

WHO

Jurgen Klopp, leading revival of Liverpool

Only one man stands between Manchester City and a second successive Premier League title – Jurgen Klopp. Unlike in 2017-18, when City won in a record-breaking fashion – most points (100), most goals scored (106) and most wins (32) – the 51-year-old Liverpool manager has ensured that Pep Guardiola's men will have to mine every last reserve to secure the trophy again. City may currently be the league's sole leader, but Liverpool remains within touching distance. With just two months left in the campaign, the stage is set for an absorbing and nail-biting dash to the finish line.

What's the secret of his success? After Jose Mourinho, the former Real Madrid, Chelsea and Manchester United boss, Klopp has been Guardiola's Achilles heel. Their rivalry stretches back to 2013-14 in Germany when Klopp was managing Borussia Dortmund and Guardiola was in charge of Bayern Munich. Klopp's teams were pioneers of Ge-

genpressing, a technique which involved harrying the opposition immediately after losing the ball, and also specialised in rapid transitions from defence to offence. When Guardiola's possession-heavy football came in contact with Klopp's, it often proved a brittle art.

How has it been at Liverpool? Klopp has certainly refashioned his ideals at the English club. It took two years and a bunch of carefully selected players to implement his vision, but the results, as seen from the 2017-18 season, have been staggering. The front three of Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane scored 91 of Liverpool's 135 goals, leaving everyone gasping for breath. Guardiola bore the brunt, losing thrice in a three-month window in early 2018, including 5-1 on aggregate in the UEFA Champions League quarter-final. Liverpool eventually lost in the final of the elite European tournament, but as a whole, the journey was a vindic-

ation of Klopp's methods and evidence enough to suggest that Liverpool would be a title-contender. In fact, in 16 matches, Klopp has defeated Guardiola seven

times and has earned three draws. One may argue that two such games in a season do not by themselves decide the direction of a title race, but a clash of ideas rarely exists in isolation. The tactical cues that emerge, if picked up well, will surely lead to a more competitive league.

Have there been any challenges? Amid the highs of last season, there were indications that Liverpool couldn't sustain its frenetic playing style at all times. While it did reach the Champions League final, the domestic campaign fizzled out. In 2018-19, Klopp has been mindful of the need to conserve his players' energies by not going full throttle in all matches. While this has certainly added some steeliness – Liverpool has lost just once in 29 league games and is well placed after the first leg of the Champions League round-of-16 tie against Bayern Mun-

ich – five draws in the last seven matches have raised questions. Through this period, Salah, Firmino and Mane have looked subdued, leading to suggestions that the side is over-dependent on the trio. And last October's 0-0 draw against City, in which Guardiola finally found a way to neutralise Klopp, wouldn't have gone unnoticed.

What next? More endless scrutiny, for one. Liverpool is gunning for its first league title in 29 years and it is inevitable that every little step will be watched. Throughout his career, Klopp has revelled in the role of an underdog and it may work to the club's advantage that Liverpool is back in the second position chasing City. There are also rumours that Spanish giant Real Madrid, currently helmed by a caretaker coach, has an eye on Klopp. The German's head though is unlikely to turn.

N. SUDARSHAN



WHAT

The lowdown on the Official Secrets Act



WHAT DOES IT MEAN? An 'Official Secrets Act' is a generic term that is used to refer to a law – originally invented by the British, and then exported across the Commonwealth – that is designed to keep certain kinds of information confidential, including, but not always limited to, information involving the affairs of state, diplomacy, national security, espionage and other state secrets. Across multiple

countries, the Official Secrets Acts follow a similar pattern: classifying certain categories of information as "official secrets," and then providing stiff penalties for any sharing, dissemination or publication of such information.

WHAT ARE ITS TRAITS? India's Official Secrets Act (OSA) dates back to 1923, unsurprisingly a creation of the colonial regime. The 1923 Act includes penalties for spying (which, in turn, includes even "approaching" or being "in the vicinity of" a prohibited place, publishing any "sketch" or "plan" that might be useful to the enemy, with a prejudicial purpose.) Additionally, however, it punishes the communication of any information obtained in contravention of the Act, which could prejudice the security of the state, or friendly relations with foreign states. Furthermore, it punished people who knowingly receive such information – a provision clearly de-

signed to capture investigative journalism.

WHAT IS THE CRITICISM? The primary critique of the Act is that it flips the constitutive logic of a democratic republic, where the state is supposed to be transparent to its citizens. While it is nobody's case that all information ought to be made public – for example, troop movements in wartime or confidential trade negotiation positions obviously need to be secret – there should be a heavy presumption against secrecy. Under the OSA, however, the state is given wide powers to place information off-limits to citizens, simply by stipulating that certain documents are secret – and then draconian powers to punish them in case it is made public, regardless of the public interest involved.

This makes whistle-blowing and investigative journalism a perilous enterprise, no matter how critically impor-

tant it might be to have the information public.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RTI? The scope of the OSA has been somewhat diluted, thanks to the Right to Information Act. Section 22 of the RTI Act expressly says it overrides the OSA. In other words, it is not open to the government to deny access to a document demanded through an RTI question, on the basis that it has been marked secret under the OSA. Rather, the government will have to justify its decision to withhold information under the arguably narrower exception clauses of the RTI Act itself.

HOW OFTEN IS IT USED? The OSA is not used very often, but it is used enough times to keep it in the news, and to exercise a chilling effect (especially on investigative journalism). Recent, high-profile cases involving the OSA include that of the

journalist Iftikhar Gilani (the case was withdrawn), the diplomat Madhuri Gupta (who was convicted of espionage charges), and the scientist Nambi Narayanan (who was charged, tried, and acquitted of espionage charges – and later directed to be paid compensation by the Supreme Court).

WHAT IS ITS FUTURE? As recently as 2006, the Home Ministry recommended substantial changes to the OSA, in line with the privacy regime established by the RTI. From time to time, there are calls to repeal the OSA and replace it with a National Security Act that is more consistent with the aspirations of an open, democratic republic. However, the OSA has proved resilient, and it would be reasonable to assume that we are stuck with it for at least the medium-term future.

GAUTAM BHATIA

WHY

is GSP vital to India-US trade ties?

What is the programme? The Generalized System of Preferences is the largest and oldest United States trade preference programme. The U.S. intended it to promote economic development by eliminating duties on some products it imports from the 120 countries designated as beneficiaries.

When was it introduced? It was established by the Trade Act of 1974. According to the website of the U.S. Trade Representative, the GSP helps spur sustainable development in beneficiary countries by helping them increase and diversify their trade with the U.S. The U.S. also believes that moving GSP imports from the docks to U.S. consumers, farmers, and manufacturers supports tens of thousands of jobs in the U.S. The other benefit is that "GSP boosts American competitiveness by reducing the costs of imported inputs used by U.S. companies to manufacture goods in the United States." The Trade Representative says the GSP is impor-

tant to U.S. small businesses, many of which rely on the programmes' duty savings to stay competitive.

Why is it important for India? The Indian export industry may not feel the pinch of the GSP removal for India by the U.S. The loss for the industry amounts to about \$190 million on exports of \$5.6 billion falling under the GSP category. But specific sectors, such as gem and jewellery, leather and processed foods will lose the benefits of the programme. A producer may be able to bear 2-3% of the loss from the change, but not more. The loss, in export of some kinds of rice for example, may even exceed 10%. The landed price of goods from India has to be the same as it was before the GSP was removed. If not, consumers of those products in the U.S. would gravitate to producers that enjoy the GSP benefits and hence are able to offer lower prices. Obviously, it is difficult to get back a customer that a competitor takes away.



Why is India in the cross-hairs? The U.S. conducts periodic reviews of the programme. The review for India, taken up last year, focussed on 'whether it is meeting the eligibility criterion that requires a GSP beneficiary country to assure the U.S. that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to its market.' The Trade Representative accepted two petitions asserting that India did not meet the criterion: one from the National Milk Producers Federation and

the U.S. Dairy Export Council, and the other from the Advanced Medical Technology Association. India wants dairy products, which could form part of religious worship, certified that they were only derived from animals that have not been fed food containing internal organs. Other exporters such as EU nations and New Zealand certify their products, but the U.S. has so far not done so. Second, India has recently placed a cap on the prices of medical devices,

like stents, that impacts U.S. exports of such devices.

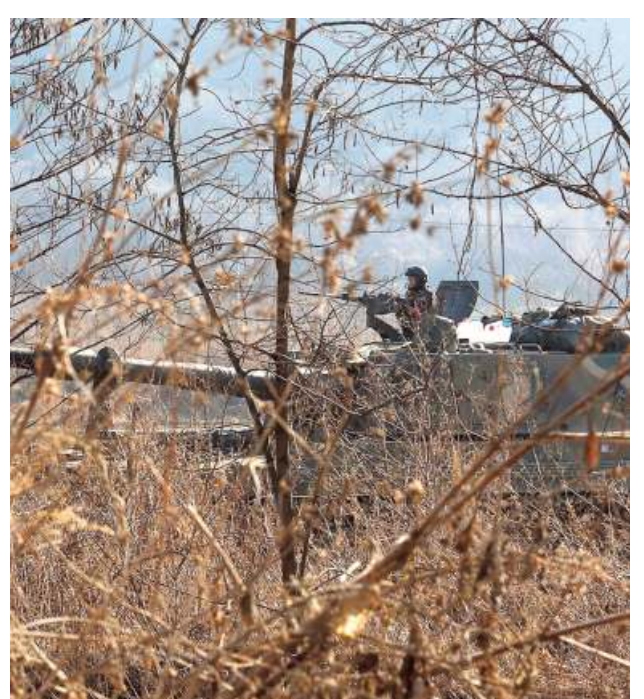
What can the Indian government do? The government must offer fiscal help to the affected sectors. But the obvious question is: what can India do if it has to be compliant with World Trade Organisation rules that protect all its members equally from undue sops given to exporters? A wry answer is that if the U.S. is not playing by WTO rules, other countries too need to be able to protect their industries. But it is possible to offer some breather to producers suffering losses from the GSP removal, even while being WTO-compliant. The Centre could consider refund of taxes for goods not under GST. Use of electricity or petrol in the manufacture of such goods but for which an input credit is not available could qualify here. Helping such sectors would also protect jobs; especially when job creation is at a low.

K. BHARAT KUMAR

WHEN

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Rising tensions: Two U.S. think tanks and South Korea's Yonhap News Agency have reported that work is under way to restore part of North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Station. Last June, North Korea began to dismantle a missile engine test stand at Sohae after the first summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and its leader Kim Jong-un. A second summit broke down last week in Hanoi over differences on how far North Korea was willing to limit its nuclear programme and the degree of U.S. willingness to ease sanctions. The structures had been rebuilt some time between February 16 and March 2, Reuters reported. Pictures show an image provided by Airbus Defence & Space and the think tank 38 North, clicked via satellite from CNES on March 6, of the Sohae station at Tongchang-ri, North Korea, and a South Korean soldier manning a K-9 self-propelled howitzer during a military exercise in Paju near the border with North Korea. •AP



WHERE

Protecting the Sundarban wetlands

On January 30, the Indian Sundarban was accorded the status of 'Wetland of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention. The Sundarbans comprises hundreds of islands and a network of rivers, tributaries and creeks in the delta of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal in India and Bangladesh. Located on the southwestern part of the delta, the Indian Sundarban constitutes over 60% of the country's total mangrove forest area. It is the 27th Ramsar Site in India, and with an area of 4,23,000 hectares is now the largest protected wetland in the country.

Why is this important? The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, better known as the Ramsar Convention, is an international agreement promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is the only global treaty to focus on a single ecosystem. The convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came

into force in 1975. Traditionally viewed as a wasteland or breeding ground of disease, wetlands actually provide freshwater and food, and serve as nature's shock absorber. Wetlands, critical for biodiversity, are disappearing rapidly, with recent estimates showing that 64% or more of the world's wetlands have vanished since 1900. Major changes in land use for agriculture and grazing, water diversion for dams and canals and infrastructure development are considered to be some of the main causes of loss and degradation of wetlands.

How did it qualify? The Indian Sundarban met four of the nine criteria required for the status of 'Wetland of International Importance' – presence of rare species and threatened ecological communities, biological diversity, significant and representative fish and fish spawning ground and migration path. The Indian Sundarban, also a UNESCO world heritage site, is



home to the Royal Bengal Tiger. The Ramsar website points out that the Indian Sundarban is also home to a large number of "rare and globally threatened species, such as the critically endangered northern river terrapin (*Batagur baska*), the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), and the vulnerable fishing cat (*Prionailurus vi-*

verrinus." Two of the world's four horseshoe crab species, and eight of India's 12 species of kingfisher are also found here. Recent studies claim that the Indian Sundarban is home to 2,626 faunal species and 90% of the country's mangrove varieties.

Will the status help? Environmentalists and forest officials say the Ramsar status will help to highlight conservation issues of the Sundarbans at the international level. The part of the Sundarban delta, which lies in Bangladesh, was accorded the status of a Ramsar site in 1992, and with Indian Sundarban getting it too, international cooperation between the two countries for the protection of this unique ecosystem will increase. This could lead to a better conservation strategy for flagship species such as the tiger and the northern river terrapin.

What are the threats? While the Indian Sundarban is a biodi-

verse preserve, over four million people live on its northern and northwestern periphery, putting pressure on the ecosystem. Concerns have been raised about natural ecosystems being changed for cultivation of shrimp, crab, molluscs and fish.

The Ramsar Information Sheet lists fishing and harvesting of aquatic resources as a "high impact" actual threat to the wetland. The other threats are from dredging, oil and gas drilling, logging and wood harvesting, hunting and collecting terrestrial animals. Salinity has been categorised as a medium and tourism as a low impact actual threat in the region. Experts believe that while the Ramsar status may bring in international recognition to the Indian Sundarban, the wetland, which along with anthropogenic pressures, is also vulnerable to climate change and requires better management and conservation practices.

SHIV SAHAY SINGH