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A doctor makes an unexpected house call

By CÉSAR CHELALA

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil—My first visit to a “favela,” one of the most famous urban slums in Latin America, was unexpected. The so-called favelas in Brazil are known as “ranchitos” in Venezuela, “pueblos jóvenes” in Peru, or “villas miserias” in Argentina. As a result of poverty, huge waves of migrants move to the countries’ main cities and end up living in these ramshackle settlements, which lack basic health and sanitation services.

At a meeting in New York, I got to know a young Brazilian physician—Dr. Paulo—as everybody calls him—and we became friends. He told me repeatedly that if I ever was in Rio de Janeiro I should visit him. He said that he would take me to the best places in Rio de Janeiro where he lives and has an active practice that puts him in touch with all segments of Brazilian society.

Soon afterwards I went to Rio de Janeiro for a medical meeting and called him. He came promptly to my hotel and we had a long chat. He asked me, since the weekend was coming, what I wanted to see in Rio. I told him I wanted to visit a favela. He looked at me quizzically and said, “I want to take you to the best places in Rio, and you ask me to take you to a favela? I don’t understand this.”

I explained to him that in New York I already have access to very fancy places, but although I have visited slums in Argentina and in other Latin American countries, I had never been to a favela. “OK,” he said, obviously disappointed. “If that is what you want to do ... one of my patients lives in Rocinha, Rio’s largest favela, so I’ll come for you tomorrow morning and we can go there.”

Unlike ghettos in the United States, the population in the favelas is racially mixed, although

blacks make up the majority of the population. Increasing poverty drives many people to live in the favelas, which are built on several levels on hillsides, crowded with poor-quality housing, and besieged by the drug trade.

Because the favelas built on hillsides are very close to rich neighborhoods below them, there is active drug traffic from the favelas to the wealthy neighborhoods. The police are normally unable to enter the favelas and, when they do, they go in powerful armored vehicles called *caveirões* (literally, big skulls).

There are some social codes in the favelas that prohibit those living there to engage in criminal activities inside their own favela. However, favelas house many people involved in drug trade and other crimes, which make a visit there relatively unsafe. Frequent shoot-outs between traffickers and the police, and other illegal activi-

ties, lead to murder rates higher than in the rest of the city.

Perhaps my friend was thinking about all these issues when I asked him to visit a favela. He was a good sport, however, and took me there. As soon as we reached the lower level, we saw a small group of men talking on the side of the steps. My friend went directly to them and said, “I am Dr. Paulo. This is my friend César, and we are visiting one of my patients called Mercedes, who lives in the upper level.”

Without waiting for a response, we continued climbing the steps to the following level where we also found a similar group of men. My friend repeated what he had said before, and we continued climbing, at each level following the same script.

I was surprised and a bit irritated by his behavior so I told him, “Why do you have to tell everybody who we are and why we

came here?” My friend looked at me and said, “Because if I don’t, we won’t reach the upper level alive. These men constitute the most efficient communication system you can imagine, so we have to clear our presence here at every level to remain safe.”

Finally, after a steep climb, we reached the upper level and knocked at the door of my friend’s patient. Mercedes, a woman of around 80, came out and was totally taken aback when she saw us. “Dr. Paulo,” she said, “what a surprise seeing you here!” and as she opened her arms, she came closer to him. Then, in an almost conspiratorial manner, she asked my friend, “Dr. Paulo, I want to be first one to know it. Are you running for office?”

César Chelala is an international public health consultant and a writer on human rights issues and foreign affairs.

Indian economy bright spot in global crisis

By SHASHI THAROOR

NEW DELHI—With the world’s most developed economies reeling under the incubus of what is already being called the Great Recession, India at the beginning of the year took stock and issued a revised estimate for GDP growth in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Its projection came out at a healthy 7.1 percent.

It is striking that even amid all the doom and gloom assailing world markets, there is no fear of a recession in India. Even the pessimists are speaking only of lower positive growth.

This is quite a turnaround for an economy that for years had crept along at what was derisively called the “Hindu rate of growth”—around 3 percent—while much of the rest of Asia shot ahead. For more than four decades after Independence in 1947, India suffered from the economics of nationalism, which equated political independence with economic self-sufficiency and so relegated the country to bureaucratic protectionism and stagnation.

But, since 1991, India has liberalized its economy and profited from globalization. Its tech-savvy, information-technology pioneers, software engineers, and call-center operators have made the country an economic success story.

India has multiplied its per capita income levels many times over since 1950, and has done so far faster in recent years than Britain or the United States did during and after the industrial revolution.

In the last 15 years, India has pulled more people out of pov-

erty than in the previous 45—10 million people a year on average in the last decade. The country has visibly prospered, and, despite population growth, per capita income has grown faster than ever before. The current financial crisis is unlikely to change the basic success story.

India’s financial system suffers from few of the creative and risky derivative instruments that caused such problems in the West. A tradition of conservative banking regulation and a tough-minded governor of the Reserve Bank (India’s central bank) ensured that Indian banks did not acquire the toxic debts flowing from sub-prime loans, credit-default swaps, and over-inflated housing prices that assailed Western banks.

The negative effect of the U.S. financial setbacks on Indian stock markets, therefore, made little sense, since they bore no relation to the real value of Indian companies. Instead, the decline in Indian stocks reflected foreign investors’ liquidity problems: They withdrew from holdings in India because they needed their money back home, not because it wasn’t growing for them.

Of course, economies that depend on foreign investment are bound to be hurt nowadays, because those investors have less capital to invest. But there are two reasons to be confident that India will weather the storm.

First, India has considerable resources of its own to put towards growth, and has proven itself skilled at the art of channelling domestic savings into productive investments. Second, once things have begun to stabilize in the West, investors

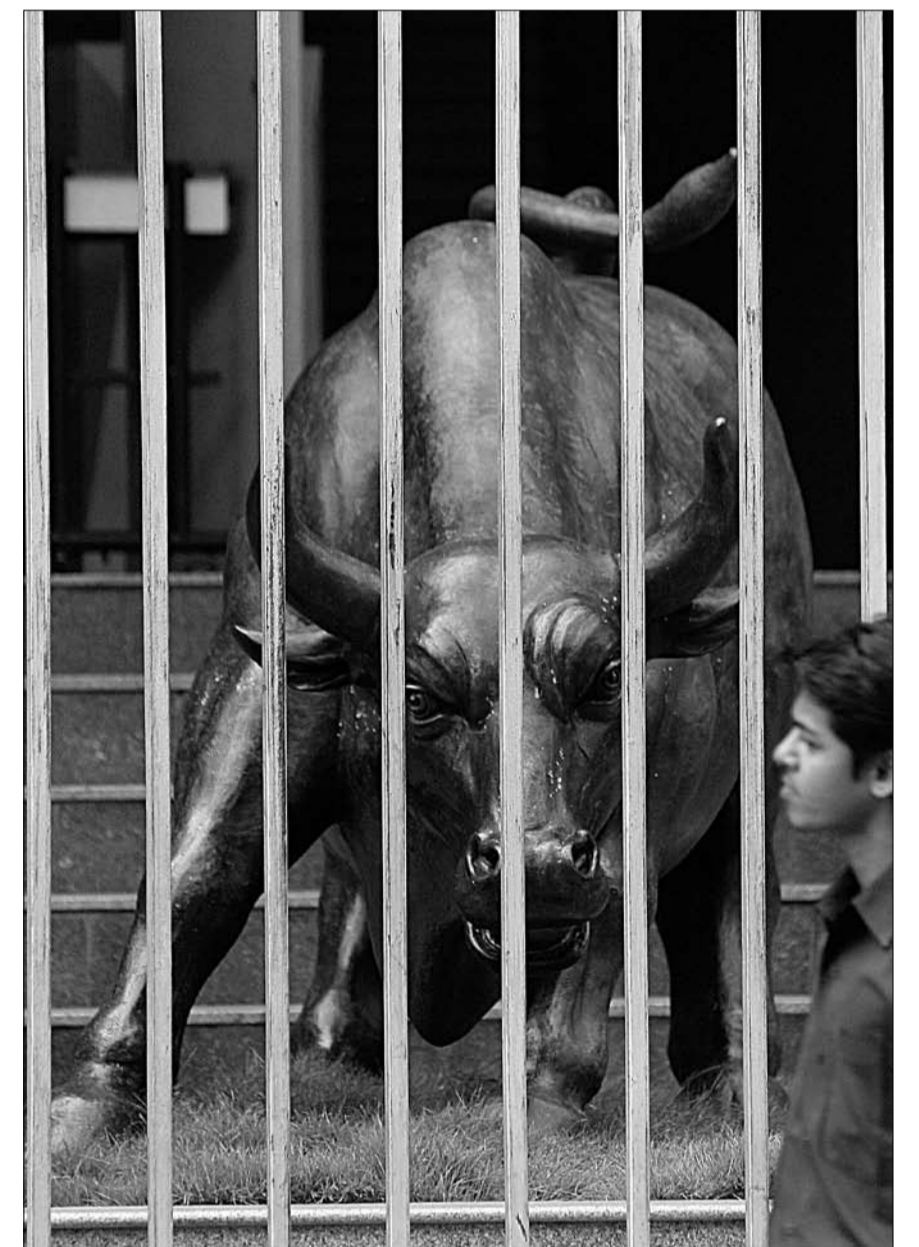
looking for a place to put their money will look anew at India, owing to the opportunities for growth and the sheer size of the market.

That said, India has relied much less on foreign direct investment than China, and has even exported FDI to OECD countries. Despite being seen as a poster child for the benefits of globalization, India is not unduly dependent on global flows of trade and capital. India relies on external trade for less than 20 percent of its GDP; its large and robust internal market accounts for the rest.

India’s private sector is efficient and entrepreneurial, and its capital and management skills have proven able to control and manage assets in the sophisticated financial markets of the developed West. India clearly has the basic systems it needs to operate a 21st-century economy in an open and globalizing world.

Obviously, the terrorist attacks of late November complicate this story. The terrorists attacked India’s financial nerve-center and commercial capital, a city emblematic of the country’s energetic thrust into the 21st century. They struck at symbols of the prosperity that have made the Indian model so attractive to the globalizing world, a magnet for investors and tourists alike. Indeed, by striking hotels favored by foreign businessmen and visitors, they undermined the confidence of those whom India needs to sustain its success story. Terror may add to the time India will need to recover from the economic crisis.

But India is already bounc-



BULLISH: A pedestrian walks past the bronze bull outside the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai on March 12. (INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

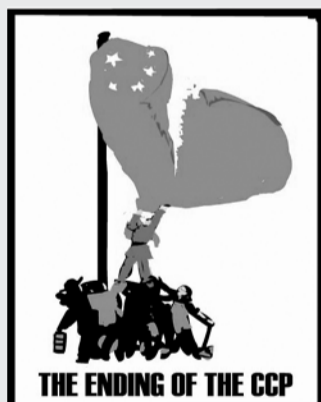
ing back. The hotels assaulted and burned in November reopened their doors a month later. Investors are returning, and FDI inflows this fiscal year are set to exceed the \$25 billion received in 2007-2008. At the end of February, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured Parliament that “India would emerge the least affected among the countries of the world from the current economic crisis.”

So, for those looking for signs of recovery from the global eco-

nomie downturn, India remains the place to watch. According to the World Bank’s annual assessment of Global Economic Prospects, India’s economy could even triple in size in the next 15 to 20 years. A few more slumdogs may become millionaires by then.

Shashi Tharoor is a former under secretary general of the United Nations. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2009 Project-syndicate.org

QUITTING THE CCP



Inspired by the ‘Nine Commentaries,’ as of 20:45 EST, March 18th, 2009

51,417,998

Chinese people have announced their intentions to quit the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations on a special Web site established by The Epoch Times. Many others, unable to break through the Chinese Internet blockade, have posted their withdrawal statements on poles or buildings. Others have written them on Chinese currency. Read recent statements of Chinese quitting the Party, the latest news on the “Nine Commentaries,” and more at

<http://www.NineCommentaries.com>

The ‘Nine Commentaries’ is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China. This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialized here.

Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

Commentary Six (cont.)

On how the Chinese Communist Party destroyed traditional culture

Subtle influences on people’s internal psyche and external Behavior

1. A culture that transforms human beings into machines

The Party wants the people to be the “never rusting bolts in the revolution machine,” to be the “tamed tool for the Party,” or to “attack in whatever directions the Party directs us.” “Chairman Mao’s soldiers listen to the Party the most; they go wherever they are needed and settle down wherever there are hardships.”

2. A culture that confounds right and wrong

During the Cultural Revolution, the CCP would “rather have the socialist weeds than the capitalist crops.” The army was ordered to shoot and kill in the

June 4 massacre “in exchange for 20 years of stability.” The CCP also “does unto others what one does not want to be done unto oneself.”

3. A culture of self-imposed brainwashing and unconditional obedience

“Lower ranks obey the orders of the higher ranks and the whole Party obeys the Party’s Central Committee.” “Fight ruthlessly to eradicate any selfish thoughts that flash through your mind.” “Erupt a revolution in the depths of your soul.” “Maintain maximum alignment with the Party’s Central Committee.” “Unify the minds, unify the footsteps, unify the orders, and unify the commands.”

4. A culture of securing a servile position

“China would be in chaos without the Communist Party.” “China is so vast. Who else can lead it but the CCP?” “If China collapses, it will be a worldwide disaster, so we should help the CCP sustain its leadership.” Out

of fear and self-protection, the groups constantly suppressed by the CCP oftentimes appear even more left-wing than the CCP.

There are many more examples like these. Every reader could probably find various sorts of elements of the Party culture from his personal experiences.

People who experienced the Cultural Revolution might still remember vividly the “model play” of modern operas, the songs with Mao’s words as lyrics, and the Loyalty Dance. Many still recall the words from the dialogues in “The White-Haired Girl,” “Tunnel Warfare,” and “War of Mines.” Through these literary works, the CCP has brainwashed people, forcibly filling their minds with messages such as “how brilliant and great” the Party is; how “arduously and valiantly” the Party has struggled against the enemy; how “utterly devoted to the Party” the Party’s soldiers are; how willing they are to sacrifice themselves for the Party; and how stupid and vicious the enemies are.

Day after day, the CCP’s prop-

aganda machine forcibly injects into every individual the beliefs needed by the Communist Party. Today, if one went back to watch the epic poem of musical dance, “The East is Red,” one would realize that the entire theme and style of the show is about killing, killing, and more killing.

At the same time, the CCP has created its own system of speech and discourse, such as the abusive language in mass criticism, the flattering words to sing the praises of the Party, and the banal official formalities similar to the eight-part essay.^{iv} People are made to speak unconsciously with the thinking patterns that promote the concept of class struggle, and to extol the Party and use domineering language instead of calm and rational reasoning. The CCP also abuses the religious vocabulary and distorts the content of those terms.

“The White-Haired Girl” was a popular, official “model play” developed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In folk legend, the white-haired girl was a female

immortal who lived in a cave. She had supernatural abilities to reward virtue and punish vice, support the righteous, and restrain the evil. However, in this Chinese modern opera, she was described as a girl who was forced to flee to a cave after her father was beaten to death for refusing to marry her to an old landlord. She became white-haired due to lack of nutrition. This became one of the most well-known modern dramas in China and incited class hatred of landlords.

“Tunnel Warfare” (Didao Zhan) is a 1965 black and white film in which the CCP claimed that its guerrillas in Central China fought Japanese invaders through various underground tunnels in the 1940s.

“War of Mines” (Dilei Zhan) is a 1962 black and white film in which the CCP claimed that its guerrillas in Hebei Province fought Japanese invaders with homemade mines in the 1940s.

The eight-part essay is a literary composition prescribed for the imperial civil service examinations, known for its rigidity of form and poverty of ideas.