The Editors

Indian Express

New Delhi.

Sub: Letter to Editor.

Apropos ‘The Unmaking of History’ (October 14), I agree with Professor Dilip K. Chakrabarti that many of the research institutions funded by the government have failed to deliver well due to a lack of professional approach in their working. However, I disagree that this has been largely due to their adherence to state’s diktats. In fact, bodies like the Indian Council of Historical Research were consistently headed by left leaning scholars completely opposed to our ‘bourgeois state’ in theory. The failings of ICHR and the Archaeological Survey of India stem rather from the rigid application of ideology and play of factions in promotion of research for decades. There are instances of articles not being published by the Indian Historical Review (the journal brought out by the ICHR) despite strong recommendations from referees. I myself suffered from such prejudice when my article submitted in 2005 was accepted in 2007 and not published till 2010 when I finally withdrew it to publish it within a year in another refereed journal. It is feared that the change of guard at the centre may lead to a repetition of such practices again.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr. Devesh Vijay

Associate Professor

Zakir Husain Delhi College

University of Delhi.

devesh\_vijay@yahoo.co.in

Ph: 9811664877.

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Sub: Letter to Editor.

Apropos ‘Why the Economics Nobel for Daeton Matters’ (IE October 13), I agree with Udit Misra that the Economics Nobel awarded to Angus Daeton (whose work on measuring poverty in India brought out the significance of factoring individual consumption decisions more centrally in economic analysis) is a very welcome development as it has the potential to spur greater integration between scholarly fieldwork and analysis of survey data at the macro level.

However, two more limitations in India’s dominant economic modeling need attention: 1) household data from the field needs to be juxtaposed to at least some long term studies of villages and slums which use qualitative methods, focus group discussions and subjects’ own voices; and 2) long term data bases on regional (if not district-wise) trends in water and air quality, contaminants in the food chain, trends in heinous crime and their redressal, human rights violations and communal tensions (as measured by riots data) need to be built up systematically to better address the question of well being that Deaton and others are championing now. The present focus of statisticians on measurements of poverty, education and health indices seems to limit our understanding of privations that are growing alarmingly even as poverty is falling in both rural and urban India.

Yours Faithfully,

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