



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FORECAST: CLOUDY

It's a delicate year for global economy and for India. And policy response cannot be in form of fiscal easing or another stimulus

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund is the latest agency to cut India's growth forecast for 2019-20 by 20 basis points to 7.3 per cent, after the RBI, Asian Development Bank and Fitch Ratings. India is not an outlier on this count. When global economic growth, after peaking at 4 per cent in 2017, softened to 3.6 in 2018, and is now projected to decline to 3.3 per cent in 2019, it is inevitable that one of the fastest growing large economies in the world could also hit a speedbreaker. There are reasons for the loss of momentum in global economic activity, ranging from weak investment and production in many countries and global trade, given the slowdown in the Eurozone and China, which has prompted central bankers in many of these countries to adopt a more accommodative monetary policy stance, after having signalled an end to monetary easing as late as December last year. These downside risks, including those surrounding Brexit, are expected to continue in the first half of this year with the IMF saying that conventional monetary and fiscal space is limited as a policy response. Even in the US, where the job markets have rebounded, fears of a deepening global economic slowdown had forced the US Federal Reserve to signal a pause on raising interest rates this year. The RBI, too, had flagged some of these risks, besides the slowdown in China and the potential impact of an El Nino event on the South West monsoon over a week ago when it cut the growth forecast for FY 20 to 7.2 per cent from 7.4 per cent, while justifying its monetary dovishness. The IMF may be worried about the high levels of public debt and fiscal slippages in India but reckons that growth would pick up to 7.5 per cent in 2020 on the back of an investment recovery and robust consumption amid a more expansionary monetary policy stance and some expected impetus from fiscal policy. Securing that growth would call for fiscal consolidation, pruning of public debt, strengthening of GST compliance and cutting of subsidies, it says.

There are the other solutions, too, such as governance reform in state-owned banks, re-vamping of labour laws and rules on land acquisition — all of which have been acknowledged by successive governments and policy-makers but are yet to be addressed. More importantly, the IMF says that this is a delicate year for the global economy. That could well have been said for India's economy too. Just as a return to global growth is contingent on policy support and downside risks not materialising, a growth uptick in India will hinge largely on a boost to investment activity and supply side reforms by the next government at the Centre. But it is equally important to recognise that the policy response this time cannot be in the form of a fiscal easing or another stimulus. That's the sobering message from the experience of the collateral damage to the economy after the 2008-09 stimulus.

A GROWING THREAT

The latest drug-resistant microbe may not be a creation of overmedication, but of the overuse of fungicides in agriculture

THERE'S A NEW superbug on the loose. *Candida auris* was first described as a pathogen in 2009, when it was found infesting a Japanese woman's ear (whence the *auris*) and in the decade since, it has been reported in 32 countries, including India and Pakistan. A hardy fungus, undeterred by antifungals, it may have killed a third of the several hundred people it has infected, and is at the new threat horizon of drug-resistant microorganisms. Sulpha drugs and penicillin liberated the human race from the tyranny of microbes, which used to casually cut short lives. Easily accessible antimicrobials made possible an era of improving public health, which changed the fortunes of nations and, arguably, altered the course of history. But now, an excess of access threatens to send us back to the dark times before penicillin, when ordinary micro-organisms — even soil bacteria — could slay the weak at will. *Candida auris* has gained infamy as a hospital-acquired infection, and like other resistant organisms, preys on people with poorly developed or compromised immune systems, including newborns, the elderly and diabetics. In a few decades, they could represent a greater threat to life than cancer.

It's anthropogenic Darwinism at work. Drug-resistant strains of microorganisms commonly develop from flawed prescription regimes, a matter of concern for decades. In affluent populations, they may be caused when patients demand overmedication. But slums in poor countries probably yield a richer crop, with patients buying antimicrobials over the counter from untrained shopkeepers. The method is hit-or-miss, a full course of medicines is rarely taken, and the bugs that survive are those resistant to medication. Over time, the efficacy of the antimicrobial can only diminish. But the cause for the *Candida auris* rampage lies deeper, in the over-use of antifungals in agriculture and animal husbandry. This has wiped out whole species, giving hitherto fringe species room to flourish. The new superbug is a country cousin of the well-known *Candida albicans*, which causes the oral infection called thrush. But the hitherto obscure organism now represents a far greater threat to humans.

Whether resistance is of medical or agricultural origin, the solution is the same: Public education against the arbitrary use of antimicrobial drugs. It did not work earlier, when it was a largely theoretical issue. But now that organisms like *Candida auris* are actually killing patients and contaminating entire hospital wards, as it has done in the US, UK and Spain, audiences will be more receptive.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

2019 Man Booker International Prize shortlist features a record five women, makes a statement

THE SHORTLIST FOR the Man Booker International Prize 2019 is out and this year, the six finalists include five women. All six books were translated, too, by women. The annual award is given to the best book which has an English translation and is published in Britain or Ireland.

It seems that four decades and a half later, the Man Booker International prize, for starters, has registered the sentiment behind American poet Adrienne Rich's past protestations. In 1974, Rich had refused to accept the National Book Award for poetry, which she won for her collection, *Diving Into the Wreck*. Rich read out a statement instead, which, she said, was "prepared by three of the women nominated for the National Book Award for poetry, with the agreement that it would be read by whichever of us, if any, was chosen." The other two nominees were Audre Lorde and Alice Walker. Rich went on to "accept this award in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world". In 1991, the Booker Prize shortlist included no women at all. The same year, a bunch of like-minded individuals recognised this serious gender disparity and set up the annual Women's Prize for Fiction. For years, literary spaces have seen a constant pushback against sexism that nudges women onto the fringes of mainstream literary hierarchy.

The shortlist makes another important departure from convention. It features French author Annie Ernaux's *The Years*, an autobiography. The norm has been to cleave autobiography from "fiction". Ernaux's inclusion then, is a nod to the fluidity of creative works. If the idea is to chip away at convention and rigid literary structures, the Man Booker International prize has done well. However, other institutions must ensure that this "trend" sustains long enough to become the new normal.



SUHASH PALSHIKAR

AFTER THE FIRST phase of campaigning, a puzzle looms. While most surveys suggest that the BJP has an edge, the campaign rhetoric of the BJP suggests that it is on edge. A party riding on the popularity of its leader would have been expected to be confident, if not gracious. Given his popularity and penchant for going down in history, Narendra Modi had an excellent opportunity to steer the campaign into a debate on development. Even if he wanted to take advantage of Pulwama, he could still engage in a serious debate over what constitutes security and what needs to be done.

At least the first round of campaigning indicates that this is not the case. The idea of security is employed only to whip up the BJP's traditional ideological anxieties — on nationalism and Hindutva. And this is being done in ways unbecoming of a truly popular leader — or it is betraying the limits of his popularity.

The campaign opened with almost trickery — the prime minister's address to the nation on the achievement of the DRDO. Subsequently, a chief minister described India's armed forces as Modi's sena. The PM began his attack on the Congress by talking of constituencies where the "majority is in minority". As the campaign for the first phase was set to conclude, he chose to violate the exhortation of the Election Commission by asking for votes in the name of the martyrs of Pulwama and the brave soldiers who participated in the air strikes. If these are not signs of nervousness, then the definition of confidence needs a revision.

All this shows the so-called electoral smartness of the ruling party and its willingness to bypass rules and institutions. These virtues of the current establishment do not need fresh advertisement. But why would the BJP want to display these in the very first round of campaigning when it appears that it has probably overcome the adverse public sentiment setting in until a few months ago?

Perhaps the answer is in the trends shown in the surveys. Overall, it seems that the BJP on its own is unlikely to reach its 2014 performance. While the media has rightly publicised that the NDA will probably be in a position to form the next government if the present trends continue, what seems to have

BJP shows it will weave nationalism, security with religious identity. So far, Opposition has no response

It is quite possible that issues related to the economy may resurface in the campaign. Therefore, there seems to be a systematic effort to keep the security kettle burning. End February, the Balakot strike took place and for the next couple of weeks the atmosphere was filled with how the government has shown determination in retaliating against the terrorists. That drowned out any sensible discussion about why Pulwama happened in the first place.

slipped attention is the fact that in spite of the extraordinary use of media and in spite of the constant projection of the PM, the BJP may fall fairly short of a clear majority. So, desperate attempts to further ignite nationalist fervour become necessary for the BJP.

The second reason emerging from the surveys that may explain the puzzle is even more serious for the BJP. Pulwama and Balakot appear to be bailing out the party for the time being — and particularly in the north and west of the country. But the Lok Sabha election is a long drawn affair and as time passes by, the proximate emotive value of Pulwama and Balakot can diminish.

If that were to happen, the BJP would be exposed to the other realities that the surveys point to: Social discord, charges of cronyism and, above all, the simple material facts of life. It is quite possible that issues related to the economy may resurface in the campaign. Therefore, there seems to be a systematic effort to keep the security kettle burning. End February, the Balakot strike took place and for the next couple of weeks the atmosphere was filled with how the government has shown determination in retaliating against the terrorists. That drowned out any sensible discussion about why Pulwama happened in the first place. Afraid that Modi would draw advantage from any security-related discussion and would turn any questioning into "anti-national acts", the Opposition shied away from a systematic critique of the current government's security lapses.

Then, end March, the announcement about India's anti-satellite capability came, rekindling the hyphenated relationship between nationalism and security. As the first round of campaigning came to a close, the PM openly invoked Pulwama and Balakot to steer the debate to that same sensibility which appears to have captured voters' imagination on a large scale — a hazy concern about security and a more concrete search for false nationalism.

Over the past couple of weeks, the BJP has shown how it will weave issues of nationalism, security, and religious identity by presenting Modi as an embodiment of all three. In contrast, what has been the response of the Opposition? The BJP's many regional speed-

breakers, cocooned as they are in their states, are often oblivious to these issues.

For them, issues like security and nationalism don't exist. When state parties cry hoarse that the BJP need not tell them what patriotism is, they are both right and wrong. They are right because surely patriotism is not the monopoly of the BJP. Yet, they are wrong, because they have nothing to offer in terms of "true" nationalism, they have no imagination of a responsible federalism, nor do they bother to develop any security policy. In fact, their ill-preparation on this front allows the BJP to go to the states and talk about security.

While the Congress did say that it has an expert group advising on security policy, the party has failed to come out with anything that can engage the BJP in this regard. And it is not only about security; for the past four years, the BJP has given clear indications of its over-emphasis on nationalism and the meaning it attaches to it. But the Congress, through its manifesto, has only made academic references to a possible robust and democratic nationalism, instead of practising and popularising it.

From Modi's remarks about Rahul Gandhi running away from the "majority" and from Yogi Adityanath's remark, "hamare liye Bajrang Bali paryapt hai (for us, Bajrang Bali is enough)" it is quite clear where the "nationalism" debate is headed. In this openly communal discourse, security is only a fig leaf. The coming rounds of the campaign are bound to witness the re-deployment of the majority motif.

The Opposition is left with two options. They would need to take on the BJP on the security question and start asking why this government failed to ensure the nation's security. Secondly, the Opposition could begin asking questions more aggressively about the economic hardships citizens face.

The "puzzle" mentioned at the beginning portends closure of debate. Only a concerted strategy can bring a semblance of debate into this campaign. Otherwise, whoever wins or loses, democracy will be the sure loser in this election.

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SHILPI BHATTACHARYA AND DIYA DEVIAH

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

New rare disease policy is a chance to create an inclusive public health imagination

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE not given the rare disease community much to celebrate. The suspension of the National Policy for the Treatment of Rare Diseases was a rude shock, particularly for those patients who were relying on the money allotted through the policy for life-saving treatments. A rare disease affects a small percentage of people. Most rare diseases are chronic and severe, leading to death or disability. Since these diseases are not found commonly, doctors are typically unaware about them and therefore either misdiagnose or do not diagnose them. This further decreases recorded incidence of the disease, which in turn diminishes interest in understanding the disease and finding treatments for it. This cycle of neglect can only be overcome by strong support from the government.

Unfortunately, India's suspended rare disease policy has reinforced the premise that public health is a game of numbers, not lives. There is an implicit calculation as the high "opportunity cost" of treating someone with a rare disease is considered a sound basis for negligible governmental spending on rare disease. While it is impractical to ignore fiscal constraints, India's meagre 1.15 per cent of GDP allocation to healthcare amplifies this dilemma and turns it into a decision of "balancing" disease incidence. A cold utilitarian calculation is a disturbing basis for public policy because it perpetuates marginalisation and subverts the state's duty to treat its citizens equally.

A new and inclusive rare disease policy should allocate substantial resources to research for the development of new platform therapies that could commonly treat different rare diseases, with the additional possibility of simultaneously bringing down the costs of current treatments. More research will also facilitate greater interest in rare diseases in the medical community, increasing rates of diagnosis and improving medical care.

It is not surprising that in various orders recognising the rights of rare disease patients, the Delhi High Court has categorically stated that low disease incidence cannot be the state's basis for denying someone the right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution. The HC has also demanded that the government promptly frame a new rare disease policy that incorporates global best practices. To respect the HC's directions, a new policy must be founded on non-discriminatory ideals. Policymakers will have to address fiscal constraints without devaluing lives of entire patient populations.

The government should create a new policy that is based on different fundamentals. The suspended policy's narrow focus on allocating funds to treat a select few rare diseases to the exclusion of untreatable diseases lacked vision and is costly. When only 5 per cent of all rare diseases are treatable, it is extremely problematic for a government's rare disease policy to state that its least priority is to allocate money to diseases that cannot be treated. Yet, per the government's calculation, it should spend first on diseases that can be treated through a one-time treatment, then on diseases that need regular treatments and last on diseases with no treatment. In doing so, it effectively excluded 95 per cent of rare diseases from its purview.

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rare diseases, with the additional possibility of simultaneously bringing down the costs of current treatments. More research will also facilitate greater interest in rare diseases in the medical community, increasing rates of diagnosis and improving medical care.

Increased focus on research could help develop cheaper treatments. Giving incentives to pharmaceutical companies to develop treatments for rare diseases has resulted in treatments being priced so exorbitantly that even the government cannot afford to procure them for the economically weaker sections of society. Facilitating increased profits while helpful in creating incentives for research, ignores the problems that the prohibitively high cost of treatments create once they do become available in the market. In India, where most patients are uninsured and rare diseases fall outside the insurance system, increased drug prices through patent protection will further increase patient dependence on government financing.

The government must not abandon the rare disease community to the market mechanism. Low incidence makes rare diseases "unprofitable" and companies are reluctant to invest in them.

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APRIL 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

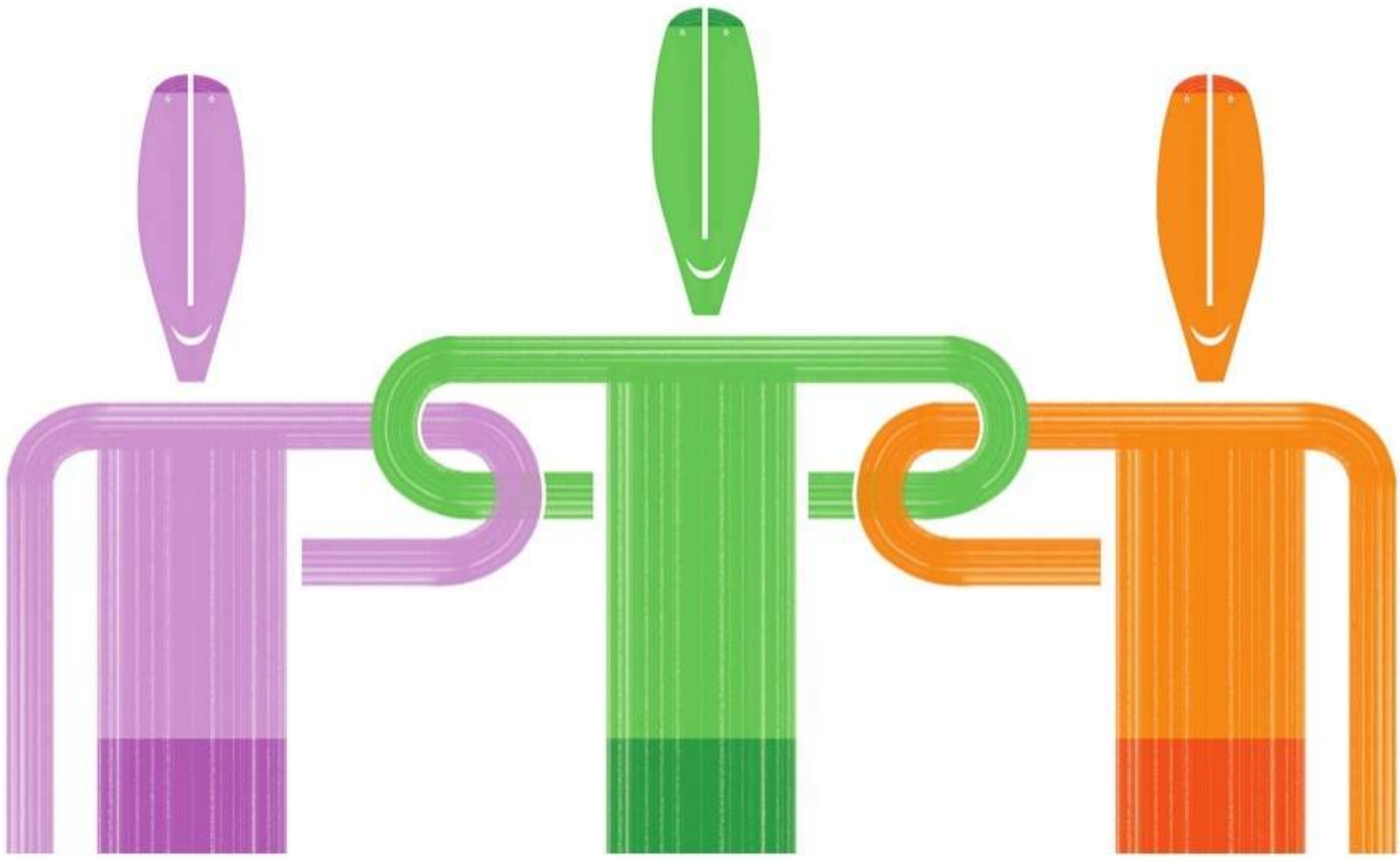
EAST IN THE DARK
POWER GENERATION IN West Bengal and Bihar has slumped to a record low, crippling industry, business and domestic life. Major industries in West Bengal were closed until next week. Smaller units had very restricted power supply. Bihar too plunged into virtual darkness, creating an unprecedented drinking water crisis. Calcutta and its neighbourhood had long spells of power shedding affecting normal life, including water supply and hospital services. Cinema houses suspended matinee shows. Shops pulled down their shutters before dusk. Office workers and housewives suffered an ordeal with the heat touching 105 degree Fahrenheit.

MOYNIHAN REVEALS
A FORMER US Ambassador to India, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, has said that the American government gave money to the Congress party twice for elections, once to Mrs Gandhi herself. In his book, *A Dangerous Peace*, published in the US recently, Moynihan has disclosed that after Mrs Gandhi's speeches in 1974 about the danger of subversion by the CIA, he ordered an inquiry into America's doings in India in the past 25 years. "I was satisfied we had been up to very little," Moynihan has written. "We had twice, but only twice, interfered in Indian politics to the extent of providing money to a political party. Both times this was done in the face of a

prospective communist victory in a state election, once in Kerala and once in West Bengal. Both times the money was given to the Congress party which had asked for it. Once it was given to Mrs Gandhi herself, who was then a party official."

JP'S HEALTH
JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, STATED to be still "quite weak", today withstood well yet another five-hour dialysis. He was given a bottle of blood transfusion during his 10th dialysis after he was flown to Bombay on March 19. His secretary, T Abraham, said in the evening that JP was running slight temperature and feeling exhausted.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

The importance of IUML

Indian Union Muslim League's politics, with Malayali characteristics, has created a language for articulating the legitimate demands of a religious minority without alienating other segments of society



SHAJAHAN MADAMPAT

THE INDIAN UNION Muslim League (IUML) is in the news following Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from the Wayanad constituency, a stronghold of the party. Yogi Adityanath dubbed the League "a virus" sure to infect the rest of the country if the Congress wins. The decision also occasioned an unabashedly communal comment from the prime minister, who described Wayanad as a constituency where the majority is in a minority. Interestingly, statements from the Left, which is likely to face a major setback because of Rahul's foray into Kerala, reflected an uncanny resemblance to the Sangh Parivar's vitriol.

The colour of the IUML's party flag and the insinuations about its purported links and nomenclatural similarity to Jinnah's All India Muslim League did not help matters either, especially at a time when the ruling party's pathological obsession with Pakistan and hatred of Muslims have coalesced into an expedient election narrative. The only solace for Muslims in India today is that the PM and his party have termed not only the Muslims, but also the entire Opposition as anti-national and sympathetic to Pakistan.

Is the IUML a communal political formation? The "Muslim" in its name may hasten judgements about it, but its work in Kerala over the past 70 years shows that the League never indulged in the politics of hate and divisiveness. If organising a religious community politically on the basis of antagonism to another is communalism, the IUML has never mobilised its cadre nor used its political and often administrative clout to create religious divides. On the contrary, whenever the state faced a communally sensitive situation, the party rose to the occasion and

played a stellar role in dousing the flames. It is pertinent to mention that the decision to establish the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, for "the promotion and development of the study of Sanskrit, Indology, Indian Philosophy and Indian languages" was taken when a Muslim League leader was Kerala's minister of education.

Interestingly, the several splinter groups, which quit the IUML and formed rival political parties, or the few Muslim political outfits that emerged with the sole aim of challenging the League, did so because they felt that it refused to toe a divisive line even when the "interests of the community so dictated. For instance, the late Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, then national president of the IUML, rebelled against the party and formed the Indian National League (INL) in 1994. He rebelled because he thought the IUML was not politically strident enough to quit the then Congress-led United Democratic Front government in Kerala in protest against Narasimha Rao's complicity in the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The IUML leadership argued that their decision to continue in the government was in the larger interest of communal harmony, since an emotional decision by the League would have pushed the entire state into a communal frenzy. That the INL is now a constituent of the CPM-led Left Democratic Front is an irony of sorts as the IUML and INL are different from each other only in the sense that the Muslim in the former's name has been replaced by the "national" in the latter's.

So if not communal, what is the IUML? The founders of the party believed that the Muslims, in the volatile post-Partition environment in India, needed a political outfit to work for the empowerment and uplift of the community within the ambit of the Constitution. Although it did not succeed in attracting people in the post-Partition environment of fear and insecurity in the North, it took roots in Kerala, far removed from the Partition nightmare.

In Kerala, it pursued a carefully crafted politics, working for the representation of the Muslims in all spheres of public life in the state. It did so without pitting itself or the Muslim community against the other com-

In Kerala, it pursued a carefully crafted politics, working for the representation of the Muslims in all spheres of public life in the state. It did so without pitting itself or the Muslim community against the other communities in the state. The Gulf remittances that began flowing in from the 1970s, Kerala's remarkably harmonious social fabric for which the Left must get due credit, and the legacy of struggles by marginalised groups in Kerala from the late 19th century helped IUML's unique brand of politics. By practicing a brand of politics that could be termed communitarian rather than communal, the IUML succeeded in actualising the constitutional guarantee of equal citizenship for the Muslims in the state.

In fact, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Kerala is the only state in the republic where the Muslims fully live out the constitutional promise of equal citizenship. The IUML's brand of identity politics, with its unmistakable Malayali characteristics, created a language and idiom for articulating the legitimate demands of a religious minority without alienating the other segments of the polity. The distinctive feature of the League in Kerala is that it strove to keep the community at the centre of the state's politics, unlike other Muslim political formations elsewhere in India that revelled in confessional isolationism.

While the ideal of different communities working under a pan-Indian secular umbrella is indeed still preferable, our history has taught us that downtrodden and marginalised communities tasted political empowerment only when they organised themselves. BSP, SP, RJD and so many other political parties across India testify to this fact. It is to the credit of the founders of the IUML that they had pioneered this kind of politics decades before others did.

The IUML has been downright conservative, often illiberal, sometimes corrupt, some other times opportunistic, but never communal. That is precisely why it remains an integral and highly respected component of Kerala's multi-dimensional political fabric. That Atal Bihari Vajpayee had no hesitation in sending IUML MP, E Ahmed, to the United Nations to represent India should convince the UP CM that his utterances were widely off the mark.

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promises then and how it is going to deliver now are obvious questions that should be asked (sic). On the other hand, how far the BJP has delivered on Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat and Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas plank, as promised on various verticals of the party's vision document released in 2014, should be analysed," the editorial says.

It also says that questions related to the welfare of all, the links between the country's cultural heritage and the government's policies, the financial viability of programmes and whether alliances are trustworthy would influence the electorates. "A leader who commands legitimacy and respect not just within his own party but by the large masses should be a natural choice in a democracy. The foreign policy and security considerations of the nation generally do not play much important role in our national elections... In the present scenario, when the international scenario is in flux and the regions like Jammu-Kashmir and Northeast Bharat are in search of a new direction and narrative of peaceful development and Bharatiyata, the security considerations are all the more important," the editorial asserts.

CONGRESS'S DECEIT
AN OPINION ARTICLE in *Organiser* claims that the Congress's election manifesto is built around blatant lies and false promises to get back to power. It says that the manifesto,

"Congress Will Deliver", is poor on facts on issues such as farm prices, exports and investment. This exposes Rahul Gandhi's ignorance on economic matters, it asserts. The article adds that it is well-known that the Modi government increased the minimum support price (MSP) for agricultural products. Similarly, anyone can verify the foreign direct investment (FDI) data over a decade and details relating to capital expenditure and capital formation can also be compared between the UPA and NDA regimes it points out. The article claims: "These blatant lies raise a question over Rahul's political ambition — win the election, by hook or by crook. Preferably by crook." It says that in an effort to "up the ante" on the Modi government, Rahul Gandhi has announced the Nyuntam Aay Yojana. But its manifesto does not say how the scheme will be implemented and funded.

"As it also promises to omit Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code with regard to Sedition, an amendment to Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, (AFSPA), 1958, deployment of armed forces in J&K, the Congress needs to explain to the nation (sic). National integrity has been targeted time and again by Congress by openly encouraging divisive politics, primarily through the 'tukde tukde' gang that seeks to undermine the integrity of the nation. The party is still in 'no mood' to learn any lessons," the article claims. It describes the party's promises such as punishment for hate crimes and assurances about

Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia as minority appeasement. It goes on to ask a few questions: "When we have enough laws to tackle incidences like mob lynching, then what is the need to mention it in an election manifesto? What Congress is going to do on incidences where a Hindu is lynched by a Muslim mob? If every citizen of the country is equal in front of the Constitution, then why do you need any specific laws for a particular community?"

NEW INDIA
AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* says that India's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, who recently shot to national fame, has sparked off fashion trend among the Indian youth. His trade mark "gunslinger" mooch has become a rage in the country, the article says. It notes that despite his ordeal at the hand of his tormentors, Abhinandan has become a symbol of peace between the two countries. It claims that after a brief dip in the PM's popularity in early January, the Modi juggernaut seems unstoppable. "Clearly, the nation is very gungho about Modi and Naya Bharat... And the youth see in Modi an able and decisive Prime Minister who can destroy the terror factories in Pakistan, Abhinandan is the new face of a Naya Bharat," the article asserts.

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Some cracks are appearing in the edifice of European solidarity. Most significant, they are forming between Paris and Berlin on the best way to handle the chronic failure of the British to formulate a national policy."
— THE INDEPENDENT

Kings and moustaches

Is there a correlation between popularity of Chulbul Pandey or 'Singham' and absence, or presence, of moustache allowances in states?



BIBEK DEBROY

USUALLY, WE DON'T notice subtle differences in playing cards. Sure, one deck of cards may differ a bit from another, depending on design. But often, the spades sign on ace of spades will be larger and more ornate than the corresponding signs on aces of hearts, diamonds or clubs. There is a historical reason. Card manufacturers had to pay taxes and stamp duties were extended to playing cards in 1711 — in England. You needed a stamp to prove duties had been paid and that stamp would naturally be on the first card of the deck, ace of spades. However, stamping every deck became a nuisance. Hence, the ace of spades bore the insignia of the printing house, proof that taxes had been paid. Consequently, the ace of spades became larger and the legacy often continues.

Ditto with the four kings. In standard English playing cards, the two black kings wield swords. The king of diamonds has a battleaxe, while the king of hearts has a sword he seems to be using to slice off his own head, unlike the black kings. In addition, the king of hearts doesn't sport a moustache, while the other three kings do. Why should there be such a discrimination? I don't think anyone knows definitively. There are a few theories. A standard answer is that while copying from original French versions, there was disfiguring and distortion when block-makers changed symbols of office. In the French versions, all kings have moustaches.

"In fact, there are endless styles of moustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanctioned by special appointment with His Majesty, the King, or Her Majesty, the Queen." This is from Mulk Raj Anand's, *Pair of Mustachios*, written in pre-independent India. In independent India, what are the rules for the armed forces? I am asking about whiskers/moustaches, not beards. For beards, there are indeed some prohibitions and special exemptions. Do remember that before fighting the Persians, Alexander the Great had his soldiers shave off their beards. Because of Abhinandan Varthaman, if not otherwise, everyone knows moustaches are allowed in the armed forces. Indeed, between 1860 and 1916, moustaches were compulsory in the British Army and that also applied to British India, starting earlier with East India Company. These rules changed in October 1916 and World War I was the reason. If you had to wear a gas mask, a moustache was a problem. Henry VIII taxed beards and so

did Peter the Great in Russia. I don't think Henry VIII's tax applied to moustaches, but the Peter tax seems to have covered both beards and moustaches.

A tax is a disincentive. There is no prohibition against, or compulsion for, moustaches in the Indian army today, nor is there a tax on moustaches. But neither is there an incentive in the form of a moustache allowance. However, like discrimination between kings in playing card decks, there is discrimination between armed forces and police when it comes to moustache allowances. Here is a quote from the 1943 police regulations: "Officers and men shall always be neat and clean in person and dress both in and out of uniform. Their hair shall always be closely cut. Those who shave shall always be clean-shaven. Moustaches may be worn though beards are shaved. Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims who are in the habit of growing long hair and beards are permitted to do so." No bar, but there can be positive incentive through a moustache allowance. I don't mean a moustache allowance specific to an individual. For instance, Meesey Thimmaiah is the official mascot of the Bengaluru Traffic Police. He was known as "Meesey" because of his distinctive and ornate moustache. He died on duty, trying to save a woman and her child from being run over. While he was alive, Meesey Thimmaiah got an annual moustache allowance of Rs 500. This was an allowance specific to him, not across the board.

Across the board, I know of only two states where policemen get a moustache allowance — Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, it only seems to be for some districts, not all, and is Rs 33 per month. In UP, policemen do get it everywhere, but only if they belong to the Uttar Pradesh Provincial (Pradeshik) Armed Constabulary (PAC), not otherwise. The amount has recently been hiked from Rs 50 per month to Rs 250. I don't think there is any correlation between the popularity of Chulbul Pandey or *Singham* and absence, or presence, of moustache allowances in different states. In a government system, the answer often lies in precedence. For the Indian Police Service, something like this is governed by the Indian Police Service (Uniform) Rules of 1954. For a state, this is governed by its rules on uniforms, such as the 1986 rules for UP, or the corresponding uniform rules for the PAC. Differences between states are thus inevitable.

In the army, there was a movement away from beards and moustaches, though those who wanted to sport these, could do so. That's what happened in the police too and it's reflected in UP's 1986 uniform rules. However, because of historical preferences and legacies, traces of moustache preference and "mooch" allowances remain in the PAC uniform rules. Evidently, UP's 1986 Police Service (Uniform) Rules will soon be amended. But probably not those for the PAC. Others are kings of hearts.

The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. Views are personal

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RESTORE SANCTITY
THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Election omission' (IE, April 10). The Constitution provides for an independent Election Commission to conduct elections. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) provides for a moral restraint on candidates and political parties from indulging in electoral malpractices. In the first phase of elections, the EC's voice seems to be subdued. There have been concerns about executive overreach and violations of the MCC. The EC should restore the sanctity of the electoral process.
Anirudh Parashar, Solan

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Election omission' (IE, April 10). Once the election dates are announced, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) kicks in. However, of late, flouting the MCC has become more a norm than an exception. This is where the EC needs to step in. However, it's easy to blame the EC. The question remains: What more can the EC do beyond giving offending parties a rap on the knuckles? Electoral reforms have been hanging in Parliament for quite some time.
Vijai Pant Hempur.

HAPPY KASHMIR
THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Dear Home Minister' (IE, April 10). Yes, can we please help create a Kashmir where fathers get back home after a day's work, where mothers cuddle their children to sleep, where students don't lose their eyesight to pellets, where youth finds employment, where Kashmiriyat is celebrated, and where Articles 370 and

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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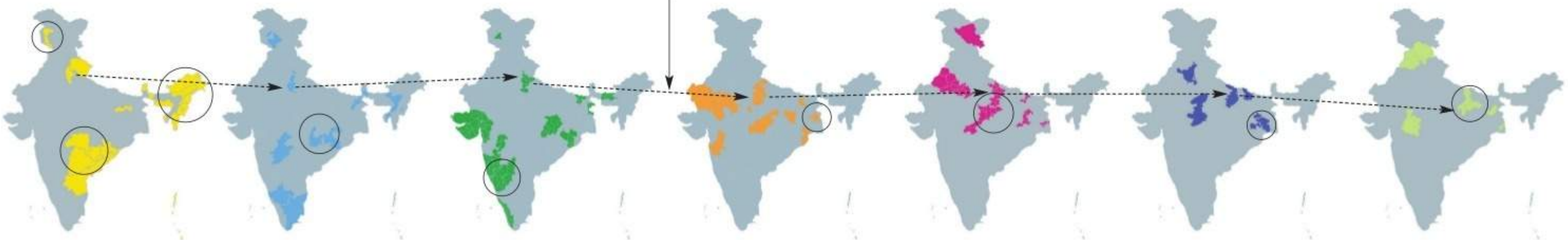
35A don't make our governments nervous? Can we have a happy Kashmir?
Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

FAMILIAR NEGLECT
THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The issue is healthcare' (IE, April 9). The Alma Ata declaration of "Health for all" in 1978 has just given political parties a tagline for their manifestos. But health has never been a political priority A "no healthcare no vote" campaign might help to remind parties of the issue.
Piyush Supekar, Ahmednagar

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT
VOTER DECIDES
AS THE CANVASSING for the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections inches to a close, the editorial in *Organiser* notes that the voter is faced with two fundamental questions: Why to vote and how to vote. "Can we draw certain common parameters irrespective of ideological inclinations and political preferences so that we can nurture the healthy democratic practices," it asks. The editorial adds that people are talking more about delivery on programmes. So, a larger ideological perspective seems to be missing from the political scenario, it points out. "Of course, the delivery factor is important as mere lip service under the garb of a sacred document is not good enough. For instance, most of the promises made in the 2019 Manifesto by Congress are the same or the improvised versions of the promises like Direct Income Support to farmers, One Rank One Pension, Universal Household Electrification etc were made in the 2004 and 2009 manifestos of the grand old party. Why the Congress could not deliver on those

Local festivals, LWE, ease of moving forces, even lunar cycles — what's considered in mapping security

UP, the electorally most crucial state, will see voting for its 80 seats spread across all 7 phases — 8 seats in Phase 1, and 8, 10, 13, 14, 14, and 13 respectively in subsequent phases. As voting moves from west to east, so will security forces



<p>PHASE 1 APRIL 11, 91 SEATS IN 20 STATES</p> <p>The biggest challenge — the Naxal heartland, areas along LoC and IB in J&K, the hilly and/or restive areas in the Northeast — is best tackled early, when legs are the freshest and minds most alert</p>	<p>PHASE 2 APRIL 18, 97 SEATS IN 13 STATES</p> <p>Even lunar cycles are taken into account for areas such as Chhattisgarh, where the forces may have to move by night. April 19, for example, is a full moon night, with moonrise a little after 6 pm</p>	<p>PHASE 3 APRIL 23, 115 SEATS IN 14 STATES</p> <p>Forces deployed in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the first phase will move to secure contiguous states in the phases that follow: Tamil Nadu in Phase 2, and Karnataka and Kerala in Phases 2, 3</p>	<p>PHASE 4 APRIL 29, 71 SEATS IN 9 STATES</p> <p>To reduce unnecessary movement of forces, CRPF has worked out deployment patterns in a way that forces in the Northeast move to West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, but not any farther</p>	<p>PHASE 5 MAY 6, 51 SEATS IN 7 STATES</p> <p>To the extent possible, after balancing other considerations, elections in contiguous areas are bunched together. Example: this north-south axis from Nepal to Maharashtra through UP, MP</p>	<p>PHASE 6 MAY 12, 59 SEATS IN 7 STATES</p> <p>There was a time, says a senior CRPF officer, when forces would travel across the country from perhaps West Bengal to Gujarat. A more scientific approach has been used over the last 2 elections</p>	<p>PHASE 7 MAY 19, 59 SEATS IN 8 STATES</p> <p>The way forces will move across UP and Bihar during the course of the election will help to concentrate them in the high population-density Purvanchal area, where Phases 6, 7 will be held</p>
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SIMPLY PUT

Anatomy of a giant election

The world's biggest, most complex democratic exercise begins today. Here's what it takes to organise, secure, and conduct India's Lok Sabha elections

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

IN 2017, when Chinese forces moved on the Doklam plateau, India moved close to 60,000 soldiers to China-India-Bhutan tri-junction on the Sikkim border leading to days of a standoff.

Between April 11 and May 19, India will be moving more than 2.5 lakh central forces personnel on over 25 helicopters, over 500 trains, 17,500 vehicles, hundreds of horses and mules and scores of boats and ships at a cost of more than Rs 200 crore. These are the logistics of organising and securing elections in the world's largest democracy.

Getting 90 crore people to vote across 10 lakh booths in 543 seats spread over 33 lakh sq km takes months of planning, gathering of resources, meticulous coordination and exceptional management skills. Given India's diversity, caste and communal fissures and threats from insurgency and terrorism, it is a huge logistical challenge.

In the last two months, three key players in poll management — the Home Ministry, the Election Commission and the Central Reserve Police Force — have sat in multiple meetings thrashing out the challenges, solutions and the final plan.

Who does what
The EC remains the supreme body or-

ganising the elections beginning from deciding the schedule to allocation of resources and coordinating civilian and uniformed manpower. The Home Ministry provides the security force companies in consultation with the EC and ties up with other ministries such as Railways and state governments for movement of forces. The CRPF is the nodal force coordinating deployment and movement of all forces on election duty.

"General elections entail a very large movement of central and state police forces. As per different requirements of different states in different phases, the movement of these forces is planned and it is as per the orders of the Election Commission and the Home Ministry. The movement entails arranging for trains, meals and accommodation of the jawans, their briefing and familiarisation of particular theatres. It is a very complex exercise and requires exactness and precision so that the forces are available at the right time and at the right place," CRPF DG R R Bhatnagar told *The Indian Express*.

The EC has a secretariat headquartered in Delhi, but this set-up is not enough to conduct elections on this scale. The Constitution provides that the President or the Governor of a state is obliged to provide all "such staff as may be necessary" for the EC to conduct elections. The expression "such staff as may be necessary" was at the centre of controversy in 1993, before the Supreme Court decided that the

EC and the government should jointly decide the staff and forces required for conduct of elections. Since then, it has always been done through mutual consultation.

Fixing the calendar

The first challenge is deciding the dates. "Every state has unique culture and religious practices. So, if you plan to hold elections in the Northeast on one date, you have to ensure there is no festival in any of the seven states on that date. And each state has different festivals. So the EC has very few dates to begin with," said a senior CRPF officer who has been part of several poll meetings. An EC official agreed: "We have to avoid polling not only on festivals celebrated nationally like Holi, but also those celebrated regionally. For instance, in Assam we cannot have polling during Rongali Bihu," an EC official said.

Drawing up a list of public holidays, therefore, is the first step. The EC also tries to keep regular religious practices in mind while narrowing down on dates. "Since the Northeast states have a significant population which goes to church every Sunday, we don't keep polling on that day. Similarly, for Kerala, where a number of voters are Muslim, we avoid Fridays."

The EC also factors in examination schedule and weather patterns. "For example, states that receive early monsoon rains like the Northeast have to wind up voting by April," the EC officer added.

According to a former Chief Election Commissioner, the EC normally prepares a number of dummy calendars with different sets of dates. This is done to ensure secrecy. "We have to coordinate with agencies and state governments to execute this mammoth exercise and yet ensure the actual dates remain a secret. This is why we make arrangements in a way that will suit all dummy schedules. The final one can be selected by the EC shortly before announcement," said an EC officer.

Forces on the move

Once the EC gives out a list of available dates, the Home Ministry and forces sit down to chart out the best possible schedule that will suit force movement. Depending on what forces can achieve with minimum movement and least use of resources, poll schedules are decided.

"Forces deployed in Tripura cannot move to Kanyakumari in the next phase. Distances matter. So schedules have to be worked out depending on availability of forces in nearby regions to ensure minimum movement. There has to be enough time between phases to ensure smooth movement and optimum rest," said the officer.

Given that insurgency-hit areas will require fresh legs, districts affected by left-wing extremist violence and secessionist militancy in Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast will vote first. So will the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands and

the hills of Uttarakhand. "Difficult areas will require greater concentration of forces. Islands of Andaman and Lakshadweep require days of travel. Troops from Kolkata and Tamil Nadu move over three to four days in ships. Then all islands have to be covered in ferries and boats. In the hills, going up requires time. So, once they are done, movement of forces becomes smoother and faster," another senior CRPF officer said.

For Chhattisgarh, even lunar cycles have been kept in mind while drawing up schedules. "In certain parts of Naxal-affected Chhattisgarh, we need forces to make movements in the night on foot. For that we need a moonrise between 5-7 pm, so that it sets early morning giving us a full moonlit night," the officer said.

Schedules for the next few phases have also been decided based on availability and mobility of forces. Forces deployed in UP will move eastward laterally until the last phase of elections. In Bihar, forces will move from south to east and then laterally to west. This will help concentrate forces in the last two phases of elections in UP's Purvanchal and West Bihar districts which have high population density.

The CRPF has worked out deployment to ensure that forces now in the Northeast will later move on to West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, and not any farther. The companies deployed in UP will be there through the entire schedule. Those in Andhra and Telangana will move to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the next few phases.

"In the last two elections, deployment has been worked out scientifically. For example, the units which secure polls on April 11 will get free only by April 13 to board a train and reach his destination on April 14. After some rest, they will be available for the next phase on April 18. But the third phase is on April 23, with little gap. So what we have deployed forces for the first three phases now itself. Barring a few states like UP, the forces deployed in the first phase will be moved to secure the fourth phase giving enough time for movement, rest and recu-

peration," the CRPF officer said.

Forces on the ground

Time and energy are also consumed in arranging logistics such as accommodation and food for the forces. "The state government provides accommodation. But suppose it's a school in Sukma, Chhattisgarh, we have to turn it into a fortified camp with *morchas* and sandbags," a CRPF officer engaged in deployment said.

It's also not enough to secure booths and accommodation. In areas such as Chhattisgarh and Odisha, even roads have to be secured. "Road opening parties would be needed for all movements in LWE areas. Beyond that we will need people to keep an eye on the roads. For that local units have sought civilian help and tied up with truck and bus drivers and regular commuters to alert us if anything amiss is noticed," the officer said.

Every state has force coordinators and state police poll coordinators who take care of all the logistics as forces move from one place to another. Their job is humongous as they are not merely handling the 2.5 lakh central forces soldiers but also state police which is in comparable numbers and moving.

To ensure time is not wasted in cooking, CRPF has tied up with IRCTC to provide food for troops moving in trains. Earlier, trains would stop at stations and troops would cook on platforms throwing the entire deployment schedule haywire, said sources.

On the ground, things have to be dealt with at rather micro level. Every booth is a unique challenge requiring "anywhere between five to 100 men to secure them." "We use institutional memory to deal with this. A mapping of all violence and troubles at booths has been done. A study of what solutions were worked out in the past and what were the results have been made. Based on this, deployment has been done and preventive measures taken," said an officer.

Then there are booths where no roads reach. Both poll officials and troops have to reach these places on mules or on foot. "In Arunachal, there are booths where it takes three days of trekking to reach. Even booths which are accessible by choppers, have to be first secured by troops in case they fall in a trouble zone. So troops have to walk," the officer said.

Personnel deployed on poll duty step down from a ferry on the Brahmaputra in Jorhat, Assam, on Tuesday. AP



TELLING NUMBERS

For an electorate equal to the combined population of Europe & Bangladesh

- 2.5 lakh** Central troops deployed on poll security. That's 4 times the 60,000 soldiers who were moved to the China-India-Bhutanese tri-junction during the 2017 standoff at Doklam.
- Rs 200 crore** The cost of transporting the troops. They will use 25 helicopters, over 500 trains, 17,500 vehicles, hundreds of horses and mules and scores of boats and ships.
- 10 lakh** Number of booths around which these troops will move, part of 543 constituencies spread over 33 lakh sq km. On Thursday, 91 of these constituencies will go to polls.
- 90 crore** The number of voters enrolled for this Lok Sabha election. For context, that is roughly equal to the combined population of Europe (74 crore) and Bangladesh (16 crore).

