



Pushing boundaries

The air strikes have delivered a clear, robust message; the follow-up must be restrained

The Indian Air Force's strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammad terror training camp in Pakistan's Balakot delivers a robust but calibrated message. The latter is manifest in New Delhi's diplomatic utterances. While the strikes followed the Pulwama attack by a couple of weeks, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale referred to the action as a "non-military pre-emptive strike". The phrase indicates the action was based on an assessment of an imminent threat, and had ensured that Pakistan's military personnel and infrastructure were not targeted, and civilian casualties were actively avoided. In effect, New Delhi's line is that the operation was an intelligence-driven counter-terror strike rather than escalatory military aggression. The government said all other options had been exhausted in making Islamabad keep its commitments since 2004 on curbing the activities of groups like the JeM. There is no denying that the decision to send Mirage jets across the Line of Control (LoC) to fire missiles 70 km inside Pakistan represents a major shift. During the Kargil war in 1999, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had drawn a red line over the IAF crossing the LoC, to avoid international recrimination. This strike was carried out in Pakistani territory, not in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the theatre for retaliatory action in the past. It is still to be determined how far the JeM has been set back, but the strikes mark a new chapter with New Delhi's willingness to push the war against terror into Pakistan territory. The government has judged, perhaps correctly, that global opinion has shifted and there is little tolerance today for terror groups that continue to find shelter on Pakistan soil. Significantly, with the exception of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, there has been no global criticism of India's statement on the strikes, and most have just counselled restraint to both countries.

In Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan has called for a joint session of Parliament and for its diplomats to raise the matter at international fora. He has convened a meeting of the National Command Authority that oversees Pakistan's nuclear policy. However, Pakistan's options are limited. It could continue to deny that the Indian strike caused any damage on the ground, and obviate the need for retaliatory strikes; or it could escalate the situation with a military response. It could also make a break from its past, and begin to shut down the terror camps on its soil, which would win friends internationally and ensure peace in the region. The Modi government would do well to continue the restrained approach it has adopted after the latest operation, and avoid the triumphalism that clouded the 'surgical strikes' of September 2016. With a response to Pulwama duly executed, it must reach out to residents of J&K who have borne the brunt of the jingoism unleashed after Pulwama. In the long term, building strong counter-terror defences, partnering with its own citizens to gather intelligence, and creating deterrents will be key.

Decolonising Chagos

Britain must honour the ICJ opinion on returning the islands to Mauritius

The stunning opinion of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, that Britain's continued administration of the Chagos archipelago is unlawful, is a landmark in the effort to decolonise the Indian Ocean and return the islands to Mauritius. Britain's reaction, however, was predictable and disappointing. It said the ICJ's is an advisory opinion it will examine, and stressed the security significance of the islands. Since the late-1960s, the U.S. has maintained a military base on one of them, Diego Garcia. In 2016, Britain extended the lease to the U.S. till 2036 even as it said it would return the islands to Mauritius when no longer needed for defence purposes. Mauritius has made it clear that it does not intend to jeopardise the future of the military base. The agreement to allow Britain to administer the Chagos islands came in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence. Mauritius says Britain had made it a pre-condition for independence. This was endorsed by the ICJ, which noted that given the imbalance between the two, the agreement did not amount to "freely expressed and genuine will". It is a damning assessment of colonial legacies and the attempt by former colonial powers to justify or ignore the indefensible on the basis of 'agreements'.

Britain has tried to block Mauritius's claim to the islands at every stage, first by attempting to defeat a UN General Assembly vote in 2017 calling on the ICJ to deliver its opinion. When it lost this, London questioned the court's jurisdiction and Mauritius's version of how the deal had been thrashed out. However, Mauritius has had many countries on its side, including India. In written and oral submissions before the court, India has insisted that historical facts were not with Britain's interpretation and that its continued administration of the islands meant the process of decolonisation had not been completed. In an ideal world, Britain would be compelled to hand the islands to Mauritius. However, as the opinion against the construction of the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2003 demonstrates, ICJ advisories are not always acted on. At the very least, Britain should show it respects the court's view and Mauritius's sovereignty, and make significant concessions – starting with matters ranging from fishing rights to compensation for the Chagosians, who have suffered through all of this. The ICJ 'opinion' draws the line on what is expected from Britain for it to be a global nation in tune with the new world order. It announces that the world has moved on from passive acceptance of the injustices of empire.

The new order in West Asia

How Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey are competing for influence



STANLEY JOHNY

When protests erupted on Arab streets in late 2010 and in 2011, felling deeply entrenched dictators such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, it was certain that the changes in government would alter the regional dynamics as well. Many thought the old order rooted in "stability" (read: the decades-long unperturbed rule of single families or dictators) would be swept away by emerging democracies. Eight years later, it is evident that the Arab world has changed, but not in the way many had predicted. The structures of the old Arab world have been either destroyed or shaken, but without fundamentally altering the domestic politics in Arab countries.

The backdrop of history

There have been multiple power centres in the Arab region, at least since the second half of the 19th century when the Ottoman Sultans shifted their focus from the East to the West. The waning influence of the Ottomans in the Arab region created a vacuum which was filled by emerging regional leaders such as Muhammad Ali of Egypt, the Hashemites in central Arabia and the Mediterranean region, and the Al-Saud family in the Arabian peninsula. In post-war West Asia, Egypt remained the most influential Arab country. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan maintained its influence

in the Mediterranean region, while Saudi Arabia was confined to the Arabian peninsula. When Egypt and Jordan were in relative decline, particularly after the 1967 war with Israel, Iraq rose under the leadership of the Baathists. Saddam Hussein, who became Iraq's President in 1979, was eager to don the mantle of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the former Egyptian leader who called for pan Arabism. Hussein launched a war with revolutionary Iran in 1980 on behalf of most Arab countries. Though there were deep divisions between these countries, one point of convergence was "stability". Neither the monarchs nor the dictators in the Arab world wanted any threats to their grip on power.

This order started to age much before the Arab protests. Hussein broke a taboo of non-aggression between Arab countries when he invaded Kuwait in 1990. And the 2003 American invasion of Iraq toppled him and buried his regime. The Arab protests expedited the changes that were already under way. Egypt went through a long period of instability starting 2011. First, a revolution brought down Mr. Mubarak and took the Muslim Brotherhood to power. And then a counter-revolution by military leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took the country back to square one. In the process, Egypt was beaten badly: the government lost moral authority; its regional standing weakened; and with economic problems mounting, a desperate Mr. Sisi went to the Gulf monarchs for help.

The reign of the Saudis

Saudi Arabia was generous in helping the Sisi regime. The Saudis were initially shocked by the fall of Mr. Mubarak, a trusted ally, and



the rise to power of the Brothers, Islamist republicans and sworn enemies of the Kingdom. Both the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates wanted to get rid of Egypt's elected government of President Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brother. They backed the 2013 counter-revolution and helped Mr. Sisi tighten his grip on power with aid. In the event, what we have now is a weaker Egypt ruled by a military dictator who's increasingly dependent on the Saudi-UAE axis.

In the Arab world, Saudi Arabia doesn't face a real challenge to its leadership now. The Saudis have been eager to take this leadership position. They organised a massive Arab summit in May 2017 in Riyadh which was also attended by U.S. President Donald Trump. The U.S. and the Arab nations also announced plans to create a Middle East Strategic Alliance, also referred to as the Arab NATO, which is a transnational Arab security entity under Saudi leadership. The common enemy of this bloc is Saudi Arabia's main geopolitical and ideological rival in the region, Iran.

Riyadh has been aggressive in taking on Iran in recent years, be it the anti-Iran campaign it is spearheading globally (in the U.S., Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Sal-

man compared the Iranian regime to Hitler's Nazi rule), the increasingly high military spend, or the desire to take on Iran's proxies (interference in Lebanon's politics or the war on Yemen). Within the Arab world, Saudi Arabia has made it clear that it will not allow alternative power centres to rise, and never from its backyard. The decision to blockade Qatar, the tiny Gulf country that has disagreements with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, could be seen against this backdrop. Besides Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Egypt had also joined the blockade, showing how dependent Cairo is on the Gulf axis. There are no doubts here: Saudi Arabia wants a united Arab front under its leadership that will contain Iran and maximise the Kingdom's interests in West Asia and North Africa.

Multipolar region

In relative terms, Riyadh has consolidated its position among the Arab countries. But its quest to become a major regional power faces serious challenges. The problem begins with its own inexperience. Saudi Arabia has never been an effective executioner of big ideas. All these years it lay low, either behind other regional powers or under the wings of the U.S. Now, as it has started taking a leadership position, its policies have gone awry. The Qatar blockade is not reaching anywhere and the war in Yemen has been catastrophic. Besides, the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate has been a public relations disaster.

Second, Iran is hardly a pushover. Ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iranians have lived under threats and with a huge sense of insecurity, which prompt-

ed them to create networks of influence across the region. Despite forging strong alliances and having a far stronger economy, Saudi Arabia has been unable to contain Iran's influence. And it may not be able to do so in the future either, unless the Americans are ready for another major war in the region.

Third, there is a third pole in today's West Asia: Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Turkey. Turkey's 'Arab Spring' bet may not have paid off as the political Islamist parties, which are aligned to the ruling Justice and Development Party, failed to consolidate power in the rebellion-hit countries, except Tunisia. However, Turkey, which retreated from West Asia in the second half of the 19th century, is now shifting its focus back from Europe to the region. It is a major defence and economic partner of Qatar, and has a strong presence in Syria through its proxies. Turkey also used the Khashoggi murder to turn up heat on Saudi Arabia internationally. While Turkey is not aligned with Iran either, it has shown willingness to cooperate with the Iranians on matters of mutual interest – such as the Kurdistan issue and the Syrian conflict – while its ties with Saudi Arabia have steadily deteriorated.

West Asia's Muslim landscape is now multipolar: Saudi Arabia, as the leader of the Arab world, is trying to expand its influence across the region; Iran is continuing to resist what it sees as attempts to scuttle its natural rise; and Turkey is returning to a shaken region to re-establish its lost glory. This multi-directional competition, if not confrontation, will shape West Asian geopolitics in the coming years.

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Smart farming in a warm world

Investment and policy reform are needed on priority to help farmers cope with climate change



FEROZE VARUN GANDHI

Over the last decade, many of Bundelkhand's villages have faced significant depopulation. Famous of late for farmer protests, the region, which occupies parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, has been adversely impacted by climate change. It was once blessed with over 800-900 mm rainfall annually, but over the last seven years, it has seen this halved, with rainy days reported to be down to just 24 on average in the monsoon period. With rains patchy, crop failures become common. There is hardly any greenery in many villages, making it difficult for farmers to even maintain cattle. Adaptation is hard, with farmers varying and mixing crops across seasons, along with heavy investments in borewells, tractors and threshers. While the national media may wonder about hailstones in Noida, such weather has been destroying crop in recent years, with the arhar crop failing completely in 2015. Farmers are increasingly abandoning their lands and heading to nearby towns to find work as labourers.

India is fortunate to have the monsoon, but it is also uniquely vulnerable to rising temperatures, with the country ranked 14th on the Global Climate Risk Index 2019. The country has over 120 million hectares suffering from some form of degradation. This has consequences, especially for marginal farmers. According to one estimate, they may face a 24-58% decline in household income and 12-33% rise in household poverty through exacerbated droughts. With rain-fed agriculture practised in over 67% of our total crop area, weather variability can lead to heavy costs, especially for coarse grains (which are mostly grown in rain-fed areas). A predicted 70% decline in summer rains by 2050 would devastate Indian agriculture. Within 80 years, our kharif season could face a significant rise in average temperatures (0.7-3.3°C) with rainfall concomitantly impacted, and potentially leading to a 22% decline in wheat yield in the rabi season, while rice yield could decline by 15%.

Some solutions

There are simple solutions to mitigate this. Promotion of conservation farming and dryland agriculture, with each village provided with timely rainfall forecasts, along with weather-based warnings regarding crop pests and epidemics in various seasons, is necessary. Our agricultural re-



search programmes need to refocus on dryland research, with adoption of drought-tolerant breeds that could reduce production risks by up to 50%. A mandate to change planting dates, particularly for wheat, should be considered, which could reduce climate change induced damage by 60-75%, by one estimate. There needs to be an increase in insurance coverage and supply of credit. Insurance coverage should be expanded to cover all crops, while interest rates need to be subsidised, through government support and an expanded Rural Insurance Development Fund. The recently announced basic income policy by the government is a good step as well.

A push for actual on-ground implementation of compensatory afforestation is required. India is estimated to have lost over 26 million hectares of forest land and 20 million hectares of grasslands/shrublands between 1880 and

2013. Even now, urbanisation means that India consumes about 135 hectares of forest land a day. Meanwhile, insufficient coordination between the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) has led to institutional apathy towards alarming air pollution levels in the metros. India hosts over 172 globally threatened species, primarily in reserve forests where they have little meaningful protection against wildlife crime and forest protection, given limited budgets for anti-poaching. Many State CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) hardly meet, while State-level forest departments routinely lack suitable record keeping, particularly on assessment and realisation of dues on compensatory afforestation activities and catchment area treatment.

Refreshing the IFS

The Indian Forest Service would also benefit from restructuring, in order to make it equivalent to the police and the army, albeit in the environmental domain. State-of-the-art training to its personnel must be provided, and specialisation should be encouraged in wildlife, tourism and protection for new recruits. Deputations from other services will no longer do; this needs to remain a specialised service. Wildlife heritage towns

should be given more attention – cities like Sawai Madhopur, Bharatpur, Chikmagalur and Jabalpur, which are adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries, need to be converted into green smart cities with upgraded waste recycling processes. The Van Dhan Yojana, as adopted by the State government in Rajasthan, can be scaled up towards building a green mission to save our non-protected forests (outside the existing national parks and sanctuaries). Wildlife tourism must also be encouraged, particularly through public-private partnerships, to help increase conserved areas while making a difference to backward districts.

The impact of climate change will affect India's food security, while reducing fodder supplies for our livestock. Prudent investments and policy reform can help make India resilient to climate change. Any adaptation to ongoing climate change will require that climate justice. This is not a blame game – this can be induced by expansion of joint research and development partnerships (like the U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center), pairing India's emerging smart cities with green cities in the West. India needs to decarbonise, there is no doubt about that. But the West needs to pay its bills too.

Feroze Varun Gandhi is a Member of Parliament, representing the Sultanpur constituency for the BJP

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

War memorial

The Modi government deserves credit for opening a war memorial ("Modi opens war memorial, hits out at Congress on Rafale", Feb. 26). This is a wonderful tribute to all the soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for the nation. However, it is disappointing that the Prime Minister used such a sombre occasion to attack his political rivals. The defence forces are above politics and they should not be dragged into political slugs.

VIDHYA B. RAGUNATH,
Thanjavur

IAF strikes

The Indian Air Force strikes are timely and welcome ("IAF strikes on JeM camp in Balakot; Country is in safe hands, says PM Modi",

Feb. 26, online). India is not sitting duck. This attack, reminiscent of the surgical strikes of 2016, shows the Modi government's zero tolerance for terrorism. The message is loud and clear: violence and diplomacy cannot go hand in hand. This also comes as a timely reminder to the Pakistani establishment to shun state-sponsored terrorism. It is heartening that the entire Opposition has supported the strikes.

B. SURESH KUMAR,
Coimbatore

It is great that the operation was a success and there were no casualties on the Indian side. The intelligence wing deserves praise for furnishing the necessary inputs to ensure a successful strike of this nature. Now, India has to

take all the precautionary steps to face a counter-attack from Pakistan.

S.V. VENKATKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

With the general election round the corner, we need greater security, not only along the border but throughout the country. For this to happen, political parties need to exercise restraint. They should not make statements that give the impression that we are a divided nation.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

The surgical strikes of 2016 did not result in any let-up in militancy in Kashmir, and the situation in the State only continued to deteriorate. After Tuesday's strikes one can only hope that the situation won't go

out of control if Pakistan strikes back. The NDA's so-called muscular policy towards tackling militancy in Kashmir has resulted in an increase in deaths of security forces and in cross-border intrusions. It is high time the Modi government changes its Kashmir policy. India must do what it can to win the hearts and minds of Kashmiris.

M.P. MURALIDHARAN,
Bengaluru

Derogatory remark

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remark is derogatory and unbecoming for someone of her stature ("PM knew about attack, says Mamata", Feb. 26). Politics seems to be at its ugliest in West Bengal.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

A new Magazine

I am a senior citizen who has been reading *The Hindu* for more than seven decades. I thank you for the refreshed Magazine supplement, which gives enough reading material to last through the week.

G. JAYARAMAN,
Bengaluru

Menstruation talk

It's great that the Academy Awards have recognised a sensitive subject in India and awarded a documentary film on the same ("Period. It's time to carry an Oscar", Feb. 26). While we must credit Guneet Monga and others involved in the film for a well-made documentary on a taboo topic, credit must also go to the makers of the Akshay Kumar-starrer *Pad Man*. It helps when actors

promote such causes.

J.P. REDDY,
Nalgonda

The government should show this documentary in regional languages in rural and urban schools throughout the country and create awareness on menstruation and hygiene. At this time, we should laud the Telangana government which provides health and hygiene kits to girls to deter them from dropping out of school. The rest of the States can take a leaf out of Telangana's book. What we must also talk about now is the importance of proper toilets for schoolgirls, which are absent in many places.

P.S.V. PRASAD BABU,
Bhadrachalam

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | SHEILA DIKSHIT

'Congress in U.P. seems to be charged up after Priyanka's entry'

The former Chief Minister of Delhi on alliance formation and the AAP government in Delhi

AMIT BARUAH & JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ

Sheila Dikshit, three-time Chief Minister of Delhi and a veteran Congress leader, is back in the hurly-burly of Delhi's politics as the head of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee. In this interview, Ms. Dikshit speaks of the Congress's preparation for the general election, the party's relationship with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and what she thinks will be the best solution for the division of powers between the Centre and the Delhi government. Excerpts:

How do you see the general election unfolding for the Congress?

I am very optimistic about our prospects. I feel this because I meet many common people and they speak about their disappointment with the current government [at the Centre] and want a change. Quite obviously, the change, if it has to come about, must come from a party that has a history of governing the country. Whatever is there in the country today it not because of the current government, it's because of the work the Congress did and what it laid out for the future; everything has been done by the Congress. The Congress stands a very good chance and I get the feeling that people are missing the presence of the Congress.

Would you say that alliances are key to the outcome of the election? And how is the Congress faring nationally when it comes to building alliances?

I wouldn't say that they [alliances] would be key. I wouldn't use the word key, but yes, wherever they are required, they will be adopted. But I don't think they will be across the country. It will be State by State. Like we already have an alliance in Tamil Nadu. So, wherever the powers-that-be on both sides think it's necessary, it will happen.

Many political pundits and

sephologists believe that this election will be won and lost in north India, especially the 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh. Would you concur with such a view?

Yes, because the north has got the largest chunk of seats. There is no denying that. This has always been so. I don't see any reason why it should not be so now.

The BJP alone won 192 of the 226 seats in the north in 2014.

I would say that we will perform well, but I am not able to tell you the numbers because things are beginning to change and the election has not even been announced yet.

But everyone seems to be campaigning already.

That is bound to happen since elections are imminent. But the number of seats we get will depend on the candidates who are chosen by the party and by [other parties] as well. Many candidates who are with the BJP now have lost a lot of their colour, their attraction. I will be in a better position to answer your question when we come closer to the elections and the candidates are chosen. For instance, there are rumours in Delhi that they [the BJP] are changing all of them [seven sitting MPs].

In 2017, you were actively



SANDEEP SAXENA

involved with the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election campaign and the Congress had an alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP). But this time, the Congress and the SP-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) combine have failed to strike an alliance. Why?

One of the reasons is that the Congress has sent Priyanka [Gandhi Vadra] and Jyotiraditya [Scindia] and divided U.P. into two parts – eastern and western – which they have been made in charge of. I think that is a great feeling of comfort for people in U.P. How this evolves eventually, time will tell.

How do you see Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's entry into politics, and how will it make a difference to the Congress?

Well, Congressmen are very happy that she has finally joined, and with her going to U.P., the Congress in U.P. seems to be very charged up and we hope that the results will come. It is too early to pass a judgment on what difference it has made. Let's

In the case of Delhi, you are working in a situation where whichever is the government at the Centre, you need to work together with them instead of having differences all the time.

wait for a while and see.

If the objective of the Opposition is to defeat the BJP, then the absence of an alliance between the Congress and the SP-BSP will divide the anti-BJP vote in U.P.

But it depends on whether the non-BJP vote wants to come together.

What is your sense on an alliance in Delhi? Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said publicly that it was the Congress which did not want an alliance in Delhi. Have you engaged in any talks with the AAP?

No, they have never spoken to me. That's what sur-

prises me – you are speaking on your own without having spoken to me or my party.

Mr. Kejriwal says that the BJP will win all seven seats in Delhi if there is no alliance between the Congress and the AAP.

I won't be as pessimistic as he is; certainly not.

The AAP came to power in Delhi on an anti-Congress platform. Is that what is holding back a possible alliance?

You all see it as an anti-Congress platform. I look at it the other way round. I say we lost [in Delhi] because of the false promises that were made to the people [by AAP]. The people got carried away. Of course, there was a sense of fatigue with the same government coming back three times. But there was also a false sense of 'you'll get free water, you'll get free electricity'. I personally feel that we probably didn't understand fully this danger, but finally when we got to understand, it was too late.

There is a history of the Congress supporting the AAP after the Assembly elections. Do you see any possibility of such a tie-up?

Not now, we will be contesting all seven seats.

We have seen all the battles that the AAP has fought with the Centre and vice versa, and we have seen activist Lieutenant Governors. How was it during your tenure as Chief Minister when you had to deal with an NDA government at the Centre?

When you come to govern, you do so in the interest of the city or the State you govern. In the case of Delhi, the Constitution is very different as Delhi is also the capital and you are working in a situation where whichever is the government at the Centre, you need to work together with them instead of having differences all the time. Because, if you were to have differences, eventually it is the Centre that will win, so why do that? You have been selected by the people of Delhi to make Delhi a much better place, and with all humility, I must say that Delhi did become a much better place during the 15 years that the Congress was in power and we were there for 15 years only because of this reason.

What do you think of what Mr. Kejriwal is proposing regarding the full statehood demand for Delhi – that the New Delhi Municipal Council area continues to be under the control of the Centre but the rest of the State gets full statehood?

It is for Parliament to decide such constitutional changes. The change has to come from Parliament. Unless that happens, how do you propose to do it? They

ought to know one thing: that you need to learn to work under the circumstances that are there and you can't be making excuses that this is not right or that is not right. What is the guarantee that if you change it, you are going to be the best government?

Since you have been Chief Minister for 15 years, what according to you should be a practical solution for the division of powers?

All parties contest elections to come to power and if you are coming to power, you must accept the constitutional position. How can you suddenly say that the constitutional position is wrong? We also wanted to change the constitutional position and even put it in our manifesto but our own Congress government and the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government did not accept the demand. The ball was in the court of the Central government and we did not get it for the reason that Delhi occupies a special place as the capital city.

During NDA-I, if you wanted something done, how did you go about it? Did you approach the then Prime Minister directly?

I was always in touch with Mr. Vajpayee and he was very kind. I was also in touch with Ministers looking after urban affairs and it was never a relationship that did not understand the other's point of view. They very often did not give in, but they were never impolite or dismissive.

How do you assess the prospects of the Congress in Delhi?

I am hoping to get, and I am working to get, all seven seats.

What is the formula you are going to use to select candidates?

You will get to know soon.

Do you plan to contest this election yourself?

No.

If you are not going to contest, what is your role going to be in Delhi?

You don't have to contest to play a role. I will work for the party with great love and affection.

We see a lot of full-page advertisements by the AAP in the newspapers promoting the work that they have done. What do you think of this advertising blitzkrieg? Does the Congress have any strategy to counter it?

The government can spend money on whatever they want. But the question that arises out of this is, why are they spending so much money on this? Are there not better things to spend money on, like development and repairing roads in Delhi which are in a big mess? Are these advertisements really necessary, and how are they helping the growth of Delhi?

There is a sense sometimes that the Congress over-projects its own strength. You need the nuts and bolts to deliver as far as politics is concerned. Do you think the organisational strength is in place for the Congress?

Of course it is there and there are Congress workers looking at all aspects. The Congress has always been in tune with the times and has adopted new systems and new ways of doing things. I don't think we are lagging behind in any way.

SINGLE FILE

Illuminating Asia's future

Seoul embraces relations with New Delhi solely based on India's inherent appeal and worth

SOURABH GUPTA



On February 22, a day after South Korean President Moon Jae-in welcomed him as his first state guest of 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Seoul Peace Prize in the South Korean capital. Mr. Modi is a conservative, nationalist leader and Mr. Moon is a liberal-minded

leader and a former human rights lawyer. Yet, similar to the *taegeuk* (yin-yang) at the centre of South Korea's national flag, the two leaders, like their respective nations' national identities and foreign relations, complement each other.

The striking historical characteristic of Korea is the homogeneity of its people and its continuous history, until recently, as a unified political entity. The same term, *Han min-jok*, is used to denote both the Korean race and the Korean nation. Riven by subnational loyalties, India is anything but homogenous. Yet India too has exuded unity since time immemorial, which is renewed daily in the hearts and minds of its citizens. South Korea's national identity and nationalism were forged, respectively, by the collapse of Chinese universalism at the turn of the first millennium and, again, in the early 20th century. India was never part of the Chinese world order. Yet both nations were, in the evocative words of Rabindranath Tagore, "lamp bearers" in their modern histories, joined in the struggle against colonialism and determined to re-illuminate the East.

Korea's foreign relations with China were steadied once its Yalu River frontier was confirmed in the late 14th century. That frontier was as porous as India's Himalayan frontier is impassable. Yet both frontiers were breached by revolutionary communists in the aftermath of the founding of the People's Republic, with profound geopolitical consequences that linger to this day.

The long history of Korea's foreign relations with China also lends an important insight into its modern-day strategic conduct: essential to its preservation as an independent state on imperial China's periphery was an immutable policy of non-involvement in the power politics or international relations of its continental-sized neighbour.

Seoul today, alone among its Indo-Pacific peers, embraces relations with New Delhi solely based on India's inherent appeal and worth. India is not a hedge or a foil to be deployed against a rising China. This opens up, rather than limits, the space for bilateral cooperation, including on sensitive defence matters.

India and South Korea view each other today as special strategic partners. As they re-illuminate the eastern sky, they must also help forge a 21st century model of Asian international relations – one that is keyed to regional tradition and historical circumstance, imbued with an ethos of equality and consensus, and which resiles from doctrines that are zero-sum in character.

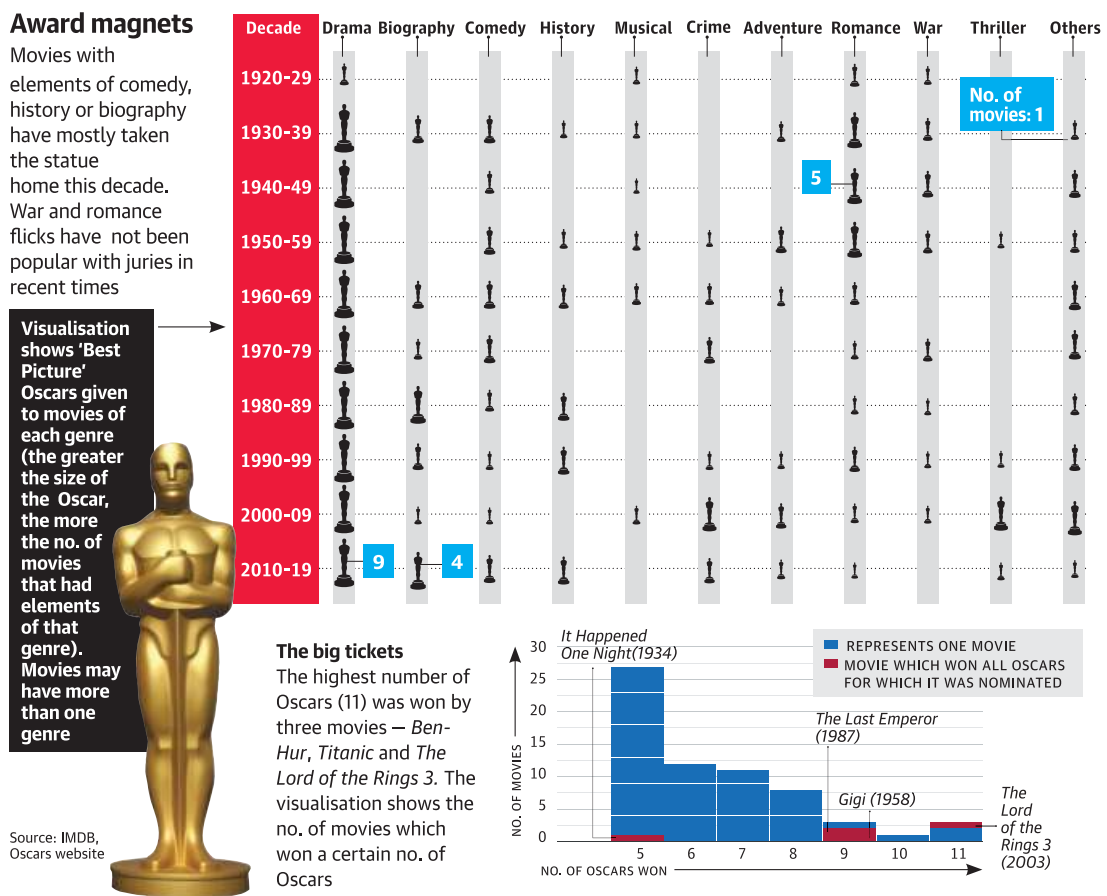
The writer is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, D.C.



DATA POINT

Oscar's favourites

Movies with elements of drama have been evergreen favourites for 'Best Picture' among juries of the Academy Awards. Only four movies have won all the awards for which they were nominated. By Varun B. Krishnan



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 27, 1969

Indian-made rocket launched

The first Indian-made Centaure rocket was successfully launched from the Thumba equatorial rocket station at 3:30 p.m. to-day [February 26] to the great jubilation of a large number of scientists. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and Indian National Committee for Space Research, described the flight of the two-stage sounding rocket as "very satisfactory" and as having gone off "completely according to plan." Hailing it as a "momentous event", he said: "We are now on the path to long-range development of superior rockets, which will take us to our goal of satellite launching in five years." He said today's flight was "steady and powerful", the separation took place flawlessly and the telemetry signals were "top class".

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 27, 1919

Indians in South Africa.

With reference to a telegram recently received by Mr. M.K. Gandhi and other leaders in India from Mr. Aswat, Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association, Johannesburg, in which he complained that laws affecting Indian community were being rigorously enforced with the object of European competitors. Mr. M. K. Gandhi has [as reported from Bombay] addressed the following letter to the press: The cable received by from Mr. Aswat, Chairman, Transvaal British Indian Association, shows that the revival of Satyagraha, with all the attendant suffering, is imminent in South Africa unless the danger that threatens to overwhelm Indians of Transvaal is averted by prompt and effective action by the Government of India and if necessary by the public also. The situation warrants a repetition of Lord Hardinge's action and immediate despatch to South Africa of a mission consisting of, say a distinguished civilian and an equally distinguished Indian publicist.

CONCEPTUAL

Hamilton's rule

BIOLOGY

This refers to a biological rule that determines when an animal will engage in altruistic behaviour that seemingly does not improve its own well-being. Hamilton's rule, named after the English evolutionary biologist W.D. Hamilton, states that an animal will engage in altruistic behaviour only when the indirect benefits that it derives from such behaviour are greater than the direct reproductive cost that it incurs. When an animal shares common genes with another animal that is in need of help, for instance, it is likely to exhibit altruism. This has led many biologists to believe that altruism could simply be selfish behaviour at the gene level.

MORE ON THE WEB

Video: What next after IAF strike in Balakot

http://bit.ly/IAFBalakot

Opinion

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2019

India retaliates, tries to dampen war sentiments

MEA did well to say the strike was a non-military intervention aimed at JeM, need to squeeze Pakistan funding via IMF/FATF

I F INDIA CROSSING the Line of Control (LoC) to enter Pakistani airspace, for the first time since 1971, and blowing up a major Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) training camp with 250-300 terrorists in Balakot—the operation involved the use of aircraft from multiple bases, including a mid-flight re-fuelling aircraft, a surveillance drone, apart from 12 Mirage 2000s—was meticulously planned and executed, the pre- and post-handling was equally impressive. That the US was clearly on board was evidenced from president Trump's statement, on the 22nd, that India was “looking at something very strong”; National Security Advisor Ajit Doval had discussed the possibility of the strike with his US counterpart John Bolton two days after the Pulwama attack. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj being invited to the inaugural plenary of the foreign ministers' conclave of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation despite Pakistan's opposition also signalled a breakthrough in diplomatic relations, as did China signing off on the UN Security Council condemning the Pulwama attack and naming JeM as responsible for the “heinous and cowardly suicide bombing”; China has, in the past, single-handedly blocked the listing of JeM chief Masood Azhar as a ‘global terrorist’ at the UN Security Council. And while Pakistan expected China to back it after the Indian strike, a bland Chinese response was to ask both countries to exercise restraint, and the spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry responded to a question on the strike by saying “fighting terrorism is a global practice and needs necessary cooperation”. And, in an attempt to dampen the jingoism that usually accompanies such strikes, as well as to give Pakistan a face-saver, the foreign secretary called it a “non-military preemptive action” that was “specifically targeted at the JeM camp”.

While Pakistan's cabinet has said it will retaliate at a time and place of its choosing, and there is always the possibility of another terrorist attack, Tuesday's strike deep into Pakistan, and the well-publicised surgical strike in 2016, make it clear that this is no longer the zero-or-low-cost operation it used to be in the past. Indeed, if India is able to further isolate Pakistan—external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj is expected to take up Pakistan-sponsored terrorism at the 16th Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral—and stop IMF aid to it or get the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to blacklist Pakistan, this could send the already-teetering economy over the brink; the US currently holds the presidency of the FATF.

Despite Tuesday's impressive strike, it would be foolhardy to think India has tamed the Pakistani terror monster, even if the costs have gone up tremendously. And even the afterglow of Balakot can't hide the fact that there was a big intelligence failure at Pulwama, and at various other places where Pakistan-backed terrorists have struck in the past. Apart from this, India also needs to get an elected government in place in Jammu & Kashmir and deal with an increasingly difficult situation there. All of this while, as the Rafale controversy showed, the Indian arms purchase machine is deeply inefficient—signing even the truncated Rafale deal, the CAG pointed out, took 180 months—and, while the political class continues to level charges at one another, that worsens the paralysis; all three forces have large gaps in their equipment needs. In order to fight the 1971 war successfully, in fact, then army chief Sam Manekshaw had to spend months buying equipment and ammunition from all over the world since, even then, the armed forces were woefully short of both. If India has to fight a full-scale war with Pakistan, its politicians can scarcely afford to ignore these realities.

Govt wakes up on tribals

SC must vet process, states must help tribals get their land

THE SUPREME COURT ordering states to evict 1.9 million tribal and forest-dwelling families off their land will not only mean a humanitarian crisis of unimaginable proportions, it shows up the incompetence of both the state and Central governments since neither interceded when the tribal claims on forest land used by them were being rejected. While Congress chief Rahul Gandhi has instructed his state chief ministers to help the tribals, BJP chief Amit Shah has now done the same with BJP chief ministers. Ironically, while the tribal affairs ministry has been writing to various states about the high levels of claims-rejection for several years, there was no meaningful attempt to fix matters.

That matters should have come to this point is ironic since the very purpose of the FRA was to grant tribals the rights to the forest they had been using for decades, if not centuries; and now a petition by various wildlife and conservationist groups has resulted in their getting evicted. Given that 1.9 million families are set to lose their forest rights, it is unfortunate that the SC didn't question the process closely; it must now, at least, ask for greater clarity on the process and whether this violated the FRA. While Rule 13 of the FRA allows oral evidence—by community elders, for instance—of a claim, *Down to Earth* says that many forest departments insisted on other evidence such as satellite imagery and caste certificates; indeed, in March 2017, the tribal affairs ministry clarified the usage of Rule 13, but this didn't seem to have helped. In this context, when the issue of tribal rights was brought up before the Gujarat High Court, it said that the ‘primary duty of the Court’ in interpreting the FRA was to adopt an approach that helped achieve the ‘purposes of the law’ and any other interpretation that defeated the purpose was ‘not permissible’; the court went on to say, ‘the hard fact that the claims petitions are filed by persons who... would hardly possess any such convincing and cogent evidence to the satisfaction of the authorities’.

Also, while the wildlife/conservation groups who filed the petition against the tribal/forest dwelling communities believe that the forest-dwellers are encroachers and are contributing to the denuding of forest land and shrinking wildlife population, there is ample evidence that community-based conservation efforts is helping preserve and even regenerate forests in many states. Communities in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Odisha have managed to both re-green barren areas and preserve natural biodiversity—at times, even using the FRA mandate to thwart timber operations and tree-felling plans of the forest department. In fact, one of the *gram sabhas* in Maharashtra has been recognised by the UNDP for its “exemplary work on decentralised forest governance”. Forest-rich nations like Brazil, Nepal and Vietnam have vested their forest-dwelling communities with management rights over extensive swathes of forest land. It would be a shame if India moves the other way.

VedicVantage

The BSB is an effort in the right direction but the selection of the private party that would run it has come under a cloud

A PROPOSAL FOR India's first national school board for Vedic education, the Bharatiya Shiksha Board (BSB), was accepted in a meeting of an autonomous body under the Union HRD ministry. The body, the Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan (MSRVVP), a fully-funded autonomous institution with the objective of promoting Vedic knowledge, released an Expression of Interest (Eoi) on February 11, inviting applicants to submit proposals for establishing the BSB. According to *The Indian Express*, proposals to the MSRVVP were to be vetted only if they were furnished by February 19, giving aspirants a tight eight-day deadline to submit their proposal. The BSB will be the first private educational board to be certified by the Centre and, on Saturday, the government body found entrepreneur Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust's offer to set up the BSB the best out of the three proposals submitted.

Patanjali's Trust reportedly expressed an intent to commit ₹21 crore for the development of the BSB and claimed that it has the necessary infrastructure ready for the construction of the Board's headquarters. However, surely, setting up of an education board should involve more than just funding and physical infrastructure, especially when matters of pedagogy and methods of historiography are at stake. The importance of academically studying the Vedas—both to unlock the knowledge these contain as well as to examine them critically—is undeniable; Vedic-age debates are integral to the study of history in the country. However, it is important to temper the need to study the Vedas and promote Vedic education with the fact that our understanding of ancient India should not simply be reduced to what the Vedas—or any other such texts—say since ancient India exhibited pluralities. That said, the effort to mainstream Vedic education would surely serve modern India and the understanding of its past better.



AGREEMENT PUT TO A VOTE

Jeremy Corbyn, opposition Labour leader

We cannot risk the country's industry and people's livelihoods and so if it somehow does pass in some form at a later stage, we believe there must be a confirmatory public vote to see if people feel it is what they voted for

THE REAL MAINSTREAM

MULTIPLE CLEARANCES ARE NEITHER LEADING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND BUILDINGS NOR IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN URBAN AREAS

Building common-sense

CHANDRA BHUSHAN

Deputy director general of Centre of Science and Environment. Twitter: Bh_Chandra



impact from the B&C sector.

Subsequently, the EIA notification in 2006 included the B&C sector in Category B projects, and a EC for all buildings with built-up area of more than 20,000 m² was granted at the state level by the State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) and the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA). As a Category B project, no EIA study is done and projects are cleared based on the information they fill up in a form.

It is common knowledge that the EIA of the B&C sector is a sham. Almost all projects are given EC based on dubious information and the implementation of the clearance conditions is not monitored. Worse, this clearance has become a major source of corruption. It was because of these shortcomings that discussions started in 2014 to reform the EC process for the building sector, especially when the TSR Subramanian Committee was set up by the MoEF&CC to review the environmental laws of the country.

The changes and its rationale

The building sector in India requires multiple environment-related clearances. Under the Water Act and the Air Act, it requires consent from the State Pollution Control Boards. If the proposed building is in a coastal area, a NOC is required from the National Coastal Zone Management Authority. Permission is required from the Groundwater Board for groundwater extraction. Large commercial buildings require

an Energy Performance Certificate from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency. On the top of all these, a prior EC is required from the SEAC and SEIAA. But it is evident that these multiple clearances are neither leading to the construction of environmentally sound buildings nor improving the environmental quality in urban areas.

The obvious question is that, if clearances are not working, what other tools can we deploy to improve the environment management in cities? This is where we have to look to other countries to understand how they manage their urban environment.

The first things one learns from other countries is that it is better to have few clearances and better monitoring and enforcement than multiple clearances and poor monitoring. When the One World Trade Center or the “Freedom Tower” was being built in Lower Manhattan, it required one detailed Environment Impact Statement from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The rest of the planning and permits were issued by the City of New York. The concept of few clearances and better planning and management holds true for cities ranging from London to Paris and from Mexico City to Beijing.

The experience world over also shows that the responsibility of granting building permission and incorporating and enforcing environmental concerns in buildings is done by the local authorities and not by environmental regulators. In fact, in most European countries, the EIA of buildings are either mandated by the local

Multiple clearances by central and state agencies are not a substitute to local planning, monitoring and management

authority or the Town and Country Planning Departments.

Lastly, in most well-managed cities, accredited third-party building auditors are deployed to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated in buildings. Permits are granted based on the reports of these independent auditors. In case the local authority finds any irregularity, stringent penalties are imposed on both the auditor and the building owner.

Based on the above learnings, the December 2016 notification tried to strengthen the environmental management in cities through the following means:

- To connect the environmental concerns in building with the wider city planning, it devolved powers to the ULBs to grant EC to buildings

- To ensure that all large buildings meet certain environment norms, it made EC applicable to all buildings above the size of 5,000 m². When the threshold was 20,000 m², 80% of all new buildings were excluded from the EC process

- The devolution of power was incumbent on ULBs amending their building bye-laws and incorporating environmental norms for different categories of buildings in it

- ULBs were mandated to set up an Environment Cell. The Environment Cell was to enforce compliance of environmental conditions and provide an oversight to the third-party auditing process

- To ensure better implementation, a system of third-party auditing through Qualified Building Environment Auditors (QBEA) was introduced. This is a trust-based compliance regime, with heavy penalties for non-compliance.

Whether these changes are a “dilution” of the existing system is for the reader to decide. But it is clear to me that multiple clearances by central and state agencies are not a substitute to local planning, monitoring and management. We will have to build the capacity of ULBs and devolve powers to them to manage the environmental quality in our cities. There is no other option.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Patchy & long way to go, period

While the run-up to the much-eyed live award event was marked by varied predictions and speculations, the show moved faster than expected and marginally gained on yearly ratings too. The Indian short documentary, highlighting a stigma and efforts to combat chronic attitudes, was duly recognised. It is therefore important to boost public participation by establishing an award mechanism, driven by practices of fair inclusion and equitable cultural representation. Authorities must ensure decent/sufficient regional representation across the globe, diligence during the nomination process and tactical use of the platform by role models to highlight performances and deliver socio-political messages to promote engagement — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

First consignment

Afghanistan sent its first consignment through Chabahar port in Iran. The port has opened a new route to promote trade between India and Afghanistan while bypassing Pakistan. It will make strong relationships between both countries. And this event will provide an opportunity to India, Afghanistan, Iran and other central Asian countries to explore further the potential of the port for promoting regional connectivity and trade — M Irshad Magadhi

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

GST uncertainty for real estate

Since the GST rate has reduced from 12% to 5%, the rate of 12% can no longer be charged. And, with no input credit, it becomes a cost. Whether the developer can recover the same from the customer would depend upon the terms of the sale agreement

NIRAJ BAGRI

Partner, Dhruva Advisors LLP

IN A DECISION which would have far reaching implications for the real estate sector, the GST Council meeting has prescribed a GST rate of 5% without input tax credit for the residential sector and a GST rate of 1% without input tax credit for the affordable housing segment. The changes would be brought into effect from April 1, 2019, and suitable notifications would be issued to give effect to the same. It appears that the option of paying GST at a higher rate by claiming input tax credit would not be available going forward.

Apart from a reduction in rates, it is also proposed that exemptions would be provided from payment of GST to transfer of development rights, lease premium, etc, for such residential property on which GST is payable.

The reduction in tax rates is being proposed with a view to provide relief to the industry which is grappling due to slowdown. Whilst reduction in rates is a welcome relief for the industry, let us evaluate whether these changes would lead to other unintended consequences. For this purpose, let us consider the impact due to proposed changes for cases where a project is going to be launched i.e., new projects and projects which are already underway.

For new projects, there would be a reduction in upfront GST chargeable i.e., 5%/1%, instead of the current

12%/8% rate. But absence of input tax credit would mean that the said taxes paid on procurements would be loaded on to the base price. Whether this would mean an overall reduction in price for the end consumer would depend upon other factors like ratio of construction costs vis-à-vis selling price, cost of land, etc. Whatever may be the outcome, the developer would be in a position to decide and control the outcome i.e., reflect the same in the base price to be charged for the residential property.

A bigger challenge awaits the existing projects. Let us say, the developer has contractually agreed for base price plus GST. Since the GST rate has reduced from 12% to 5%, he cannot charge the rate of 12% any longer. Further, as per the condition of the proposed amendment, the developer would not be able to claim input tax credit. Therefore, it becomes a cost. Whether he can recover the same from the customer would depend upon the terms of his sale agreement, but looking at the current environment, it would be a herculean task.

It is also commonly seen that the project has been advertised as an all-inclusive cost i.e., a lump sum price

including GST, stamp duty, etc. For such cases, seeking any additional consideration due to denial of input tax credit would be difficult.

It would also be interesting to see the implications of the anti-profiteering provisions. Typically, any project would have a lifespan of a couple of years. If the benefit arising due to introduction of GST has been computed by the developer and is being passed on over the proportionate life of the project, can he now take a position of not passing any benefit for the balance period? Or, let's say, if the developer intended to pass on the benefit towards the end of the project, would he be required to do the same now, considering that the benefit of input tax credit has been withdrawn?

Given that anti-profiteering provisions are one-way traffic—all the benefits would be required to be passed on without taking into account additional costs, these changes could initiate new challenges for the sector.

It seems prudent that whatever changes are proposed, the option of charging a higher GST rate with input tax credit should be one of the options available to the developer at least in so far as existing projects are concerned.

The option of charging a higher GST rate with input tax credit should be one of the options available to the developer



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

Towards CO₂ accounting

MEGHA JAIN & AISHWARYA NAGPAL

Jain is assistant professor and Nagpal a senior research scholar, University of Delhi

India Inc is already seeing the benefits of this

THERE IS A GLOBAL POLITICAL consensus on the role of carbon, besides other greenhouse gases, in climate change. In this context, 'carbon accounting' facilitates not just the identification of the place of emission of the harmful gases, but also their respective place of removal. Carbon accounting (aka GHG accounting) enables quantification of CO₂/GHG accounting by an entity (nations, states, corporations, and individuals). It comprises consumption- and production-based accounting (CBA & PBA, respectively). CBA works on the principle that the party benefitting from the activity causing emissions shall bear the costs imposed by the emissions. The global temperature rising to above 1.5 degree celsius (critical level) is more or less a given, if one goes by current and historical emission trends. The arithmetic to contain the rise below the critical level can't get any simpler, though. Emissions should peak no later than 2020. Undoubtedly, this foreshadows a global emergency.

Interestingly, carbon accounting or carbon budgeting is predicated on the concept of negative emissions. This is predicated on curbing emissions via extensive restoration, increased bioenergy usage, increasing forest growth, etc, to increase carbon capture and storage. Many climate scientists consider negative emissions as an indispensable to tackling climate change. There are a number of methods for carbon accounting, including the life-cycle assessment methodology (ISO), the greenhouse protocol from the World Resources Institute and the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC). But, since climate crisis is no longer a distant threat, we need an honest assessment of the efficacy of each method, including on calculation errors and assumption biases, before we choose the method most suited.

Organisations, mostly corporates, are keen on getting started on carbon accounting. The reasons for this include potential cost-cutting implications and the opportunity to showcase environmental leadership. Corporate carbon accounting is also fast becoming an integral part of corporate social responsibility—with increasing consumer awareness, carbon accounting helps companies showcase accountability over their carbon footprint; eco-friendly businesses are bound to be easily socially acceptable and enjoy a good reputation.

Carbon accounting matters only if becomes part of the overall accounting. It can't work in isolation. Carbon credit, carbon trade and exchange, carbon tax, etc, are all vital to corporate carbon accounting, which then becomes a guide for emission reduction. Trading carbon credits is a market-based approach where groups claim reduction in carbon and GHG emissions by purchasing credits from another entities. Carbon tax is a form of carbon pricing. It is a levy on the emissions by a business, imposed often on the carbon content of fuels with the purpose to reduce emission by discouraging consumption of emissions-rich inputs and products.

India Inc has begun to recognise the importance of carbon accounting. It has undertaken and reported this in various public forums such as Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and "sustainability reports". The number of companies responding to the CDP's information request on climate-change mitigation strategy, emission risk hedging, and carbon accounting has increased steadily 2009 onwards. But, those with the largest carbon footprint still need to do more. Producers and consumers are both responsible for emissions and have a shared responsibility to address the problem. Details of how this shared responsibility is to be divided between the producers and the consumers—only this can help achieve meaningful emission reduction—need to be worked out. The exact nature of this sharing is yet to be determined in negotiations, but both CBA and PBA need to be squared. Carbon accounting for companies is not only about measuring, monitoring, benchmarking and reporting GHG emissions but also about taking accountability and bringing down emissions and reducing impact. It is a catalyst for the evolution of an entirely novel investment and accounting industry. Capitalising on carbon accounting can place companies ahead of the carbon regulatory curve. Carbon accounting might not be an exact science today, but its role has never been more important.

ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA & ALMITRA PATEL



Ahluwalia is Chairperson, ICRIER, Delhi, and former Chairperson of the High-Powered Expert Committee on Urban Infrastructure and Services. Patel is Member, Supreme Court Committee on Solid Waste Management

Small towns drive big change

On solid waste management, especially waste segregation, our metros must take a cue from smaller towns like Karjat and Suryapet where able leadership is driving micro-planning and implementation—and this is something that can be replicated at the ward level with the right delegation

fund new tractor-trailers (which can unload waste mechanically) for self-help groups by guaranteeing their monthly repayments to banks from the city's payments to the self-help groups for waste collection services. The tractors moved punctually and dependably along lanes, stopping at every 6-7 houses to collect unsorted waste. The same teams swept the roads, so they had the incentive to do efficient collection, without spills during the process of collection. The tractor trailers which were first offloaded the wet waste, which was stabilised for two weeks by stack-composting—less space and are piled off the ground for natural air circulation without manual turning. This was fed to vermi-beds, and with quality vermicompost in good demand, the municipality earned ₹45,000 per month.

The tractor trailers had high wire-mesh compartments for different categories of dry waste which was offloaded at the inner city sorting shed. Eight waste-pickers on the city's payroll further separated the wastes for daily sale. This is what normally happens informally at the rear of all waste-buyers' premises. The sale of recyclables generated additional earnings of ₹55,000 per month. Open-drain cleaning was done in the afternoons. Soggy silt went directly into a wheelie-bin and, then, into a dedicated leak-proof collection vehicle which unloaded the silt and the debris for transport by widening the road shoulders of all radial roads.

The Suryapet experience clearly shows that citizens can be incentivised to segregate wet and dry wastes when they see clear administrative will and primary collection vehicles designed to accept and transport wastes unmixed. The universal complaint of city officials that residents do not cooperate is often an excuse for their own lack of will, vision and action.

A second inspiring example of what able leadership can do can be found in Karjat, a small town in Maharashtra with a population of close to 30,000. Ramdas Kokare was appointed commissioner of the Municipal Council of Karjat in end-2017, arriving with a fine reputation for making tiny Vengurla (population of 13,000 and floating population 5,000) a dump-free town. Public expectations of him must have been high.

Within two days of joining, Kokare strictly enforced Maharashtra's ban on plastic carry-bags. These are now replaced by sari-cloth bags costing ₹6 per bag. Handcart vendors use bags made out of newspapers. What is amazing is how he persuaded Karjat residents, already enjoying doorstep waste collection, to cooperate in giving 36 kinds of waste separately on different days of the week!

This is probably a global first.

Many progressive cities abroad have different bins for wet-dry-garden waste and rejects, and separate days of the month or year to collect e-waste or discarded household furniture and appliances. But Karjat is the first town where we have seen regular weekly collection of so many separate items! Kokare must have intensely motivated and trained his waste collection staff to demand and sustain such achievement. The large shed at the former dump is now full of separate categories of waste regularly being purchased and removed.

The secret of the success of Kokare and Khadar is passion and daily personal supervision, both going around the city every morning before office hours to meet, persuade and exhort citizens to cooperate. In Karjat, after initial warnings, doorstep collectors refuse to collect mixed waste and also report the person. The same evening, an official comes and grills the person on where they dumped their uncollected mixed waste. Such intense individual effort is especially required at the start. Once word gets around, cooperation is easier.

There are other cities with innovative approaches to solid waste management. In Namakkal (population of 55,000) in Tamil Nadu, pushcart collection workers have been manually separating mixed waste into wet and dry, daily at the doorstep of each household, rather than adopted behavior change. Years later, Raichur (2.3 lakh population), Warangal (6.15 lakh population), and Kolar (15.3 lakh population) have redesigned their pushcarts to enable them to carry half a dozen bags on the cart so that dry waste can be sorted at source for easy sale without the need for a sorting centre.

Alappuzha in Kerala was recently recognised by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) for its decentralised system of waste management. In these, and many more small towns, the secret of success is meticulous micro-planning, committed leadership at the administrative level and receptive and engaged communities. The objective is clear—a litter-free, bin-free and dump-free city. Big cities scoff at small towns leading the way and claim that their own waste volumes are unmanageable. But, even in large metropolitan cities, populations of most wards are smaller than those of towns. Decentralisation and effective use of delegated power at the ward level are crucial if micro-planning and implementation are to work with cooperation from RWAs. Only then can we find collective solution to the challenges of solid waste management in our larger cities.

The Suryapet experience shows that citizens can be incentivised to segregate waste when they see administrative will

CYNICS OFTEN DIE out that old habits die hard. They tell us that it is going to be impossible to get residents of Indian cities to keep different types of waste separate. Yet, we know this is essential for municipalities to find a sustainable solution to the problem of solid waste management. But there is some good news. Small and mid-sized cities and towns of India are showing the way on how to manage solid waste by getting communities to segregate waste and keeping the waste streams separate. In this column, we share experience from our visits to some of these cities, in particular, Suryapet and Karjat. Effective leadership in these cities and towns has found simple and sustainable solutions to the problems of solid waste management which still elude our metropolitan cities.

The earliest, and the best, success story was that of Suryapet, a city in Telangana, 136 km east of Hyderabad, with population of a little over 1 lakh. In 2003-2004, there was no external funding, no

NGO and no Resident Welfare Associations. A single individual, SA Khadar, the Commissioner of Suryapet Municipal Corporation, demonstrated personal leadership that made a big difference. He managed all of the city's wet and dry wastes (32 tons daily at that time) on a half-acre site within the city, earning a gross income of ₹1 lakh per month from vermi-composting and recycling. There was no need for a landfill.

Khadar Sahab began by winning the hearts of his sanitary workers by prompt satisfaction of minor demands such as granting leave and/or reassignment of workplaces. Next, he wooed the residents, one mohalla or street or commercial area at a time, by organising daily meetings on morning rounds from 6-9 am before beginning his office work. Residential pockets that gave 100% unmixed waste earned token gifts.

Even more impressive and crucial was the municipal corporation's visible commitment to transporting segregated wastes for ease of separate processing. The Commissioner got banks to

REGIONAL CAFE: KARNATAKA

Aroma of success

Competition from a giant corporation like the ITC or from the widespread unorganised sector has not shaken Cycle Pure Agarbathies from the leadership position it holds

SUSHILA RAVINDRANATH

sushila.ravindranath@expressindia.com



Agarbathies the world's largest carbon-neutral agarbatti manufacturer. The company makes recycled corrugated boxes at relevant units. All the packaging material is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). "We need specialised bamboo that is flexible to make agarbattis. This bamboo is actually a grass that grows very fast. It disturbs the ecological balance. To prevent this, we harvest bamboo in the forest," says Ranga.

"We use only natural ingredients that are International Fragrance Association-certified aroma materials and are not harmful to the environment or health. We have been perfumers for generations. My family members have been trained abroad. We create every fragrance in-

house. Our fragrance creation and application is IP-protected."

Cycle Pure currently has an annual capacity of 12 billion sticks. They are made from its own facility in Mysuru and other third-party manufacturing sources, spread across Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Odisha and Punjab. "The introduction of GST has made it possible for us to create manufacturing clusters all over India. Our R&D facility is located in Mysuru," he adds.

Ranga says that Cycle Pure provides opportunities for rural women to enhance family incomes. Tamil Nadu is home to 15 agarbatti clusters, and these consist mostly of homemakers making agarbattis from homes. The company provides indirect employment to 35,000 women. Cycle



Pure maintains an organised supply chain of raw materials and provides these women agarbatti machines and teaches them how to use it. Women do the packaging as well. "Women are better at it than men," Ranga says.

The manufacturing process was entirely manual till recently. Now it is semi-mechanised to increase production to meet delivery targets. The company has introduced automation and machines in some processes to ensure a high level of standardisation and quality. "Mechanised sticks were introduced eight years ago. They proved to be very expensive. Now it has been reversed. Handmade sticks are more expensive," he adds.

Agarbattis made in the factory and clus-

ters are sent to warehouses. The company has a network of distributors with 4 lakh retail outlets in the country. "We have introduced ERP-enabled supply chain management. Internet of Things-powered sales force automation application 'Sales Diary' has helped us become a more efficient and connected enterprise. Cycle Pure has been awarded ISO 2015 certification as well."

Cycle Pure is one of the top-50 Indian brands as rated by AC Nielsen. Competition from a giant corporation like the ITC or from the widespread unorganised sector has not shaken it from the position it holds. Ranga estimates the country's puja market to be around Rs 10,000 crore, of which the share of agarbattis is around Rs 6,000 crore.

The company has been expanding its product range to move with the times. It has launched Pooja Packs for all occasions, ranging from birthdays to festivities. The Pooja Pack is an all-inclusive kit complete with everything one needs to conduct a puja at home. It comes with the Pure Puja app, which gives instructions to conduct a puja and also gives the option to reach out to a pandit.

In Tamil Nadu, which is the company's most important market, Cycle Pure recently launched three new products—Om Shanthi Pure Cow Ghee Diya, Om Shanthi Pure Chandan Tika and Om Shanthi Pure Puja Oil. Ranga says, "We have taken into consideration the rich culture and traditions of Tamil Nadu and have designed our products accordingly."

Markets such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal are growing fast. The quality markets are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. Ranga adds, "Cycle Pure has been part of every Indian home and their prayer. Mothers always light a lamp to pray for the future of their children. We are now making region-specific, easy-to-use puja products. These will help take our products to the next generation seamlessly."

Ranga predicts exponential growth in this market. People are veering towards quality products. Consumerism is catching up in the puja market. Even a state like Tamil Nadu, dominated by rational parties, is seeing increasing religiosity.

India-Pak impasse unlikely to alter soon



RAHUL BEDI
SENIOR JOURNALIST

There is a tiredness — and sameness — in the litany of options mouthed by a variety of what passes for 'experts' locally on ways to deal with Pakistan, accused by New Delhi of planning the recent killing of over 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in Kashmir. Politicians, armchair warriors in television studios, retired soldiers, diplomats and other self-appointed strategists, tediously reiterate and catalogue what is horribly wrong with affairs in Kashmir and relations with Islamabad. They echo each other in what needs, must and ought to be undertaken to ameliorate the deteriorating security situation in Kashmir and with Pakistan, but offer no worthwhile practical, doable or enforceable response to the enduring Mexican standoff between India and Pakistan. India's impending General Election, the imminent US military drawdown in Afghanistan, the negotiated return of the Taliban to the wartorn country and the 'outsourcing' of Kabul to Islamabad by Washington, all restrict Prime Minister Narendra Modi's options in delivering even a token riposte to Pakistan. According to official sources, other than telephonically expressing sympathy for the CRPF killings in Pulwama, US National Security Advisor John

Bolton 'cautioned' his Indian counterpart Ait Doval last week regarding any 'military adventurism' against Pakistan. Such a move, the acerbic Bolton is believed to have inferred would panic Islamabad, adversely impacting US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. This, in turn, would delay if not derail one of the few assorted deliverables promised by President Donald Trump during his election campaign for the American presidency. Additionally, there is another disturbing and worrisome reality: the questionable state of India's materiel, aggravated by wooliness in decision-making amongst the country's higher defence establishment. Collectively, these twin impediments magnify India's woes as it struggles to evolve demonstrable options with regard to 'punishing' and 'detering' Pakistan. Ironically, this also reinforces what French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau during World War I wisely declared: 'War is too serious a matter to entrust to military men.' So what can India tangibly accomplish to dent Pakistan's predominantly egoist Punjabi establishment, which for decades has both welcomed and mocked India's gushing overtures, but more its hollow braggadocio? For starters, Delhi can vindicate its threat of diplomatically isolating Pakistan by unilaterally halving the strength of its High Commission in Islamabad to 50, as the massive contingent of some 100 diplomats and support staff have for decades been unable to perform even a modicum of their assigned role. Undeniably, there is a mountain of historical, political, diplomatic, sectarian and territorial baggage, visceral acrimony and suspicion between the neighbours to sustain even



WEARY PUGILISTS: Both India and Pakistan have been circling each other for most of their 72 years as independent states, waging three wars-and-a-half.

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a modicum of trust, or at best a functional relationship between the two diplomatic establishments. Like weary pugilists, both have been circling each other for most of their 72 years as independent states, waging three wars-and-a-half, periodically mobilising their armies for battle and exchanging nuclear and military threats. This has been frequently interspersed with jerky half-baked treaties, 'composite' dialogues and stillborn peace initiatives. So, other than expending perennially scarce financial resources, why commit competent diplomats who have achieved nothing in fostering good neighbourliness when they could be more gainfully employed elsewhere? It's also puzzling how many such worthies, who served as envoys to Islamabad, have become foreign secretary, almost as if a blank report card at best, deserves high reward. To coin an adage, CD or Corps Diplo-

matique business is about keeping one's country flag flying in foreign, often hostile lands and furthering bilateral relations through established norms. However, this in no way applies to diplomatic activity between Delhi and Islamabad. Their respective missions, built, staffed and maintained at enormous expense, fulfil none of these CD requirements. Either side claims the others' embassy is staffed with spies, issue visas grudgingly and encourage little or no trade. Paradoxically, even the designated and undeclared spooks are unable to perform their clandestine tasks as they, and at times even their families, are under constant surveillance and subject to ham-handed harassment. Beleaguered diplomats from both sides individually face the brunt of strained ties in the two capitals. If their shadowing and harassment is not challenging enough, heavies have been known to kidnap and thrash embassy staff before expelling them on charges of spying. The only good news, however, is that the score on this count, and other aggravation indicators, remains even. In short, sincere diplomacy via the high commissions in Delhi and Islamabad is for now no more possible than dry water. But this proposition, like convenient diplomatic codicils includes a caveat: in the event of relations bettering, respective mission numbers can be mutually hiked at a later date. Islamabad's reality is quite uncomplicated even though most Indian 'thinkers' tend to unnecessarily confound and intellectualise it. Indisputable reasoning decrees that the Pakistan Army remains Islamabad's principal fulcrum of power and one least interested in conflict resolution. Instead, it is embarked not only on stockpiling

strategic assets, including Nasr, its solid fuelled tactical battlefield nuclear missiles, and assorted other materiel from China and cossetting Islamist groups to wage low cost war against India to haemorrhage it under the nuclear threshold. In her excellently researched book *The Pakistan Army's Way of War*, US scholar Christine Fair argues that that 'Pakistan's revisionism persists in regard to its efforts, not only to undermine the territorial status quo in Kashmir, but also to undermine India's position in the region and beyond.' She calls Pakistan a 'greedy state' willing to suffer any number of military defeats in its efforts to undermine India. But under no circumstances will it acquiesce in any way to India, as this would mean the unthinkable: defeat for the Pakistan Army. Conversely, Fair argues retaining even the ability to challenge India is victory for the Pakistan Army. She also contends that despite its many setbacks in wars with India — in 1971 and Kargil — the Pakistan Army continues to view itself as India's peer competitor and demands that Delhi, the US and the world treat it as such. India, on the other hand, is high-handed in its dealings with Pakistan, invariably hostage to the politics of the day. It talks down to Islamabad, issuing it ultimatums it is unable to vindicate and ends up looking impotent. Alternately, it makes itself hostage to the goodwill of other states, appealing whiningly to Washington to intervene with Islamabad on its behalf, but with little effect. The ensuing stalemate only serves to further worsen bilateral relations. In short, the discordant script between India and Pakistan rarely ever changes and this impasse is unlikely to alter soon.

The noose of blank cheques around farmers



DEVINDER SHARMA
FOOD & AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST.

Gurpreet Singh is a small farmer from Kishangarh village in Moga district of Punjab. He owns 3.5 acres of land and had defaulted in repaying an instalment on a Rs 5.6-lakh crop loan that he had taken from the State Bank of India (SBI). A year ago, he was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years. His fault: he had failed to make repayment as per the schedule. "As I had an SBI account, they took blank cheques from me," he told a newspaper. Gurpreet Singh is among the thousands of farmers who have been served legal notices under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instrument Act, 1881. Hundreds of them have served jail terms over the years and numerous others are on bail and await trial. In all cases, the modus operandi is the same. Banks take blank cheques from farmers when they seek loans, and fill in the amount due when it becomes apparent that the farmer is unable to repay an instalment, and file for a criminal case. What should otherwise be a civil case, thereby turns into a criminal offence, which I think is patently wrong. "Almost 99 per cent of the farmers who draw loans from the banks, whether private, cooperative or nationalised, and fail to pay back face this ordeal," says Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) leader Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan. Seven farmer unions had joined hands against the unsavoury practice by banks of using blank cheques to recover the unpaid dues. "These days, banks are taking triple securities from farmers - pledging of land, signing by a guarantor and blank/post-dated cheques," said Buta Singh Burjgill, president of the



UNSAVOURY PRACTICE: Farmers have joined hands to protest against the banks using blank cheques to recover unpaid dues.

Banks take blank cheques from farmers when they seek loans, and fill in the amount due when it becomes apparent that the farmer is unable to repay an instalment, and file for a criminal case. But there is no such condition for Mudra loans. Banks cannot be allowed to wilfully exercise a discriminatory policy against farmers.

BKU (Dakunda) faction. While numerous reports have appeared from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh of public auction of farm lands or tractors mortgaged with the banks, it is invariably the blank cheques that land more and more defaulting farmers behind the bars in Punjab. This is primarily because Punjab has banned the auction of mortgaged land or 'kurki'. Even this is denied by farmers who say that 'kurki' orders are issued frequently but it's only because of pressure from farm unions that auctions are not allowed. Now compare this with Mudra loans. Minister of State for Finance Shiv Pratap Shukla informed Parliament that loans worth Rs 7,277.31 crore of public sector banks till March 2018 under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna (PMMY) had turned bad. Subsequently, an RTI

revealed that Rs 11,000 crore of Mudra loans belonging to 13.85 lakh account holders had turned into non-performing assets (NPA) till August 3, 2018. Interestingly, while the government has set up a Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU) which guarantees payments against default in micro loans up to Rs 10 lakh to eligible borrowers, no such provision exists for defaulting farmers. Bad loans of Punjab farmers are in reality far less when compared with Mudra loan defaults. Strange, while post-dated/blank cheques are taken from farmers at the time of applying for bank loans, there is no such condition for Mudra loans. In fact, borrowers don't need to pay processing charges or offer any collateral. Or else, 13.85 lakh borrowers who have defaulted on Mudra loans would have been served legal notices, and hundreds

of them would have been behind the bars. Therefore, the question that arises is why the practice of taking blank cheques at the time of granting a loan is confined to farmers? Is it because given the level of illiteracy and economic depravity, the farmer is a soft target? Take the case of the new scheme offering loans up to Rs 1 crore within an hour, or 59 minutes to be exact. For the medium, small and micro-enterprises (MSME), an automated, contact-less provision has been enacted for providing loans from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore. For these loans, collateral is not mandatory considering that these loans are covered with a Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGFTMSE). Again, if the state can act as a guarantee for defaults for MSME business loans, I see no reason why a similar guarantee fund should not be created for farm loans. After all, the farmer is an entrepreneur and farming too is a business activity. Banks' argument that the practice of obtaining blank cheques serves as a security for farm loans is in fact discriminatory. The high-handedness being shown by banks to use the blank cheques from gullible farmers so as to easily convert these civil cases into criminal ones, defies logic. Meanwhile, Punjab's Cooperation Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, who after prolonged negotiation with agitating farmers and bankers, has assured that banks will withdraw cases and return the blank cheques to farmers owning up to 5 acres of land and loan up to Rs 10 lakh. Around 6,000 small farmers will benefit if the bounced checks are returned, but the protesting farmers want this practice to be withdrawn completely. Although banks have promised before the Punjab and Haryana High Court to return blank cheques for the small farmers in a week or so, I don't see any reason why the practice of drawing blank cheques is not completely dispensed with. Banks cannot be allowed to wilfully exercise a discriminatory policy against farmers. There have been cases when banks have attached a farmer's pension to recover outstanding dues. According to National Crime Record Bureau statistics, 80 per cent indebted farmers who committed suicide in 2015 had taken loans from banks and registered microfinance institutions. This defies the common understanding which blames private money lenders for adopting unlawful recovery tools. Farming is a risky enterprise, which operates under difficult economic as well as climatic conditions. But the dual approach adopted by banks to recover outstanding farm loans from farmers using coercive means, while going soft on massive corporate loan defaults besides other business loans, clearly shows that the credit policy is designed to benefit the rich at the cost of the poor. Let me illustrate. As per a report presented by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, the total outstanding loans of the public sector banks, termed as NPAs, stood at Rs 6.8 lakh crore in March 2014. Out of this, 70 per cent belonged to the corporates whereas only 1 per cent default was of the farmers. Corporate NPAs presently stand at a whopping 10.3 lakh crore. Did we ever hear of any of the corporate defaulter going to jail for bounced cheques?

QUICK CROSSWORD

1 Decline to give (6)
2 Powerful (6)
3 Zeal (7)
4 Speak (5)
5 Lash of whip (5)
6 Accomplish (7)
7 Call to account (5,2,4)
8 Ghastly (7)
9 Degrade (5)
10 Vilification (5)
11 Short naval sword (7)
12 Channel of communication (6)
13 Jovial (6)

1 Show to be false (6)
2 Renounce (5)
3 Sporting firearm (7)
4 Unyielding (5)
5 Very busy (2,3,2)
6 Semiprecious red gem (6)
7 Overcome formality (5,3,3)
8 Enlist new soldiers (7)
9 Reinforce (7)
10 An African antelope (6)
11 Reliably loyal (6)
12 Extempore (2,3)
13 Interlace (5)

ACROSS

DOWN

SU DO KU

	5	7		3			8	
8			4		5			1
					6			
	8				1		6	
	6						7	
7		9					5	
				9				
3			7		2			4
	9			6		5	3	

V. HARD

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 26, 2019 TUESDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Phalgun Shaka 7
- Phalgun Parvishite 14
- Hijari 1440
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 8, up to 5:21 am
- Vya Yoga up to 10:46 am
- Anuradha Nakshatra up to 11:04 pm
- Moon in Scorpio sign
- Gandmool start 11:04 pm.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

5	7	4	8	3	2	6	1	9
3	8	9	6	7	1	2	5	4
2	6	1	9	4	5	8	7	3
1	4	8	2	5	9	3	6	7
7	2	3	4	6	8	1	9	5
9	5	6	3	1	7	4	8	2
8	9	7	1	2	4	5	3	6
6	1	2	5	9	3	7	4	8
4	3	5	7	8	6	9	2	1

FORECAST

SUNSET: TUESDAY 18:18 HRS
SUNRISE: WEDNESDAY 06:52 HRS

CITY
Chandigarh MAX 21 MIN 10
New Delhi 22 13

PUNJAB
Amritsar 20 08
Bathinda 20 07
Jalandhar 20 08
Ludhiana 20 09

HARYANA
Bhiwani 21 11
Hisar 21 09
Sirsa 20 09

HIMACHAL PRADESH
Dharamsala 11 05
Manali 06 -01
Shimla 10 02

JAMMU & KASHMIR
Jammu 12 02
Leh 04 -08
Srinagar 08 02

UTTARAKHAND
Dehradun 24 10
Mussoorie 14 05

TEMPERATURE IN °C

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Poll push

Re-election bid rains sops

THE Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is the latest in a series of schemes launched with an eye on the polls. Increasing awareness of the distress in the rural sector and its likely impact on the political fortunes of those who seek the farmers' votes have no doubt brought about greater attention from the political class. Prime Minister Modi has launched this assured income support scheme for small and marginal farmers, which will give a yearly income of Rs 6,000. Congress president Rahul Gandhi has not named the sum he promises to dole out, but at the same time has taken digs at the Rs 17 per day figure proposed by Modi. It is competitive politics at the cost of the exchequer, which will be left to foot the estimated Rs 95,000-crore bill.

Remunerative prices and help in the form of guidance for better farming choices and techniques, rather than doles, is the answer to the farmers' woes, as *The Tribune* has pointed out time and again. The rural sector lags in infrastructure, education and health facilities, besides being economically a laggard, but politicians tend to treat it as a vote bank, to be tapped near the polls, rather than take a holistic interest in the wellbeing of the vastness which is home to most Indians. This leaves young rural residents bereft of schooling and skilling that is necessary for improving their prospects, besides issues of access to proper health services, etc.

Even as polls are round the corner, the effort to notch 'successes' is visible. However, the challenges to the economy remain. The government has not been particularly successful in repairing bank balance sheets, the rupee valuation has been uninspiring, and even the recent, and populist, cut in the GST rate for affordable housing has received only mixed reviews. The approaching election season will mark further marginalisation of the fundamental issues, even as various so-called welfare schemes are doled out, by both Central and state governments. The politics of sops for voters is here to stay, yet everything that can be done must be done to expose unhealthy decisions that will cost the taxpayer dear. Political success should not be at the cost of public money without commensurate benefit to the public.

Election-time Budget

While seeking to please all, Haryana stays prudent

AFTER the parliamentary polls and Haryana will have Assembly elections later this year. But, riding on the BJP's recent wins in the Jind bypoll and the earlier municipal corporations elections, the Finance Minister has not succumbed to populism at the cost of fiscal prudence in the last Budget of the Khattar government's current term. However, as Capt Abhimanyu has ensured that the fiscal deficit did not exceed the healthy limit, it is not surprising that the Rs 1.32-lakh-crore Budget for 2019-20 is largely people-friendly. While all sections of society stand to gain from the absence of any fresh taxes, the minister has sought to benefit poor peasants and unorganised sector workers with a special Rs 1,500-crore sop. Under this new allocation, families of farmers owning up to 5 acres of land and those of unorganised sector workers with family income of less than Rs 15,000 per month have been promised a social security cover.

Notably, the other special enhanced allocations address diverse segments of the economy. Foremost is the development of Hisar as an aviation hub, a project that has been hanging fire for years due to lack of enough funds. Emphasis on the development of the Aravalli Biodiversity Park in Gurugram's Nathupur village stands out as an effort towards the much-needed conservation of ecology in the degraded area. In the same vein, Ambala seeks to regain its past glory of being a scientific instruments city and of grinders and mixers as it is allocated funds for its growth as a sub-regional science centre.

By loosening the exchequer's purse strings towards skill development, the Minister aims to benefit the youth. The slew of measures for them includes the opening and upgradation of some more ITIs so as to render them employable as well as providing for unemployment allowances. Towards this end, there is an appreciable increase of 51 per cent in the outlay for the Employment Department and a raise of 24 per cent funds for skill development as compared to last year.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The balance of power is the scale of peace.

— Thomas Paine

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1919

New Arms Regulations.

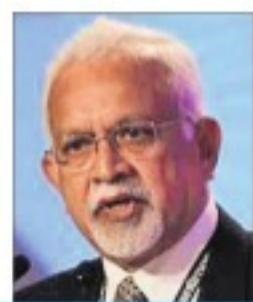
REPLYING to a question in the House of Commons Mr. Montagu stated that the Government of India was about to issue new arms regulations, based on the recommendations of a committee of the Imperial Legislative Council, abolishing all racial distinctions and enabling all persons of recognised status and character to obtain licences. It will be remembered that His Excellency the Viceroy in his reference to this matter in a recent speech in the Indian Legislative Council left it rather vague. Mr. Montagu's statement is clearer, though still inadequate. The abolition of all racial distinctions is exactly what public opinion has been demanding with increasing strength all these years, and if the regulations will fully and frankly concede this demand we have no doubt that they will be welcome. At the same time care must be taken, in framing the regulations, to see that the old distinction does not reappear in a new form. We need scarcely say that the details will be awaited with the keenest interest and expectancy.

Franchise for Indian Women.

MRS. D. Jinarajadasa, President of the Women's India Association, Madras, has published the contents of two letters written to Lord Southborough, Chairman of the Indian Electoral Franchise Committee, by the Indian Women's Education Association, London, of which Mrs. T. Muir Mackenzie is the President, on the subject of giving the franchise to women in India. These letters are signed by a large number of British Women's Associations and prominent individuals of both sexes, and show that the proposal has a large measure of support from British voters. Several Indian Ladies' Associations have similarly passed resolutions in favour of the proposals.

Cherry-picking in West Asia

Pressure on India to align with US and its regional allies



MK BHADRAKUMAR
FORMER AMBASSADOR

ON the face of it, Iran is down 0-2. That is, if a metaphor from soccer were to be used to describe India's affection toward Iran's archetypal West Asian rivals — Israel and Saudi Arabia. After all, Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives their leaders at the tarmac of Delhi airport with a hug, but there was hardly anyone to receive Iranian President Hassan Rouhani when he landed in Delhi in February last year, alighted from the plane, got into a limousine and drove off.

If Israeli PM Netanyahu visits again later this month, the tally may even jump to 0-3. Our criteria for display of affection to world leaders remain confidential. It causes some unease, since it is exceedingly foolish if India becomes a partisan in the power struggle in that region over the rise of Iran. The US is actively promoting a regional axis between Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates aimed at creating 'strategic depth' for Israel and weaken Iran. The Trump administration resuscitated the moribund geo-strategy against the back-drop of the steady drain of American influence in West Asia. The rational thing to do would have been to normalise relations with Iran by following up on the constructive engagement embodied in the 2015 nuclear deal but the Trump administration, which is heavily under the influence of Israel and the neoconservative lobby, opted for exactly the opposite.

The West Asian power struggle has already affected India by way of US sanctions against Iran, with Washington inserting itself into the India-Iran oil trade. Meanwhile, pressure is also building up on India to align with the



MIDDLE PATH: India needs to tread carefully with its alignments.

In a medium-term perspective, Iran is the only 'natural ally' for India in the region, while for the present, the Sheikhs and Netanyahu are useful, too.

US and its regional West Asian allies. In some ways, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit last week and the proposed one-day trip by Netanyahu (amidst the hurly-burly of the Israeli election in April) can be seen in this light. Broadly, the game plan is to offer India an alternative package to its Iran ties which it cannot refuse. The Crown Prince's loud musings about India qualifying for \$100 billion investments and his offer of Saudi oil to make up for disruption of (Iranian) supplies fit into the paradigm.

This pantomime can be expected to play out on five templates — energy, Indian diaspora, trade and investment, regional connectivity and terrorism. For a start, take energy. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are sources of supply of oil, but Iran is the gas superpower, while Israel can never be a significant energy partner for India. If we take trade and investment, Iran is the biggest market (population: 82 million), exceeding by far the combined population of Saudi Arabia (33.5 million), the UAE (9.5 million) and Israel (8.4 million). Besides,

Iran's reconstruction is yet to seriously begin. Again, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran are potentially big investors in the Indian economy, but Israel lacks any investible surplus of capital.

To be sure, millions of Indians live and work in West Asia but the bulk of them are in Saudi Arabia and the UAE — close to 5 million Indians. Whereas, the Indian communities in Iran or Israel are miniscule in comparison. And that puts Saudi Arabia and the UAE into a special category. However, when we turn to regional connectivity, the partnership that Iran presents is unique for India's Eurasian integration. Unless and until Kashmir issue gets resolved, India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia and its capacity to tap into the vast mineral resources of that region will depend almost entirely on the transportation route heading north from the Chabahar Port. Neither Saudi Arabia and the UAE nor Israel can offer a substitute to Chabahar.

To be sure, India has major concerns over terrorism emanating from West Asia. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and

Israel have used terrorist groups as tools of regional policy in Syria, Libya, Yemen, etc. The Syrian government has repeatedly uncovered massive quantities of Israeli weapons and ammunition in areas liberated from Al-Qaeda affiliates. While Israel armed and equipped extremist groups as proxies against the Syrian government, Saudis and Emiratis recruited and funded them.

Meanwhile, the Saudi-Emirati bailout for the Pakistani economy (to the tune of \$12 billion), the proposed \$20 billion Saudi investments in Pakistan, and the recent visits by the crown princes of the two petrodollar states to Islamabad — these signify the revival of the alliance between the three Muslim countries in the West Asian geopolitical matrix. Pakistan becomes a crucial partner for Saudi Arabia and the UAE as they return to Afghanistan and size up its utility as a potential staging post to encircle and destabilise Iran from the east. They hope to reboot the Afghan Taliban with Wahabi ideology and reinvoke the movement's anti-Shi'ite moorings as of the nineties when they mentored the late Mullah Omar and his regime. Above all, Saudi Arabia may have need of Pakistani mercenaries if push comes to shove and Washington is unwilling or incapable of acting as the provider of security.

Suffice to say, the spectre of Saudi-Emirati-Pakistani convergence with tacit US and Israeli backing haunts India in its western neighbourhood. India cannot help cherry-picking. The grouping of the US' allies in West Asia, leave alone any single partner country in that region, can optimally fulfil India's aspirations as a rising power. In a medium-term perspective, Iran is the only 'natural ally' for India in that region, while for the present, the Sheikhs and Netanyahu are useful, too. India should tread warily. Hugging shouldn't mean guards are lowered, when there is so much evil around. Nor can it be the case that by not hugging we are spurning outstretched hands of sincere friendship.

The hunter of maladies & mischief

RAJIV SHARMA

SALT and pepper beard, lean frame, average height, energetic demeanour, white trousers, matching shirt and azure turban were the hallmarks of Mr Sucha Singh, the pharmacist at the school infirmary. He and the staff nurse, Mrs Evelyn, a corpulent lady from Kerala, were responsible for the health of 600-odd students, in the age group of 10 to 15 years, at the boarding school.

The health unit was the kingdom of Mr Sucha Singh and his writ ran in his territory. He and sister Evelyn were in charge of the affairs of the unit day and night, except for a half an hour when a medical specialist came for a daily round in the evening. Students sometimes feigned illness

to get admitted to escape the rigorous routine of physical training and drill. But no one could deceive the sharp-eyed pharmacist. He was deft at separating the wheat from the chaff and hypochondriacs and malingerers were sent packing to the dormitories.

But it was altogether a different ball game when he confronted the 'man-eater', a tall, lanky and daring boy of 14. Two years senior to us, he was a tough nut to crack. His coterie addressed him as 'Rajkumar' — from a thrilling story, *Bandhavgarh Ka Rajkumar*, from our Hindi textbook, wherein Jim Corbett, the legendary hunter, is tested for his patience, skill and courage when sent to decimate the dreaded man-eating tiger (Rajkumar).

Though his obsequious coterie called him Rajkumar, the meek

among us referred to him as a 'man-eater' in hushed tones.

With a sip of warm water, before placing the thermometer below his tongue, he was able to get entry into the kingdom of Mr Sucha Singh. The kind-hearted sister was taken in by his acting skills and Rajkumar was awarded a comfortable bed to escape the gruelling routine of the Army School for some days.

Mr Sucha Singh never believed what he saw or heard until verified by his scientific mind. His sixth sense did not want the man-eater in his den. But the temperature charts and perfect expressions worn by the patient were hard to ignore until his prying eyes discovered the daily dose of pills shoved under his mattress. From then on, there was an open war between the

man-eater and the hunter. Peals of laughter and a variety of food items brought by Rajkumar's gang were too much to handle for the hunter.

The next day, Mr Sucha Singh noted 'communicable disease' on his file and shifted the man-eater to the isolation ward. Door of the ward was opened only thrice a day to administer medicine and provide bread and milk to the patient.

Used to pampering, Rajkumar could not withstand the isolation for more than two days. He broke down to render an apology. The man-eater was caged, tamed and let off with a warning to never masquerade again to enjoy the hospitality of the infirmary, ruled by Mr Sucha Singh, the hunter of maladies that plagued the young and exuberant.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remove Governor

Reference to the edit 'Athagata Roy must go' (Feb 25); it is shocking that a person holding a constitutional post of Governor incites people to boycott Kashmiris and also tells countrymen not to visit Kashmir. After such ridiculous comments, there is no official condemnation from the government or the President, till the PM made a belated and indirect reference to it. The Governor's comments have belittled our Constitution as Kashmir is an integral part of the country. Despite the Supreme Court orders to states to provide protection to Kashmiris across the country, the Governor has not cared to withdraw his tweet. Should he not resign or be removed?

SL KATARIA, PATIALA

Low forest cover

Refer to 'Spare Aravallis, don't reduce forest cover: Protesters to govt' (Feb 25); the proposed amendment allowing construction in the Aravallis would further accentuate environmental (air, water, soil) woes of the NCR. The Aravallis serve as natural sinks, barrier to the advancing Rajasthan desert and recharger to the fast depleting water table. Haryana has an abysmally low forest cover at

3.58 per cent against the desirable level of 33 per cent. The need is for more reforestation.

LN DAHIYA, ROHTAK

How does it help?

Refer to 'Modi takes holy dip at Sangam, washes feet of sanitation workers' (Feb 24); how will this act of the Prime Minister salvage the plight of these poor people? The CEO of Indian democracy seems to have endless aces up his sleeve to stir the sentiments of gullible voters. This is nothing short of marketing by the PM. People are sick of such gimmicks by politicians. Please do something worthwhile which helps these people lead a better life.

BHUPINDER GUPTA, SHIMLA

Smash terror networks

Apropos the report 'Crackdown continues, 50 more arrested' (Feb 25), the outpouring of grief and anguish in India in the wake of the Pulwama attack is understandable but to create a war frenzy on this issue is not appropriate. This would only create more animosity. India should instead focus on action rather than words and find out how best the terror networks in Kashmir and Pakistan can be dismantled.

It should have been proactive on this issue and should not wait for a terror attack to strike before taking offensive action.

DEVENDRA KHURANA, BHOPAL

Poll arithmetic

Apropos 'Defeat terrorism not mere rhetoric' (Feb 25), it has been rightly said all political parties are on the same wavelength, engrossed in only verbal assault at one another. The only difference being that some are in power while others are not. This has resulted in the continuation of such incidents, leading to a huge loss of lives — defence and paramilitary personnel and civilians too. The security forces are fighting alone in Kashmir, without any holistic approach by all parties. Post Pulwama, when the nation demanded tangible action against Pakistan, this political class is busy in electoral arithmetic.

ANIL VINAYAK, AMRITSAR

Let them go

It is the right time to send off the separatists to wherever they have friends, if they don't consider India their own Kashmiri ('200 Jamaat leaders detained in Valley, separatist call it Art 35A conspira-

cy'; Feb 24). They have been treated with kid gloves by the UPA dispensation and the NDA government was also continuing with a soft approach towards them. They don't like to be called Indians, but they were enjoying all the VIP perks provided by the Indian State. Even after the Pulwama attack, they did not condemn Pakistan. They are the ones inciting the Kashmiri youth.

LJ SINGH, BY MAIL

Memorial to our heroes

Delighted to read about the inauguration of the National War Memorial, right behind India Gate ('Nation gets war memorial', Feb 25). It is impossible to put the significance of this memorial in words. It was long overdue. As an independent nation, we finally have our first memorial to honour the bravehearts who laid down their lives and scripted the history of modern India with their blood. The memorial is a stoic symbol to remember our martyrs and showing our solidarity with the families of our *shaheeds*. Every Indian should know about our war heroes. We should start including their stories in school textbooks. Salute the soldiers.

SALONI MOHAN, ZIRAKPUR

THE TARGET: JAISH

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Terror outfit once crushed in Kashmir, now in revival effort

Why Balakot is a watershed

The first time India has used airpower, and its first venture this deep inside Pakistan. The precedent also raises new challenges before the two countries in responding to each other

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

IN TUESDAY'S airstrike in Pakistan, India targeted a camp of Jaish-e-Mohammed, the terrorist group responsible for the attack that killed 40 CRPF men in Pulwama. The attack and the target underline the return to relevance of the outfit.

In recent years, Jaish chief Masood Azhar sent two of his nephews to Kashmir: Talha Rashid was killed in October 2017 and Usman Haider in 2018. On Tuesday, the government said the Jaish camp struck by the airstrike was headed by Maulana Yousuf Azhar alias Ustad Ghouri, Azhar's brother-in-law. Yousuf was one of seven Pakistani nationals who had organised the hijacking of flight IC-814 to Kandahar in 1999. In exchange for the hostages, Masood Azhar (arrested in 1994) and two others were released from jail.

Rise, fall, revival

Jaish is the newest terror group operating out of Pakistan; it was launched in 2000 with men from the Harkat-ul-Ansar which had already carried out major terror strikes in Kashmir. The first was the 1995 abduction of six western tourists through its front Al Faran, carried out with the aim of securing the release of Azhar and Harkat commander Sajad Afghani.

Jaish's first major strike, in 2000, was also the first suicide bombing in Kashmir and altered the trajectory of militancy. A young local recruit blew up a car at the entrance of the Army's 15 Corps in Srinagar. Later that year, Jaish sent another suicide bomber (a UK national) to the entrance of Army's 15 Corps with a explosives-laden car. In October 2001, Jaish attacked the J&K Assembly, so vicious that Pakistan was forced to condemn it. India managed to get Jaish listed as an international terrorist outfit by the UN that month.

On December 13, 2001, Jaish carried out the Parliament attack that pushed India and Pakistan into an eyeball-to-eyeball military situation. On December 26, 2001, Washington declared Jaish a foreign terrorist organisation. Then Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, under international pressure, launched a crackdown. Pakistan banned Jaish in 2002, but Azhar renamed Jaish as Khudam-ul-Islam and then as Al Rehmat Trust as a cover for terror activities.

Jaish split in 2002. This is when Azhar's family members became vital to its functioning. Pakistan sided with the US in Afghanistan and Azhar's group hatched plots to kill Musharraf, who survived two attempts in December 2003. This provoked a crackdown, with several Jaish men arrested and hanged by the Pakistani military. Azhar was put under house arrest. The killing of the entire Jaish top brass in Lolab in 2004, after Indian intelligence

sleuths lured them into a trap, routed the outfit in Kashmir. The group didn't emerge for the next 10 years.

Its revival began with a strike on a military camp in Kupwara in 2014, and the launch of 'Shaheed Afzal Guru fidayeen' squads. Major attacks include those in Pathankot and Uri in 2016.

The founder

Masood Azhar was born in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, on July 10, 1968, one of 12 children of schoolteacher Baksh Shabir; the family ran a dairy and poultry farm. In his book *The Virtues of Jihad*, Azhar writes that his father had Deobandi leanings. "One of my father's friends, Mufti Sayeed, was working as a teacher at the Jamia Islamia at the Binori Mosque in Karachi. He prevailed upon my father to admit me to Jamia," he wrote.

Azhar joined Binori madrasa and was later given a teaching job. Pass-outs from Binori madrasa played a vital role in formation of Taliban in Pakistan besides Harkat-ul-Ansar, later named Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the predecessor of Jaish. Leaders of Harkat had great influence on the madrasa. "A leader of Harkat-ul-Ansar, commander Akhtar, had come to invite the principal of the madrasa to visit Afghanistan. The principal, Mufti Ahmadur Rahman, suggested that Azhar should participate in the training course of jihad," Azhar writes.

Azhar is said to have failed to complete his 40-day military training at a Harkat camp in Afghanistan. He still joined the war against the Russians and was injured. Harkat appointed him head of the department of motivation, and he started editing Harkat publications.

Azhar's first terrorist act was against the Pakistan Army when he questioned the role of a contingent (which was on a UN mission) against a jihadi group in Somalia. Azhar also met Sajad Afghani who would become Harkat's Kashmir chief, later killed in India.

When Harkat decided to operate in Kashmir in 1994, a new group was created by merging Harkat-ul-Mujahideen with splinter group Harkat-e-Jihad-e-Islami. Soon Azhar became Harkat's general secretary, and its best orator. Harkat introduced foreign cadres, especially Afghan war veterans, into Kashmir.

In his mission of recruitment and fundraising, Azhar visited Zambia, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia and the UK. His meeting with Mufti Ismail of a Southall mosque was followed by visits to Mongolia and Albania. He also visited Nairobi and Kenya.

In 1994, Azhar flew into New Delhi from Dhaka as a Gujarat-born Portuguese national, Wali Adam Issa. He left for Deoband with two Harkat men from Kashmir. In Srinagar, he met Harkat commanders Sajad Afghani and Amjad Bilal. Azhar and Afghani went to Anantnag, where they were arrested on February 10.



In this photo released by the PMO, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security in New Delhi Tuesday, following the Indian Air Force's strike on a terror camp in Balakot. PTI

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

In what ways is the Indian incursion a watershed event in India-Pakistan engagement?

First, Tuesday's airstrikes by the Indian Air Force establishes a new threshold between the two nuclear neighbours for an Indian response to a terror attack. So far, India has either chosen to put diplomatic pressure on Pakistan (after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack), mobilise its armed forces (after the 2001 Parliament attack) or conducted limited ground-based operations (after the 2016 Uri attack) but has never used the Air Force, that too inside Pakistan.

The use of airpower has been taboo between the two countries, especially after both became declared nuclear powers in 1998, because of the dangers of escalation. While Pakistan has threatened retaliatory action, the fact remains that a major red-line about use of airpower has been crossed by India now. Restrictions around the use of airpower are best illustrated by the Kargil War, when the Vajpayee government allowed the IAF to be used, but did not allow it to cross the LoC. As much as it was about respecting the LoC and highlighting Pakistani incursions, it was also about the escalatory dangers of using airpower.

A more important reason making it a watershed is the extent of incursion. Indian operations after the 1971 War have always been limited to the Line of Control and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, never venturing into mainland Pakistan. As India considers PoK to be Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan, and LoC is a militarily active border manned by the two armies, military action there has been considered somewhat acceptable.

This airstrike also sets a precedent for future action by India: use of airpower in mainland Pakistan against terror camps. If it is Balakot today, it could be Bahawalpur or Muridke tomorrow. This new template for Indian response is going to create a public clamour in India after every terror incident to punish Pakistan, another reason that makes



ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016, India announced that the Army had carried out surgical strikes in the early hours of the day to destroy seven terrorist launch pads along the LoC. This was the first time that India officially acknowledged a military strike in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

THE ARMY said significant casualties had been inflicted on the terrorists and those providing support to them. The strikes came 10 days after the September 18, 2016 attack by Pakistani terrorists on a military base in Uri, which left 18 soldiers dead. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had vowed that the attack would not go unpunished.



Where Pakistan said there was firing

it a real watershed in the history of the bilateral relationship.

The Foreign Secretary has called it an "intelligence-led operation" and a "non-military preemptive action". What do



Pak Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi (right) heads an emergency meeting in Islamabad. Via AP

these expressions mean?

The Foreign Secretary was taking the care of asserting that the targets had been carefully selected, based on hard intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the camp. This intelligence would be from technical inputs (via satellites), or communication intercepts or human intelligence sources on the ground. By calling it an intelligence-led operation, the government was trying to send a message to the global audience that the airstrikes were not done at some arbitrarily chosen place but were part of a well-considered action.

The phrasing of "non-military preemptive action" was important for two reasons. Given that use of airpower inside Pakistani mainland territory is bound to be considered an act of war, India by calling it non-military wanted to reassure everyone that it is not such an act. That India chose not to target the Pakistani military or civilians but a terror camp was an important part of the Indian argument for preventing any escalation by the Pakistani side.

The words "preemptive action" were to suggest that the airstrike was not an act of revenge or retribution but an act of self-defence to prevent a likely terror attack in the future. All these phrases point to an effort to couch the action in terms that have a de-escalatory tone, giving Pakistan the space it may need to de-escalate.

Pakistan has called India's action "grave aggression" and warned of an "appropriate reply". What form could

that take?

Any step that Pakistan takes from here on as an "appropriate reply" would be escalatory in nature, which could beget a further response from India. While Pakistan will try and make a diplomatic case against India, it is unlikely to carry any weight because of its track record in dealing with terrorist groups. Any military action outside the LoC will be an act of war, and hitting any non-military target is fraught and could make the situation even more difficult for Pakistan.

Having wrested the initiative, India would have placed its armed forces on the highest alert, which takes away any element of surprise that Pakistan would want in conventional warfare. It may intensify its shelling along the border.

Having taken this leap, what are the key challenges for India?

The real challenge is of an escalation matrix. Essentially, this means that the Indian armed forces will now have to be prepared for a full-spectrum of conflict.

Politically, India is heading into elections and the BJP has done well to tone down the rhetoric.

Diplomatically, it is the challenge of dealing with the US, China and Russia, which are interested in a settlement with Pakistan and would advise both the countries to exercise restraint. While that restraint is now being asked of Islamabad, in case of a Pakistani military misadventure against India, that restraint would also be sought of New Delhi.

The surgical strike after the Uri attack did not prevent the Pulwama attack. If there is yet another attack, what could India's response be?

The purpose of a military action after a terror strike is either compellence or deterrence. While compellence refers to India's demonstration of military and political will to compel Pakistan to change its ways of patronising terror, deterrence refers to a fear of punishment to stop Pakistan from supporting another terror attack in India. The air strike in Balakot is a strong signal that India can hold the threat of action as a coercive tool and use the diplomatic offensive to demand compliance from Pakistan.

THE THEATRE: BALAKOT

A 6-acre training camp for 600 terror recruits, run by Masood Azhar's kin

RITU SARIN & NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

THE EXPECTATION of the Pakistani establishment that the Jaish-e-Mohammed's headquarters in Bahawalpur would be the obvious target of the Indian retaliation for the Pulwama terrorist attack, led to a large number of Jaish cadre being "congregated" at the organisation's main training centre in Balakot, top security officials have told *The Indian Express*.

Balakot is in the Mansehra district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is 63 km north of Abbottabad, (where United States special forces killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011), 200 km from Islamabad, and 40 km north-west of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

The Indian Air Force hit Jabha Top, a forested hilltop where the Jaish-e-Mohammed had its camp.

Indian intelligence agencies have over time compiled an impressive dossier on the activities of the jihadists who have been trained in the Balakot camp. There is a lot of information, including copious lists of Jaish cadres, and plenty of photographic evidence of militants moving around the complex, their exercise halls, ammunition dumps, firing range, and so on.

The training camp is described as being spread over six acres, with enough space to accommodate 600 cadres. The last "passing out" of militant recruits at Balakot, according to intelligence officials, was attended in April 1, 2018 by Mufti Abdul Rauf Asghar, the brother of Jaish founder Maulana Mazood Azhar.

In the complex distribution of portfolios and responsibilities among the members of his family following the creation of the Jaish, Azhar had assigned the task of overseeing the Balakot training centre to his brother-in-law Maulana Yousuf Azhar. This was mentioned by Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale in his media briefing on Tuesday,



Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. AP

The Indian dossier on the Jaish also contains photographs of Yousuf Azhar, and of the vehicle used by him for doing his daily rounds of the hilly training grounds and firing ranges at Balakot.

Balakot has symbolic significance for Jaish. It is the burial place of the Bareilly revivalist leader Syed Ahmed Shaheed and his associate Shah Ismail Shaheed, who were killed in Balakot in May 1831 while fighting the subcontinent's first — albeit unsuccessful — jihad against the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Jaish training camp in Balakot is named after Syed Ahmed Shaheed.

By all accounts, the activities inside the Syed Ahmed Shaheed Training Camp became more organised, and the numbers of Jaish cadres getting training there swelled after two nephews of Masood Azhar were killed by security forces in the Kashmir valley within the span of a year.

The first was Talha Rasheed, son of Azhar's brother-in-law Abdul Rasheed, who was killed in an encounter in Pulwama in

November 2017, and the other was Usman Haider, the Maulana's other nephew who was killed in Tral in October 2018.

It is to be recalled that Usman Haider was the son of Ibrahim Azhar, one of the hijackers of IC-814, the hijacking that had led to the release of Masood Azhar himself from prison in India almost two decades ago.

Balakot, and indeed the entire Mansehra district, has been central to the Pakistani security establishment's jihadist project. The area has a very large number of mosques and madrassas, and this is where the first camps were set up to train jihadists for the Afghan war and later, for Kashmir.

Close to Balakot is Garhi Habibullah, where the Hizbul Mujahideen is reported to have a training camp. Back in 2005, the monthly Pakistani magazine Herald had published a report on the restarting of various jihadist training camps in Mansehra district after having been shut for a couple of years in the aftermath of 9/11.



The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Decisive and restrained



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

IAF operation has established air strikes as an effective tool of deterrence in sub-conventional warfare

THE NEW RED LINE

India signals resolve to push the envelope on the deterrence imposed by nuclear parity to defend itself against terror

THE SUCCESSFUL STRIKE by Indian Air Force jets against a training camp for Jaish-e-Mohammad militants in Balakot in Pakistan has set a new metric, etched a new red line, in the fraught relations between the two neighbours. With this, India has signaled its willingness and ability to push the envelope on the deterrence imposed by nuclear parity in order to defend itself against terrorist groups waging a proxy war in Kashmir and elsewhere in its territory on behalf of the Pakistan Army. Unlike the surgical strike that followed the September 2016 Jaish attack in Uri, which was planned and conducted by India's Army across the Line of Control in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, this aerial strike targeted a camp atop a mountain in Balakot in Manshera district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, making it the first operation of its kind since 1971.

India's government had promised a response to the February 14 Jaish-e-Mohammad attack against a CRPF convoy in Kashmir that killed 40 jawans. By calling it a "non-military pre-emptive" strike against the Jaish which was planning more attacks across India, the government has underlined the message that this was a defensive act. That it was a strike on terrorism, not Pakistan. This is further reinforced by the fact that it was the country's top diplomat who made the formal announcement of the Indian action, and that he described it as an "intelligence-based" operation. The careful choice of words, meant to convey that the strike was nothing less than what India described, but nothing more than that either, showed a sobriety that this delicate moment demands of a responsible power.

It is now the time to build on this and reach out across the world to convey the unequivocal message that India continues to seek a resolution to its issues with Pakistan through diplomatic means. Pakistan may be unwilling, it may allow or even help the JeM to get back on its feet after this attack. But that only means that India's diplomatic work is not yet done. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj travels to Beijing this week to attend the Russia-India-China foreign ministers' meeting, and to Abu Dhabi later to represent India as the "guest of honour" at the Organisation of Islamic Conference foreign ministers' plenary. At both places, India must underline the important role that friends of Pakistan can and must play in dissuading it from using terrorists to achieve its strategic objectives. Pakistan must be cautioned about the diminishing returns of such a policy and of India's determination to ensure that the costs will only mount.

AFTER BALAKOT

There is diplomatic work to be done abroad. The OIC is an apt forum to make a beginning

THE FIRST EVER invitation for Delhi to address a ministerial gathering of the Islamic nations is an important breakthrough in independent India's diplomacy. Delhi certainly appears to have outsmarted Pakistan, which has for decades sought to block or undercut India's outreach to the Islamic nations. The back story with Pakistan at the Organisation of Islamic Conference is nearly half a century old. India was invited to participate in the founding conference of the OIC at Rabat, Morocco in 1969, but Pakistan compelled the Conference to "disinvite" India. Rabat has been one of independent India's worst diplomatic humiliations. Since then, Pakistan has repeatedly used the forum to target India on Kashmir. The OIC, with its provocative pronouncements crafted in Pakistan, became a permanent headache for Indian diplomacy, becoming more intense in moments of crises with Pakistan of the kind that is playing out since the Pulwama attack.

That the Indian foreign minister can now walk into the OIC and address it as a guest of honour is an important inflection point in India's engagement with the Muslim world. The government of Pakistan could not even publicly protest against the invitation to Swaraj, for the initiative has come from one of Islamabad's closest partners — the United Arab Emirates. It has strong support from Pakistan's other long-standing allies like Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The invitation also reflects the altered perceptions of Pakistan and India in the Middle East and beyond. In the 1950s and 1960s, Pakistan was seen as one of the natural leaders of the Muslim world. Today it is seen as an economic supplicant looking for dole from oil rich nations. India, in contrast, is seen as a major economic partner by all the key Islamic countries.

For Swaraj, the OIC meeting provides a big opportunity to explain the origins of the current crisis with Pakistan, the rationale behind the preemptive attack on the Balakot terror camp, and Delhi's repeated efforts for peace and reconciliation with Pakistan. Beyond the immediate, Swaraj can build on the fact that most Muslim countries are threatened by violent religious extremism and are open to long-term security cooperation with India. Delhi must focus on converting this diplomatic breakthrough into sustained institutional engagement with the OIC, including a possible observer status in the organisation. India's formal engagement with the OIC, however, is unlikely to stop Pakistan from taking advantage of India's internal troubles. As Delhi begins to leverage the new goodwill in the Islamic world, it must also renew the process of healing in Kashmir.

WHISPER NO MORE

The Oscar to a documentary about menstruation is an important step towards the breaking of an unsanitary silence

A DOCUMENTARY ON a group of Indian women fighting patriarchy for the right to hygiene and dignity, has just won an Oscar and, rightfully, the nation is rejoicing. It is not often that women from the global south get a voice on as big a platform as the Academy Awards, especially if they hail from impoverished, rural backgrounds as do the protagonists of *Period. End of Sentence*. But this win is being celebrated in large part because it has thrust onto the global stage a conversation that was — and continues to be in large parts of South Asia — a whispered one.

Because that's what you have to contend with when you grow up female in South Asia: The belief that menstruation is not a normal biological function. It is a shameful secret, wrapped in a newspaper and slid discreetly across the counter by the chemist. It is an abomination that offends the gods and pollutes the kitchen, and it makes women weak and inferior to men. This is the belief that has denied women, especially in rural India, access to sanitary products, forcing them to make do with cloth rags, sand and sawdust, imperilling their health and damaging their dignity.

The Oscar win couldn't come at a better time. In the last year alone, the conversation about menstruation has become louder and more public. There was the film *Pad Man* which sought to normalise period discourse. The Sabarimala controversy, too, centred squarely on the rights of menstruating women, has made clearer than ever before how many women — and men — find menstrual taboos restrictive, discriminatory and plain tedious. With *Period...* now grabbing the baton, the race towards the end of such beliefs and practices can only get quicker. There must be no more whispering — only loud, impassioned arguing for equal rights to health and dignity.

IN A CALIBRATED, decisive and yet restrained show of force, the Indian Air Force (IAF) converted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise of punitive action into reality as it pounded jihadi training camps in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) in a series of coordinated air strikes in the wee hours of Tuesday. Seen in isolation from a contemporary conflict scenario, air strikes in counter-terrorist operations are the preferred first option across the Western world for a few reasons.

First, they are safer than committing boots on the ground. Second, the seductive technological capability of precision allows for pinpoint targeting and the possibility of carrying out effective decapitation missions against terrorist cadres. And lastly, air strikes are no longer seen as escalatory mechanisms in a sub-conventional conflict. India's hesitation in the past to use airpower as an effective tool of deterrence in sub-conventional operations had its reasons and some of them may well have been justified. However, this writer has for long argued that while many of these reasons — responsibility, restraint and escalation — may hold true while conducting sub-conventional operations in the hinterland, different paradigms have existed in Jammu and Kashmir ever since Pakistan raised the tempo of its covert war by employing proxies like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

Through the Nineties, the IAF argued that it had the capability to hit terrorist camps in PoK and that this ought to be a critical element of a clear punitive policy, which many Northern Army Commanders have suggested. Successive governments, however, failed to bite the bullet and continued with reactive response strategies that eschewed the use of air power because of a lack of understanding of what air power could and could not do. During the Kargil conflict, the IAF wanted to hit the logistics lines opposite the Kargil area that would choke supplies

India's hesitation in the past to use airpower as an effective tool of deterrence in sub-conventional operations had its reasons and some of them may well have been justified. However, this writer has for long argued that while many of these reasons — responsibility, restraint and escalation — may hold true while conducting sub-conventional operations in the hinterland, different paradigms have existed in Jammu and Kashmir ever since Pakistan raised the tempo of its covert war by employing proxies like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

but was held back with restrictions to not cross the LoC. Similarly, in 2002, the IAF conducted some strikes, albeit without crossing the LoC, during the closing stages of Operation Parakram when Pakistan made some effective incursions in the Neelam-Gurez sector. It is believed that the IAF had options ready after the 2008 attack, but the overarching need to be seen by the world as a "responsible and restrained" state saw India balk at the use of force.

Tuesday's action, when viewed through the prism of the issues discussed above, answers a few long-standing dilemmas and raises a few questions. The first is that there seems to be an emerging understanding within the strategic community and the political establishment that offensive air power can be employed as a credible tool of punitive or proactive deterrence, a policy that has been attributed to the more muscular national security posture of the Modi government. Does this constitute a crossing of the Rubicon or is it just a decisive operational response? The Rubicon, a point of no return, has always been in the mind of our strategic establishment and one only hopes that this enhances their understanding of the utility of air power as a kinetic tool of statecraft that can be employed with restraint. For the IAF, I am sure it was an opportunity to walk the talk and demonstrate what it has been training for years in the sub-conventional domain.

When PM Modi announced that he has given a free hand to the armed forces to act after the Pulwama attack, he was criticised for abdicating political responsibility for any military action — his critics failed to distinguish between reality and rhetoric. I will argue that what he meant was he would give full freedom to the armed forces to ideate and plan for multiple options without imposing any restrictions, but the final green signal would obviously come from the PM himself. The fact that the air attack plan is said to have been explained in detail by the

air chief to the raksha mantri, and that PM Modi monitored the attack in real time, reflects that there was good synergy between all stakeholders in the operation.

The IAF must be commended for not engaging in mission over-reach, considering that it does not regularly conduct such operations and unlike many reports in the popular media that the Pakistan air force goofed up its air defence response, I will argue that the surprise element and the timing may have caught the best air forces by surprise. It was a mission well-executed and from the first statement issued during an MEA briefing and subsequent statements from the NSA, it is assessed that significant damage was caused to the target systems chosen.

Whether there will be consequences is too early to say and depends on numerous variables — China will condemn the attacks, but is likely to advise restraint. They have too much at stake with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The West will be cautious in any criticism, but as always, focus on the nuclear dimension as a means of diffusing tension. The internal situation in Pakistan and its precarious economic condition may preclude the possibility of any escalated conventional response. What remains is continued subversion and prosecution of its time-tested covert war using proxies as a low-cost option, albeit with a changed flavour. An outside chance, of course, is a Eureka moment that brings home the realisation to the Pakistani deep state that war of any kind is a losing proposition for the country as its asymmetry vis-a-vis India grows. In the meantime, India cannot afford to let its guard down. War as we know it is not an option but full-spectrum and hardened deterrence is an absolute necessity. The radars must keep churning.

The writer is a retired Air Vice Marshal from the Indian air force and a strategic commentator



SHALINI LANGER

MEMORIES STIRRED BY PULWAMA

Where childhood ends and fear begins

THE SAW MILL at the start of the lane. In my growing-up years, the beginning and end of my summer holidays were marked by this mill, a few metres from my grandparents' house in Jammu. It was never much, just an open shed with a tin roof. But in the dusty, sweaty summers, it carried a hint of the hills.

It was also an odd entity in that neighbourhood. Passing by, we could see what seemed like giant machines whirring and hear the wood being shaved, sliced and hauled. The whiff of the fresh shavings, the irritation in the throat if you swallowed one by mistake, the sharp edges of some spilling onto the road, and the horses lugging the wood in carts, leaving a trail of dung.

When we were grown up enough, we heard another story about that mill. How my aunt's eldest child, on her way to college, had come under the wheels of a cart there. She didn't survive. My aunt never talked about her "most beautiful one". Unlike our angry times, I heard no one blame the mill, whose Kashmiri owners remained respected neighbours.

Years passed, the cousins got jobs and moved out, the grandparents' house became larger and yet smaller, its grounds holding more cars than grass, our days got somehow shorter, while the mill disappeared. Overtaken by grass, its machines left to rot in a bolting city that it was too slow for.

I have struggled to hold on to its memory, as to the memory of the Jammu of my childhood, a Jammu untainted, for me, by hatred. A Jammu where my mother and

Could one enter a tunnel (jawahar) an Indian and leave it an anti-national? Did something change in the air at Banihal, marking this 'border', where a cousin once treated me to a sumptuous lunch, in quarters he shared with families from all over India, there to build a railway line to Kashmir? Maybe I was shielded from it, or maybe I was just blind to the Jammu that has now emerged, picking what it wants from its partner.

aunts spent hours agonising over the thinness and softness of each other's exorbitant Kashmiri shawls, and proclaiming expertise over the embroidery. A Jammu that would be tied for me with the kangri carried by my grandfather under his clothes (an art lost with that generation) and the kahwa slurped over gossip — the only time we were allowed "tea" by a mother guarding our "fair" looks. The kahwa would help wash down the yakhni, whose fragrance still filled the room, while the mothers swapped recipes of Kashmiri haak saag.

Years later, owning more shawls than she remembers, my mother never passes by a Kashmiri shawl shop — always the most crowded in any market — without picking one up, and demanding a discount. "Hum bhi wahin ke hain," she says. The shopkeeper smiles back. I ran into one such shopkeeper in Old Jerusalem, of all places, and no, the story didn't play out any differently.

What is Jammu about me, and what is Kashmir? Where does one end, and the other begin? Could one enter a tunnel (Jawahar) an Indian and leave it an anti-national? Did something change in the air at Banihal, marking this "border", where a cousin once treated me to a sumptuous lunch, in quarters he shared with families from all over India, there to build a railway line to Kashmir? Maybe I was shielded from it, or maybe I was just blind to the Jammu that has now emerged, picking what it wants from its partner. A Jammu creaking under the vehemence of family

WhatsApp groups.

Ironically, the Pulwama attack spurring that vehemence again brought me back those lost years — if only briefly. The Pakistani killed in the Rajasthan jail in its aftermath belonged to Sialkot, the town my maternal grandfather left behind during a time of another terror — Partition. Settling in a Jalandhar lane with his bride, my nana built a small business whose one chain goes across the border even today. As Karachi Bakery came under attack in Bengaluru, I remembered my mother talking about a dessert he got back from his travels: Karachi halwa. She pulled out that memory one day suddenly, while biting into a sweet — years after he had died. To us children, he was a tall man with a booming voice, who would always get something for us to eat — mostly patties from a local bakery, that he called bakarkhani (a word with roots from Central Asia to Bangladesh). Later, I could never read *Kabuliwala* — about the tall Afghan with a booming voice, whose pockets always had goodies — without remembering him.

Pulwama has now given me another memory. The 20-year-old who carried out the attack worked at a saw mill. I imagine him driving into the CRPF convoy, and in the blast that follows, I see my saw mill blow up — up go the machines, that table where they sliced the wood, the shavings, the horses, and down they come in a million little pieces. To be never put together again.

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FEBRUARY 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW FACE FOR JANATA THE JANATA PARTY treasurer, C B Gupta, bowed out of the leadership contest on "technical grounds", naming the erstwhile Congress For Democracy (CFD) leader, Raj Mangal Pandey, as the pro changers' candidate for the chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh. Pandey now faces the ministerialists' nominee, Banarasi Das. The meeting of the Uttar Pradesh Janata Legislature Party is slated to be held tomorrow to elect a new leader to succeed Ram Naresh Yadav as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Yadav had resigned after having lost the vote of confidence in the party by nine votes on February 15.

TARAPUR SNAG A FRESH ATTEMPT will be made during the talks the US Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, will have in Delhi to break the deadlock between India and the United States over the question of supply of nuclear fuel for the Tarapur atomic plant. Two shipments — of 16.8 tonnes and 19.8 tonnes — of nuclear fuel are long overdue from the US. The application for 16.8 tonnes of fuel has been blocked in the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which has been putting off a decision for one reason or the other. The application for 19.8 tonnes of nuclear fuel is pending with the US State Department and is yet to be sent to the NRC.

VIETNAM'S STRENGTH THE CHINESE DEPUTY vice-prime minister, Deng Xiaoping said the war with Vietnam would end in about 10 days, *Kyodo* reported. He said the Vietnamese had expected help from "those who pulled the string behind them". In an apparent reference to the Soviet Union, he was reported to have added, "If we are afraid of that, other people would think we are soft. When we made up our mind (to fight), we kind of thought let's see ourselves if the Chinese had a nervous breakdown". Answering a question, Deng said the war with Vietnam would end sooner than it had with India in 1962 because, according to him, "Vietnam is stronger than India".

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India and Pakistan need to stop beating the drums of war and seek a way out of confrontation."

—THE GUARDIAN

Remembrance and foreboding

In the last five decades, the complexion of India's confrontation with Pakistan has changed



K M CHANDRASEKHAR

AMID WAR CRIES, memories flood my mind of wartimes past. In 1961, the Chinese streamed into the Northeast and marched relentlessly towards Tezpur, driving back an inadequately armed, ill-equipped Indian army, used to years of peace and a threat-free environment. Those were the days when India believed Jawaharlal Nehru was invincible. And, indeed, he strode the globe like a veritable colossus in the Fifties, the founder and leader of non-alignment, the creator of the Panchsheel contract with China, the votary of global peace and disarmament. I recall the large advertisements and headlines in the newspapers and periodicals of the day proclaiming, "When Nehru leads, victory is ours."

We, as a nation, have progressed much since those days but we have not recovered from our colonial obsession with the concept of infallibility of individual leaders, regardless of the fact that the founding fathers of our Constitution have given us, in their wisdom, a Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, where leadership is collective, where responsibility resides in the Cabinet as a whole rather than in any one person or his office. When the time came to find a scapegoat, the unpopular defence minister took the blame even though it was Nehru who had proclaimed on October 12, 1962, that he had ordered the Indian army to clear the NEFA areas of Chinese invaders. The king could do no wrong then and the king can do no wrong now.

When we first went into a regular war with Pakistan, I was in college. India's prime minister was a mild-mannered man, quite the antithesis of his predecessor, liked by all and worshipped by those who worked with him. The western front with Pakistan was opened up at several points as "surgical strikes" were made into Indian territory. Pakistan demonstrated superior firepower and armoured, acquired from the US at the height of the Cold War. The decision was boldly taken to use air power and the balance was restored. We lived in Delhi and there was the frequent threat of air attacks. Black sheets were stuck against windowpanes to keep the light out to delude enemy warplanes. In each locality, residents formed groups and took turns walking up and down the streets with stout sticks in their hands to keep opportunistic thieves at bay. Air-raid sirens would blare out occasionally and fear prevailed until the threat passed.

In college, there was a frenzy of excitement. NCC training had been made compulsory after the 1961 war in the hopeful but mistaken belief that marching up and down in heavy army boots a couple of days each week would make soldiers of us. Rumours of all kinds were floated with alacrity, less speedily and less pervasively, no doubt, as there was no social media, no news channels, not even TV. When the war

ended, Lal Bahadur Shastri once again showed his mettle. At Tashkent, he had the courage to make peace with Pakistan. I recall newspaper pictures of the man, dwarfed completely by the huge, hulking figure of his Pakistani counterpart, shyly shaking hands with him. It takes a great deal of courage to make and maintain peace. It is easier to let things go their own way and start a fight, to join in the jingoistic war-mongering cries of irresponsible people who never expect to fight or be hurt themselves. The soldiers can go and fight and lose their lives, we can sit on the sidelines and watch the fun. After the war, we can make patriotic noises and do little, insignificant things for soldiers. Shastri died the next day and the course of Indian history changed.

1971 was different in that it was a war that was politically-crafted and patiently led. The simmering discontent in East Pakistan had been sharply watched and unobtrusively supported. The plans for intervention had been carefully laid out over a period of months. War was started when the occasion was right, when we were completely ready, when political factors were in our favour, when the Pakistani political world itself was riven with dissension and strife. India swept through the eastern half of Pakistan and made inroads into the western part. This time, the surrender did take place and Bangladesh was born.

The only time I ever went to Pakistan was immediately after the 1971 war. IAS officers have to go through a period of military attachment and my group was attached to the army inside Pakistani territory, in the Shakargarh sector on the banks of the river Ravi. We lived in tents and were made to toil hard from dawn to dusk. Overall, it was an unforgettable experience. The army sends its best cooks to forward formations and the food was literally out of this world. In those days, those of us who had ceased to be teetotalers, had the added incentive of being able to consume large quantities of alcohol. I still remember a beautiful afternoon relaxing on rubber dinghies on the river Ravi, then shallow and placid, drinking beer and consuming an enormous amount of snacks. We were half-a-century younger and digestion was correspondingly strong.

Are we seeing war clouds on the horizon again? In the last five decades, the complexion of war with Pakistan has changed. In conventional warfare, we probably have a decisive edge but any protracted war at this point of time is unlikely to remain conventional. From what I have read, the nuclear arsenals of the two countries are more or less evenly matched. The growth of technological capacity has brought in its wake the possibility of cyber attacks of various kinds. War, therefore, will not be limited to the soldiers. It has the potential to affect millions of human beings and its after-shocks could linger for many years.

Posturing is unavoidable in a pre-election situation but mature reflection and reasoned thinking on all sides is needed to go even one step beyond this. Knee-jerk reactions and inflammatory statements can create havoc of unimaginable proportions. It isn't just a game of cricket any more.

The writer is a former Cabinet Secretary



C.R. Sasikumar

Small town, cleaner future

Big cities should learn how to implement waste separation effectively from small, mid-sized Indian cities



CITIES AT CROSSROADS

BY ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA AND ALMITRA PATEL

unload waste mechanically) for self-help groups by guaranteeing their monthly repayments to banks from the city payments to their SHCs for waste collection services. The tractors moved punctually and dependably along lanes, stopping at every six-seven houses to collect unmixed waste. The same teams swept the roads, so they had the incentive to do efficient collection without spillovers during the process of collection.

The tractor trailers first offloaded the wet waste which was stabilised for two weeks by stack-composting — composting in vertical heaps that require less space and are piled off the ground for natural air circulation, without manual turning. This was fed to vermi-beds where quality vermicompost was in good demand, earning the municipality Rs 45,000 per month.

The tractor trailers had high wire-mesh compartments for different categories of dry waste which was offloaded at the inner city sorting shed. Eight waste-pickers on city payroll further separated the wastes for daily sale. This is what normally happens informally at the rear of all waste-buyers premises. The sale of recyclables generated additional earnings of Rs 55,000 per month.

Open drain cleaning was done in the afternoons. Soggy silt went directly into a wheelie-bin and then into a dedicated leak-proof collection vehicle which unloaded the silt and the debris for widening the road shoulders of all radial roads.

The Suryapet experience clearly shows that citizens can be incentivised to give wet and dry wastes unmixed when they see clear administrative will and primary collection vehicles designed to accept and transport wastes unmixed. The universal complaint of city officials that residents do not cooperate is often an excuse for their own lack of will, vision and action.

A second inspiring example of what human leadership can do, is found in Karjat, a small town in Maharashtra with a population of close to 30,000. Ramdas Kokare was appointed commissioner of the municipal council of Karjat in end-2017, arriving with a fine reputation for making tiny Vengurla (population of 13,000 and floating tourists 5000) a dump-free town. Public expectations of him must have been high. Within two days of joining, Kokare strictly enforced Maharashtra's ban on plastic carry bags. These are now replaced by sari-cloth bags which cost Rs 6 per bag. Handcart vendors use bags made out of newspapers. What is amazing is how he persuaded Karjat residents, already enjoying doorstep waste collection, to cooperate in giving 36 kinds of waste separately on different days of the week! This is probably a global first.

Many progressive cities abroad have different bins for wet-dry-garden waste and re-

jects, and separate days of the month or year to collect e-waste or discarded household furniture and appliances. But Karjat is the first town where we have seen regular weekly collection of so many separate items. Kokare must have intensely motivated and trained his waste collection staff to demand and sustain such achievement. The large shed at the former dump is now full of separate categories of waste regularly being purchased and removed.

The secret of the success of Kokare and Khadar, is passion and daily personal supervision, both going around the city every morning before office hours to meet, persuade and exhort citizens to cooperate. In Karjat, after initial warnings, doorstep collectors refuse to collect mixed waste and also report the person. The same evening, an official comes and grills the person on where they dumped their uncollected mixed waste. Such intense individual effort is especially required at the start. Once word gets around, cooperation is easier.

There are other cities with innovative approaches to solid waste management. In Namakkal (population of 55,000) in Tamil Nadu, pushcart collection workers have been manually separating mixed waste into wet and dry, daily at the doorstep of each household, rather than attempt behavior change. Years later, Raichur (2.3 lakh population), Warangal (6.15 lakh population), and Kolar (15.3 lakh population) have redesigned their pushcarts to enable them to carry half a dozen bags on the cart so that dry waste can be sorted then and there for easy sale without the need for a sorting centre. Alappuzha in Kerala was recently recognised by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) for its decentralised system of waste management. In these and many more small towns, the secret of success is meticulous micro-planning, committed leadership at the administrative level and receptive and engaged communities. The objective is clear — a litter-free, bin-free and dump-free city.

Big cities scoff at small towns leading the way and claim that their own waste volumes are unmanageable. But even in large metropolitan cities, populations of most wards are smaller than of these towns. Decentralisation and effective use of delegated power at the ward level are crucial if micro-planning and implementation is to work with cooperation from RWAs. Only then can we find collective solution to the challenges of solid waste management in our larger cities.

Ahluwalia is chairperson, ICRIER and former chairperson of the high-powered committee on urban infrastructure and services. Patel is member, Supreme Court committee on solid waste management

Big cities scoff at small towns leading the way and claim that their own waste volumes are unmanageable. But even in large metropolitan cities, populations of most wards are smaller than of these towns. Decentralisation and effective use of delegated power at the ward level are crucial if micro-planning and implementation is to work with cooperation from RWAs.

"the war has been going on since Partition" and only the instruments of war have been changing: "The enemy enters as regulars, irregulars or terrorists." The editorial adds that internally, an intellectual cover has been created through the skewed narratives of human rights and Kashmiriyat and the Hurriyat and stonepelters are an extension of Pakistan's aggression. It adds that "in tune with the peaceful aspirations of Bharat, every Prime Minister has explored some ground for dialogue with Pakistan but what they received in return was backstabbing. Pulwama is followed by the Kartarpur initiative as Kargil was followed by the Lahore initiative. For Pakistan and its stooges in the Valley, this is an existential war and violence is an integral part of it."

It also says that "at this critical juncture, we have to come out of the 'stable Pakistan is good for us' mindset."

HOW'S THE JOSH?

AN ARTICLE IN *Panchjanya* claims that two recently released films — *Uri: The Surgical Strike* and *Gully Boy* — "give a fitting reply to all those who had raised questions over the surgical strike conducted two years ago" and to those who "after the Pulwama terror attack alleged that Muslims are not safe in India". The article asserts that the success of

Uri: The Surgical Strike has shown a mirror to those political parties, NGOs and journalists who were calling the surgical strike a fake. The film's total box office collection so far has been Rs 230 crore, according to the article. "In the movie, when an army officer before the surgical strike operation asks his team, 'How's the josh?', then not just the team members on screen but the audience too respond — 'high, sir!'" the article claims. This film "is an example how a movie can play a strong role in expressing the sentiments of common people against any anti-national negative propaganda".

The article then claims that when the government reacted to the Pulwama incident, a handful agenda-driven journalists and intellectuals started creating the bogey that Kashmiris and Muslims were no longer safe in the country. But "on February 14 *Gully Boy* was released in which the lead characters were Muslims". "It can be said that if anti-Muslim sentiment existed in society the film would not have been successful," the article claims.

DEFEAT POPULISM

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* says that populism is on the rise, which inextricably links politics to society with an adverse fallout on the economy and long-term national security.

According to the article, populist schemes include farm-loan waivers and Rythu Bandhu grants to big farmers, subsidised canteens, free laptops, free saris, baby/mother kits, wedding grants, free TVs, old-age pensions, unemployment allowance, reservations for castes and communities, free energy and pump sets to farmers, free land for housing even before the construction of houses, free education schemes, free cycle schemes for girls, free health schemes, etc. The article claims that by "indulging in such farcical free sops, populists — left-wing, centrist and right-wing — are... not only making a joke of democracy, they are also disrupting our economy and politics". It also asserts that leaders of all political parties are to be blamed for the messy economic and political situation of the country today. It adds that the emergence of "regional satraps", who are mostly authoritarian and autocratic and have no regard or respect for liberal institutions.

The ballot in 2019, it contends, will involve two competing ideas of modern India — dynasts vs nationalists. It exhorts the reader: "Do not fall prey to competitive populism. None of them will honour their pre-poll promises. Wake up 'We the people of India!' Give a DECISIVE VERDICT (sic) against pretenders masquerading as... saviours."

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HANDLE WITH CARE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Anxious in Itanagar' (IE, February 26). The angry protests over a committee report regarding Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC) to six non-tribal communities reinforces the sensitive nature of the identity issue in the Northeast. The BJP may have its own reasons to press for the Citizenship Amendment Bill but the fact remains the party's recklessness is alienating it from people in the region. The demographic issue in the Northeast has always been a complex one and utmost caution should be exercised in intervening in it. **Vijai Pant, Hempur**

DEBATING PEDAGOGY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Pedagogy and politics', (IE, February 26). The constitution of the Bharatiya Shiksha Board (BSB) to standardise Vedic education is an encouraging development. Incorporating elements of modern education into our traditional system of learning holds promises for more inclusive teaching and learning. Imported ideas and concepts have their limitations. Education must be founded on indigenous wisdom to be relevant. **Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata**

TIME FOR SANITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'View from

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

the Valley' (IE, February 22). As the Lok Sabha elections inch closer, the political class seems hesitant about giving any statement on the Pulwama attack that might be construed as controversial. At the same time, however, aggressive actions like stopping water to Pakistan may do more harm than good. **Sanidhya Jain, Ujjain**

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

EVER-WAR

IN THE CONTEXT of the attack in Pulwama and its immediate aftermath, the editorial in *Organiser* claims that while the entire nation stands with soldiers and calls for vengeance, the usual suspects are asking for "peace talks". The editorial also claims that the narrative of "Kashmiri students being attacked all over Bharat was systematically built", forgetting the fact that the students who were being questioned "either celebrated the killing of soldiers or shouted pro-Pakistan slogans".

"If all this was not enough, the caste categories of bravehearts were also (re)counted by sick minds," the editorial says. It adds that after the Pulwama attack, the army has already started operations in the Valley and the government is exploring diplomatic, economic, and military options for action across the border. What is missing in this battle of nerves is the grasp of the "real nature of the war" and "a pro-Bharat narrative around the same", the editorial contends. It adds that



We the hatemongers

Social media or news television simply reflects the hate and abuse inside society. Controlling that is our job, not some tech company's



MEDIASCOPE

VANITA KOHLI KHANDEKAR

You walk into a crowded coffee shop. There are several groups, couples and singles at the dozen odd tables. Some of those conversations can be overheard. Somebody is talking about their personal problems, discussing politics or holding forth on his achievements.

Suddenly you hear something that you don't agree with or don't like. You get up to argue. You soon start abusing the person who said that. Soon the whole coffee shop becomes a battleground. There is a skirmish, cups are broken, tables overturned. The coffee shop owner is left to clean his café. Just when he is about to open it again, he is told that he is disturbing the neighbourhood. If he cannot keep his customers in check he won't get permission to run the coffee shop.

That essentially is the conundrum that social media companies face.

They provide a platform; unlike a coffee shop, it is for free. You go there talk, scream, shout, argue, hang out with like-minded people. But because it is a social media platform, all sorts of people are likely to be there. They don't like what you say or you don't like something they say. But unlike a dinner party it doesn't stop at polite

disagreement. It becomes vicious and abusive and very often spills onto the streets — in the form of lynching, killings or riots.

Can you blame the platform for it? Sure, tech companies can do a much better job of facilitating the conversations that they monetise. Facebook is cavalier with our data. Twitter seems to have no control over rampant abuse, threats, bad language and fake videos. But would calling its CEO and founder Jack Dorsey before a panel help deal with this?

The problem is us, the people. Maybe it is time to start taking responsibility for our behaviour as citizens, as audiences or simply as human beings. Maybe it is time to start educating ourselves on the basics of our history, economics, politics and everything else that we debate about, usually on the basis of "WhatsApp university forwards." On most days,

arguments are between people with no knowledge or half-baked understanding of an issue. It is amazing what a three-five minute fact check can do to the most vicious and blatantly false forwards and videos — if you are willing to not fall in the trap of believing something because it fits with your pre-conceived notions.

The truth is that mass media, especially news media, has failed India and Indians. The easier it has become to launch a news channel or newspaper, the worse the quality. India has a world-beating 400 news channels. Most don't even use the fig leaf of journalism any more. Several have become mouthpieces for the state; others are rabble-rousers and hatemongers. Not one of them has been summoned by a parliamentary panel or had their license revoked. Nor have they got notices from the News Broadcasters Association, the body that attempts, without much success, to self-regulate.

The problem in news broadcasting is one of ownership. More than half of India's news channels are owned by people or companies that have no interest in producing good quality journalism. The idea is to peddle influ-

ence, extort favours or simply become a propaganda tool. News remains one of the smallest and most unprofitable segments of India's booming television industry. How can any honest news outlet — which is about research, analysis, travelling to the spot, all very expensive things to do — ever compete against well-funded rabble rousers.

At forums and in debates, there is lot of fulminating about how news channels chase television rating points or TRPs. But TRP is a measure of the viewership, the audience for these news channels. If there was no audience would they bother?

It is time then for us as audiences and as Indians to reject hate and bad behaviour — whether it is on a social media platform or on a news channel. A journalist, an editor, an expert, a stranger or your friends may have a point of view you don't agree with. But no one can be allowed to express their disagreement through violence and abuse. Why indulge in hate? And if we do then why expect Twitter or Facebook to clean our society when we cannot even agree to disagree politely.

<http://twitter.com/vanitakohlki>

CHINESE WHISPERS

'Babur descendant' approaches SC



Dressed in a colourful *sherwani* and sporting a matching *pagdi*, a man claiming to be the sixth-generation descendant of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, showed up at the Supreme Court on Tuesday. Prince Yakub Habeebuddin Tacy had approached the top court, seeking to be heard in the Ram temple-Babri mosque land title dispute case. Prince Tacy claimed the title to the land on which the disputed Babri mosque was constructed. Though the top court declined to entertain his plea, Prince Tacy was seen talking enthusiastically to his lawyers outside the court after the hearing on Tuesday was over. He was also seen taking selfies with lawyers even before the court proceedings.

High on josh

When sentiments run high, brands aren't shy of cashing in on marketing opportunities. Fast food joint Burger Singh, which offered discounts to celebrate the "surgical strikes" carried out by India after the Uri terrorist attack in 2016, was at it again on Tuesday. As news of Indian warplanes bombing terrorist camps in Pakistan began to spread, the quick service restaurant offered a 20 per cent discount, asking customers to use the coupon code "FPAKAGAIN". In 2016, it had used the coupon code, "fPak20", and hiked the discount from 20 to 30 per cent with a changed coupon code ("strike30") after "a positive response from customers". However, on both occasions, it received flak on social media for being "insensitive". In Pune, private insurer Bajaj Allianz Life flashed "How's the Josh" — the popular catchphrase from the recent hit movie *Uri: The Surgical Strike* — on the electronic scroll board outside its office.

Battle of the sons

The battle for the Shimoga seat (Karnataka) in the coming Lok Sabha elections will be watched keenly if the ruling Janata Dal (Secular)-Congress combine in the state decides to field Madhu Bangarappa, the son of former chief minister S Bangarappa, against B Y Raghavendra, the son of the BJP's B S Yeddyurappa. Shimoga has been a traditional stronghold of Yeddyurappa, Karnataka BJP president and leader of opposition in the Assembly. Since 2009, either Yeddyurappa or his son has been representing the seat but the victory margin has dwindled over the years. Encouraged by those results, the ruling coalition has decided to pump in more resources in the "Madhu-Raagu" battle in the state, which won the BJP 17 seats in 2014.

China & India: The threat of populist nationalism

An exclusive excerpt from former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan's latest book

Continued growth will put pressure on both China and India to liberalise further and become more market-oriented. Almost inevitably, this will make them look more like successful advanced economies, making global engagement and dialogue easier. Much slower growth, though, could lead them in more worrisome directions.

Leaders have an alternative to moving toward a liberal open-access society. And that is to exploit the populist nationalistic fervor that is latent in every society, especially as economic fears grow and disenchantment with the corrupt traditional elite increases. Both China and India have large numbers of people who have left their village community, and have moved to cities in search of work. These large young migrant populations, both tantalised and shocked by city life, and yet to be integrated into solid new communities, are ideal raw material for the populist nationalists' vision of a cohesive national community. They become especially malleable in times of slow job growth, as they see the incredible opportunities that the better-educated upper-class elite obtain....

In India, the Hindu nationalist movement tries to tap into such people's desire to anchor themselves in tradition. It also attempts to focus them on grievances that will shape them into a committed following. It exploits the sense among the majority Hindu population that they have bent over backward to appease minorities, especially Muslims. As

with all populist nationalist movements, it portrays a glorious if mythical past, where Hindu India shone a beacon for the world to follow, while dismissing the entire period of Muslim rule over large parts of India as an aberration. For the rootless migrant from the village, the movement offers membership in organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).... The truly committed majoritarian Hindu leader, drawn from a young age into the RSS, is usually personally austere — which endears him

to those who dislike corruption — and committed to the cause, which makes him ruthless in his methods. They are a serious threat to a liberal tolerant innovative India, especially because they are more single minded than other groups, and thus effective in using their periods in power to infiltrate India's institutions with their sympathisers.

India faces serious challenges if global markets were to close. As it is, manufacturing exports are becoming more difficult as developed countries automate to compete with cheap labour elsewhere. Some developed countries are making it harder to provide cross-border services, which India has

developed a strong presence in. An increase in tariff and nontariff barriers to goods and services will make the export-led path to growth much harder for India. There is a protectionist streak among some Hindu nationalists, fuelled by their business backers (they do have ties to business despite their seeming austerity), which will use the



The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the People's Liberation Army (right)



excuse of protectionism elsewhere to make India more protectionist once again. The private sector will then become yet more dependent on government favour. Therefore, the actions of populist nationalists elsewhere can weaken India's democracy and strengthen its destructive populist nationalism. Democratic, open, tolerant India will be an important, responsible contributor to global governance in the decades to come. Populist nationalism around the world will make this less likely.

Deng's dictum to China was that to prosper, it should 'hide [its] capabilities and bide [its] time'. China seems to believe that the time for that dictum is over. As President Xi stated in October 2017, 'the Chinese nation has gone from standing up, to becoming rich, to becoming strong.' A great fear in Washington is that China is rapidly becoming able to challenge the United States, not just economically, but also militarily and politically. Hence its concern about the "Made in China 2025" programme, which aims to increase China's presence in advanced manufacturing industries like aviation, chip manufacturing, robotics, artificial intel-

ligence, and so on. While the United States still has a substantial technological lead in some of these industries, it worries that China will coerce US firms to part with technology and steal any technology it still needs. Similarly, new China-sponsored multilateral financial institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank make the United States concerned that China is undercutting existing multilateral institutions that the United States dominates. China's hard power, as demonstrated by its militarisation of islands in the South China Sea, and its soft power as evidenced by its One Belt, One Road initiative to build out infrastructure connectivity across land and sea from China, causes yet more unease in Washington.

The reality is that...China has to be accommodated, especially in global governance structures. In turn, China also has to recognise global concerns about the means by which it has grown, especially its subsidies to industry and its appropriation of intel-

lectual property.... It also has to assuage its neighbours' concerns about how their territorial disputes will be resolved, and make clear its intentions about respecting the global rules-based order as its power increases.... That dialogue becomes much harder if China suspects the developed world is

ganging up to prevent its natural development as well as if China becomes more repressive politically. Chinese populist nationalism, centered around the Han Chinese population, and driven by a sense that developed countries have historically exploited China with unfair treaties, will be strengthened by acts precipitated by western populist nationalists. China has its own minorities such as the Tibetans and Uyghurs, who have already experienced the oppressive weight of Chinese nationalism. A more virulent populist Chinese nationalism is not a development anyone, inside or outside, will want to see.

(Excerpted with permission)

INNOCOLUMN

Behaviour & culture essentials in start-up land

With a fulsome media fawning on start-up leaders, Indian founders are exposed to a dangerous combination of de-railers



R GOPALAKRISHNAN

The narratives of super ego and toxic behaviour among the CEOs of large companies are disturbing and increasingly prominent. They have a pattern. After ascent, the CEO is powerful, power damages the brain, and the CEO's behaviour changes visibly. What people see is loss of empathy, arrogance, poor treatment of people, and inability to listen. I refer to these as de-railers in my book, *CRASH: lessons from the rise and exit of CEOs*. The de-railers become the sword on which several CEOs fall. The CEO's downfall become "breaking-news" for the media, for example, Thomas Middelhoff in Germany, Martin Sorrell in Britain, Carlos Ghosn in Japan, and many in India.

It should not be assumed that power-induced brain damage applies only to CEOs of large companies. The founders and funders of start-ups are equally prone to this fatal affliction. Start-ups argue that they don't have

the resources to monitor their adherence to numerous regulations and observing the codes of conduct. Obnoxious leadership behaviour and absence of work culture needs to be distinguished with the same dispatch as in large companies.

Just two years ago, we witnessed the behavioral volatility of the key founder of Housing.com. He became abusive with the funders of his venture; he played a pampered kid, who had gone berserk; the board had to dismiss him into anonymity. Paytm is portrayed as a successful start-up because the company has ratcheted up well over 100 million customers in a short time. Many could argue that, with losses of several thousand crores each year, it can hardly qualify yet as a successful company. From a purely behavioral point of view, watch the rousing, but foul, celebratory speech of the founder to the 4,500 employees at a company party in 2017, after demonetisation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONvxdNodWDg>). Judging by this evidence — admittedly a bit unfair — the soundness of the company leadership may well be an accident waiting to happen.

Start-up land is thought to provide the cool, better-behaved digital corporation of the future compared to the

greedy, larger-than-life robber baron company of yesteryear. Such a new company is thought to have a culture of being open, creative, having engaged employees and solving the major consumer problems. The evidence for this perception is variable.

The older Silicon Valley ventures like Google and Facebook did attract great adulation during their run-up to maturity; quite unexpectedly, they now attract social criticism and opprobrium. Jessica Powell's satirical novel, *The Big Disruption*, says a lot. The behaviours of founders of companies like Juicero, Zenefits and Theranos have managed to shake up non-expert observers, who have been bewildered by how reputed VCs and family offices bought into ill-conceived or even fraudulent ideas, resulting in billions of dollars evaporating right under their nose. Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn co-founder, has said that rapidly scaling companies need "responsible blitzscaling" in the book he has co-authored with Chris Yeh, *Blitzscaling*.

In India, some commentators think that start-up land holds the answer to the national issue of unemployment. The background and skills of those who need jobs contrasts with the atmosphere of start-ups like the e-commerce ones. The most admired e-commerce

start-ups have modelled themselves on the Rambo "spend now, profits will follow" model. The jury is out on the likelihood of its success, but that is entrepreneurship, isn't it?

Entrepreneurs have no choice but to shake a leg on the entrepreneurial dance floor, hoping that the music and their dance steps will match at some point. Bill Gross, start-up entrepreneur and venture capitalist, analysed all the investments of his funds to determine the hierarchy of success factors. He found that timing is the most important success factor, not the idea, the team or the founder (<https://youtu.be/bNpx7gpSqbY>).

While start-up founders are tapping their feet on the dance floor, waiting for the right music, they should remember that good leadership behaviour and company culture in start-ups are just as important as in grown-up companies. Indian founders are a younger and more immature bunch compared to those in the United States. With a fulsome media fawning on start-up leaders, Indian founders are exposed to a dangerous combination of de-railers.

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LETTERS

Review pension system

This refers to Somesh Jha's report "Hike in minimum pension will need budgetary support: EPFO" (February 26). The Indian pension system needs a comprehensive review and overhaul. Since December 2003 when the government unilaterally and prospectively discontinued a defined payment-based pension scheme, which existed for the central government employees, and introduced a New Pension Scheme (later rechristened as National Pension System), temporarily exempting defence personnel from the changeover, the policy approach to pensions has been one of "hit and run". By now, there appears to be a consensus that a pension scheme, as a social security instrument, is an essential ingredient of remuneration packages across public and private sector establishments. If that be so, there should be an agreement on the following:

(a) The pension component should be part of the wages paid by the employer. If the central or state government has to subsidise the cost of pension outgo, for any specific reason, it should be on a monthly or annual basis.

(b) Pension should have a relationship to the earnings/wages. The Centre may consider including review of the pension system for its employees in the term of reference for Central Pay Commission. It should also appoint a high-level pension review committee to consider integrating pension schemes, now operated by different agencies, in public and private sector organisations.

M G Warriar Mumbai

Enforce compliance

This refers to "RBI proposes to rein in pay of pvt bank CEOs" (February 26). The central bank has drafted regulations for claw-

back of the bonuses and stock options of CEOs of private banks where the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Inspection Reports reveal wide variance in classification of non-performing assets (NPAs). This provision must be extended to cases of serious shortcomings in the functioning of the boards of these banks as they play a major role in the effective functioning (or the lack of) of these organisations. A case in point is of the ICICI Bank board which, despite the revelation of serious allegations against its then CEO, under its chairman gave a clean chit and refused to order an enquiry until much later. The Axis Bank board is another example. Similarly, in case of the non-banking financial corporations (NBFCs) like Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services the CEOs' and boards' functioning left much to be desired.

The clawback provisions should apply not only to private banks but also to other RBI regulated entities like NBFCs. The provisions should be triggered not only in the case of CEOs but also the directors in case of major divergence in classification of the NPAs, serious shortcomings in corporate governance, gross irregularities like serious violations of KYC norms, money laundering, inadequate action/delay in investigation of serious frauds etc. The CEO and boards must follow the highest standards of corporate governance and be held strictly accountable to their stakeholders — depositors, shareholders, employees etc — for not only the financials of their organisation but also for regulatory and legal compliance as well as adherence to corporate ethics.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

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After retribution

IAF's professionalism matched by govt's measured response

The air strikes by the Indian Air Force (IAF) on a terrorist-training camp in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should not have come as a surprise to Pakistan, given that the Indian leadership had virtually promised retribution for the killing of at least 40 central policemen in Kashmir earlier this month in a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide attack. That it did take the Pakistanis by surprise is due largely to careful planning and the professional skill of the IAF's Mirage 2000 pilots, who executed a deep incursion into heavily defended airspace and returned after successfully completing their mission. This military professionalism was complemented by the restraint with which the government announced the strike. Eschewing triumphalism and chest thumping, the foreign secretary emphasised that the targets were terrorists and not the Pakistani military or innocent civilians. The careful use of the phrase "non-military" operation is designed to make the point that India has not hit military targets. So if Pakistan responds against military targets, it will be guilty of escalation. The Pakistani military must surely be in soul-searching mode about being caught napping yet again, as it was in 2011, when US commandos flew deep into Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden near Abbottabad. It cannot have been missed that the target chosen was in mainland Pakistan, not in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

The government is also to be complimented for taking the Opposition into confidence after the Pulwama attack, and this allowed planning to be carried out without worrying about political considerations. The Opposition, in turn, has, for the most part, thrown its weight behind the government — a rare, but welcome, bipartisan consensus. The government also deserves kudos for skilful diplomacy, which included briefing foreign envoys about Indian compulsions after the Jaish-e-Mohammad proclaimed ownership of the Pulwama attack and yet Pakistan refused to act against the group. The outcome of this diplomacy is evident from the international community's broad acceptance of the air strikes. Even China has advocated restraint and an improvement in relations.

The ball is now in Pakistan's court and the generals will decide whether they want to escalate, whether through air strikes, ground raids or stepping up activity by its terrorist proxies. Predictably, belligerent statements have been made, but Islamabad (and Rawalpindi) must weigh the fact that India's military would be fully geared to handle revenge attacks and would, if necessary, escalate matters further. All three services have already been placed on high alert. Additional police forces have already been moved into Kashmir. The government says they are for election duty, but it goes without saying that they would boost the state response to any uptick in terrorism.

Beyond these recent incidents, the core concern about Kashmir and terrorism continues. India remains with the problem of finding a solution to Kashmiri anger and resentment, so that the disaffected youth are not pushed into becoming cannon fodder for groups like the Jaish. The crackdown on separatists is unlikely to curb the ideology of separatism in any way, with dialogue and engagement providing a more effective route. At the same time, it is in both Pakistan's and India's interests to de-escalate the situation purposefully so that the Line of Control does not flare up in tit-for-tat actions that serve no purpose but to claim lives on both sides.

Impressions of favouritism

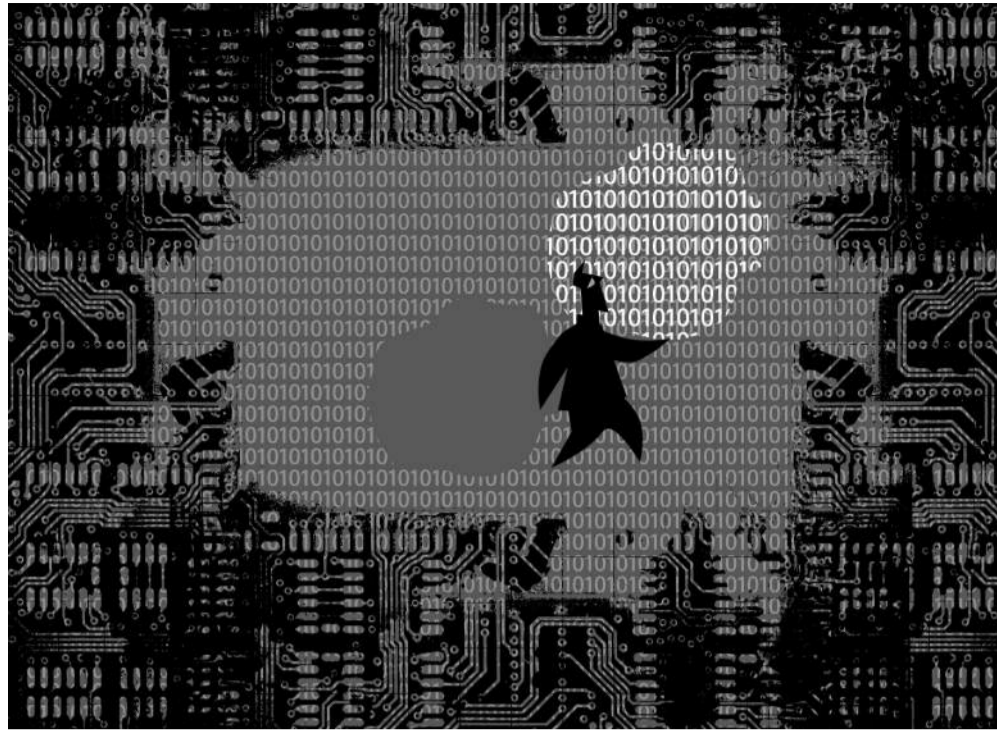
Vodafone CEO raises questions of a level playing field

Speaking in Barcelona, Nick Read, chief executive officer (CEO) of Anglo-Dutch telecommunications giant Vodafone on Monday, attacked the regulatory environment for the stress in the sector in India, and said it was designed to favour a particular player. Mr Read said the company had only asked for a level playing field in terms of regulation, but "over the last two years, we had many regulatory outcomes that were against everyone in the market except Jio". His perspective is, of course, informed by being the head of one of Reliance Jio's primary rivals. But as the stated opinion of the head of one of the parent companies of a major player in an important sector, it is nevertheless worth taking seriously. The impression that regulation is systematically favouring one player over others is something that no government, ministry, or sectoral regulator should allow to build up.

The special conditions of the telecom market make this criticism of favouritism particularly potent. The telecom market features network externalities — the more there are people on a network, the more it can dominate the market. This means that natural monopolies could build up. Arguably, much of market behaviour in the recent past can be interpreted as an attempt to position companies as the natural beneficiaries of this tendency towards monopoly. Thus, one focus of regulation must surely be ensuring that incumbents and challengers both stay in the game. From the regulator's point of view, if it does not consider the dynamic perspective, Jio's entry into the market has helped consumers, and so should be welcomed. In addition, the purpose of regulation is typically to assist new entrants in a market exhibiting a tendency towards natural monopoly — and not the incumbents. Thus, what Mr Read sees as a systematic bias towards the challenger could be explained away by this combination of incentives. However, neither principle applies in a simplistic manner in this case. The preservation of competition is also important, and it is in this that the regulator is perhaps at fault.

Mr Read also pointed out that average revenue per user in the Indian market was very low, and would have to rise. The regulator should perhaps note that such a rise is inevitable. The question is if this increase in tariffs will come after all the other players have been forced out of the market other than Jio, or before. The latter course is surely preferable, because it would ensure that a rise is controlled and not monopolistic in nature. The question then becomes how to ensure that this inevitable increase in tariffs is induced to happen in a clear and systematic manner, in such a way that competition is preserved. This is what the focus of the telecom regulator and department should now be. If the sector's regulators and other authorities wish to recover their reputation and to avoid further such accusations of favouritism, they should make their intent to preserve competition clear, and seek consultation on how to restore the sector to profitability through a rationalisation of tariffs.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Will the US capitulate to China?

Unless the Chinese agree to stop stealing technology, the US will not have achieved anything useful from Trump's tariffs

It's beginning to look like US President Donald Trump will yield to the Chinese in America's trade conflict with China. The United States threatened to increase tariffs on imports from China from 10 per cent to 25 per cent on March 2 if no agreement was reached. But Trump recently said that the date is flexible and may be postponed because of the progress being made in the ongoing bilateral talks.

Fair enough, but progress is in the eyes of the beholder. The most important problem that needs to be resolved is not America's massive bilateral trade deficit with China. It is that the Chinese are stealing US firms' technology and using it to help Chinese companies compete with those same firms in China and around the world.

The Chinese do this in two ways. First, US firms that want to do business in China are required to have a Chinese partner and to share their technology with that firm. That compulsory sharing of technology is explicitly forbidden by World

Trade Organization rules. Since joining the WTO in 2001, the Chinese have ignored this rule and disingenuously claim that US firms voluntarily agree to share their technology because they want to be active in China.

Second, the Chinese use the Internet to enter the computer systems of US firms and steal technology and blueprints. Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed with then-President Barack Obama in 2015 that his government would stop doing this. But, after a temporary decline, such cyber theft has resumed, presumably because state-owned companies and others have the ability to reach into the computer systems of US firms.

Despite Trump's upbeat talk about progress in the talks, there is no suggestion that the Chinese will agree to stop stealing technology. Instead, China's chief negotiator, Vice Premier Liu He, has emphasised that the Chinese will reduce their large bilateral trade surplus by buying US soy beans and natural gas. A sharp reduc-



MARTIN FELDSTEIN

UP's lesser-known story

Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has often been in the news for his Hindutva politics. But little attention has been paid to his government's fiscal performance. Even his government's latest Budget, the third in his tenure so far, made newspaper headlines more for the ₹400 crore he allocated for building cow shelters and less for keeping a tight leash on the state's finances.

This could be because details of state Budgets are not immediately available in easy formats, comparable with past years. After several months of their presentation, the Reserve Bank of India brings out its annual publication on state Budgets. Only then can a proper analysis of state Budgets be made after analysing the revenue and expenditure trends over the previous few years. A report from PRS Legislative Research, compiling the Budgets of eight states presented so far for 2019-20, fills the gap considerably.

What it shows about the last three UP Budgets is quite significantly different from the popular narrative about the Yogi Adityanath government. The UP government's fiscal consolidation achievement has been quite remarkable. Inheriting a fiscal deficit of 4.5 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) in 2016-17, the last year of the Akhilesh Yadav government, Yogi Adityanath halved it to 2.02 per cent in its first year — 2017-18. Remember that the numbers for both the years are actuals and hence have passed audit scrutiny and are unlikely to be revised.

In its second Budget, for 2018-19, the state government's fiscal deficit, as per the revised numbers, widened a bit to 2.97 per cent of GSDP. And for the 2019-20 Budget that UP Finance Minister Rajesh

Agarwal presented earlier this month, the fiscal deficit is projected to be reined in at the same figure of 2.97 per cent. The Finance Commission-mandated deficit cap for the states is 3 per cent of GSDP and UP is now among the few states like Gujarat, West Bengal and Karnataka, which are below that level.

What about the revenue balance or the gap between the state's revenue expenditure and revenue receipts? Well, even in this area, UP is among a handful of states that have maintained a surplus. The revenue surplus came down a little to 0.91 per cent of GSDP in 2017-18, from 1.6 per cent in 2016-17. But in 2018-19, it scaled up again at 3.2 per cent, only to project a decline to a surplus of 1.76 per cent next year.

This has been possible largely because the state has seen robust growth in its own tax revenues. In the first year of the Adityanath regime, the state's own tax revenues increased by 8 per cent to ₹97,393 crore in 2017-18. Then, a dramatic surge of 38 per cent in 2018-19 saw the state government's own tax revenues go up to ₹1.34 trillion. But as apparently puzzling as the surge in 2018-19 is the plateauing of the own tax revenue growth projected in 2019-20 — an increase of only 4 per cent to ₹1.4 trillion.

Could the surge be a reflection of the first full-year's impact of the goods and services tax (GST) on UP's own tax revenues? And now that the GST rates have been rationalised and reduced, along with the grant of fresh exemptions to various sectors, the state revenues on account of the GST would grow at a much slower pace. In 2018-19, GST revenues for UP were estimated at ₹1.06 trillion and these would go up marginally by 3 per cent in 2019-20. This will clearly be a challenge for the UP government in the coming years, if



NEW DELHI DIARY

A K BHATTACHARYA

Contours of the 'Asian Century'



BOOK REVIEW

ANITA INDER SINGH

Writing with facility, using a wealth of statistics and provocative arguments, Parag Khanna enthuses about a dynamic Asia going into the global lead. Stretching from the Red Sea to Japan, Australia and New Zealand, Asia includes most of the world's largest countries and advanced economies. Asia has most of the world's cities, foreign exchange reserves, largest banks, technology and industrial companies and armies. Singapore and Japan have "the most powerful passports". Singapore's "Crazy Rich Asians" have even inspired Brexiters, who

dream of Britain becoming the "Singapore of Europe". How the once mighty have fallen! Those invoking Britain's former imperial power to justify Brexit want one of its smallest former colonies to be the role model for Little Britain.

Mr Khanna's Asian century began in May 2017, when China hosted the first Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) summit in Beijing. At this historic gathering, China assembled the heads of the 68 African, European and Asian countries that had joined its BRI. They represented half of the world's GDP and the largest effort to connect the world commercially and culturally.

The BRI was conceived by Asians for Asians, he says. Really? In fact, the BRI is a vital component of China's national rejuvenation and was enshrined in the ruling Communist Party's constitution in 2017. And China is not building a combat-ready world class military by 2050 merely to advance the connectivity of Asians. Ask China's smaller and weaker neighbours,

Beijing challenges their sovereignty by invoking its version of history — even as they welcome strong trade and investment ties with China. But Mr Khanna is right that problems of indebtedness are renegotiated and settled. For, China does show flexibility in its foreign dealings.

Despite cultural diversity and the inability to forge pan-Asian ideas, Asian interests and identities are intertwined. Asian countries buy and sell the most goods to one another. Internationally between Asians abroad have created "Ch-Indians" in Singapore and "Indi-pinos" in Dubai. Yet how do their numbers compare with the fact that at least 20 per cent of marriages in the US take place with a foreign-born person?

Asia is America's largest customer. The US is dispensable. It remains the sole superpower but it is declining economically, socially and culturally. Since 1945, Western laws and culture have dominated the world. Rising Asia favours the Chinese phrase,

"community of common destiny".

Not quite. India and Japan back the liberal rules-based order. This US-dominated order gave Asia — and Europe — the stability that provided the groundwork for the advancement of their prosperity. The US alone has the power to prevent instability in Asia. Whether it uses that power is another matter. Moreover, China's \$14-trillion economy cannot easily catch up with America's \$20-trillion one. In the trade war, Beijing seeks agreement with Washington with the intent of reducing an unfavourable fallout for itself.

China-led connectivity has prompted India and other Asian countries to increase connectivity with one another. Geopolitical rivalries will, thus, speed up the Asianisation of Asia. Even so, isn't it doubtful that connectivity rather than money — especially US dollars — drives the world? As a connectivity project, China's BRI could not have been put on the rails without Chinese cash. In fact, part of China's achievement is that it can finance its BRI independently.

In contrast, India needs help from richer countries to promote its connectivity —

and other interests. Like all Asian countries, India offers the world cultural attractions and exports. But it dawdles on the road to global power. Other Asian countries have seen it as "a squalid, overpopulated, quasi-socialist third-world morass; big, but not important". Economically and militarily, China has raced ahead of India.

If scientific knowledge is power, the high quality of China's research does threaten the US. China's ability to attract 400,000 foreign students is impressive. They mostly comprise South Koreans and Southeast Asians, an increasing number of Indians and Russians — and even 14,000 Americans. But doesn't the US do better? It attracts more than 1.1 million Asian students. There are about 150,000 foreign students in Japan — and 42,000 in India, mostly from Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan.

Admiration for China's leadership of the Asian century leads Mr Khanna to write off China's authoritarianism. Opinion polls in the US reveal that the percentage of Americans who feel it is essential to live in a democracy has fallen from three quarters to one third. But how

tion in the US trade deficit with China would enable Trump to claim victory and give him something to celebrate when Xi visits him at his home in Florida sometime in the next few months.

There are easy bragging rights in a dramatic reduction of the US trade deficit with China, which, year after year, has been the largest of America's bilateral trade deficits. In 2017, the deficit with China was \$375 billion, or two-thirds of the total US trade deficit. So the Chinese are clever to offer to buy enough US commodities to cut that very visible imbalance.

But while that would reduce the bilateral trade deficit with China, it would have no effect by itself on the total US trade deficit. As every student of economics knows, a trade deficit reflects the fact that a country chooses to consume more than it produces. And as long as a country consumes more than it produces, it must import the difference from the rest of the world.

If the Chinese do buy enough to reduce the bilateral trade deficit, the US would end up importing more from other countries or exporting less to other countries. The total US trade deficit will not decline unless the US reduces total demand by saving more. That is a matter for US policymakers; it is not something the Chinese can do for America.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has emphasised another largely irrelevant Chinese offer: A promise to prevent the value of the renminbi from declining relative to the dollar. While a stronger renminbi would make Chinese goods less attractive to US buyers, thereby reducing the bilateral trade deficit, it would not reduce America's global trade imbalance.

Moreover, although the renminbi-dollar exchange rate does vary from year to year, the variations have been small. Today, a dollar buys CN¥6.7; a year ago, the dollar exchange rate was CN¥6.3, and two years ago it was CN¥6.9. A decade ago, in February 2009, a dollar bought CN¥6.8. In short, there is nothing to celebrate if the Chinese agree to stabilise the value of their currency relative to the dollar.

The key issue is technology theft. Unless the Chinese agree to stop stealing technology, and the two sides devise a way to enforce that agreement, the US will not have achieved anything useful from Trump's tariffs.

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indeed the flattening out of growth in own tax revenues is due to a slowing down in its GST collections.

Another area in the three Budgets of the Adityanath government that deserves attention is its capital expenditure. It rose by 110 per cent in 2018-19 to ₹1.17 trillion, from ₹55,599 crore in the previous year. For 2019-20, the capital expenditure saw a marginal decline and was projected at around ₹1.16 trillion. In effect, the share of capital expenditure in the UP government's total expenditure increased from 17 per cent in 2017-18 to 26 per cent in 2018-19 and will stabilise at a slightly lower level of 24 per cent in 2019-20. To earmark about a fourth of the state's total expenditure for capital spending is an achievement that not many states can take credit for.

The PRS Legislative Research has calculated the capital outlay for the state also and has defined it as a component of the capital expenditure that is directly used for creating assets. Such capital outlay, too, more than doubled to ₹88,528 crore in 2018-19, from ₹39,088 crore. For 2019-20, capital outlay was projected a little lower at ₹77,641 crore. In other words, the asset-creation function of capital spending has not been ignored in the way the UP government has structured its capital expenditure in the last three years.

UP is India's most populous state, with an estimated GSDP size of ₹14.76 trillion that ranks it among the top five states in the country. It is also one of India's economically backward states. But if the state follows fiscal prudence and spends more on creating assets, it must be doing at least a few things right as far as fiscal governance is concerned. Isn't it then time for economic analysts to turn their focus on UP's fiscal performance to gain a better understanding of the prospects of economic growth in the state that will send the largest number of legislators to the Lok Sabha coming May?

many of these Americans have lived under a corrupt dictatorship? And had Mr Khanna's educational experience been confined to authoritarian states would he have had the intellectual freedom to gain the knowledge essential to write his internationally informed books?

The questions raised by Mr Khanna's stimulating book highlight his deft weaving together of technology, geopolitics, economics, globalisation — and the decline and rise of great powers. *The Future is Asian* will be widely read.

(The reviewer is a Founding Professor of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in New Delhi; website: www.anitaindersingh.com)

THE FUTURE IS ASIAN: Global order in the twenty-first century
Parag Khanna
Hachette India
Pages: 433, Price: ₹699

