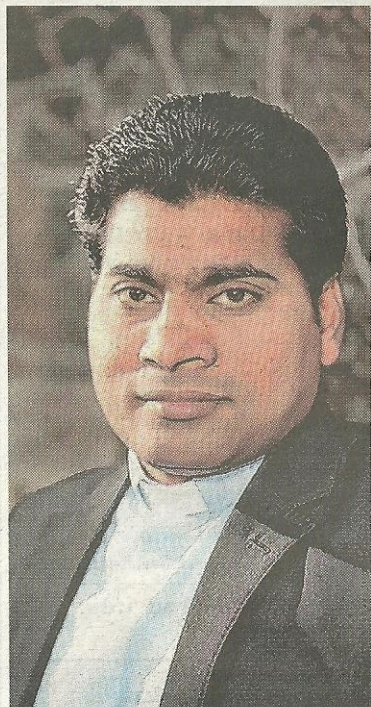


Reflections

Election promises



'THIS tank is full of political promises' is an amusing statement that you may have seen on the sides of a septic tanker around Okehampton and Chagford.

It used to bother me as I thought it was too direct and offensive, but I gradually started to appreciate their bravery in using humour to address truth in politics.

As we head towards yet another general election, we are called to listen to political promises made by all the parties — some are realistic and hopefully achievable, while some are definitely attractive, but unrealistic and probably impossible.

The media loves anything idealistic and/or unusual that entertains and supports their business.

The majority of the electorate, whose senses are repeatedly flooded with alluring promises, is unconsciously drawn to believe political miracles are just around the corner and will be revealed immediately after the election results.

History has a number of examples of bungled promises.

During the 1988 US presidential campaign, George Bush said: 'Read my lips: no new taxes.'

When he came to power after that election victory, he did just the opposite.

It was impossible to keep his election promise due to the recession that widened the deficit.

In the 2010 election campaign, the Liberal Democrat Party promised to abolish any increase in

university tuition fees.

However, immediately after forming a coalition government with the Tories, they had to vote to do just the opposite.

During the 2014 Indian general election campaign Narendra Modi promised to bring back all the 'black' money stashed abroad by wealthy Indians — he imagined he could deposit an amount equivalent to £15,000 worth of Indian rupees into every voter's bank account.

None of this happened after his landslide victory in the election.

In the lead-up to the forthcoming December 12 British election, the Labour Party has promised full fibre broadband for the fastest internet access to every household in the UK by 2030, while the Con-

servatives have promised to take the country to the world's best free trade areas once in power.

These two promises are extremely attractive, although no one knows quite how they will be achieved while whoever is in power will have to cope with the most inextorable priorities of Brexit and the NHS.

One of the reasons why politicians make attractive promises that are hard or impossible to deliver is to get into power by any means. Paul Krugman, the American economist, said: 'Politics determine who has the power, not who has the truth.'

With all the merits of a democracy, it can be the ignorance or obliviousness of the voters succumbing to such eloquent persua-

sion by the candidates that leads to electoral success and power.

Such a situation impairs the security and safety of all.

It is important to address some of the perennial flaws of democracy. Let us start to make our politicians base their rhetoric on truth and their promises on solving thorny issues, rather than playing on our natural ignorance and forgetfulness.

'All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.' (Mathew 5:37).

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