

# Game for new ideas?

Gamification appeals to employees' sense of competition and desire for recognition



## HUMAN FACTOR

SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR

Are your employees getting distracted easily, or slipping on job targets? Are they getting in to and leaving work bang on the dot? Some employees will always be in this mode, irrespective of the nature of work they are doing, but if the tribe of employees with slumped, negative body language is increasing, you better do something to stop the brighter

among them hitting the exit door.

Of course, there is no easy solution. Some of the world's top companies are spending millions of dollars to improve engagement, retention, and performance — and yet over half their employees are still imagining greener pastures and looking at their 9-to-5 paycheck instead of a long-term career. Some companies, however, have gone beyond the obvious and put in place new systems to bump up the motivation quotient. One of these tools that is gaining popularity is "gamification". Though not a new concept, many companies have brought it up to speed to cater to the new generation workforce who say they do not have the opportunity to show their best work or have a vehicle to contribute their ideas and suggestions. Using gamification to address this usually improves engagement levels.

Take Google, for instance. The technology giant has incorporated a travel expense game that encourages people

to keep track of their expenses related to business trips. The motivating factor is that every penny that they save from spending is paid back to them as an addition to their salaries. Google has also been organising a Google Code Jam software-writing competition as a way to find fresh talent. Developers and engineers who enter the contest are competing in a game to win monetary prizes up to \$50,000.

HR experts say there is nothing like a little competitive element to increase learning engagement and have employees try to outdo each other. Gamification, in essence, is based on the idea that human beings like games — not only just as a child, but well beyond adulthood. According to *Forbes*, 80 per cent of smartphone users play mobile games on their device, and nearly 50 per cent play games every day. Additionally, mobile game apps are used equally by both men and women. While more teens play mobile games than adults, 62 per

cent of adults do use these apps.

Cisco, for example, teaches social media skills to its employees and contractors through a multi-level training programme that lets learners advance through the ranks to obtain the ultimate title of a social media "Master", through 46 courses. This was a wide success because of the in-built competitive element.

Gamification, in fact, is a simple strategy of applying game-oriented thinking to various non-game applications. It makes such non-game applications more engaging and fun for employees. Smart marketers use it to increase consumer engagement and influence consumer behaviour, the broad idea being that it helps companies to engage people with the brand. For a company that adopts a game-like attitude, it showcases that your brand and company culture believes in innovation and creativity.

Domino's did that with great effect. Its Pizza Mogul game (users create and name their own ideas for pizzas and toppings, and then for every item sold, they get certain monetary rewards) built enough brand awareness to show to potential job candidates that the company is game for new ideas in the workplace.

Undoubtedly, employee engagement is one of the holy grails of human resource

function, which is why HR leaders have been exploring the ways gamification can transform talent management and company culture by applying point scoring, competition with others and rules of play among them to their employee management strategies. It appeals to an individual's sense of competition and desire for recognition. Uber drivers, for example, are able to earn badges for "excellent service" and "great conversation" etc. Other firms use it to engage employees in particular initiatives.

It's true that gamification gets people excited like no other strategy does, probably because it holds the promise of fun and engagement, and extraordinary results. But it has to be thought through and designed well. Otherwise, it can have the Cobra Effect. Here's why: Concerned about the rise in venomous cobra snakes in Delhi, the then British government offered a bounty for every dead cobra. The strategy proved successful initially, resulting in a large number of snakes being killed. However, people soon began gaming the system, breeding cobras for the extra income.

Organisations thus have to put in place systems so that unintended, and even undesirable behaviours do not become the side effects of a gamification initiative.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Scramble to lose

It is unusual for leaders to fight for seats when the chances of victory are bleak. But that's exactly what is happening in the Kerala unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). State leaders are jockeying to contest from Pathanamthitta, the epicentre of the Sabarimala issue. At least four top leaders including Union Ministers K J Alphonso and senior leader K Surendran are vying for a ticket to contest the seat. Interestingly, the BJP has never won a Lok Sabha seat from the state. Also the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and BJP cadres in Kerala do not see eye to eye. Given that, political observers are betting on either the Congress or the Left, despite the mileage BJP gained out of the Sabarimala stir.

### Don't gatecrash



It's not unusual to hear stories about students in India gatecrashing weddings. Just for fun or to indulge in a hearty meal when hostel mess food is nothing but torture and the monthly allowance from home is diminishing rapidly. A premier institution in the country has had enough of this. The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Kurukshetra, has issued a directive of sorts for its students urging them to desist from gatecrashing weddings, calling it "unethical, immoral and uncivilised behaviour". Although the institute did not mention what action would be taken if someone was found violating the directive, some said NIT might impose a fine or short-term suspensions. And as it happens quite often these days, a copy of the circular was posted online and tweets, backing and opposing the administration's move, started pouring in.

### Too many cooks?

The Congress party on Tuesday identified three agencies that would manage its digital and social media campaign for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Some more would be hired in the coming days and assigned other tasks. The publicity committee of the party is headed by party leader Anand Sharma. But there was much disgruntlement in the team — some members complained to Congress President Rahul Gandhi that they were not being kept in the loop. The Congress chief first asked senior leader Jairam Ramesh to take part in the meetings, and when that alone did not help, overseas Congress Chief Sam Pitroda was summoned hastily, which helped break the stalemate.

# Boards and political funding

In a perfect world, business and political parties need to maintain a respectful distance. But given the influence policy has on the fortunes of a business, it is naïve to expect this



## OCCASIONAL ASIDE

AMIT TANDON

Elections are expensive and need to be funded. The Election Commission spent ₹3.43 billion in 2014. Add the cost of the EVM's, also costs that are not directly incurred by the Election Commission including that of deploying security personnel, their movement, communication and training, this number is estimated at a further ₹325 billion. The expenses for the conduct of the election is paid for directly by the citizens, through the taxes collected. This sum no-doubt is high, but an equally large amount — ₹350 billion, is said to have been spent by candidates and parties during 2014 elections. To put it in relative context, the US elections that elected Trump, the house and the senate in 2016 was ₹455 billion. And note, State elections need to be tallied separately.

Those contesting elections are expected to spend ₹600 billion in the coming national elections. This is why we now see many more millionaire candidates. Data from the Association

for Democratic Reforms shows that 1,249 out of the 7,810 candidates (15 per cent) who contested the 2004 national elections were *crorepatis*. Their number jumped to 2,207 out of 8,163 candidates (27 per cent) by 2014. That the 2014 Parliament had 443 *crorepati* MPs (83 per cent), suggests their winnability is higher. Are the rich intrinsically more winnable? I believe political parties go for more well-heeled candidates because they can spend their way to the victory stand — creating a bias for their selection.

How campaigns are funded is crucial for a well-functioning democracy. A nexus between corporates, a perennial money-tap, and politicians can be toxic. It is in this context that there is a need for more transparency with regard to corporate funding of elections.

There was a brief period after 1969 when corporates were banned from political donations. But since elections still needed to be funded, corporates used this ban to justify creation of black money. This was reversed in 1985, capping donations to 5 per cent of the previous three-year average profit. Today political funding is covered under Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013, with no caps, subject to board approval and disclosure in the annual report.

The 2017 Budget limited cash donations to ₹2,000 per person, down from ₹20,000 earlier, to contain the use of black money. It also introduced electoral bonds akin to bearer instrument in nature of promissory note. It's too early to judge the efficacy of electoral bonds, but rather than encouraging transparency, the opacity adds



There is a need for more transparency with regard to corporate funding of elections

to the murkiness.

We have also seen the creation of electoral trusts. Under this, business groups contribute to a trust and the trust in-turn passes on the money to a political party. This helps in a few ways. More than one company or business group can contribute to an electoral trust — and if many do, there is some distance between the companies and the political parties. Two, the trusts put in place principles or guidelines that determine how the money gets passed on — contributions are non-discretionary. Further, companies do not have to report whom they donated too, saving them blushes if the party they back, does not win.

How should managements and boards deal with political contributions

(or demands)?

First, boards must take a call on the amount they wish to donate. Note that CSR spend is put at 2 per cent and each candidate's campaign-spending is currently capped at ₹7 million and there is a compelling reason to increase this. Putting these numbers together even 7.5 per cent of three-year profits — the earlier cap which has conveniently been done away — appears far too high. An absolute number should be preferred to a percentage of profits.

Second, once the amount is decided, it should be put to shareholders to vote. The shareholder resolution should have a validity period and renewed periodically. This helps to bring an ex-ante cap on the number. Importantly, the board approved limit can be changed in a hurriedly called board meeting; a limit approved in a shareholder meeting has its own timeline. And greater scrutiny implies the number is less flexible.

Three, boards should maintain oversight and not leave it unattended. Putting in place a framework to report to the board will help. Four, have guidelines regarding how this money will be disbursed. If the money is passed on to an electoral trust, the board should familiarise itself with the trustees, what their role is, as well as the gifting principles. Whether directly or through the trust route, keeping discretion to the minimum should be a core principle. The Progressive Electoral Trust donates all the funds on the basis of the performance in the outgoing Lok Sabha. There is a case for a percentage on the basis of past and the balance on the basis of the performance in the incom-

## BUSINESS LIFE

# Should Netflix be afraid of Apple?

JOHN KOBLIN

On March 25, a delegation of producers, studio executives and big-name actors will enter the subterranean 1,000-seat Steve Jobs Theater in Cupertino, Calif, for one of those Apple showcases, with the Chief Executive, Tim Cook, commanding the stage before a crowd of loyalists.

This time around, the focus won't be on the next must-have device. With iPhone sales showing signs of fatigue, the event is intended to draw attention to the company's billion-dollar-plus bet on entertainment, an initiative that will put Apple in direct competition with Netflix, Amazon and HBO.

The premiere date for the service is getting closer, with the first of a dozen or more shows likely to start streaming before the year is out. At next week's presentation, Apple is expected to reveal details of what it has been working on with stars from both sides of the camera.

The tag line, "It's show time," appeared prominently on the invitations. For many of the show business people, this will be their first trip to Cupertino, the corporate home of their new patrons.

Apple didn't need stars before, but it needs them now. Although the company was the first publicly traded American firm to be valued above \$1 trillion, its most recent earnings report showed flat profits and falling revenue.

So the plan now is not only to sell devices, but to fill them with content. That has led the company into the alien territory of Hollywood, where local customs can clash with Silicon Valley folkways.

Apple is a relatively late arrival to streaming. Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have offered original programming for several years. In 2018, there were



nearly 500 scripted television shows available in the United States, with Netflix spending at least \$8 billion on new content.

Apple has decided to put more emphasis on its services — think Apple Music and Apple Pay — to increase revenues. The strategy will include an expansion of Apple News, which is expected to be highlighted at the showcase, and the star-studded streaming service. Apple has negotiated with the likes of HBO, Starz and Showtime to populate its screens, Bloomberg has reported, but the centerpiece will be original programming.

The event at the Apple Park campus in Cupertino is also meant to drive home just how many shows Apple has pulled together. Five series have completed filming. Around a half dozen more are on the verge of wrapping production, according to several people familiar with the shows who were not authorized to speak publicly. And the number of original productions is expected to increase in 2020.

With all that new material, Apple will transform itself, seemingly overnight, from a tech giant into a more general enterprise, with a slate of original entertainment offerings sizable enough to put it in a league with Showtime, Hulu or FX.

Interviews with more than a dozen people who have had dealings with Apple, all of whom said they couldn't speak publicly about private discussions, suggest that, while the producers and stars appreciate having another deep-pocketed company to pitch, they also have concerns.

Those concerns have arisen from the culture clash that may inevitably come about when a tech company that is used to guarding its trade secrets gets involved in show business.

Players expect to be kept in the loop. But many of the people working with Apple said they have received little or no information on how, exactly, their shows will be released. They also don't have a clear idea of Apple's marketing plans for the shows.

Apple's entertainment team is based in Culver City, Calif, and is led by two former Sony television executives, Jamie Erlich and Zack Van Amburg, under the watch of the senior vice president of internet software and services Eddy Cue. Cue hired the Sony veterans in 2017, after Apple rolled out its first original series, a reality show called "Planet of the Apps," which was a dud. About \$1 billion was set aside for them to spend on programming, and they have blown well past that amount by now.

Apple's entertainment team has not been totally opaque. It has provided feedback to individuals involved in the shows, but it has been tight-lipped about the marketing and rollout plans.

People involved in the coming series also said that Apple executives had expressed squeamishness when it comes to the portrayal of technology in the shows — how exactly are you using that iPhone? Or that Mac laptop?

Apple had no comment on any aspect of its streaming plans.

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## LETTERS

### Don't be emotional



Apologies your editorial "Review takeover code" (March 20), I am in total agreement with your comment that the high drama and outburst on the part of Mindtree founders (pictured) will hardly meet the end objective. Call it hostile or whatever, the fact remains that not only is L&T well within the law, but it also makes sound business sense for the very successful engineering conglomerate that already has two software services arms to take over Mindtree, which will complement its existing strengths, and hopefully create a powerhouse that can aim a shot at larger contracts. Even Ashok Soota, co-founder and former chairman of Mindtree, has gone on record saying that the promoters are fighting a losing battle. It is time for the well-meaning but over-enthusiastic promoters to be more pragmatic and less emotional about the issue.

As far as the broader point is concerned, our laws do need changes, not only to bring in the provision of a leveraged buyout — notwithstanding the fact that in the present case even that won't help — as well as differential voting rights for promoters. As our businesses become global, it is essential that we also embrace international best practices and laws governing these. The consolidation through mergers and takeovers is an accepted fact; these will happen with greater regularity. It will be useful to have a proper

framework in place.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

### You think we are fools?

What an irony! In the run up to the election in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminded people that he was a *chaiwala* (tea server) at Vadnagar railway station in Gujarat. Come 2019 elections, he has now launched the "MainBhiChowkidar" campaign countering Congress President Rahul Gandhi's "chowkidarchorhai" jibe. As if that was not enough, all of his cabinet colleagues and a lot of their followers have prefixed *chowkidar* to their Twitter handles.

We the people are amused at the fall of the country's *pradhan sevak* or Prime Minister to *chowkidar*, after Pulwama and after the Rafale documents were allegedly stolen. I think we as common people had voted for a prime minister and not for a *chowkidar* or *chaiwala*. While the PM might not acknowledge, the common people are quite aware of the government's failures: to name a few, agrarian crisis, jobless growth, and damage done to all democratic institutions. They cannot fool us voters anymore.

Bidyut Chatterjee Faridabad

### Take action now

This refers to "India staring at severe water crisis, among the worst in the world, says WaterAid research" (March



19). It will be a great tragedy if we do not take note of such warnings and not take effective measures in managing our water resources, with special emphasis on ground water recharging on a grand scale. We have the ability to do it. Just that it is not getting the attention that it deserves. It appears some dried up rivers in Rajasthan and Maharashtra have been revived through private efforts. Such efforts must spread all over, especially in the north, where depletion of ground water is the fastest. Further, the consumption of water in agriculture should also go down with better agricultural practices.

NP Sinha Jamshedpur

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## HAMBONE



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## Jet's new flight path

Banks gave too long a rope to promoters

Lenders to Jet Airways have finally decided to act tough by asking promoter Naresh Goyal and three of his nominees to step down from the board immediately so that they have no role in running the airline. The lenders have agreed to put in ₹1,200 crore of interim financing, which would make them the majority equity holder after Etihad decided to pull out. The move by lenders is in tune with a framework outlined by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) last year. The procedure, applicable for companies with a negative net worth, is called bank-led provisional resolution plan. The only other option the lenders had was to take Jet to the National Company Law Tribunal, but it was obvious that they wanted to avoid that route, as Jet's failure meant that banks would have to take a full hit on their loans as the liquidation value might not be much, unless a very high value is attached to the brand. It would have been bad optics too because of the potential job losses and possible surge in air fares, giving an opportunity to a vocal opposition to attack the government for another failure after the Air India privatisation fiasco.

But there is no doubt that the lenders gave too long a rope to Mr Goyal, as the writing on the wall was clear for the past 12-18 months. The airline was in the news for the last several months for all the wrong reasons: A cash crunch, mounting losses, unpaid salaries, diminishing market share, and governance issues. Jet needed urgent recapitalisation to survive and the promoters just did not have the money. It was also open knowledge that Etihad and the promoters were not seeing eye to eye after Mr Goyal tied up with KLM and Air France to create an alternative alliance for Europe, which conflicted with Etihad. The foreign carrier gave enough indication that it would not put any more cash or pledge its shares to bail out the airline until Mr Goyal was out of the cockpit. Finally, Mr Goyal's refusal to limit his holding in Jet Airways to 22 per cent and exit active management reportedly scuppered the deal with Etihad. Lenders, it seems, preferred to live on hope for a long time.

Now that the promoters are set to be on their way out, lenders have their task cut out. They neither have the expertise to run the airline, nor can they own a majority stake for any length of time in a company that operates in a profoundly risky sector such as aviation. That means banks will have to appoint a new board, which will oversee the interim phase of keeping the airline flying and look for a new strategic investor who has the cash and the management depth to turn around Jet. That itself is a tremendous task as the aviation industry is facing turbulent weather. With hyper competition between six players and growing capacity additions (IndiGo is adding nine planes a month and all airlines will add 90 more planes in FY20), yields are getting severely dented. According to CAPA, while passenger growth will be robust at 14-16 per cent (because of low average fares) in FY20, the consolidated losses of the airlines are expected to increase. Banks have to act before time runs out.

## A swap in time

RBI's new liquidity management tool is a welcome move

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) move to provide a swap facility of \$5 billion to banks will provide liquidity to them without causing any expansion to the central bank's balance sheet. It has also resulted in forward rates coming down and opens an opportunity for long-term dollar borrowers to hedge at a lower cost. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has introduced the liquidity management tool, which was used once in the past by Raghuram Rajan in 2013 to rein in the rupee, which had depreciated a lot in a short period. But that was a different situation, and the measure was an extraordinary one. What Mr Das and team intend to do is to make this swap more mainstream and likely a regular feature.

With this facility, banks will no longer need to deplete their bond holdings to shore up liquidity, and for the RBI, the swap will stop a massive expansion of its balance sheet. It will provide additional liquidity even as the RBI continues with its secondary market bond purchases through open market operations (OMO) in the next fiscal year as well. This fiscal year, the central bank prevented interest rates from increasing by buying 72 per cent or about ₹3 trillion of the government's net borrowing from the market. The next fiscal year's borrowing target is equally stiff at ₹7.1 trillion in gross and ₹4.73 trillion on a net basis. Banks cannot buy gilts unless the central bank chips in with liquidity support. Now for the RBI, undertaking open market operations expands its balance sheet, which is bad for a central bank that has mounted a war against inflation and is focused on a better transmission of policy rates. The balance sheet expansion corresponds with increase in money supply, which in turn stokes inflation. To control that, the RBI will have to raise interest rates, which then stifles growth. The central bank is now trying to aid growth through lower interest rates. But unless banks pass it on, a policy rate cut doesn't hold any significance. In the face of a massive supply of bonds, estimated to be over ₹14 trillion, including state development loans, public sector undertaking bonds, central government borrowing, and corporate bonds, the RBI's continued liquidity support in the next fiscal year would be a must. Therefore, it is necessary to expand liquidity tools.

The swap of dollars with rupees works only when there is adequate dollar supply in the economy. The month of March, with \$4.6 billion net foreign portfolio investments in equity and debt combined, has been promising in this respect. The heat map of the last 12 years shows that the last quarter is always the time when the rupee appreciates due to increased dollar supply. So, the \$5-billion swap will likely sail through this time. The expectation of this amount in the near future also means that the RBI's intervention (purchase of dollars) has reduced in the currency market, which is letting the rupee appreciate. No doubt, exporters who were sitting on dollars have been hit now by the rupee appreciation. The first instance of the swap is expected to be a success as foreign flows have been strong, but how this new tool shapes up in future remains to be seen.

## A contest of content in this election

We need to hear from our political parties why we should vote for them, what ideas they stand for, their policies, reform, etc

This has been a dispiriting election campaign. Most of what we hear are negatives — why we should not vote for the other fellow. Most of the rest is rhetoric — platitudes masquerading as content. We need an election where we see a contest of ideas and not hate. Start with three propositions: First, both the government and opposition are equally committed to the national interest and try to serve it with equal integrity. Neither has a monopoly on patriotism or integrity, and accusations of being anti-national or corrupt in either direction are shameful. Second, when in government, both the BJP and Congress have done their best to develop the economy. This best has often been lacking. The last 20 years have seen India governed by the governments led by the BJP and Congress for 10 years each. Each can take roughly half the responsibility for what we have achieved in these 20 years and what we haven't. And third, both the government and opposition would serve the country well if they debated ideas instead of personalities. We do not need a strong leadership; we need a government that does the right things.

So what right things should we seek as election promises from our political leaders?

### Economic issues must dominate debate

India needs decades of high growth to become a developed country. If we grow 8 per cent a year (better than we are achieving now), it will take 20 years for our per capita GDP (currently \$2,000) to match today's mid-income level of China (\$9,000). If we grow 10 per cent a year, it will take 30 years to reach today's devel-

oped country level of South Korea (\$30,000). Very few countries have grown 10 per cent a year for over 20 years: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China. We must have the same aspiration. What will it take?

Three things: Our growth must be inclusive, we need consistent structural reform of the economy, and the private sector must be the growth dynamo.

First, as 60 per cent of India's GDP growth comes from consumption, our growth must be inclusive. Both the government and opposition talk inclusive growth, but rely on giveaways — whether loan waivers or direct cash transfers. Giveaways alleviate current poverty; they do not include people in growth processes. We should rely, instead, on education and skills. We need specific commitments on education spending, policies to improve education outcomes, and ideas to kick-start our moribund skill development programme.

For too long we have tolerated governments which do not accord school education the priority it demands. The results are depressing: The 2018 Annual State of Education Report (ASER) says:

- Under half of all children in government schools in Standard V can read a Standard II text;
  - Only 23 per cent of children in government schools in Standard V can do division. Forty per cent of children in Standard III cannot even subtract;
  - Only 12 per cent of Standard III children in Uttar Pradesh can read a Standard II text while 47 per cent of children in Himachal Pradesh can.
- Eventually, the ASER tells us, many children learn something. But if our children spend most years in



INDIA'S WORLD? NAUSHAD FORBES

## Italy enjoys a rare moment of banking bliss

The banking industry hasn't given Italy many reasons to celebrate. The country has stumbled from crisis to crisis, as it fought a rear-guard action against the European Union's rules for handling failing lenders.

This week, EU judges gave Rome a rare moment of joy. The bloc's general court, its second-highest tribunal, ruled on Tuesday that the 2014 rescue of Banca Tercas SpA by the Italian deposit guarantee scheme didn't break the law. Italian politicians and regulators feel vindicated. They've long argued that deposit insurance funds should be used not just to compensate savers, but also to help struggling banks — a position the European Commission has opposed.

The case has implications that go well beyond a tiny lender in Abruzzo, one of Italy's smallest regions. Many in Rome believe they could have acted faster to save other struggling banks by using this tool — for example, the four small banks that were resolved in 2015. Antonio Patuelli, the head of Italy's banking association, said EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager should resign. Enzo Moavero Milanesi, the country's foreign minister, wouldn't rule out seeking damages from the EU.

The Commission can now appeal to the European Court of Justice, the EU's highest legal authority. But even if the judgment stands, it will be a Pyrrhic victory for the Italians. Creative use of the deposit guarantee scheme doesn't magically solve the problems of a rescued bank. It simply

forces healthier lenders (which contribute to the fund) to share the burden. Any such rescue depletes the scheme, which cannot fulfil its primary mission: To guarantee deposits of up to €100,000. That makes it more likely that taxpayers will have to step in.

A short history of Italy's recent banking troubles illustrates this point. After the EU blocked them, the Italian authorities found an imaginative way to let the guarantee fund intervene anyway in saving Tercas: They used a "voluntary" scheme that doesn't count as state aid. But Banca Popolare di Bari ScPa, which rescued its rival with the help of the fund, now finds itself in need of a new capital injection.

Italy's banking system has also chipped in to contribute to a separate rescue fund, Atlante, which took over Banca Popolare di Vicenza SpA and Veneto Banca SpA. Atlante failed to turn around the banks, which were eventually liquidated. Finally, the deposit scheme has now intervened to rescue Banca Carige, another troubled lender, by investing in a subordinated bond. Several participating banks, including Intesa Sanpaolo SpA have already written off the investment.

This sequence shows that asking industry funds to support troubled banks is not a free lunch. In fact, it rewards bondholders who have lent money to a mismanaged lender, at the expense of share-



FERDINANDO GIUGLIANO

school simply learning how to read, add and subtract, they are missing the basic skills needed to learn anything else. Shouldn't such fundamental issues, which are crippling the nation in the long run, be front and centre in our election?

Second, we need consistent economic reform — defined as moving decision-making from the government to the market. We do not need better government; we need less government. This government's ease of doing business programme is in the right direction, but we have a long way to go. Every improvement in reducing regulation by one department (e.g. industry) seems to be matched by a new regulation from company affairs, or a regulator like the Securities and Exchange Board of India, or the Anti-Profitting Authority (the name itself is a throwback to our pre-1991 slumber). Election manifestos may be necessarily short on detail, but we need specific commitments of which areas would be reformed, and how. Two examples of sensible economics are missing in our political discourse: Instead of free power, farmers should be promised 24-hour high-quality power — at market rates. If we need subsidies, provide a direct cash transfer. Agriculture should be taxed as for any other activity — will any party have the courage to tax personal agricultural income above, say, ₹1 crore per year?

Third, the strength of the Indian economy, unlike the Chinese economy, rests in the private sector. Much of the increase in our growth rate since 1991 has come from the unleashing of private enterprise. We should hear how business in general (as opposed to some individual crooks) would be trusted to invest and take the economy forward. A 1970s cartoon by the wonderful R K Laxman shows a businessman walking away from a minister's desk: "Did you see how depressed and miserable that businessman looks? That shows our industrial policy is working." We have come a very long way after 1991, and the progress must continue. And just as business must be trusted to do the right thing, business must repay that trust — by investing in capacity and proprietary technology by complying with all applicable laws in full, and by funding political parties completely transparently — saying who and how much they fund.

### If politicians are human, and voters are intelligent

Finally, as voters, we should expect our politicians to be human. We should not expect them to be supermen or miracle-workers, able to bring peace and prosperity to all while balancing the books. We should expect them to wrestle with conflicting priorities and display the humility of not having all the answers. We should expect responsibility for actions and accountability for failures. We should expect decency in debate and civility in how opponents are addressed. And, equally, politicians should expect us as voters to be intelligent. That we do wish to hear ideas debated and policy presented. That we do want politicians to call on us to think for ourselves and make real choices, instead of pandering to our worst instincts. Let us have a contest of content when we go to the polls in April and May.

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### Creative use of the deposit guarantee scheme doesn't magically solve the problems of a rescued bank. It simply forces healthier lenders to share the burden

mooted merger between Deutsche Bank AG and Commerzbank AG shows, German lenders are as disaster-prone as anyone else.

Ironically, more expansive use of national guarantee funds by Italy or whomever would only make Berlin even more suspicious of setting up a joint one (something coveted by the Italians). Rome should be careful what it wishes for.

The writer is an economics columnist for La Repubblica and was a member of the editorial board of Financial Times ©Bloomberg

## The United States of open wounds



### BOOK REVIEW

PARUL SEHGAL

All literature is literature in translation. There is no mother tongue. All of it migrates out of the body, out of a tangle of sensations and intuitions, obscure rancour and desires; we hunt racks of ready-made language for words that might fit.

Mitchell S. Jackson is the author of a sharply drawn novel, *The Residue Years*, and a new memoir, *Survival Math*. Questions of translating his experience have long preoccupied him. "I'm not writing for white people, to inform them on black lives," he has said. Nor does he want

the reader to be dazzled by the instability and violence of his childhood and miss the "bounteous love" that is as much his legacy.

Mr Jackson's work is set in Portland, Ore., one of the whitest big cities in America, scarred by a long history of racist violence and intimidation. The black community he grew up in was small and straitened, hit hard by years of redlining. He writes about a lifetime of losses and near escapes, his mother's crack addiction and his own drug dealing.

It's an American story Jackson tells, nesting his own among others — that of the first black man thought to set foot in Oregon (Markus Lopus) and those of the friends and relatives whose lives Jackson depicts in interspersed "survivor profiles." He includes poems woven out of lines lifted from the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Exuberant maximalism is his mode. The digressions have digressions. There

are pages of garrulous footnotes. Every story veers off into a lesson — on the history of the Bloods and Crips, the invention of whiteness and crack cocaine, the composition of plasma and the cultivation of apple trees — some sections only tenuously knitted into the narrative. The detours recall the hectic narrative nonfiction of the nineties and early aughts, by writers like Dave Eggers and David Foster Wallace.

Mr Jackson tells us so much, but it's the omissions that are deafening.

There are patterns in his reticence. He begins a personal story, he opens a wound — and when we expect emotion, he floods us with information. The elaborate architecture of the book can feel like an exercise in misdirection, especially when Jackson turns to his treatment of women.

He introduces his concept of "The Men on the Scale" — players, users of women. He has been such a man, he says, but he alludes only vaguely to how he harmed them. Instead he includes "victim state-

ments," testimonies of his behaviour from five former partners. They describe being cheated on and lied to, coerced into abortions, feeling too traumatised to date again. "I blamed me," one writes. "I wasn't pretty enough."

These stories shimmer with pain. But Mr is impatient to talk about victimology instead. He wants to discuss Don Giovanni, Lord Byron, the writer Chantal Thomas, Steven Pinker, Frantz Fanon, Picasso, Simone de Beauvoir, the psychologist Grazyna Kochanska — all in two pages. He wants to tell us about history's great Lotharios.

There have been a slew of new books that have reckoned powerfully with manhood and masculinity and their intersections with race and sexuality. Mr Jackson has the facility, but what does he force himself to face? Too often, a strong protective instinct takes over. He writes, of the men he grew up with, some who dealt drugs or pimped women: "Though their

foibles weren't the crux of what I used to compose, best believe not a single man I mentioned has existed in my life beyond critique. And that's all sorts of apropos, since I too am a flawed human striving, striving."

The syntax turns knotty and tortured here; it trips over itself. It's as if Jackson has remembered he's being overheard, and by readers who might summarily condemn these men. He retreats to a safer bank — aren't we all just imperfect human beings? On other occasions, he takes cover behind the abstractions of the pulp. "Ours is a revolutionary era of gender fluidity and sexual equality and same-sex parents and girls doubtless need fathers, too," he writes. "However" — however! — "this is my beating heart: Boys need fathers. Boys need fathers — period, exclamation point."

This is stale writing — period, exclamation point. It is beneath Mr Jackson. Not only because it so casually dismisses same-sex and single parents, but because it misses the pungency and wisdom of the scenes, the richness and beautiful uncertainties of the voice he inhabits,

when he seeks to depict and not merely sermonize.

The retelling of his first foray into drug dealing is indelible. "I kept faith, stood out in the shadows among others determined to clock a dollar. It was frightening and exhilarating all at once. It was near ineffable seeing that world demystified, witnessing firsthand the landscape, which by that time my mother had been roaming for years. There was also a part of me that half hoped I'd see her."

He does, eventually. I will never forget their encounter. What a book this might have been had he stayed in this register a little longer, had he stayed with all that is "frightening and exhilarating," and let us truly encounter him.

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**SURVIVAL MATH: Notes on an All-American Family** Mitchell S Jackson Scribner 315 pages, \$26





## Travesty of justice

The Samjhauta blast case raises doubts about India's resolve to prosecute terror cases

The acquittal of Swami Aseemanand and three others brought to trial for the killing of 68 people on board the Delhi-Lahore Samjhauta Express near Panipat in February 2007 is bound to be seen as a travesty of justice. Any acquittal in a heinous crime will raise questions about the credibility of the investigation or the effectiveness of the prosecution; but there are some cases in which the outcome may also spark cynical responses ranging from attribution of political motive to suspicion of institutional bias. The train blast case, in which both Indian and Pakistani citizens died, may evoke all such responses. It casts a shadow on India's ability and resolve to probe and prosecute major acts of terrorism. It is the third case in which Aseemanand has been acquitted. He was earlier cleared of involvement in the Ajmer Dargah blast, which killed three persons in October 2007, and the Mecca Masjid blast that left nine dead in Hyderabad in May 2007. Aseemanand, a.k.a. Naba Kumar Sarkar, was a key figure, according to the prosecution, behind a Hindu right-wing group that wanted to avenge incidents such as the Akshardham temple massacre of 2002. The contours of 'saf-ron terror' were revealed by Aseemanand in 2010 when he gave a lengthy statement before a magistrate, detailing the planning and execution of some key terrorist attacks between 2006 and 2008. This confession failed to convince the trial courts, mainly because of his subsequent retraction. That he was in police custody at the time also cast a doubt whether it was voluntary.

There appears little doubt that the blast was aimed at destroying attempts to build friendly ties between India and Pakistan, and it is possible that extremists of any hue may have been behind it. However, the change of regime at the Centre in 2014 seemed to have weakened the National Investigation Agency's resolve. Details of the verdict are not yet available, but it is clear that the prosecution case collapsed after key witnesses turned hostile. The trial proceedings opened in February 2014, but by early 2015 witnesses began turning hostile. Among these were one who removed a mobile phone from the body of Sunil Joshi, a prime accused in the case who was murdered in December 2007, and another who bought mobile phones and electric detonators. On the flip side, the fact that some early suspects were Muslims and that the U.S. and the UN had linked Lashkar-e-Toiba operatives such as Arif Qasmani to the blasts could have been important factors. The larger concern for the criminal justice system is whether such acquittals indicate innocence, or the prosecution's lack of freedom and resolve to obtain a conviction.

## Back on track

India and the Maldives must continue to build a shared strategic vision

India and the Maldives appeared to return to the old days of strategic bonhomie when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met her counterpart Abdulla Shahid in Male during a brief visit this week. It is the first full-fledged bilateral visit at the political level from India to the Maldives after the new government assumed office in the wake of the historic election last September. President Ibrahim Solih assumed charge after a multi-party, pro-democracy coalition led by his Maldivian Democratic Party was swept to power. Mr. Solih's inauguration, which was marked by the attendance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was assumed to be a potential inflection point in the trajectory of bilateral ties with India. The previous five years witnessed Male's disconcerting drift, under the aegis of the Abdulla Yameen government, into what many Maldivians felt was the stifling embrace of China. Chinese financing for infrastructure and construction projects poured in even as the functioning of the political Opposition and the judiciary was harshly curtailed. All of this flux appeared to have been washed away on September 23, 2018 when the Maldivian electorate voted resoundingly for the coalition that backed Mr. Solih for President.

Yet it would be unwise for New Delhi to take the Indian Ocean nation for granted. There is indeed an opportunity for reset on numerous policies, and some of that has already happened. In December, when Mr. Solih visited India, a \$1.4 billion financial assistance package for the Maldives was announced. While the proximity of the Indian general election may have precluded any major policy announcements from New Delhi, the two countries have agreed to exempt holders of diplomatic and official passports from visa requirements, inked an MoU on Indian grant-in-aid for "high-impact community development projects", and other agreements on energy efficiency and renewable energy, areas critical to the agenda of Mr. Solih. At a broader level, the archipelago and the larger Indian Ocean region could expect more collaborative approaches on regional maritime security issues, including counterterrorism and trans-national crimes. However, Male is still grappling with the legacy of the Yameen administration's headlong plunge into the orbit of Beijing. The massive debts the Maldives incurred, by some estimates to the tune of \$3 billion, linked to infrastructure investments need to be unwound. Second, the multiparty alliance must hold firm despite immense political pressures that arise from varying visions for governance. Some tensions already seem to be bubbling to the top: on February 25, Mohamed Nasheed, former President and important coalition-builder in the MDP, tweeted about the country's Supreme Court "meddling in elections - again". For genuine peace and bilateral harmony to take root in the region, building a shared vision for the future of the Maldives is the immediate task at hand.

# When free speech is truly free

Its true power is its capacity to make those in power accountable to those who don't have power



SUNDAR SARUKKAI

Freedom is a theme which is going to come up again and again through this election. It is a term, like truth, that has globally become extremely important today. But it is not an easy concept to understand, especially in a public political discourse. First of all, there are many kinds of freedom: freedom to speak, to write, to think, to imagine, to live our lives, to eat what we want, and so on. Since this term is invoked so quickly and so easily - witness little children saying they want their freedom to have ice cream! - it is important that we understand its diverse meanings in our everyday use of this term. Here I want to understand what one of the most important expressions of freedom, free speech, could mean.

### Freedom to hold forth?

We often tend to think that among the main elements of democracy are the holding of elections and a free media. Both elections and free media are important because they stand, among other things, for the notions of free speech and free expression. Casting a vote anonymously, of one's own free will, is an example of free expression and is broader than just 'free speech'. Similarly, when the media has the freedom to air all kinds of views, it is seen to be an example of free speech. But is free

speech really the essence of democracy? Is it really so important for an effective democracy?

Paradoxically, there is an inherent tension between free speech and democracy. If free speech is understood merely as the freedom to say what one wants, then that is obviously not conducive to meaningful social behaviour. For example, one can spread falsehood about another in the name of free speech. One can insult, lie, create harm and hatred through free speech. In these cases, free speech should rightfully be called rumour and gossip. Rumour, gossip, fake news and deliberate lying can be hidden under the guise of free speech. It is speech with an ulterior motive. To call these as free speech is a mistake.

The answer to the problem of defining what really constitutes free speech lies in understanding the meaning of 'free' in free speech. What is really free in free speech? The freedom to say what one wants? We can't really say what we want all the time since all speech is constrained. We are constrained by language, words, concepts and grammar, and even by the physical contours of our mouth. We are constrained by the biological and cognitive structures related to thought and its expression through language. Socially, we are not fully free to say what we want. We cannot make certain utterances in certain places. A commentator, commenting on a game of cricket, cannot suddenly give a lecture on philosophy saying that he is protected by free speech!

In addition to constraints, all speech also has a cost. When we



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utter something, good or bad, there is a price to pay. Even in personal relations with family and friends, we cannot say what we want. If we do so - that is, if we are honest and outspoken - there is a price to pay. Relationships get broken, wars are declared between people because somebody spoke 'freely'.

Thus, the essence of free speech is not really about the freedom to say what we want. It is more about speech which is free, which comes with no cost. Free speech is actual speech for which you don't pay a price. But paying a price is not in the hands of the speaker. When I say or write something, I do not know who will take offence at it. People get upset and take offence very easily these days! Free speech is nothing but the conditions under which the hearer is not allowed to take offence and intimidate the speaker.

The real freedom in 'free speech' lies not in the freedom of the speaker to say what she wants but in the constraint on hearers to allow the speaker to say what she

## Beyond the 'us-them' binary

By calling the Christchurch attacker a terrorist, the New Zealand Prime Minister sent a powerful message



TABISH KHAIR

Though some media outlets gave it needless coverage, anyone could have expected that the Islamic State (IS) would call for "revenge" following the Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shootings on March 15, in which 50 people lost their lives. At its peak in 2015, the IS had 30,000 fighters and the estimated support of (at the most) half a million Muslims - out of a total world population of an estimated 1.8 billion Muslims in 2015. It also has the reputation of being the organisation that has killed the maximum number of Muslims in recent years, a fact obscured by its gory executions of 'non-Muslims'.

For the IS to urge 'revenge' on the behalf of all Muslims was exactly the same as the act of terrorism perpetrated by the Australia-born, white supremacist, alt-right terrorist on men, women and children who had gone to two Christchurch mosques for peaceful Friday congregational prayers on March 15. As his 'manifesto' indicates, this young white alt-right male terrorist was also seeking "revenge" for various acts of real

or imagined violence by 'Muslims'. In short, the perpetrator of the Christchurch massacres and the IS are caught in a distorting binary worldview of 'us versus them', and inevitably this is the world they will create if the rest of us do not call their bluff.

### The 'T' word

And this time, for a change, a world leader called their bluff right at the start. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, not only referred to the attacks as "one of New Zealand's darkest days" but, more courageously, did not hesitate to call their perpetrator a "terrorist". By using the 'T' word - which is easily applied to terrorising violence by Muslim criminals but tardily applied to similar violence by white supremacist or (in India) Hindutva criminals - Ms. Ardern sent a powerful message. In this, she was supported by her counterpart in Australia, Scott Morrison, who also did not hesitate to describe the perpetrator as a terrorist.

The hesitation in the media to describe white extremism or Hindutva violence as terror is a reflection, however diffuse, of exactly that binary division of the world into 'us versus them' that I have highlighted. It has its counterpart in the Muslim world too, and I will come to that a bit later. Evidently, Ms. Ardern's honest description of what happened in Christchurch



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sent a message not only to the world media but also to Muslims: what she effectively said was that Muslims are not 'them' in New Zealand. She highlighted this in many ways, by thoughtful acts of condolence as well as a clear statement in which she embraced the victims (mostly immigrants and refugees) as "one of us".

The good effect of such admirable statesmanship was evident in the responsible way in which the New Zealand media largely covered the tragedy. Those of us in India who are used to our hyper-ventilating evening shows should have marked this difference. Not that the 'us-them' binary disappeared. The tabloid press - not least in England, a country whose inability to face up to its own subterranean prejudices has landed it in the on-going mess of Brexit - still continued, much of the time, to think along those binaries. This was admirably exposed by The Feed, which, among other things, compared the initial front page

wants. Thus, when we demand the right to free speech, we are essentially demanding the right to stop others from not letting us speak. The most important consequence of the idea of free speech is that it shifts the responsibility of free speech from the speaker to the hearer. But does this mean that anybody can say what they want? Can they slander a person through falsehood in the name of free speech? Is slandering a person the same as criticising the government or the nation? After all, our governments, independent of which party is in power, have effectively used the charge of sedition to stop certain utterances in public.

### Criticism as a duty

It is not free speech to purposefully slander a person. But criticising the government or nation is not the same as slandering an individual. Such criticism is not just a right, it is more a duty of democratic societies. In a true democracy, there is nothing that can be considered as slandering the government, even if a criticism may be wrong and unjustified. That is because free speech is a tool to make democracy workable and it is not really about the individual freedom to say what one wants.

Democracy is about governance for others and on behalf of others. It is a social and public system of responsibility of governance. The very foundation of democracy is collective action and the real freedom in a democracy is the freedom of choosing who will govern on our behalf. The ideal of democracy is that we are all potential rulers - any one of us can be the

Prime Minister of our country. When we elect somebody, we are only putting a group of people to govern on behalf of us. Free speech is the mechanism to make sure that they govern correctly and on our behalf. It is only free speech, defined in this manner, that makes democracy workable.

The true power of free speech lies in its capacity to make those in power accountable to those who do not have power. It is a means to control those in power and is not really about freedom of individuals. The price we demand for making somebody govern on our behalf (the elected leaders) is to allow us to say what we want about them, not as individuals but as political leaders.

### The power equation

Thus, true free speech covers only those acts of speech which speak against power, and keep those in power accountable. It thus safeguards the most cherished democratic principle. Free speech by itself is not the essence of democracy but is the means by which any democracy can be sustained. Anybody who doesn't like to hear criticism of government or government representatives is being undemocratic. We dilute the importance of free speech when we use it to derive personal benefit or cause harm or do so in situations which are not about power. Speech, in the task of keeping check on power, has to be subsidised and made free by those in power.

Sundar Sarukkai is a philosopher based in Bengaluru

## 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.

### No bail

But for a British reporter accusing the fugitive Indian diamond businessman Nirav Modi and later a bank employee alerting the police about his presence, it is doubtful whether the diamantaire would have been arrested in the manner he was (Page 1, "Nirav Modi's free run ends, held without bail in London", March 21). While the developments have come as a face-saver for the government, there are still several unanswered questions about his having fled India despite complaints about his alleged banking misdeeds. One can be sure that Nirav Modi is not going to be flown back any time soon given the protracted extradition processes in the United Kingdom. One has to remember that Vijay Mallya has yet to be brought back to face trial for alleged banking frauds. Is all this a part of election time compulsions?

S.K. CHOUDHURY,  
Bengaluru

■ The Opposition is bound to accuse the government of having let Nirav Modi escape in the first place, but those parties should remember that there has been some movement as far as Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi are concerned. It was under the Congress that Bhopal gas tragedy accused Warren Anderson and Bofors scam accused Ottavio Quattrocchi were facilitated free passage.

CHANDER ARUNA,  
Chennai

■ One cannot fail to notice the pertinent observation of the judge - that there are substantial grounds to believe that Nirav Modi would fail to surrender if granted bail. Such high-profile defaulters have to be brought to justice to restore our faith in law and justice. If there is some positive development in the cases of Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi, one will also be reassured that the U.K. is not a haven for law violators, as it is assumed to be now.

M.S. VAIDYANATHAN,  
Chennai

■ It is necessary to revisit the clauses of extradition treaties in force so that offenders do not take advantage of the loopholes and get the better of legal systems in the home country. Inordinate delays tire out a system in pursuit of such cases and often reach a dead end after the initial burst. The case of Lalit Modi has been going on for nearly a decade and he is almost forgotten after the cases of more prominent offenders have come under the spotlight. Unlike a few decades ago, the image of India as a global economic power has grown manifold. Hence the country deserves better in terms of extradition processes.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

### 'Chowkidar' campaign

A Hollywood movie with four Academy awards, Spartacus (1960), has an interesting and emotional portrayal of a scene where the rebellion slaves, who were caught by the Roman army, refused to identify their leader, Spartacus, though lured with

freedom. This they did with all of them saying, "I am Spartacus." As the result, they were all subjected to crucifixion as the identification failed. Such is the expression of unchallenged loyalty to the leader. Does the BJP's "Main bhi chowkidar" (I too am watchman) plan resonate with such a movie scene? Movies have entertainment value and so do the tall promises that our political parties make. To this one can add the 'tit-for-tat' dramatics ("I turn abuse into ornaments: PM", March 21).

VICTOR FRANK A.,  
Chennai

■ If the ruling party is relying on a catch-phrase to score a home run and if it also thinks that the mere addition of a word as a prefix to Twitter handles is all that it takes to win an election, then all is not right with that democracy. The tag may not resonate with the country's impoverished multitudes. The BJP could have made a greater claim to being a chowkidar had it

convincingly established that the Rafale deal was not dubious. It is not yet clear whether the BJP's exertions to make the tag a 'people's movement' will gain enough momentum to enable its re-election.

G. DAVID MILTON,  
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

### Sparrows at Manapad

On a recent visit to Manapad at Thoothukudi (Tuticorin), Tamil Nadu, we were pleasantly surprised to find scores of sparrows in the 500-year-old Holy Cross church which stands on a hillock and is surrounded by the sea on three sides and an imposing light house. Food is no problem as there are many pilgrims who visit this landmark church every day. The birds seemed to be

THARCUS S. FERNANDO,  
Chennai

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
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### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Qatar hosted Asian Games in 2006 and not Commonwealth Games as mentioned in a report, "The Indian angle to Qatar WC" (Sport, March 21, 2019)

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# What can India do to influence China on Masood Azhar?

PARLEY

India-China dialogue has expanded but the two countries are not on the same page on terror

Last week, China placed a hold on the listing request for Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)'s leader Masood Azhar at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Ministry of External Affairs said that it was "disappointed" by the outcome. Alka Acharya and Jabin Jacob talk of the Azhar problem, the Wuhan summit, and the strategic view of India's relationship with China, in a discussion moderated by Suhasini Haidar. Edited excerpts:

While we say that China is not supporting us on this aspect, we also have our annual counter-terrorism exercise with China. I think that sort of mixed messaging doesn't work.

**On the one hand, if you seem too conciliatory with China, then it may see that as a sign of weakness and therefore not change its position. Is this actually a larger challenge for India when it comes to China?**

**A.A.:** I don't agree that because China has chosen to block Azhar's listing, it amounts to its contradictory stand on other issues with us. China has tried to take a consistent position as to why it has to blacklist an individual, whereas it is taking a slightly different position with regard to the organisation (JeM).

The fact is that the India-China dialogue has expanded. It has now brought terror on board, but we need to be discussing this more because I don't think we are on the same page as far as terror is concerned. It is a part of the strategic dialogue and that's a start. We are together on many multilateral platforms, so we could start communicating our position to the Chinese much more clearly, but at the same time not permit this issue to derail what is a much larger process.

**In India there is no stomach for any kind of dialogue with Pakistan. And yet with China, every time there is a pushback from China, this is pretty much in your face when China refuses to list Masood Azhar despite the kind of push India has made diplomatically after the Pulwama attack. How do you explain this dichotomy?**

**A.A.:** In the last five years, the whole situation with Pakistan has become more rigid. So, if in the past we did see an attempt to balance no terror or no dialogue till the terror attack stopped, but at the same time you are opening up other channels. Increasingly, you are seeing that the Chinese are becoming more and more significant players in this region, so you are in a bit of a dilemma. Because you need to ensure



MASOOD AZHAR - AP

that your relationship with China doesn't get derailed. There is a lot of suspicion about how the Chinese are preparing to support Pakistan. You can't shut that door because then you are really only dependent on the Americans. It's not just about China, India and Pakistan. It's about the Americans wanting to disengage; the Russians wanting to get into Afghanistan via Pakistan. Do you think the Americans are going to play our game with the Pakistanis for us? I'm not too sure.

**Why does China continue to stand firm on the Azhar issue in particular?**

**J.J.:** This is clearly tactical as far as the Chinese are concerned. The BRICS forum in Goa refused to allow any mention of terror in the joint declaration. But the next year, in China, they were willing to go along. So, it's up and down. And I suppose the Chinese are not completely at home in Pakistan, so they also need to put pressure on the Pakistanis and tell them to behave vis-a-vis Chinese influence.

The larger issue is about communication. What is the communication that India has with China on this particular issue? At the end of January, we had the 8th India-China Joint Working Group Meeting on Counter-Terrorism. And if you look at the MEA website... it doesn't really inform you about what is going on. The Chinese can get away with that. But in India the government needs to communicate to the strategic community and to the public. You can't deal with the Chinese us-

ing Chinese methods and ignore how the system works at your end.

**Do you think the diplomatic capital that India is using when it comes to the Azhar issue is worth it?**

**J.J.:** True, but we don't know if we have come to that realisation.

**A.A.:** I would say it's the reverse. I think today China is far more wary of its international image and therefore the need not to stand out like a sore thumb, especially when there

is a global consensus on certain issues. Now, does the Azhar issue actually dent that image, or does it really show China as a power which has double standards?

**How much of an impact did the U.S.'s open statements challenging China have on China's own decision? Or do you think China's mind was made up?**

**J.J.:** Yes, the Chinese do take the Americans seriously and that's again a question of capacity because the Americans can follow up. They can put others under pressure to follow what the Americans think is in their interest. In the case of terrorism or the Nuclear Suppliers Group, these are important for India perhaps, but they are not important to other states. And it is possible to keep the other states interested if we have the capacity to consistently put pressure. As long as that's not the case, the Chinese will not be moved.

**On the question of political wrangling... on the one hand, you have the government accusing the Congress party leader of meeting the Chinese Ambassador. You have criticism from the Opposition that, despite the Wuhan summit, the Prime Minister has been unable to get any concessions from China. How much is this political issue over China playing out in Beijing as well?**

**A.A.:** There are three dimensions here. One, over a period of time the Chinese have seen that there is a fairly consistent position in India. Whichever government has been in power has more or less taken the same framework, which is one of engaging and moving the relationship forward. Therefore, I am sure many people in China do not take this internal wrangling very seriously. I think on the whole these charges are of necessity, purely political. So, you will have to say, 'Wuhan is in tatters'. I don't agree with that. Wuhan was about something else.

The second point is that we have not yet grasped that the China-Pakistan relationship is undergoing a major transformation, and we continue to take this anti-India perspective as the dominant one, which it is

not. China is far too invested in Pakistan. Anti-India is lower down, it's not the top priority.

And the final point is that China-India relations are also not static. And the best way to beat this is to get the India-China game up.

**J.J.:** I agree that the China-Pakistan relationship is something that has transformed over time and I also agree with Alka that it's not the anti-India sentiment in China that really drives matters. I think where we have failed is in reassessing our relationship with Pakistan. The more you disengage from Pakistan, the more of a free hand you give the Chinese. Trade is the only way we can fix things in many ways.

**Alka, you said Wuhan is not in tatters. Yet we see no movement from China on India's NSG membership and on Azhar. On the other hand, India has torn down some of the irritants vis-a-vis China, whether it is sidelining the Tibetan leadership or not speaking about the Chinese building infrastructure in Doklam. Why do you say the Wuhan summit still carries some weight?**

**A.A.:** The answer to that would depend on your understanding of what Wuhan was all about. It was an informal meeting between the two leaders to address what had become a dangerous impasse in the relationship. Two sides were eyeball to eyeball for 72 days. This was a means to defuse that situation and evolve a modus operandi for ensuring that this relationship does not get derailed. More importantly, what is the framework within which this relationship has to develop? It was not issue-based. As to whether we have got what we want from China... I think we need to figure out where this relationship is going, particularly how we are managing the economic aspect. That ultimately is going to provide the ballast.

**J.J.:** Wuhan was tactical. My problem with Wuhan is that you are moving away from process-based interactions between governments. Instead we have an individual-based approach. This might work in China because President Xi Jinping is the all-powerful. But not here.



Alka Acharya is Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University



Jabin Jacob is Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar University



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SINGLE FILE

## Testing Israel's character

The April election will determine whether Israel belongs to all its citizens or to the Jewish people alone

MOHAMMED AYOUB



Does Israel belong to all its citizens or to the Jewish people alone? The Israeli election scheduled for April 9 will have an important bearing on this issue. Israel has struggled with this question from its birth. The dilemma has been exacerbated by the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 that has led to projections that soon there will be as many Arabs as Jews in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

As the prospect of a two-state solution has receded, the spectre of a bi-national state with equal rights for all citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, has begun to haunt the Zionist right. The Nationality Law passed by the Knesset in July 2018 by a vote of 62 to 55, which declares Israel the nation state of the Jewish people, was a pre-emptive measure to rule out this option for all time to come. More than 65 discriminatory laws have been passed since Israel's establishment restricting the rights of Palestinian citizens. However, this is the most blatant attempt to legally define the Palestinian inhabitants of Israel as second-class citizens.

While the opposition denounced the law as racist, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described its passage as "a pivotal moment in the annals of Zionism and the State of Israel. We enshrined in law the basic principle of our existence." The controversy around this law has heated up following the decision of Israel's elections committee, now under appeal in the Supreme Court, to bar the joint Arab party Raam-Balad from participating in the coming election. Signalling his support to the election committee's decision Mr. Netanyahu tweeted, "Those who support terrorism will not be in the Israeli Knesset!"

Mr. Netanyahu re-emphasised his commitment to the Nationality Law when in response to criticism of it he wrote on Instagram, "Israel is not a state of all its citizens. According to the Nation-State Law that we passed, Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish People - and them alone." In the same post he argued that a government led by his opponents Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid will be dependent on the support of Arab parties and will, therefore, "undermine the security of the state and citizens". Mr. Netanyahu clearly implied that the loyalty of Israel's Arab citizens was suspect and that they should never be a part of a coalition governing Israel.

Considering the small margin by which the Nationality Law was passed, the election is likely to become a referendum on the basic character of the Israeli state. The electorate will be passing judgment not only on Mr. Netanyahu's fitness to govern considering the corruption charges levelled against him, but more importantly on whether Israel is a state for all its citizens or for the Jewish people alone.

The writer is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington, DC



NOTEBOOK

## The phenomenon of ghost newspapers

As India goes into poll mode, news must not be up for sale

ANURADHA RAMAN

In 2015, a senior government official approached this newspaper with a story. He was sure that it would not be published. The story had to do with the media itself, and referred to the phenomenon of 'ghost newspapers'.

The documents in his possession exposed the murky operations of these newspapers. These were newspapers that disappeared as mysteriously as they appeared, and dealt with little news. On paper, they were called 'small newspapers' and were in the business of making a quick buck. Officials were privy to this business but they could do little to stop these papers from thriving. On paper, there are rules that govern the registration of newspapers. It is the Registrar of Newspapers for

India (RNI)'s preserve to register titles, check their authenticity, and keep a watch on claimed circulation figures. In practice, the phenomenon of 'ghost newspapers' mocked these rules. Officials in the government hinted at a collusion between those who handed out government advertisements and those who were in the newspaper business.

The list of newspapers to which advertisements were given was maintained in the records of an organisation called the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), which has been renamed as the Bureau of Outreach and Communication and comes under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. The Bureau empowers newspapers according to their circulation. Advertisements are doled out

accordingly.

Officials in one of the ministries had meticulously checked out the credentials of the newspapers. In the process of collecting information, there were a few surprises in store for them. There were more than 190 newspapers bearing the same content and yet appearing under different names. There were also newspapers that were being published in the same press. How they had passed the scrutiny of officials was a mystery.

Quite predictably, officials at the DAVP and RNI clammed up when I reached out to them. I sent emails, but got no response. A few people in the small newspapers industry admitted to the existence of ghost newspapers, but that was all. Going through these documents was a revelation for me, as there

was no connection between the newspapers that had received government advertisements and those that were empanelled by the DAVP.

India has among the highest number of newspapers in the world. This is a highly regulated business. From 99,660 in 2014, the number of newspapers has soared to above a lakh since. The phenomenon of ghost newspapers will continue to be a challenge in the coming election, just as paid news and fake news was in 2009, when advertisements appeared as news, and in 2014. These problems have only got exacerbated since then. As India goes into poll mode, news on TV, print and online will be consumed with interest. It will be in the interest of democracy to ensure that news is not up for sale.

FROM *The Hindu*. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 22, 1969

### P.M. willing for dialogue on Centre-State ties

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to-day [March 21] expressed her willingness to have a national dialogue on Centre-State relations, while addressing the Standing Committee of the National Integration Council here [New Delhi]. Mrs. Gandhi said it was necessary to discuss the issue. It would be helpful if a working paper was first prepared setting out the guidelines. She added that the Home Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, was asking the Administrative Reforms Commission to expedite its report on Centre-State relations. The issue could be discussed "at a suitable time." She stressed that the question should be carefully examined. The consequences of a Centre with less powers, at a time when the States were pulling in different directions, should be gone into.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 22, 1919.

### Mussalmans in Burma.

Replying to an address presented by the Mahomedans of Akyab the Lieutenant-Governor said [in Rangoon] that special preference to Mussalman candidates for Government service in Arakan could be considered if it was shown that qualified candidates were unable to obtain a reasonable share of the appointments because of racial or religious discrimination against them. The appointment of a Mahomedan deputy inspector of schools to the divisional educational board would be considered. The demand for a Mahomedan representative from Arakan on the legislative council had to be considered with the general scheme of reforms now engaging the consideration of the Government. The demand was opposed to the body of Mahomedan opinion in Rangoon which had expressed itself against the necessity of communal representation of Indians in Burma. The fourth request for the last day of Mohorrum to be gazetted as a holiday required examination.

CONCEPTUAL

### Indelible ink

This refers to the violet-coloured ink in India that is applied on a voter's forefinger after she exercises her vote. In 1962, the Election Commission in collaboration with the Law Ministry, the National Physical Laboratory of India and the National Research Development Corporation made an agreement with Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd. to manufacture ink that couldn't be wiped off easily. Mysore Paints was founded in 1937 by Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. The company is the sole supplier of indelible ink for civic body, Assembly and Parliamentary polls. It also supplies ink to about 25 countries. Indelible ink remains bright for about 10 days, after which it starts fading. It is known to contain silver nitrate and is manufactured in secrecy.

MORE ON THE WEB

Podcast: The Mumbai CST footoverbridge collapse and India's civic infrastructure issues

<https://bit.ly/2FhwPmK>



# The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

## Mayday!

Turbulence-hit Jet buffeted by lenders

**A**SILVER jubilee year for what was once the success story of Indian economic liberalisation drive has turned out to be a bleak one, as Jet Airways is buried under a mountain of debt and seeks relief from reluctant lenders. The Naresh Goyal-led airline had once set standards for superior service, but has suffered straight losses for the past 12 months. Even as the founder chairman seeks to palm off the losses on the macro-economic challenges — high fuel prices and a depreciating value of the rupee — that buffeted the aviation industry in the country, his own business decisions exacerbated the situation. Indeed, all Indian airlines lost money for some time, but others like SpiceJet and IndiGo, managed to recover soon.

These low-cost airlines, it could well be argued, have contributed significantly to eroding the bottom line of the full-service airline, which Jet is, and surely Goyal would be ruing the day, 15 years ago, when he dismissed the challenges of the then newly-launched airlines. They prospered, and Jet needs nearly Rs 8,500 crore to meet its funding gap. This is not the first time that the airline has required a bailout, only this time it is more serious. Emergency meetings between government officials, banks and other lenders, as well as Etihad, which is offering to sell its 24 per cent stake in Jet Airways to the State Bank of India and is willing to take a significant haircut, all signal Jet's precarious finances, as does the depletion of its fleet, and its failure to pay salaries to even key employees like pilots.

Naresh Goyal's grip on the airline is unmistakable, but the stakeholders and lenders are not moving in to take control. The question of whether they will be able to bail out the cash-strapped airline remains. The banks and public institutions should ensure that they don't throw good money after bad. The airline must be helped, but only after there is a clear plan leading to its recovery, and a strong management that can deliver. Seat-of-pants flying will not do any longer.

## A fine deterrence

HC order to sell convicts' property just

**G**RUESOME and grisly crimes deserve stringent punishment. The penalty must be severe enough to serve the twin purpose of acting as a deterrent as also giving the victim a sense of compensation. Towards this end, while pronouncing the ruling in a case of heinous crime, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has said death sentence alone is inadequate; properties of the convicts should also be sold to recover the fine imposed on them. The court slapped a fine of Rs 50 lakh even as it upheld the death sentence awarded to the seven convicted of gangraping and killing a 27-year-old mentally challenged woman in Rohtak in 2015. Since the culprits together committed the ghastly act, they were jointly liable to pay the fine. The state and the victim's sister, with whom she was living at the time, would get 50 per cent each of the amount recovered by selling their properties. Given the shocking injuries inflicted on the woman by the perpetrators through brutal and predatory acts, the order serves justice to her and some balm to the sister's suffering.

This is the second time in six months that the High Court has passed a strong judgment with financial implications against barbaric criminals. In September last year, it awarded Rs 90 lakh compensation to a 15-year-old rape victim of Faridkot and her parents. The Deputy Commissioner was directed to sell the properties of the convict and his mother for their rowdy and cruel conduct. The relief came to the family six years after their life was turned into a nightmare by their landlord and his accomplices. The minor girl was forcibly taken away and ravaged after her father, mother and sister were assaulted with rods by the armed culprits.

With beastly sexual crimes against women continuing unabated in our society, more such verdicts would instill a fear of the stern penal provisions and curb criminal tendencies. No girl should have to suffer such torture, trauma and social stigma that adversely impacts her personality irreversibly. They have a right to a safe environment.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none. — **Thomas Jefferson**

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

## The Tribune.

LAHORE, FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 1919

### The Hindu Sabha and His Honour.

WE have two concrete cases in view. In the first place we learn that at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Hindu Sabha it was resolved to present an address to His Honour. The first question that we want to ask is: Has the Hindu Sabha as a Sabha before given a farewell address to a Lieutenant-Governor? If not, why is a distinction going to be made in favour of Sir Michael O'Dwyer? Secondly, is it not a fact that a meeting of the Executive Committee requires a three days' notice and that on this occasion only twenty-four hours' notice was given and that, too, only to local members, moffussil members not being invited at all? Is it not a fact that the meeting was attended by only 8 persons, and that though no division was actually taken, it was understood that two or three out of the eight were not in favour of the proposal? Is it anything else than a mockery, is it respectful to the Lieutenant-Governor himself, to call a decision of the Hindu Sabha and an address presented by such a body an address on behalf of the Hindu Sabha or the Hindu community?

### Satyagraha Volunteers.

IT is interesting to notice that the movement of passive resistance in Bombay includes the engagement of a permanent body of volunteers to instruct those desirous of taking the Satyagraha pledge in the great struggle, so that if may be carried on successfully and without any untoward incidents through anger or passion. In the first place they have to make the pledge takers understand the Rowlatt Bill provisions and decide for themselves whether it is harmful. Secondly, they must explain what civil disobedience in its legitimate application means. They must see that passive resisters do not break any moral laws.

# 'Looking west' with success

India has been able to seamlessly build on its ties with Gulf nations



**G PARTHASARATHY**  
FORMER DIPLOMAT

**E**VER since Independence, India has sought to derive maximum strategic advantage by avoiding moves that could draw it into the vortex of global rivalries. The initial years were spent in seeking good relations with both the Soviet Union and the USA. There were, however, instances like the 1971 conflict, when relations with the US were strained with the emergence of a Sino-American quasi-alliance. This was also a period when the adoption of Soviet-style centralised economic planning led to India's declining role in global trade and economic affairs and a relatively slow rate of growth.

The near-collapse of the Indian economy in 1991 coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was the vision of PM Narasimha Rao that led to the dismantling of our 'licence, permit, quota raj'. A new era of liberalisation and rapid growth enabled us to emerge as one of the fastest growing economies. It was during his tenure that we combined liberalisation with economic integration, adopting an imaginatively crafted 'Look East Policy'. It has been invaluable in promoting India's interaction with and access to trade, investment and technology from countries like Japan, China and South Korea.

What we appeared to lack in this period was a clearly enunciated policy beyond our western land and maritime frontiers, extending across the Indian Ocean to east Africa, and to the shores of the oil, gas and cash-rich Persian Gulf. The approach to our western neighbourhood was myopic and fixated on Pakistan. This only increased with the post 9/11 developments in Afghanistan. But,



**BIG RETURNS:** There are about 7.6 million Indian nationals in GCC countries, remitting back around \$40 billion annually.

The approach to our western neighbourhood was myopic and fixated on Pakistan, which is now changing.

our imaginative economic assistance in areas, ranging from hydroelectric and irrigation projects to electricity transmission and support for education and training in Afghanistan, received extensive international acclaim. This demonstrated the positive role India could play even in a country being torn apart by Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

While the Islamic world is beset by sectarian (Shia-Sunni), religious, and civilisational (Persian-Arab-Turkish) rivalries, India has skilfully conducted its diplomacy, advocating reconciliation between contesting states. New Delhi has stayed away from rivalries that have led to civil wars and incredible human suffering in Yemen and Syria. India has also made efforts to not yield to US pressure and has continued oil imports from Iran.

Imaginative diplomacy enabled India to get the US to waive sanctions for the development of the Chabahar Port. Moreover, Iraq is now emerging as a significant energy partner. Its leadership needs to be carefully cultivated. The most crucial relationships

for India, however, pertain to its ties with the Gulf monarchies — all members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). They provide 42 per cent of India's oil requirements. There are an estimated 7.6 million Indian nationals in GCC states, remitting back around \$40 billion annually. Around 5.5 million Indians work in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The annual trade with GCC countries is around \$104 billion.

The last decade has seen a remarkable transformation in our earlier myopic approach. Recent years have been marked by high-level visits by PM Modi to the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These two countries work closely on virtually all crucial regional issues. The Saudi-UAE relationship is marked by high dependence on the US, especially on issues of regional security. The US uses their substantial influence to promote its interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This was evident in the role of these countries in facilitating US dialogue with the Taliban, and even in recent tensions between India and Pakistan.

India's rise in high-tech sectors is

reflected in the increasingly senior positions of Indian experts in the Gulf, where Indians are engaged in huge numbers in the knowledge-based economic sectors, such as Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City and Jebel Ali Free Zone. The India-UAE ties have evolved into a significant partnership in the economic and commercial sphere. India-UAE trade is around \$52 billion (2016-17), making India the largest trading partner of the UAE, while the UAE is India's third largest trading partner after China and the US. The UAE is the second largest export destination of India (over \$30 billion) for the year 2016-17. Modi's visit to the UAE was the first by an Indian PM after Indira Gandhi's 1981 visit. Modi paid a second visit to Abu Dhabi in 2018 after welcoming the UAE Crown Prince in New Delhi in 2016. The red carpet was similarly laid out for the Saudi Crown Prince last month.

Respecting New Delhi's sensitivities, the Crown Prince did not visit New Delhi immediately after his visit to Pakistan. Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been forthcoming in promptly deporting/extraditing Indian and foreign nationals wanted for serious crimes in India. There appears to be greater readiness in not only avoiding partisanship on issues like Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, but also in welcoming India as an 'honoured guest' to meetings like that of the OIC, while overruling Pakistani objections. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are poised to expand investments in India substantially. While much noise was made about the \$20 billion investments pledged when the Crown Prince visited Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have expressed readiness to invest \$44 billion in the Ratnagiri refinery and petrochemical project, which will add to our existing annual exports of \$40 billion of petrochemical products. The commercially wise Arabs know the difference between investing money and sharing profits in viable refineries on the one hand, and dishing out aid for a perpetually bankrupt recipient on the other.

# Good old Shimla a thing of the past

COL MAHESH CHADHA (RETD)

**W**ALKING for miles to school across Shimla dales, drinking water at a flowing spring; pelting stones at a young pear, apple, plum, fig tree and savouring the raw fruit; plucking a berry or some wild flower; admiring a farmer ploughing his terraced fields with a pair of oxen; giving a helping hand to a whistling shepherd to mentor his sheep and caressing his lamb are unconvincing stories for my grandchildren. It is no surprise, brought up as they are in modern cities, devoid of such heavenly benevolence. They go to school by car or bus, nor do they come across blossoming fruit trees.

For them, fruits and flowers are only purchased from vendors; milk from a machine or a carton.

They wonder at my confidence when I tell them that on the very first day of my school, in 1952, I walked back home to my mother's utter surprise as she failed to pick me up. Appreciating my initiative, she showed no signs of worry. Shimla was a peaceful, walker's paradise, then — no traffic hazards; people along the way knew us and children were considered safe everywhere. Today, children wear identity cards, carry mobiles and are collected from school by guardians as a ritual.

They do not believe that I used to venture out in severe winter, wear-

ing heavy woollens knit by my mother, to enjoy the soft snowflakes on my face; making a snowman and snowballs to hit friends and siblings with! For them, snow may be fun, but short-lived — only during holidays, that too if luck favours it.

They go to sleep while watching cartoons on TV, whereas for me it was the melodious ringing bells of the mules passing by our house or, at times, the deafening growl of a leopard or a barking deer not far away in the jungle. Sundays meant a picnic, walking to Glen, Annadale, Naldhera or Mashobra for juicy apples and peaches etc. The 'Big Ben', mall road, Ridge, 'Scandal Point', and Gaiety Theatre were where we would cross

path with dignitaries like Dr Rajendra Prasad and Marshal Tito. After a tiring walk, there would be a feast of *bhatta*, *doodh-jalebi* or *puri-bhaji* at Mehru and Nathu *halwai*. For the kids now, it is malls, pizzas and burgers.

The heart laments — *koi lautade mere beete hue din*, that often lure me to the now-flattened hills of my childhood — sans pristine beauty. All that one sees now is dying pines and deodars; drying *chashmas*, concrete jungles, noisy traffic, pollution, growing population and nobody shaking hands with a tourist.

Shimla is as bad as other cities where grandchildren live, rendering it worthy of their taunt and unworthiness of a melodious story anymore.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Can Lokpal deliver?

After all the din and hullabaloo, we finally have the beginnings of an operational Lokpal. It took a long time, but augurs well for our democratic institutions. It is a heavy cross that Justice Ghose will have to bear. He has the right credentials, but can there be any ducking of the question if the 'system' will enable him to deliver what he might seek to achieve?

DIYA, CHANDIGARH

#### Taking on corruption

Corruption and reservation are the two stumbling blocks which deprive deserving candidates of opportunity. We hope that Justice Ghose, as the first anti-corruption ombudsman, will use enormous powers to cleanse right from the gram panchayat to Parliament, to move India to new heights, and also set examples so that corrupt politicians become history. Let all scammers count the bricks of jail. Let it be a new beginning in the history of India.

ANJANI SHARMA, CHANDIGARH

#### R&D in Punjab

Reference to 'Punjab to float company for R&D in industry' (March 19); the state has poor industry yields and

whatever manufacturing is being done is rudimentary in technology. But these facts need to be examined in the larger context, as also what should be done for progress. Innovation and R&D in India has not evolved much to create an impact on the world map. Whatever IPRs that have been created have found little application in applied sciences. Track records of big R&D institutes like the DRDO or CSIR have been low if not abysmal. In emerging sectors of IT, pharma, etc., Punjab lost the race due to lack of global connectivity and quick ramping of urban infrastructure. Punjab needs to unshackle the global entrepreneurial spirit and supported by tax-friendly schemes.

KAMALJIT SINGH JASSAL, BY MAIL

#### Debate live on TV

In view of the forthcoming general election, it is desirable that the parties should debate all issues and their achievements live on TV. This is the cheapest media and also liked by the general public. All parties will spend colossal amounts of taxpayers' money for rallies and campaigning. The debate on TV will help save this money and the loss of thousands of man hours wasted on rallies.

COL JASPAL SINGH (RETD), LUDHIANA

#### Safety gear missing

Apropos the report 'Two die cleaning sewer at Rayya' (March 20); avoidable deaths of sewer workers are distressing. Such incidents are reported often from different parts of the country. In the modern era, sufficient technological equipment is available for cleaning sewers. But contractors do not provide safety equipment nor utilise mechanical devices for the purpose. Careless approach causes casualties.

SUBHASH VAID, NEW DELHI

#### Practice then preach

Apropos the news 'Cong wobbly in firming up alliances' (March 20), it is funny that Yashwant Sinha, who himself is a rebel against the current BJP leadership, is advising opposition parties to 'stop speaking against each other in public. Sort out your differences privately'. He is asking others to do what he himself ought to have done. This is the limit of hypocrisy.

ASHOK KUMAR, JALANDHAR

#### Need credible advisers

With regard to the article 'Horses for courses lesson for Pakistan' (March 20), the contour of the bor-

der between the two countries really becomes offensive and restrictive under such circumstances. There is no denying the fact that the Balakot strikes will be in vain if the gains do not lead to the stabilisation of the tempestuous scenario in Kashmir. It was a double whammy for internal security policy makers because they are liable to enunciate the whole situation. The 'credible' advisers in the MHA and the office of the NSA are the need of the hour. We need strong diplomacy and capable military to achieve a geopolitical solution for the long run.

KIRANPAL SINGH, BY MAIL

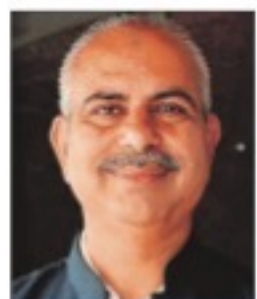
#### Don't field celebrities

Reference to the middle 'Need real leaders, not celebrities' (March 19); it is right to say that a professional politician is more responding to people than a celebrity. A party supremo should not project any celebrity, but a ground leader for a constituency. A professional leader can better understand the needs and problems of the people of that area. The high command should desist from projecting celebrities. If it does, it is injustice to people.

SATYA PARKASH GUPTA, GURUGRAM



# Cong challenges satraps with 'difficult' seats



**RASHEED KIDWAI**  
SENIOR JOURNALIST & AUTHOR



**BADA BHAI-CHHOTA BHAI:** Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath are considered as equals in the power corridors of Madhya Pradesh.

MP has several seats such as Bhopal, Indore, Vidisha, Damoh and Bhind that have remained with the BJP for decades. Kamal Nath wants to win these seats to make a strong political statement that the state Assembly poll victory of December 2018 was not a fluke.

Bhopal can be a tricky turf for Digvijaya. On the positive side, he can count on the bulk of over three lakh Muslim votes and the presence of his son as state urban development minister. Digvijaya's support base supposedly cuts across caste lines and his oratory skills are an asset. He has a huge network of party workers, religious leaders, bureaucrats and other influential members of society who reside in Bhopal.

House encounter and the death of anti-terror squad chief Hemant Karkare during the 26/11 Mumbai attack. These remarks were used by the RSS and Sangh Parivar to dub the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister as "anti-Hindu."

Interestingly, Digvijaya has been getting some free advice from the opponents. Former state BJP Chief Minister Babulal Gaur has gone on record dissuading Digvijaya from opting for Bhopal. Gaur, who holds a record of sorts, winning the Govindpura assembly seat 10 times, has cautioned Digvijaya against contesting from Bhopal. Speaking in Hindi, Gaur addressed

Digvijaya through the local media and said, "Bhool kar bhi aaisi galti na karna" (do not commit the folly even by mistake).

Sources close to Digvijaya said he would wait for party chief Rahul Gandhi's nod or insistence to contest from Bhopal. Outgoing BJP MP Alok Sanjar has not been a popular figure, so there is a likelihood of some BJP bigwig, like union minister Narendra Singh Tomar, contesting from the Madhya Pradesh capital. Tomar is currently the MP from Gwalior.

The options before Scindia are few. Given his preoccupation with Uttar Pradesh, Scindia supporters want him to field wife Priyadarshani from Guna or Gwalior and focus on battleground Uttar Pradesh. But Scindia has remained non-committal, pointing that he would go by Rahul Gandhi's decision.

Nath's interest in Digvijaya and Scindia's seats has generated a lot of attention in the Congress circles both within and outside Madhya Pradesh. One way of looking at it is a sign of measuring the electoral strength of Digvijaya and Scindia, who never tire of projecting themselves as regional satraps. There are over a dozen ministers in the Nath cabinet who flaunt their allegiance to either Digvijaya or Scindia. A poor performance by either of them would weaken their hold in state politics and indirectly strengthen Nath, while electoral conquests would increase the Congress tally.

MADHYA Pradesh is witnessing a protracted battle among three key players - Digvijaya Singh, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Kamal Nath - over the ensuing Lok Sabha polls.

Nath, Chief Minister of the state, set the ball rolling when he recently went public, asking Digvijaya and Scindia to contest from "difficult seats" and wrest parliamentary seats like Bhopal and Gwalior from the BJP. Scindia, AICC general secretary in charge of western Uttar Pradesh, is currently the Lok Sabha MP from Guna while Digvijaya, two-time former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, is a Rajya Sabha MP.

While Scindia kept mum, refusing to be drawn by Nath's challenge, Digvijaya took the Twitter route to respond to the Congress Chief Minister. He first talked about his bond with Rajgarh which had elected him as the Lok Sabha MP in 1977 and then wrote again, thanking Kamal Nath for considering him worthy of contesting from a seat which the party has not won since 1989.

Diggy Raja, as he popularly called, has been two-time Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh during 1993-2003. In the Madhya Pradesh political circles, the former Raja of Raghogarh is considered as an equal to Chief Minister Kamal Nath and enjoys a "Bada bhai-Chhota bhai" (Nath being elder) relationship with the new Chief Minister. In fact, it is a bit of role reversal between Nath and Digvijaya as during the 1993-2003 Congress rule, Nath's wishes were treated as command and Digvijaya used to publicly acknowledge Nath as the real power behind the throne.

Nath's son Nakul is in the fray from Chhindwara, a parliamentary constituency that has elected Kamal Nath nine times since 1980.

Madhya Pradesh has several seats such as Bhopal, Indore, Vidisha, Damoh and Bhind that have remained with the BJP for decades. Nath wants to win these seats in order to make a strong political statement that the state Assembly poll victory of December 2018 was not a fluke. Nath has reportedly promised 20 out of 29 parliamentary seats to his party chief Rahul Gandhi. The task of winning 20 seats is rather insurmountable in the wake of the Balakot airstrikes resulting in hypernationalism. But sources close to Nath are still confident of netting 14-15 Lok Sabha seats. In 2014, the Congress had won two out of the 29 Lok Sabha seats that were earned by Nath and Scindia.

# How to make our water use sustainable



**AMARJIT SINGH**  
FORMER UNION SECRETARY, WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT AND GANGA REJUVENATION

ACCORDING to a report by the NITI Aayog (CWMI, 2018), 600 million people in India face high-to-extreme water stress. Critical Ground Water (GW) resources, accounting for 40 per cent of the total water supply, are being depleted at an unsustainable pace. Three-fourths of the households in the country do not have drinking water at their premises. As much as 70 per cent of our water is contaminated; India is ranked 120th amongst 122 countries in the water quality index. The poor water quality causes around two lakh deaths every year. The added morbidity, due to contaminated water, takes a huge toll on the earning capacity of the population as well as their quality of life.

The food security that our country has enjoyed thus far appears to have been at the cost of water insecurity. By 2030, our water demand is projected to be twice the available supply. This would mean severe water scarcity for 40 per cent of the population. The metropolitan areas of New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad are likely to be severely affected. The water crunch is likely to cost India 6 per cent of the GDP. There is, therefore, a need to deepen our understanding of our water resources and usage and to put in place interventions that make our water use efficient and sustainable.

## More 'crop per drop' needed

Agricultural productivity appears to be a fundamental part of the solution. Agriculture today consumes around 80 per cent of the water resources of the country. Our consumption for domestic use and industry is abysmally low. In the days to come, 400 million additional people are likely to live in the urban areas. This would mean an

added requirement of water for domestic and industrial use. As a result, there would be lesser and lesser water for agriculture in the face of spiraling demand for water for food, feed and fiber.

India, would therefore, have to focus on enhanced agricultural productivity, where there are huge variations within the country. Punjab produces 48.48 quintals of wheat per hectare, vis-à-vis 24.05 quintals in MP. Similar is the case with rice; MP produces only 14.38 quintals per hectare of rice as against 39.52 quintals in Punjab. These gaps will have to be plugged. More "crop per drop" could come through a mix of improved efficiency of water application and the net water gains through crop yield enhancement. These include drip and sprinkler irrigation; no-till farming and improved drainage, utilisation of the best available seeds, optimising fertiliser use, and innovative crop protection technologies.

## MP shows way forward

The Madhya Pradesh irrigation reform model of accelerated irrigation expansion (PMKSY), through effective canal management by restoring irrigation management protocols; last mile investments; reducing deferred maintenance; constant monitoring and benchmarking of the districts; animating irrigation bureaucracy to ensure accountability to farmers and revitalisation of the Water Users Associations shows the way forward. More so, for the states like Maharashtra, which have the largest number of major dams in the country but the least percentage of area irrigated!

In addition, there is a real possibility of shifting India's rice and wheat cultivation eastwards. Punjab,



**WATER INSECURITY:** By 2030, India's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply.

virtual water! There is a real possibility of a second green revolution if the wheat and rice economy can be shifted to the east through apposite procurement policies, solarisation, and appropriate support to the farmers. This would be a game changer in the 95 irrigation deprived districts, where fortunately ground water is available. A well thought-out policy on solarisation could generate 10,000 MW of power, energise 2.7 million pumps, and irrigate 18 to 20 MHA, in the irrigation deprived districts.

## Gujarat's reforms

In the GW sector, the way Gujarat has tackled the water-energy nexus through its Jyotir Gram Yojna is illustrative. It has ensured rationing of energy for agricultural use through separate feeders, metered supply and time of use charge. This has been complemented by greater vigilance to prevent power thefts. Though highly political and challenging to implement, the benefits of these reforms have far outweighed the effort in addressing feeder-level chaos, reducing power thefts, as well as subsidy on free and unmetered energy supply.

This, along with other initiatives of the Government of Gujarat such as rain water harvesting, check dams (bori bandhs) and micro-irrigation have helped Gujarat arrest the decline in ground water.

Ground water development, which was 75.3 per cent in 2002 and in the semi-critical category, came down to 67.92 per cent in the safe category in 2013. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) assessment shows that the number of safe blocks increased from 105 to 177 and over-exploited blocks came down from 30 to 23 during the same period.

## Fix leakages

The other possible interventions to supplement these efforts are fixing leakages in the municipal areas, and optimising the use of water in industries and thermal power plants, as per international norms.

Our country generates 42 billion litres of waste water per day. Currently, it pollutes our rivers. There is a real possibility of recycling this for con-joint use in agriculture and industry. Above all, we have to ensure that there is an economic return on water. The low-priced water for various sectors is actually wasteful and expensive.

## Audit water use

The effective operationalisation of the above agenda would only be possible if we have the ability to audit our water on quality, area and sector-wise use, over-exploited and underserved sectors, consumption trends, and tradeoffs between economic and social benefits.

We also need greater research to assess the impact of water policies on our consumption trends to optimise the use of water. This would require appropriate governance reforms in the Water Resources Ministry as well as the key professional bodies in the sector: the Central Water Commission and the CGWB.

The experience of Israel shows the key role of public awareness and advocacy in ensuring sustainable use of water. Amongst other things, one way of doing it would be to present a water budget in our Parliament and the state legislatures, especially during the lean period. May be, this would force our elected representatives to think deeply about this issue and come out with well thought out plans for sustainable use of water.

On the eve of World Water Day, let us address why critical ground water resources are being depleted at an unsustainable pace in our country; three-fourths of the households do not have drinking water at their premises; 70 per cent of the water is contaminated; and poor water quality causes around two lakh deaths every year.

## QUICK CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8					9	
10	11		12			
14			13		15	
17				16		18
21			22			23
24				25		

- ACROSS**  
1 A fever (7)  
5 To chatter (5)  
8 Wearisome routine (9)  
9 Useful hint (3)  
10 Pile (4)  
12 Standards for judging (8)  
14 A French brandy (6)  
15 Lay waste (6)  
17 Supplier (8)  
18 To lash (4)  
21 Be indebted for (3)  
22 Advance indication (9)  
24 Of the sun (5)  
25 Fast (7)
- DOWN**  
1 Be equal to (5)  
2 Be situated (3)  
3 Primitive (4)  
4 Large cage for birds (6)  
5 Spacious and splendid (8)  
6 Consequence (9)  
7 Atone for (7)  
11 Show good prospects (5,4)  
13 Believed to be (5,3)  
14 Abundant (7)  
16 Intense repugnance (6)  
19 Devoutness (5)  
20 Stage in a process (4)  
23 Sorrowful (3)

**YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION**  
Across: 1 Sociable, 5 Pass, 9 Slant, 10 Satiated, 11 Single-minded, 13 Rating, 14 Astral, 17 Marksanship, 20 Sibling, 21 Gnome, 22 Sulk, 23 Leatherly.  
Down: 1 So-so, 2 Chariot, 3 Antagonistic, 4 Lessen, 6 Award, 7 Steadily, 8 At first sight, 12 Premises, 15 Rhizome, 16 Haggie, 18 Rebel, 19 Rely.

## SU DO KU

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

V. EASY

## CALENDAR

**MARCH 21, 2019, THURSDAY**

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Phalgun Shaka 30
- Chaitra Parvishte 8
- Hijari 1440
- Shukla Paksh Tithi 15, up to 7:13 am
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 1, up to 3:53 am
- Gand Yoga up to 9:07 am
- Vridhi Yoga up to 5:14 am
- Uttarphalguni Nakshatra up to 1:34 pm
- Moon in Virgo sign

## YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

## FORECAST

**SUNSET:** THURSDAY 18:34 HRS  
**SUNRISE:** FRIDAY 06:24 HRS

**CITY**      **MAX**      **MIN**

Chandigarh	29	15
New Delhi	30	14

**PUNJAB**

Amritsar	27	12
Bathinda	29	13
Jalandhar	28	13
Ludhiana	29	14

**HARYANA**

Bhiwani	32	15
Hisar	32	15
Sirsa	30	14

**HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Dharamsala	18	10
Manali	14	03
Shimla	17	08

**JAMMU & KASHMIR**

Jammu	25	12
Leh	10	-05
Srinagar	12	02

**UTTARAKHAND**

Dehradun	29	13
Mussoorie	17	07

TEMPERATURE IN °C