

# Rajya Sabha passes Bill for appointment of CEC, ECs

Appointments so far had not been guided by any laws, and the Bill makes the process transparent, says Law Minister; Opposition questions government's intent, says the Bill violates the Constitution

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, which will guide the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Election Commissioners (ECs) in future.

Denying the Opposition's charges that the Supreme Court was being kept away from the process of selecting the CEC and the ECs, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said the Bill had been prepared following a direction from the Supreme Court. Mr. Meghwal said that so far the appointments had not been guided by any laws, and the Bill made the process transparent.

The Law Minister said the 1991 Act did not have a clause related to the appointment of the CEC and ECs. He said the names of



**Major decision:** It completely negates the Election Commission to the authority of the Executive, says Randeep Singh Surjewala. PTI

the commissioners had so far been decided by the government, and from now on, a search-and-selection committee would look over the process.

"A clause related to protection from initiation of legal proceedings against the CEC and ECs for actions taken while carrying out their duties has also been introduced through the Bill," he said.

Apparently accepting suggestions from former CECs, the Centre brought

**The Opposition wanted to send the Bill to a select panel but this was rejected by the House**

two amendments, bringing the protocol of the CEC and ECs on a par with Supreme Court judges, with similar salaries and emoluments.

The Opposition wanted to send the Bill to a select committee, but this was re-

jected by the House.

The Opposition questioned the intention of the Centre. Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, who initiated the debate, said the Bill violated the Constitution.

**'Subjugating EC'**

"It completely negates and subjugates the Election Commission to the authority of the Executive and it does away willingly, maliciously the judgment of the Supreme Court, and that is why this law is *per se* like a stillborn child," he said.

"An independent appointment mechanism would guarantee eschewing of even the prospect of bias... this is what this government is afraid of. I am saying it with a sense of responsibility, for they don't want an independent Election Commission, CEC and EC. They want a pocket borough," Mr. Surjewala said, adding that the process was arbitrary, the intent was malicious, and the result was disastrous. "That is what is going to happen," he said.

# Retail inflation increases to 5.55% in November, food prices also surge

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Consumer prices rose at a three-month high pace of 5.55% in November from 4.87% in October, with food price inflation surging to 8.7% from 6.6% driven by a surge in the inflation rate for vegetables, pulses, fruits, and sugar.

While rural inflation levels were higher at 5.85% than the price rise in urban areas, which was 5.3%, food prices paid by urban consumers rose at 9.3% while they were up 8.4% for their rural counterparts. On a month-on-month basis, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was up

## Base effects boosted IIP growth in Oct.

NEW DELHI

India's factory output grew at a 16-month high rate of 11.7% in October, recovering from a three-month low rate of 5.8%, thanks to base effects from last year when output had dropped 4.1%. » **PAGE 14**

0.54%, with rural prices up 0.64%, and food prices rising 1.05% from October levels. Overall consumer price inflation stood at 5.88% in November 2022, with the food price index rising 4.7%.

## India's economy is moving in right direction, says FM

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday told the Lok Sabha that the economy was moving in the right direction, and India had become the fastest-growing major economy. » **PAGE 14**

The Reserve Bank of India, which had warned last week of a spike in inflation in November due to hardening prices of some vegetables, expects inflation to average 5.6% between October and December.

This implies that price rise may accelerate to around 6.4% in the current month.

Among food items, cereals inflation remained in double digits at 10.3% from 10.7% in October, while meat and fish inflation eased from 3.3% to 2.15% in November.

The price surge in pulses hardened to 20.23% from 18.8% in October, vegetables inflation hit 17.7% from just 2.7% in the previous month.

Most non-food prices rose at a milder pace than October. Fuel and light prices were 0.77% below last year's levels, compared to a 0.4% decline in October.

EVA STALIN IAS

## Lok Sabha passes Bills for women's quota in J&K, Puducherry

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed two Bills to extend the provisions of the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, which grants 33% reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, to the Union Territories of Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir. The debate in the House was, however, dominated by the Supreme Court's verdict on Monday on Article 370.

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Second Amendment) Bill and the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha.

"Consequent to the enactment of the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, similar provisions for providing reservation for women in the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are also required to be made by Parliament by amending the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019," said the state-



Nityanand Rai

ment of object and reasons of the Bill. The provisions for providing reservation for women in the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Puducherry are also required to be made by Parliament by amending the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the statement read.

Hasnain Masoodi of the National Conference pointed out that while there was talk of representation, Jammu and Kashmir had no MLA for the past six years and that "four officers" were running the Union Territory. A. Raja of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam said historical obligations and promises made by constitutional entities at the time of J&K's accession to India were now "hanging in the air."

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## 74% Indians could not afford healthy diet in 2021: report

A. M. Jigeesha  
NEW DELHI

More than 74% of Indians could not afford a healthy diet in 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations said in a report on Tuesday.

In 2020, the percentage was 76.2.

In Pakistan, the figure was 82.2% and in Bangladesh, 66.1% of the population faced difficulties in finding healthy food.

Rising food costs, if not matched by rising income, would lead to more people being unable to afford a healthy diet, the report, "Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends", said.

"If food costs rise at the same time incomes fall, a compounding effect occurs that can result in even more people unable to afford healthy diets," it said.

The FAO report is a glimpse of the progress in meeting Sustainable Development Goals and World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition targets. It said that during the pandemic and the "SFS" crisis - food, feed, fuel, fertilizer, and finance - the Asia Pacific region witnessed harrowing statistics.

"Even to date, the region is still suffering from some protracted effects. The latest statistics indicate that the region, with 370.7 million undernourished people, continues to represent half of the global total. Similarly, the Asia and the Pacific region accounts for half of the world's severe food insecurity, with more women than men being food insecure. Prevalence rates on stunting, wasting and overweight among children under 5 years of age, as well



The reports said the Asia Pacific region witnessed harrowing crisis during the pandemic. FILE PHOTO

as anaemia among women of reproductive age, are still off the marks in terms of World Health Assembly global nutrition targets," the report said.

### 16% undernourished

It said that 16.6% of the country's population was undernourished. "The impacts of undernourishment extend beyond health and nutritional well-

being to include economic and social costs," it said.

The region, according to the report, had a lower prevalence of both moderate or severe and severe food insecurity when compared with the world prevalence since 2015.

"Southern Asia showed higher prevalence of severe food insecurity compared with the other sub-regions, and it is in Eastern

Asia where the lowest prevalence of severe food insecurity was observed. Compared with the world, Southern Asia had higher percentages for both moderate or severe and severe food insecurity since 2015," the report said.

It said that 31.7% of children in India under the age of five showed stunted growth. "Stunted growth and development are the result of poor maternal health and nutrition, inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, and repeated infections interacting with a variety of other factors over a sustained period," it said.

For wasting (low weight for height), India recorded the highest rate in the region, with 18.7% children under five facing this major health problem.

"Reducing and maintaining childhood wasting to less than 5% is the WHA

global nutrition target," the report noted, adding that 2.8% of children below five were overweight, another health risk.

It said that 53% of women aged between 15 to 49 in India had anaemia, which was the largest prevalence rate in the region in 2019. "It (anaemia) impairs health and well-being in women and increases the risk for adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes," the report warned. It also said that 1.6% of adults in the country were obese.

On exclusive breastfeeding among infants in the age group of 0-5 months, India had improved the prevalence with a percentage of 63.7%, which is higher than the world prevalence of 47.7%. India had the highest prevalence of low birth weight in the region (27.4%), followed by Bangladesh and Nepal.

## Modi kicks off global AI summit

The Prime Minister raises several pertinent issues around Artificial Intelligence - from a standardised global AI education curriculum to watermarking products - at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence Summit

Aroon Deep  
NEW DELHI

The annual Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit kicked off in New Delhi's Bharat Mandapam on Tuesday, with discussions on AI issues like safety and development challenges.

"Trust on AI will grow only when related ethical, economic and social aspects are addressed," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while inaugurating the three-day event. As many as 29 countries, from North and South America,



Next in line: After Japan, India will be lead chair of the GPAI grouping in 2024. PTI

Europe and Asia, are part of the summit; China is not a member. The previous summit was held in Osaka, Japan. In 2024, India will be lead chair of the grouping.

Mr. Modi also raised other pertinent issues surrounding the AI debate. "Can we establish an institutional mechanism that ensures resilient employment? Can we bring stan-

dardised global AI education curriculum? Can we set standards to prepare people for an AI-driven future?" he asked.

The Prime Minister also invoked watermarking of AI products, an apparent reference to suggestions that imagery generated by AI applications be distinguished as such. AI-generated images have been used in illicit ways such as creating 'deepfake' clips of celebrities, and by firms seeking to save costs by creating photorealistic images for advertisements.

Mr. Modi also pointed to the dangers of terrorists

getting access to AI tools, as well as the potential for increased cybersecurity and data theft incidents. He called for visibility into the algorithms that go into creating AI models. "There is no doubt that AI is transformative but it is up to us to make it more and more transparent," he said.

Discussions through the day featured AI policymakers and industry officials presenting their views and expertise. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday that issues related to farming and healthcare would be discussed thoroughly at the summit.

## **Welcome direction**

### **As with elections, SC should have given a deadline for restoration of statehood**

**I**n its conclusion in the judgment that upheld the decision to abrogate the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court expressly directed that the Election Commission of India (ECI) must conduct elections to the Legislative Assembly of J&K by September 30, 2024. It is welcome that the Court has set a deadline to conduct the long-delayed elections in J&K, which has been under spells of Governor's Rule and President's Rule since June 20, 2018 and without a Legislative Assembly. But it is also incongruous that the judgment does not press the government to restore statehood to the bifurcated Union Territory, a promise that has been conveyed by the Solicitor General, but has yet to gain fruition. The Bench remarks that direct elections cannot be put on hold until statehood is restored but it could have directed the Union government to restore statehood and conduct elections by a specified date, as there remains no reason for the continuance of J&K as a Union Territory. Restoration of statehood is an important measure as this guarantees a degree of federal autonomy to the province, that should allow the elected government to be able to better address the concerns of the electorate than depend on the representatives of the Union government.

J&K remains among India's most conflict-prone regions partially due to historical reasons related to integration of the erstwhile princely State into the Indian Union and later due to accumulated grievances over the conduct of democratic processes in the erstwhile State. Even when periodic and regular elections were conducted during the height of the militancy, participation was limited in many parts of the Valley, denoting the disenchantment with the political system. But things took a change for the better since the early-mid 2000s when electoral participation improved and J&K's citizens began to partake in the democratic process to get their concerns addressed before agitations and protests – including by separatists – over security policies and the later steps taken by the Bharatiya Janata Party government led to the current state of affairs. In the last five and a half years, local government elections have been held with varying levels of participation indicating that the mood in the Valley has been against the measures that have been implemented since 2018. India's unique selling proposition as a leader in the Global South remains its robust conduct of formal democratic process and which in itself is important for conflict resolution in places such as Kashmir. Without political processes, a contestation of ideas and a sense that elected representatives can address the grievances of citizens, there cannot be any normalcy.



## Game-changer

Gene therapy offers new hope for those with sickle cell disease

Less than a month after the UK drug regulator approved Casgevy, the gene therapy to treat people above 12 with sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia, the U.S. FDA has approved two gene therapies – Casgevy and Lyfgenia – to treat sickle cell disease in patients over 12. Its decision on approving Casgevy gene therapy for treating beta thalassemia is expected by March 2024. These landmark decisions mark the beginning of gene therapy using the CRISPR-Cas9 tool to treat diseases that could otherwise be cured only through bone marrow transplantation. While Lyfgenia uses a disabled lentivirus as a vector to introduce into the blood stem cells a new gene for haemoglobin that mimics the healthy version, Casgevy uses the gene-editing tool of CRISPR-Cas9 to disable a particular gene (BCL11A) that turns off foetal haemoglobin production in blood stem cells. While about 10% of adults continue to produce foetal haemoglobin, in others, the BCL11A gene prevents the production of foetal haemoglobin. By disabling the BCL11A gene, foetal haemoglobin that is produced, which does not have the abnormalities of adult haemoglobin, helps treat patients with sickle-cell disease or beta thalassaemia. In clinical trials, 28 of 29 sickle-cell disease patients who received Casgevy gene therapy were relieved of the debilitating effects of the disease for a year; for beta thalassaemia, 39 of 42 patients did not require blood transfusion for one year, and in the remaining three the need for blood transfusion reduced by more than 70%. In the case of clinical trials involving Lyfgenia, 30 of 32 sickle cell disease patients did not suffer from severe blocked blood flow caused by sickle cells, while 28 of 32 patients did not experience any blocked blood flow events six to 18 months post-infusion.

Since both gene therapies use patients' own blood cells for gene editing, the number of patients who can potentially be treated will be huge as these treatments do not rely on matching bone marrow donors. But in reality, these treatments would be exorbitantly expensive. Also, much like bone marrow transplantation, only certain hospitals will be equipped to extract a patient's blood stem cells and use the genetic editing tool to the stem cells before reinjecting them, thus limiting the number of beneficiaries. With clinical trials evaluating the therapies in a very small number of patients and for shorter duration, the compulsion to continuously monitor their safety and efficacy through real world data cannot be overemphasised: the possibility of unintended genetic modifications and their resultant side effects are real when the CRISPR-Cas9 tool is used.

## Tackling Chennai's flood problem

The scale of floods may be different this time, but the problem areas are the same

### STATE OF PLAY

T. Ramakrishnan  
ramakrishnan.tj@thehindu.co.in

The torrential rains triggered by Cyclone Michaung on December 3-4 in Chennai and its neighbouring districts exposed yet again the limits of urban planning. The southern and northern areas of Chennai experienced severe flooding; the only exceptions were the central parts. The neighbouring districts of Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, and Tiruvallur were equally affected.

This spell of rains was heavier than the rains of 2015, but certain features in the city seem constant. For instance, little changed in Velachery, a much sought-after locality in recent years, or in Ambattur Industrial Estate, one of the old industrial estates of Tamil Nadu. There was public anger in areas where relief work, restoration of services including electricity supply and Internet, and the provision of essentials such as sanitary napkins left a lot to be desired.

The perceptible difference between the 2015 floods and the 2023 rains is that this time, there was no dramatic event apart from the cyclone itself. Eight years ago, the release of water from the Chembarambakkam reservoir, one of the water sources for Chennai, into Adyar in the south was widely cited as the main cause of the floods. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report of 2017 on the 2015 Chennai floods pointed out that 29,000 cusecs of water were continuously discharged for 21 hours from the reservoir. This, coupled with surplus water from upstream tanks and catchment areas, caused flood water to flow into the Adyar river.



The DMK government, which has completed half its term, has claimed that its handling of the situation made a difference this time. It has cited the ongoing implementation of a ₹4,000-crore storm water drain project to support this position. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin lost no time in announcing the distribution of ₹6,000 to each of the cyclone-hit families in the four districts. Apparently in response to criticism that voluntary organisations did not participate in relief efforts as much as they should have, the government announced that a system is in place to channel these services.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami has doubted the efficacy of the storm water drains project and demanded a White Paper on its implementation, and also demanded that the relief amount be doubled, but some feel that the Opposition party has done little in making its presence felt on the ground.

One positive feature of the present situation is that there is a smooth working relationship between the Central and State governments. This is heartening since the relationship between the BJP and the DMK has been at a particularly low point since the controversy over the DMK's statements on Sanatana Dharma. A host of Central agencies were in-

volved in efforts to mitigate the crisis, the Defence Minister visited Chennai, and the Home Minister announced that funds would be allocated for flood-related work.

Over the next few weeks, normalcy will return in all the affected areas. But public-spirited individuals and civil society groups are demanding that steps be taken in a sustained manner so that the government is prepared for such a crisis and that a lasting solution to the problem of flooding be found. There are plenty of case studies on what should be done. They suggest that Anna Nagar, a locality developed in the western part of Chennai during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, did not face a major problem this time because of its pucca layout. However, many other parts of the city were not as lucky. Over the years, permission has been recklessly granted to unapproved layouts in the name of 'regularisation schemes.' This trend needs to be stopped.

It is imperative for authorities to properly maintain water bodies and natural wetlands such as the Pallikaranai marsh. Citizens feel the marsh, which has shrunk to around 700 hectares from 5,000 hectares, can become more effective as a sponge for the city only if the biomining project at the nearby Perungudi dumping yard be expedited. The government should also publish the findings of the committee headed by former civil servant V. Thirupugazh on Chennai flood disaster mitigation and management, apart from ensuring a free debate on the matter. At the macro level, it is time that the government considers the idea of developing a second capital or an alternative capital in the fertile parts of the Cauvery delta in central Tamil Nadu.



# India's extreme rainfall 'corridor'

How has the Indian monsoon been affected by global warming? What has a new study on large-scale extreme rainfall found and what is its significance? How will this study improve forecasts and reduce risks associated with large-scale rainfall events?

## EXPLAINER

Raghu Murtugudde

### The story so far:

**T**he Indian monsoon has well-known features, such as the onset of the monsoon, the withdrawal, the active and break periods, and the low-pressure systems (or monsoon depressions). Every aspect of the monsoon has been affected by global warming. The total seasonal rainfall has also trended downwards for more than seven decades, due to the differential heating of the land versus the ocean due to global warming. However, this trend has been distributed unevenly through the monsoon season – as manifest in the longer duration but lower intensity of dry spells and the greater intensity of wet spells. While the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has made progress in forecasting extremes, multiple factors can combine to still produce devastating heavy rain events that remain hard to anticipate.

### Where does extreme rain occur?

India's monsoon forecasts rely heavily on its relation to the El Niño and the La Niña phenomena, although this relation holds only about 60% of the time. We also know of other global relations but translating them to better predictions requires careful modelling experiments. Researchers are also continuing to search for additional process understanding, especially for high-impact extreme rainfall events. A new study (of which the author was part) has found that despite all these seemingly disparate changes in different aspects of the monsoon dynamics, a remarkable stationary element exists in terms of where the synchronised extreme rainfall events occur.

The so-called large-scale extreme rainfall events are actually simultaneous or near-simultaneous heavy rain episodes that are strewn across a 'highway' that



Heavy showers: A villager with his herd in the rain in Gajapati district of south Odisha. [SRIWANJAN ROUT](#)

extends from parts of West Bengal and Odisha to parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The most remarkable new finding is that this corridor has remained unchanged from 1901 to 2019. In the seemingly chaotic change in all aspects of the monsoon, such a trapping of the extreme events to a relatively narrow corridor is good news for potential improvements in process understanding, which is bound to lead to better predictions of these synchronised extreme rainfall events.

### What does this mean for the monsoon's stability?

Traditional statistical methods tend to miss the complex relations between multiple nodes of rainfall centres. Rainfall data from the IMD at a 25-km scale in

latitude and longitude offers a rich field over which sophisticated network analysis can be applied to extract the nodes that have highest synchronicity in rainfall with other nodes near and far. This analysis – applied in this study – found that the most active nodes have followed this 'highway' for more than a century. The link lengths between nodes, or the scales of synchronicity, have remained nearly constant, at an average value of about 200 km.

We can use a popcorn and kettle analogy here to understand this better. Central India is the kettle that warms up from the pre-monsoon into the monsoon. The monsoon rainfall systems are like kernels of corn popping randomly across the kettle. But it turns out that the kernels

are popping in a synchronous dance, in an indication that large groups of popcorn are jumping up at the same time.

An analysis of winds and other circulation features indicate that the monsoon domain has been unique in remaining fairly stable for the formation of these extremes despite the various kicks from all tropical oceans and from pole-to-pole.

### What do the findings mean for forecasts?

Some researchers have said that stationary elements no longer exist in climate systems because of global warming. Yet the Indian monsoon continues to produce surprises in the way it is able to synchronise heavy rain events as well as stick to the 'highway' for such a long time. This is also the corridor for the monsoon depressions, which themselves have shown an increase at the 3- to 10-day timescales while decreasing at lower frequencies of 10-60 days. These changes are manifest in the active and break periods, as stated above. The main candidate for the geographic trapping of synchronised extreme rainfall is likely to be the range of mountains running along the west coast and across Central India.

This hypothesis needs to be tested in models, but its implications for improving forecasts of such events is undeniable. The finding also suggests that, in order to improve forecasts, increasing the model resolution and the computational cost may not be necessary. Instead, the focus can be on the dynamics of synchronisation.

The potential for reducing risk at the smaller scale from these large-scale extreme rainfall events, for agriculture, water, energy, transportation, health, etc., is also alluring. Fortunately, India is in a solid position vis-à-vis its modelling capacity and computational resources to fully exploit this potential.

Raghu Murtugudde is a professor at IIT Bombay and an emeritus professor at the University of Maryland.

## THE GIST

▼ Every aspect of the monsoon has been affected by global warming. The total seasonal rainfall has also trended downwards for more than seven decades, due to the differential heating of the land versus the ocean due to global warming.

▼ The so-called large-scale extreme rainfall events are actually simultaneous or near-simultaneous heavy rain episodes that are strewn across a 'highway' that extends from parts of West Bengal and Odisha to parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The most remarkable new finding is that this corridor has remained unchanged from 1901 to 2019.

▼ This hypothesis needs to be tested in models, but its implications for improving forecasts of such events is undeniable.

# What are the implications of recent Argentine elections?

Who is Javier Milei, the new President of Argentina? What are the regional ramifications of his leadership? What does this mean for Peronism?

Dhriti Mukherjee

### The story so far:

**I**n December 10, Javier Milei, a far-right libertarian, was sworn into office as the President of Argentina. On November 19, he won the election by defeating the left-leaning Economic Minister of Argentina, Sergio Massa.

### Who is Javier Milei?

Javier Milei, a radical libertarian economist and self-proclaimed anarcho-capitalist, is known for his economic policies which challenge the "thieves" of the political elite. Mr. Milei was elected to Congress in 2021, successfully attracting voters with his promise to "flatten" the political system. He popularly came to be known as the "chainsaw man," as he used a chainsaw during his campaign to highlight the vitality of the "reconstruction of Argentina." Additionally, he is an admirer of former U.S. President Donald Trump,

and has been compared to Brazil's Former President Jair Bolsonaro.

### What are Milei's policy proposals?

Mr. Milei's promise to dismantle the "propaganda mechanism" of the left and bring in "drastic changes" is what characterised his election campaign and policy suggestions. In order to "kill" Argentina's inflation of more than 140%, his central proposal is to dollarise the economy, and implement spending cuts equal to five per cent of the economy.

During his inaugural address on December 10, he blatantly stated that "there is no money," while warning Argentinians to brace for a "shock adjustment." He also stated that public works projects would be halted, and Argentina's trade and currency controls would be lifted. The socio-political policies that Mr. Milei put forward resonate with his anti-establishment rhetoric that the "model of decadence has come to an end." A "limited government, respect for private property," removal of

10 of the 18 federal ministries, and privatisation of state-owned media are some of his suggestions.

### What do the election results signify?

The elections have several implications for Argentina nationally, of which the fall of Peronism is a pivotal one. Peronism is a movement that emerged in Argentina in the 20th century and has its roots in social justice. The elections marked the first time since 2015 that a Peronist government failed to win. Mr. Milei's victory is also indicative of a rise of the right, with his victory reflecting the profound discontent among segments seeking a break from tradition. However, there are concerns on whether this change will come at the cost of societal institutions.

Furthermore, there was a clear departure from conventional politics, as the public, disillusioned with traditional parties' handling of economic challenges, embraced unconventional approaches. The youth particularly, could be seen

expressing support for Mr. Milei, describing him as an "academic" who has pulled away from "conservative" policies to "fight against the system."

### What about other countries?

Mr. Milei has been vocal on his foreign relations plans between Argentina and other countries. While stating that he is going to be "aligned with the United States, Israel, and the free world," he remained sharply critical of working with China, Brazil, and Russia, countries he considers as "communist regimes." There are several concerns that ending ties with these countries, especially China and Brazil, could have negative implications for Argentina's trade. His belief that the Mercosur-EU trade deal has no benefits from Argentina is already straining the country's foreign relations.

### What next for Argentina?

It is uncertain whether Mr. Milei will be able to implement his radical policies. His supporters maintain that "he is the change that Argentina needs." However, his party only holds 38 of the 257 seats in the lower house, which means that these radical ideas will not necessarily get adequate political support. Mr. Milei's election marks a difference from the recent 'pink tide' that has taken over Latin America, resulting in many countries electing left-leaning governments. There could be regional ramifications from Argentina's choice.

The writer is a Research Assistant at the National Institute of Advanced Studies