

Hyperactivity, Boris Johnson and the dead cats on the table

There is much activity in Boris Johnson's government but how much is real progress and how much is just clever PR spin?

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When I was a trainee journalist on the Belfast Telegraph newspaper in Northern Ireland, my mentor was a wonderful editor called Norman Jenkinson. He was a hard-headed Ulsterman of wit and wisdom, affectionately nicknamed "Jenks." He would see me rushing into the office breathlessly excited about some news story involving a political announcement and would calm me down with a simple phrase.

"Listen, lad," he would say, staring at me above his glasses, "never confuse activity with progress."

Nowadays, when I hear politicians make announcements and public promises of action, Jenks's observation comes to mind. It happens constantly with US President Donald Trump's promises to "build a wall and make Mexico pay for it," or forcing China to take more US imports, or reviving America's old industries in the so-called "rust belt" states or, in some unspecified way, "Making America Great Again." I wondered then, and still wonder now, if Mr Trump's Mexican-funded "wall" will ever come into existence, even if he wins another term. Since America has always seemed "great" to me, I continue to wonder in what sense Mr Trump would re-create its greatness. We shall see. Or not.

Here in Britain, Jenks's phrase



Johnson looks on during a visit to a construction site for the new High Speed 2 (HS2) rail project in Birmingham.

comes to mind almost daily. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's new government is a fountain of hyperactivity, although it is unclear where real progress is being made. We have a daily blizzard of announcements, slogans, plans and promises. One big promise is to "level up" the British economy by investing more in the north of England. I am all for it. The most eye-catching bit of "levelling up" is the announcement to build the "HS2" high-speed rail line, which will eventually connect London with the great northern English cities of Manchester and Leeds at a

cost in excess of £100 billion. I am for that too.

Then there was the announcement that "experts" will be studying whether to build a bridge from Scotland to Ireland. This is a daft idea and it will likely never happen. There are further announcements: Britain will next month switch the colour of its passports from the current red burgundy to blue. Add to this rumours that the government has declared war on the BBC and will scrap its funding model. And news that immigration rules will be changed with a new points-based system for skilled workers.

And a determination within the government not to talk about Brexit any more since on leaving the European Union on January 31; Brexit is, in the words of their election slogan, "done."

So much activity! But how much real progress amid the snowstorm of announcements? How much is reality, and how much just spin and clever public relations?

The case to build HS2, for instance, is ultimately sound, but construction work has been going on for years. HS2 actually began in 2009. All Mr Johnson's government has done is manu-

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facture a PR coup by not actually cancelling it. If he was really "levelling up" the economy of the north of England, then full construction work on the project would be starting in the north. It is not. It is starting in London, and is merely another great building project which increases London's dominance of the British economy, even if connectivity will eventually benefit the north of England too.

Then there is the switch to "traditional" blue passports. This is the clearest symbol of a government obsessed with public-relations activity rather than progress. The Home Secretary Priti Patel says blue passports are in some way "entwined with our national identity." Well, possibly among some citizens over 50. Britain agreed to switch from blue to red passports 30 years

ago. But this was not a European Union imposition. Croatia, a EU member, still has blue passports. Yet London is trumpeting switching back to blue as some kind of "taking back control" activity. Moreover, these new (or old?) blue passports will be printed not, as you might expect by a patriotic British company but in Poland by French-Dutch consortium Gemalto. Given contracts to Polish workers and foreign companies may be Ms Patel's sense of "national identity but not everyone agrees."

In all this there is a bizarre phrase much loved by political insiders to describe such public relations activities – "throwing dead cat on the table." It means that when everyone is talking about something that the government finds unhelpful or negative the way to change and dominate the national conversation is to interrupt with something else however bizarre – like interrupting a business meeting with a dead cat. Everyone ends up talking about the dead cat. Mr Trump has used the "dead cat" technique brilliantly in his tweets.

In Britain, from blue passports to impossible bridges to Ireland Mr Johnson is masterfully steering Britain's national conversation with his own "dead cats on the table." Whether his PR hype activity results in any discernible progress remains uncertain. Jenks would suggest we all treat it with great suspicion.

20 tips for CBSE Boards 2020



ANIRUDDHA BARANWAL

In continuation of our expert column in education section for CBSE students here are some general and subject wise tips and guidelines for the students of Grades X and XII who would be appearing in Science and Mathematics CBSE Board Exams.

Now that most of the students have already prepared well, some last moment tips will surely help them to optimize their performance. This is all the more important with the revised pattern for CBSE Board exams.

General tips for classes X and XII students:

1. Must know the format of question paper like duration,

number of questions, number of sections and marking scheme.

2. Utilise your reading time effectively: This extra 15 minutes given to the students must be used to decide about the questions to start with, mentally formulate the answers while reading. They should think of the formula, graphs, reasons, diagrams to be given while answering.

3. Answer as per marking scheme: Students must know how much to write for 1 mark, 2 marks, 3 marks, 5 marks or 6 marks.

4. Presentation matters: Remember, the easier we make evaluator's work to check our answer sheets, more will be the marks obtained. Even an average student can increase one's marks anywhere between 5 and 10 just by good presentation. A good presentation must always include relevant labelled diagrams, ray diagrams, circuit diagrams, balanced chemical equations, underlining keywords, using rough works separately and leaving at least one line spacing after the completion of each question.

5. All numerical based questions must start with the relevant formula. FIITJEE has been

providing formula booklets to its students. Mention what is given and what is asked with proper sign convention. And students must ensure to check the given values in regards to their units.

6. Take sufficient mock tests and get evaluated by your respective teachers. Keep track of your mistakes and work on those, which are recurring.

7. Students must ensure to read the questions at least two times so as to double sure that all information have been picked. After completing the question, they must go through the questions once again so as to ensure that all the parts have been attempted.

8. Make sure you finish the paper at least 15 minutes early and this available time must be devoted for revision, checking your calculation and making your answers more presentable.

9. Once you get the question paper take a deep breath and remind yourself- "I have done sufficient revision and there is no reason that I don't do well".

10. After doing few questions, take a sip of water and mentally boost yourself by saying, "I am going well".

Specific tips for Class XII students

Mathematics:

11. Since one mark questions play a major role in new pattern as they carry 25 per cent of the total marks, enough attention must be given to this section. Mastering NCERT text books would ensure a good score in this section.

12. Most expecting 6 marks could be from the following chapters: Application of derivatives and Integrals, 3D Geometry, Matrices, Determinants and Areas under curves.

13. Before going to examination, students must revise formulae for Integration and Inverse Trigonometric Function.

Physics:

14. Students must do all the solved examples of NCERT.

15. Students in the last days must ensure to revise all the derivations, devices and experiments

thoroughly. Most expecting five markers could be from electrostatics, optics, magnetism, EMI and AC.

Chemistry:

16. Practise all named reactions of organic chemistry through writing. In Inorganic Chemistry, structure and shapes of all the compounds must be learnt.

17. All NCERT intext questions must be done thoroughly with special focus to numerical-based questions for Physical Chemistry.

Specific Tips for Class X Students:

Mathematics:

18. Use sharp pencil for construction. The scoring areas are mensuration, statistics, construction and quadratic where all four markers can easily be solved. Last day revision should cover only solved examples of all chapters.

Physics:

19. Numericals will be mainly from lens and mirror formulae and series and parallel combination of resistances. One can always expect one long answer type question from one of the defects of eye and electro-magnetic induction. Applications of left and right hand rule should be made thorough.

Chemistry:

20. Wherever possible, give balanced chemical reactions. In diagram-based questions like electrodot diagrams, diagrams for electron transfer or circuit for electrolysis, labelling must be done.

FIITJEE WISHES ALL THE STUDENTS A VERY BEST OF LUCK FOR CBSE BOARDS!!!!

(The author is an Ex-IITian currently working with FIITJEE and has been providing consultancy and guidance to CBSE students in Bahrain for CBSE Board SAT, IIT-JEE and other similar Exams for more than 12 years and has been guiding force behind many success stories. For more tips and further guidance he can be reached at aniruddha.baranwal@fiitjee.com)