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ABSTRACTS

**Environmental and Development Economics**
Prasenjit Banerjee, University of Manchester:

*Politicians and their promises in an uncertain world: Evidence from a lab-in-the-field experiment in India*

Abstract:
In emerging economies, pro-social policy outcomes may be prevented by bureaucratic inefficiency, capture by elected or non-elected office holders, or by other hurdles. For local citizens, uncertainty about the true cause of such failures often prevails. We study the pro-sociality of politicians’ decision-making in a modified dictator game with real politician participants in rural India. In our game, a recipient citizen does not know whether dictator politician capture or bad luck is to blame when receiving zero. Using a $2 \times 2$ design, we investigate how the combination of two non-monetary instruments affect politician behaviour in this hard to govern environment. The first instrument, a (non-binding) promise, is a commitment device; the second introduces a minimal relational lever between the politician and the recipient. We find that politician-dictator giving becomes dramatically more pro-social, from zero- to 50:50-giving, when these two instruments are combined. Our results provide new insights about the scope for norm-based, low-cost mechanisms to tackle governance-related asymmetric information challenges in developing-country settings.

**ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT MEMBERS**

**New Publications**


The next EconNewsletter will be published on Monday, November 4, 2019.

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