



Slow on sanitation

Policy makers have failed to use technological advances made in treating faecal sludge

The tragic death of six people who entered a septic tank in Tamil Nadu's Sriperumbudur town is a grim reminder that sanitation remains a low-priority area despite the high political profile of Swachh Bharat. Public understanding of the science of managing septic tanks continues to be poor, and the availability of cheap labour to clean these structures has slowed efforts to develop technologies that can safely remove and transport the waste. Sanitation thus remains a challenge in thousands of unsewered towns. What sets the incident apart from the several instances of people dying of asphyxiation in the tanks is that some of the victims were the owners of the property and not workers. Three people collapsed while inspecting their residential septic tank, and others who tried to save them also perished. Although workers were not affected in this case, it confirms Tamil Nadu's abysmal overall record at raising sanitation standards. Since 1993, when the first law was passed against manual cleaning, there were at least 144 worker deaths in Tamil Nadu as of November 2018, according to official data reported to the Centre for grant of compensation. Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab also fared badly with a cumulative toll of 146 lives lost during that period. But this is obviously a gross underestimate, since the Safai Karmachari Andolan, which has litigated in the Supreme Court seeking to aggressively prosecute offenders, contends that septic tank cleaning claimed nearly 1,500 lives between 2014 and 2016. More reports of deaths continue to come in.

Every death of a manual worker represents a crime, since the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 makes the use of such labour to clean septic tanks an offence punishable with imprisonment of two years or with a fine of ₹2 lakh or both even in the first instance. If State governments are reluctant to prosecute offenders, they are also slow to adopt newer technologies such as Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTP), which can be combined with omniprocessors for safe treatment of waste. For the task of cleaning the tanks, indigenous innovation in robotics looks promising. A prototype is planned to be tested by the Indian Institute of Technology Madras and such devices can potentially transform sanitation in India and other developing countries. But the pace of adoption will depend on the priority that governments accord to the long-neglected problem. Last year, Tamil Nadu, and some other States, notably Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, announced plans to scale up FSTP infrastructure. This is a task that deserves the highest importance, and needs to be completed on deadline. What happened in Sriperumbudur highlights the heavy price that communities pay for the lack of scientific sanitation. If governments remain apathetic, citizens would expect the courts to step in to uphold the law against manual scavenging and make individual departments accountable. The science on sanitation has advanced, and policy must urgently catch up.

Saving Jet

With the airline landing in the laps of banks, the challenge now is to quickly find a buyer

The decision of Naresh Goyal and Anita Goyal, his wife, to step down from the board of Jet Airways and cede control to its lenders has come not a moment too soon. By hanging on to the troubled airline and refusing to let go, Mr. Goyal brought Jet to the brink, imperilling 16,000 direct jobs and ₹6,000 crore of outstanding debt to banks. Even as banks, obviously prodded by the government, stepped in with a rescue plan in February that would give them a controlling stake in the airline through conversion of a part of their dues, Mr. Goyal refused to keep his side of the bargain. In the meanwhile, the airline continued to nosedive with aircraft being repossessed by lessors, pilots threatening to strike work and schedules going for a toss. It is just as well that Mr. Goyal finally saw reason and resigned from the Jet Airways board. This signals the start of a rescue act to save the airline, but whether it succeeds will depend on a host of factors, including the ability of banks to quickly find a buyer to pilot it.

Meanwhile, the active role played by banks in devising the rescue plan and also committing fresh funds of ₹1,500 crore has already come under question. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was enacted precisely to handle situations such as what Jet found itself in. In the normal course, the airline would have been dragged to bankruptcy court for a resolution as many other truant borrowers have been in the last two years. But, just ahead of elections, the government obviously did not want a high-profile bankruptcy with thousands of jobs lost and inconvenience to the public through disrupted flight schedules and higher airfares. While this explains why banks were prodded into rescuing Jet, the fact remains that they are ill-suited to run an airline. Besides, there is the risk of setting a precedent for other defaulters to try to stay out of the tentacles of the IBC. Already, fugitive economic offender Vijay Mallya, whose Kingfisher Airlines collapsed, is asking why he was not offered a bailout as Jet has been. That said, the priority of banks now is to exit from Jet as soon as they can with their money intact. That means finding an investor or a strategic buyer to offload their stake quickly. That is not going to be an easy task, but the alternative for the banks – of running the airline themselves – is not a practical option. The banks also have to guard against Mr. Goyal trying to stage a comeback in some manner in the event that the lenders fail to find a buyer. Such an eventuality would be a violation of the spirit of the IBC and also encourage recalcitrant borrowers.

The tragic heroes of the anti-IS war

Despite their historical role in destroying the IS Caliphate, the Kurds face risks of further aggression than recognition



STANLY JOHNY

With the liberation of Baghouz in eastern Syria last week, the physical structures of the Islamic State (IS) Caliphate have now been shattered. Baghouz had been the last slice of land the IS clung on to even as its territories continued to shrink in the wake of counter-attacks. Hundreds of IS fighters had surrendered in recent weeks, while thousands withdrew to the Iraqi and Syrian deserts.

Ongoing story

All this does not mean that the war against the IS is over. The IS is basically a terrorist insurgency and it had started moving back to its insurgency roots when the Caliphate came under attack. It still has its sympathisers, active members and sleeper cells in many parts of West Asia. Besides, it has branches in other countries which include Afghanistan, the Philippines, Nigeria and Libya. It is an ongoing story. But the neo-Caliphate announced by the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, from the pulpit of the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, in 2014 – which had erased the Iraqi-Syrian border and lured tens of thousands of youth from across the world – no longer exists. It is no small feat in the history of counter-terror operations. So who brought the Caliphate

down? There have been multiple players and factors in this war, in which the U.S. has played a pivotal role. U.S. President Barack Obama ordered American air strikes on the IS in August 2014, a few months after Baghdadi appeared in Mosul and when the militants were fast-expanding their territorial influence to the south and west of Iraq.

Since then the U.S. has carried out thousands of strikes, in Iraq, Syria, Libya and even in Afghanistan against the IS. The U.S. may not like to recognise it, but Iran has also played a crucial role in this war – directly in Iraq and indirectly in Syria. In Iraq, the Iran-trained Shia militias were at the forefront of the battlefield. It was a coalition of the Shia militias, the Iraqi national army and the Peshmerga, the armed wing of the Iraqi Kurdistan, with support from the U.S. that recaptured IS-held territories in Iraq such as Mosul, Fallujah and Ramadi.

The Syrian angle

In Syria, the war was more complex. If in Iraq, the national government had international recognition and support from both the U.S. and Iran, in Syria, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, which was in the midst of a civil war, lacked international support. The Obama administration initially wanted Mr. Assad to quit. There was no united anti-IS front in Syria, but the regime had done its bit. Government troops, backed by Russia and Iran, defeated the IS in Palmyra and recaptured the ancient city twice. The survival of the regime itself acted as a bulwark against the further spread of the IS



from the east, where it established a de facto capital in Raqqa, to the west and the south. Had Mr. Assad's regime fallen, one possible outcome would have been the IS overrunning Damascus, just like the Taliban captured a battered Kabul in 1996 in the midst of a civil war and the collapse of the central authority. On the other side, the most dangerous and prolonged anti-IS battles were carried out by Syrian Kurdish fighters. It is this group that ousted the IS from Baghouz last week, sealing the victory against Baghdadi's Caliphate.

The beginning of the end of the IS was in Kobane, a small Syrian town on the Turkish border that was overrun by the IS and later recaptured by the Kurdish militia, the People's Protection Units (YPG). The battle for Kobane threw the Syrian Kurds, who were a non-entity in the civil war till then, into the centre of West Asia's most complex war. Though the U.S. started bombing IS positions months earlier, it saw the first major result in Kobane, after finding the Syrian Kurds as an ally on the

battlefield, in January 2015. But this opened up new geopolitical complications. The YPG is the armed wing of the left-wing Democratic Union Party (YPD), which is now in control of the Syrian Kurdish region. Both the YPD and the YPG have strong ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) on the Turkish side, which has been designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey and the U.S. The rapid rise of the Syrian Kurds and their military alliance with the U.S. have upset Turkey, which saw a stronger Syrian Kurdistan (also known as Rojava), as a threat that could strengthen the PKK further. This drove a wedge between Turkey and the U.S., both NATO members.

Tip of the spear

To overcome this contradiction, the U.S. founded a new coalition, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which was led by the YPG and included Arab and other ethnic militias. The U.S. argument was that it was not directly helping the YPG but was supporting the SDF in the fight against the IS. But in effect, the SDF remained the official defence force of the Syrian Kurdistan; it is this force that has been the tip of the spear that destroyed the IS Caliphate.

After Kobane, the IS experienced a series of defeats on the Turkish border region. It lost Tal Abyad, Manbij, and then further east in Raqqa, the de facto capital. There was also Der Ezzour, one of the towns captured earlier by the jihadists and where it had been well-entrenched. In all these battles, the SDF did the ground fighting, clearing block after block and

street after street of IS militants. It did the same in Baghouz, bringing the Caliphate to an end.

Despite the historical role the Kurds have played in destroying the Caliphate, they face risks of further aggression than recognition. Turkey is alarmed by the SDF's victories. It has already carried out two attacks inside Syria, first to capture an IS stronghold on the border (which in a way stopped the Kurds from capturing that territory) and then drive Kurdish rebels away from Afrin, a border town. Turkey wants to create a buffer between its border and the Syrian Kurdistan. It has also threatened to attack the Syrian Kurdish militias, calling them a "terrorist army". Iran, which backs both the Iraqi and the Syrian governments, is wary of the Kurds as it has its own Kurdish problem. Recently, Turkey and Iran have announced a joint military campaign against the PKK.

The Syrian government has repeatedly vowed that it will retake every inch of territory lost during the civil war, which includes the Syrian Kurdistan where the PYD, the Kurdish party, is now in charge. This means the Kurds are surrounded by enemies. The U.S. is their only ally. But President Donald Trump has already announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria. Now that the Caliphate is destroyed, the U.S. has no strategic reason to continue troops in Syria. But if it pulls out troops without securing a deal for the Kurds, a tragic fate could be awaiting the heroes who brought down the IS Caliphate.

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A blow against Article 370

Presidential orders and the circumstances in which they were made have eroded J&K's special status.



MUSTAFA HAJI & KEVIN JAMES

On March 1, 2019, the 77th and 103rd constitutional amendments were extended to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by a presidential order, with the concurrence of the J&K Governor. These relate to reservations in promotions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the State services and special provisions for the advancement of economically weaker sections, respectively. However, on March 18, this was challenged before the J&K High Court.

Background and status quo

The constitutional relationship between J&K and the Indian Union has been the subject of numerous discussions in recent times. This has rekindled the long-standing debate on the continued relevance of Article 370. As in Article 370, the provisions of the Indian Constitution do not automatically apply to J&K. To extend constitutional provisions and amendments to the State, a presidential order to that effect has to be passed. This order requires the concurrence of the State government, where the

subject matter does not relate to the subjects specified in the Instrument of Accession (defence, external affairs, and communications). For other cases, only consultation is required.

Accordingly, a 1954 presidential order extended various provisions of the Indian Constitution to J&K. This order was made with the concurrence of the State government and also ratified by the State Constituent Assembly. After the J&K Constitution came into effect in 1957, the State Constituent Assembly was dissolved. Since then, more than 40 such orders have been made, through which most constitutional provisions have been extended to the State. The sheer number of such orders, as well as the circumstances under which they were made, have considerably eroded J&K's special status under Article 370.

A slow death

From the 1950s there has been a gradual dilution of the procedural norms followed by these presidential orders. In passing the 1954 order, procedural propriety was followed in the fullest possible sense as the requisite concurrence was obtained not only from an elected State government but also the State Constituent Assembly. The presidential orders made after the dissolution of the State Constituent Assembly – except a 1986 or-



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der extending Article 249, and the present 2019 order – can be seen as the first level of dilution. This is so because for all these orders, while the concurrence of an elected State government was obtained, the State Constituent Assembly did not exist and, therefore, could not give its ratification. Although the Supreme Court upheld this practice in the Sampat Prakash case (1968), it has been criticised as being beyond the scope of Article 370.

The 1986 order represents a second level of dilution. This is because it was made when J&K was under Governor's rule as per Section 92 of the J&K Constitution. In the absence of an elected council of ministers, the Governor could not have validly given the requisite concurrence to the presidential order. Even if the Governor acting without a popularly elected government can be considered as a "state government" for the purposes of concurrence, the Governor must at least have had some

nexus with the State and some independence from the Centre. However, this is not the case in practice, since the Governor is not only an unelected nominee of the Central Government but also holds office during the latter's pleasure. Not surprisingly, the 1986 order was challenged in the J&K High Court; it is still pending.

If the 1986 order was problematic, the third level of dilution brought about by the 2019 order is almost the final blow. In December 2018, the President assumed all the functions of the State government and the Governor through a proclamation under Article 356. In an order passed on the same day, the President directed that all powers assumed by him would be exercisable by the Governor as well, "subject to the superintendence, direction, and control of the President".

This is the main point of distinction between the 1986 and 2019 orders. During Governor's rule, as was the case in 1986, the Governor is at least on paper expected to act independently. However, in the present case involving President's rule, the Governor is reduced to a mere delegate of the Centre and is expected to act as per the aid and advice of the Central Government. A presidential order made through obtaining such a Governor's concurrence is tantamount to the Centre talking into a mirror and

makes a mockery of Article 370.

Against federalism

The manner in which the 2019 order was made also goes against the spirit of federalism, which is a salient constitutional principle. President's rule is an exception to the general constitutional scheme that envisages representative government at the State level to accommodate regional aspirations. Extending constitutional provisions to the State during this exceptional state of affairs is suspicious. If the Centre had legitimate intentions, it should have waited until the formation of an elected government in J&K. In the absence of popular will backing it, the 2019 order clearly falls foul of the principles of constitutional and political morality.

Commenting on the 1986 order, the Sarkaria Commission had observed that "every action which is legally permissible may not be necessarily prudent or proper from the political stand-point". Not only is the recent presidential order against federalism generally and the spirit of Article 370 in particular but it also violates the letter of the Constitution.

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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.

Mission announcement

For an hour or so last morning, we were kept in suspense and fright. And then came the announcement – of India having successfully test-fired an anti-satellite missile, thus joining an exclusive band of nations with such capability. Technology-driven space wars are a recipe for the annihilation of the human race. While painting the picture of a 'Shining India', the government should not forget 'Suffering India'. The country, that has become a space power, cannot skirt the question of whether there is enough food for all. One also wonders the credit for the milestone could have been shared live with those who conceptualised and started the mission.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

■ One wonders whether the announcement on national media, of India's newly acquired capability to take down enemy satellites, is a violation of the electoral

code of conduct now in place. The capability that India has acquired is a great achievement by our defence and space scientists and is more a device to be used when we are at war. It could have been announced in the form of a departmental press release. Being the head of government, the least the Prime Minister can do is to follow the code of conduct and set an example for others to emulate him.

S. KAMAT,
Alto St. Cruz, Goa

Promises and promises

If wishes were horses and promises magic wands, poverty would have been eradicated a long time ago. It is election time and promises from politicians and parties will come thick and fast. Congress president Rahul Gandhi's minimum income guarantee offer is on the same lines as that of the Prime Minister's. One fails to understand where and how the government or the Congress, which has now come up with this offer, will get this money from. The

state will use taxpayers' money to feed the poor. The politics of opportunism to gain access to the corridors of power is deep-rooted in our political landscape. Happily, in the last 70-plus years of electoral politics if there is one thing our people have learnt it is not to take politicians at face value – there is a wide chasm between what they say and what they do.

PADMINI RAGHAVENDRA,
Secunderabad

Ponzi cases

Though the Supreme Court has transferred the multi-crore ponzi scams to the CBI, it is unfortunate that not much headway has been made in bringing the accused to book (Page 1, "Very, very serious matters in CBI report on Saradha case: SC", March 27). Can't the CBI explore other options such as tracing the routing of funds in order to make out a solid case? Instead of sticking to conventional methods of a probe, some out-of-the-box thinking is required by the CBI to get at the truth if it

finds itself in a situation where it is facing a hostile State. Meanwhile, hapless depositors wait with bated breath for the case to reach its logical conclusion and get back their hard-earned money. The matter is even more complicated with the involvement of politicians.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

Ukraine's place

Unlike India or China, Ukraine is not too small a country not to be either pro-Russian or pro-western, as suggested in the Editorial ("A fight for Kiev", March 20). I was a student at Moscow University in the early 1990s when that country voted in a referendum to secede from Soviet Russia. And one of the very first students there, from South Korea, told me then that the only way for Ukraine to succeed was follow his country's model and work six days a week. I grew up in Siberia and could see how the Kremlin was supporting its satellites as the

shops there were selling rice vodka from Vietnam, cigarettes from North Korea, and sugar from Cuba. It was the same with the U.K. when I visited England in 1990 – fruits from Israel and clothes from West Berlin. But I saw no Ukrainian goods while re-visiting London in 2013. That may mean that there has never been a real fight for Kiev by the West as it has a lot on its plate now, stopping it from supporting our former East European satellites and the Baltic states in the EU and NATO. Who will win there we will learn pretty soon, but more important is who will be the higher bidder in Ukraine: Washington or Moscow.

MERGEN MONGUSH,
Moscow

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The report, "Congress's Naik-Nimbalkar the latest to switch to BJP" (some editions, March 26, 2019), erroneously referred to Ms. Heena Gavit, an MP from Nandurbar, as the daughter of Mr. Rajendra Gavit. She is the daughter of Mr. Vijayakumar Gavit.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

What we need is a commons manifesto

How India handles land use change will decide whether it can improve lives without warming the world

NITYANAND JAYARAMAN,
AMITAV GHOSH & T.M. KRISHNA

Another election is upon us, and we are preoccupied with some matters that are grave and many that are not. But noticeable by its absence in any of the manifestos and declarations by political parties is a debate about the future of human civilisation.

In October 2018, UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that without radical course correction, the world will exhaust its carbon budget to keep global temperature increase below 1.5°C by 2030, just two general elections away. Any increase above that will trigger runaway changes to global climate that could leave large portions of the planet uninhabitable.

That is not all. In March, UN's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services warned that human societies are using up nature faster than it can renew itself and compromising its ability to sustain life on the planet.

A myopic preoccupation

Scientists reassure us, though, that it is still not too late to avert the worst-case scenarios of ecosystem collapse and a climate-run riot. But for that, the world would need to reframe its engagement with climate change and abandon its myopic preoccupation with greenhouse gas emissions and carbon budgets.

India's obsession with 100 GW solar electricity targets may fetch high ratings from the international green energy cheerleaders. But that alone will do nothing to fortify ordinary Indians from the impending disasters. Real resilience will result only from improving the health of the lands they live in and depend on.

Around the world, governments, multinational charities and technology companies are peddling a simplistic story of false solutions — that crisis can be averted by changing the fuel that powers our economy. By themselves, renewable energy systems will not make an inherently unsustainable economy sustainable or correct an unjust social system. They may even make it worse.

Last December, during the climate summit in Katowice, Poland, the Environment Minister declared that India was on track to meet its climate goals ahead of the deadline. The



"Paved surfaces disrupt water flows, reduce groundwater recharge and obliterate biodiversity." Schoolchildren wade through a waterlogged street in Mumbai in 2017. — AP

same government is also changing laws to dilute environmental protection, facilitate corporate land grabs, disempower local communities and criminalise any dissent against its grand schemes.

This month, the Union government proposed amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927, that will make the draconian Act even harsher. According to Campaign for Survival and Dignity, "These amendments would give forest officials the power to shoot people without any liability; allow forest officials... to relocate people against their will; to hand over forests to private companies for afforestation, and to grab other forests in the name of 'carbon sequestration'." These amendments are a targeted attack on forest dwellers; if passed, they will criminalise the cultures that hold the key to rebuilding our broken relationship with nature.

In February, the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, which regulates "development" along India's 7,500-km shoreline, was diluted to allow denser construction closer to the sea. The notification cites tourism jobs to justify the construction of temporary facilities within 10 m of the waterline. Mega infrastructure, such as ports and roads, will be permitted anywhere — inside the sea, over dunes, through mangroves and tidal marshes — if they are declared to be "strategic" projects. These are hare-brained policies. Even the government acknowledges that sea levels can rise by 3.5 to 34.6 inches by

2100 and inundate India's coastline. How India handles land use change, not climate change, will decide whether it can improve the lot of millions without warming the world.

Grassroots campaigns

Across the country, people are rising up to protest against certain kinds of 'development' — for example, the Mumbai coastal expressway, and the proposed ports in Ennore and Kanyakumari. Farmers are mobilising against the bullet train, and indigenous people are fighting against the opening up of forests for mines and dams. Although these fights may have positive consequences for the climate, they have never been explicitly about reducing the kinds of greenhouse gas emissions associated with 'development'. Rather, they are about how we relate to the lands that sustain us and who gets to define 'development'.

Even today, agrarian and indigenous cultures acknowledge the importance of open, unbuilt spaces. The medieval Tamil word 'Poromboke' refers to communally held commons such as water bodies, grazing lands and community forests. Unlike the free-for-all landscapes referred to in predicting a tragedy of the commons, Poromboke lands are carefully managed to yield value to the community, and subject to strict regulation. Poromboke lands cannot be bought or sold. Barring a few exceptions, they cannot be paved over nor covered by a roof.

Far from advocating for pristine nature or a hands-off approach, open earth economies emphasise management, transformation and value extraction through activities that do not kill the proverbial goose that lays golden eggs. The opposing and dominant world view of the 'developmentalists' is predicated on the value of built infrastructure, and requires the constant colonisation of open land.

Paved surfaces, the hallmark of built-earth economies, disrupt water flows, reduce groundwater recharge and obliterate biodiversity. Such economies impoverish local communities and increase their vulnerability to natural shocks. In places like Chennai, which witnessed disastrous flooding in 2015, paved surfaces increased from 47 sq km in 1980 to 402 sq km in 2010, according to a study by the Chennai-based research group Care Earth. Meanwhile, wetlands dipped from 187 sq km to 71 sq km during the same period.

Urban flooding, though, is not only a third world phenomenon. Hurricane Sandy and the New York floods of 2015, the European floods of 2016, the 2017 floods in Mumbai and Houston, the 2018 floods in Japan, and the ongoing flooding of the Missouri in the U.S. all expose the vulnerabilities of urban areas where climate change meets mindless land use change. In all these instances, land had been paved over, unmindful of the need for water to flow and stay.

For all the rivalry between the political parties contesting the elections, there is a remarkable homogeneity of thought on matters relating to ecology and economy, and lack of thinking about India's future. What is desperately needed at this moment is a manifesto for the protection of the commons and open lands, and for the re-creation of economies that derive value out of healing wounded landscapes and covering open lands with diverse vegetation, water and life. For this, we need to defer to the Constitution and ensure that those who are challenging 'development' projects like the bullet train can speak without fear.

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A deal at last?

It will not be easy to find a please-all deal on the Naga conflict



PATRICIA MUKHIM

The Naga Framework Agreement is back in the news after the Centre's main interlocutor in Nagaland, R.N. Ravi, visited the State to tie up loose ends before a final deal is sealed.

A young Naga leader with political acumen recently told me that if anyone could solve the Naga crisis, it is the National Democratic Alliance government because it is perceived as a strong entity, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a no-nonsense leader. This is true to a large extent. A vacillating leadership in Delhi will have neither the bandwidth nor the determination to go ahead with a considered decision, irrespective of the consequences. And consequences there will be, whichever way we look at the Naga conundrum.

Spread across States

Nagas don't live in a single territory. They are spread across Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Nagas of Manipur, particularly those in Ukhrul, home of the Tangkhuls, are the most vocal because that is also the home of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isac-Muivah) general secretary, Th. Muivah. A large chunk of the youth who have joined the outfit are also from there. They dream of 'Nagalim', a unique homeland where all Nagas can live with dignity. This is of course a utopian idea considering that there really is no basis for that unity. Nagas have always been driven by clan and tribe loyalty. These divisive tendencies cannot be brushed under the carpet to be resolved after the deal with the government is signed. The utopian idea is one that a pragmatic, modern, progressive Naga will not entertain. This mindset is held by those of the former generation who experienced the Naga struggle for sovereignty and lost their family members to the cause.

Today, the struggle, or what's left of it, has morphed into something that leaves even Nagas resentful. There is extortion galore by the so-called Naga national workers, a euphemism for the NSCN(IM) cadres and the other subgroups that have emerged over the years. There is not a single item entering Nagaland that is not taxed by these armed groups. The idea of a Nagaland that would be

free from this perverse and arbitrary taxation is what young Naga entrepreneurs are expecting. Is that a possibility?

It is interesting that the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 was the first collective expression by different tribes inhabiting Nagaland and the hills of Manipur to come under a common umbrella. The Naga men who were drafted by British rulers in the Labour Corps as soldiers, porters, builders, etc. felt the need for a united front after they returned from battle in the First World War. The word Naga itself is shrouded in multiple interpretations. Consciousness about borders and boundaries came with the arrival of the British who practised statecraft in the way they knew best — through a policy of divide and rule. Unable to win over the tribes who raided them time and again, the British designed an instrument called the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (1873) to keep them at bay. The tribes were not allowed to venture beyond this line. That was their

first idea of borders. The labourers and porters enlisted by the British during World War 1 and sent to France felt lost and alone and longed for a fraternal bond. They agreed that after returning to their homeland, they would work towards solidarity among the different Naga tribes. The British were convinced that the Nagas needed a common identity, especially after Christianity came to the Naga hills. In the Naga Club's centenary year, ironically, differences have emerged between its members and the Naga Students' Federation.

Complex politics

The politics of Nagaland is complex. Tribal loyalties have not vanished because of a unifying religion, Christianity. Corruption is widespread, as is evident in the absence of motorable roads. There is not much visible by way of 'development' either.

Against the backdrop of this complexity, where identities are contested, and ghosts of unresolved tribal differences lurk, the Naga Framework Agreement was signed in August 2015. It was a bold and ambitious step for the then one-year-old Modi government. Since 2015, Mr. Ravi has held consultations with every known Naga political group, first to try and understand their genuine concerns and later to seek their wise counsel on the best possible solution to the long-standing conflict. We wait and watch for the final outcome now that Mr. Ravi says substantive issues have all been ironed out.

Patricia Mukhim is Editor, The Shillong Times

SINGLE FILE

Temple and state

Calls to 'liberate' temples from the state goes against the social justice ethos of the Dravidian movement and the law

MANURAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM



The constitutional wall that separates the state from religion has continuously shifted. Recently, in the landmark cases of *Shayara Bano* (2017) and *Indian Young Lawyers Association* (2018), which dealt with triple talaq and women's entry into the Sabarimala temple, respectively, the Supreme Court looked at the balance between religious freedoms and fundamental rights. Through these cases, and others preceding them, the Supreme Court established itself as an arbiter of prickly religious issues.

Nevertheless, in recent times, social conservatives have not stopped demanding that the state stay away from any interference with the 'temple'. Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy filed a writ petition before the Supreme Court to quash all "State HR & CE [Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments] temple laws as unconstitutional" and BJP National Secretary H. Raja has endorsed the liberation of temples from "the clutches of government."

The issue portends serious social repercussions in Tamil Nadu. State control and administration of Hindu temples is seen as an integral reform of the century-old Dravidian movement. It was under the Justice Party's rule that the first set of temple reforms took shape. In 1925, the government constituted the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board, which was vested with the power to control and supervise the administration of temples and appoint officials for proper administration. Around the same time, Periyar's Vaikom movement sparked a revolution on temple entry and worship by the backward castes.

In 1970, the M. Karunanidhi-led Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government amended the HR&CE Act to allow appointments of priests. For the first time, this challenged hereditary priesthood. Though this law ran into legal hurdles, it provided the belief to men from all castes that they too could enter the sanctum sanctorum. Ultimately, the 2006 law passed by a subsequent DMK government completed the reform process. The first backward caste priest was appointed by the Tamil Nadu government in July 2018.

The support among Hindu conservatives towards "liberating temples" goes against the social justice ethos of the Dravidian movement as well as the law. In *N. Adithayan* (2002), the Supreme Court held that "the vision of the founding fathers of Constitution to liberate the society from blind and ritualistic adherence to mere traditional superstitious beliefs sans reason or rational basis has found expression in the form of Article 17." The HR&CE Board only serves to reiterate the constitutional guarantee of equality before law of all citizens. Therefore, it is now up to the Court to reiterate the core constitutional principles and ensure that any right to "propagate and disseminate religious beliefs" can only be subject to "public order, health and morality and other provisions of Part-III", as held in *N. Adithayan*.

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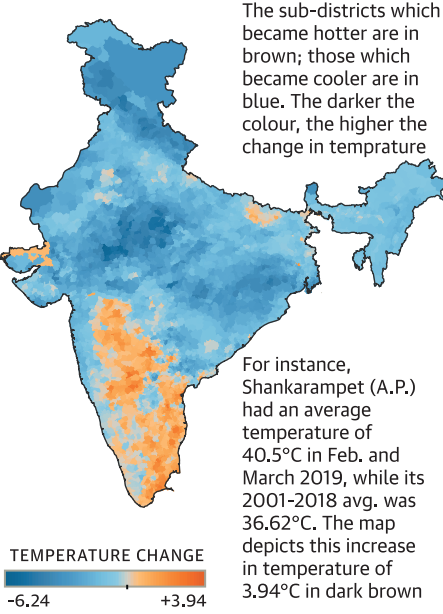
DATA POINT

Hot down south

Most places in south India experienced a hotter February and March this year compared to the average temperature for those two months between 2001 and 2018. In contrast, most places in other States experienced a relatively cooler climate. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Blowing hot and cold

The map shows the difference between the avg. daytime temperature in February and March in 2019 and the avg. temperature in those months between 2001 and 2018 in all the sub-districts



The sub-districts which became hotter are in brown; those which became cooler are in blue. The darker the colour, the higher the change in temperature

For instance, Shankarampet (A.P.) had an average temperature of 40.5°C in Feb, and March 2019, while its 2001-2018 avg. was 36.62°C. The map depicts this increase in temperature of 3.94°C in dark brown

State-wise analysis

The table shows the % of sub-districts in each State that have become hotter or cooler during the day-time in February and March 2019 compared to the 2001-2018 average. For instance, 60% of the sub-districts in Kerala experienced a temperature increase of 0.1°C to 2°C, while 40% of them saw a temperature decrease of 0.1°C to 2°C in the daytime. Tamil Nadu experienced the biggest rise in temperature: 11% of its sub-districts saw an increase of more than 2°C, while 77% saw an increase of 0.1-2°C.

Source: MODIS (LDAAC-NASA). Processed by Raj Bhagat Palanichamy using Google Earth Engine

State	% cooler			% hotter	
	> 4°C	2.1 to 4°C	0.1 to 2°C	0.1 to 2°C	>2°C
A.P.	0	11	51	36	3
Arunachal	0	6	94	0	0
Assam	0	2	97	1	0
Bihar	0	5	78	17	0
Chhattisgarh	3	69	27	1	0
Delhi	0	44	56	0	0
Goa	0	0	100	0	0
Gujarat	1	51	46	2	0
Haryana	0	34	66	0	0
Himachal	28	71	1	0	0
J&K	14	64	21	0	0
Jharkhand	5	45	48	2	0
Karnataka	0	0	29	66	5
Kerala	0	0	40	60	0
M.P.	17	55	27	0	0
Maharashtra	0	6	61	32	0
Manipur	0	0	100	0	0
Meghalaya	0	0	100	0	0
Mizoram	0	0	100	0	0
Nagaland	0	0	100	0	0
Odisha	1	50	49	0	0
Punjab	0	16	84	0	0
Rajasthan	13	54	31	1	0
Sikkim	0	25	75	0	0
Tamil Nadu	0	0	12	77	11
Tripura	0	0	100	0	0
Uttarakhand	4	74	23	0	0
U.P.	3	23	73	1	0
W.B.	0	23	72	4	0

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 28, 1969

Shipment of foodgrain rushed to East Pakistan

Martial Law administrators to-day [March 27, Karachi] rushed huge shipments of food to stave off starvation in troubled East Pakistan where riots, murder and arson provided the major ammunition to topple the regime of President Ayub Khan. Army Chief Gen. Yahya Khan, who was appointed Martial Law Administrator when Mr. Ayub resigned on Tuesday night [March 25], ordered 3.110,000 tons of foodgrains to be sent to East Pakistan, Radio Pakistan announced. Martial Law authorities also sanctioned the release of 194,000 tons of sugar in East Pakistan. Radio Pakistan reported to-day [March 27] that the East Pakistan Martial Law Administrator had asked the people to contribute 634,17,000 mounds of foodgrains, to meet the food crisis in the State. Pakistan, on the third day under Martial Law was showing signs of all round activity with markets, usually sensitive, registering buoyancy.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 28, 1919.

Sir George Lloyd's speech.

Replying to the address of the Ahmedabad Municipality on Wednesday, [March 26] H.E. the Governor of Bombay [Sir George Lloyd] said he was very keenly desirous of seeing the initiation of early steps of self-government in India and asked them to remember that there was no hope for a wider form of self-government in India unless those responsible showed administrative capacity in handling their local affairs. His Excellency said it was absolutely necessary to form standing committees to deal with various branches of work, but ample powers should be devolved upon them for this prompt dealing of the questions entrusted, leaving the general body to decide the broad issues of general policy and upon broad outlines of reform.

POLL CALL

NOTA (None Of The Above)

NOTA is an option given to voters to exercise a negative vote by not choosing any of the candidates who are contesting in a local, Assembly or general election. It came into force in 2013. The NOTA symbol is of a ballot paper with a black cross mark. While the Supreme Court envisaged it as a way of cleansing the political system, NOTA's scope remains limited at the State and national level. Even if the maximum number of votes cast in a constituency is for NOTA, the candidate winning the next highest number of votes is declared the winner. At the local level, there have been attempts to expand its scope — last year, the Maharashtra and Haryana State Election Commissions announced that if NOTA garners the most number of votes, then none of the candidates would be declared the winner and a fresh election would be held instead. In the 2014 general election, 1.08% of the electorate chose the NOTA option.

MORE ON THE WEB

Meet Pakistan's Tyrion Lannister

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