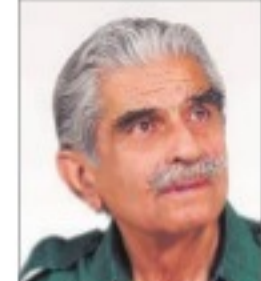


# The danger in over-hyping Army operations



**MAJ GEN ASHOK MEHTA (RETD)**  
FORMER GOC, IPKF, SRI LANKA

Hooda who decided on announcing the successful launch and recovery of Special Forces. It was a calculated risk that Modi used to his political advantage. Left to it, the Army would have preferred to maintain secrecy as it has done in the last 60 years astride the LoC.



**NO CHOICE?** Left to it, the Army would have preferred to maintain secrecy as it has done in the last 60 years astride the LoC.

TWO and a half years after its execution, the key architect of the military operation, former Northern Army Commander, Lt Gen DS Hooda finally said this month at a military literature festival that surgical strikes were hyped and politicised: 'If you start having political resonance in military operations, it is not good'.

The common malady among senior military commanders and service chiefs has been their failure to provide prudent advice to the political leadership on military operations. Instead of waiting for 30 months, Lt General Hooda and other commanders in the loop should have warned Prime Minister Modi against turning military strikes into a political football as he and his party have done by keeping operations under wraps. Lt General Hooda said: 'In hindsight, it would have been better had we done surgical strikes secretly'.

Rewind to September 2016. Modi's decision to go public was contingent upon two factors: no casualties and no escalation. Surgical strikes were kept below this threshold by targeting terrorist launch pads, not army posts. When the two conditions were met, it was Modi, not Army Chief Gen Dalbir Singh or Lt General

Instead of dissuading the government from, in Lt General Hooda's words, 'employing the constant hype' of surgical strikes (politically flogged for two and a half years) the military leadership went along with the politicisation of operations (and the Army) to the detriment of established military norms and values. After Lt General Hooda set the cat among the pigeons, Army Chief Gen Rawat was the first to intervene: dismissing his observations as 'individual perceptions' and 'personal views'. Almost synchronised were comments lauding the operations by two other military commanders — Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, Lt Gen Anbu, and Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Ranbir Singh, who was the pivot to the surgical strikes as then DGMO.

Never before has a single modest operation been politically milked as much as to make the government order the Army to commemorate the second anniversary countrywide without celebrating its first anniversary. The Army should have resisted that. When Lt Gen Hooda was asked what about the need to hype the operation, he said: 'This should be asked of the politicians.' A similar but more spectacular raid inside Myanmar against NSCN-K rebels who had ambushed a Dogra Battalion patrol was also needlessly hyped and politicised. If the military was

Whether it was the raid inside Myanmar, the Doklam standoff or the surgical strikes, the Army high command should have informed the political leadership about hyping such operations. Since then, demonetisation and Yogi Adityanath's insertion have attracted the sobriquet of surgical strikes, both with negative consequences.

not so subservient to the political and bureaucratic class, the Army high command should have emphatically informed the political leadership of the present and real danger of hyping surgical strikes which instead of retarding infiltration and curbing terrorism as claimed, have only given a leg up to both.

In October 2016, Uttar Pradesh was warming up to the Assembly elections. Posters and banners began appearing in Lucknow glorifying the surgical strikes. Emblazoned on them were three pictures: Lt Gen Ranbir Singh flanked by Modi and Amit Shah. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar was supervising preparations of election rallies. He had been taking credit publicly for preparing the Army for more than one year for operations, invoking in soldiers the 'Hanuman' spirit.

A few days later, Modi was hailed in Lucknow as the 'conqueror in chief' and awarded the war mace. In the ceremonies that followed, surgical strikes were billed as the BJP's single biggest achievement with Modi its tallest leader. The Army did not demand the recall of the offending posters and banners.

The BJP chief, Amit Shah, also made no bones about using the surgical strikes to further his party's political fortunes. Rarely did an election rally addressed by Modi or Shah not see prominent mention of surgical strikes. While praise for the jawans was in the passing, the party leadership's deification was supreme. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat also does not shy away from comparing Swayamsevaks with a regular Army.

Modi has secured political divi-

dends from the Doklam standoff too. On October 4, 2017, while addressing the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, he indulged in subtle self-praise over India's capability of standing up to China, drawing a leaf from the Mahabharata. Doklam was invoked at political rallies but did not find the resonance of surgical strikes. Since then, demonetisation and Yogi Adityanath's insertion in recent state elections have attracted the sobriquet of surgical strikes, both with negative consequences.

Senior IAF officers were asked to publicly justify at a seminar the Rafale contract, the pricing and choice of offset partners. During Defence Minister Sitharaman's regurgitation of these issues, the Chief or Vice-Chief of Air Staff was deployed beside her. The former has even endorsed the Supreme Court judgment when he should have avoided entering the political domain.

Former Deputy NSA Arvind Gupta who now heads the BJP's Vivekanand Foundation had the courage to write in his recent book How India Manages its National Security, that political parties (read BJP) freely used the Army's name in UP state elections which is dangerous politicisation of the Army's surgical strikes. For the political leadership Lt General Hooda's afterthoughts on surgical strikes (and military operations) carry a statutory warning: Do Not Politicise. Equally, senior military commanders have a constitutional duty to deter political leaders from crossing military red lines. The use-by date of surgical strikes was long over.

# Monoculture breeds impractical economic logic



**AMARJIT BHULLAR**  
PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Budding economists are taught to put faith in an economics of mechanical precision that takes the help of econometric models while ignoring interconnections between power, class and the economy. Neoliberal economic theories are so strongly embedded in the university curriculums that economics students largely have the access to mono-cultured thought.

THE continuous increase in the disparities has given a rise to economic discontent throughout the world and India is no exception. An Oxfam report calls for 'a fundamental change in the way we manage our economies so that they work for all people and not just a fortunate few'. But the 'fortunate few' have not only been able to circumvent economic policies to their advantage but are also the beneficiaries of what is happening within the discipline of economics.

The course of development of economics, in the last four decades, is coxswained in a way that, largely, the theories that favour the 'fortunate few' get endorsement the economic discourses. The systematic promotion of these theories ensures their domination in economic teaching modules to marginalise and make dormant any alternative economic thought to the extent possible. Budding economists are taught to swim with the current to avoid the fear of, 'being exiled'.

Historically economics, as a subject, is an affiliate of the social sciences faculty closely associated with sociology, psychology, anthropology, ethics etc. Different schools of thought and competing theories and policies emerged from those schools. The diverse schools of thought dominated in different time periods, but nothing was called 'mainstream economic theory' as forcefully as one



**RAY OF HOPE:** The 'Occupy Wall Street' stir was contained but students' movements in the West continue to press for change in the way we study only one type of economic thought.

hears today in the economic discourses. Economists have tried to describe economic activities and the economy with mechanical precision with the help of mathematical and econometric models leaving aside the interconnections between power, class, and the economy.

So, it was a tremendous effort to accept liberalism as the definitive version of economic thought. Most of the economic journals published the papers that adhered to a homogenised form of thinking. The mainstream media discussions also demeaned alternative ideas and thoughts.

Neoliberalism with the institutional support it got, failed to appreciate that it is a part of the pluralistic evolution-

ary economic thought not an end itself. Noted critic and a long-time trade unions' economist Jim Stanford writes, 'If the entire history of Homo sapiens up to now is assumed to 24-hour day, then neoliberalism so far existed only for 17 seconds.'

But neoliberal economic theories are so strongly embedded in the university curriculums and the economics students largely have the access to monocultured thought. Milton Friedman's statement that 'there is no such thing as different schools of economics; there is only good economics and bad economics' depicts the tactical approach of labelling all other schools as schools of bad economics.

Consequently, the students of economics learn abundantly the type-cast models and impractical theories. As a result, many of them carry profound doubts over whether economic theories embody real science, or whether economists explain the economic order in a moral, socially responsible manner.

In the last decade, students' voice is heard in every nook and corner of the world to reform economics curriculum and end the supremacy of a thought.

The disagreement of students to the supremacy of neoclassical economics in the curriculum is not new. In the year 2000, French students organised themselves under the name 'Post-Autistic Economics'. It disapproved the teaching of economics for lack of practicality, excessive reliance on mathematical techniques, and the dominance of the neoclassical approach. However, with the growth and stable conditions in Western economies and the unprecedented growth in some of the emerging economies, neoclassical economics proclaimed its victory over the conduct of economic policy. But the unpredicted recession of 2008 killed that euphoria. Mainstream economic theorists and the economists of World Bank and IMF had not warned of a recession.

After that the disenchantment with the neoliberal economics re-emerged. The 'Occupy Wall Street' movement started and gained momentum, but it was contained in a

short span of time. But the most important event was the students' dissent. Students of Harvard University boycotted the lecture by Gregory Mankiw, a noted economist and former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers with President George W. Bush, and joined the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement alleging that the course module was biased in favour of conservative economics and policies. There were tens of other dissenting organisations that emerged.

The most important result from social perspective is the rise of income inequalities. The World Inequality Report clearly brings out the glaring income and wealth disparities across the world and how it has increased since the adoption of liberal policies.

In 2016, 22 per cent of global income was received by the top one percent. The bottom 50 per cent received only 10 per cent of the global income. Who is reaping the fruits of growth? The global GDP has increased from \$11 trillion in 1980 to \$80 in 2016 but the top one per cent has garnered about 27 per cent of the global GDP growth. The World Inequality Report further provides a vast set of data to prove that skewness in income distribution is on the increase and will continue if 'business as usual' scenario prevails. The economics discipline is under severe pressure to discipline itself and it remains to be seen whether a nascent students' movement in the West will bring it about.

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# The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

## The secular *begum* wins

Promising prospects but haze in medium term

THE Bangladesh polls were the easiest to call. After the jailing and hanging of almost the entire top opposition leadership, there were absolutely no prospects of a spirited response from Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh's eternal battle of the two *begums*. And so it turned out. PM Sheikh Hasina and her allies accounted for 90 per cent of the seats. Liberals and purists will frown on the quality of democracy on display in the past two general elections in Bangladesh. But social indicators show the country never had it so good, though Western think tanks have criticised Hasina for curbing dissent and displaying authoritarian tendencies. Her last five years have seen a 7 per cent GDP growth and halving of poverty levels. That, more than alleged violence, forms the bedrock of her support.

For India, Hasina's secular outlook and a good economic performance have led to a respite from distress-induced migration as well as an end to ISI-sponsored provocations via Bangladesh-based Assam separatists and radical Islamists. Indo-Bangla tranquility has been sealed with a full and final settlement of the border. India has also sought to bind Bangladesh in bonds of economic interdependency by helping alleviate its power shortage and seeking transit routes through its territory. Dhaka has also been adroit in keeping all its neighbours in good humour — it balanced its purchase of Chinese-origin submarines by allowing an Indo-Russian venture to build a nuclear power plant.

But New Delhi and PM Modi must sagaciously handle the potential time-bomb of 40 lakh stateless citizens in Assam. During the general election, Indian politicians will have to moderate their vitriol at the 'other', most of whom are suspected Bangladeshis. Popular opinion in Bangladesh must not be allowed to turn against New Delhi as it begins evaluating the Chinese proposal for an OBOR link terminating too-close-for-comfort at Chittagong. The decade-long sanguinity in Indo-Bangla ties will soon be tested. India must keep a firm lid on the communal cauldron to creatively exploit the opportunities and lower the remaining reservations in Dhaka for closer ties.

## Pension plan for farmer

Haryana should come up with well-thought-out scheme

AFTER the golden double-income slogan, MSP assurances and circuitous loan waiver commitments, the latest in an attempt to court the farmer is the pension dote. The Khattar government in Haryana is contemplating a pension scheme for farmers. The benign political gaze has shifted, in a big way, to the agitated, down-on-luck farmer. Not without reason: all parties believe he possibly holds the key to fortunes in the new big election year. There are no chances to be taken.

In Haryana, it is a clever effort to get around anti-incumbency, and counter the opposition's loan waiver promise ahead of the crucial Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha polls. The state has in place a pension plan for its elderly. Under the Atal Pension Yojana, the Central share is Rs 1,000 per beneficiary. This, along with the state government's contributions, could whip up a decent sum for the farmer. While Haryana is at it, it should study Odisha's Rs 10,000 crore Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation scheme for the farmer's 'overall' development. The waiver component has been left out from the scheme, which will cover about 92 per cent farmers, extending to the lowest denominator: the small farmer. Another model is Telangana, where farmer suicide is common. The Rythu Bandhu programme provides financial assistance of Rs 4,000 per acre, per season, to all land-owning farmers.

All parties have jumped merrily on the waiver bandwagon, which will help but a tiny segment, that too in the shortest term. For a robust and lasting solution, an all-inclusive comprehensive scheme is paramount. As Haryana — under fire for not implementing the Swaminathan report in toto — works out the modalities and feasibility of its new scheme, it must weigh in, and negate, the public perception that the bulk of beneficiaries in any programme are well-off farmers and the waiver is not so much to bail out farmers as is to help banks clean up their books. The farmer needs assistance, but to bring in real agricultural prosperity, for all, something more than just 'vote' should drive the movement.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus. — Martin Luther King, Jr

### ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

## The Tribune.

LAHORE, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1919

### The Punjab and the Reforms.

THE Indian National Congress has earned the gratitude of this Province by passing a special resolution advocating her cause in the matter of constitutional reforms, in addition to the general demand embodied in one of its resolutions that "no part of the British India should be excluded from the benefit of the constitutional reforms." This resolution was appropriately moved by one of the Punjab's prominent political workers, Pandit Rambhaji Datt Chowdhry, runs as follows:—"That this Congress views with grave apprehension the attempt made in certain quarters to assign an inferior position to the Punjab in the Reforms scheme and urges that having regard to its political, military and historical importance, its wealth, education and social advancement, and its magnificent services during the last war the Punjab should be placed on a basis of equality with Bengal, Madras, Bombay and the United Provinces."

### The Industrial Conference.

OF the adjuncts to the annual session of the Congress, none is more important than the industrial Conference. The report of the Industries Commission had been published between the last session of the Conference and this one, and it was expected that the Conference would consider the main recommendations in the report. Judging from the Presidential address, of which we have published a part, this expectation has been realised. The President, who is a distinguished leader of the Indian commercial community, subjected the report to an able criticism. Here we would draw attention to the fact that the President expressed concurrence with those who refuse to treat the industrial problem as a problem, and who have been urging that political freedom is essential to industrial growth.

# The course ahead for Hasina

Awami League government must continue to focus on all-round development



SHANTANU MUKHARJI

FORMER IPS OFFICER AND SECURITY ANALYST

THE 11th parliamentary elections held in Bangladesh on December 30 saw a resounding victory for PM Sheikh Hasina and her ruling Awami League (AL) party, returning her to power for the third consecutive term. Her policies and iron-handed approach to mitigate her political adversaries, consisting mainly of right reactionary and fundamentalist forces, stand vindicated. The opposition cried foul, calling for re-elections in view of the alleged rigging and violence that claimed 17 lives.

Elections were held in 299 parliamentary seats out of 300. Polling was postponed in one seat due to the demise of a candidate. The latest results announced by the Election Commission is 298. Awami League-led *Mohajote* (grand alliance) won 288 seats. On the other hand, Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led *Oikya Front* (united alliance) could barely win eight seats. This dismal performance of the opposition parties demonstrates that the electorate rejected outright the forces that are communal, anti-liberation and aligned with Jamat-e-Islami (JeI).

The BNP leadership is in tatters. Former PM Khaleda Zia, now over 70, is undergoing a prison sentence on charges of corruption. Her son and party supremo, Tareq Rahman, is in exile in London, operating from there at the behest of extraneous forces, inimical to Indian security interests. He, too, is seen to be overtly pro Pakistan and regressive in approach. He is wanted in Bangladesh in many serious criminal cases, including one on arms smuggling and criminal conspiracy to assassinate Hasina in 2004. There is no visible or even a notional



RIGHT CHOICE: The voter has rejected forces that are communal and anti-liberation.

India and Bangladesh need to work more closely on power, space, defence cooperation, closing the trade deficit, and more importantly, tackling terror.

leadership to steer the party.

In the vacuum caused due to the glaring bankruptcy of leadership, a wily political opportunist, Dr Kamal Hossain, with no grassroots support, and leader of Gano Forum, stepped in an attempt to play a role aspiring to defeat the Awami League and assume power. His calculations were terribly misplaced because his fantasy of becoming PM was utopian in the absence of a support base. Also, he partnered with JeI, a hardcore fundamentalist party which supported war criminals. Many were tried and executed for their crimes during the liberation struggle, which included collaborating with Pakistanis.

The secular and liberal electorate of Bangladesh, which has further matured in the past 47 years, still reveres its Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (also Hasina's father), and any individual or party challenging his stature would face nothing short of rejection. The same happened with Dr Kamal, an internationally known expert on constitution law and the first foreign minister of Bangladesh. Now over 80, Dr Kamal

thought it was a 'do or die' situation, and so he distanced himself from Hasina and her supporters, anticipating a win. In effect, he supported the BNP, Jamaat and the anti-liberation forces to form a government. It will not be surprising if he and his cohorts played to Pakistan, whose notorious ISI started enforcing its blueprint to rally all anti-Hasina forces together to oust her from power.

This argument is also borne by the fact that very recently an ISI handler was intercepted talking to a senior BNP leader for help to win the elections and also seeking Chinese help. Intelligence and diplomatic sources in Bangladesh confirm that ISI handlers were operating in full throttle from the UAE to ensure Hasina's defeat. Thankfully Dhaka's counterintelligence apparatus had kept its antenna alert, foiling Pakistani designs to harm Hasina's political interests.

Now that Hasina has been reposed with a new trust and confidence by majority of the voters, she should focus on development, especially infrastructural, and most important-

ly, there should be a concerted effort to a zero-tolerance approach to corruption. She has to deliver on all counts and people's hopes and aspirations have gone up and their expectations are now even higher than before. The neglected readymade garment industry, the second largest in the world after China, needs to be comprehensively addressed.

As regards Bangladesh's relations with India, it is needless to emphasise that both countries have to work more closely on sectors of power, space, defence cooperation, exchange programmes and closing the trade deficit. The most important aspect is a joint approach to tackle terror. Now that Pakistan plans to snatch the elections in favour of BNP stand aborted, Indian security and intelligence agencies need to play a more proactive role to counter any feeble Pakistani attempts to reappear with its footprint. In the past two Hasina regimes, there has been a significant people-to-people contact between the two countries. This momentum has to be kept up through cinema and other multifarious cultural events.

On her part, Hasina has proved time and again that she stands by India. Demonstratively, India's Northeastern insurgents are no longer harboured by Bangladesh. Even ULFA leader Paresch Barua, who was sheltered in Bangladesh, is on the run. That is a huge overture by Hasina. We should reciprocate such actions in equal measures. Teesta is yet another issue waiting to be resolved. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, must be persuaded to act with a positive frame of mind to narrow down our irritants.

Hasina and her advisers and political counsellors should now sit down, do a concerted brainstorming and take stock of the existing situation. They need to draw a fresh road map for clean governance, eradication of corruption, ensure freedom and security of religious minorities and thwart external threats by neutralising the radicalised lot. A safe and secure and progressive Bangladesh is good for its friendly neighbour India.

# A tambola evening to remember

COL AVNISH SHARMA (RETD)

MY wife is particularly fond of the 'intellectual' game called tambola. I presume, the affinity started during the routine weekly tambola at our Army club, which we patronised rather religiously. It was an effective way to unwind after a hectic *fauji* routine, and we looked forward to it — 'memsaab' to tickle her grey cells, and 'saab' to get an opportunity to indulge at the bar without getting the trademark dirty looks.

The affinity turned to addiction after the better half won a snowball (a bonanza win of accumulated money over a time — a rare

achievement). In 1985, the princely sum of Rs 400 was a fourth of my take-home monthly salary. That day and today, tambola evenings are permanently reserved, notwithstanding the fact that the investment in the game has been roughly a hundred times more than the earnings. A fit case of disproportionate liabilities, one would say. Well, that much for the background.

The kids have grown up and insist to carry on with their own weekend errands and plans. That leaves us twosome and a driver who looks forward to an odd drink, unwatched, at the club, while the boss plays tambola. The party, however, turned sour when I was signalled to stop and test

at the alcometer on our drive back from the club. I was politely informed by the Sub-Inspector that the alcohol content was abnormally high in my blood and that I was putting everybody's life in jeopardy. I tried putting up a brave front of normalcy, blaming the vintage of the alcometer. But the cop assured me that the machine was a month old and a state of the art one. I was handed over a slip and the local police, in its characteristic courtesy, dropped us home in government transport!

A driving school instructor was hired post haste to impart a crash course in driving to my Himachali wife, who did not even ride a bicycle before marrying a tank man! Nor-

mally laidback, she was rather serious this time around. The driving test was passed with flying colours. Addiction can make you perform wonders, I realised that day.

Friday evenings continue to bring cheer to my better half and thoughtful apprehensions to me. The routine is undisrupted — the intellectual exercise remains patronised, with my novice wife behind the wheels and her stressed husband in the passenger seat, but a lot more sombre and sane, wondering what is safer — an intoxicated but experienced veteran, or a dedicated and committed wife! I think the latter. I am sure all you gentlemen agree!

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Won't take us forward

Apropos the editorial 'Bulandshahr to Rohru' (Dec 31), it is not expected from a civilised society that allows unabated incidents of mob lynching and mob frenzy by cow vigilantes and other anti-social elements or religious bigots. Such incidents are being used in a pre-planned way to encourage polarisation and division in society and communities. It is not only shameful, but also tarnishes the image of our country internationally. It will adversely affect economical developments and foreign investments. How can we expect employment opportunities and hope to uplift the underprivileged while facing such challenges? Our political leadership should come forward unitedly to control this menace with determination.

DEEPAK MEHRA, BY MAIL

#### Making light of law

Apropos the editorial 'Bulandshahr to Rohru' (Dec 31), the two incidents are a sign of things to come as polls near. Both states ignored the SC's July verdict that said 'horrendous acts of mobocracy' cannot be allowed to overrun the law of the land. Two murders of cops in UP by mob violence within a month speaks volumes about the law and order of the state while CM Yogi Adityanath is playing the pol-

itics of religious polarisation instead of dealing with cow vigilantism. This is most disappointing.

SS PAUL, NADIA

#### Not all true

Apropos 'Babri: Is there a way forward?' (Dec 28), the writer's question, 'Do we want to go Pakistan way?' is not right as India's secular image cannot be destroyed, even as governments come and go. In Pakistan, the minorities are second-class citizens, which is not the case in India. However, his contention 'Hindu fundamentalist have always relied upon a coercive solution' appears to be true, as is obvious from recent happenings. About Ayodhya, it is claimed that Lord Ram was born several thousand years earlier. This is incorrect as archaeology has proved that it was then 'Stone Age'. The Bronze Age in the Indian subcontinent began around 3200 BCE, which then gave rise to the Indus Valley Civilisation, which continued till 1900 BCE, and even up to early Rig Vedic period. The Bronze Age is succeeded by the Iron Age in India, which begins around 1000 BCE after the coming of the Aryans. Warriors in Ramayana are shown using iron weapons and chariots which could not be possible during the Stone Age. The happenings shown in this epic could have occurred after

the coming of the Aryans.

VIDWAN SINGH SONI, PATIALA

#### Shielding children

Refer to the editorial 'Tightening the noose' (Dec 31); the need of the hour is stricter law enforcement and sensitisation of the upcoming generation. Shelter-homes and orphanages should be raided often, because children residing there are the easiest target for all kinds of sexual offences. The POCSO Act is a modern-day enactment that contains adequate provisions and stringent punishments. Furthermore, cases of kidnapping and missing children should be investigated speedily because they could be targets of trafficking and child prostitution. Sensitisation does not seem urgent, but it is a precaution. Youngsters should be aware about the fundamentals like 'good touch, bad touch', and child helplines.

REWANT SHARMA, PATIALA

#### The deadly mix

Reference to 'Bhagat Singh stressed religion-free politics' (Dec 31); *mazhab nahin sikhata aapas mein bair rakna...*, said Allama Iqbal. A mix of religion and politics is playing havoc on our country's growth. Lots of lives are snuffed out by the hooligan-

ism encouraged by religio-political leadership. Religion shows the path of non-violence and truth while politics is vice versa. After God, our society has adopted our political class as their icon. In spite of religion, people follow them blindly and wholeheartedly. In this 'faithful worship' lies the evil communal design, which Bhagat Singh had observed decades ago. Sometimes communalism turns into conflict which is beyond our control. Print and electronic media should create awareness on social issues instead of debating inflammable issues.

JASVINDER S HUMSAFAR, MALOUDH

#### Very well played!

Refer to 'Win-win deal' (Dec 31); the Indian cricket team, which has never won a Test series in Australia, took another step forward to win the Test series, beating Australia in the third match at Melbourne. The series now stands at 2-1 in India's favour. Can it hold on to the lead in the fourth Test match at Sydney? The standout performers at Melbourne were Jasprit Bumrah and Cheteshwar Pujara while Mayank Agarwal played well and is a bright prospect for India. Our bowlers have bowled well in overseas conditions in all three Test matches played so far.

DEVENDRA KHURANA, BHOPAL