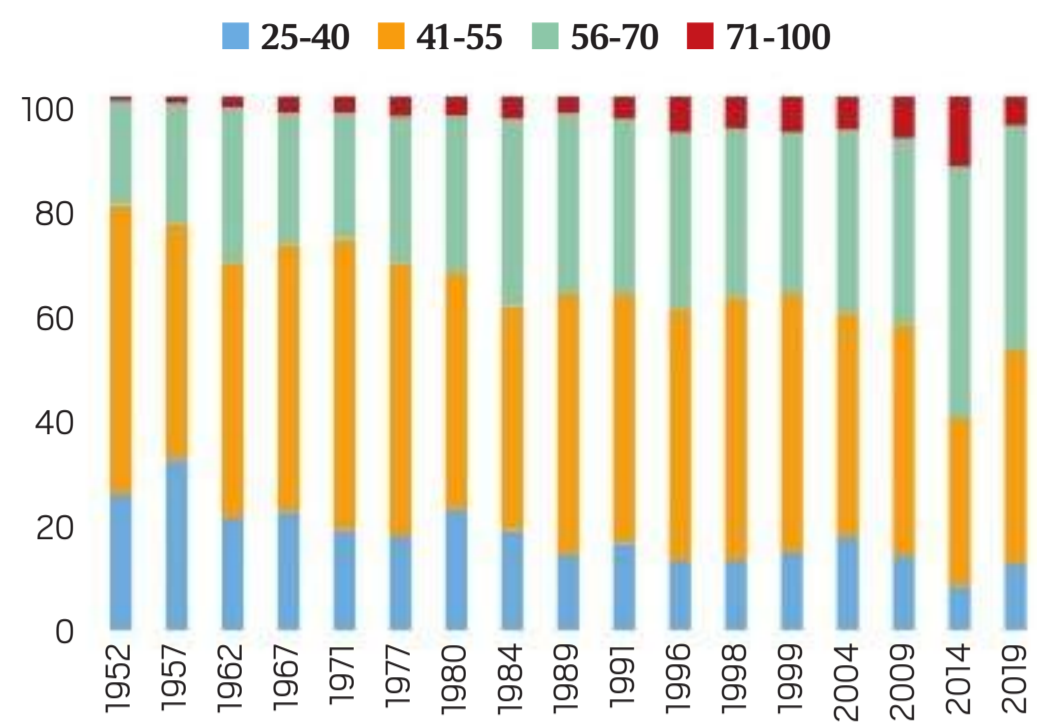




TELLING NUMBERS

AGE PROFILES
(1st Lok Sabha to the 17th)

MPs ages 25-40 have smallest-ever share in Lok Sabha since the first general election, barring in 2014



2014 (TOTAL 532 MPs)			2019 (TOTAL 542 MPs)		
Ages	No. of MPs	% of MPs	Ages	No. of MPs	% of MPs
25-40	44	8%	25-40	64	12%
41-55	170	32%	41-55	221	41%
56-70	251	47%	56-70	227	42%
71-100	67	13%	71-100	30	6%

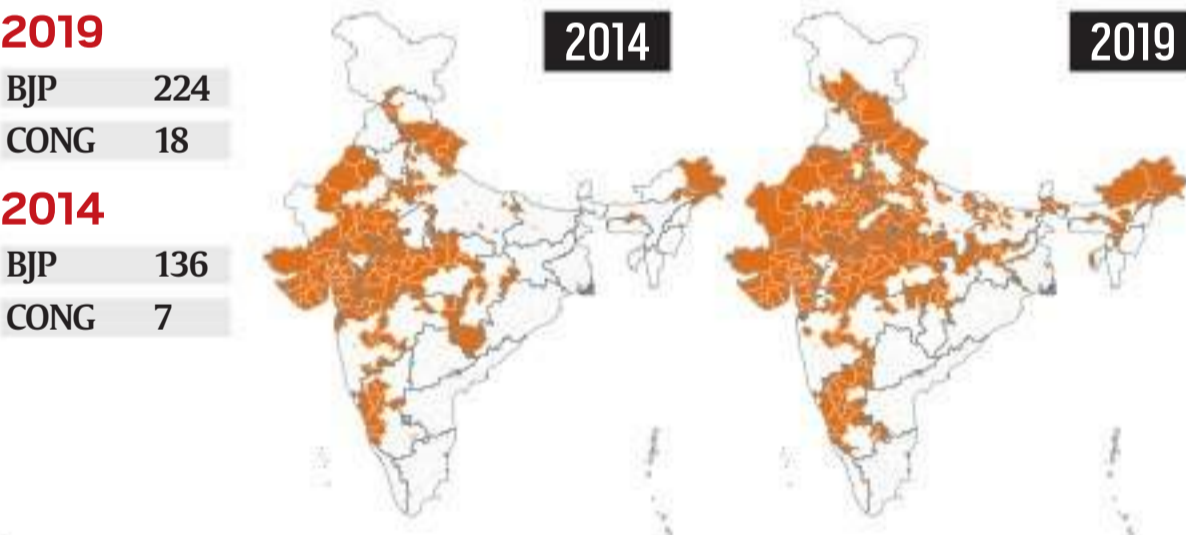
THE YOUNGEST 15 IN 17TH LOK SABHA

Chandrani Murmu, 25 (BJD)	Keonjhar, Odisha
Goddeti Madhavi, 26 (YSRCP)	Araku, Andhra Pradesh
Nusrat Jahan Ruhi, 28 (TMC)	Basirhat, West Bengal
Prajwal Revanna, 28 (JD-S)	Hassan, Karnataka
Tejasvi Surya, 28 (BJP)	Bangalore South, Karnataka
Indra Hang Subba, 30 (Sikkim Krantikari Morcha)	Sikkim, Sikkim
Mimi Chakraborty, 30 (TMC)	Jadavpur, West Bengal
Praveen Kumar Nishad, 30 (BJP)	Sant Kabir Nagar, UP
Abhishek Banerjee, 31 (TMC)	Diamond Harbour, West Bengal
Dr Heena Vijaykumar Gavit, 31 (BJP)	Nandurbar, Maharashtra
Raksha Nikhil Khadse, 31 (BJP)	Raver, Maharashtra
Himadri Singh, 32 (BJP)	Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh
Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, 32 (TDP)	Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh
Ramya Haridas, 32 (Cong)	Alathur, Kerala
Dr Shrikant Eknath Shinde, 32 (Shiv Sena)	Kalyan, Maharashtra

Listed in order of increasing age. MPs of same age listed in alphabetical order (first name)
All data: PRS Legislative Research

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

>50% VOTE SHARE FOR BJP IN LAST 2 ELECTIONS



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AN EXPERT EXPLAINS
In biggest bout, knockout



GILLES VERNIERS

ONE OF the most surprising facts of the 2019 elections was the ability of the BJP to retain its hold over the state of Uttar Pradesh, where an alliance of three regional parties was expected to make it lose its majority. Clearly, the alliance did not work to its potential. The BJP won 62 seats; the BSP and SP 10 and 5 respectively. The Congress, nearly mute spectator of the Battle of UP, lost Amethi while retaining Rae Bareilly.

Giant bite of the pie

The first achievement of the BJP was to increase its vote share. In 2014, it won the state with 42.3% of the votes. It increased its vote share to 49.5% in 2019 and, in fact, crossed 50% if one considers that it contested only 78 seats.

The shocking news for the SP and the BSP is that they actually did a little worse than their cumulative vote share of 2014, when they had contested separately. (charts right) Strike rates reveal that within the alliance, it was the SP that underperformed. The SP won only 13.7% of the seats it contested, against 26.3% for the BSP.

In the absence of publicly-available survey data results, one can only speculate that the SP bears a somewhat greater responsibility for the defeat than the BSP. It could very well be that fragments of BSP voters did not transfer their votes to SP candidates to the extent that was expected.

Or it could be that the Yadav support for the SP was not as cohesive as the SP thought it would be. According to CSDS data, support for parties from their core group has somewhat declined in recent years.

It could also be a combination of both. An examination of vote shares in seats contested shows that the difference between BSP and SP is not great — 40.8% and 38.4% respectively.

West was best of all

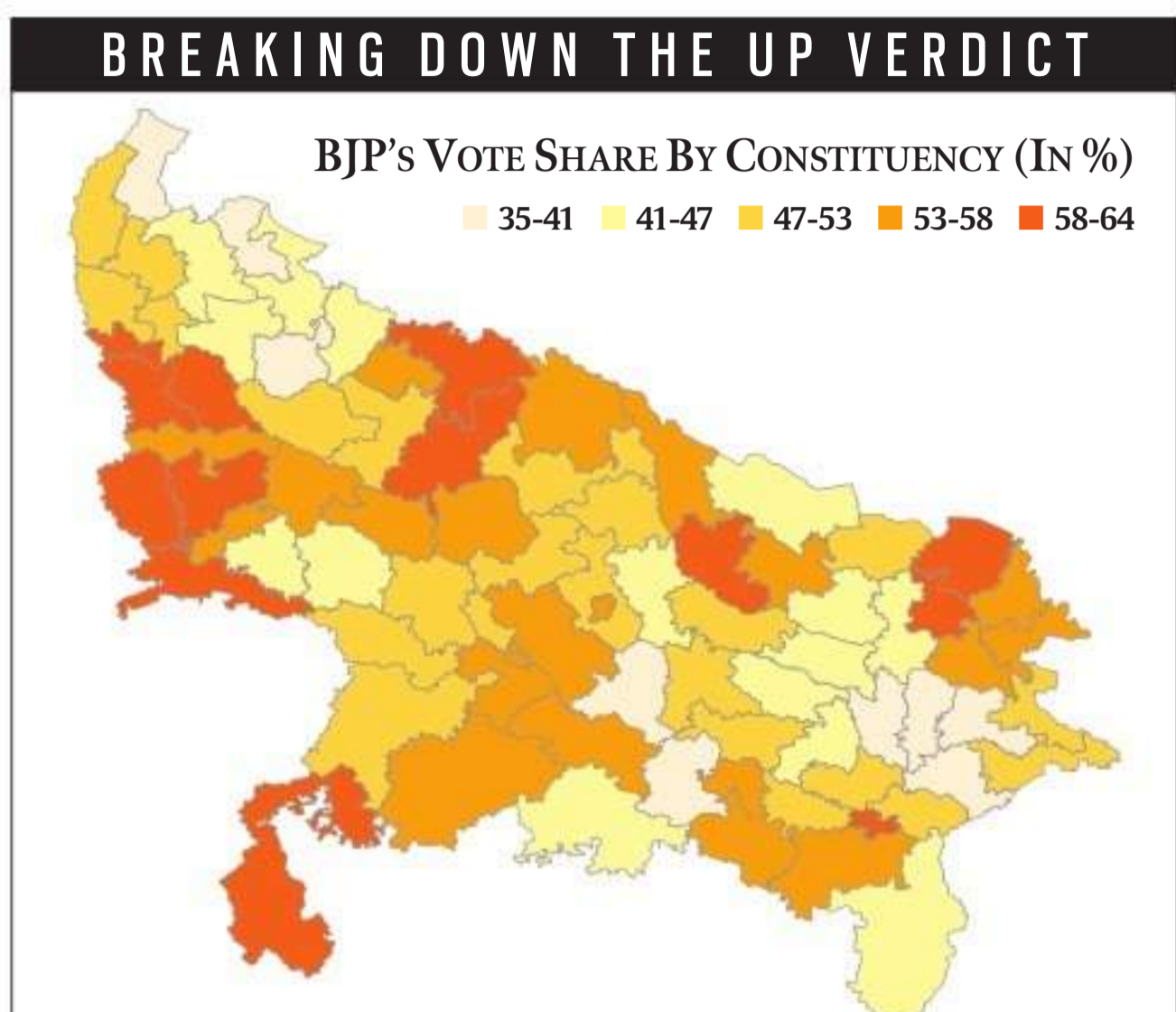
The vote share map of the BJP (top right) reveals that it did the best in Western Uttar Pradesh, as it had done in 2014 and 2017. But in 2019, the BJP increased its vote share the most in the Lower Doab — where the SP has a number of traditional strongholds — and in Central Uttar Pradesh, the subregion that has the largest number of Rajput strongholds. The BJP keeps underperforming (if one can use that word in this context) in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, where caste equations are less favourable to it. The BJP also performed well in a number of Muslim-dominated seats in Rohilkhand.

How caste calculus worked

It may seem strange to speak of caste when a result appears to have been so overdetermined by a single factor. But to focus on Narendra Modi alone leads to ignoring the role of other contributing factors to the victory.

One such factor — which is hard to write about as it is poorly documented — is the role of money and the role of organisation. It is worth remembering that the image of Modi alone is not sufficient for the BJP to win elections. In order to do that, it needs to be backed by a strong organisation, by troops on the ground.

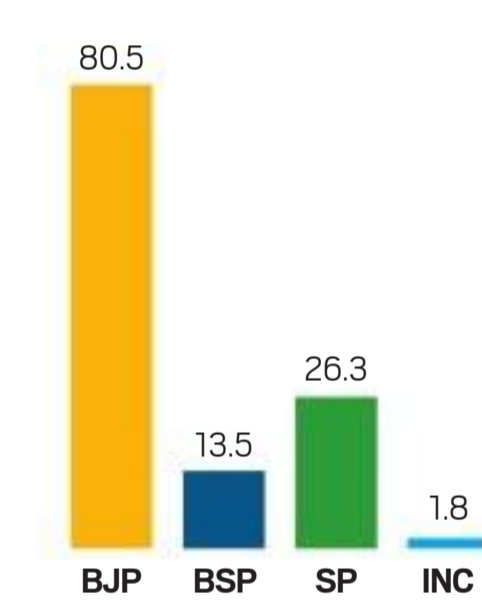
The other contributing factor is the caste calculus. I have argued in a previous piece ('How UP was conquered', *The Indian Express*,



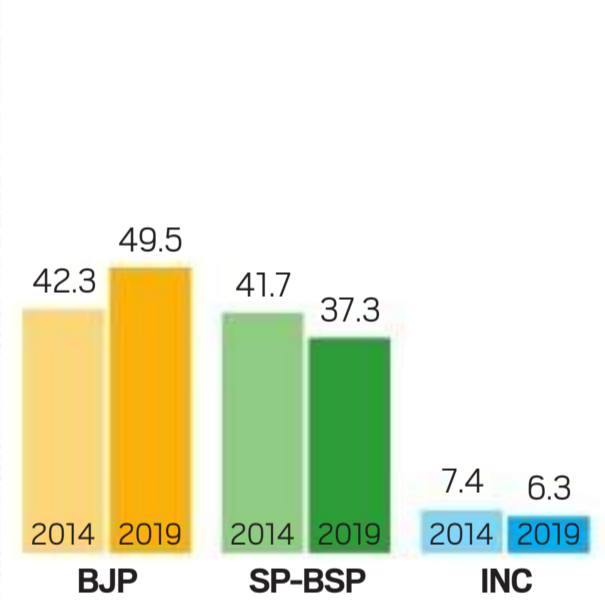
SHARE OF CASTES IN TICKETS AND SEATS OF PARTIES

	BJP		INC		BSP		SP	
	TICKETS	WON	TICKETS	WON	TICKETS	WON	TICKETS	WON
Brahmins	19.2%	19.4%	16.4%		15.8%	10.0%	8.1%	
Rajputs	16.7%	16.1%	14.9%		10.5%	10.0%	2.7%	
Baniyas	2.6%	3.2%	3.0%		2.6%		5.4%	
Other UCs	7.7%	8.1%	9.0%		5.3%	10.0%	2.7%	
Jats	5.1%	6.5%	4.5%		2.6%		0.0%	
Yadavs	1.3%	0.0%	3.0%		5.3%	10.0%	27.0%	40.0%
Kurmis	7.7%	8.1%	4.5%		7.9%		10.8%	
Other OBCs	16.7%	12.9%	7.5%		10.5%	10.0%	13.5%	
Jatavs	5.1%	4.8%	13.4%		21.1%	20.0%	2.7%	
Pasis	7.7%	8.1%	6.0%		2.6%		8.1%	
Other SCs	9.0%	11.3%	4.5%		2.6%		8.1%	
Muslims	1.3%	1.6%	11.9%		10.5%	20.0%	10.8%	60.0%

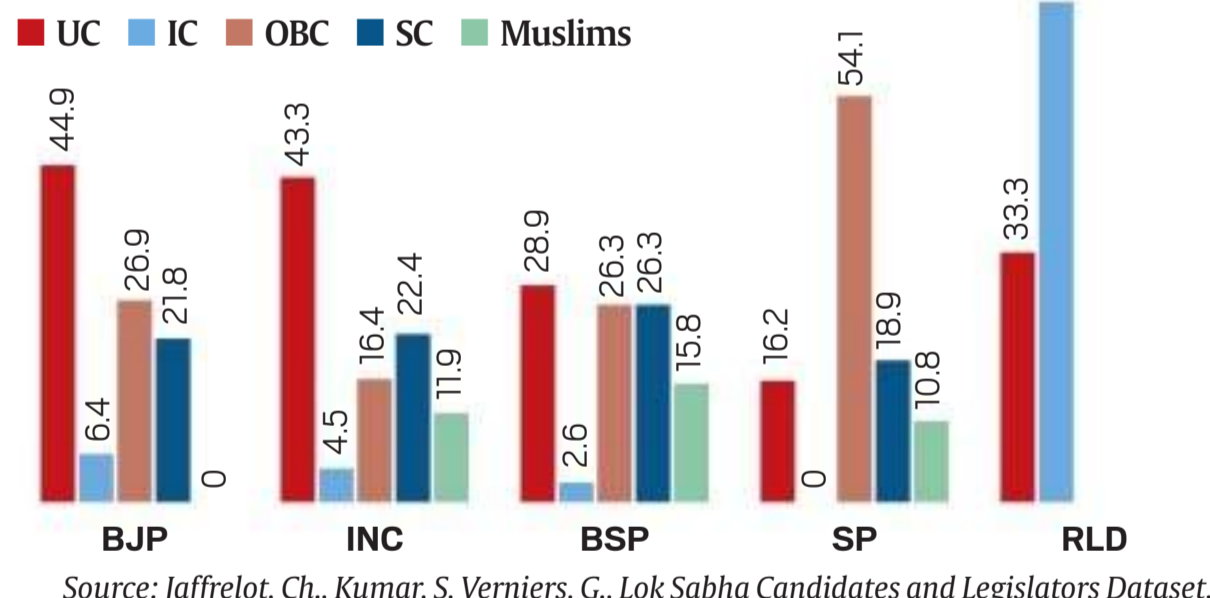
STRIKE RATE, 2019 (%)



VOTE SHARE, 2019, 2014 (%)



REPRESENTATION OF CASTE GROUPS, 2019 (%)



Source: Jaffrelot, Ch., Kumar, S, Verniers, G., Lok Sabha Candidates and Legislators Dataset, 1952-today, Trivedi Centre for Political Data, Ashoka University; data compiled by Sofia Ammassari

STATE BY STATE

UTTAR PRADESH

NEXT
RAJASTHAN, GUJARAT

The SP — down to just 5 seats — relied far too much on vote transfers, and sought to maximize the representation of Yadavs, projecting a preferentialism that the mass of the voters rejected

print edition of May 25, 2019) that the *mahagathbandhan* failed for having focused exclusively on a narrow caste calculation. That does not mean, however, that caste plays no role. Quite the contrary.

An examination of the caste composition of candidates and winners shows that clear choices were made by parties, choices that correspond to well thought-out electoral strategies, and public discourse.

In 2019, both the BJP and the Congress distributed nearly half of their tickets to upper-caste candidates (BJP 45%; Congress 43.3%). The BSP had a more balanced distribution of caste groups among its candidates, while the SP bet heavily on OBCs (54%). And it gave half of its OBC tickets (10/19) to Yadavs.

Within caste groups, there are clear variations. The BJP distributed 15 tickets to Brahmins and 13 to Rajputs. It fielded only four Jats, and just one Yadav. Nineteen other tickets were distributed to 10 different OBC castes. Kurmis got 6, *jatis* like Nishad, Rajbhar, Lodh, Saini, Modh Ghanchi, etc. got only one or two each. The same pattern was seen among the SCs — Jatavs got only four tickets out of 17, while a variety of other groups received a small number of tickets each.

UP: The big picture

The point here is this: First, while the BJP claims to look beyond caste and be an inclusive party, it clearly favours its historical core support base. Second, data confirm that the BJP pursued in 2019 the same strategy that helped it sweep UP in 2017: cater to all the groups that are not affiliated traditionally with either the SP or the BSP. And that means a marginalisation of Yadavs, Jatav Dalits, and Muslims.

In retrospect, the SP did perhaps commit the mistake of relying too much on vote transfers. It sought to maximize the representation of Yadavs, forgetting that this particular alignment has created a strong perception of preferentialism that is clearly rejected by voters.

These are only data snapshots on an election that is far more complex than caste or alliance mechanics. I do not claim that these two factors alone explain the outcome. The truth is that we simply don't yet have the instruments to assess the impact of the new forms of communication that the BJP has invented, or the effect of policy on electoral choices. But while we speculate on the weight of factors that are hard to measure, we should not forget at the same time to look at more conventional factors of electoral politics that still inform the working of democracy.

Gilles Verniers is Assistant Professor of Political Science, and Co-Director, Trivedi Centre for Political Data, Ashoka University

Why invite to BIMSTEC leaders sends important signals to India's neighbours

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 27

BY INVITING leaders from the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries, Kyrgyz Republic and Mauritius at his swearing-in ceremony on May 30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a carefully calibrated diplomatic move that signals a major outreach to India's neighbourhood from the Bay of Bengal to Central Asia, as well as the Indian diaspora across the world.

Last time, Modi had invited the SAARC leaders, and then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's attendance had raised hopes of a new beginning in the bilateral ties. This time, SAARC's exclusion is clearly aimed at keeping Pakistan out of New Delhi's engagement with its neighbours.

Who are invited, why

By inviting the leader from Kyrgyz Republic, India is displaying an outreach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which is headed by the Kyrgyz leader, and which has China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan as members. India, which became a member along with Pakistan in 2017, wants to leverage its

membership to advance its strategic objectives — counter-terrorism and connectivity. And Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, who was also the chief guest at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in January this year, is one of the most well-placed People of Indian Origin in the world. Since Modi has invested diplomatic capital in outreach to the Indian diaspora since 2014, this invite is seen as a natural choice.

The key message, however, is the outreach to BIMSTEC, which includes Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan, besides India.

From SAARC to BIMSTEC

New Delhi's engagement with BIMSTEC rose from the ashes of SAARC. In October 2016, following the Uri attack, India gave a renewed push for the grouping that had existed for almost two decades but been largely ignored. Alongside the BRICS summit in Goa, Modi hosted an outreach summit with BIMSTEC leaders.

That September, some of these BIMSTEC countries had supported New Delhi's call for a boycott of the SAARC summit scheduled in Islamabad in November 2016. As the summit was postponed, India had claimed victory in isolating Pakistan, having accused that country of carrying out the Uri attack. Suddenly, BIMSTEC had emerged as a



Contingents from the armies of five of seven BIMSTEC countries had a weeklong military exercise focused on counter-terror ops in a semi-urban environment in Pune in September 2018. Pavan Khengre/Archive

regional platform where five SAARC countries could gather and discuss sub-regional cooperation. India had long felt that the vast potential of SAARC was being under-utilised and opportunities were being lost due to either a lack of response and/or an obstructionist approach from Pakistan.

The search for an alternative, in fact, had been evident at the 2014 SAARC summit in Kathmandu, where Modi had said opportunities must be realised "through SAARC or outside it" and "among us all or some of us."

That was an important signal to Pakistan, as well as to fellow SAARC members.

"As former Indian ambassador to Myanmar Rajiv Bhatia once noted that BIMSTEC was at risk of being little more than a 'rebound relationship' whenever New Delhi fails to pursue regional integration SAARC," Constantino Xavier, fellow at Brookings India, wrote in a paper in February 2018 for *Carnegie India*.

Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Senior Fellow with ORF, however, wrote in a paper in January 2018: "Since the SAARC summit has only been postponed, not cancelled, the possibility of revival remains. The success of BIMSTEC does not render SAARC pointless; it only adds a new chapter in regional cooperation in South Asia."

Two years after the BRICS-BIMSTEC outreach summit and the BIMSTEC leaders' retreat, the fourth BIMSTEC summit was held in Kathmandu in September 2018. The outcome was considered quite comprehensive, spanning from blue economy to counter-terrorism, although it was only the fourth summit in 21 years.

Why the region matters

The Bay of Bengal is the largest bay in the world. Over one-fifth (22%) of the world's population live in the seven countries around it, and they have a combined

GDP close to \$2.7 trillion.

Despite economic challenges, all these seven countries have been able to sustain average annual rates of economic growth between 3.4% and 7.5% from 2012 to 2016. The Bay also has vast untapped natural resources. One-fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year.

In an effort to integrate the region, the grouping was formed in 1997, originally with Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and later included Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. BIMSTEC, which now includes five countries from South Asia and two from ASEAN, is a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It includes all the major countries of South Asia, except Maldives, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Arguing on "Prospects for a Bay of Bengal community", scholar V Suryanarayan, wrote in *Seminar* in 2000 that few people in India are conscious of the fact that Phuket in Thailand is only 273 nautical miles from Indira Point, which is less than the distance between Chennai and Madurai.

India's stake

As the region's largest economy, India has a lot at stake. In the 20th anniversary speech in 2017, Modi said BIMSTEC connects not only South and Southeast Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Note to the minority

Muslims are not headed for a bleak future. They should welcome PM's resolve of winning over their trust



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

FARM OPENING

Resounding political mandate provides NDA government an opportunity to restructure the farm subsidy regime

AGRARIAN DISTRESS WASN'T seemingly a factor in determining the outcome of the recent Lok Sabha polls. Despite sugarcane payment dues to farmers by mills in Uttar Pradesh crossing Rs 11,000 crore, the BJP won 17 out of the state's 23 key ganna-growing constituencies. It also practically swept the entire middle and upper Doab aloo belt from Mathura to Kanpur, notwithstanding three consecutive years of low potato prices. Farmers across UP complained about the crack-down on cattle slaughter causing a collapse of the livestock trade as well as their standing crop being devoured by stray bovines. Yet, they voted overwhelmingly for the party of the incumbent, Narendra Modi. The ruling alliance similarly made mincemeat of the Opposition in Maharashtra's Marathwada and Vidarbha regions, synonymous with drought and farmer suicides. Farmer leader Raju Shetti losing from his own seat in Western Maharashtra is further proof of cane, milk, onion, grape, pomegranate and turmeric producers reposing faith in Modi than those offering no credible alternative.

There could be three explanations for the above results. The first is, of course, an inept Opposition — its inability to weave a coherent narrative around farmers' problems and its focus on issues (Rafale and corruption) having little resonance with rural voters. Secondly, the Modi government's own schemes — the building of about 1.55 crore houses, 9.27 crore toilets and 2.18 lakh km of all-weather roads during the last five years in rural India, besides providing 11.21 crore active LPG connections (between June 2015 and April 2019) and reducing the number of un-electrified households from roughly 4 crore to a mere 18,735 — may have considerably neutralised the impact of the crash in agri-commodity prices, especially post demonetisation. Third, low crop realisations would have hurt farmers — specifically those with surplus produce to sell — more than the landless rural poor, who are likely to have benefitted both from benign food inflation and the various Pradhan Mantri asset creation-cum-welfare schemes.

It would be a mistake, however, for the Modi government, in its new innings, to brush aside the serious structural problems confronting Indian agriculture. The resounding political mandate it has got provides an opportunity for restructuring the existing farm subsidy regime — based on under-pricing of fertilisers, water, electricity and credit, along with physical grain procurement at market-distorting minimum support prices — in favour of direct benefit transfers. The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi should be extended to every farmer and all current input/output subsidies converted into a fixed per-acre money payment. This is also the time to dismantle all restrictions on farm produce, whether relating to sale, stocking, domestic movement or export. Finally, scrapping the Essential Commodities Act and state-level Agriculture Produce Market Committee laws will help revive price sentiment and attract investments in processing, warehousing, transport, finance, research and extension.

MOST LIBERAL AND secular scholars and newspaper editorials have predicted a bleak future and isolation for India's 15 crore Muslims after the massive electoral victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Out of 303 members of the Lok Sabha from the BJP there is not a single Muslim, though the Opposition will have 27 Muslim members. Some of the fears of liberals may be real but many are not only unfounded but may be counter-productive, which might lead Muslims to go into a shell. In the last three centuries, Indian Muslims have faced several existential crises but each time, they survived and received huge support from enlightened sections of Hindus.

The first event was the end of the Mughal empire in 1857. The so-called Muslim rule (in reality it was Mughal-Rajput rule) of seven centuries had ended and since Bahadur Shah Zafar was the symbolic leader of the revolt, Muslims had to face the wrath of the British. Hundreds of Muslims were publicly executed in Delhi. After the failure of the revolt, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan founded MAO College which was later converted into the great Aligarh Muslim University. Every Muslim family in the Indian Subcontinent has at least one or two members who had received modern western education at this citadel of learning. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded and in 1887, it elected a Muslim — Badruddin Tyabji — as its third president.

In 1918, the British and French armies occupied Istanbul, ending the Ottoman Empire. The Muslim community across the world was in shock. Indian Muslims came forward in the fight for the restoration of the Caliphate. The Khilafat movement of 1919-1924 was supported by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. The Khilafat was not restored but Islam continued to flourish.

Independence in 1947 brought yet another turning point. The country was partitioned in the name of religion because of V D Savarkar and MA Jinnah's regressive two-nation theory. The Muslim ulama were at the forefront of opposing Partition. Most Muslims did not endorse the divisive idea and were not even voters under the Government of India Act, 1935.

The majority of Muslims, of their free will, decided to stay in India. The communal violence during and after Partition led to the killing of half a million people. The Hindus of the country, after the initial wave of riots, stood up for minorities under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. While after Jinnah's death,

Pakistan became a theocracy, India opted to be a liberal and secular democracy. Indian secularism assured Muslims that the state will not have any religion of its own and they will have full religious and cultural freedom. In subsequent decades, the Supreme Court held that both secularism and minority rights are part of the basic structure of the Constitution, which cannot be changed even by a constitutional amendment. Even assuming that India may become a Hindu Rashtra, the heavens are not going to fall for the Muslims. In fact, such a possibility should worry Hindus more and they should ensure that India does not follow Pakistan's disastrous path.

In 1992, Hindu fanatics demolished the Babri mosque and Muslims of India yet again went into depression. The secular and liberal Hindus once more not only condemned the demolition but also extended a helping hand to the demoralised community. The Muslim community survived this onslaught and played an important role in the subsequent decades in the country's politics.

In 2002, we witnessed communal violence in Gujarat and there are reasons to believe that the state machinery did not discharge its constitutional duties in a timely manner. The then PM had to remind the state government of its Raj Dharma. True, the violence was nothing short of a genocide of some 2,000 Muslims, but then more than a dozen police officers and a few leaders have been punished. Recently, Bilkees Bano was awarded Rs 50 lakh compensation by the Supreme Court. There is no denying the unfortunate segregation of Muslims and Hindus in Gujarat, yet life has not come to a halt for Gujarati Muslims.

In 2014, the Narendra Modi government took office. Soon after, there were cases of mob lynching on allegations of possession of beef. Muslims suffered the most and some 35 people were brutally killed. This is a challenge not for Muslims but for the government — any state that cannot even ensure the security of life of its citizens theoretically loses the right to allegiance from the people. Subsequently, the PM himself had to condemn the so-called gau rakshaks as criminals. Love jihad too dominated the public discourse for some time, leading to even the Supreme Court ordering an NIA probe. The NIA did not find any evidence of motivated and systematic love jihad.

The Modi government did make triple divorce a big issue and after the Supreme Court judgment, made it a criminal offence. While this author is opposed to the use of criminal

law in civil matters, this cannot be termed as an entirely anti-Muslim step as within the community, liberals are in any case opposed to instant triple divorce. Some orthodox ulama, following the example of the second caliph, do not mind the invocation of criminal sanctions for triple divorce if the validity of divorce is acknowledged. In reality, if the Modi government compels Muslims to follow the more rational Quranic procedure of divorce, they cannot really complain.

Coming to three major issues that the BJP has been consistently raising — the uniform civil code (UCC), construction of a Ram temple and abrogation of Article 370 — none of these is a question of life and death for Indian Muslims. The UCC exists in several western countries yet Islam continues to thrive there. As far as India is concerned, the UCC can certainly be used to polarise voters but it is extremely difficult to enact such a code. Hindus themselves may not agree to it. The Law Commission (2018) recently said a UCC is neither desirable nor feasible. As far as the Ram temple is concerned, the Modi government has always maintained that it will go by the Supreme Court's decision. In all likelihood, the ongoing mediation will now come up with a solution. Muslims are more than willing for a negotiated settlement. As far as the abrogation of Article 370 is concerned, it is not an issue of Muslims but of federalism and the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir. If J&K's legislative assembly gives its concurrence for abrogation, no one can raise an objection. In any case, Article 370 is now more like a shell that has been emptied of its contents.

If a government shows authoritarian tendencies, suppresses dissent, promotes corporate interests at the cost of the poor and keeps mum on the violations of fundamental freedoms of its citizens, it should worry the whole country. If regressive policies are pursued by any government, it will equally affect all citizens not just its minorities.

It was heartening to see the PM assuring minorities after his election as NDA's leader. He will do some good to his own international image if he takes concrete steps to dispel the fears of minorities. Muslims should welcome his resolve of winning over what he rightly termed the "trust" of the minorities. Let the Modi government implement the BJP's slogan of "justice for all, appeasement of none". Muslims want nothing but justice.

The writer is vice chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. Views are personal

SHADOW OVER DATA

Attempts to curb role of National Statistical Commission raise more questions over autonomy of statistical system

ON MAY 23, while the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha election was underway, the NDA government passed an order to merge the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) with the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The order, which cleared the formation of an overarching body — National Statistical Office (NSO) — skipped any mention of the National Statistical Commission (NSC). This is unfortunate. As the NSC is an independent body which oversees technical aspects of the NSSO's statistical work, the worry is that this move will impinge on the autonomy enjoyed by the NSSO so far. Coming at a time when data put out by the Indian statistical system is already under a cloud of suspicion, this is likely to raise further questions over the independence of the statistical system.

Events over the past year have suggested that all is not well in the Indian statistical system. At the centre of it all, was the NSC. It all began when a report, prepared by a committee appointed by the NSC, showed that under the new GDP series, the economy had grown at a much faster pace under the UPA, than previously estimated. With the NDA government quick to disown it, the matter acquired a political dimension. A few months later, P C Mohanan, acting chairman of the NSC, and J V Meenakshi, Professor at the Delhi School of Economics, resigned from the NSC, protesting against the decision to not publish the NSSO's employment survey. The results of the survey showed that unemployment in India had surged under the NDA. Then, a few weeks ago, another report by the NSSO showed that a large number of companies in the MCA21 database — which is integral to estimating GDP under the new series — either couldn't be traced or had closed down or were operating in different sectors. This warrants a relook at the manner in which the MCA21 database is used for estimating GDP.

This series of events, followed by the government's latest order, is likely to increase scepticism of official data. But, while the more immediate concern is that of the role of the NSC, the larger concern is the decline of what was once a famed statistical system. For a government that should have begun its new term by re-building the credibility of the system, this is not a good start.

A CRISIS CALLED BREXIT

As Theresa May steps down as PM, it seems things will get worse before they get better

PRIME MINISTER THERESA May's resignation as leader of the Conservative Party, thus effectively from the prime ministership of Britain, may resolve nothing yet for the British decision to leave the EU and its inability to agree on the terms of the exit. May's departure was inevitable after she failed three times to win parliamentary support for the deal her government negotiated with the EU. A fourth attempt on May 22 also ended prematurely with the resignation of a minister. May was the architect of her own bitter and tearful political end. A "remainer" to begin with, she promised too much to Brexiteers, but had to sell them the realities of what it really meant to leave, particularly for economic relations with the Irish Republic. Her gambit to bolster her political strength by calling a snap election in 2017 ended in failure as the Tories did not win a majority. She leaves behind a legacy of a country and political parties, including her own, bitterly divided on Brexit. She will remain in office as PM until the Conservatives elect a new leader, for which a race has already begun.

But it must get worse before it gets better. There is also every likelihood that it may not get better. The frontrunner for the Tory leadership is Boris Johnson, the maverick former foreign secretary, a hardliner on Brexit, who once wrote a poem about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey having sex with a goat. He has said already that Britain will leave the EU by the extended deadline of October 31, "deal or no deal". In the EU parliamentary elections, the Tories are a distant fourth, and the extreme-right Brexit Party has won the most number of seats in Britain.

Its leader Nigel Farage, who also heads the United Kingdom Independent Party, has been criticised as a racist and is a known immigrant baiter. Labour, which is as divided as the Tories over Brexit and its leadership, has stood third in the elections. Such are the challenges before Britain. A possible general election may throw up even more difficult choices.



GIRISH LUTHRA

VOTERS' LIMITED MENU

Democracy demands credible alternatives. The onus is on the Opposition

THE LANDSLIDE VICTORY of the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance — in the Lok Sabha elections is an impressive repeat of the alliance's 2014 performance. There is, however, one major difference. The euphoria witnessed after the 2014 verdict seems to be absent this time. This can, of course, be expected, given that an incumbent government has won another term, and change — with attendant hope and new aspirations — is not the fundamental message of the election verdict. But a significant reason for this lack of excitement is also the electorate's realisation about the lack of a credible alternative to the alliance holding office at the Centre.

India's vibrant democracy, with its numerous intricacies and complexities, wins the country accolades from around the world after every general election. The voting population is also praised for exercising its franchise. But there is hardly any meaningful debate on the choices available to the country's vast electorate. During the 2019 campaign, some analysts commented on the BJP's strategy that seemed to be aligned towards the presidential form of government. Issues related

to leadership — or lack of clarity about it from the Opposition — emerged as the dominant theme. From a voter's perspective, at least two or three national-level parties should be in a position to offer leadership to the country. Such a scenario will strengthen our democracy, make governments more accountable to their party manifestos and promises, and gradually move the conversation during election campaigns from trivial to substantive issues. It will also lead to more meaningful debates on matters related to development, the social and economic challenges faced by the country and issues pertaining to national security and foreign policy.

Under the present circumstances, the onus for bringing about such a structural change lies squarely with the Opposition, especially the principal opposition party, the Indian National Congress. It must find ways to shed some of its historical baggage, and re-invent itself. To start with, the party should consider changing its name (though retaining the word "Congress"), induct fresh faces in key party positions, strengthen its organisational structure and work fresh to enhance its outreach. While vote-bank politics is not

likely to go away soon, the Congress must also present an agenda for positive change.

The focus on credible alternative(s) also does not mean writing obituaries for coalition politics. A coalition at the national level should, however, present itself as a credible alternative. Demonstrating cohesion in the face of competing objectives at the Centre and state levels would, however, pose a big challenge for such a political formation.

It's quite likely to be some time before such a credible alternative emerges. Meanwhile, the BJP and NDA must payback the confidence reposed in them by the people. The government should fulfill the unfulfilled, or partially-fulfilled, promises of the BJP's 2014 manifesto. At the same time, it shouldn't neglect the promises of the party's 2019 manifesto. The government can, of course, disregard petty and unfair criticism of its performance but there is merit in paying heed to genuine suggestions and criticisms. That would be the best tribute to the electorate.

The writer is former Commander-in-Chief of Western Naval Command and Southern Naval Command. Views are personal

MAY 28, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



LUCKNOW CURFEW

AN INDEFINITE CURFEW was clamped this morning in Aminabad, the main shopping centre in Lucknow and adjoining areas which witnessed violent clashes between the police and traders and cases of arson in which four vehicles were burnt. All markets have been closed for an indefinite period by the traders to press their demands for the suspension of the city magistrate, assistant sales tax commissioner (survey) and abandonment of the sales tax survey schemes, which triggered yesterday's violence. According to the district authorities the curfew may be relaxed tomorrow morning for two hours if the tension eases.

L N MISHRA PROBE

THE STEPS TAKEN by D Sen, the then CBI chief, to sabotage the investigation into the murder of L N Mishra by his own agency on instructions from Mrs Indira Gandhi are described in detail by V M Tarkunde in his report. According to Tarkunde, an officer of the rank of Sen could not have suppressed the investigation into the murder of a cabinet minister when it had reached a crucial stage yielding some startling disclosures without the assurance of political support from higher quarters. There is no other reason to explain why Sen rushed to Samastipur on March 28 on learning about the disclosure of the name of Ram Bilas Jha by Arun Kumar

Mishra in a conversation with the Samastipur jailor on March 21. Within days, he terminated the association of the state CID and police with the investigation.

ISRAEL-EGYPT BORDER

THE ISRAELI PRIME minister, Menachem Begin, after a meeting with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, said that Egypt and Israel had proclaimed their borders open and that he would go to Alexandria early in July. Begin, Sadat and the US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance spoke briefly following their meeting in El Arish and Begin said, "the President and I can proclaim here in El Arish the borders of Israel and Egypt are opened".

Election is the ideology

A hundred years after the birth of Hindu nationalism, Narendra Modi's victory embodies its original vision



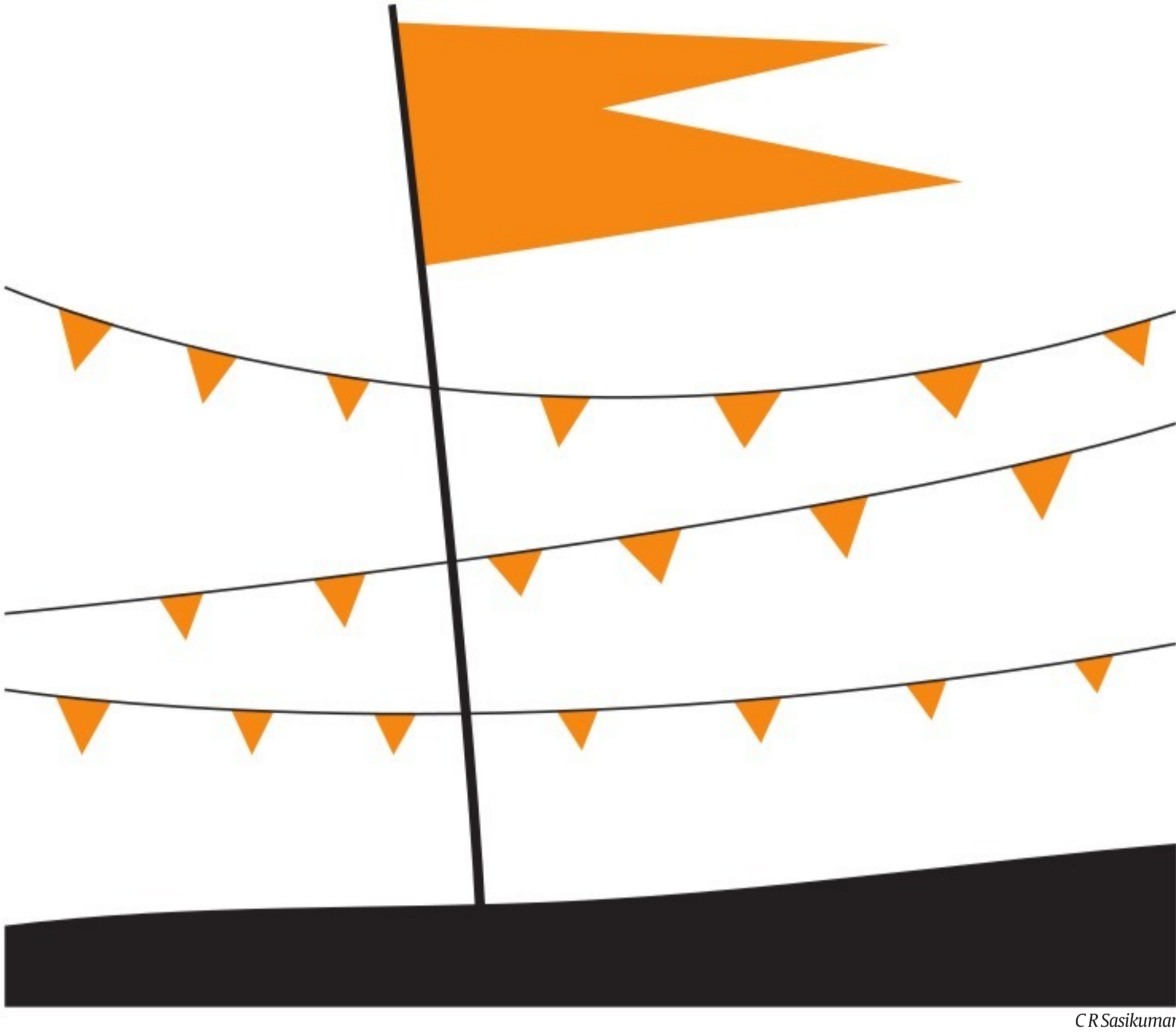
VINAY SITAPATI

HINDU NATIONALISM WAS born exactly 100 years ago. The colonial Government of India's Act of 1919 allowed for direct (though limited) elections, a first in Indian history. Never before had Indians, as Indians, been able to choose their leaders. In a society composed of individuals with interests, this would have resulted in the ideal of western-style democracy. But in a society composed of groups with identities, the logic of democracy began to be seen through the prism of demographics. For the first time in Indian history, numbers could translate into power.

More than any single event, it is this introduction of one-person-one-vote in India — through the general elections of 1920, 1923 and 1926 — that created Hindu nationalism. For this was the decade in which India got its first pronouncement on Hindutva (V D Savarkar's eponymous essay was published in 1923), its first completely Hindu party (the Hindu Mahasabha became a separate national party in the 1920s) and its most lasting Hindu organisation (the RSS was formed in 1925). Though there were other factors (such as the Malabar rebellion of 1921 and Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement), without the background of one-person-one-vote, it is impossible to understand Hindu nationalism.

This has continued in the decades since. The Jana Sangh was created for the 1951-52 elections. Deendayal Upadhyaya's doctrine of "Integral Humanism" — the official ideology of the BJP — was an election document that presaged the Jana Sangh's rise in the 1967 elections. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal gained prominence during the BJP's rise to power through the 1980s, and the crop of new Hindu groups make sense only in the context of the electoral rise of Modi's BJP. Last week's triumph of the BJP is not just an achievement for brand Modi; it is the culmination of the original logic of his ideology.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani spent their entire careers trying to decipher the mind of the Hindu voter. It's just that they assumed that while the cadre may want radical ideology, the average Hindu was by and large moderate. Their politics was, therefore, radical at times, but never enough to alienate the Hindu voter. Amit Shah and Narendra Modi are just as focused on what the Hindu voter wants. It's just that they have understood that the Hindu voter of today is far more radical than during the Vajpayee-Advani era. This understanding stems from their time as grass roots workers in the Gujarat of the early 1980s. While the national BJP was portraying a secular image of "Gandhian Socialism" under Vajpayee, its Gujarat unit was dealing with a Congress attempting a "KHAM" alliance of Muslims with low-caste Hindus. Modi and Shah saw this as an attempt to split the Hindu vote. Their solution: Cater to Hindu castes microscopically while painting Muslims as the broad brushed "other". This was the very calculation that Advani would make a decade later, when he decided to ride a Toyota chariot from Somnath to Ayodhya just one month after the acceptance of the



CR Sasikumar

Mandal commission's OBC quota report. And this is the very calculation that Modi and Shah have deployed in these elections. None of these strategies make sense without the core belief that the route to Hindu power is through an electoral system that rewards Hindus for being united. As a senior BJP leader told me, "our aim is to worship God through winning elections".

To put it differently, Modi and the 100 years of Hindu nationalism before him, do not have a conception of power other than one acquired through elections. This is partly because Hindu nationalists understood that majority groups can use democracy to their advantage. But it is also because, as Pratap Bhanu Mehta has argued elsewhere, traditional Hinduism does not provide a clearly articulated vision of a "Hindu state" or of "Hindu politics". "Ram Rajya" is a slogan rather than a thought-out counter to electoral democracy.

This is in telling contrast to Muslim nationalism in the Subcontinent that arose as a response to British attempts to introduce elections — beginning in 1909 and ending with the creation of Pakistan. As the scholars Farzana Shaikh and Venkat Dhulipala have shown, the Muslim League rejected the principles of one-person-one-vote, both for pragmatic reasons (Muslims would then become a demographic minority) as well as ideology. There existed within Islamic tradition, ideas of an Islamic state. This "New Medina" was legitimised by God, not elections. What is striking about the Hindu nationalism of that era was the absence of any alternative to a democratic state being articulated. There was no "New Ayodhya".

Nor does "Hindu *rashtra*" mean a Hindu state. What it means is a Hindu "nation" or a "national community" that can operate successfully within an electoral democracy — as

Narendra Modi and the 100 years of Hindu nationalism before him, do not have a conception of power other than one acquired through elections. This is partly because Hindu nationalists understood that majority groups can use democracy to their advantage.

the past two elections have shown. Eighty per cent of Indians must think in terms of not their caste, region, sect, or language, but as unified Hindus. Hindu *rashtra* is a conception of a "Hindu vote-bank".

This creation of a Hindu vote-bank has been a hundred-year project. In order to achieve this, it has been necessary to play up (and in many cases invent) what Hindus have in common. This ranges from common cultural grammar (a taboo against beef, the uniform worship of Lord Ram and now, a common reaction to Pulwama) as well as common loathing of Muslims as the "other". This is not to argue that Hindu nationalism is "liberal" or even "constitutional". But it is to say that the word democracy should not simply mean good governance or protection of minorities (plenty of non-elected dictators have provided both). All democracy means is majority rule sanctified through the process of clean elections.

Seen this way, terming Modi and Hindu nationalists as "fundamentalist" is a category error; Modi has no interest in going back to the fragmented, traditional Hinduism of the past. Terming him "fascist" is an even bigger blunder. What Modi has shown is that the best frame to understand him is through concepts such as "booth", "vote-bank", "majority" and "minority". In this, Modi is very much a product of his ideology; he's just proven better than any other Hindu nationalist before him in achieving its goals.

The election results are a victory for democracy, a victory for Hindu nationalism, and a victory for Modi — all in one. There is no Hindu *rashtra* down the road from here. It has already arrived, invited by democracy.

The writer teaches at Ashoka University and is writing a book on Hindu nationalism before Modi (Penguin)

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Mrs May made her choices and parliament rejected them. Her successor will face equivalent choices in a hostile climate where continental goodwill and domestic public patience are spent." — THE GUARDIAN

Modi's Taiwan opportunity

If there is one piece of real estate that holds the key to the geopolitics of East Asia, it is Taiwan



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

SUGGESTING THAT THE new government in Delhi should put Taiwan on its diplomatic priority list might look a rather small-bore recommendation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has come back with a huge domestic mandate that vastly enhances his international standing. Some in Delhi, however, would say that Modi's focus on Taiwan is too big and risky an idea. They worry it might offend Chinese political sensitivities. But productive engagement with Taiwan is not about abandoning India's "One-China" policy or playing some kind of a "card". India has been rather scrupulous in respecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

When the NDA government assumed office in 2014, the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj vented the frustration that Beijing does not reciprocate with a "One-India policy". Given the stakes in a sensible relationship with China, the NDA government rightly chose to stay the course on the "One-China policy". But it is by no means sensible for Delhi to deny itself the benefits of engaging Taiwan within the framework of its One-China policy.

Most major nations have significant co-operation with Taiwan without extending it diplomatic recognition. India, however, has too many self-imposed constraints on its Taiwan policy. It is now time to lift many of them. Even more important, is the need to end Delhi's traditional political neglect of the Taiwan relationship. Lack of interest at the high political level means there is no bureaucratic ownership in South Block.

To be sure, since the establishment of formal channels of contact in the mid-1990s, there has been steady progress in the relationship. Annual bilateral trade has reached \$7 billion last year and the hope is to raise it to \$20 billion in the next few years. There has been a rise in Taiwan's investments in India and a steady growth in exchanges between the two societies.

During the last five years, the NDA government has taken steps to enhance the relationship. These include the upgradation of the bilateral investment agreement, promotion of major Taiwanese investments, expanding parliamentary exchanges and facilitating track-two dialogues on regional issues.

There are at least three reasons why Delhi should take a fresh look at Taiwan and replace its current incrementalism with a more ambitious policy.

The first is geopolitical. The delicate three-way political compromise between US, China and Taiwan crafted in the 1970s appears to be breaking down, thanks to rising China's regional assertiveness, the renewed threat of forceful reunification of Taiwan and Beijing's relentless pressure tactics against Taipei.

Meanwhile in Washington, as part of the belated push-back against China under the Trump Administration, the "deep state" is determined to strengthen ties

with Taiwan. In reinforcing its security commitment to Taiwan, the Trump Administration has begun to send its naval ships through the Taiwan Straits more frequently than before. Meanwhile, divisions within Taiwan on the future ties with Beijing have deepened.

The relative quiet in the triangular relations between the US, China and Taiwan over the last four decades tends to mask the strategic significance of Taiwan that straddles the sea lines of communication in the Western Pacific and is a stone's throw from China's mainland.

If there is one piece of real estate that holds the key to the geopolitics of East Asia, it is Taiwan. The unfolding dynamic around Taiwan will have significant consequences for India's Act East Policy and its emerging role in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Second is geo-economic. The unfolding trade war between the US and China is compelling Taiwan to accelerate its plans to move its large manufacturing bases away from China to Southeast Asia and India. Well before the US-China trade conflict intensified, Taiwan announced the "New Southbound Policy" in 2016. The objective is to strengthen ties with the 10 countries of the ASEAN as well as Australia, New Zealand and India.

As the structure of industrial production in East Asia undergoes a profound transformation, amidst the prospect of an economic decoupling between the US and China, India has once-in-a-generation opportunity to boost its own manufacturing sector. For Modi's agenda of promoting industrial production and creating jobs in India, the Taiwan connection with its impressive small and medium enterprises is more than opportune.

The third is talent and technology. Few issues have animated Modi more than the promotion of global access to India's professional talent. As it turns out, Taiwan has embarked on a big mission to attract skilled workers. With a declining birth rate and growing emigration, Taiwan's industry, education, and technology development could do with Indian engineers and scientists. At present, there are barely 2,000 Indians working in Taiwan.

There is no shortage of ideas for the transformation of India's relations with Taiwan. An agreement on comprehensive economic cooperation is one of those. The synergy in human resources provides the basis for massive collaborations between the universities, research institutions and technology enclaves in the two countries.

What the bilateral relationship now needs is high-level political attention in Delhi to make things happen and quickly. Expanding the engagement with Taiwan can't be a tactical game; it should be an important part of Delhi's effort to come to terms with all corners of Greater China that looms so large over India's future.

Those who think Taiwan is small beer in the wider scheme of Indian grand strategy should ponder over two facts. Taiwan's GDP is about \$600 billion and twice the size of Pakistan's economy. And few entities in the international system are today as eager and capable of boosting Modi's domestic economic agenda.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express



SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

At home and in the world

Under PM Modi, the aspiration is for a new, global version of Indian modernity

"MAJORITARIANISM" AND "DEMOGOGUERY" have been the most frequent terms used to describe the 2019 elections results. However, the dominance of the will of the majority and the appeal of a leader with the ability to incite passions has also been a common feature — in different degrees — at other times in our history. The current appeal of these strategies to gain power requires different explanations, ones that are not as easily arrived at through surveys and exit polls that seek to gauge the voters' political intent. Certain socio-cultural changes over the past two decades or so have remade Indian identities across class and caste divides in ways that allow us to understand the appeal of contemporary political strategies. If "Narendra Modi" has been the answer, what are the grounds for the questions that are being asked?

It is frequently said — particularly by supporters of the ruling party — that these elections are about the lessening of caste factors and the rise of class consciousness. Given that both the distribution of tickets as well as voting has stayed true to the arithmetic of caste, this statement is not difficult to disprove. What is actually crucial to understand is the upsurge in desire for both caste and class identities: It is not as if caste identities have been abandoned in favour of class ones,

rather there is as much pride in asserting caste identities as there is the desire to display the markers of, usually, middle classness. There is a specific desire for a "better" class identity along with retaining the older caste one. This is a significant factor that attracts many to the persona of Modi.

Unlike Rahul Gandhi, he has a distinct caste identity, and, he champions the cause of class. The desire to inhabit multiple worlds — for that is what class and caste desire is — has a broader history. It has to do with the growth of a very particular vision of Indian globalism. Modism has been a way of demonstrating how to be global with Indian characteristics. Here, one can be part of the world — global goods and commodities, travel, food, lifestyles — and yet, have the capacity to ensure that the home remains "Indian". The ways in which this is expressed are diverse: Karva Chauth along with pilates classes, *Game of Thrones* as well as obsequious biopics of the PM, and the choice of multiple "themes" for weddings. But, not necessarily the ability to choose whom one marries.

Socio-cultural change of the scale we have witnessed in the past two decades — changes in the nature of work, altered media landscapes, new gender and sexual politics, among others — have become causes of great social anxiety. And the answer that Modi offers is that

one can have the world on one's own terms: Unlike the older ("Westernised") middle classes, a newer, more Indian version of modernity. In this world, the choices are about what one buys, wears and eats, without the fear that these might alter the existing structures of power. Young women aspire to be cabin crew and must conform to the dictates of dressing and co-mingling — but when the flight lands, they return to a home apparently untouched by the turbulence of change. The idea is that one's family and social life can be quarantined from the effects of social and cultural change.

In a recent television interview, a female Modi supporter proclaimed that just as a family needs a strong husband and father to "protect", so does the nation require Modi. This pithily captures the idea that while we may want the world — international holidays et al — its influence must be balanced with "traditional values" that regulate what comes in.

Finally, very significant at a time when the power of the electronic media is paramount, there has been a particularly potent process of normalisation of war and violence. Advertising has been a compelling force in this regard. It is now common to see martial metaphors as sales strategies across a range of products that are an intimate part of our lives. Advertisements for butter refer to "sur-

gical strikes", cars are sold through appeals to military masculinity and the quality of bathroom tiles are compared to the nationalism of army personnel. When war and militarism become banal aspects of everyday life, then the leader who can embody their practice becomes an irresistible object of admiration. When combat becomes the dominant way of imagining life, then the absolute annihilation of differing opinions — rather than negotiation — becomes the norm. In such a situation, the appeal of the leader who is a "warrior" is overwhelming.

In the backdrop of all this, the manner in which we process change and utilise the instruments of change to think about the future is fundamental to the manner in which we vote. Any fundamental understanding of voting behaviour, thus, requires that we understand the ways in which it is but a subset — rather than an independent variable — of all the different ways in which we live our lives. This does not, of course, provide quick answers regarding "better" politics. However, if we do not start from this level of analysis, then any insight into what people do — and why they do it — becomes impossible to grasp.

The writer is professor of sociology at the Institute of Economic Growth

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WORDS ACTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Weight of words' (IE May 27). The words of the prime minister needs to be supported by actions. As a first step, the BJP should remove all those who incite violence against minorities from party positions. Such incidents should be condemned and justice expedited for the victims. **Safdar Ali, Kolkata**

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Weight of words' (IE, May 27). It is heartening that the PM is talking about inclusiveness and promising to work towards allaying the fears of minorities. The task will require strong political willpower. The change will have to come from the top leadership. **Bhoomi Keshwala, Veraval**

DEMAND FROM FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The low hanging fruit first' (IE, May 27). The BJP will be judged on its ability to fulfill its promise to double farmers income by 2022. The implementation of the APLM Act, 2017, the constitution of an agrimarketing council on the lines of GST council, review of the Essential Commodities Act and shifting from price support to income support are steps required to fulfill this promise. **Anirudh Parashar, Solan**

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

ILLUSION OF FEAR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Transfiguring India,' (IE, May 27). The author seems to have arrived at wrong conclusion about India becoming a Hindu *Rashtra*. The PM has asked the BJP's MPs to puncture the illusion of "insecurity" surrounding the minorities. **Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata**