Fuelling friction: On PM Modi’s comments on fuel price

Shifting the onus of providing relief from high fuel prices onto States can strain federalism

At a meeting with Chief Ministers about the resurgence of COVID-19 on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi charged Opposition-ruled States with committing an injustice to the people by not cutting duties on petroleum products as the Centre had done in November 2021. Those cuts of ₹5 and ₹10 per litre of petrol and diesel, respectively, came as fuel prices crossed well past ₹100 a litre — those levels have been breached again after a poll-driven lull. The PM noted that the Centre’s plea at the time, for States to back these cuts by paring their VAT levies on petroleum products, was not heeded by States not governed by the BJP. But even NDA-administered States are now facing extremely high inflation — retail inflation in April was 8.19% for Uttar Pradesh and Assam, and 7.4% to 7.6% in Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana — far higher than the national retail inflation rate of 6.95% for the month. The PM’s remarks, buttressed by the slogan of cooperative federalism, attracted an instant backlash from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, Telangana, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. While all States are fretful about resource constraints and pending dues from the Centre, some had reduced VAT on fuel products and others have not hiked rates for years. Despite its recent assertions that no taxes were levied to counter the pandemic, the Centre had hiked fuel taxes even amid the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown with a preference for cess levies that do not have to be shared with States.

While the political brouhaha over the PM’s pitch unfolds, the signal for the common man is clear — abandon any hope of immediate relief. This is akin to striking a cruel blow against the middle and lower-income classes, already besieged by successive setbacks on the job, health and income fronts. Household budgets are severely squeezed because of price rise. Even industry has mooted fuel tax cuts to sustain a fragile consumption recovery. With record tax collections last year and revenue buoyancy expected to hold up this year, the Centre has fiscal room to slash its fuel taxes, and there will be an automatic cascading effect on State taxes levied on an ad valorem basis. Expecting States, which are worried about their limited revenue sources once the assured GST compensation stops flowing from this July, to take the lead in reining in petroleum taxes, is unwieldy, short-sighted and unnecessarily confrontational. Even more so as the States are also expected to ramp up capex spending to revive the economy. As the PM said, the Centre and States need to coordinate better to spur the economy amid global tumult. Singling out a few States to deflect attention from the Centre’s excessive reliance on fuel taxes is not the right approach to attain such harmony. Most of all, as high inflation will debilitate the recovery’s momentum, shirking corrective action to bolster its revenue kitty would be a case of being penny wise and pound foolish.

Practice Exercise

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where ‘red’ denotes ‘subject’ and ‘blue’ denotes ‘verb’.
Vocabulary

1. **Fuel** (verb) – incite, inflame, exacerbate; stimulate, boost, encourage उकसाना
2. **Friction** (noun) – discord, disharmony, disunity, strife, conflict, मनमुड़ाव
3. **Onus** (noun) – burden, responsibility, liability, obligation दायित्व, भार
4. **Strain** (verb) – injure, hurt, damage, impair हानि पहुंचाना
5. **Federalism** (noun) – The relationship between the Central Government and the State governments of India. संघवाद
6. **Resurgence** (noun) – renewal, revival, recovery, rally, upturn, comeback, पुनर्स्थापन
7. **Charge** (with) – accuse of, indict for, arraign for आरोप लगाना
8. **Opposition-ruled** (adjective) – governed by opposition विपक्ष शासित
9. **Commit** (verb) – carry out, do, perform, perpetrate, engage in करना
10. **Duty** (noun) – tax, levy, tariff, excise, toll, fee, imposition कर
11. **Past** (preposition) – beyond, beyond the limits of, in excess of पुराना
12. **Breach** (verb) – break, burst through, rupture तोड़ना
13. **Poll-driven** (adjective) – Election-motivated चुनाव से प्रेरित
14. **Lull** (noun) – pause, respite, interval, break, hiatus, suspension, ठहराव, विराम
15. **Plea** (noun) – A request made in an urgent and emotional manner. अपील
16. **Back** (verb) – support, endorse, sanction, approve of, समर्थन करना
17. **Pare** (verb) – reduce, diminish, decrease, cut, cut back घटाना
18. **Value added tax (VAT)** (noun) – a type of indirect tax levied on goods and services for value added at every point of production or distribution cycle
19. **Levy** (noun) – tax, tariff, toll, excise, duty कर
20. **Heed** (verb) – pay attention to, listen to, notice, adhere to, abide by ध्यान देना
21. **Govern** (verb) – rule, preside over, be in power over, reign over, control शासन करना
22. **NDA-administrated** (adjective) – managed or controlled by NDA
23. **Inflation** (noun) – A general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money. मुद्राफीति
24. **Remark** (noun) – comment, statement, utterance, observation

25. **Buttress** (verb) – strengthen, reinforce, fortify, support, prop up, bolster up, shore up पुष्ट करना

26. **Slogan** (noun) – A motto associated with a political party or movement or other group. नारा

27. **Cooperative federalism** (noun) – a flexible relationship between the Centre and state governments in which both work together on a variety of issues and programs.

28. **Backlash** (noun) – adverse reaction, adverse response, counteraction प्रतिक्रिया

29. **Fretful** (adjective) – distressed, upset, miserable, tense, stressed, restive, परेशान

30. **Constraint** (noun) – hindrance, impediment, hampering, obstruction, बाधा

31. **Dues** (noun) – An obligatory payment; a fee. देय राशि

32. **Hike** (verb) – Increase (something, especially a price) sharply. बढाना

33. **Assertion** (noun) – declaration, contention, statement, claim, submission अभिकथन

34. **Counter** (verb) – combat, fight, attack, tackle, confront; respond to, retort to मुकाबला करना

35. **Amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by, among, के बीच

36. **Cess** (noun) – a tax or levy. उपकर

37. **Brouhaha** (noun) – disturbance, racket, uproar, tumult, ruckus, clamour बवाल

38. **Pitch** (noun) – Speech, comment, talk

39. **Unfold** (verb) – Reveal or disclose प्रकट करना

40. **Abandon** (verb) – give up, stop, cease, drop, forgo, desist from त्याग देना

41. **Akin** (to) (adjective) – similar, related, close, near समान, बराबर

42. **Strike a blow against** (phrase) – to do something that harms something severely.

43. **Besiege** (verb) – surround and harass. घिरा होना (समस्याएं)

44. **Setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue, hitch, complication झटका

45. **Front** (noun) – a particular situation स्थिति

46. **Severely** (adverb) – very badly, extremely badly, seriously, गंभीर रूप से

47. **Squeeze** (verb) – (especially in a financial or commercial context) have a damaging or restricting effect on. निचोड़ना

48. **Moot** (verb) – put forward, introduce, advance, present, propose पेश करना
49. **Sustain** (verb) – maintain, continue, preserve, बनाए रखना

50. **Fragile** (adjective) – weak, delicate, frail, debilitated, tottery, shaky कमजोर

51. **Buoyancy** (noun) – growth, development, progress, improvement उफाल

52. **Hold up** (phrasal verb) – Remain strong or vigorous. अच्छा रहना

53. **Fiscal** (adjective) – financial, economic, monetary वित्तीय

54. **Room** (noun) – scope, capacity, margin, leeway गुणजायस

55. **Slash** (verb) – reduce, cut, drop, bring down कम करना

56. **Cascading effect** (noun) – Cascading effect is when there is a tax on tax levied on a product at every step of the sale. The tax is levied on a value that includes tax paid by the previous buyer, thus, making the end consumer pay “tax on already paid tax”

57. **Ad valorem** (noun) – according to value.

58. **Once** (conjunction) – as soon as, when, after, immediately after,

59. **Assured** (adjective) – guaranteed, certain, sure, secure आश्वासित

60. **GST compensation cess** (noun) – The Compensation Cess is a Cess that will be collected on the supply of select goods and or services or both till 1st July 2022. The Cess will compensate the states for any revenue loss on account of implementation of GST. This Cess will not be payable by those persons who have opted for compensation levy.

61. **Take the lead** (phrase) – accept responsibility for dealing with situation

62. **Rein** (verb) – Keep under control; restrain. लगाम लगाना

63. **Unwieldy** (adjective) – cumbersome, unmanageable, unhandy, unmanoeuvrable बोझल

64. **Short-sighted** (adjective) – narrow-minded, narrow, unimaginative, lacking foresight, अदृश्य

65. **Confrontational** (adjective) – hostile or argumentative. टकराव वाला

66. **Ramp up** (phrasal verb) – Sharply increase in level or amount. बढ़ाना

67. **Capex** (noun) – Capital expenditure.

68. **Capital expenditure** (noun) – Money spent by a government on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets, such as land, buildings, and equipment.

69. **Spur** (verb) – encourage, prompt, propel, prod, induce, impel, प्रोत्साहित करना

70. **Tumult** (noun) – turmoil, confusion, disorder, disarray, disturbance, कौलाहल
71. **Single out** (phrasal verb) – select, pick out, fix on, choose, decide on चुनना

72. **Deflect** (verb) – turn aside, turn away, divert, avert, sidetrack मोड़ना

73. **Reliance** (on) (verb) – dependence, dependency भरोसा

74. **Harmony** (noun) – concord, accord, agreement, peace, peacefulness समन्वय, एकता

75. **Debilitate** (verb) – weaken, make weak, make feeble, दुर्बल करना

76. **Momentum** (noun) – impetus, energy, force, power, strength गति

77. **Bolster** (verb) – strengthen, support, reinforce, make stronger, boost, मजबूत बनाना

78. **Kitty** (noun) – funds, reserves, resources, money, finances, wealth, cash लिधि

79. **Penny wise and pound foolish** (phrase) – careful and economical in small matters while being wasteful or extravagant in large one
Practice Exercise

Direction (Q1 – Q3): Select the best express synonym of the given words

1. Shifting the **onus** of providing relief from high fuel prices onto States can strain federalism
   A. Responsibility
   B. Repercussion
   C. Complicity
   D. Unconscionable
   E. None of the above

2. The PM noted that the Centre’s plea at the time, for States to back these cuts by **paring** their VAT levies on petroleum products, was not heeded by States not governed by the BJP.
   A. Torpor
   B. Complacent
   C. Genre
   D. Diminish
   E. None of the above

3. The PM’s remarks, **buttressed** by the slogan of cooperative federalism, attracted an instant backlash
   A. Acrimonious
   B. Strengthen
   C. Audacity
   D. Obfuscate
   E. None of the above

Direction (Q4 – Q5): Select the antonym of the appropriate highlighted word

4. While all States are **fretful** about resource constraints and pending dues from the Centre, some had reduced VAT on fuel products and others have not hiked rates for years
   A. Fetter
   B. Paucity
   C. Tranquil
   D. Arduous
   E. None of the above

5. Even industry has mooted fuel tax cuts to sustain a **fragile** consumption recovery
   A. Sturdy
   B. Prosaic
   C. Disdain
   D. Rhetoric
   E. None of the above

Direction (Q6 – Q10): Improve the underlined part of the sentences, if needed:

6. You cannot pass **as long as** you study.
   A. provided
B. unless  
C. less  
D. No improvement  

7. They sat by the river bank with their legs **remaining** in the water.  
A. swimming  
B. dangling  
C. washing  
D. No improvement  

8. Maggie took a hot bath because she **was** working in the garden all afternoon.  
A. is  
B. has  
C. had been  
D. No improvement  

9. The country faced a rainfall deficit of eight per cent **after the** four month long southwest monsoon.  
A. during the  
B. at the end of  
C. for the  
D. No improvement  

10. Children with disabilities and special needs also have the right to education **just like normal children**.  
A. just as normal children do  
B. are doing even as normal children  
C. along with normal children  
D. No improvement  

**Cloze test based on Editorial: Rebels and Rulers**

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s year-long war on the rebels in the northern Tigray region .......................................................... to pull the whole country into a deadly civil war between the federal troops and several ethnic militias. When the war began, Mr. Abiy, a Nobel peace laureate, wanted to .......................................................... the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), an ethnic paramilitary group-turned-political party, in Tigray and install a friendly regional government. Within a month, he met his objectives and declared that major combat operations were over. But retaining control over a rebellious region was harder than ousting the rebels. Moreover, Mr. Abiy seemed to have .......................................................... Tigray’s complex history. The mountainous region that shares a long border with Eritrea was the base of resistance against the military dictatorship in the 1970-80s. The TPLF, which fought the Derg, the military regime, for 16 years before ruling Ethiopia through a multiparty coalition for three decades, .......................................................... not an easy pushover.

**Answers**

11. A. threatens  
   B. Exacerbates  
   C. Relegates  
   D. Exults
12. A. Circumvent  
B. Disseminate  
C. Renounce  
D. Oust

13. A. Ruminated  
B. Overlooked  
C. Proselytized  
D. Expedited

14. A. Was  
B. Were  
C. Have  
D. Ought to

15. **Which among the following will be the last sentence of the paragraph after the rearrangement?**

P. The arrest of Gujarat independent legislator, Jignesh Mevani, by the Assam police is an egregious instance of the misuse of law to target a vocal critic of the Union government.

Q. It is clear that apart from being harsh criticism of the Prime Minister, there is nothing in it that can be seen as affecting public tranquillity or causing divisions in society.

R. There are several aspects about his arrest that ought to cause shock and revulsion to those who believe in law and democracy.

S. Not only have the police invoked the entire gamut of offences related to inflammatory speech, breach of peace and outraging of religious feelings, but provisions related to conspiracy and hacking of computers have also been added for good measure.

T. Mr. Mevani’s tweets, subsequently withheld by Twitter, described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a “Godse worshipper”, but also contained an appeal to him to call for peace in some areas of Gujarat that witnessed communal violence.

U. While some of the criminal provisions in the FIR are questionable, it is astounding that the police in distant Kokrajhar, Assam, chose to act on a complaint by a political functionary against a legislator in Gujarat and travel all the way to take him into custody and jail him in Assam.

A. P  
B. Q  
C. U  
D. R  
E. T
**Answers**

1. A  
2. D  
3. B  
4. C  
5. A  
6. B  
7. B  
8. C  
9. A  
10. A  
11. A  
12. D  
13. B  
14. A  
15. C

**Explanations**

6. (B) ‘as long as’ के बदले ‘unless’ का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि ’as long as’ का प्रयोग Conjunction of Time के रूप में ‘जबतक’ के अर्थ में होता है जबकि ’unless’ का प्रयोग Conjunction of condition के रूप में ‘यदि नहीं’ के अर्थ में; जैसे

   i. As long as God is with us we need not fear.

   ii. You cannot catch the train unless you get a taxi.

7. (B) ‘remaining’ के बदले ‘dangling’ का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि ’remain’ का अर्थ है ’continue to exist or to stay continue in a particular state’ अर्थात् ’रहना, बना रहना’, किनतु ’dangle’ का अर्थ है ’swing loosely, hang’ अर्थात् ’लटकना, झूलना, झूलाना’ जैसे-

   i. She remained quiet.

   ii. He dangled a bone in front of the dogs.

8. (C) ‘was’ के बदले ’had been’ का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि ‘garden’ में काम करना past of the past की जारी घटना है जिसके लिए Past Perfect Continuous का प्रयोग होता है; जैसे-

   i. She was tired because she had been working for ten hours.

9. (A) ’after the’ के बदले ’during the’ का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि ‘rainfall’ ‘monsoon’ के ’दरम्यान’ होगा, न कि ’monsoon’ के बाद।

10. (A) ‘Just like normal children’ के बदले ’just as normal children do’ का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि ’like’ का प्रयोग एक Preposition के रूप में होता है जिसका अर्थ होता है ’के समान’ किन्तु ’as’ का प्रयोग एक Conjunction के रूप में होता है जिसका अर्थ होता है ‘जैसा कि’। ’Like’ तथा ’As’ के प्रयोग के सम्बन्ध में निम्नलिखित तथ्यों को देखें-

   a. Like (pseudo-preposition)With objective case Like you and me. not like you and I. Though actually an adjective or an adverb, according to the context it can have degrees of comparison since we can say more like you and me, like is treated as preposition, and the pronouns that follow it must be in the objective case.

   b. (As a subordinating conjunction) These are incorrect:
i. Do it like I told you.

ii. Please leave the room like you found it.

Like should not be used as a subordinating conjunction to introduce an adverb clause of manner or comparison. Use as.

11. **Threaten** (verb) - endanger, be a danger to, be a threat to, जोखिम में डालना
12. **Oust** (verb) - expel, force out, throw out, remove निकाल देना, हटाया देना
13. **Overlook** (verb) - disregard, neglect, ignore अनदेखा करना
14. Was, Subject of the given sentence is singular (i.e. The TPLF).

15. **PRTQU**

The arrest of Gujarat independent legislator, Jignesh Mevani, by the Assam police is an egregious instance of the misuse of law to target a vocal critic of the Union government. There are several aspects about his arrest that ought to cause shock and revulsion to those who believe in law and democracy. Mr. Mevani’s tweets, subsequently withheld by Twitter, described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a “Godse worshipper”, but also contained an appeal to him to call for peace in some areas of Gujarat that witnessed communal violence. It is clear that apart from being harsh criticism of the Prime Minister, there is nothing in it that can be seen as affecting public tranquillity or causing divisions in society. Not only have the police invoked the entire gamut of offences related to inflammatory speech, breach of peace and outraging of religious feelings, but provisions related to conspiracy and hacking of computers have also been added for good measure. While some of the criminal provisions in the FIR are questionable, it is astounding that the police in distant Kokrajhar, Assam, chose to act on a complaint by a political functionary against a legislator in Gujarat and travel all the way to take him into custody and jail him in Assam.

**Explanation in English**

6. (B) 'unless' will be used instead of 'as long as' because 'as long as' is used as Conjunction of Time in the sense of 'till' while 'unless' is used as Conjunction of condition in the meaning of 'if not'; As

   iii. As long as God is with us we need not fear.
   iv. You cannot catch the train unless you get a taxi.
7. (B) ‘dangling’ will be used instead of ‘remaining’ because ‘remain’ means ‘continue to exist or to stay continue in a particular state’ but ‘dangle’ means It is ‘swing loosely, hang’. like-
   i. She remained quiet.
   ii. He dangled a bone in front of the dogs.

8. (C) ‘had been’ will be used instead of ‘was’ because working in ‘garden’ is a continuing event of the past for which Past Perfect Continuous is used; As-
   i. She was tired because she had been working for ten hours.

9. (A) ‘during the’ will be used instead of ‘after the’ because ‘rainfall’ will be ‘between’ ‘monsoon’ and not after ‘monsoon’.

10. (A) ‘Just as normal children do’ will be used instead of ‘Just like normal children’ because ‘like’ is used as a preposition but ‘as’ is used Occurs in the form of a Conjunction. Observe the following facts regarding the use of ‘Like’ and ‘As’ -
   a. Like (pseudo-preposition) With objective case Like you and me. not like you and I.
      Though actually an adjective or an adverb, according to the context it can have degrees of comparison since we can say more like you and me, like is treated as preposition, and the pronouns that follow it must be in the objective case.
   b. (As a subordinating conjunction) These are incorrect:
      i. Do it like I told you.
      ii. Please leave the room like you found it.
      Like should not be used as a subordinating conjunction to introduce an adverb clause of manner or comparison. Use as.
### Explanation of other important words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.NO</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Repercussion</td>
<td>A consequence; an indirect effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complicity</td>
<td>Participation in wrongdoing; the act of being an accomplice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unconscionable</td>
<td>Not controlled by conscience; unscrupulous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Torpor</td>
<td>Sluggishness; inactivity; apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complacent</td>
<td>Self-satisfied; overly pleased with oneself; contented to fault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Type or category, especially of art or writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Acrimonious</td>
<td>Full of spite; bitter; nasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audacity</td>
<td>Boldness; reckless daring; impertinence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obfuscate</td>
<td>To darken; to confuse; to make confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Fetter</td>
<td>To restrain; to hamper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paucity</td>
<td>Scarcity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arduous</td>
<td>Hard; Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Prosaic</td>
<td>Dull; unimaginative; like prose (as opposed to poetry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disdain</td>
<td>Arrogant scorn; contempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>The art of formal speaking or writing; inflated discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>Exacerbate</td>
<td>To make worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relegate</td>
<td>To banish; to send away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exult</td>
<td>To Rejoice; to celebrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12</th>
<th>Circumvent</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>To frustrate as though by surrounding</th>
<th>विगाइना, दरकिनार</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disseminate</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>To spread the seed of something; to scatter; to make widely known</td>
<td>प्रसार करना, प्रचार करना</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renounce</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>To formally give up or resign; to disown; to have nothing to do with anymore.</td>
<td>त्याग, छोड़ना</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>Ruminate</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>To contemplate; to ponder; to mull over</td>
<td>मनन करना; विचार करना</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proselytize</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>To convert from one religion or doctrine to another; to recruit converts to a religion or doctrine.</td>
<td>फूँसलाना</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expedite</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>To speed up or ease the progress of</td>
<td>जल्दी करना, झटपट करना</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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