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THIS WORD MEANS

CCR5-DELTA 32

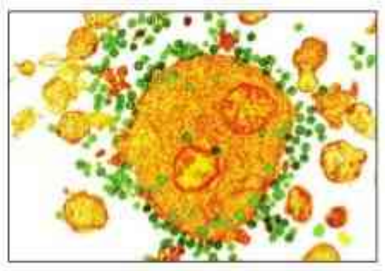
The rare mutation that could help stop HIV

THE REMARKABLE research breakthrough that appears to have cured the anonymous "London Patient" of HIV is based on a stem cell transplant involving CCR5-delta 32 homozygous donor cells. This is the same treatment that cured Timothy Ray Brown, known as the "Berlin Patient" when he received two stem cell transplants in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, Brown's doctor, Berlin-based haematologist Gero Hütter, reported success (*Long-Term Control of HIV by CCR5 Delta32/Delta32 Stem-Cell Transplantation*: NEJM), and a decade on, the American recipient of his treatment remains HIV-free.

With the case of the London Patient, reported in *Nature* Tuesday, scientists have successfully duplicated Dr Hütter's CCR5-delta 32 experiment from 13 years ago, with less pain than Brown, the pioneering survivor of HIV, had to endure.

Dr Hütter put Brown through an allogeneic stem cell transplant, which involved replacing his immune system with donor hematopoietic stem cells (usually found in bone marrow) so that his immune system could be regenerated, with no malignant cells. Importantly however, the donor he chose carried what is called a CCR5-delta 32 mutation.

On the surface membrane of immune cells is a protein called CCR5, which is, as a post on the *Nature* Education blog *Scitable* puts it, "like a door that allows HIV entrance into the cell". However, about 1% of people of Northern European descent, mainly Swedes, are born with a mutation known as CCR5-delta 32, which "locks 'the door' which prevents HIV from entering into the cell".



A coloured transmission electron micrograph of the HIV virus *(green)* attaching to a white blood cell *(orange)*. *NIBSC/Science Source via The NYT*

Simply put, HIV uses the CCR5 protein to enter immune cells, but it can't latch on to cells that carry the delta 32 mutation. IciStem, a consortium of European scientists studying stem cell transplants to treat HIV infection, has a database of 22,000 donors with this HIV-resistant mutation.

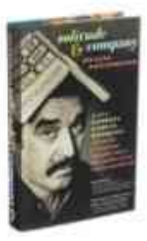
IciStem scientists are tracking 38 HIV-infected people who have received bone-marrow transplants, including six from donors without the delta 32 mutation. The London Patient is 36 on that list; Number 19, the so-called "Düsseldorf Patient", has been off anti-HIV drugs for four months now, *The New York Times* reported on Tuesday.

Incidentally, CCR5 is the protein that Chinese scientist He Jiankui claimed to have modified with CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing in at least two children in an attempt to make them resistant to HIV.

TIP FOR READING LIST

MARQUEZ, BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM

SILVANA PATERNOSTRO has subtitled her book *Solitude & Company* as "the life of Gabriel García Márquez, told with help from his friends, family, fans, arguers, fellow pranksters, drunks, and a few respectable souls". Her project began in 2000, when Tina Brown, who had founded the (now dead) monthly *Talk* the previous year, commissioned an essay based on conversations with people in Colombia who had known 'Gabo' in the years prior to his becoming arguably the 20th century's most influential writer. This capsule of oral history, which Paternostro titled *Solitude & Company* after the name of a film production company that Márquez had at one point considered setting up, never saw light of day, but in 2003 she published a different version with the same title in *The Paris Review* and a translation in the Mexican magazine *Nexos*. In 2010, Paternostro listened to her tapes again, and after conducting a fresh set of interviews subsequently, published *Solitude & Company* in Spanish in 2014. The English translation was released last month.



Paternostro has divided her book into BC, i.e., Before *Cien Años de Soledad*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish, and AC, or After *Cien Años de Soledad*. In the first part, Gabo's siblings and others who knew him before he became a global icon, speak; the celebrated writer Márquez appears in the second. Oral history, the author says, "allows those who were very close to him... tell us how they welcomed him, helped him, and watched him create himself; it permits them to make us feel how much they love him or how much he annoyed them; just them, without other narrators or descriptions as intermediaries". In an interview to *The New York Times*, Paternostro said: "There are people that have spent most of their lives as Gabo experts. I don't think I'm a Gabo expert. I had a curiosity in understanding the man before and the man he became later. But along the way, I became the repository of all these incredible stories, and I felt it was almost my obligation to share them."

There is another reason for even people who aren't Márquez fans to read the book. In the English translation, the author told *The NYT*, "I included things that would make readers understand Colombia. It turned into a book that explains our music, the violence, the idiosyncrasies of the region... Now that Colombia has become a travel destination, the book, while it's not a travel guide, is a companion to travel to Colombia with."

SIMPLY PUT

What the US trade rap means

US set to remove India from select trade list. What is this list, what led to the move, how can it impact India?

PRABHA RAGHAVAN & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

THE US has announced that it intends to "terminate" India's designation as a beneficiary of its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). This could impact India's competitiveness in items groups such as raw materials in the organic chemicals sector and intermediary goods in the US market, alongside items such as iron or steel, furniture, aluminum and electrical machinery.

India's exports of organic chemicals to the US stood at $1.4 billion in 2017, US Census data showed. According to the Commerce Ministry, about 1,900-odd products exported to US with GSP may be impacted.

GSP programme

The GSP, the largest and oldest US trade preference programme, allows duty-free entry for over 3,000 products from designated beneficiary countries. It was instituted on January 1, 1976, and authorised under the US Trade Act of 1974. India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime and accounted for over a quarter of the goods that got duty-free access into the US in 2017.

Exports to the US from India under GSP — at $5.58 billion — were over 12% of India's total goods exports of $45.2 billion to the US that year. The US goods trade deficit with India was $22.9 billion in 2017.

Curbing of benefits

"At the direction of President Donald J Trump, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer announced today that the United States intends to terminate India's and Turkey's designations as beneficiary developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program because they no longer comply with the statutory eligibility criteria," stated the office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) in a media release. The move came two days after Trump's reference to India as a "very-high tariff nation" and his demand for a "reciprocal tax" on goods from India is in keeping with Washington's concerted attacks on India's trade stance. In his address to the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington DC Saturday, Trump went back to his often-cited example of Harley-Davidson motorcycles to substantiate his point about India, which came at a time when the US and China have managed a temporary truce over tariffs.

At President Donald Trump's direction, Robert Lighthizer, his top trade adviser, announced Monday that the US would remove India (and Turkey) from the list of beneficiary countries under the GSP programme. *Al Drago/The New York Times/Archive*

EXPORTS TO THE US UNDER GSP ($ BILLION)

	2015	2016	2017
Total GSP imports into US	17.54	18.66	20.77
Exports from India under GSP	4.58	4.68	5.58

(Source: US Dept of Commerce)

India's tariff structure

India's tariffs used to be high until about the late 1990s, with the peak customs duty — the highest of the normal rates — on non-agriculture products steadily coming down from 150% in 1991-92 to 40% in 1997-98 and subsequently, to 20% in 2004-05 and 10 per cent in 2007-08. According to WTO data, India's average applied tariff is around 13% and it plans to move toward the ASEAN tariff rates progressively (approximately 5% on average). There has, however, been a move to increase duties on a number of items by the government over the last five years.

Eligibility review

The US had launched an eligibility review of India's compliance with the GSP market access criterion in April 2018, following concerns raised by its medical devices and dairy industry. The Indian government's attempts to arrive at a "balanced" package that would address the US's concerns and protect the Indian public's welfare were not successful.

In 2017, India had capped prices of cardiac stents and knee implants, slashing these over 70% and 60% respectively. The move impacted US giants like Abbott, Medtronic, Boston Scientific and Stryker.

India had also said its requirement that the source animal of dairy products had never been fed animal-derived blood meals was "non-negotiable" from a cultural standpoint and it could not dilute this requirement in its certification procedure.

"India has implemented a wide array of trade barriers that create serious negative effects on United States commerce. Despite intensive engagement, India has failed to take the necessary steps to meet the GSP criterion," said the USTR statement.

Possible impact

India's Department of Commerce feels the impact is "minimal", given that Indian exporters were only receiving duty-free benefits of $190 million on the country's overall GSP-related trade of $5.6 billion.

Some experts feel the move will not have a major impact on India also because it has been diversifying its market in the Latin American and the African region and its trade with countries of the Global South has also been expanding at a "very competitive pace".

At the same time, the move could hit Indian exporters if it gives an edge to competitors in its top export categories to the US.

"The amount of price advantage India has versus competitor countries and what happens to their GSP privileges will determine the extent to which India's exports will be impacted," said Dr Jaimini Bhagwati, former ambassador to the UK who also worked in the World Bank.

What next

These changes announced may not take effect until at least 60 days after the notifications are sent to the US Congress and the governments of India, and will be enacted by a Presidential Proclamation.

India, in June 2018, had intended to impose higher tariffs on 29 goods imported from the US in retaliation to the country's decision to impose hefty tariffs on imported steel and aluminum products. The move, which could potentially impact products like walnuts, almonds and chickpeas, has been deferred several times.

Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhwan indicated that the government would continue to engage in "internal" discussions on these issues and that the "door for discussions" with the US was "always open".

INDIAN EXPORTS UNDER GSP

PRODUCT	VALUE (US$)
Organic chemicals	1402.6 mn
Vehicle parts, accessories	1040.5mn
Furniture, household goods	591.5mn
Electrical apparatus	461.1 mn
Stone, sand, cement	410.5 mn
Bauxite and aluminum	359.1 mn
Iron or steel mill products	245.9 mn
Plastic materials	188.7
Wood, glass, plastic	60.1 mn
Synthetic rubber	34.3 mn
Nuclear fuel materials	6.3 mn
TV and video equipment	4.1 mn

Why the Brahmaputra needs long bridges

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, MARCH 5

THE CABINET Committee on Economic Affairs last week approved the construction of a four-lane bridge over the Brahmaputra. It will be the country's longest, and will boost connectivity and commerce in the region.

How the bridge helps

At 19.28 km, it will connect Dhubri in Assam to Phulbari in Meghalaya. It is projected to reduce the travel distance between these two places from 205.3 km to 19.282 km, and travel time from 5 hours to 20 minutes.

"As of now, the only means of going directly from Dhubri to Phulbari is by boat. It takes approximately 3 hours, and while returning it takes 5 hours against the current. This will come down to 25-30 minutes at the most after the bridge comes up," Bikash Sarma, information and public relations officer of Dhubri district, told *The Indian Express*.

A Press Information Bureau (PIB) statement said the alignment will augment the transport network for the Northeast region, by providing the shortest link connecting western Meghalaya, as well as the southern NE states of Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, with the rest of the country.

Brahmaputra again

The current longest road and rail-road bridges of the country are already over the Brahmaputra. The Dhola-Sadiya bridge (road) runs 9.15 km, and the Bogibeel bridge (rail-road) is 4.94 km.

The Brahmaputra, running 670 km in Assam, is extremely wide at some places. "It is the narrowest in Guwahati, say about 1 km, and the widest in Dibrugarh, over 15 km stretching to 20 km," Dulal Chandra Goswami, former head of environment studies at Gauhati University, said. "Assam is bisected by the Brahmaputra and it numerous tributaries. Naturally, people are handicapped when they have no means to cross the river. Bridges will be immensely helpful since distances will be reduced by hundreds of kilometres," Prof Goswami said.

Inaugurating the Bogibeel bridge in 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said three bridges over the Brahmaputra were completed in the last four-and-a-half years and another five were being built.

Construction

The bridge will be built under the North-East Road Network Connectivity Project with loan assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency. The PIB statement said construction would cost Rs 3,548 crore, and the total capital cost would be Rs 4,997.04 crore. Construction is expected to be completed in approximately six years.

In December, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways Mansukh Mandaviya had told Lok Sabha that construction was scheduled to be taken up during 2019-20.

How a change in law has made election candidates more accountable

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

LAST WEEK, the Law Ministry made it mandatory for election candidates to reveal their income-tax returns of the last five years, as well as the details of their offshore assets. This was done by amending Form 26, after the Election Commission of India wrote to the Ministry on February 13.

What is Form 26?

A candidate in an election is required to file an affidavit called Form 26 that furnishes information on her assets, liabilities, educational qualifications, criminal antecedents (convictions and all pending cases) and public dues, if any. The affidavit has to be filed along with the nomination papers and should be sworn before an Oath Commissioner or Magistrate of the First Class or before a Notary Public.

What has changed?

Earlier, a candidate had to only declare the last I-T return (for self, spouse and dependents). Details of foreign assets were not sought. Offshore assets, as per the February 26 notification, means "details of all deposits or investments in foreign banks and any other body or institution abroad and details of all assets and liabilities in foreign countries". It is now mandatory for candidates to reveal their own income-tax returns of the last five years rather than only one, and the details of offshore assets, as well as the same details for their spouse, members of the Hindu Undivided Family (if the candidate is a *karta* or coparcener), and dependents.

Why must candidates file these details?

The objective behind introducing Form 26 was that it would help voters make an informed decision. The affidavit would make them aware of the criminal activities of a candidate, which could help prevent people with questionable backgrounds from being elected to an Assembly or Parliament. With the recent amendment, voters will know the extent to which a serving MP's income grew during his five years in power.

When and how was it introduced?

CEC Sunil Arora *Prem Nath Pandey*

Like most recent electoral reforms in India, Form 26 was introduced on September 3, 2002, following a court order. The genesis of the affidavit can be traced to the 170th Report of the Law Commission, submitted in May 1999, which suggested steps for preventing criminals from entering electoral politics. One of the suggestions was to disclose the criminal antecedents as well as the assets of a candidate before accepting her nomination.

The then government did not act on the recommendation, leading to public interest litigation in Delhi High Court in December 1999. On November 2, 2000, the HC directed the EC to secure information on whether a candidate is accused of any offence(s) punishable by imprisonment, her assets as well as those of her spouse and dependents and any other information the EC considers necessary.

The Union government appealed in the Supreme Court, which not only agreed with the Delhi HC, but went a step ahead and directed the EC, in its order dated May 2, 2002, to ask candidates whether they have been convicted/acquitted/discharged of any criminal offence in the past, or accused in any pending cases six months before the filing of nomination, seek details of assets and liabilities of a candidate, her spouse and dependents, and the educational qualifications of the candidate.

On June 28, 2002, the EC issued an order to implement the verdict. However, in less than two months, the Union government promulgated an Ordinance diluting the EC's order. As per the Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 2002 (subsequently replaced by an Act on December 28, 2002), a candidate was only expected to disclose whether she was accused of any offence punishable with imprisonment for two years or more in a pending case in which charges had been framed by a court, and whether she had been convicted of an offence and sentenced to a year's imprisonment or more. The government subsequently also amended the Election Conduct Rules of 1961 on September 3, 2002, to prescribe Form 26 in which a candidate had to disclose the above information.

The SC declared the amendment *null and void*. The EC then issued a fresh order on March 27, 2003, seeking information on all five points mentioned in the SC order of May 2, 2002.

What happens if a candidate lies in an affidavit?

A candidate is expected to file a complete affidavit. Leaving a few columns blank can render the affidavit "nugatory". It is the responsibility of the Returning Officer (RO) to check whether Form 26 has been completed; the nomination paper can be rejected if the candidate fails to fill it in full.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

YOUTH IS A DREAM, A FORM OF CHEMICAL MADNESS.

— F SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TRUMP'S BARRIER

US move against India's exports is in line with its new trade policy. It should not mean that India closes its own doors

LATE ON MONDAY, the US Trade Representative's Office announced that it plans to terminate India's and Turkey's designations as beneficiary developing countries under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) which allows for zero duty imports of products into that country. It says that the two countries have not been complying with the eligibility criteria. According to the US Trade Representative, the proposal to withdraw duty or tariff benefits on exports valued at $5.6 billion on over 1,700 products from India, including the engineering, textiles, gems and jewellery sectors on the directive of US President Donald Trump is because of India's failure to provide the US with assurances that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to its markets in several sectors. It is an outcome of a review of the programme which was undertaken in April, 2018 following charges by the US Trade Office that India had created a wide array of trade barriers. India's commerce ministry officials have been quick to downplay the impact saying that the GSP benefits, at close to $190 million, were relatively limited.

The latest move by the US is in line with the trade policy that is being pursued by the Trump administration. It features an aggressive enforcement of its trade laws with an eye on boosting the country's economy, which could lead to the creation of more jobs and higher wages to workers there. That aggression is on display in trade talks with countries ranging from China and Japan, to the UK and EU. But it is the timing of the move that will test India's leverage with the Trump administration. For, it comes at a time when the US is reckoned to be involved in de-escalating the conflict between India and Pakistan. In the backdrop, also, are the concerns flagged off on the new e-commerce rules which could impact global retail heavyweights such as Amazon and Walmart. Importantly, it is a growing sign that multilateralism may be dead and that given the disenchantments relating to globalisation and a slowdown in many countries, there will increasingly be pressures to erect barriers to markets in the West.

That should not mean that India should keep its doors closed. It is amply evident that after India opened up in 1991 on the trade front, there have been significant gains thanks to global trade, especially in services, and which fuelled double digit growth in exports during the high growth years between 2004-05 to 2012-13, leading to creation of more jobs too. Bi-lateral negotiations may show the way forward. Meanwhile, it is best to keep the focus on creating the enabling conditions, including infrastructure and cheaper credit, for exports which have been sputtering over the last four years.

WHAT THEY REALLY WANT

Once more, first-time voters are in a position to sway an election. Parties must find imaginative ways to talk to them

THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND is not an exclusively economic concept, but also has a political dimension. About 8.1 crore new voters born between 1997 and 2001 will exercise their franchise in the forthcoming general elections. Citizens of a brave new India, they know only at second hand of pivotal moments in recent political history, like the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the Mandal agitation. Election Commission data suggests that they could be arbiters in as many as 282 Lok Sabha seats in 29 states. On average, 1.49 lakh young people will vote for the first time in each constituency, which is higher than the winning margin in 297 seats in the last general election. In 2014, the BJP had specifically targeted this constituency, which may not always be progressive, but is, above all, aspirational. Candidate Narendra Modi had unofficially kicked off his campaign with a keynote address at Delhi's Shri Ram College of Commerce. At the time, it was presumed that the election would be won by whichever political formation accurately connected with the hopes of the young.

The demographic dividend was a serious factor in 2014, with 15 crore new voters, and in a watershed election, an appeal to jettison the old had a ringing resonance. The coming election presents a relatively more complex picture. The use of social media to reach the young electorate directly was earlier a monopoly of the BJP but in the interim, Opposition parties have also learned to play the game. While schemes of the ruling party have delivered, like increasing access to cooking gas, attractive jobs are more scarce than before and the gap between skills required and imparted grows. Make in India, once the flagship initiative of the government, is heard of infrequently.

How efficiently will the parties in the fray leverage the aspirations of the youth? Their vision would have to be more believable than the stale promises of the past. Above all, young people want better opportunity, which amounts to access to quality education, skilling and secure jobs. Any party which hopes to reap the demographic dividend this time needs to address the youth directly, with credible, measurable initiatives. Interventions could range from ensuring a better safety net against unemployment to more funding for research, but the bottomline is that they have to be deliverable.

SAY IT WITH FERVOUR

Air India's demand that its crew chant 'Jai Hind' is a too-clever ploy to deflect attention from its own failings

FERVOUR", IT IS likely, holds the key. It is not enough, according to Air India — the country's national carrier and well-known drain on national resources — for its crew on flights to merely utter "Jai Hind" after every announcement on board. They must do so "after a slight pause" and with "much fervour". The pause, presumably, is meant to build anticipation for the patriotic zeal to follow.

If there's one thing Air India is good at, it's building anticipation, and so what if it is mostly in vain. Its patrons wait for the day they are guaranteed a modicum of punctuality, a fraction of what the market leaders in the aviation industry provide. Or even suitable notice on flight changes and cancellations. Non-vegetarian passengers anticipate with bated breath that when they are finally in the air and en route, a stale chicken curry can provide some succour once the airline decides not to police people's dietary choices on domestic routes. In fact, to address its critics who demand an explanation for the losses (to the tune of Rs 3,500 crore last year, a little less than the year before) borne by the taxpayer, bids were invited for the strategic disinvestment of the airline over a year ago. The people wait in anticipation for a gullible buyer.

The advisory to Air India staff to feverishly shout 'Jai Hind' is an attempt, too little too late, to distract from the anticipation that is turning into anger. Who, after all, will have the temerity to question the price for an often-late flight, in the face of a nationalist greeting? Fervour, the second cousin of madness, when encountered mid-air, is an effective tool to ensure customer satisfaction. But there are times when even patriotism, genuine or contrived, is no refuge.

When language fails

National security is best served when diverse voices are heard

ABDUL KHALIQ

AS TWO nations stand poised at the edge of a precipice, a section of civil society is engaged in hate-mongering and war hysteria as a recreational sport. In this surreal atmosphere, the young, grieving widow of Squadron leader Ninad Mandavgane, who was killed in the MI 17 helicopter crash in Kashmir, made a poignant appeal for calm between India and Pakistan. "We do not want a war. You do not realise the damage a war inflicts on people. No other Ninad should be lost from either side," Vijeta Mandavgane said.

She lashed out at those calling for war: "I would request the social media warriors to stop doing what they are doing... If you have so much 'josh', then join the force and see how it feels." At her husband's cremation in Nashik, she urged the sloganeering group to stop spreading communal hatred. Even in her inconsolable grief, she was appalled by the negative emotions that her husband's ultimate sacrifice had engendered.

Tragically, in this time of grave national crisis, hers is one of the lone voices of sanity. It is frightening to hear the WAR (wise after retirement) veterans — retired armed forces men and diplomats — spewing venom and cheerleading for strong military action and war if necessary, careless of the consequences. As for the media in general, the most telling statement of militant jingoism was the image of a TV anchor in military-regalia spouting anti-Pakistan wisdom.

It is significant that consequent on the Pulwama horror, the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued an advisory to all TV channels against any content which is likely to incite violence or "contains anything against the maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national attitudes" or that would affect "the integrity of the nation". In line with this policy, show-cause notices were issued to two private TV channels for telecasting footage of a news briefing by the Pakistan army. Considering the low credibility of Pakistan's army briefings, which are not taken seriously in our country and the futility of trying to sanitise social media which first aired the report, the clip was rather benign when compared to the inflammatory rhetoric of mainstream TV anchors that clearly threatened the unity and integrity of the nation.

> With Indian fighter jets crossing the LOC for the first time since 1971 and dropping bombs on a terror camp in Balakot, India has displayed a new muscular assertiveness in dealing with terror attacks emanating from Pakistan soil. Hitherto, India had adopted the dogma of "strategic patience" for fear that aggressive tactics and escalation could spin out of control and result in nuclear war. But now, much to the satisfaction of our defence hawks, the strategy seems to be "offensive defence". Will this doctrine ensure the elimination of terrorism or its reduction? I'm afraid that this policy will make matters infinitely worse for both countries.

Apart from calling for an all-out war against Pakistan, some TV anchors claimed that the stone-pelters in Kashmir were becoming terrorists. Dire warnings were issued to those who differed with the bellicose discourse. The "nation wants to know" TV anchor and government drummer-boy warned dissenters: "You are for or against the nation. You will be marked out if you are against the nation." Unfortunately, in the current fraught atmosphere, it would be blasphemy to suggest that criminal action should be taken against them.

We politicians are the archetypal opportunists, scouting for possibilities to advance our interests even when we confront a national tragedy. Death and destruction at the borders are so much grist in the election calculus. Much has been made of B S Yeddyurappa's smug assertion that the pre-emptive air strikes would help the BJP to win 22 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. But the fact is that while Yeddyurappa was guileless in making those comments, equally cynical and opportunistic was Mamata Banerjee's innuendo that the Pulwama attack was allowed to happen. Sadly, politicians of all hues have been conducting their macabre dance on the dead bodies of our bravehearts.

A vibrant democracy encourages a free flow of ideas, especially in times of crisis. In fact, national security is better served when diverse voices are heard that could inspire improved decisions by the policy-makers. The widespread belief that when faced with a threat to the nation, society must speak in one voice and accept without demur what the government decides, is fraught with danger as it undermines democratic functioning. After all, freedom of speech is the lifeblood of democracy. National security cannot be the excuse for curbing freedom of expression or for distorting or hiding the truth from the public on issues of national import.

As an incorrigible pacifist, I have a deeper concern. According to defence experts, the surgical strike 2.0 has signalled a decisive shift in India's policy towards Pakistan and cross-border terrorism. With Indian fighter jets crossing the LoC for the first time since 1971 and dropping bombs on a terror camp in Balakot, India has displayed a new muscular assertiveness in dealing with terror attacks emanating from Pakistan soil. Hitherto, India had adopted the dogma of "strategic patience" for fear that aggressive tactics and escalation could spin out of control and result in nuclear war. But now, much to the satisfaction of our defence hawks, the strategy seems to be "offensive defence". Will this doctrine ensure the elimination of terrorism or its reduction? I'm afraid that this policy will make matters infinitely worse for both countries. Pakistan has already shown that there will be retaliation. Ultimately, only the number of dead on each side may differ. There can be no winners in such a conflict.

We would do well to remember the American experience in Afghanistan. In response to the September 11 attacks, the US with its NATO allies invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and drove the Taliban from power. Since then, the Taliban has launched numerous attacks on the government and US forces. After 17 years of war which has cost the US more than $1 trillion and the death of 2,400 soldiers, the US has backed down and is now holding negotiations with the Taliban in the desperate hope of bringing peace to that benighted land.

Margaret Atwood had perceptively observed that "war happens when language fails." The only hope for peace in the subcontinent is for India and Pakistan to resume dialogue.

The writer, a former civil servant, is secretary general of the Lok Janshakti Party

ACKNOWLEDGING THE CRIME

Apology for Jallianwala Bagh massacre could offer a chance for Britain to atone

AMEEN JAUHAR

IN 1946, WHILE finding himself in an isolated position on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (adjudicating the war crimes committed by the Japanese in World War II), Justice Radhabinod Pal delivered a well-researched and soundly-reasoned dissenting verdict. To him, despite the depravity of the actions of the Japanese, there was no legal basis for charging the accused for crimes of aggression. His deeper contention, however — as is evident from a reading of his voluminous yet eloquent dissenting opinion — lay with the patent hypocrisy manifested by the circumstances. The irony of the Western colonial powers sitting in judgement over the ill-conceived imperialistic actions of a now shambolic Japanese empire was not lost on him.

As Justice Pal argued, Japan was fundamentally attempting to mimic the West's imperialist methods and colonial ideology, to fuel its economic enrichment at great loss to and oppression of its colonies. But his dissent was much to the chagrin of the white majority on the bench. In Tokyo in 1946, his concerns were met with snide and snobbish insults, undermining Justice Pal's position as a jurist. The reactions betrayed the all too well-known racism and inequality of that time. It also betrayed the immoral and greedy colonialist spirit of the jurists from the West, who wanted to condemn the Japanese for the same actions the "empires" of their countries had committed across Asia, Africa and South America.

These prefatory remarks are relevant as we head towards the centenary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in April. The massacre took place on April 13, 1919: More than 300 unarmed civilians, including a large number of women and children, were gunned down indiscriminately. As per one record, almost 2,000 more were grievously wounded when the English general Reginald Dyer ordered his troops to machine gun unarmed protesters in a park. The protests were sparked off because the colonial state had backtracked from its promises. It had agreed with the Indian National Congress and other leaders of the Indian Independence movement, to accord Dominion Status to India, far short of complete independence, but involving some amount of self-governance. In return, they sought India's support in fighting World War I. This support included payment of millions of pounds in taxes, and providing men, arms and ammunition for the "glorious empire's" military. After the war was over, the government reneged on its promises.

> The heinous act at Jallianwala had all the trappings of a crime against humanity and should have placed General Dyer in the unenviable company of Hideki Tojo, Heinrich Himmler and all the great villains of World War II, in the annals of history. However, in 1919, the English government did not severely penalise the cold-blooded murder of innocents. It also rewarded General Dyer.

The heinous act at Jallianwala had all the trappings of a crime against humanity and should have placed General Dyer in the unenviable company of Hideki Tojo, Heinrich Himmler and all the great villains of World War II, in the annals of history. However, in 1919, the English government did not severely penalise the cold-blooded murder of innocents. It also rewarded General Dyer. As we head towards the centenary of this great tragedy, it is pertinent to question on what authority did these erstwhile colonial powers impose higher ideas of morality, embedded in notions of the rule of law at the Tokyo Trials.

While judges from the Allied nations — mainly the US, the Netherlands, and Britain — were all in favour of handing out death sentences to the Japanese war criminals for crimes against humanity, their own governments perpetrated similar atrocities for decades (or centuries) within their "colonies". To paraphrase Justice Pal, it was indefensible to arbitrarily and hypocritically impose newly-created international laws on individuals who could be tried and prosecuted in their own country's courts, especially when many people across Asia and Africa continued to reel under colonial rule and face similar violence and oppression.

While the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy cannot be reversed, an unconditional apology from the British government is long overdue and would demonstrate its recognition and remorse for this dastardly attack. Calls for such a gesture were issued in February in the British parliament by parliamentarians of Indian origin, Meghnad Desai, and Raj Loomba. They said that the British government had to "make amends and finally provide a closure" to the Indian people. As Shashi Tharoor rightly proclaimed in his now-famous speech at the Oxford Union, reparations or an official apology from the British government should not to be viewed as a tool for empowering Indians. Instead, it offers Britons a chance to atone for the wrongs that should never have been committed or celebrated in the first place.

The writer is a senior research fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Views are personal

MARCH 6, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

China announces troop withdrawal

SIVALIK

CHINA WITHDRAWS

CHINA HAS ANNOUNCED the withdrawal of its troops from Vietnam after a 17-day invasion during which Peking claimed to have achieved its goal of punishing its neighbour for alleged border incursion. The official Xinhua news agency reported that Chinese troops had begun withdrawing but warned that "the Chinese Government solemnly states that the Chinese side reserves the right to strike back again in self-defence in case of recurrence of such Vietnamese activities". There was no immediate reaction to the Peking announcement from Hanoi, but a commentary from the Voice of Vietnam broadcast at about the same time as the Chinese withdrawal statement said that Peking's leaders had "failed in their large-scale invasion to teach Vietnam a lesson and could not fulfil their expansionist aims".

OUTSTANDING DUES

IF AN ORDINARY telephone subscriber fails to pay his bill the telephone department acts with amazing speed in disconnecting his phone and taking legal action. But MPs and ex-MPs enjoy special privilege. Bills, often for huge amounts, are outstanding against their names, but the department has done little about the matter. The fact that such a large number of MPs defaulted on payment of their telephone bills has been brought out by a fellow MP, Kanwar Gupta. There are over 300 MPs and ex-MPs on the list. It includes the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chenna Reddy, owing Rs 271, Madhya Pradesh CM V K Saklecha owing Rs 390, and the late president, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who owed Rs 2,864, among others.

BHUTTO'S SENTENCE

A CLOSE AIDE of former Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto discussed Bhutto's fate, now under death sentence, with President Zia-ul- Haq. The aide, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, a former finance minister in the Bhutto cabinet, met Zia for two hours, sources said,

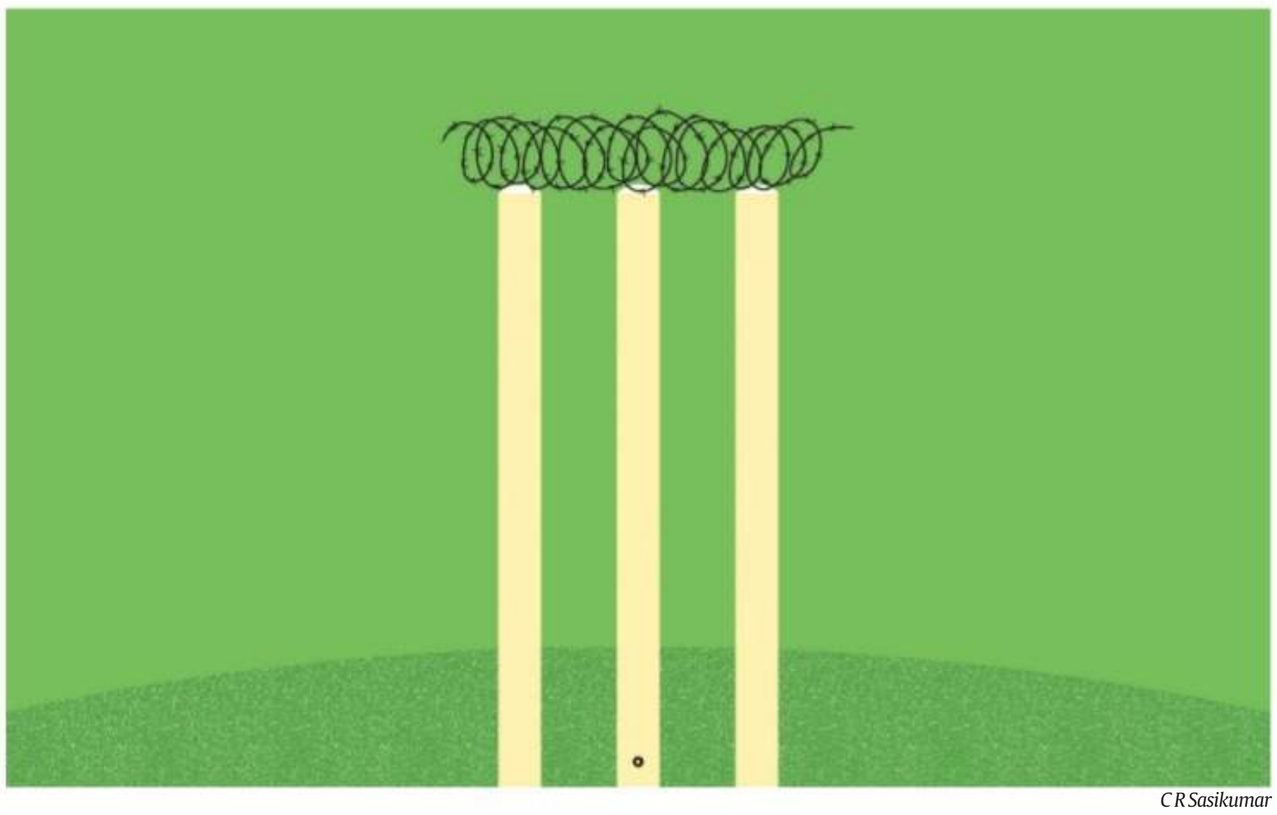
WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The fight against violent religious extremists will require a different mix of actions instead of purely counter-insurgency and counterterrorism campaigns."
— DAWN

BCCI's surgical strike out

There was a time when cricket administrators from India and Pakistan worked together to democratise the game. Now, BCCI seems to have forgotten that foreign policy is not its mandate

SANDEEP DWIVEDI



C R Sasikumar

IT WAS AT Lord's over biryani — what else could have India and Pakistan bonded over — where cricket's big Asian coup was planned. A day after the 66-1 underdogs India won the 1983 World Cup, the Indian cricket board president, N K P Salve, and his Pakistan counterpart, retired Air Chief Marshal Nur Khan, met for lunch at the home of cricket. Salve was pleased but a shade sad too. He still couldn't get over the snub he got from those veto-power wielding snooty MCC boys over his request for extra tickets for the India-West Indies final. Later, he would write in his book that it wasn't the refusal but the rude rebuff that had hurt him.

Salve would share his pain with Khan, who, too, reserved special scorn for the ICC's undemocratic ways. With utter disbelief and disdain, the two would contrast Lord's alleged ungraciousness to the Subcontinent's legendary hospitality. "Extra tickets?... that's the least we would do for guests," they would lament. History books say that it was Khan's very pragmatic query to Salve that would eventually trigger cricket's eastward shift. "Why can't we play the next World Cup in our countries?" he had asked. Next year, in 1984, the India-Pakistan-Sri Lanka consortium would join forces to drag the World Cup out of England, and ferry it all the way to Asia.

Salve and Khan — unlikely allies from either side of the prickly fence — had done the impossible. They didn't let their day job come in the way of their honorary pursuit to promote the game they were so passionate about. One was a life-long Congressman, an Indira Gandhi loyalist, a sitting Lok Sabha MP when India-Pakistan went to war in 1971. The other, Pakistan Air Force's commander-in-chief during the 1965 war against India. But on that monumental June afternoon at Lord's, the bitter neighbours decided that they would watch each other's back at ICC meetings.

Salve and Khan crystalised cricket's parallel power centre and called it the Asian bloc. In years to come, the two nations would jointly host two World Cups. In Jagmohan Dalmiya, a businessman from Kolkata, and Ehsan Mani, a Rawalpindi-born British-educated chartered accountant, the ICC got its most influential chiefs responsible for filling cricket's so-far empty coffers. Mani and Dalmiya would also collaborate to teach the cricketing world the economics of TV rights.

With time, India and Pakistan would have differences. At the turn of the century, Pakistan's dip coincided with India's phenomenal rise. The world stopped touring Pakistan after the 2009 terror strike and the IPL franchise shunned Pak players on auction day. The BCCI would diligently follow the Indian government's policy to avoid Pakistan in bilateral series but in private, the cricket officials would day-dream about past Indo-Pak games. The buzz before those games, those VVIPs queuing outside the cricket centre, phone calls from offices as high as the PMO for passes... Oh how much they missed those days of a windfall when cricket triggered a virtual curfew in India and Pakistan! For both emotional and economic reasons, they longed for cricket's biggest tamasha but they were willing to wait.

A fortnight ago, in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack, the BCCI did something unprecedented. They asked the ICC to ban Pakistan. The (CoA) chairman, Vinod Rai, said Pakistan, like South Africa in the past, should face cricket apartheid. It was an ugly, ill-advised wild cross-batted heave played with closed eyes and from way outside the crease. It was a misadventure that didn't follow any textbook. It certainly wasn't inspired by the Olympic charter that asked administrators to remain apolitical in all circumstances. The fundamental principle of Olympism calls the practice of sport a human right. It discourages discrimination and promotes "friendship, solidarity and fair play". If those standards were too high and idealistic, even turning the pages of Indian cricket history would take them to the chapter of solidarity that Salve and Khan had so meticulously written.

In its inscrutable urgency, in the season of war-mongering and nationalistic chest thumping, the BCCI jumped the gun. They forgot that it was Sushma Swaraj, the external affairs minister, who had the mandate to decide India's international stance and if need be, to lobby to isolate Pakistan. For years, the BCCI would throw the ball in the government's court when it came to playing Pakistan. Now they are bringing out their big brutal forehand and doing their own hitting.

Rai's invocation of apartheid, too, seems misplaced. The Pakistan of now is different to South Africa then. South African sports suffered sanctions because it followed the government policy of racial segregation. Had their cricket board remained apolitical, they wouldn't have allowed all-white teams but pressed for mixed squads. Being non-inclusive and discriminatory was never kosher on a sporting field.

With due apologies to those with delusions of grandeur, the BCCI needs to be reminded that its only objective is to administer and promote cricket in its own country. Regardless of the trending topics on Twitter, choking cricket in the neighbourhood was no surgical strike — it was a distasteful and diabolical overreach.

The BCCI's letter to the ICC could easily go down as the most meaningless official communication ever. Did the Indian board really believe that the ICC would actually ban Pakistan? By raising the issue of terror camps in Pakistan with the international cricket body, did the BCCI fancy itself to be the MEA or did they confuse the ICC for the UN?

Cricket is a complicated sport with limited reach. With barely eight nations that can boast of any quantifiable cricketing history, would the ICC, or other non-Indian members, have ever considered cutting one of its strong limbs? Were those who signed the ICC letter blind to the contribution of Indo-Pak matches in cricket's unquestionable mass appeal or how the game will get devalued in the absence of World Cup games against Pakistan?

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It would have needed a non-cricketing heart of stone to talk about closing the door on Pakistan. It's a country that has contributed enormously to cricket. They have enriched the game and added heft to cricket's narrative. Visionary captains, world champion teams, frustrating enigmas, sultans of reverse swing, doosra inventing geniuses, hilarious sledgers, run machines, audacious stroke players, Wasim Akram... Pakistan has given a lot but hasn't got back enough.

Maybe the BCCI's decision to call for Pakistan's ban had something to do with its present-day non-cricketing culture. The old BCCI office bearers are well and truly sidelined and the only cricketer in the Supreme Court's ad hoc CoA, Diana Eduljee, is in a minority. Veteran bureaucrat Rai, just-included Lieutenant General Ravi Thodge and CEO Rahul Johri, are among the decision makers and representatives of Indian cricket at ICC meets. The recent corporatisation and the addition of assorted spin doctors have made the BCCI lose its sense of history. They have no connection to the era when the BCCI worked out of a 1BHK hovel, lacked resources, worked on relationships with members, lobbied to gain their support and finally toppled the Gentlemen at MCC. Those on court-appointed temporary duty aren't worried about having long-term allies.

Rai told this newspaper that the present dispensation wasn't a "closed cricket community, we represent the nation". He even justified the decision by saying how it "reflected the sentiment of the nation". It was a hint that henceforth it would be the pulse of the country that will sway cricket decisions. Here's calling for a nation-wide referendum to decide if M S Dhoni should be India's wicket-keeper at the World Cup or should the selectors pick Rishabh Pant.

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Tehran tremor

The resignation of Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, is a setback for reforms in the Islamic republic

RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

THE RESIGNATION OF Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, last week came as a big surprise to analysts and observers of Iranian politics. Whatever the reasons behind Zarif's resignation, he will be remembered as one of the architects of the nuclear deal of 2015. Though Zarif's resignation was rejected by President Hassan Rouhani, the fact that it happened during the visit of the Syrian president to Iran is considered as a big victory for the Iranian hardliners. The message seems clear: Zarif's moderate diplomacy failed, whereas General Qasem Soleimani's tough intervention in Syria has been triumphant.

Undoubtedly, the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the re-imposition of US sanctions on Iran also had a role in Zarif's resignation. Washington continues to warn Tehran against its use of ballistic missile technology. However, Iran unveiled a new cruise missile with a range of 1,300 km during the celebrations of the Islamic revolution in February.

Iran's oil exports are dropping drastically under pressure from US sanctions. Political tension between Iran and Germany is at its peak due to suspected Iranian espionage activities in the latter. The Dutch government, meanwhile, has put out secret service documents concerning Iran's alleged involvement in the murder of two Dutch nationals of Iranian origin in 2015 and 2017. Besides, Denmark recently accused Iran of plotting to kill a member of an Ahvazi opposition group, which Tehran blames for an attack in Iran that killed 25 people last September.

The tensions with Europe spell bad news for Iran. Tehran's trade with the European Union fell by 66 per cent between November 2017 and November 2018. According to Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, China has slowed down its efforts at redesigning Iran's Arak heavy water reactor as required by the JCPOA. This does not come as a surprise since Chinese exports to Iran have collapsed by 70 per cent, from about $1.2 billion in October 2018 to just $391 million in December 2018. This suggests that China may be abandoning the policy of sustaining trade with Iran in direct contravention of US sanctions, which presents both economic and political risks. A change in Beijing's trade policy toward the Islamic republic will contribute to layoffs across Iran in the coming months.

The US on January 24 imposed sanctions on four organisations which it said were tied to either Iran's Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force or blacklisted Iranian airline Mahan Air. In order to fortify this measure, President Donald Trump put the Europeans on alert, saying if they try to do an end-run around US sanctions they will be subjected to stiff fines and penalties. However, the Trump administration has concerns about the alternative payment system put together by the European Union to compete with the international bank transfer system, SWIFT. Though the Europeans have signaled that the alternative money transfer system would be used only for humanitarian transactions with Iran, the US is suspicious that it could also be used for trade transactions to evade sanctions.

European officials see the trans-Atlantic rift over Iran sanctions as a significant crisis for the European economy, which can be avoided if the EU is able to counterbalance US economic power and the primacy of the dollar in international finance. In December, the European Commission released a report, 'Towards a Stronger International Role of the Euro', which underlined the sanctions on Iran and as a key justification for strengthening the role of the euro in global trade and finance. Germany, France and Britain have already launched their own payment channel to help European companies bypass US sanctions on Iran. The channel — INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) — is meant to facilitate legitimate trade with Iran and persuade the leaders in Tehran to continue fulfilling their commitments to the nuclear deal.

Trump's violation of the Iran deal without a viable backup plan has put the US's credibility on the line and weakened the primacy of the US dollar in world financial markets. For the time being, the ball is in the Iranian camp because NATO allies — Britain, France and Germany — along with China and Russia remain committed to the agreement. However, the Trump administration continues to put diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran. Poland and the US are hosting an international meeting in Warsaw on Iran's activities in the Middle East.

Forty years have passed since the Iranian revolution, a revolution that promised freedom and welfare for all Iranians. Despite the cruel and naive optimism of the Iranian authorities (Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi recently exclaimed that Iran has progressed more in the last "forty years than it had in the 400 years prior"), Iran's per capita income has grown far slower since the Iranian revolution, while a large share of the Iranian population have slipped into poverty or remain chronically poor.

Last but not the least, the Iranian regime is trying to confront the US sanctions at a time when Iran has the lowest overall labour force participation rates. According to the latest reports on the Iranian economy, only 45 per cent of the workforce is economically active. Iran has one of the highest unemployment rates, particularly among the educated youth. Hence, while after 40 years of revolution, the Islamic Republic has certainly gained an ideological and military presence in the Middle East, it has failed to keep its ranking among Asian countries, like South Korea, which trailed Iran prior to the revolution.

It is too soon to predict in which direction Iran's politics and foreign policy will evolve after Zarif. But the latest developments in Iran and the Middle East do not encourage optimism.

The writer is professor and vice-dean, Jindal Global University

Post Balakot, the state of play

A new paradigm has emerged on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism

AKHILESH MISHRA

IT IS NOW over a week since India struck Balakot in Pakistan in a pre-emptive strike to take out terrorists planning further attacks on India. Various competing claims have been put forward about the impact these strikes would have, both in the short term and in the medium term. These claims can essentially be put within three brackets: The impact on the India-Pakistan calculus, the domestic impact and, finally, the way Narendra Modi would be assessed as a decision maker.

On the India-Pakistan front, the changes are already being felt. First, the most dramatic change has been in terms of India's threshold and the type of its response to terrorism. For a long time, Pakistan managed to convince the world that it called the shots on defining the threshold, and that it would determine which Indian defensive action would constitute a breach beyond which it would use its nuclear button. Post Balakot, the world has been notified that it is actually India which will set the threshold of strategic patience, beyond which it would respond within Pakistani territory. It is now up to India to determine how low this threshold will be.

Second, the tri-services press conference on the one hand and the foreign secretary presser on the other, have signaled to Pakistan that India is now willing to use any and every means necessary to put an end to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. The Indian navy has had ostensibly no role so far in dealing with terrorism, and yet, it was out there briefing the media on its readiness to respond to Pakistan. The message could not have been more succinct.

Third, during this episode, not once did India try to "talk" to Pakistan to end terrorism. It was Pakistan that desperately called up India and got no response. It was Pakistan's prime minister who went on national television not once but twice to plead, and it was Pakistan which shut down its airspace for almost a week. India, on the other hand, went about its business as usual. The message was loud and clear: Persisting with its hostility for India will now have disproportionately higher costs for Pakistan.

Most importantly, the nuclear bluff has finally been called. For 30 years, Indian decision makers were paralysed when it came to responding to terror emanating from Pakistan. India is perhaps the only country in the world which did not respond militarily when its Parliament was attacked and when its financial capital was brutalised. The bullet-proof jacket that Pakistan wore all this while has been pierced and there is no putting it back on.

Domestically, two strands are playing out. Both of these revolve around Modi. First, one of the important promises made by Modi in the 2014 elections was that he would be a more decisive leader when it came to dealing with terror. In dealing with militant groups in the Northeast, Naxalites in central India, the Islamist terrorists inside Kashmir, and, in responding to Pakistan, Modi has lived up to that promise. The second is a claim that Modi's supporters have made ever since 2014, and it is rather unfortunate that it has turned out to be true: That hate-Modi would eventually morph into hate-India, was a constant theme on social media and elsewhere among the most ardent of Modi supporters. When 21 parties passed a resolution last week condemning the government of India during an ongoing crisis with Pakistan, they could have hardly been unaware of how Pakistan would play it against India. Soon enough, this was used by Pakistani media as proof that India itself orchestrated the Pulwama attack! When the dust settles, saner and more seasoned minds in the Opposition would, perhaps, reflect on what they allowed Rahul Gandhi to do?

Finally, how should we assess Modi, the decision maker? Since his Gujarat days, he has built an image of a person who does not let electoral timetables impact national endeavours: As prime minister, he has now proved that multiple times. One state which was likely to bear the initial hiccups the most due to demonetisation was Uttar Pradesh. Yet, that did not deter him from going ahead with the initiative just a few months before the UP elections. The GST rollout timeline was decided by national consensus — just a few months before the Gujarat elections, a state which would face the maximum initial disruption. Even well-wishers advised Modi to pause, but GST was rolled out on time. Now, just before the national elections, the risk of sending fighter planes deep inside Pakistan territory was immense. It could have gone terribly wrong. But, personal political risk, again, did not deter Modi from taking decisions that were in the national interest. Perhaps this would cement the defining legacy of the first term of Modi's prime ministership. That he always put India first.

The writer is CEO, Bluekraft Digital Foundation and was earlier director (content) MyGov

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AFTER BALAKOT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Opposition's duty' (IE, March 6). The more Balakot is discussed by the Opposition, the more it plays into the BJP's hands, which will continue to label it as unpatriotic. Already, there's a momentum building up in favour of the government with India's successful retaliation to the Pulwama attack. The BJP would love to show itself as the only political party steeped in national pride. The Opposition must try to get the focus back to the government's dismal failure on the economic front.

Vijai Pant, *Hempur*

FRIENDS AND ALLIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A new conversation' (IE, March 5). India's presence at the OIC meeting in Abu Dhabi may have irked Pakistan, but if Russia with few million Muslims can be an observer at the OIC, India with very large Muslim population is more a deserving candidate. Pakistan sat out in protest when the Indian external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj was speaking. Its entreaties, however, cut no ice with the IOC boss Saudi Arabia. The host country for this meet, UAE,too was unmoved by Pakistan's arguments. This may not mean that Islamic countries will prefer India over Pakistan but a diplomatic success appears to have been achieved.

P L Singh, *Amritsar*

WEST ASIA CALLING

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The gulf as a channel of peace' (IE, March 05). A shrewd foreign policy with a sprinkling of soft diplomacy has worked wonders for India's relationship with West Asian countries. This could ease tensions with Pakistan. However, New Delhi should not fall into believing that the Saudis will choose India over Pakistan.

Ketan Kishan, *Gurugram*

PARADOX OF PLENTY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unmet farm challenge' (IE, March 5). The distress in the farms is the single biggest challenge for the government. This crisis has happened despite high foodgrain production because farmers still do not have links to the market.

Tapomoy Ghosh, *Katwa*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

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