



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Health of a nation

In election season, parties promise universal health care.
But it will need to be defined and monitored



K SRINATH REDDY

TURBULENCE AHEAD

The health and competitiveness of aviation sector needs to be restored. There is much at stake

INDIA MAY BE the fastest growing aviation market in the world, clocking double digit growth over the last four years, but the sector is in a shambles. The turmoil in Jet Airways, the country's oldest listed private sector airline, has forced local lenders, who have taken control for now, to engage with the government to find a solution to ensure that the airline which has an accumulated debt over half a billion USD does not go the way of Kingfisher Airlines. The full service airline, which exemplified global service standards earlier, is now a pale shadow of itself. Its fleet strength is down to 14, or one-fifth of its original size, after non-payment to lessors, leading to grounding of aircraft, and cancellations across its domestic and global network. There is mounting pressure from over 23,000 employees of the airline, especially pilots, who have not been paid for the past few months, fuel suppliers and infrastructure providers, besides passengers who had booked in advance and are now grounded.

A rescue effort has been initiated by the lenders led by SBI after the airline's promoter, Naresh Goyal, agreed to exit with the airline's partner, Etihad, which owns 24 per cent, and a couple of other investors showing interest in a bid process which is underway. The lenders have promised to infuse Rs 1,500 crore after a new investor comes in. But in an election season, any such process to salvage the fortunes of a firm could well be fractious, and bad optics too, if another company is allowed to go under at a time when the incumbent government is under attack for not creating adequate jobs. A case in point is Air India, which did not find a single buyer even after it was put on the block by the government last year. It is an irony that the fastest growing aviation market is dotted with airlines which are bleeding, including the market leader — a fallout of mindless capacity expansion, high fuel and operational costs, predatory pricing and regulatory failure. The longer the issue festers, be it Jet or other industry players, and the longer it takes to address the structural issues of the aviation sector, including the distortions, inefficiencies and the foreign investment hurdles in a capital intensive industry, besides the burden of taxes, the higher will be the economic costs.

Like telecom and financial services, aviation has been a stand-out sector after liberalisation. There is much at stake in ensuring the health and competitive spirit of this industry given that it can be an economic force multiplier with a clear knock-on impact in terms of creating jobs.

THE WORLD HEALTH Organisation (WHO) sought to highlight the importance and urgency of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) when choosing this year's theme for the World Health Day. It called for "UHC — for everyone everywhere". This echoes the target set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that all countries must achieve UHC by 2030. India, too, accepted that target date while signing up to the SDGs.

How countries will be measured for success in reaching that target depends on how UHC is defined and monitored. The WHO states that UHC "means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care."

Interpretation, however, has varied on what services are to be universally provided to begin with and what level of financial protection is considered acceptable. Should UHC commence by offering the same set of services to the entire population and progressively expand the service package to all as more resources accrue? Or, should UHC first prioritise certain services to the poor and vulnerable sections, to ensure both access and affordability, while leaving the rest of the population for coverage at a later stage? Another option is to provide a basic package of services to all, with full financial protection, along with an additional set of publicly funded services to the poor and vulnerable sections. These are all possible beginnings in the path of progressive universalisation that ultimately leads to UHC for everyone, with levels of service and cost coverage that meet the health needs of all persons without financial hardship to any.

To meet the standard set by the WHO and the SDGs, UHC has to include all persons in a population, even if the service package is modest to begin with. In terms of financial protection, the WHO recommends that out of pocket expenditure (OOPE) on health should not exceed 15-20 per cent. This requires a high level of public financing. Even

countries which follow an insurance model have a high level of public funding to support several health services. Mandated contributory insurance model will not work in India which has over 90 per cent of the workforce in the informal sector.

How does India measure up presently and how can we achieve the 2030 target? OOPE is still around 63 per cent, despite several government health insurance and benefit schemes. Impoverishment due to unaffordable healthcare expenditure affects 7 per cent of our population, as noted even in recent national surveys. Healthcare induced financial distress is a leading cause of suicide among farmers. Access to health services varies widely among states and between rural and urban populations. Qualified healthcare providers are in short supply nationally and those available are maldistributed, with marked density differences across regions. It's a long way before we reach the base camp of UHC, even as the ascent to the 2030 summit seems very steep.

Even the governments which earnestly wish to implement UHC will face the challenge of exercising choices within the limited budgets. First, they need to get the priorities right within the funding available. Primary health care has to be recognised as the foundational basis of an efficient and equitable healthcare system. It has the highest number of beneficiaries (the whole population), provides a wide range of services and can prevent a large spillover into hospitals for advanced care through effective prevention and timely care.

What do we need to do? Public financing is the lifeline of UHC. So, we should raise public spending on health to at least 2.5 per cent by 2022 and 3 per cent by 2024. Both these are within the term of the government we elect in 2019. Will it deliver? This electoral season has seen UHC being promised in one form or another by most political parties, either in published manifestos or proclaimed promises. Not only the national parties but the state-level contestants in Andhra Pradesh, too, are competing in promises of good and affordable healthcare. Post-June, the electorate will see if health remains a priority.

Even the governments which earnestly wish to implement UHC will face the challenge of exercising choices within the limited budgets. First, they need to get the priorities right within the funding available. Primary health care has to be recognised as the foundational basis of an efficient and equitable healthcare system. It has the highest number of beneficiaries (the whole population), provides a wide range of services and can prevent a large spillover into hospitals for advanced care through effective prevention and timely care. While establishing seamless bidi-

rectional linkages with advanced care facilities, primary care needs to be the fulcrum of UHC. Emergency health services are also a high priority, to provide the link between these services and also lifesaving care on location and during transport. All such services have to be provided free of cost.

What about people who need advanced care? Even at the start, UHC has to cover several services like commonly needed surgeries and treatments that can protect life. The component of advanced care expands as more resources accrue, but not at the expense of primary care. Government funded programmes should ensure that financial barriers should not stop access to needed advanced care. As UHC evolves, the poor and near-poor must get full cost coverage while others may seek protection through employer funded schemes or privately purchased insurance. Even for them, OOPE must remain low.

UHC has to be cashless at the point of care and health benefits under the programme have to be available for access anywhere in the country. The health work force has to be expanded to make available multi-layered, multi-skilled teams which can deliver the needed services. Basic and specialist doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and an array of allied health professionals need to be developed in large numbers and deployed across the country. This calls for expediting reforms in health professional education, cadre planning and incentives for rural postings. Strengthening of primary care infrastructure and district hospitals has to be a government priority. Free provision of essential drugs and diagnostics at public healthcare facilities will have an immediate impact on OOPE.

We have just a decade to go before we are measured for success in reaching the SDG target of UHC. More important, and even more immediate, is the need for elected governments to redeem the promises to the electorate. That account has to be presented to the people in 2024. Will UHC appear well on the way by then?

The writer is President, Public Health Foundation of India. Views are personal

THE SAGA OF BREXIT

Difficulties in arriving on terms of exit could have been foretold, but they're also a sign of a failure of leadership in UK

THE UNITED KINGDOM'S continuing confusion over its plans to implement an exit from the European Union is now tiring the world. It remains unclear if the EU's extension of the exit deadline from April 12 to October 31 will help clear the fog in the minds of British politicians about what they want — soft Brexit or hard Brexit; "Irish backstop" or hard border between British Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; another referendum or not. This is the second time the EU has given an extension — the first was from March 29 to April 12. While the new deadline has given some breathing space to the Conservative government of Theresa May, there is the humiliation of having to participate in the May 23 European Union elections, a condition on which the extension was granted. This means that British politicians on all sides of the debate, from the right and the left, will need to contest an election to a parliament in which, going by the Brexit referendum, more than half of British voters have no belief. Moreover, the results could end up complicating the options even more.

Prime Minister May has already suffered three ignominious defeats in Parliament over the exit plan negotiated by her government with the EU. The latest was on March 29, but she and what Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn described as her "zombie government" are still in office, even surviving a no-confidence motion earlier this year. Barring the most headline Brexiteers, everyone in the British Parliament seems to agree that leaving without a negotiated exit could create chaos. Therefore, failure to arrive at a political consensus on what that deal should be can only be a sign of a failure of leadership. Politics is, after all, the art of the possible.

Since June 2016 when Britain voted 52-48 to leave the European Union, it has been clear that the terms of the exit would always be the difficult part. For the other 26 members of the EU, the messy spectacle that the UK has made of itself over Brexit, should be discouragement enough from harbouring Brexit-like thoughts. Indeed, this is why the EU has imposed such strict conditions on the UK. The rest of the world wants the British to get on with it, so that they know what steps they have to take to bring their policies in line with the change. India, however, need not hold its breath. UK Foreign Office Minister Mark Fields told a parliamentary committee on foreign affairs of the British House of Commons that India was not in the first tier of countries with which a post-Brexit UK would conclude trade treaties, and that it would be far easier to finalise agreements with Australia and New Zealand.



GURU PRAKASH

NEW DALIT, NEW INDIA

Aspiration and assertion are at the core of the emerging politics of the community

THE DALIT DEBATE in India today has multiple layers. It is no longer viewed from the lens of affirmative action, politics of patronage and symbolism. Dalit thought has evolved with ever-changing social narratives and political landscapes. There are two vectors through which to decipher the Dalit imagination in the present context. One is contoured by aspirations and assertion and the other is well-defined within the paradigms of aggression and accommodativeness.

The emergence of Jignesh Mevani in Gujarat and Chandrashekar Azad in western Uttar Pradesh is one strand of the manifestation of assertion while the stories of Milind Kamble, Tina Dabi and Kanishka Kataria represent the aspirational component of the contemporary Dalit struggle. Every story is noteworthy and the field to capture the Dalit mind is competitively open.

These are individual examples but a profound history is being created at an institutional level. Milind Kamble deserves special mention as he has single-handedly woven a network of more than 5,000 micro, small, medium and mega Dalit entrepreneurs from across the country through his organisation, Dalit Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DICCI). He has been inspired by the American idea of Black Capitalism and is often found commenting on how there were a hundred business Obamas before the rise of one Barack Obama. His is indeed a huge achievement, bearing in mind the inertia and dependence of Dalits on state support and conventional model of constitutional safe-



The next generation's struggle will be defined by the demand for representation at various levels. This is not going to come exclusively through the Constitution, but also from a gradual evolution consciousness and self-corrective measures. DICCI and Tata corporations have together, for example, come out with a plan of affirmative action through which they handhold, support and create Dalit entrepreneurs.

guards like preferential treatment in education and employment.

The Mudra scheme, for example, has been a game-changer in this regard. As per the available data, SC beneficiaries from the scheme are 61.14 lakh and ST beneficiaries are 16.78 lakh; total accounts of SCs and STs are 77.92 lakh. These beneficiaries form 22.34 per cent of the total and the disbursement amount is Rs 19,433 crore under the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana. Kamble asks the Dalit youth to "be job givers, not job seekers". He is inspired by Babasaheb Ambedkar, who also was an ardent supporter of entrepreneurship. His immense scholarship in economics is a testament to the idea of how capital can be instrumental in defeating caste.

Representation is another significant cornerstone of the new Dalit imagination. Representation at critical decision-making leadership levels that is well beyond the symbolic "tick mark quota". That not a single cabinet secretary or a foreign secretary in the 70 years since Independence has been from the SC category cannot just be a matter of coincidence — it indicates institutional apathy. The number of vice chancellors, professors, think tankers and authors is another sad story. The resistance over the roster system in universities was evidence of this struggle for representation. The government finally had to bring in an ordinance to contain the damage done by the Supreme Court. The higher judiciary is yet another destination that scores extremely low on the scale of representation. There has not been a single Dalit

judge in the apex court since 2010. Apart from the statutorily-mandated reservation in the lower judiciary, there is no mechanism to ensure space for the marginalised on the bench. The media, both print and electronic, show a dismal presence of Dalits. The absence of Dalits in newsrooms ought to be a matter of collective concern. Diversity of perspectives is significant in such places, where opinions are created.

The next generation's struggle will be defined by the demand for representation at various levels. This is not going to come exclusively through the Constitution, but also from a gradual evolution of consciousness and self-corrective measures. DICCI and Tata corporations have together, for example, come out with a plan of affirmative action through which they handhold, support and create Dalit entrepreneurs. It does not stop here. Once they are trained, they are provided with a seed fund support to commence with their own ventures until they eventually join the Tata business ecosystem.

The New Dalit is now readying for the battle to become a stakeholder and an active participant in the New India story. She will not be bullied. The old structures of power are crumbling. The fresh wave of energy and enthusiasm will guide the Dalit narrative in a positive direction and articulate ideas of integration.

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FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



APRIL 15, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NANDA DEVI THREAT
SOME FORMER TOP officials of the government have confirmed that a CIA nuclear device was put on Nanda Devi, and later on Nanda Kot, with the express approval of the Government of India. According to them, Indian scientists, intelligence men and other personnel were involved with the project that was meant to record Chinese rocket telemetry and atomic tests. R N Kaw, former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and P N Haksar, former principal secretary to the former prime minister, Indira Gandhi, said that the Indian government was associated with the collection and processing of the data from the device, and the informa-

tion was shared with the US government.
TARZAN IN TROUBLE
JOHNNY WEISSMULLER, WHO starred as Tarzan, is now hospitalised and at times "screams, hollers, makes Tarzan-like calls", and frightens hospital employees, according to a court petition seeking a conservatorship over him. The petition, filed yesterday at the Los Angeles Superior Court by Jack E Staggs, asks that Staggs be appointed as Weissmuller's guardian. Staggs contends that Weissmuller (74) is suffering from a deteriorating chronic mental health condition. Staggs requested a conservatorship so that he can move Weissmuller from the hospi-

tal where he now resides, to a mental care facility.
JANATA CONFERENCE
THE JANATA PARTY president, Chandra Shekhar, is proposing to convene a conference of state chief ministers in Calcutta next week in an attempt to evolve a national consensus on major issues. Not only the chief ministers belonging to the Janata Party but non-Janata chief ministers are also invited to the conference. The conference is likely to be attended by Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, Devraj Urs of Karnataka, Prakash Singh Badal of Punjab, P K Vasudevan Nair of Kerala and Chenna Reddy of Andhra Pradesh.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The US accusations of violating press freedom and cracking down on dissenters are always against non-Western countries. If WikiLeaks targeted countries like China, Russia and Iran, the US and its major allies will cheer in chorus and label Assange a hero who opposes autocracy.” — GLOBAL TIMES CHINA

Poll machine and the people

Aam aadmi, not just government officials, should be part of the conduct of elections to end distrust



M RAJIVLOCHAN

ELECTIONS IN INDIA are conducted entirely by the machinery of the government, which is taken over for the purpose by the Election Commission. This has resulted in the common people of the country having no experience of how polling actually takes place. Keeping the common people away from the actual conduct of the election has provided a chance to interested parties to make wild claims about how vitiated the entire electoral process is. At the same time, of the nearly 50 lakh government employees who are shanghaied for poll duty, many feel extremely aggrieved and go to great lengths to get out of the duty. This distancing of the public from the election process needs to stop. Every polling booth requires at least three polling staff and there are nearly 10 lakh polling booths planned for the 2019 national elections. If even half of these people were to come from among the common people of India, it would mean that in every national election, 15 lakh people would get to observe the electoral process from up and close. This would go a long way in ensuring a strong voice among the people that stands in support of the electoral process and becomes an essential foil to the negativity about elections that is routinely spewed by all political parties.

A major result of the distancing of the public from the conduct of elections has been a growing sense of distrust of the electoral process itself. The purported grounds of distrust are many. It began with people saying that the EVMs could be hacked. Yet, no one could ever prove such a wild claim. The distrust becomes possible because once in a rare while a machine has malfunctioned. The Election Commission responded by increasing the safeguards and the number of observers and instituting a VVPAT for generating a voter-verified paper audit trail. Yet the ac-

cusations of wrongdoing in the electoral process continue to grow.

Internationally, the Indian elections are regarded as one of the fairest in the world. The news magazine, *The Economist*, wondered in 2014 just how was it that India was so good at organising elections. And in 2019, it describes the slow pace of Indian elections as being integral to the code of conduct. In the general elections of 2014, the UNDP facilitated the visit of delegates from 20 countries ranging from members of the League of Arab Nations and Kenya to Nepal and Bhutan to witness the electoral process. At home, though, the atmosphere has steadily vitiated. No proof is needed; people only need to presume that there is no smoke without fire and those interested in undermining India's elections can create the necessary smoke.

There is no reason to recruit the personnel, who are deployed for conducting the election process, from only government employees. The Representation of Peoples Act merely imposes a restriction that any person who is employed by a candidate or has worked on his behalf cannot be assigned poll duty. But anyone else can do the job. And that someone else need not be a salaried government official.

All the Commission really needs to do is to reach out to volunteers some months before the elections and verify that they are not employed by any candidate. Training volunteers should not be a problem. All this is within the letter of the law.

It is when people don't know what is happening and the electoral process becomes a black box, that seeds of doubt are easy to sow. For political parties in India, attacking the Election Commission has become synonymous with attacking the government, even though the Commission today is completely independent of the government of the day.

The precautions taken by the Election Commission keep on increasing, including digital and policing measures of all varieties. At the moment, what is lacking is the human touch. The Election Commission now needs to co-opt the common people of India to bolster the legitimacy of India's electoral processes.

The writer is professor, Contemporary History, Panjab University, Chandigarh



CR Sasikummar

Promises to the farmers

Whichever party comes to power at the Centre, India is making a policy shift to direct income support



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH BY ASHOK GULATI AND RITIKA JUNEJA

THE FESTIVAL OF democracy started with the first phase of polling on April 11. Ideally, it should be celebrated like Holi, forgetting past enmity and embracing each other with love. But, unfortunately, it is being fought like the battle of Kurukshetra in the epic, Mahabharata. All the weapons of politics — *saam*, *daam*, *dand*, *bhed* — are being used. *Saam* reaches for accord with other parties, *daam* uses money power to buy votes, *dand* uses the CBI to raid the camps of opponents, and *bhed* divides voters on caste/religious lines.

Voters are in a quandary as the political parties have promised the moon in their manifestos. They know that most of these promises will be forgotten once the elections are over. Yet, one must look at manifestos which reflect the best intentions of the parties. We examine some of these with respect to farmers and the poor, normally agri-labourers. Given that the full list is too extensive, we focus only on the big ticket promises.

BJP's *sankalp patra* (manifesto) promises to double farmers' income by 2022-23, a reiteration of its earlier promise. Under that heading, it lists 29 promises/schemes. The most notable one is PM-Kisan (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana), which will be extended to all farm families. It promises to give each farm family Rs 6,000 per year. With an estimated 14.6 crore farm families as per the 2015-16 survey, this would cost about Rs 87,600 crore per annum. This may be the largest direct income support (DIS) by the government of India (GoI). But as a NABARD survey on financial inclusion

showed, the average farmer household income was Rs 8,931 per month in 2015-16, which by now must have crossed Rs 10,000 per month (or Rs 1,20,000 per annum) in nominal terms, after adjusting for inflation. So, a support of Rs 6,000 per year is a meagre five per cent support. Doubling of farmers' income surely requires much more than this DIS.

The Dalwai Committee set up by the Narendra Modi government in 2016 had made it clear that the promise to double farmers' income is, in real terms, with the base year of 2015-16. It calculated that it would need 10.4 per cent growth per annum in real terms from 2016-17 to 2022-23 to double farmers' real incomes. The past record of growth in real incomes of farmers during 2002-03 to 2015-16 shows that they increased at 3.7 per cent per annum, and this growth follows very closely the growth in agri-GDP. The Modi government's five year record of agri-GDP is pretty low at 2.9 per cent per annum. That means for the remaining four years, the growth in farmers' real incomes has to be almost 15 per cent per annum. This is next to impossible given the existing set of policies. No wonder the Congress party calls it the Modi government's *jumla*.

We feel that if India achieves a 4 to 5 per cent growth in agri-GDP on a sustainable basis, it would need to export aggressively lest it creates glut at home, adversely impacting farmers' incomes. But the Modi government's record on agri-exports is most pathetic. From a peak of about \$43 billion agri-exports in 2013-14, that it inherited from UPA 2, till date, its exports have remained below that peak — meaning negative growth all through the five years of Modi government. This is one major reason behind the farm distress.

What was expected from the main political parties were bold promises to reform agri-markets. But the BJP manifesto is quite silent on this. In that sense, the Congress manifesto scores better by explicitly promising to reform the Essential Commodities Act, repealing the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee, freeing exports, etc. How they will do all that is yet to be seen, but at least the thinking and intent is in the right direc-

tion. Also, the Congress promises Rs 72,000 per year to the bottom 20 per cent families under its NRAY scheme, which may include many small and marginal farmers, tenants, agri-labourers. It is likely to cost the fisc Rs 3.6 lakh crore, almost four times what the BJP's PM-Kisan will cost. Obviously, everyone is asking where this money will come from: That's not spelt out in the manifesto. Since the Congress manifesto also gives a time-frame under which it will be implemented, it seems serious about it.

In both cases, it is clear that India is on the road to a major shift in policy towards DIS, triggered by Telangana's Rythu Bandhu and followed by Odisha's KALIA scheme. This move towards DIS can be a tectonic shift in policy if it subsumes at least food and fertiliser subsidies, and, if possible, power subsidies at the state level. Currently, the food subsidy is Rs 1.84 lakh crore with pending bills of FCI of Rs 1.3 lakh crore as on April 1, 2019. Fertiliser subsidy is Rs 75,000 crore with pending bills of about Rs 30,000 crore. If all these are merged and given as DIS to identified beneficiaries, that would be the wisest move by whichever party comes to power. Incidentally, much of this was recommended to the Modi government in 2015 by the Shanta Kumar panel report, a high-powered committee set up by the Modi government itself. Maybe it is time to pick it up and implement it.

There are many other promises: The BJP promises zero-interest loans to farmers up to Rs 1 lakh. The trouble with such schemes is that they lead to massive diversion of agri-loans to non-agri-purposes. The Modi government had made a big move in revamping crop insurance in 2016, but its rollout suffered teething problems. The test of the existing scheme would be in a drought year, but making it voluntary may shrink its coverage. There is the promise of investing massive amounts in agriculture (Rs 25 lakh crore) without much details. Such promises remain meaningless. But who cares, it is time to see the dance of democracy!

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VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

CRISIS ZONE

MUNIR AKRAM, A former Pakistani ambassador to the UN, lays out in an article in *Dawn* on April 14 the many hurdles to peace in South Asia, of amity between Indian and Pakistan.

He first says that the recent crisis in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack was a "baptism by fire" for the Imran Khan government and adds: "In the event, the Pakistani leader emerged as a responsible statesman while Modi exposed himself as a rash warmonger." But Akram disagrees with the Pakistan PM's assertion that if re-elected, Narendra Modi will be strong enough to engage meaningfully with Pakistan. The crux of his argument is that in the current global geopolitical scenario, with the US and China ranged against each other in a "new Cold War", "peace is difficult".

He argues: "A new Cold War is underway between the US and China. The Washington 'establishment' views India as an essential ally in its global competition with China. After the Pulwama suicide attack, US National Security Adviser John Bolton immediately proclaimed India's "right to self-defence", providing New Delhi a virtual "carte blanche" to proceed with its threatened military action, irrespective of the inherent risk of a wider Pakistan-India war. Responsibility to avoid a conflict — by acting against Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) — was placed on Pakistan."

Currently, argues Akram, US hostility towards Pakistan is tempered by "Washington's need for Pakistan's support to US-Taliban dialogue. Yet, here too, Islamabad's help is perhaps being taken for granted."

The article places the onus of peace in the Subcontinent on South Asia, and argues that New Delhi's ego about the Belt and Road Initiative stands in the way: "Peace could come to the entire region if India decides to become a part of the Asian 'order' being created under the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Unfortunately, Modi and the BJP's obsessive ambition to emerge as China's 'equal' has propelled them towards an alliance with America and may consign South Asia to remain a 'zone of crisis' in the New Cold War."

BRITAIN'S CALLOUSNESS

THE APRIL 13 editorial in *Dawn* is something of a thought experiment, an exploration of a counterfactual triggered by British Prime Minister Theresa May's statement expressing "regret" but not apologising for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. It says: the inability to cleanly apologise for the brutality and callousness that marked British rule reveals, unsurprisingly, that lessons from history are not always easy to learn. The old apathy laced with bouts of cruelty towards the 'natives' seems to

have never left South Asia though the British went home more than 70 years ago. From Srinagar to Trivandrum, from Quetta to Dhaka, the promise of real freedom has eluded the quest for democracy in the successor countries, while many of the trappings of colonial high-handedness were quickly adopted as the norm on the mottled dawn of Independence by the new rulers."

The bloodletting at Amritsar, the editorial argues, was a reaction to the Hindu-Muslim unity forged by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mohandas Gandhi with the Lucknow pact of 1916. "Some scholars have averred that the history of un-partitioned India would have been truly rewarding had the British decided to leave in 1919 — as a reward, if for no other reason, for the sacrifices that Indians of different religious hues had made for the war effort," the editorial conjectures.

It concludes by saying "The colonial era may have ended but laws from that period still dog India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, sometimes enforced by the military, occasionally by civilian rulers, and increasingly so by state-backed mobs, which is an innovation on how the British crushed the quest for truer freedoms."

PORTS FOR NEPAL

THE APRIL 11 editorial in *The Himalayan Times*

calls for Kathmandu to draw closer to China and the Belt and Road Initiative to boost Nepal's economy. "Nepal and China are all set to sign the protocol of the Nepal-China Transit Transport Agreement (TTA) during President Bidhya Devi Bhandari's upcoming visit to China, where she is scheduled to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRFIC). President Bhandari is paying her first ever official visit to the northern neighbour at the invitation of her Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on April 24," according to the editorial.

The agreement, which will allow landlocked Nepal access to Chinese ports, has been three years in the making. The implications of the agreement, and Nepal's increasing closeness to and dependence on China have obvious implications for India-Nepal relations — an issue the editorial assiduously avoids. It concludes by calling for the Nepal business community and state to work towards increasing Chinese investment: "With the right policy in place, Nepal can also attract more Chinese investment to produce goods at competitive prices for export. This way, containers entering Nepal loaded with imported goods will not have to return empty. With China ready to link Nepal with a railway line in the near future under the Belt and Road Initiative, the TTA will be a milestone in enhancing trade with countries of the Far East and Europe."

SS Paul, Nadia

APOLOGY IS DUE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Sorry, not sorry' (IE, April 12). The Baisakhi festival reminds Indians, especially Punjabis, of a tragedy that occurred 100 years ago — the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar. The Government of India must press upon British government to tender an official apology for this incident, which involved killing of hundreds of innocents in a closed compound. The British prime minister has expressed regret for the incident but the country has not yet issued a formal apology.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

NOT SO BENIGN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The importance of IUML' (IE, April 11). The writer paints a soft picture of the Indian Union Muslim League. To take up issues concerning ones own community is indeed a commendable endeavour. But, at the same time, the fact that religion dominates the day-to-day life of

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

COARSE DEBATE

THIS REFERS TO the reports, 'Supreme Court rejects Centre objections to Rafale deal papers' and 'PM targets Rahul' (IE, April 11). The reports show how Indian politics has plunged to a new low. The Congress president calls the prime minister a thief and the latter alleges that the former is a liar. This creates a sense of mistrust and polarisation. Issues related to unemployment, inflation, climate change and problems of the economy have been relegated to the margins of the discourse.

Gopal Nathani, Gurugram

REBUFF TO CENTRE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Supreme Court rejects Centre's objections to Rafale deal papers' (IE, April 11). The Court's decision is a firm and necessary rebuff to the Central government's attempts to de-legitimise all investigative journalism and invoke the Official Secret Act against journalists for exposing corruption in the Rafale deal.

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. THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

the Muslim community is an indicator of the community's myriad problems. Waynad has the lowest literacy rate in Kerala and the madrasa education system does not prepare the students to join the mainstream, either socially or economically. The Muslim League has joined hands with Jamait-e-Islami and Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI), both of which are often seen as fundamentalist organisations.

Partha Guha Ray, via e-mail

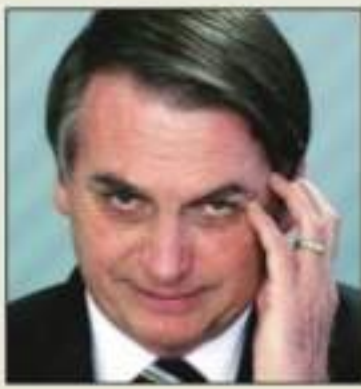
PRESSURE IS ON

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A debate has two sides' (IE, April 11). Since elections are taking place in six phases and the declaration of results is still a good 40 days away, the impact of Balakot will gradually die down. Other issues are bound to come to the surface, whether the ruling party likes it or not. Yes, the Opposition does not have any answer to the BJP's nationalism plank — their efforts to show a united face has not made much impact. However, it should keep raising issues like unemployment and the farm crisis.

Bal Govind, Noida

12 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



The Brazilian President

BRAZIL

Bolsonaro raises eyebrows saying Holocaust can be forgiven

Jerusalem, Rio de Janeiro: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro drew veiled rebukes from Israel on Saturday after saying the Nazi genocide of the Jews during World War Two could be forgiven. The far-right Bolsonaro made a solidarity visit to Israel last month during which he raised eyebrows by asserting, after a tour of the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem, that the Nazis were "leftists". Addressing a group of Brazilian evangelicals on Thursday, Bolsonaro said: "We can forgive, but we can't forget. That's my phrase. Those who forget their past are condemned not to have a future." Israel's President Reuven Rivlin condemned the statement.

SUDAN

Protesters submit demands to military

Khartoum: Sudanese protest organisers have presented demands to the country's new military rulers, urging the creation of a civilian government, the group spearheading demonstrations said. Thousands remained encamped outside Khartoum's army headquarters overnight to keep up the pressure on a military council that took power after ousting veteran leader Omar al-Bashir on Thursday. A 10-member delegation representing the protesters delivered their demands during talks late Saturday, according to a statement by umbrella group the Alliance for Freedom and Change.

MADAGASCAR

Measles epidemic kills over 1,200

Ambalavao: Babies wail as a nurse tries to reassure mothers who have come to vaccinate their children. They fear a measles epidemic that has killed more than 1,200 people in this island nation where many are desperately poor. As Madagascar faces its largest measles outbreak ever and cases soar well beyond 115,000, resistance to vaccinating children is not the driving force. Measles cases are rising in the US and other parts of the world, in part the result of misinformation that makes some parents balk at a crucial vaccine.

AUSTRALIA

One dead after shooting outside nightclub

Sydney: A drive-by shooting outside a nightclub in the Australian city of Melbourne inflicted "horrific injuries" that killed a security guard and wounded three men, police said on Sunday, but there was no suggestion yet that the attack was terror-related. Australia has some of the world's toughest gun control laws, adopted after its worst mass murder, when a gunman killed 35 people at Port Arthur in the island state of Tasmania in 1996.



WORLD'S LARGEST PLANE MAKES 1ST TEST FLIGHT

The world's largest airplane, built by Stratolaunch, takes off on its first test flight in Mojave, California, on Saturday. Reuters

■ The world's largest airplane, featuring two fuselages and six Boeing 747 engines, has made its first test flight in California. The plane has a wingspan of 117 metres, the length of an American football field.

■ The aircraft was built by Stratolaunch, a company set up by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, to provide a more flexible way to deploy satellites. But Allen died last year, so the future of the company is uncertain.

■ The plane is supposed to provide a more flexible way to deploy satellites. It is designed to carry into space a rocket that would in turn ignite to deploy satellites. This would allow launches from runways.



The site of the crash in Lukla, Nepal, where a small plane hit a parked helicopter while taking off on Sunday. Reuters

Nepal plane hits helicopter while taking off, 3 killed

GOPAL SHARMA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 14

A SMALL plane operated by a private airline in Nepal hit a parked helicopter on Sunday while preparing to take off in a mountainous area near Mount Everest, killing three people including a co-pilot, an airport official said. The Twin Otter aircraft crashed into the helicopter at Tenzing Hillary Airport at Lukla, known as the gateway to the world's highest

mountain, 125 kilometres northeast of capital Kathmandu. The plane, operated by Summit Air, was not carrying passengers as it was trying to leave what is considered to be one of the world's most dangerous airports due to the shortness of its runway and its location surrounded by mountains. Officials said the cause of the incident was not immediately known. The dead included two security guards who were near the helicopter. REUTERS

Assange to cooperate with Sweden, fight US warrant, says lawyer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, APRIL 14

JULIAN ASSANGE will cooperate with Swedish authorities if they reopen a rape case against him but will continue to resist any bid to extradite him to the United States, his lawyer said Sunday. "We are absolutely happy to answer those queries if and when they come up," Jennifer Robinson told Sky News television about the rape claims. "The key issue at the moment is US extradition, which we have warned about for many years," she added.

The WikiLeaks founder is in custody in London awaiting sentencing for breaching his British bail conditions in 2012 by seeking refuge in Ecuador's London embassy. He was arrested at the embassy on Thursday after Ecuador gave him up, and is now also fighting a US extradition warrant relat-



The WikiLeaks founder is in custody in London awaiting sentencing for breaching his bail conditions. Reuters

ing to the release by WikiLeaks of a huge cache of official documents. The Australian has always denied the claims of sexual assault and rape in Sweden. The first expired in 2015 and the other was dropped in 2017, but the alleged rape victim has now asked for the case to be reopened. If Stockholm makes a formal extradition request, the British government will have to decide whether to consider it before or after that of the US.

7 children killed, 10 injured in Afghanistan blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KABUL, APRIL 14

SEVEN CHILDREN were killed and 10 more wounded Sunday when an unexploded mortar shell blew up in eastern Afghanistan, an official said. Assadullah Dawlatzai, the Laghman governor's spokesman, said the circumstances around how the children found the mortar and why it exploded were under investigation. All the victims were below the age of 15, he said. The blast occurred on the outskirts of Mehtarlam, the capital of Laghman province, east of Kabul.

CRACKDOWN ON TERROR FINANCING

FATF asks Pak to track all gold purchases

Pak told to restrict supply of jewellery to banned groups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 14

AN INTERNATIONAL terror financing watchdog has asked Pakistan to implement a new set of constraints in its crackdown against terror financing, including documenting and regulating all gold markets, a media report said on Sunday.

The finance ministry has reportedly received a new list of recommendations from the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which requires documentation of all gold markets and purchase and sale of gold in the country, Geo TV reported.

The FATF has asked Islamabad to collect data of all gold markets in the country and to restrict the sale and purchase of gold items using cash, instead requiring payment to be made with a debit or credit card, it said.

The watchdog has also demanded that the country ensure restriction on supply of gold and jewellery to banned outfits and terrorist organisations.

The FATF has urged Pakistan to collect data of all trusts operating across the country as well as their bank accounts on the district level. It has also asked the country to ensure regulation of thousands of registered trust organisations.

Pakistan is due to submit a third report on the measures be-

EXPLAINED
E.
Non-compliance could lead to Pak's blacklisting

THE PARIS-BASED Financial Action Task Force has already put Pakistan on its 'grey list' for not doing enough to tackle terrorism financing. Recently, the Pakistan Foreign Minister said the country could be blacklisted due to "lobbying by India". Pakistan would lose \$10 billion annually if this were to happen, he said. With the FATF set to review Pakistan's status in May, it's imperative for the country to comply with the watchdog's recommendations in order to avoid the costly blacklisting.

ing taken by the government in compliance with the recommendations of the FATF and its regional affiliate, the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) till April 15.

The compliance report would be taken up by the FATF review group in its meeting scheduled to be held in May. PTI

Hazaras in third day of sit-in protests over lack of security

Quetta: Minority Shia Hazaras blocked traffic in a sit-in protest for a third day in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta on Sunday after a suicide bomb killed 19 people in an outdoor market, many of them ethnic Hazaras.

Dozens were injured in the blast Friday on the outskirts of Quetta, capital of the Baluchistan province, officials said. Islamic State claimed responsibility.

Hazaras have been frequently targeted by Taliban and Islamic State militants and other Sunni Muslim militant groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"We've lost hundreds of our loved ones in the last 10 years," Tahir Hazara, leading the sit-in, said. "The government failed to protect our community. Terrorists are free to target us."

"Stop killing Hazaras," the crowd chanted. "Down with terrorism and sectarianism."

The protesters have set up camps and burn wood to keep warm at night. A police official said there were about 200 people taking part Sunday, blocking the key Western Bypass leading into Quetta. REUTERS



Seychelles President Danny Faure (left) inside a submersible vessel under the water off the coast of Desroches, in the outer islands of Seychelles, on Sunday. AP

Protect oceans, Seychelles leader says in unprecedented underwater speech

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DESROCHES ISLAND, APRIL 14

IN A striking speech delivered from deep below the ocean's surface, the Seychelles President on Sunday made a global plea for stronger protection of the "beating blue heart of our planet".

President Danny Faure's call for action, the first-ever live speech from an underwater submersible, came from one of the many island nations threatened by global warming.

He spoke during a visit to an ambitious British-led science ex-

This issue is bigger than all of us, and we cannot wait for the next generation to solve it. We are running out of excuses to not take action, and running out of time."

DANNY FAURE
SEYCHELLES PRESIDENT

pedition exploring the Indian Ocean depths.

Oceans cover over two-thirds of the world's surface but remain, for the most part, uncharted. We

have better maps of Mars than we do of the ocean floor, Faure said.

"This issue is bigger than all of us, and we cannot wait for the next generation to solve it. We are running out of excuses to not take action, and running out of time," the President said from a manned submersible 400 feet below the waves, on the seabed off the outer islands of the African nation.

Wearing a Seychelles T-shirt and shorts, the President said after his speech that the experience was "so, so cool. What biodiversity". It made him more determined than ever to speak out for marine protection, he said.

INVESTIGATORS ARE USING THE TECH GIANT'S DATA TO FIND SUSPECTS NEAR CRIME SCENES, RAISING PRIVACY CONCERNS

Tracking phones around the world, Google is a dragnet for police

JENNIFER VALENTINO-DEVRIES
APRIL 14

WHEN DETECTIVES in a Phoenix suburb arrested a warehouse worker in a homicide investigation last year, they credited a new technique with breaking open the case after other leads went cold.

The police told the suspect, Jorge Molina, they had data tracking his phone to the site where a man was shot nine months earlier. They had made the discovery after obtaining a search warrant that required Google to provide information on all devices it recorded near the killing, potentially capturing the whereabouts of anyone in the area. Investigators also had other

circumstantial evidence, including security video of someone firing a gun from a white Honda Civic, the same model that Molina owned, though they could not see the licence plate or attacker.

But after he spent nearly a week in jail, the case against Molina fell apart as investigators learned new information and released him. Last month, the police arrested another man: his mother's ex-boyfriend, who had sometimes used Molina's car.

The warrants, which draw on an enormous Google database employees call Sensorvault, turn the business of tracking cellphone users' locations into a digital dragnet for law enforcement. In an era of ubiquitous data gathering by tech companies, it is just the latest example of how personal infor-



Google's headquarters in Manhattan. NYT

mation — where you go, who your friends are, what you read, eat and watch, and when you do it — is being used for purposes many people never expected. As privacy concerns have mounted among consumers, policymakers

and regulators, tech companies have come under intensifying scrutiny over their data collection practices.

The Arizona case demonstrates the promise and perils of the new investigative technique,

whose use has risen sharply in the past six months, according to Google employees familiar with the requests. It can help solve crimes. But it can also snare innocent people.

Technology companies have for years responded to court orders for specific users' information. The new warrants go further, suggesting possible suspects and witnesses in the absence of other clues. Often, Google employees said, the company responds to a single warrant with location information on dozens or hundreds of devices.

Law enforcement officials described the method as exciting, but cautioned that it was just one tool that they could use.

It is unclear how often these search requests have led to ar-

rests or convictions, because many of the investigations are still open and judges frequently seal the warrants. The practice was first used by federal agents in 2016, according to Google employees, and first publicly reported last year in North Carolina.

It has since spread to local departments across the country, including in California, Florida, Minnesota and Washington. This year, one Google employee said, the company received as many as 180 requests in one week. Google declined to confirm precise numbers.

The technique illustrates a phenomenon privacy advocates have long referred to as the "if you build it, they will come" principle — anytime a technology company creates a system that

could be used in surveillance, law enforcement inevitably comes knocking. Sensorvault, according to Google employees, includes detailed location records involving at least hundreds of millions of devices worldwide and dating back nearly a decade.

The new orders, sometimes called "geofence" warrants, specify an area and a time period, and Google gathers information from Sensorvault about the devices that were there. It labels them with anonymous ID numbers, and detectives look at locations and movement patterns to see if any appear relevant to the crime. Once they narrow the field to a few devices they think belong to suspects or witnesses, Google reveals the users' names and other information. NYT