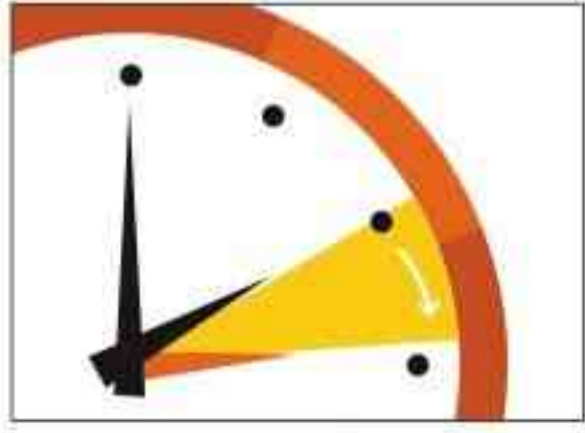


**FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY**

## WHY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAS VOTED OUT DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

EARLIER THIS week, European Parliament voted to scrap the custom of DST, or daylight saving time. Followed twice a year by some 70 countries, including those in the European Union, it involves resetting clocks ahead by an hour in spring, and behind by an hour in autumn.



**Why DST at all**

The key argument is that DST is meant to save energy. This is an idea that is now debated across the world. According to those in favour of DST, if clocks show a later sunrise and later sunset, it means a longer evening daytime. Individuals will complete their daily work routines an hour earlier, and that extra hour of daylight means — or is supposed to mean — lower consumption of energy.

Written accounts suggest that a group of Canadians in Port Arthur (Ontario) were the first to adopt the practice on July 1, 1908, setting their clocks an hour ahead. Other parts of Canada followed suit. In April 1916, during World War I, Germany and Austria introduced DST to minimise the use of artificial lighting. It gradually caught on in many countries. In the EU, clocks in the 28 member states move forward on the last Sunday in March and fall back on the last Sunday in October. India does not follow daylight saving time.

**Why not**

In a recent article, *Popular Science* magazine cited studies to list out the disadvantages of DST. One hour of lost sleep in the US, one study calculated, increases the fatal crash rate by 5.4% to 7.6% for six days following the transition.

Other studies found a higher rate of workplace injuries after the switch, leading to loss days of work; a slight drop in stock market performance; health prob-

lems as a result of disruption of the circadian rhythm (body clock) — and even longer sentences ordered by judges deprived of sleep.

The vote in European Parliament followed a survey by the European Commission. Out of 4.6 million responses, 84% voted in favour of scrapping DST, *The Guardian* reported.

**What next**

The move, passed by 410 votes to 192, comes into effect in 2021. EU member states will choose between “permanent summertime” or “permanent wintertime”. Those who choose the former will reset their clocks for the last time in March 2021; those who choose the latter would do so in October 2021.

For the UK, which is on its way to exiting the EU, it presents new complications. The change would apply to the UK if it stays in the EU, and also during an extended transition period that is part of the Brexit deal, *The Guardian* reported. It explained that if the House of Commons should ratify the withdrawal agreement in the next three weeks, and go into an extended transition period, the UK government would have to implement the directive without any say. It could, however, backtrack once the extension period is over.

## WHY SHOOTING DOWN A SATELLITE, APART FROM BEING A TECHNOLOGY STRIDE, GIVES INDIA A NEW STRATEGIC WEAPON

**SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER**

# The ABC of ASAT

AMITABH SINHA  
PUNE, MARCH 27

INDIA ANNOUNCED to the world Wednesday that it had carried out a successful anti-satellite missile test, becoming only the fourth country to do so. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi coming on television himself to make the announcement, the test is being described as a giant technological and strategic development for the country.

**What is an anti-satellite missile test?**

Called ASAT in short, it is the technological capability to hit and destroy satellites in space through missiles launched from the ground. Early Wednesday, scientists and engineers at Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) launched a missile from the Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island launch complex near Balasore in Odisha that struck a predetermined target: a redundant Indian satellite that was orbiting at a distance of 300 km from the Earth’s surface.

**But why would one want to hit and destroy a satellite?**

The technology is aimed at destroying, if necessary, satellites owned by enemy countries. The test, however, can be carried out only on one’s own satellite. There are a large number of satellites currently in space, many of which have outlived their utility and orbiting aimlessly. One such satellite was chosen for the test. India did not identify the satellite it had chosen to hit for the test. But official sources said the satellite that had been knocked out was Microsat R, a micro-satellite launched by ISRO on January 24 this year. The satellite was manufactured by DRDO.

Satellites are extremely critical infrastructure of any country these days. A large number of crucial applications are now satellite-based. These include navigation systems, communication networks, broadcasting, banking systems, stock markets, weather forecasting, disaster management, land and ocean mapping and monitoring tools, and military applications. Destroying a satellite would render these applications useless. It can cripple enemy infrastructure, and bring it down on knees, without causing any threat to human lives.

**If it is so potent, why do only few countries have it?**

It requires very advanced capabilities in both space and missile technologies that not many countries possess. But more than that, destroying space infrastructure like satellites is also taboo in the international community — at least till now — just like the use of a nuclear weapon. Almost every country agrees that space must not be used for wars and has spoken against weaponisation of space. There are international treaties governing the use of space, that mandate that outer space, and celestial bodies like the Moon, must only be exploited for peaceful purposes.

There is a Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to which India is a signatory, that prohibits countries from placing into orbit around the Earth “any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction”. It also prohibits the stationing of such weapons on celestial bodies, like the moon, or in outer space. “The moon and other celestial bodies shall be used by all state parties to the treaty exclusively for peaceful purposes,” it says.

There are at least four more multilateral treaties that deal with specific concepts agreed to in the Outer Space Treaty. None of these, however, prohibits the kind of test that India carried out Wednesday.

### SENT UP, BROUGHT DOWN

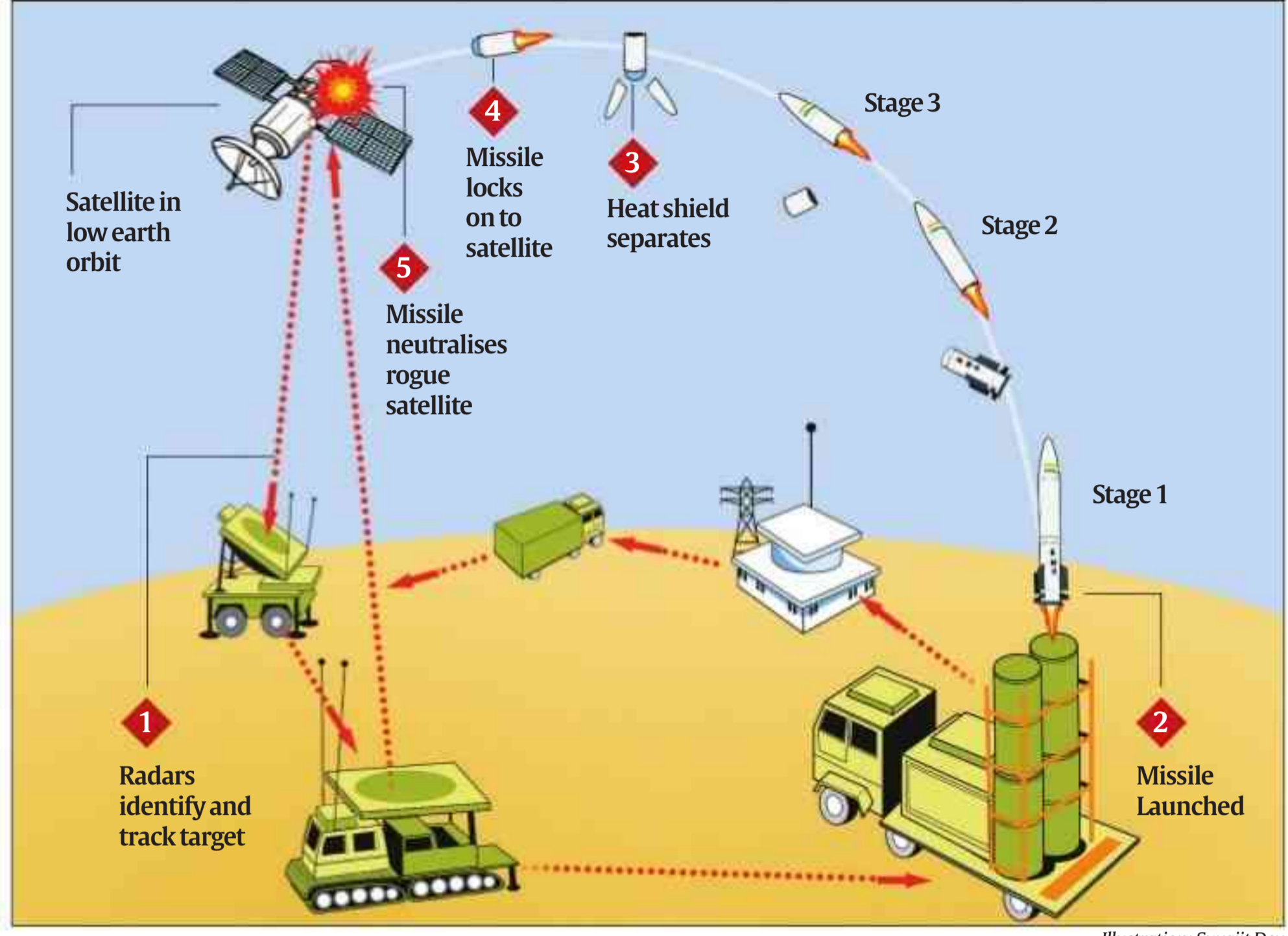


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

But there is a more compelling, practical and selfish reason for countries not wanting to destroy each other’s satellites — the problem of space debris.

**Why is space debris such a big problem?**

Anything launched into the space remains in space, almost forever, unless it is specifically brought down or slowly disintegrate over decades or centuries. Satellites that are past their life and are no longer required also remain in space, orbiting aimlessly in their orbit. According to the September 2018 issue of *Orbital Debris Quarterly News*, published by NASA, there were 19,137 man-made objects in space that were large enough to be tracked. These included active and inactive satellites, rockets and their parts, and other small fragments. Over a thousand of them are operational satellites.

Besides these, there are estimated to be millions of other smaller objects that have disintegrated from these and keep floating around in space. According to the European Space Agency, there were an estimated 7,50,000 objects of size one cm or above in space.

A satellite that is destroyed by a missile disintegrates into small pieces, and adds to the space debris. The threat from the space debris is that it could collide with the operational satellites and render them dysfunctional. According to the ESA, space debris is one of the principal threats to satellites.

When China carried out its first anti-satellite missile test in 2007, destroying its Fengyun-1C weather satellite, it created more than 2,300 large pieces of space debris, and an estimated 1.5 lakh pieces of objects that were larger than 1 cm in size. Each of them could render a satellite useless on collision.

With countries launching more and more satellites, each one of them being a strategic or commercial asset, avoiding collisions could become a challenge in the future. Countries do not want to complicate matters by creating more debris in space.

**Didn't Indian test add to the debris?**

It did, but it is too early to say by how much. The Ministry of External Affairs, in its statement Wednesday, said the Indian test was done in the lower atmosphere to ensure that there was no space debris. “Whatever debris that is generated will decay and fall back on to the earth within weeks,” it said. The satellite hit during the Indian test, as stated, was orbiting at 300 km from Earth’s surface. Several analysis of the Chinese test of 2007, which had targeted the satellite placed at more than 800 km from Earth’s surface, said that the debris created in that test would remain in space for several decades, possibly centuries.

**What signal does the test send to the world?**

While the government has conceded that India has long had ASAT capabilities, this is the country’s first demonstration to the world. It has shown that it is capable of bringing down a satellite, and disrupting communication. Because the test was carried out on a satellite placed in the low-earth orbit, one might question whether India can hit any satellite. Targeting satellites in the higher orbits, however, is only a matter of scale — of powering the rockets enough to go deeper in the space. Many of the most strategic satellites are placed in orbits that 30,000 km from earth’s surface or even higher. DRDO scientists claim India has the technology to target these as well.

**But could this trigger similar tests by other countries?**

Unlikely. The countries that have the capability, and intended to carry out the tests, have already done so. The first anti-satellite test (ASAT) was carried out by the US military way back in 1959. The then Soviet Union followed a year later. Thereafter, the two countries carried out a series of such tests till early 1980s. After that there was a lull, broken only by the Chinese test in 2007. A year later, US brought down a non-functional spy satellite. Other countries which could have the capability, like

Israel, have not shown an intention to test.

**How does the world generally react to such tests?**

Technically, if the Prime Minister had not announced it himself, the world would not have known, at least immediately, of the test since only India’s own satellite was affected. As is mandatory for any missile test, India did issue a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) to airline authorities across the world informing them about an impending missile test. This notice does not have to specify the kind of missile being tested, only the flight path and the region affected, so that airborne systems are able to avoid it.

The Chinese had withheld the information about their 2007 test for 12 days before announcing it. It had triggered an international outcry, but that was also because of the very large amount of debris created.

**Is this the only way to target enemy satellites?**

In the last few years, countries have explored alternative options of making enemy satellites dysfunctional, options which do not involve direct destruction of the target or creation of the debris. For example, technologies have been developed to jam the communication from the satellites by interfering with its radio signals. This can be attempted during the uplink or the downlink.

Another option that has been explored is the possibility of sending satellites that could just approach a target close enough to deactivate it from its selected orbit, without destroying it. Several countries and organisations including China, Japan, Russia and the European Space Agency are said to be working on developing these ‘close proximity’ anti-satellite technologies.

The third option is the possible use of ground-based lasers to ‘dazzle’ the sensors of the satellites and make them at least “partially blind” so that they are unable to work efficiently.

None of these technologies is mature enough to be deployed or tested.

**TELLING NUMBERS**

## To learn English, brain needs to store 1.56 MB information: study

HOW MUCH memory does it take to store a language in the brain? New research has quantified it. To store all the information necessary to learn and use the English language, the brain needs 1.56 megabytes, according to University of Rochester cognitive scientist Francis Mollica and University of California-Berkeley psychologist Steven T Piantados, who report their findings in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*.

They reached their conclusion by assigning storage size to various aspects of the English language. For phonemes (the sounds that distinguish one word for another), they assigned 15 bits each, so that the brain requires 750 bits to store the 50 phonemes required to know English. They estimated that 40,000 unique words are essential to knowledge of

Domain	Storage
Phonemes	750
Wordforms	400,000
Semantics	12,000,000
Word frequency	80,000
Syntax	697
<b>Total (in bits)</b>	<b>12,481,447</b>
<b>Total (in MB)</b>	<b>1.56</b>

the language, which would require 400,000 bits. Semantics require the most storage space, at 12 million bits. Other elements are word frequency (80,000 bits) and syntax rules (700 bits). All this adds up to 12.5 million bits, or 1.56 megabytes of information.

# Behind Mali conflict: settled vs nomadic farmers, rise of militant outfits

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

LAST WEEKEND, unidentified gunmen massacred villagers in Bankass in the Mopti region of central Mali. Those killed — the toll has now crossed 150 including women and children — belonged to an ethnic group called Fulani. The gunmen were reportedly dressed in traditional hunting gear of the Dogon, a group that has been involved in ethnic conflict with the Fulani.

The Fulani are largely Muslim and the conflict has been violent following the emergence of Islamist groups in the last few years. Days before the latest attack, a group affiliated to the al-Qaeda had killed 23 Malian soldiers days earlier. Now, militia of a Dogon group have been blamed for the massacre of Fulani villagers; while the group has denied responsibility, the Mali government has banned it.

**Dogon and Fulani**

The Dogon have lived in the central plateau region of Mali for centuries. They follow settled agriculture and traditional religious practices, and are often identified by

their mask dances. There have been various estimates for their population, most of which put it at less than 1 million.

The Fulani, also known as the Fula people, are the largest ethnic group in a massive region that spreads across West Africa and parts of Central Africa, with most estimates putting their population at 30 million, and some counting over 40 million. While they are widely dispersed, the Fulani also include the largest nomadic pastoral community in the world, about a third of their population. These largely Muslim herders have at times come into conflict with settled agricultural communities, such as the Dogon in Mali. In Nigeria, too, similar violence has been reported between Fulani and settled farmers.

**Rise of conflict**

In Mali, Dogon people have often accused the Fulani of bringing their cattle onto their farms and destroying their crops. Although this has led to violence at times, competition over resources was frequently resolved by negotiation, BBC News reported. After militant Islamist conflict began in northern Mali in 2012, and spread to central areas by 2015, the region began to



At Ogossogou village in Bankass of Mali’s Mopti region, shortly after the violent attack last weekend. *Tabital Pulaaku via AP*

be marked by more instability.

A report by the New York-based Human Rights Watch said that over 200 civilians were killed in communal violence in 2018 in the Mopti region alone. Groups linked to al-

Qaeda and Islamic State have exploited such ethnic rivalries in Mali, as well as in Burkina Faso and Niger, to boost recruitment and render vast swathes of territory virtually ungovernable, Reuters reported.



The Dogon, who have often been victims of militant attacks, suspect the Fulani of aiding these outfits. This has led to the emergence of Dogon resistance groups. The Fulani have often accused the government of arming these groups, which is denied by the authorities.

**Armed groups**

The group that was outlawed following the massacre calls itself Dan Na Ambassagou, which means “hunters who trust in God” in the Dogon language. It was created in 2016 and came to prominence last year. Dan Na Ambassagou has frequently denied accusations of involvement

in a number of the attacks on the Fulani last year, BBC reported. In the wake of similar allegations after Saturday’s attack, Dan Na Ambassagou denied these in a statement: “We have nothing to do with this massacre which we utterly condemn. Anyone can wear hunters’ costumes, they are available in the markets.”

The Human Rights Watch report notes that some Fulani community members, too, formed a group called the Alliance for the Salvation of the Sahel (ASS) last year, to protect Fulani from armed groups in Mali and Burkina Faso. While Dogon militia accuse the ASS of links with militant Islamist groups, the ASS denies this.

**Action taken**

Mali President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has banned Dan Na Ambassagou and also sacked two generals: chief of staff Gen M’Bemba Moussa Keita and chief of land forces Gen Abdoulaye Coulibaly. The presidency said that “the protection of the population remains and will remain solely in the hands of the state”. The BBC described this as the government “distancing itself from allegations that it has outsourced the fight against the the jihadists”.

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A cop out

Police reform is 'mumkin', but the political executive has failed to make it happen



Prakash Singh

PASSING ASAT

But it is no substitute for the long overdue policy debate on India's security challenges in outer space

THE ANTI-SATELLITE (ASAT) weapon test conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday is more about Delhi's changing approach to space weapons than a great technological breakthrough. But the significance of this long overdue change in India's space mindset was masked by the political pieties of the Foreign Office in explaining the ASAT test. Delhi's urge to package consequential strategic actions in meaningless mantras goes back to May 1974 when India called its first nuclear test a "peaceful nuclear explosion". Last month, the government described its attack on a terror training camp at Balakot in Pakistan as a "non-military pre-emptive action". That verbal dissimulation did not impress Pakistan, which reacted shortly with an airstrike of its own on Indian military bases. India's self-righteous rhetoric leads to self-deception and an underestimation of how the rest of the world — especially China and Pakistan — might respond to India's strategic moves.

But first to the ASAT test. India may only be the fourth country testing an ASAT weapon. But it is a distant fourth to the US, Russia and China. The first ASAT tests by Washington and Moscow go back to the 1960s. President Reagan's "Star Wars" programme announced in 1983 triggered a second wind to ASAT development. China tested its first ASAT weapon in 2007. All three have stepped up their work on space weapons since. Beijing and Moscow are said to be close to deploying space weapons. In the US, President Donald Trump has announced the intent to create a space force that can fight wars in the dark yonder. India has a long way to catch up. India's ASAT test — which targeted a satellite in a low earth orbit of 300 km — builds on its already demonstrated missile defence systems. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley conceded that India has had ASAT capabilities for long and claimed that the UPA government had denied permission to develop and test them.

One ASAT test based on modest technologies, however, is no substitute to the long overdue policy debate on India's security challenges in the outer space environment. Although space has become an arena for great power jousting and the technology to build space weapons has advanced rapidly, Delhi seemed happy arguing in international forums against the weaponisation of outer space. Despite the growing dependence of India's armed forces on communication and reconnaissance satellites, the civilian leadership has resisted the development of effective higher defence structures to manage the emerging space threats. Delhi's explicit demonstration of space weapon capabilities is welcome, but it must be part of a clearly articulated military space doctrine that identifies India's political objectives and technological goals in outer space and the strategy to realise them.

OUR NEWSPAPERS, UNTIL recently, were full of BJP's tagline "Namumkin Ab Mumkin Hai". There is no doubt that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a number of initiatives in diverse fields, which would raise the standard of living of the common man and transform India into a cleaner, healthier and resurgent nation. Swachh Bharat is gradually becoming a reality. Ayushman Bharat aims to provide healthcare benefit to about 50 crore people. Electricity would appear to have reached every corner of the country. Ujjwala and Sukanya Yojana would go a long way in improving the plight of women, and so on. Different departments came out with their lists of achievements. Even if we make allowance for an element of exaggeration, these initiatives have been laudable and the progress impressive.

It is disappointing, however, that there is an area where even what was *mumkin* (possible) has not been achieved — it is about reformative changes in the police with a view to transforming it into an instrument of service to the people. The Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment in 2006, clearly said that "the commitment, devotion and accountability of the police has to be only to the rule of law" and that "the supervision and control has to be such that it ensures that the police serves the people without any regard, whatsoever, to the status and position of any person while investigating a crime or taking preventive measures". The Court issued a slew of directions with a view to insulating the police from extraneous influences, giving it a measure of autonomy in personnel matters and making it more accountable. It is a great pity that even after 12 years, there has been only partial and, in some states, far-facial compliance of the directions.

The states are primarily to blame. However, the Centre cannot escape responsibility for its indifference and inaction in

the matter. The Police Act Drafting Committee headed by Soli Sorabjee had prepared a Model Police Act in 2006. The expectation was that the Centre would pass an Act on similar lines for Delhi and the Union Territories and that the same model would be adopted at least in those states where the same party held office. Besides, Article 252 of the Constitution gives Parliament the power to legislate for two or more states by consent and lays down that such an Act shall apply to the consenting states "and to any other by which it is adopted through a resolution passed in that behalf by the House or, where there are two Houses, by each of the Houses of the legislature of that State".

Unfortunately, nothing of the kind happened. Till this day, the Government of India has not taken any definitive action on Sorabjee's Model Police Act. In the absence of any initiative by the Centre, the states, 17 of them so far, have gone amok with their separate police Acts. It is ironic that while the British India had one police Act for the entire country, we are confronted with a situation where every state has a different Act with sharp differences in essential features.

Justice KT Thomas, who was appointed by the Supreme Court in 2008 to monitor the implementation of its directions, expressed his "dismay over the total indifference (of the states) to the issue of reforms in the functioning of police". Justice JS Verma, who submitted a comprehensive report on amendments to criminal law in 2012, urged the "states to comply with all six Supreme Court's directives in order to tackle systemic problems in policing". It is quite *mumkin*, but the executive is unfortunately not prepared to give up its *zaminadari* over the police.

The prime minister, while addressing the police chiefs of the country in Guwahati in

2014, raised hopes when he talked of building a SMART police — a police, which would be sensitive, mobile, accountable, responsive and techno-savvy. There has hardly been any follow up action and only some cosmetic steps were taken to augment the manpower and infrastructure of the forces.

It is indeed a tragedy that while the country is forging ahead in different spheres to build a new India, its policing remains mired in a colonial structure. The Acts passed by the states are crude attempts to circumvent the implementation of judicial directions. The Supreme Court has also, for inexplicable reasons, not cracked the whip so far.

The total strength of state police forces is 2.46 million and there are about 25,000 police stations and outposts across the country. It is a formidable strength. Imagine a situation where a common man does not feel inhibited in entering a police station, has a fair degree of confidence that his report would be lodged and investigated! It would be such a sea change. But is the political class keen on bringing about such a transformation? And, are the police officers themselves serious about introducing the much-needed internal reforms, which they could initiate without any political clearance or legislative backup?

We need to understand that stable law and order provides the foundation for sustained economic development. Haryana offers the most recent example of a state suffering a serious economic setback when law and order collapsed in the wake of an agitation over reservation. A healthy democracy also needs a healthy police. In fact, if police is not able to enforce the rule of law and is constrained to take directions from persons of questionable antecedents at the helm, it will be the beginning of the end of democracy.

The writer is chairman, Indian Police Foundation

STRIKING OUT QUESTIONS

The achievement of India's scientists, like the feats of India's soldiers, must not be used to circumscribe political argument

WHEN PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi addressed the nation on Wednesday morning, to say that India had successfully shot down a live satellite in low earth orbit, and thereby entered an elite club of space powers, he was making two announcements in one. He was, of course, declaring India's stronger capability to defend itself in space. But that was not all. Coming just as the election campaign heats up, Wednesday's announcement was politically freighted. That is proved best not by the Opposition's allegations of motives but by the government's own strenuous efforts to frame a disquieting political opposition in its wake. In a press conference, senior ministers did not just seek to invoke a take-no-questions national pride, they didn't just dismiss the Opposition's questions as "clerical objections" — but also drew a line from Pulwama-Balakot to Wednesday's announcement, and talked of preparing for the war of the future. After its "aitihasic bhoor (historic blunder)" over Balakot, said Arun Jaitley, history has given the Opposition another chance — to stand with the scientists in their achievement. The implication was subtle: The Government plus Soldier plus Scientist plus National Security on one side — the Opposition on the other.

If this is another strain of the BJP's theme song in the upcoming election campaign, it speaks of an impoverished politics ahead. If the BJP is signalling that its electoral strategy will be to wrap itself in war-like Pulwama-Balakot-ASAT, in order to insulate itself from all contentions and draw attention away from other issues, like agricultural distress or joblessness, it portends a shrunken debate. Hopefully, the party that rules India's centre will not let its pursuit of poll victory blind it to the virtue — and necessity in a large and diverse democracy — of keeping politics free and open to questions. Hopefully, the Opposition will rise to the political challenge. It must be hoped, too, that other institutions, especially the Election Commission, are mindful of their responsibility.

For the BJP, Balakot and now the declaration of ASAT missile capability, may make a perfect fit with its political USP of muscular nationalism. It is for the countervailing institutions in a constitutional democracy, however, to judge when and how to apply the check and restore the balance.

MUCH ADO

Row over mankading highlights need for the MCC to frame a clearer law

A DAY AFTER much silly outrage in the cricketing world against R Ashwin's mankading — when a bowler runs out the non-striker who has left the crease even before the ball has been delivered — the MCC, the body that drafted the cricketing laws, came up with a clarification which has further obscured the issue. "Yesterday's incident could have been ruled out or not out, depending on how 'the instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball' is interpreted."

This is obscurantism in the modern age, where all major sport tries to stub out any vagueness and irrational "subjectivism". Who determines if it was a deliberate delay that would be unfair? Jos Buttler, the batsman who was mankaded, thought that moment had happened and stepped out of the crease while Ashwin obviously didn't think so. Different third umpires could interpret it differently, leading to more chaos. There have been spinners before — in fact, Ashwin certainly for one — who have stopped at the crease, almost waiting it out to see if the batsmen predetermines a shot, before they deliver the ball. So, one can't even subjectively derive from the pause-over that he has pulled out from releasing the ball. What if at that instant he spots the non-striker out of the crease and mankads?

In other words, instead of making it foolproof, the MCC has sought to obfuscate. The MCC should have clarified that the batsman can't leave the crease before the ball is delivered. If the bowler is waiting for eternity, then let the batsman just stay in till the umpire asks the bowler to carry on. By introducing subjectivity on how high the bowling arm has been raised and such technicalities, a needless confusion is being created.



Badri Narayan

MAYAWATI'S MOVE

BSP leader's decision to not contest polls is full of possibilities

THE BAHUJAN SAMAJ Party (BSP) leader, Mayawati, recently decided to not contest the Lok Sabha elections. This decision surprised almost everyone. Political analysts had been speculating that Mayawati could emerge as one of the main claimants for the prime minister's post if the Opposition parties were in the running to form a government. Her supporters, especially those from the Dalit-Bahujan communities, also want to see the BSP chief as the PM.

Mayawati has, however, not ruled herself out as a contender for the PM's office and has asked her supporters to not be disappointed by her decision because a person has six months after assuming office to get elected to Parliament. She has also asserted that the BSP is not just a political party but also a movement. Strengthening the movement required her to take hard decisions, she has said. Her decision to not contest elections was a sacrifice for the Bahujan movement, she added. Mayawati has also assured the BSP members and supporters that she will work for the victory of each candidate of the BSP-SP *gathbandhan*.

But what are the political reasons behind Mayawati's decision? An obvious reason could be the prospect of a tight contest on every seat in UP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Mayawati would want to devote as much time as possible to campaign for the *gathbandhan*'s candidates. To create chemistry between the supporters of allied parties is a

big challenge. Mayawati could be seeing herself as performing that role. There could also be a message to her alliance partners that she is pursuing a larger goal in national politics. Her sacrifice has elevated her stature above other leaders of the *gathbandhan*. Her decision is a signal of sorts to the partners that should the situation arise, they should support her candidature for the PM's post.

Second, Mayawati's decision is also a response to critics within the Dalit-Bahujan movement like Vaman Meshram, Chandrashekhar Azad Ravan and a few other Ambedkarites, who see the BSP as just another political party that is only interested in power. They want to create space for a movement within the realm of Dalit politics. That, of course, could weaken Mayawati's hegemony over Dalit politics. That is why she has emphasised that the BSP is not just a party, but also a movement.

Third, Priyanka Gandhi's entry in UP politics has made the situation tough for the *gathbandhan*. Priyanka's leadership has given a new lease of life to the Congress in the state. Almost a dead force before her entry, the Congress is fast emerging as a third bloc, which could make inroads in the *gathbandhan*'s support base, especially the Muslim and Dalits. These communities were part of the Congress's support base for a long time in UP and the party wants to revive its standing amongst them. Priyanka's recent visit in the region that stretches from

Prayagraj to Varanasi has created a deep impact on the people of the area. She focused on the Most Backward Castes, Dalits, poor, women and artisan communities who are on the margins of the paradigm of development pursued by the BJP-led NDA government. The Nishads and the weaving community — comprising both Muslims and Hindus — were at the centre of her mobilisation efforts. She seemed to have struck a chord with the people as well as the Congress workers.

All this could have created an apprehension in Mayawati's mind that a section of the BSP's support base is shifting to the Congress. Priyanka's meeting with the Dalit youth leader Chandrashekhar has already created a soft corner for her amongst a section of the community. This also explains Mayawati's recent outbursts against the Congress.

The Congress may also attract Brahmin and forward caste voters, who form the BJP's support base. But this may pose challenges for the *gathbandhan* as well. The alliance's early edge over the BJP could diminish with the Congress emerging as the third bloc in UP. Mayawati would have realised this challenge. Her decision to not contest the Lok Sabha election is thus a fallout of several political imperatives. It is also rife with several political implications.

The writer is professor, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad



MARCH 28, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

EGYPT REJECTS LEAGUE

EGYPT ANNOUNCED that it was suspending its activities within the Arab League in the face of efforts to isolate it for signing a peace treaty with Israel. The step left the future of the 22-member league in doubt. Its Egyptian secretary-general, Mahmoud Riad, has already resigned because of the profound split in the Arab world over the treaty. The disarray in the Arab ranks was underscored by the fact that Riad's assistant, Sayed Nofal, also an Egyptian, issued a statement backing the treaty as "a support for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East." Radical Arab countries opposed to the treaty signed in Washington yesterday are promoting efforts to remove the league headquarters from Cairo.

YOUTH CONGRESS

THERE APPEARS TO be a growing resentment among Congress (I) members over the decision of the party high command to revive the Youth Congress (I) and pave the way for Sanjay Gandhi's direct entry into politics. The manifest reason for the revival of the Youth Congress is to create a party front to fight the RSS and, more important, to organise a protest movement against the Special Courts Bill, which was recently passed in the Rajya Sabha. The decision of the working committee of the party to revive the Youth Congress (I) brought to surface the resentment of some members against the development which, according to them, was to project Sanjay Gandhi. At the general body meeting of the parliamentary party, several members expressed resentment.

GEORGE FACES FLAK

UNION INDUSTRY MINISTER, George Fernandes, faced criticism from within the ruling Janata Party over the collaboration between the government-owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Siemens. One of his critics is Subramanian Swamy, a vocal Janata MP, from Bombay. Swamy has met the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, in an attempt to stall the BHEL-Siemens deal. The PM, it appears, called a meeting of the industry minister and Swamy in his office a few days ago and confronted Fernandes. Swamy, it is learnt, was asked to give a detailed note on the deal for a reply by Fernandes. This is the second meeting of the kind the PM has called in which the minister has been asked to face charges made by a member from within the ruling party.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

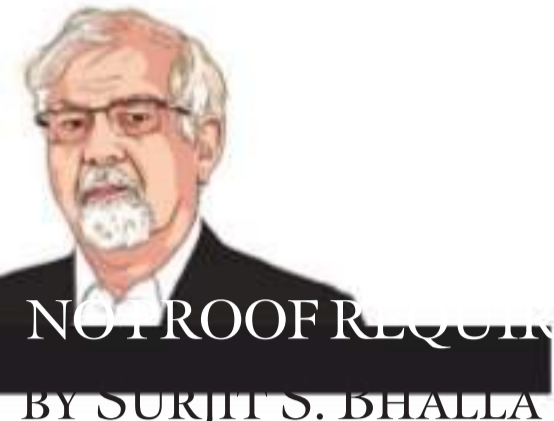
Donald Trump is playing with fire by trying to redraw the map of the Middle East in an imperial fashion. — THE DAWN

# In the name of the poor

There is no other way to say it — Congress's 'expert' formulation of a 'unique' concept of minimum income guarantee is intellectually embarrassing and deeply flawed

# A fight for freedom

As the election approaches, we must remember what is at stake: It is a struggle to preserve an India that celebrates freedom



NO ROOF REQUIRED  
BY SURJIT S. BHALLA

FOR TWO AND a half days, the media was full of discussion, and interpretation, of the Congress proposal on alleviating poverty (hereafter pap or PAP). In addition, the Congress, and its president, Rahul Gandhi, has not been shy of invoking big names in his advertisement of support for, and planning of, PAP. Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has been prominently mentioned as a major consultant; Economist Thomas Piketty has admitted to having been consulted, though Nobel laureate Angus Deaton has denied as having been involved in any way whatsoever. In addition, leading MIT economist Abhijit Banerjee has admitted that he has been consulted by the Congress. According to a report in Business Standard (January 27): "A committee of party leaders, which included Manmohan Singh and P Chidambaram, has calculated the basic living income each family needs to survive as Rs 12,000 per month."

It is quite clear that the Congress believes that PAP is unique, innovative, and a game-changer. According to Chidambaram's press conference, the total expenditure involved in implementing PAP will not exceed 2 per cent of the GDP. Lately, there has been intellectual and policy folly of both PAP1 and tense speculation, and debate, in the media.

I hope to make clear why I think none of the economic luminaries mentioned above will ever admit to supporting either PAP1 or PAP2. Very likely, and I am speculating (pm). Here is the first bit of confusion in the PAP proposal. The Congress believes that Rs 12,000 a month (or Rs 144,000 a year) is the survival income needed but the Congress's Minimum Income Guarantee promising to give only half of that as its (MIG) income, and the contradiction becomes survival and poverty line income.

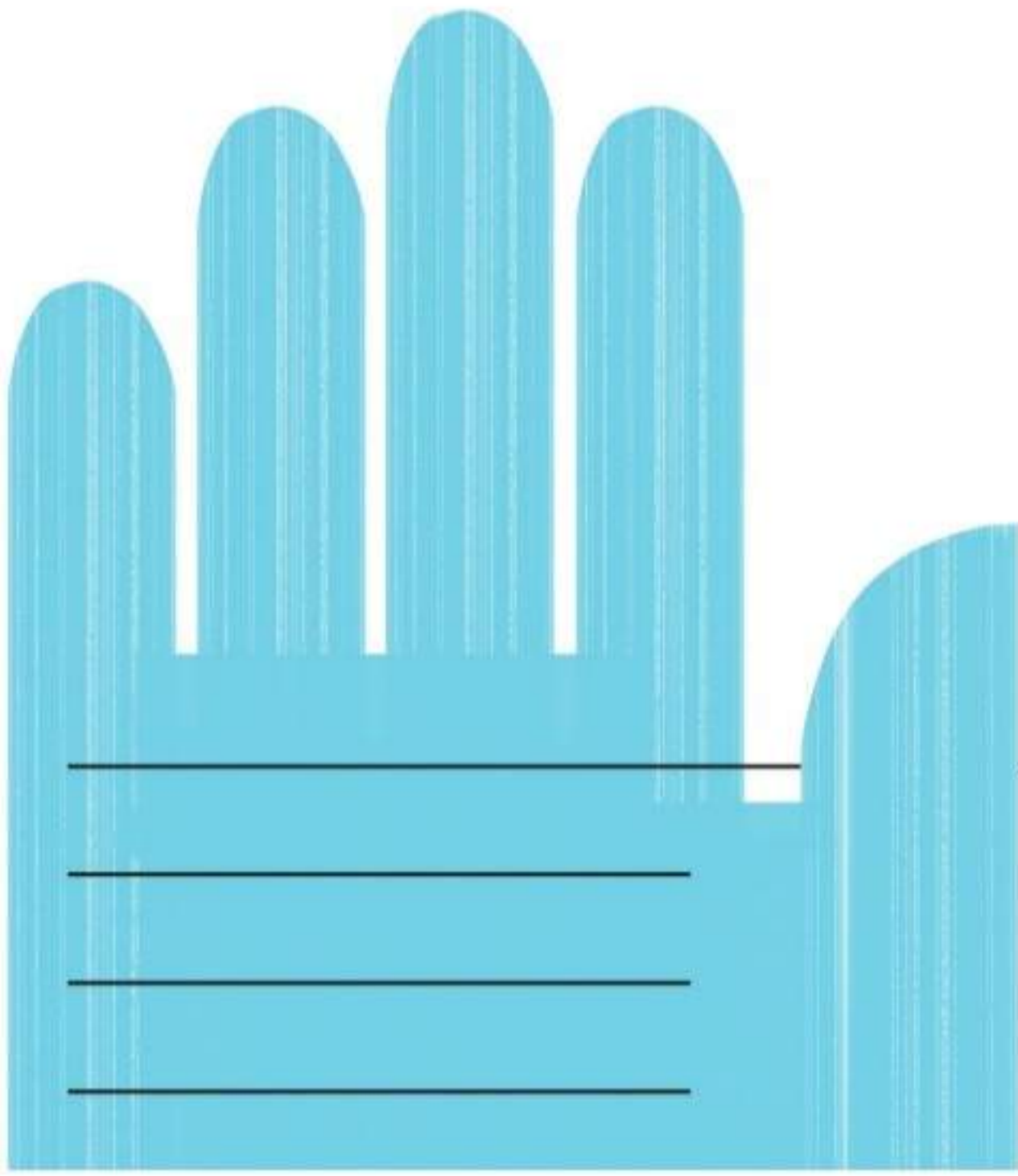
There is an explicit contradiction in the government's policy of transferring Rs 2,000 every month into the bank account of the designated woman in the family. I have written several articles over the last few months documenting the existence, and prominence, of the fake news line income!

A top-up proposal would mean that the family would help in its own way. In my book, *Citizen Raj-UPA*, if it returns to office, would help every family residing in the bottom 20 per cent to reach an income level of Rs 6,000 pm. Hence, if a family earned Rs 4,000 per month, the government would transfer Rs 2,000.

The document all my assertions so that there is no doubt that whatever I say is backed by Chidambaram was emphatic in his press conference that the Congress would follow the Modi government's policy of transferring money into a woman's account. I promise to keep you hooked!

The first fake news element within PAP there would be a zero-rupee transfer. Incidentally, PAP1 was revealed to the world by one other than Rahul Gandhi himself — of Rs 72,000 a year or Rs 6,000 a month.

Then Congress spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, contradicted his party chief. He said that PAP1 was not a top-up but a straightforward grant of Rs 72,000 to every family whose income fell below Rs 72,000 a year. Let us call this proposal PAP2. While Surjewala did not say so, a clear implication of PAP2 is that his leader could not tell the difference between a top-up and a grant. He don't believe that Rahul Gandhi could understand the difference. I believe it was a straightforward case of confusion in the Congress about which proposal to advocate and confusion between poverty line income and Rs 6,000 per month and survival income.



CR Sasikumar

areas was Rs 853 per capita per month (pcpm). For urban areas, the national average was Rs 1,000 pcpm. Rural CPI average for July 2011 to June 2012 (the NSSO months) registered a level of 95.0; urban CPI registered 95.7; for 2017-18 (same months), the corresponding levels are 138.6 and 133.7. For both 2018-19 and 2019-20, an average inflation of 4 per cent is assumed. This yields rural and urban CPI levels of 150 and 145 in 2019-20. The corresponding 2019-20 Tendulkar poverty line is therefore Rs 1,347 pcpm (rural) and Rs 1,515 pcpm (urban).

It remains to determine the urbanisation rate in 2019-20. Leaked PLFS reports suggest that India had an urbanisation rate of only 29.3 per cent in 2017-18, and even lower than that observed in 2011-12! One of the many problems with the PLFS data that has gone unremarked by most commentators is the low rate of urbanisation observed in 2017-18. If this urbanisation rate is taken as accurate, then the national Tendulkar line in 2019-20 is Rs 1,396 per person per month. Accepting this figure yields an average family size of 4.3 for India (6,000 divided by 1,396). While this seems low, it apparently is identical to the PLFS estimate of family size in rural India, a poverty benchmark region used by international agencies like the World Bank. Hence, what the Congress has proposed is a transfer of poverty line income to each family — and half of survival income!

Part II of the PAP jumla will document how a top-up scheme in 2019-20 will likely involve an additional expenditure level of less than 0.2 per cent of annual GDP and how, in 2019-20, the Tendulkar poverty level in India will likely be less than 5 per cent of the population, and how the grant proposal will benefit 20 per cent of the population and alienate those in the next 30 per cent (21 per cent to 50 per cent). It doesn't seem as if this is an intelligent election strategy. But who am I to comment? I supported Manmohan Singh as prime minister in the 2009 election!

The writer is Contributing Editor, Indian Express and Consultant, Network 18

The first fake news element within PAP is in its assertion that prominent economic experts were involved in arriving at the figure of Rs 72,000 a year or Rs 6,000 a month as the minimum income line. Because Rs 6,000 a month is exactly an update of the Tendulkar poverty line, and this official minimum income line has been in existence for more than a decade.

# Lessons from Christchurch

In India, secular parties need to invoke the freedom struggle's inclusive ideals



SYEDA JAMEED

THERE IS SOMETHING ominous about the Ides of March. That day in 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated by his entire senate, and an official letterhead, Anning averred that the attack was led by his best friend Brutus. The growing fear in Australia and New World War II was sparked that day when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. The Syrian civil war erupted on the same day. And, on the same day, in Christchurch, New Zealand, a man walked into a mosque where people had gathered to offer Friday prayers: An Arab prophet as "A 6th Century despot masquerading as a religious leader."

While shooting innocents, he was also filmed the incident on a camera attached to his helmet. The world rose to condemn the incident and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. It was called an "act of a mentally ill supremacist". No one called it Christian terror. No one equated it with religious terrorism. It was called only when an incident such as this occurred in Christchurch uncovers the dirt that lies beneath the veneer of modernity.

The mass killing in New Zealand's Christchurch in terms of Christian terror. Nor a Queensland senator, in Australia. From the killing of Jews in Pittsburgh Anning not only justified, but valorised the 28-year-old fellow Australian killer, Brenton Harrison Tarrant. In a statement published in an official letterhead, Anning averred that the attack was led by his best friend Brutus. The growing fear in Australia and New Zealand of increasing Muslim presence was Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. The Syrian civil war erupted on the same day. And, on the same day, in Christchurch, New Zealand, a man walked into a mosque where people had gathered to offer Friday prayers: An Arab prophet as "A 6th Century despot masquerading as a religious leader."

harsh treatment of the aboriginal people, the history of snatching the rights of the First Peoples in their quest for new lands and contrived white supremacist. But history is usually forgotten and recalled only when an incident such as this occurred in Christchurch uncovers the dirt that lies beneath the veneer of modernity. Across the world, the aim is to not to quote the Quran. Demonisation of Muslims is a right wingers have said it, albeit under political compulsion. Personally, I don't think of mosque triggered an instant response from Christians in terms of Christian terror. Nor a Queensland senator, in Australia. From the killing of Jews in Pittsburgh Anning not only justified, but valorised the 28-year-old fellow Australian killer, Brenton Harrison Tarrant. In a statement published in an official letterhead, Anning averred that the attack was led by his best friend Brutus. The growing fear in Australia and New Zealand of increasing Muslim presence was Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. The Syrian civil war erupted on the same day. And, on the same day, in Christchurch, New Zealand, a man walked into a mosque where people had gathered to offer Friday prayers: An Arab prophet as "A 6th Century despot masquerading as a religious leader."

is best expressed in the 1923 address of Maulana Azad, the youngest Congress president, where he said that if an angel were to descend from heaven and declare that India will get swaraj within 24 hours, provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim unity, "I will relinquish swaraj rather than give up Hindu Muslim unity. Delay in attainment of swaraj will be a loss to India but if our unity is lost it will be a loss to entire humankind". Those were days when such words could be spoken from public platforms without the fear of lynching or assassination. They need to be invoked across the board now by secular, democratic liberal peoples and parties. India has 180 million Muslims who cannot be swept away by a spate of violence. Globally, 1.5 billion Muslims, most of whom live in 50 Muslim-majority countries, cannot be destroyed by random killings. There is solace in what prophets, philosophers, sufis, have instructed in every text, every language, and every religion. Gandhi said, "There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seemed invincible, but in the end they always fall". These words keep me alive.

is best expressed in the 1923 address of Maulana Azad, the youngest Congress president, where he said that if an angel were to descend from heaven and declare that India will get swaraj within 24 hours, provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim unity, "I will relinquish swaraj rather than give up Hindu Muslim unity. Delay in attainment of swaraj will be a loss to India but if our unity is lost it will be a loss to entire humankind". Those were days when such words could be spoken from public platforms without the fear of lynching or assassination. They need to be invoked across the board now by secular, democratic liberal peoples and parties. India has 180 million Muslims who cannot be swept away by a spate of violence. Globally, 1.5 billion Muslims, most of whom live in 50 Muslim-majority countries, cannot be destroyed by random killings. There is solace in what prophets, philosophers, sufis, have instructed in every text, every language, and every religion. Gandhi said, "There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seemed invincible, but in the end they always fall". These words keep me alive.

The writer is a former member, Planning Commission



ASHWANI KUMAR

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS for the constitution of the 17th Lok Sabha has been set in motion by the Election Commission's announcement of the poll schedule. By all accounts, this will be a watershed election given the context, challenges and the choices that are to be made. The electorate will choose between the government's claims of performance, promises for a better future and the Opposition's interrogation of governance in the last five years, besides their projection of a dim future for the country under the BJP dispensation. Pressing issues such as agrarian distress, rising unemployment, economic and social inequities, flawed policies and faltering economic growth will be at the centre of the Opposition's campaign as indicated in the Ahmedabad resolution of the Congress working committee.

This election is certainly more than the sum total of these issues. It is about the future and quality of our democracy — whether our democratic engagement will remain discursive, inclusive and responsive to resist the "stampede of the masses" and a free run on the foundational principles of the republic. This election is about political morality in an age of extremes defined by coerced allegiance, contrived consent, and a nationalism which silences and suppresses. It is about the debilitating condition of democratic institutions, stifling of free thought and imagination, the egregious violation of religious rights, assaults on human dignity, enforced uniformity in a pluralist society, and, about a "narrowing circle of human empathy" exemplified in the continuing marginalisation of the vulnerable. It is about the state's indifference to human misery and its oppressive apparatuses, about the disintegration of established patterns of human relationships and hate crimes in which blaming the victim is the new normal: These disquieting phenomena decisively point that our politics is moving towards the extremes.

But, this election is also an opportunity to reclaim the nation's moral centre and to factor in the above challenges in the framework of an alternative narrative. In this intensely contested election, the core issues run the risk of being subsumed in rancorous political discourse — making us unable to anchor any political dialogue in civility. Electoral success will ensure a critical return to the path of moderation to rescue our faltering democracy. The imperative of embracing the middle ground through a politics of adjustment and rational engagement is self-evident. The Buddha's middle path and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics have extolled the virtues of avoiding "excess and defect". Modern institutional dimensions of moderation were introduced to us by constitutionalists who,

inspired by Montesquieu et al, rejected concentration of power in a single authority, and reinforced the logic of an equilibrium of power based upon its dispersal. Yet, the obvious virtues of "the intermediate" to which human beings accommodate themselves better than to extremes remains "...the most difficult lesson of wisdom..." (Tacitus). Hopefully, leadership across the political spectrum will recognise the need to rest Indian democracy on the edifice of moderation, lest it is reduced to a mobocracy by the demagogues. We must also accept that for democracy to yield power that is benign, we need to civilise ourselves in its use so that every powerful figure does not become, "...a ravenous beast of prey."

The battle of the ballot this time will also be fought in the shadow of armed hostilities with Pakistan. In a charged political atmosphere, it is impossible to deny the influence of military glory on the emotions of the nation — this will undoubtedly challenge the wisdom of our people. But an election such as this cannot just be a moment to look for "viscerally satisfying solutions". It must serve instead, as an opportunity to invigorate our democracy: This is our moment to demonstrate that the world's largest democracy can "...rise above the crowd" and can resist the seduction of a muscular state in which narrow ideas of nationalism are used as an opiate. Together, we must reject the onslaughts on freedom and uncritical deference to authority.

A nation born to freedom must forever remind itself that the liberties of its citizens are secure in their own wisdom. That the struggle for freedom is a permanent revolution through which the notions of human dignity are constantly revisited.

Those on the side of freedom, therefore, ought to speak aloud and together. It would be a colossal tragedy if the parties that stand for freedom — from oppression, exploitation and fear — were to balk at projecting this election as another struggle for freedom, lest their campaign is trounced at the altar of a perverse idea of nationalism. Only through an unrelenting struggle for the vindication of this nation's values can political parties redeem their waning credibility as upholders of the people's priorities.

Rahul Gandhi's statement in Chennai (March 13) regarding the assault on democratic institutions and the need to remove a feeling of pervasive fear in the country is reassuring given the context. All individuals and authority figures supporting an open society are obliged to unite because "...the extensiveness of the folded fan draws breath and flourishes only in spreading." (Walter Benjamin). While navigating our politics in these troubled times, we cannot forget the lesson of history that the majority vote does not guarantee freedom unless the majority stands up for freedom. For this to happen the election must be fought in defence of an idea of India that celebrates freedom — an idea which is under siege.

The writer is a former Union Minister of law and justice

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### JUMLA POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Not so basic' (IE, March 27). There appears to be a desperate competition between PM Modi and Rahul Gandhi to appear as 'game changers' in removing endemic poverty, and thereby win votes. While Modi announces payment of Rs 6,000 annually to the 20 per cent poorest, Rahul makes it Rs 72,000 per year. That would mean loss of Rs 3.6 crore to the exchequer (1.88 per cent of the estimated GDP). Where will that come from? What will happen to the existing 950 central government welfare schemes? The only way to help the poor is to give them jobs. And jobs will come from enhanced development and inclusive growth. Let our leaders not fool the people with slogans and schemes, but get real with a bold economic vision.

Ripu Singh Ambala

### POLITICS, DIPLOMACY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Why foreign policy needs consensus' (IE, March 26). The writer has shone a light on the politicisation of foreign policy issues in the country, and pointed out that such domestic contentions imperil India's position in the Subcontinent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured that India's standing has risen in the world. Despite occasional foreign policy setbacks, India remains a power to reckon with. A strong government with a decisive majority will elevate India's status in the eyes of the global community.

Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

### ALARM BELLS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Forecasters of fantasy' (IE, March 27). It was frightening to read that Indresh Kumar, a top RSS ideologue, has forecasting that within five years, Pakistan and Bangladesh will become a part of India — and China will willingly concede a large part of its territory to India. It is alarming that a prominent RSS ideologue is living in a world far removed from reality. It could lead India and the Subcontinent into a nuclear tragedy.

JS Bandukwala via e-mail