

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

America versus the rest

Non-dollar based trading regime holds key to breaking US stranglehold over oil trade



VIKRAM S MEHTA

LISTEN TO YOUR OWN

In case against the CJ, SC should address disquiet expressed by a senior judge, desist from ex parte probe

HERE IS no doubt that the Supreme Court faces a serious challenge of institutional integrity after one of its ex-employees levelled charges of sexual harassment against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi. While the apex court showed that it's alive to this concern by instituting a three-member panel to investigate the charges, the complainant's walking away from the probe, after expressing fears that she is "not likely to get justice from the committee," has, by all accounts, muddied the waters even more. Now, a submission by a senior judge of the apex court, Justice D Y Chandrachud, speaks of the sense of disquiet within the higher judiciary. As reported in this paper, Justice Chandrachud has, in a letter to the panel on May 2, asked it to not proceed with the ex parte probe. He also met the panel last week to convey his concerns about the investigation. The committee — and the apex court itself — should do well to pay heed to the most critical of these concerns, as expressed in Justice Chandrachud's letter: The credibility of the Supreme Court would be further damaged if the panel decided to continue the probe in the complainant's absence.

In her press statement after walking out of the probe, the complainant had alleged that she was "not informed of the procedure the committee is following". She had talked of feeling "quite intimidated and nervous in the presence of three Hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court and without having a lawyer or support person". The committee, however, declined her request for a lawyer and decided to carry on the probe ex parte. The complainant has held that denying her a lawyer was testimony to the committee's lack of sensitivity to "the fact that this was not an ordinary complaint". The panel was dealing "with a complaint of sexual harassment against a sitting CJ and therefore it was required to adopt a procedure that would ensure fairness and equality in the highly unequal circumstances," she has contended.

It's true that the victim's allegations pertain to complex procedural issues. And no doubt the panel's task has become complicated because the SC's "in-procedures" do not have explicit provisions for an inquiry against the CJ. But the principles of natural justice — and the SC's own jurisprudence guaranteeing a level-playing field to working women — demanded that the committee's first task was to institute processes to mitigate the unequal power relations in this case. Justice Chandrachud's letter too suggests such an imperative. He has suggested that the committee could either accede to the complainant's request for a lawyer or appoint an amicus curiae for the probe. The SC should heed the message of its senior judge.

ONE SHOULD NOT be surprised by US President Donald Trump's imperious approach to the rest of the world. He has but one concern. To keep his domestic constituency intact and to win the 2020 elections. He may not even care if in the process, the "rest" go to hell in a hand basket". His latest missive against Iran is manifestation of this attitude. The question that one must ask is what can the "rest" do to prevent such an outcome.

On April 22, Mike Pompeo announced that the exemptions granted to seven countries (and Taiwan) from the US sanctions law, CAATSA (Countering American Adversaries through Sanctions Act) against Iran would be withdrawn on May 3. He said these countries would have to bring their imports of Iranian oil/gas down to zero within the next two weeks and the policy objective was to choke off the outlaw regimes' principal source of revenue.

Pompeo's announcement should not have come as a surprise. The exemptions had been granted for six months and were to expire on May 3. It did rattle the market, though, because of the impracticality of the demand. How were these countries going to reduce their purchase to zero at such short notice? Together, they were purchasing one million barrels of oil daily and Turkey imported almost 15 per cent of its gas requirement via the pipeline from Iran. It was also not clear what the US would do if China, Turkey and India cocked a snook at this diktat. Would the government prevent US banks from financing US business in these countries? If so, what and how would these restrictions be implemented? Anyway, the uncertainties led to a tightening of the oil market despite Trump's characteristic tweet that he had "spoken to OPEC to make up the shortfall".

On hearing this announcement, the issue that concerned me was not the impact on the oil market or on India. It was the reaction of Iran and whether this might trigger actions and decisions that could lead to a broader conflagration. I knew that India had

already substantially reduced its petroleum imports from Iran and that whilst the costs of making up the 11 per cent that it still imported would push its import bill higher, this increase was affordable and it would not create a major economic disruption. Of course, I did wonder whether India would readily accede to the diktat or whether, on a matter of principle, it would signal to America that it could not compromise its principles and be seen as a fair weather friend. After all, India and Iran have had long standing strategic, cultural and trading relations. But these were subsidiary thoughts to the contours of a possible disaster scenario taking shape in my mind. It was also subsidiary to the follow up question: What, if anything, can the rest of the world do to prevent Trumpian foreign policy from disproportionately and adversely impacting the people in the region?

Consider the following. The relatively moderate government of President Hassan Rouhani collapses because of public disaffection with the dire state of the domestic economy, and because of an emboldened opposition. It is replaced by a hardline government opposed to the JCPOA — the multi-nation agreement that had placed constraints on Iran's nuclear programme — which resumes work on the nuclear programme. John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser and arguably the architect of Trump's hardline policy towards Iran finds he now has the excuse to "bomb" Iran. He has often expressed this wish. Trump signs off on this act of muscularity because he believes it will go down well with his domestic constituency. Iran reacts along multiple fronts. It endeavours to block the Straits of Hormuz through which flow 22 million barrels of oil every day, it intensifies support to anti-American Shia factions in the region and reaches out to China for support. The price of oil shoots up, the global economy hits the skids and...

So what, if anything, can the global community do to avoid such a scenario? The answer clearly does not lie in a "jaw jaw" with

Trump, Bolton and Pompeo. They have set their stakes in the ground. They will not ease off until, as Pompeo put it, Iran learns "to behave like a normal country". Moreover, they are persuaded that the portrayal of Iran as "an outlaw regime" plays well with their Republican base?

So, what are the other possibilities? One of several reasons for America's economic leverage is that it sits at the epicenter of the global financial system. The dollar is a reserve currency. Global trade is preponderantly carried out in dollars. Oil is priced in dollars. The US treasury is the favoured haven for risk averse investors. And, it controls the financial messaging system (SWIFT). Banks, financial intermediaries and corporates would not be able to function if they did not have access to this system. This latter reality is the threat that hangs over every entity that continues to trade with Iran after May 3.

Clearly, this threat would lose its edge if there were an alternative messaging system that enabled non-dollar transactions without SWIFT. The European signatories of JCPOA (Germany, France and the UK) have created such a system. They announced in January the establishment of a SPV "Instrument in support of Trade Exchange" (INSTEX) to enable companies to trade with Iran without having to deal with dollar-based US banks. It remains to be seen whether companies will avail of this mechanism. Also, the threat would dilute if the countries decided to engage in barter but this is not a sustainable alternative.

I am sure there is more that can be done. The larger point is that the "rest" must find ways of creating a non-dollar based trading system, particularly regards petroleum and thereby weakening America's stranglehold over the global financial system. For Trump is pushing the Middle East onto a collision course and the consequences for everyone could be severe.

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So what if anything can the global community do to avoid such a scenario? The answer clearly does not lie in a 'jaw jaw' with Trump, Bolton and Pompeo. They have set their stakes in the ground. They will not ease off until, as Pompeo put it, Iran learns 'to behave like a normal country'. Moreover, they are persuaded that the portrayal of Iran as "an outlaw regime" plays well with their Republican base?

STALEMATE IN KABUL

Afghan loya jirga fails to convince the Taliban to engage with the elected government

THE TALIBAN'S rejection of a call for an Eid truce by the Afghan loya jirga last week was good indication that despite American optimism, arriving at peace in Afghanistan is not going to be as quick or easy as the United States wants it to be.

The Grand Council of 3,200 Afghans was itself controversial. Left out of the US-Taliban talks, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani called the loya jirga ostensibly to build consensus among the various tribal groups on discussions with the Taliban. The Taliban, however, are resolute that they will not enter into any dialogue with the elected Afghan government until after the US and other foreign troops have withdrawn from the country. And there is no guarantee that they will do so after the withdrawal. The Taliban openly called on the Afghans to boycott the loya jirga. Ghani's political rivals, including chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, refused to attend the meeting for their own reasons. Packed as it was with Ghani loyalists, they saw the jirga as an attempt to boost his own political standing and stature ahead of the September 28 presidential elections. The meeting was hobbled by other difficulties, including that it was led by a former warlord associated with Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Ghani lined the truce call to the Taliban with a sweetener, offering to release 175 Taliban prisoners. But the Taliban, who had observed a three-day ceasefire last Eid, are in no mood to indulge Ghani.

The US too made plain its disinterest in the loya jirga by holding another round of talks with the Taliban in the same week. US Special Representative Zalmay Khalizad has stressed that a deal requires agreement on "four inter-connected issues", which are, a timetable for troop withdrawal, guarantees from the Taliban that no terrorist attacks will be launched against other countries, a dialogue between Taliban and the elected Afghan government, and a ceasefire. But he has also said that he wants to reach this deal before the presidential elections. With Ghani's political opponents readying for a rumoured "interim government" under a peace agreement, there may be no elections. Ghani's own legitimacy has been undermined with each passing day of the US-Taliban engagement. Both see Iran and India as potential trouble makers. Left out of the talks, in which Pakistan has played a significant role, Delhi has so far found it convenient to say it will back any agreement supported by the elected Afghan government. But the dilemma for Delhi is really how to deal with a post-US Afghanistan.

ELECTING A NEW PEOPLE

Statements during 2019 campaign go against principle of universal franchise



SEEMA CHISHTI

SOME DEBATES IN the heat of the battle of 2019 are a throwback to the past, reminiscent of the distance we have veered off the kerb of acceptable ideas about what the pact of India and its people was about. Two distinct statements come to mind that show how close we have been to embracing discarded ideas of separateness, unmindful of the road — crossing near-impossible hurdles — to invent the idea of our republic.

In the fulminations of the RJD in Begusarai where Kanhaiya Kumar is contesting as a candidate of the Communist Party of India, or in what Narendra Modi had to say on Congress President Rahul Gandhi's contest from Wayanad, an important but somewhat neglected chapter from our political history came into sharp focus.

On April 1, speaking in a rally at Wardha, Modi expressed disdain for Rahul Gandhi for standing from an area "where the majority is in a minority". The implication being that it cannot be a legitimate representation if Rahul Gandhi is voted in by the "minority" community. Conversely, fulminations against the Bhumihar-comrade Kanhaiya for daring to contest from Begusarai, where the RJD's Tanveer Hasan is also contesting and so seeking Muslim votes, was made out to be an act against "secularism".

It is common sense, people say — that since India votes according to its micro-identities — to seek votes as per caste, sub-caste, region and religion. But to have been able to forge a modern idea of each citizen having

one vote has been a big leap for India, as it negotiated several kinds and levels of inequalities and differences, diversities and inequities. This was an idea that was provocative at the time and bore the seed for social revolution, as each voter mattered equally and only as much as the other voter.

By drawing attention to electorates like this, parties as contrasting as the BJP and RJD did not realise how close they were to making a case for separate electorates — a controversial and long-discarded idea from colonial India, which was always eager to sharpen the cleavages in Indian society.

The year 1909 marked the beginning of separate electorates. The Poona Pact is recalled by how the British wished to further carve out the "depressed classes" as separate electorates. Gandhi fasted over the issue and after protracted pressure, B R Ambedkar agreed to doing away with the demand and agreed to reserved

seats instead.

It was only a few months after Partition, as the Constituent Assembly debates were in progress, that a sub-committee looking to examine if separate electorates should be continued gave up on the idea. There were Muslims in the committee, headed by then home minister, Sardar Patel, leading the argument for a joint electorate. The move was towards a democracy where your central identity would be of a citizen; where you would vote as equal to every other citizen, and not demand a set number of representatives for either Muslims or Christians or Sikhs.

Oddly enough, those who now argue for the need for a "Muslim" leadership miss this point entirely: Each MP, after the doing away of separate electorates, is sworn to look after each citizen and constituent, and this is at the heart of the "unseparateness" that the Indian Constitution sought to forge.

In statements focussing, perhaps unthinkingly, on what "the people" must represent ("Muslims" be represented by "Muslims" and "Hindu" leaders elected from where the people are "Hindu"), we have come dangerously close to flirting with the dark moment Bertolt Brecht speaks of in *Die Losung or The Solution*: "Stating that the people/Had forfeited the confidence of the government/And could win it back only By redoubled efforts/ Would it not be easier in that case/ for the government to dissolve the people/And elect another?"

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FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



MAY 6, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

TEESTA RIFT INDIAN AND BANGLADESH experts have differences on working out an agreed basis for sharing the Teesta water. Indian experts want the availability of water to be measured in totality in the Bangladesh region for which the country proposes to use Teesta water, while Bangladesh insists on the availability to be at the point where the river enters its territory, according to joint commission sources. A suitable machinery for sharing the water, in pursuance of Prime Minister Morarji Desai's recent talks with President Ziaur Rahman, is to be set up by the Joint River Commission of the two countries. The commission is likely to meet in Delhi later this

month to discuss the augmentation of the Ganga flow.

NON-ALIGNED MEET PRESERVATION OF NONALIGNED unity was the strand that ran through the 35-minute discussion which the Yugoslav foreign minister, Josip Vrhovec, had with Prime Minister Morarji Desai on May 4. There was unanimity of views on the issue of Egypt's expulsion from the nonaligned movement: That there was no case for such a step to be taken, and that such a move must be discouraged. Southeast Asia was also identified as the critical area, where the interests of three major powers — the US, USSR and China —

were clashing.

LONE IN CUSTODY ABDUL GANI LONE, chairman of the newly-formed Kashmir People's Conference and a "fellow of his associates" were taken into custody at Baramulla, in north Kashmir. Lone, also a member of the state assembly, had attended a meeting of the District Development Board at Baramulla. As soon as he entered the meeting hall, he created a row by taking exception to his not having been allotted a suitable seat. He also reportedly protested against the way in which his party's public meeting at Sopore was disturbed on May 5.

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Venezuela cannot recover politically, socially or economically while Mr Maduro remains in charge. Even a tranche of Chavistas have abandoned the man Hugo Chávez picked as his successor."  
— THE GUARDIAN

## The Socratic question

On the birthday of Socrates, what can be said about the philosopher whom nobody has read?



**IN GOOD FAITH**  
BY VIJAY TANKHA

THOUGH PROBABLY THE best known philosopher in the Western tradition, Socrates' fame is based not on his work, as he wrote nothing, but on the monument of his life as reconstructed by his disciples, mainly Plato. The Socratic question is: How real is the character Plato sketches in his numerous dialogues? Plato's *Apology*, reporting the defence (*Apologia*) made by Socrates at his trial, shows him to be the first public intellectual rather than an absent minded stargazer.

Socrates had no interest in natural science or metaphysics (unconcerned with fantasies of the afterlife), epistemology (his model of knowledge was based on everyday occupations), or theology (he neither spoke on behalf of the gods nor about them). Instead, Socrates positioned himself as practitioner of free inquiry. Interacting with fellow citizens in the Agora (the centre of the city), he forced them to reflect on their own beliefs. His method, stylistically grounding both philosophical prose and tragic poetry of the time, was akin to a judicial cross-examination, in tune with his claim: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Obeying this dictum, he followed his god-given duty to "... go about doing nothing else than urging you... not to care for your persons or your property more than for the perfecting of your souls... for virtue is not derived from wealth, virtue is itself the source of wealth... both for the individual and the State" (*Apology* 30).

Care of the self and the examined life are conceptually linked. To say that the unexamined life is not worth living is to make a claim for the importance of philosophical examination in one's own life. This has parallels in other traditions, in the practice of meditation, confession of sins, etc, but these are usually private rather than public acts.

Care of the self also involves paying attention to what is really important and so becomes the question of how one should live one's life, a question which, for Socrates, philosophy alone is equipped to answer. In a paradoxical reversal, asking the question becomes the answer. The simple asking of questions (of ourselves, of others) is living the examined life. More recent versions emphasise paying attention to what we do

— thinking about and examining our motivations is to live authentically — the hallmark of the Socratic demand that we place ourselves under scrutiny.

Unlike other Socratic paradoxes ("no one does wrong willingly", "the good man cannot be harmed"), this injunction is easy to repeat but difficult to practice. What Socrates called for was an examination of our belief system as a whole which, once exposed, was subject to a rigorous assessment, leaving no room for anything hidden or unexpressed. This was also the beginning of philosophical therapy: ironing out the wrinkles of deceit and double dealing, seemingly necessary to everyday existence. Socratic examination was the first step in the care of the self.

Socrates, though put to death by majority vote, was not in opposition but in opposition to democratic Athens, where freedom of speech was every citizen's right. Even the city's most vociferous critics could speak openly: Reasoning in the courts (where citizens doubled as either judge or jury) or declaiming in the Assembly (where policies were debated and ratified). Nor was it surprising that the heights of Athenian civilisational achievement was bracketed between the tyranny of Pisistratus and the hegemony of Philip of Macedon.

Unlike the intelligentsia of the past (poets and poet-prophets), Socrates laid no claim to wisdom, nor did he praise rulers. Pilloried by comic poets long before he was brought to trial, he compared himself to a gadfly whose job was to sting the state and its citizens. Although he did not seek office, yet during the brief terror of the Thirty Tyrants, he refused, under threat of death, to obey them. Unjustly condemned by the restored democracy in 399 BCE ("many a good man has been condemned because of prejudice"), he declined to flee. The slow nature of his virtue overtaken by the speed of their wickedness (*Apology* 39a: Reminding us of Gandhi who had translated this work into Gujarati).

How should one live? The question, signalling the entry of ethics into politics, is possible only in a democratic polity. Only in democracies can the self determine itself, becoming at last no less than the sum of its accidents. The classic separation of mind and body was designed to separate being from beings, contrasting the uncertainty about the Self with the certainty of what it is not. Am I not as well what I seem most not to be? Not merely a disembodied soul but an embodied self (*jiva*)? Knowledge and care of the self still remains the goal of all our endeavours. Refashioning the oracular imperative — know thyself — the real Socratic question turns out to be not about him but about ourselves.

The writer taught philosophy at Delhi University

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### LONG-TERM SECURITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Tagging Azhar' (IE, May 3). As a lay person I am perplexed as to how the labeling of terrorist Masood Azhar shall have a negative impact on the terrorism unleashed against India by JeM in the past. Terrorists are known to execute their plans through proxies and the tagging of Azhar is no guarantee that there shall be no terrorists attacks on India when Pakistan harbours such innumerable terrorists. The only solution is to make our borders secure and take people of Kashmir into confidence as a lot of attacks are by people from within the country. There should also be a mechanism to extradite terrorists.  
**Deepak Singhal, Noida**

### GOOD NEIGHBOURS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Wuhan spirit needs a body' (IE, May 3). China's decision to alter its stand on Masood Azhar is a welcome one and it could lead towards solving the Indo-China border issue which has been the bone of contention between India and China since 1962. Informal meetings like the Wuhan summit allow leadership of both countries to imagine out-of-the-box solutions.  
**Akshay Sharma, via e-mail**

### LACK OF BALANCE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Listen to her' (IE, May 2). The editorial does not take a balanced position and has become a mouthpiece of the complainant. The complainant has sought to dissociate herself from the probe on specious grounds like asymmetry of power equations. That is an integral aspect of the factual matrix of the case and can't be altered. Her desire to tweak the probe procedure to suit her conven-

### 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](mailto: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

ience under the garb of natural justice is wrong. The editorial does not aver to the allegations of conspiracy, addressing which are very important given that the stakes are very high. It has reduced the matter into a lopsided issue.  
**R K Mathur, Ghaziabad**

### PM'S CONCERNS

This refers to the editorial, 'The Maoist challenge' (IE, May 3). The attacks highlighted the incompetent security preparations of the government, but the problem needs to be understood in a larger context. Maoists need to be de-radicalised but the hardcore Maoist needs to be dealt sternly by the security forces. The prime minister's concerns national security has been proven right.  
**Pranay Kumar Shome, Kolkata**

# Clones in the civil service

Indian civil services run the risk of producing just clones who seek precedence not innovation in work



MEERAN CHADHA BORWANKAR

IRREVERENCE HAS ITS place. Especially if it is coupled with integrity and there is no serious breach in discipline. I am talking of the civil services and with particular reference to the sudden and before-time shift of the Chief of Enforcement Directorate, Western Zone. The government has been prompt in avoiding the prolonged and painful tussle that the country recently witnessed in the fight between the two powerful blocks of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). To that extent, the citizens have been spared the turmoil, but the reasons for the sudden action have not been made public and may never come out either. Despite the Right to Information Act, governments — irrespective of the party in power, are wary of disclosing anything as they feel threatened. So, lesson number one is that the Right to Information is a long battle and the citizens have won only the first round.

The sudden "shunting" of civil servants is bewildering to many, especially if the officer has been performing well. At such times the topic of "political interference" in administration invariably crops up. Politicians are painted as darker than black. It is a fact that if officers bend, politicians make them bend even more. But if they do not bend, they indeed are "shunted out" or not given prize postings. That is the price one pays for holding one's spine straight. However, nowhere have we questioned the culture prevailing within the civil services — whether it is conducive to civil servants taking value-based personal positions, and colleagues standing

by such officers and supporting them.

The sad truth is, the civil services induct some of the most talented and intelligent individuals in the country, and then labour hard on making them mediocre. We want clones in each of our departments. Original thinkers? The word does not exist in the dictionary of civil servants. Our prime focus is "safety", and to be in the good books of the party in power: We feel insecure, very often, especially at the slightest departure from "precedence", that holy word. We convey the same sentiment to the political bosses, too. Though they are a little more adventurous initially, soon they fall in line. The result is an opaque governance, the slow chugging train of Indian democracy.

An officer who dares to think different or breaks the stagnant, unproductive routine with any new initiatives, is first looked upon with suspicion. And if he goes at a speed that is decidedly not "ours", he is shunted out so that we feel secure in our own slow bumpy ride. That has been the story for the last 72 years, and yet we wonder why India is still a developing country. Recently, Saheber Bhatia of Hotmail fame, along with some others, moaned about the non-accountability of civil servants. The truth is that civil servants are as much responsible, if not more, for India missing many achievable goals given the political leadership of different parties: It takes much more to succeed as a nation than the tardy routine that most bureaucrats boast about. If that had been enough, we would have been a happy and healthy nation, decades earlier.

What the civil services need is a culture that accepts and values questioning and the irreverence of bold officers: The ultimate objective, of course, is to have integrity in one's work ethic, and a steady commitment to the common good. If an officer is honest but different, let her be. If the officer has a different viewpoint, it is alright — in fact, that is what we need to take the country out of the rut. We, in the civil services, have been non-performers because we are clones of each other, unable to think differently.

In India, the colonial culture gave way to the culture of 'cloneism' in the civil services. That's the reason why the country is stuck the way it is. There are many ways out of it, and one important solution is to make the civil services listen to the voices with a 'difference', from among their own. Another is to have a culture that rewards performance and not repetitive motions or 'precedence'. Encourage officers who offer different solutions, even if they fail. If they are grounded to the field realities, they will come up with new ones.

When Harvard University studied the extraordinary response of the staff of the Taj hotel in Mumbai to the 26/11 crisis, they found that "What the Taj Group looks for in managers is integrity, along with the ability to work consistently and conscientiously, to respond beyond the call of duty, and to work well under pressure". While integrity, consistency, and conscientiousness are essential for civil servants, equally important is their ability to think positive, to think different and to be able to implement their thought process to ensure the good of the citizens. If these original thinkers are irreverent of seniority, let it be, as long as they show results. If they question, let us reply to them in full sincerity instead of putting them down. If they have views and opinions of their own, let's forget our cumbersome protocol and listen to them wholeheartedly. They may, and do have substance, most of the time. If they look fearless, let's not feel threatened. Fearlessness comes only if you have a spine and most of us have lost it some time back.

In India, the colonial culture gave way to the culture of "cloneism" in the civil services. That's the reason why the country is stuck the way it is. There are many ways out of it, and one important solution is to make the civil services listen to the voices with a "difference", from among their own. Another is to have a culture that rewards performance and not repetitive motions or "precedence". Encourage officers who offer different solutions, even if they fail. If they are grounded to the field realities, they will come up with new ones. They may be irreverent and outspoken, and yet be the solution. In the "shunting out" of the Enforcement Directorate chief of the Western Zone, the prevalent system has, once again, failed to appreciate and value an officer who dares to think differently.

The writer is an IPS officer of the Maharashtra Cadre, and retired as the Director General, Bureau of Police Research and development (BPRD)

## VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

## TERROR TAG

THE EDITORIAL reactions in *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune* about Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar being designated a "global terrorist" by the UN, after China lifted its "technical hold", is telling. In its May 3 editorial, *Dawn* remarks that "JeM may have made India-held Kashmir its focus, but its cadres have caused plenty of havoc in Pakistan as well." It cites the following example: "Its (JeM) militants form the nucleus of what is known as the Punjabi Taliban, a loose confederation of jihadists, also consisting of sectarian elements. Though the JeM was banned in 2002 by Pakistan, its activities continued and Masood Azhar was largely a free man." In addition, China only ceased to block the listing once all mention of Kashmir and terror in India was removed from the resolution. What is interesting — and admirably critical — in *Dawn's* editorial, is the understanding that Pakistan must put its house in order. The editorial does say that New Delhi tries to link "the Kashmiri struggle for justice" with terrorism and that this "false binary must be exposed". However, it adds that "if we had put our own house in order, India would not have been able to exploit the situation and associate jihadist groups with Pakistan."

## ANGER IN SRI LANKA

OVER THE last week, editorials in the Sri Lankan English language press have been consistently critical of the government for

groups and non-state actors that promote hateful, divisive and sectarian narratives must be shut down".

The *Express Tribune*, on the other hand, rubbishes any claims by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the listing constitutes a diplomatic victory for India. Its May 3 editorial, in fact, spins the terror tag as China finding an "amicable way out" — it has responded to pressure from the US, UK and France without affecting its deep ties with Pakistan: "The global superpower rivalling the US utilised its power potential, forcing the movers of the resolution against the JeM chief to correct the relevant materials and re-submit them for the sanctioning exercise — all for the sake of Pak-China friendship that is indeed higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans and sweeter than honey."

While one publication seems to address the core issues around Masood Azhar from a patriotic but critical perspective, the other seems to be defending with great zeal China and the stylistically dated rhetoric around the China-Pak relationship — "friendship sweeter than honey" indeed.

The editorial also calls out the government for attempting to take advantage of the situation to strengthen its own powers: "It is trying to have its new anti-terror Bill passed in spite of fears being expressed by trade unions and the Opposition that it, if passed, can be used to suppress workers, the media and the oppositional forces. Nobody will buy into the government's claim that new laws are needed to combat terror. The LTTE, which was considered the most dangerous terrorist group in the world, was defeated with the help of the existing anti-terror laws. The gov-

ernment had better abandon such sinister moves, for its own sake."

## BLAME THE IDEOLOGY

IN HIS column in *Dawn* on May 4, Irfan Hussain demolishes the myth that terrorism, or "radical" or "jihadist" violence is a result of a lack of education. The suicide bombers who killed hundreds in Sri Lanka were well educated and Omar Saeed Sheikh, the man who killed journalist Daniel Pearl was educated at the London School of Economics. Radicalisation of the youth appears to take place largely through Salafism, the most regressive variety of Wahabism. This, argues Hussain, is because these varieties of Islam "are propagated by Saudi Arabia through the vast network of madrasas and mosques it supports across the world. From Jakarta to Johannesburg, clerics often paid by Riyadh preach sermons full of hate towards non-Muslims". The West turns a blind eye to this fact. In the end, though, an important question remains: "Experts are unanimous in suggesting that education and jobs are the answer to jihadist radicalisation. But as we have just seen, some of the deadliest attacks have been carried out by well-educated and well-off men. So how do we remove the poison that has infected them?"



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**TELLING NUMBERS**

**In growing income tax base, number of e-filings down 6.6 lakh**

INCOME TAX e-filings in 2018-19 dropped by more than 6.6 lakh, statistics put out on the Income Tax Department's e-filing website show. Tax return forms for 2018-20 have been notified, with July 31 as the deadline for filing. In 2018-19, the number of returns e-filed was 6.68 crore, down from 6.74 crore in the 2017-18, after a jump from 5.28 crore in 2016-17.

The drop in e-filings comes at a time when the number of registered filers have risen. This count was 8.45 crore as of March 31, 2019, which was 15% more than the 7.36 crore on March 31, 2018. From the same date in 2013, when the count was 2.69 crore, the rise has been more than threefold in six years.

A PTI report on Sunday quoted from a Kotak Economic Research report on April 30, which said: "We are surprised with the decline in income tax e-filing in FY2019. If the filings are indeed plateauing, it will be a worry for the fiscal which has seemingly shifted its focus to compensatory expenditure. Tax filings have surprisingly plateaued in FY2019. This is surprising given that post demonetisation it was expected that the tax base would continue to increase."

**E-RETURNS RECEIVED**



**REGISTERED FILERS**

Year	Registered Filers
2012	1,97,42,161
2013	2,69,45,778
2014	3,61,86,146
2015	4,31,20,913
2016	5,22,23,836
2017	6,21,34,605
2018	7,36,34,944
2019	8,45,14,539

Data source: Income Tax Department

**THIS WORD MEANS**

**CHEWBACCA**

**In culture and science, the legacy of a 'Star Wars' character played by a recently deceased actor**

ON SATURDAY, May 4, *Science News* magazine's Twitter handle replugged a report from 2016 with the words: "In a galaxy far, far away, Chewbacca is a 7.5-foot-tall Wookiee. On Earth, he's a small furry beetle. #Maythe4th." The tweet had an immediate context in two ways — May 4 is celebrated as *Star Wars* Day by fans of the series, and the actor who played the role of Chewbacca in the series, Peter Mayhew, died at age 74 last week.

Chewbacca, a fictional character, has left a lasting legacy on popular culture as well as science, as the naming of the beetle shows. As co-pilot with lead character Han Solo, Chewbacca was placed at number four in *Entertainment Weekly's* 2013 list of 50 "greatest sidekicks" in film history. He has been the subject of comics, a TV series and books; and inspired scientists to name species after him.

The fictional Chewbacca belongs to a species called Wookiee, comes from the planet Kashyyyk, and is hairy, intelligent and 7.5 feet tall, as mentioned in the tweet. The real-life beetle, on the other hand, is one of four species that researchers had



Trigonopterus chewbacca

discovered on an island off the coast of Papua New Guinea. Earlier, a furry moth was named after him, the *Science News* report said. Among the four beetles, the one whose name he inspired, *Trigonopterus chewbacca*, is black, flightless and about 3 mm long. "Although *T. chewbacca* doesn't resemble its namesake in size, the dense hairlike scales covering its head and legs reminded the researchers of Chewbacca's fur," the magazine explained.

**SIMPLY PUT**

**The road to an EVM landmark**

Nizamabad seat presented the EC with 185 candidates, more than any EVM had ever handled. What were the challenges, and how did the EC meet them in an exercise now being documented for future reference?

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

OF ALL the Lok Sabha constituencies gone to polls so far — 425 out of 543 by Monday — Nizamabad in Telangana presented the Election Commission with the most remarkable challenge. When nominations closed for the April 11 first phase, the EC found itself faced with an unprecedented 185 candidates in Nizamabad — most of them troubled farmers contesting in protest — which was more than most Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) can handle. The EC considered going back to paper ballots for the 15.5 lakh voters but, in the end, conducted the biggest ever exercise carried out using EVMs.

The planning and conduct is being documented by the office of the Telangana Chief Electoral Officer so it can be consulted for similar cases in future. The EC is also in touch with a *Guinness Book of Records* team to recognise the effort as a world record.

What were the challenges, and how did the EC meet them

**Getting the EVMs**

A second generation (M2) EVM can accommodate 64 names, with 16 names per Ballot Unit connected to it. When nominations were scrutinised on March 26, the final list of 185 candidates was nearly three times the capacity of an M2 EVM. "It was a logistical nightmare. We had just 11 days to make to make quick, sound decisions and execute them," an election officer said.

It briefly led to calls for paper ballots. "But that was never an option. With so much being said to discredit EVMs, this was an opportunity to prove their efficacy," said an official.

On March 31, the EC decided to use third-generation (M3) EVMs, which can connect to 24 Ballot Units, with 384 names. But this threw up another challenge. Electronics Corporation of India Limited, the designated EVM manufacturer in Hyderabad, did not have enough M3 machines to supply at such short notice. An urgent delivery was then sought from Bharat Electronics Limited in Bangalore. The EVMs — 25,000 Ballot Units, 2,000 Control Units and 2,000 VVPATs — covered a distance of 781 km in two days in a convoy of 20 containers and reached Nizamabad on April 3.

**Storage**

The arrival of this new batch required several last-minute adjustments. "We had to fig-



Outside a booth in Nizamabad, 186 symbols on display for voters; inside, 12 Ballot Units arranged in an L-shape with VVPAT machine at centre.

**THE LOGISTICS LEADING TO APRIL 11**

**15,52,838 VOTERS**

7,37,543 men, 8,15,266 women and 29 third gender, registered across 7 Assembly segments

**186 SYMBOLS**

NOTA plus 185 candidates — out of 203 original nominations, 14 were rejected and 4 withdrew

**12 BALLOT UNITS**

Connected to each EVM (one Ballot Unit can accommodate up to 16 names) in 1,788 polling stations

**10,800**

Poll personnel at work on voting day on April 11, along with 354 sectoral officers and 354 route officers

ure out additional storage space. The existing arrangement was useless as we had our stock of M2 machines there. A warehouse and a college building were arranged at the last minute to store M3 EVMs," the EC official said.

Close to 600 engineers and 2,000 personnel were deployed for the first-level check or

FLC, mock poll and assigning of EVMs to different polling booths over three days.

Meanwhile, a team of senior EC officers was sent to Hyderabad on April 1 to chalk out a detailed action plan with the Telangana CEO, the Returning Officer and the concerned District Electoral Officers. The CEO visited

**How women differ from men in jihadi terrorism**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

A LARGE-SCALE research project has sought to evaluate the characteristics of women involved in jihadism-inspired terrorism. Coincidentally, one of the suicide bombers in the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka was a woman. The researchers, led by a PhD student at North Carolina State University, drew on data from the Western Jihadism Project, based at Brandeis University, which collects data on terrorists associated with al-Qaeda-inspired organisations. They conducted comparative analyses of 272 women and 266 men, who were matched to control for vari-

ables such as ethnicity, nation of residence and age at radicalisation.

Among the findings:

**Rising women recruitment**

The researchers said the data suggests that terrorist organisations may be increasingly recruiting women. For example, 34% of the women in the sample were born after 1990, compared to only 15% of the men. Having controlled for age at radicalisation, the researchers said this suggests an increase in women's involvement in terrorist groups.

**Different roles**

"Women were less likely than men to be involved in planning or carrying out terror-

ist attacks. Only 52% of the women were involved in plots, compared to 76% of men," the university quoted PhD student Christine Brugh as saying. "In many ways, the roles of the women in these terrorist groups are consistent with traditional gender norms. The women were more likely to play behind-the-scenes roles aimed at supporting the organisation," associate professor Sarah Desmarais was quoted as saying.

**Background differences**

Only 2% of the women had a criminal background before radicalisation, compared to 19% of the men. And 14% of the men had no profession in the six months preceding their affiliation with a terrorist group, while al-

most 42% of the women were unemployed during the same timeframe.

**Beyond jihadism**

Brugh was quoted as saying: "We need to see what, if anything, sets these people apart from their counterparts in the general population. Are there relevant variables that could inform threat assessments or models of radicalisation? It would also be good to see if there are similar patterns in other types of terrorism. Are the differences we found in this study particular to jihadism-inspired groups? In short, there is a lot of work to be done in this field."

The paper is published in the *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*.

**Imran's Iran outreach: evolution of a relationship, what it means for India**

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

AT A joint press conference with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani in Tehran late last month, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan said: "I know Iran has suffered from terrorism [perpetrated] by groups operating from Pakistan... We [need to] have trust in each other that both countries will not allow any terrorist activity from their soil. We hope this will build confidence between us."

Back in Pakistan, the Opposition PML(N) leader Khurram Dastgir Khan said, "No Prime Minister has ever made such a confession on foreign soil", and the PPP's Hina Rabbani Khar, a former Foreign Minister, said the country was "continually becoming a laughing stock", and that it was "not funny anymore".

**The background**

Imran — who was accompanied by ISI chief Gen Asim Munir — spoke a little over two months after 27 personnel of Iran's Revolutionary Guards were killed in a suicide attack in the Sistan-Baluchistan province along the border with Pakistan. Iran said the bomber was Pakistani. The attack — which happened the day before the Jaish-e-Mohammad attack on the CRPF bus in Pulwama — was claimed by the Sunni jihadist Jaish al-Adl. Tehran says the Jaish al-Adl operates mostly out of Pakistan and, in

March, Rouhani demanded that Pakistan act decisively against anti-Iranian terrorists.

On April 18, three days before Imran travelled to Iran, a terrorist attack targeted security forces in Pakistan, which Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi blamed on outfits that had their "training and logistic camps inside Iranian areas bordering Pakistan". Gunmen stopped a bus on the Makran coastal highway between Karachi and Gwadar, checked passengers' IDs and took away 10 Pakistani Navy personnel, three from the Air Force, and one from the Coast Guard, and executed them.

**Friends with the Shah**

Shia Iran has repeatedly criticised Pakistan's backing of Sunni terrorist outfits involved in attacks in Iran's eastern areas, and the killing of Shias inside Pakistan. Pakistan's proximity to Saudi Arabia — Iran's great rival in the Middle East — has been a constant irritant in ties between Tehran and Islamabad. But this wasn't the case always. The Shah of Iran was a Cold War ally of the United States, and during his rule, Iran and Pakistan were important partners. "For the Shah, Pakistan over the years morphed into a critical buffer zone, a line of defence against not only the Soviets but also the then Soviet-leaning India," Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, wrote in *Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence* (2015).



Iran President Hassan Rouhani with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in Tehran on April 22. Iranian Presidency via AP

In 1950, the Shah became the first foreign Head of State to visit Pakistan, and at one time even proposed a confederation of the two countries with a single army, and with him as Head of State. There was a logic, Vatanka wrote: "First, Iran and Pakistan were already members of the budding new organisation CENTO (the Cold War military alliance known as the Central Treaty Organisation). There was already much talk about political, military and economic integration as part of the structures of CENTO. Second, the Shah had not envisioned the

idea out of the blue. Right next door in the Arab world, four regional countries were at the time already experimenting with political confederations. In 1958, Egypt and Syria agreed on a union, which became known as the United Arab Republic."

Indeed, the Iran-Pakistan axis was so strong that Iran had even threatened to attack India if it did not stop its offensive against Pakistan in the 1971 Bangladesh War.

**Post-Revolution freeze**

Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic

Revolution marked a turning point in the Iran-Pakistan relationship. After the Shah's departure, Pakistan worked closely with the Saudis in the war in Afghanistan. In the 1990s, as rival militias battled to gain control over Afghanistan, Iran backed the Northern Alliance against the Pakistan-backed Taliban. In 1998, after the Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif, at least 11 Iranians, mostly diplomats, were killed in the city.

In subsequent years, the future of Afghanistan and the Baloch insurgency were the major sticking points in the relationship. The outside influence of the Saudis in Pakistan's foreign and security policy, and their investment in Pakistan's Balochistan province bordering Iran, has added to the suspicion and trust deficit. While Pakistan refused to bend to the pressure from Riyadh to join the war in Yemen against the Iran-backed Shia Houthi rebels, Rawalpindi did clear the appointment of former Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif to lead the Saudi-backed coalition.

Writing in *Dawn*, Arif Rafiq, a non-resident fellow at the Middle East Institute, described Iran as a "frenemy to Pakistan's west". He underlined that Iran is a potential supplier of natural gas, of which Pakistan has a massive supply shortfall; the fact that Iran has emerged as Afghanistan's largest trading partner, eclipsing Pakistan; and that with the prolonged closure of the Chaman and Torkham border crossings, Afghan trade with the outside world is be-