

Speaker:

Anand Murugesan (Central European University)

Date and Time:

August 13th, 2025 (Wednesday) at 2:15 PM

Venue:

Room 307 (Conference room), Department of Economics,
IIT Bombay

**Title:**

Fighting Cash-for-Votes: Evidence from Information Interventions in Southern India

Abstract:

Cash-for-votes (C4V) remains widespread in India and many democracies, distorting accountability and governance. This study presents a field experiment with over 4,000 voters in Tamil Nadu and Kerala to test whether correcting voter misperceptions can reduce vote-selling. Two information treatments—one targeting beliefs about candidate wealth and criminality, and another addressing peer norms—were delivered through in-person interviews. The interventions had significant effects in Tamil Nadu, where misperceptions were widespread and salient: demand for candidate transparency rose by 107%, and donations to anti-C4V efforts increased by 25%. In Kerala, where beliefs were more accurate, the treatments had no effect. These findings underscore the potential for targeted information campaigns to shift political behavior in contexts of entrenched electoral corruption.

About the speaker:

Anand Murugesan is an Associate Professor at the Central European University, Vienna, whose research combines insights from economics and related disciplines to study behavior and social issues. His recent work explores topics like the costs of conflict in India, the influence of history on contemporary behaviors, and the role of beliefs and norms in democratic participation. He co-authored *Demystifying Causal Inference*. Currently, Anand is a Senior Researcher at the University of Vienna, collaborating on an EU-funded project using experimental methods to examine democratic resilience in Europe. He is also a Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Vienna, and a research affiliate at the Democracy Institute in Budapest.