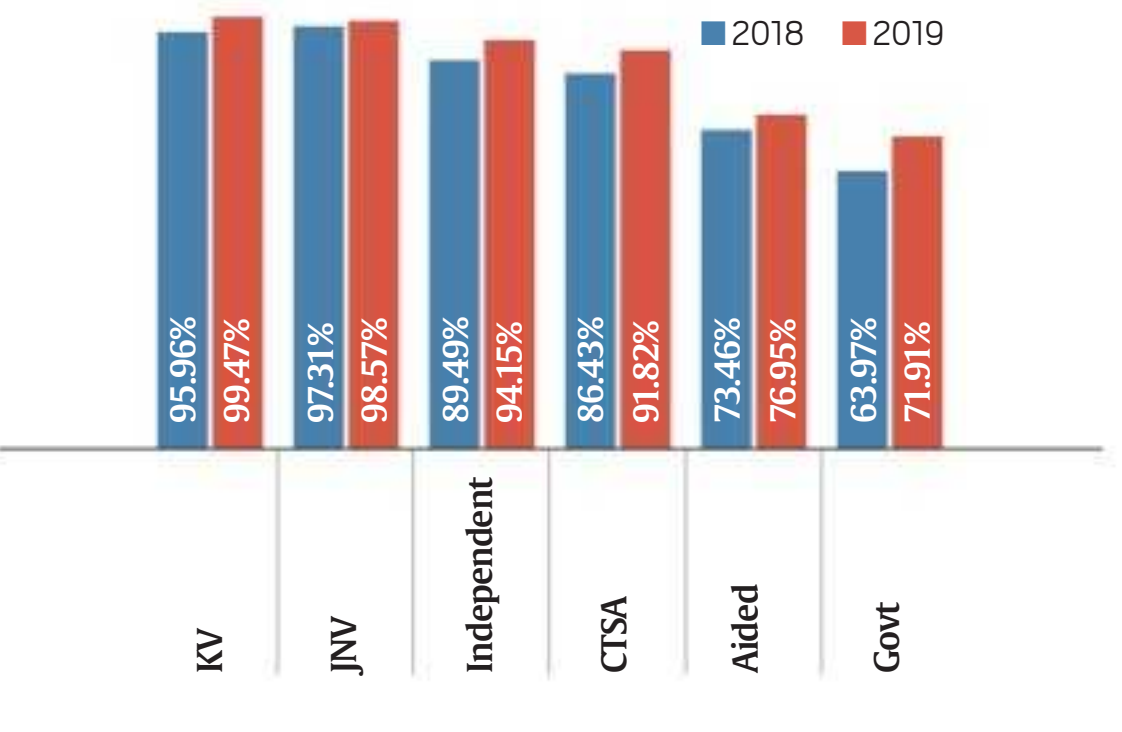


**TELLING NUMBERS**

**CBSE Class X: KV's outdo JNVs, govt schools improve by miles**



In the CBSE Class X results declared Monday, the overall improvement in the proportion of successful candidates — from 86.70% in 2018 to 91.10% in 2019 — reflected in the institution-wise results. Among the key takeaways were the Kendriya Vidyalayas outperforming the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, and a huge improvement in the performance of government schools. The KV's, which were behind the JNVs in 2018, took top position in 2009 (99.47%) although the JNVs too improved to 98.57%. And while government institutions remained at the bottom of the list, their 72% was miles better than their 64% of 2018.

**REGION BY REGION**

Trivandrum	99.85%
Chennai	99.00%
Ajmer	95.89%
Panchkula	93.72%
Prayagraj	92.55%
Bhubaneswar	92.32%
Patna	91.86%
Dehradun	89.04%
Delhi	80.97%
Guwahati	74.49%

99.60% to 99.85%, Chennai from 97.37% to 99%, and Ajmer from 91.86% to 95.89%. Four of the other seven regions had pass rates over 90%.

**THIS WORD MEANS**

**PURPLE FROG**

Species being considered for Kerala state amphibian



*Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis.*  
Sandeep Das

deeper layers of the Earth. It is considered endemic to the Western Ghats, especially the southern portion in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and its closest relatives were documented in Seychelles. Exact population sizes have been hard to come by. The species is classified as endangered on the list of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and faces severe habitat loss.

**VISHNU VARMA**

**SIMPLY PUT**

**Where are driverless cars going?**

**HOW AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES SEE AND HEAR**

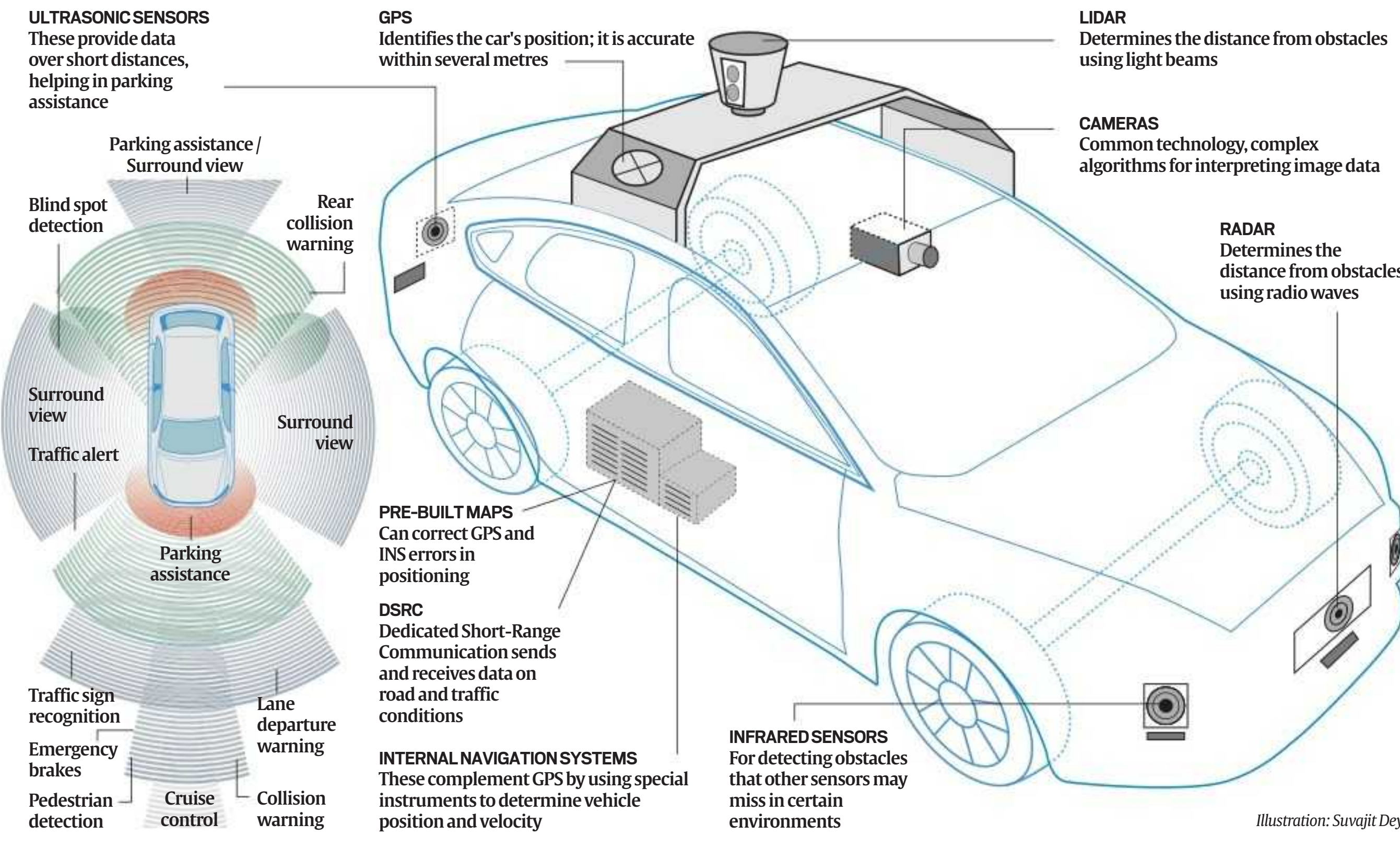


Illustration: Sujajit Dey

**Elon Musk recently said Tesla robotaxis, which will run without humans, will be ready by 2020. Companies are pushing ahead with autonomous vehicles, but concerns remain — and consumer interest is not rising**

**ANIL SASI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

SOME OF the greatest scientific achievements — digital photography, virtual reality, the Deep Web and the Internet — trace their origins to military research. The concept of self-driving cars too, owes a lot to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Competitions organised by Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) — a research and development wing of the Pentagon — in the mid 2000s have had a direct bearing on most of today's autonomous vehicle (AV) projects.

**The beginnings**

The Stanford Cart, first built in 1961, could navigate around obstacles using cameras. Later, Carnegie Mellon researchers drove across the US in a NavLab 5, a Pontiac Trans Sport rigged up to drive itself using a windshield-mounted camera that looked for lane lines, while humans controlled the fuel pedal and brakes.

The first DARPA Grand Challenge of 2004 required robotic cars to travel 140 miles across the Mojave Desert. Carnegie Mellon University's entry, a Humvee named 'Sandstorm', used cameras, laser scanners, radars, and a 1,000-pound box full of electronics to travel 7 miles. The final DARPA race in 2007, which was won by CMU's 'Boss', followed by Stanford's 'Junior' and Virginia Tech's 'Odin', had a total budget of about \$30 million.

Things have moved fast since then, with the military imperative being replaced by commercial considerations. The market for AV technology is valued at \$100 billion, not including the value of the actual cars. Jefferies Research LLC recently valued Waymo, owned by Google's parent Alphabet Inc, at \$250 billion

— over 8,000 times the 2007 DARPA budget.

In 2009, Google launched its self-driving car project with a team of DARPA Challenge veterans. A few years later, Tesla announced it would build a self-driving system into its cars. In 2015, Uber got scientists from CMU, a robotics and artificial intelligence powerhouse, for its project.

**Current technologies**

Two broad concepts are being tested: ■ A system that uses radars, sonars, and cameras to perceive vehicles and other objects; this, according to a McKinsey report, requires less processing power, but does not assess the environment on a deeply granular level.

■ The second approach uses Lidar — a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances and range — in addition to the traditional sensor suite of radar and camera systems. It requires more data-processing and computational power, but is more robust, especially in tight, traffic-heavy environments.

While the radar and camera technology is easy to optimise and robust enough to incorporate into mass-market cars, the challenge lies in leveraging artificial intelligence to convert 2D visuals into 3D images that the vehicle can then successfully negotiate. Lidar, on the other hand, is still expensive.

In an earnings call in February this year, Tesla founder Elon Musk dismissed the Lidar technology as being "too expensive" and "too bulky", and defended Tesla's strategy of achieving "full autonomy" using only cameras, radar, and ultrasonic sensors.

Lidar is a fixture on self-driving cars operated by GM, Uber and Waymo, the last two of which are currently fighting in court over Waymo's allegation that Uber stole its Lidar

technology. Tesla's call to dump Lidar altogether is being seen as a new frontier.

**The state of play**

**WAYMO** launched Waymo One, a commercial self-driving car service and accompanying app for about 500 test families in suburban Phoenix, Arizona, in December 2018.

**FORD** Motor has set a date of 2021 for its first purpose-built driverless car. Ford plans to deploy "thousands of self-drivers" on the streets of multiple US cities in two years.

**GENERAL MOTORS** Cruise Automation plans to test a fleet of self-driving electric Chevy Bolts shortly. It has announced plans to debut its automated ride-hailing business in an American city (possibly New York) this year.

**TESLA** has claimed there will be self-driving Tesla "robotaxis" on the road as early as next year. Musk has said he would demonstrate a cross-country trip without touching the steering wheel.

**VOLVO** has labeled its AV project 'IntelliSafe', and set a zero-fatality goal before fully rolling out the autonomous features to the public. The Sweden-based carmaker plans to offer 100 Swedish customers early access to an autonomous XC90 SUV by 2021.

Riding on upbeat predictions, Lyft has raised \$1 billion. Hundreds of smaller firms are rushing to offer better radars, cameras, Lidars, maps, and data management systems to the established players. Chipmakers such as Nvidia, Intel and Qualcomm are optimising power requirements by the cars, while Tesla has announced plans to make its own chips to meet specification requirements and cut costs.

**Scepticism and concerns**

After a 2018 incident in which an Uber self-driving car prototype fatally hit a pedestrian

in Arizona, carmakers had paused to reflect on safety aspects. Uber, however, resumed testing its autonomous Volvos in December 2018, just nine months after the accident.

Ragunathan Rajkumar of CMU, who serves as co-director of the General Motors-Carnegie Mellon Connected and Autonomous Driving Collaborative Research Lab, is of the view that from a purely scientific standpoint, "Musk's... proclamations would be laughed out of the room in academic circles and his submissions rejected summarily".

Matthew Johnson-Roberson of the University of Michigan, who co-directs the UM Ford Center for Autonomous Vehicles, has said that the only way forward is to isolate autonomous cars in their own lanes, walled off from unpredictable humans.

On the Lidar-versus-camera debate begun by Musk, Rajkumar told *The Indian Express* that "the Tesla vehicles only have a camera and a radar, and they have been claiming for quite some time that the hardware will be capable of being fully autonomous with a future over-the-air update. Musk's claim that Lidar companies are doomed is simply smoke and mirrors to confuse investors and consumers who are either not aware or not technology-savvy. No AV company today uses Lidars exclusively; they all have cameras too (and radars as well)".

In Rajkumar's assessment, full autonomous driving "is some years away".

A Deloitte study suggests that consumer trust in AVs is stalling. In the US, 50% of respondents did not believe they would be safe, nearly the same as last year's 47%. The share of consumers in China, Japan and South Korea who believed AVs will not be safe decreased modestly; and Indian and German consumers both showed slight increase in distrust.

**Lesson from Kurkheda: no 'open areas' in a Maoist-hit landscape**

**VIVEK DESHPANDE**  
NAGPUR, MAY 6

THE MAY 1 ambush of 15 Gadchiroli Police commandos near Kurkheda, close to Maharashtra's trijunction with Chhattisgarh and Telangana, was a reminder that the Maoists, though down, retain the ability to surprise and strike back with a change in strategy. What happened last Wednesday — arson by Maoists on a road works site followed by an ambush on policemen apparently headed to the spot — has happened earlier.

**2009-14, five attacks**

Ten years ago, the Maoists had killed 48 policemen in three deadly attacks in Gadchiroli — besides another four personnel in separate incidents — destroying the morale of the police force, and underlining the tactical superiority of the guerrillas in the area.

■ In February 2009, the Maoists set on fire some vehicles at a road construction site about 3 km from Markegaon village in Dhanora *tehsil*, not far from the site of this month's attack in Kurkheda. The police, aware of the possibility of an ambush, waited a couple of days before setting out on foot for the site of the arson. Near Markegaon village, however, they came un-

der fire from all directions, and lost 15 men.

What was remarkable about the Maoist strategy was that they had waited a full two days for their targets, and that they had impeccable intelligence on both the timing and the route of the police movement. They succeeded even though the police stuck to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of not going immediately to the spot.

■ In May 2009, however, the police rushed, in violation of the SOP, to Hattigota, also in Dhanora *tehsil*, where Maoists had felled trees to block the road. Instead of walking to the spot, the police chose to use a vehicle — walking and riding it intermittently, presuming the road ahead was safe. But as they reached Hattigota, guerrillas lying in wait fired on the vehicle from both sides of the road, killing the 16 personnel on board.

■ In a November 2009 attack, the Maoists demonstrated another new strategy. A police party was on patrol in the forest near Lahiri outpost in Bhamragad *tehsil*. But instead of attacking them in the jungle, the Maoists set up an ambush close to their outpost, and surprised the team returning from the operation inside their 'safe' territory. The Maoists were said to have filmed the ambush — and reportedly chased down policemen running helter-skelter for their lives, and shot them dead. Seventeen police personnel were killed.



Mangled remains of a police vehicle, carrying security personnel, that was allegedly blasted by Maoists using IED, in Gadchiroli, May 1, 2019. PTI

■ In 2012, the Maoists set off a landmine near Pushtola village, again in Dhanora, killing 13 CRPF personnel, and injuring 29. The CRPF men were travelling in a vehicle to a village which their then Director General of Police Vijay Kumar was to visit. No road-opening operation had been carried out to ensure safe passage for the vehicle, and the CRPF personnel proved sitting ducks for the Maoists.

■ In May 2014, the Maoists set off an explosion under a vehicle carrying policemen

in Chamorshi *tehsil*. The men were returning to Gadchiroli from a combing operation, and had chosen to get on the vehicle on the assumption that the area was "safe". Seven personnel were killed.

In two of the five major attacks between 2009 and 2014 — Hattigota and Pushtola — police and CRPF failed to follow SOPs. In Markegaon and Lahiri, the Maoists surprised the police with new, unexpected tactics. In both these attacks, the police were also done

in by miserable intelligence failures.

The attack in Chamorshi was similar to the Kurkheda incident to the extent that it too, resulted from a misplaced sense of security.

**Over the last five years**

Since 2014, the police have built strong intelligence networks, and penetrated deeper into the Dandakaranya zone of the Maoists, building fortress-like outposts there. The Maoists have lost 84 cadres during this period, nearly four times the number of Gadchiroli Police casualties (22). This trend has been the reverse of that in the 2009-14 period, when police lost 77 personnel as against 59 casualties suffered by the Maoists. 2018 was the worst year for the Maoists — they lost 50 cadres, 40 of them in back-to-back police encounters on April 22 and 23.

After many years, iron ore mining has started in the Surjagad hills in the worst-affected Etapalli *tehsil*. Despite the continued opposition by Maoists, hundreds of people from the nearby villages have made a beeline for the mines, seeking work. In November 2016, the Maoists carried out their biggest ever act of arson, setting on fire 80 vehicles deployed for work at the Surjagad mines. The incident happened close to the Hedri police outpost; police, however, observed caution in not rushing to the spot, averting potential casualties.





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Indian woman goes to vote



BHASKAR CHAKRAVORTI

Can you hear women at polling booths, and on the Internet? The silent revolution will get noisy soon

AS THE LARGEST exercise of democracy on earth readies for a denouement, three developments have converged and it is time we paid attention. All three have to do with the state of the Indian woman.

Let me begin with some good news. Despite India's well-known biological imbalance — one of the world's worst sex ratios — it boasts a top 20 ranking (19th out of 149 countries) in terms of political empowerment of women, according to the World Economic Forum. This is translating into outcomes at the polling booths. The turnout of women has been rising faster than that of men, even in the traditionally backward states; and if recent trends persist, women will outnumber men in the 2019 elections. Brookings India's Shamika Ravi calls this a "silent revolution".

Another silent revolution is happening on the digital front. This is the second of the three developments. The past two years have been dramatic in terms of increased access to the internet across the country. Some of the most significant beneficiaries of this surge are women. More than 40 per cent of Indian women are now aware of the mobile internet, according to the GSMA. In isolation, this might seem like a glass half empty given the 60 per cent still excluded, but this is already more than double the proportion of women aware of the mobile internet from just a year before. The proportion of women who might have independent sources of information — and, unfortunately, misinformation — has jumped.

That's where the good news ends. With the third of the three developments, we get down to some sobering realities. The central issue for the current elections has been the state of employment in India. The jobs crisis has disproportionately affected women.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), a large percentage of all the jobs lost last year were held by women. Out of the 11 million jobs lost in 2018, women accounted for 8.8 million. This only serves to exacerbate an already severe economic imbalance across gender lines. Indian women receive 34 per cent less wages than men for equivalent work, spend around five hours a day on unpaid care work compared to a mere half an hour for men and are primarily engaged in low-paying, informal sector work. Putting these three developments to-

gether, rising female political engagement, surging female access to information, true or false, and worsening economic opportunities for women sounds like a recipe for a revolution — and quite possibly not a silent one. In the global context, India's long-standing gender gap is already a disgrace. The country remains a perpetual bottom hugger of international league tables when it comes to metrics on the status of women.

Consider this sampling of India's rankings: 147th out of 149 countries on health and survival of women and 142nd out of 149 in terms of economic participation of women, according to the WEF's gender gap index; 163rd out of 181 countries in female labour force participation, according to the World Bank; 149th out of 193 by percentage of women representatives in parliament, notably behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, and, yes, even Saudi Arabia, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union; most dangerous country to be a woman, according to the Thomson-Reuters Foundation, worse than Afghanistan, the DRC, Syria or Yemen. OK, I get that the last one may still be a bit controversial and you may quarrel over methodology, but let's not get too comfortable. Being a woman is no picnic in a crowded bus or in a lonely street in India — and, for far too many women, even their own home is no refuge.

If there is a single message I would have for the new government post-May, it would be this: It is high time to get out of these lowly rankings. Much needs to change.

First, look past the reductive and politically expedient ways to frame women's needs; think beyond toilets, talaq and cooking gas. Women need equal access to opportunities to gain a measure of economic independence, without which it is hard to imagine independence on other fronts. The barriers are inter-connected, and not just societal mores but those related to poor education and healthcare access as well. The solutions have to be systemic. Higher paid jobs, for example, call for schooling, but 23 million girls drop out of school each year because the families fall on hard times or because of inadequate sanitation or proper menstrual hygiene capabilities in schools. The opportunity crisis is tied to wider crises.

India's water problem, for example, im-

poses a heavier burden on women with consequences for their access to opportunities. A rural woman might walk 5-20 km a day to fetch water. Carrying water across long distances is stressful on the body and managing households with little water is stressful on the mind. With this kind of a burden, it is hard to imagine acquiring skills, remaining healthy and getting into productive employment.

Second, to be fair, there are several women-oriented government initiatives with good intentions, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao; however, their track record has been long on publicity and short on results. Consider the Nirbhaya Fund set up in 2013, to support projects aimed at the safety of women. Till the end of 2018, only 42 per cent of that money has been used — and a modest Rs 450 crore was allocated for the Herculean task of making eight of India's largest cities safer for women. The patchwork approach must go. Leadership at the Centre and the states needs to develop a less patronising attitude and a genuine commitment to effect change. More women ought to be politically elevated to run in the next election. A ministry with real clout ought to own the problem of ensuring gender inclusion. Yes, there is a ministry already. But why is it called the Ministry of Women and Child Development? Tying women's development with child development itself is a vestige of a patriarchal mindset that must go.

Finally, to those who say that elections are won on promises of a growing economy and jobs, I have some good news. Closing the gender gap offers a big political return on investment. India could add over 18 per cent to its GDP by 2025, by giving equal opportunities to women, according to those clever fellows at McKinsey. If that doesn't wake up our politicians, the rising clamour of women at polling booths and on the internet will. The silent revolution will get noisy soon. If the #MeToo campaign teaches us anything, it is to never underestimate the power of an angry woman with a mobile phone.

*The writer is the Dean of Global Business at The Fletcher School at Tufts University, founding executive director of Fletcher's Institute for Business in the Global Context and non-resident senior fellow of Brookings India*

## TAMING THE TEMPEST

Odisha's handling of Cyclone Fani points to the gains the state has made in dealing with natural disasters

THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT can take credit for minimising the impact of Fani, a rarest of rare summer cyclone that made landfall near Puri on Friday. It flattened several structures on the coast and disrupted essential services in the state. Every death is one too many, but the death toll, at 34, was expected to be worse. Two decades ago, the Super Cyclone, which swept the state with windspeeds similar to Fani, killed over 10,000 people. Odisha had then promised to put systems and structures in place to deal with cyclones, an unavoidable natural phenomenon on the Bay of Bengal coast. The administration's resolve was tested by Cyclone Phailin in 2013 and now, it has stood up to the onslaught of Fani.

The administration could plan the evacuation of over a million people largely because the Indian Meteorological Department had tracked the storm's path accurately since it originated as a tropical depression in the Indian Ocean, off Sumatra, on April 26. As the eye of the storm moved across the Bay of Bengal, the Odisha administration embarked on a massive communication outreach to get the vulnerable population on the coast shift to nearly 900 cyclone shelters that had been built in the aftermath of the 1999 Super Cyclone. Loud speakers to radio and TV commercials to mobile phones — 2.6 million text messages were sent out — were pressed into service to spread the message of the impending storm and fishermen warned not to go out into the sea. Thousands of volunteers, emergency workers, police officers executed the evacuation plan and by the time the cyclone crossed over to the land, most of the population had been moved to the shelters. The administration had also readied boats, helicopters and the necessary equipment to clear roads, fallen trees etc. Now that the worst has passed, it is time to start counting the losses. Electricity and water supply are to be restored in rural and urban areas. That, hopefully, will be done soon. People and the state administration will need a generous hand from all sections of society to rebuild homesteads, livelihoods and infrastructure. But the administration has passed the first test.

Cyclones have been both a boon and bane of India's eastern coasts. These tropical storms feed water systems on the eastern coast, even as they wreaked havoc on unsuspecting populations in the past. Advanced technologies now allow accurate prediction of cyclone paths and enable people to be prepared when the storm arrives. Equally important is that the administration and political leadership are now more capable and willing to put in the extra effort to contain the impact of cyclonic storms. A similar resolve would help Odisha get back on its feet soon.

## HIGH INSECURITY

Attack on Kejriwal is actually a slap on face of Delhi Police. It must be held accountable for repeated failure to protect CM

DELHI CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal has been attacked yet again, this time on the campaign trail in Moti Nagar. The Delhi Police have been notable in their failure to protect him from various assaults in the past, and are living up to their reputation. In fact, they may even have surpassed themselves by initially identifying the attacker as an AAP supporter. His family, reportedly, has described him as a scrap dealer with no party affiliations, apparently incensed about poll promises not being kept, and about Kejriwal speaking against the prime minister. The AAP has referred to the attack as "Opposition-sponsored" (its Opposition in the Assembly).

Amid the allegations, the central fact is in danger of being overlooked — the police force of Delhi has been repeatedly negligent about the personal security of the chief minister. His car was attacked recently and in November, a man threw chilli powder at him outside his office in the Delhi Secretariat. Kejriwal was unhurt, but his spectacles were broken in the ensuing commotion. The inauguration ceremony of Delhi's Signature Bridge was not without incident, either, with the AAP alleging that water bottles were thrown at him. In 2016, at a ceremony to mark the odd-even anti-pollution scheme, a woman had thrown a bottle of ink at him before she could be restrained. And a shoe was thrown at him the same year. Earlier, in 2014, Kejriwal had been slapped by a rickshaw-driver. These incidents have one thing in common: The incompetent police response, which has indicated that it may be unable to pre-empt a more serious attack.

The AAP's central election issue is full statehood for Delhi, which would make the police directly answerable to the state government. The success of the attacks on Kejriwal, and the bungling in their wake, would appear to illustrate the very argument that the party makes for full statehood. If the police cannot protect the person of the chief executive of the state, it cannot offer sufficient security to the common people. The country is in the midst of an election which, like others in the last two decades, has seen little violence. In that backdrop, the recurring failure to protect Kejriwal from being physically targeted in the nation's capital shows its police force in especially poor light. There must be urgent and visible accountability, the trust of citizens in the police force is at stake.

## BEHIND THE MASK

Peter Mayhew, the man who played Chewbacca, achieved silver screen greatness from the character he played

OUTSIDE OF DEDICATED fans of the *Star Wars* franchise, the kind who attend conventions and are mediators of the Wikipedia page, most people wouldn't have recognised Peter Mayhew if he walked by them. They would likely have noticed him — at over 7 feet, he certainly drew your gaze — but the joyful shrieks that would have accompanied the sight of Chewbacca were unlikely to have burst eardrums. It is possible to see Mayhew's career, he died last week at 74, as somehow incomplete. But in a more important sense, his best-known performance is also a testament to the craft of cinema and what goes into making silver screen magic.

After having played the iconic Wookiee — a species that existed "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" — in four films, Mayhew fought back from being in a wheelchair to reprise his role in the rebooted franchise in *The Force Awakens*. For much of his career, the "gentle giant" played the witty and loyal sidekick and co-pilot to Harrison Ford's Han Solo. We know of Chewbacca's wit only thanks to Mayhew's amazing ability to speak through his body, over layers of costume and makeup: Chewie, for those who do not know, is essentially a giant wolf-bear-man and "speaks" in what sounds to human ears like canine yelps and howls.

Mayhew did not receive the shallow accolades of stardom — the recognition and the celebrity — that even minor players from *Star Wars* otherwise have. He was the faceless heart of a sci-fi fairytale, one which has held sway over nearly half-a-century. He managed to weave subtleties into a character that could have easily become a caricature in the hands of a less dedicated performer. In that sense, Mayhew was more like a part of the crew, the hundreds of technicians, artists, craftspeople that make the massive enterprise, the wonder we see on screen, possible without ever being the centre of attention. And in doing so, he achieved a kind of perfection the best actors aspire to — he became Chewbacca.



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

## AMETHI LOWS

PM Modi's labelling of Rajiv Gandhi as 'Bhrashtachari No. 1' sinks political discourse

AS SOMEONE WHO 30 years ago stood as the Janata Dal candidate against Rajiv Gandhi in Amethi, I may be allowed to comment on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's now infamous remark about the earlier PM.

Speaking at an election rally in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh constituency, which adjoins Amethi, and directly addressing Rahul Gandhi, the Congress candidate from that seat, Modi said on May 4: "Your father was termed 'Mr Clean' by his courtiers, but his life ended as 'Bhrashtachari No 1'."

All know that the life of Rahul's father, Rajiv Gandhi, India's prime minister from 1984 to 1989, ended in 1991 from a terrorist bomb blasted in his face.

For three years or so of his premiership, Rajiv Gandhi was indeed termed "Mr Clean" by what was then an independent media, not by persons close to him. It is also true that unsuccessful attempts were made to link Rajiv Gandhi to kickbacks from Sweden's Bofors company after India's defence ministry ordered that company's field-guns in 1987.

I was one of several Indians troubled by the Bofors scandal. But when, in 1989, I stood as a Janata Dal candidate against Rajiv Gandhi in Amethi, Bofors did not figure in a large way in my campaign. Media independence was my main plank, and also the strengthening of democratic institutions. To speak in my

favour, V P Singh (who would become prime minister at the end of 1989) and Mulayam Singh Yadav came to Amethi. Neither mentioned Bofors.

After my defeat at Rajiv's hands, the UP Vidhan Sabha elected me to the Rajya Sabha. In Parliament, where the Congress, now in Opposition, was led by Rajiv, I had several warm if brief interactions with him before his assassination in the summer of 1991.

If there were some in India in 1991 who thought of Rajiv as India's most corrupt person, I did not meet them. No MP, whether in government or Opposition, seemed to think of Rajiv as personally corrupt. All were shaken by the brutal assassination of a fine human being and grieved over it.

Even if someone then believed that Rajiv had tolerated corruption, would they say to his son 28 years later that "your father ended his life as India's most corrupt man"?

His daughter, Priyanka Gandhi, reacted to Modi's remark by saying: "The prime minister, who is seeking votes in the name of martyrs, yesterday disrespected the martyrdom of a noble man. People in Amethi will give a befitting reply."

Everyone was horrified by the unbelievable remark and many have expressed themselves, but none as concisely and bitingly as Rahul, who replied to the slur thrown directly at him: "Modi ji, the battle is over. Your

Karma awaits you. Projecting your inner beliefs about yourself onto my father won't protect you. All my love and a huge hug. Rahul."

Whatever the election results be on May 23, history will record this tweet as a classic retort. In his Pratapgarh speech, Modi had also said, referring to Rahul Gandhi's persistent allegations over Rafale, "By hurling abuses, you cannot turn 50 long years of Modi's tapasya into dust."

If his other sentence was shocking, this one calls for reflection. For starters, Modi comfortably speaks of himself in the third person. He observes, acknowledges and even seems to admire his own tapasya of "50 long years".

Though self-praise is seldom an attractive quality, we need not question the claim of 50 strenuous years of dedicated effort. However, we can wonder about the goal behind the dedication, and we can ask whether or not persons from a particular category are to be excluded from the fruits of that effort.

Sadly, dedication may at times be accompanied by ill-will. Equally, frankness can be joined by goodwill. When Rahul added the word "love" to his stinging retort, it sounded genuine.

*The writer is research professor at Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign*



## MAY 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### DOWN WITH CULTS

THE KARNATAKA CHIEF minister, Devaraj Urs, advised partmen to give up their old way of running after personalities and understand the socialist ideology, policies and programmes for which the Congress (I) stood. He said this was the only way the organisation could be strengthened. Personalities were no doubt important, Urs commented, but the party's policies were more important than the personalities "howsoever high he or she may be".

### RSS BAN

KARNATAKA HAS DECIDED to ban the RSS parades in public places, chief minister

Devaraj Urs announced. Speaking to newsmen in Ahmedabad, he said a bill was being worked out to this effect, and that the RSS was the greatest danger to the country. Asked whether he would seek the cooperation of others like Raj Narain in his fight, Urs said "let Raj Narain fight against it and seek the cooperation of the Prime Minister first."

### NON-ALIGNED MEET

AT THE COLOMBO meeting of the coordinating bureau of non-aligned countries to be held in early June, India and Yugoslavia will attempt to postpone divisive issues. They will focus on a concerted effort to set up a new international economic order, greater coop-

eration among non-aligned nations to promote collective self-reliance and a joint struggle for the eradication of the last vestiges of imperialism, colonialism and racism. This emerged at the first round of official talks between the visiting Yugoslav foreign minister, Josip Vrhovec, and the minister for external affairs, A B Vajpayee.

### BOMBING PALESTINE

ISRAELI WARPLANES RAIDED a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon killing four civilians and wounding more than 23. A communique from PLO said that four Israeli planes mounted a 15-minute air strike on the Nahr Ek Bared camp.



“Striking a balance between China and the US is in the best interest of the West and all other countries and regions around the world rather than siding with the US to contain China.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

# The Masood Azhar victory

Credit for his listing as a global terrorist goes to the Narendra Modi government. Pakistan now has a chance to act on the resolution, tackle terror



RAM MADHAV

IT WAS A significant victory for the Indian political and diplomatic establishment when the Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council finally succeeded in declaring dreaded Pakistani terrorist, Masood Azhar, a “Global Terrorist”. With this decision, Azhar has joined notorious company. Several attempts were made in the past to get the Security Council to so designate Azhar but every time, it was our neighbour China which blocked those efforts. It did so by deceptively imposing what is called a “technical hold”.

The credit goes to the doggedness of the Narendra Modi government in pursuing the matter to its logical conclusion. Although the matter was taken to the UNSC by the UPA government in 2009, it was not pursued enough and appropriately. Once Modi became prime minister, a resolute effort was launched at the UN level and elsewhere to ensure that the resolution is passed. It was a nerve-racking effort for our diplomats because the Chinese representative at the UN would take weeks, if not months, to move even an inch forward.

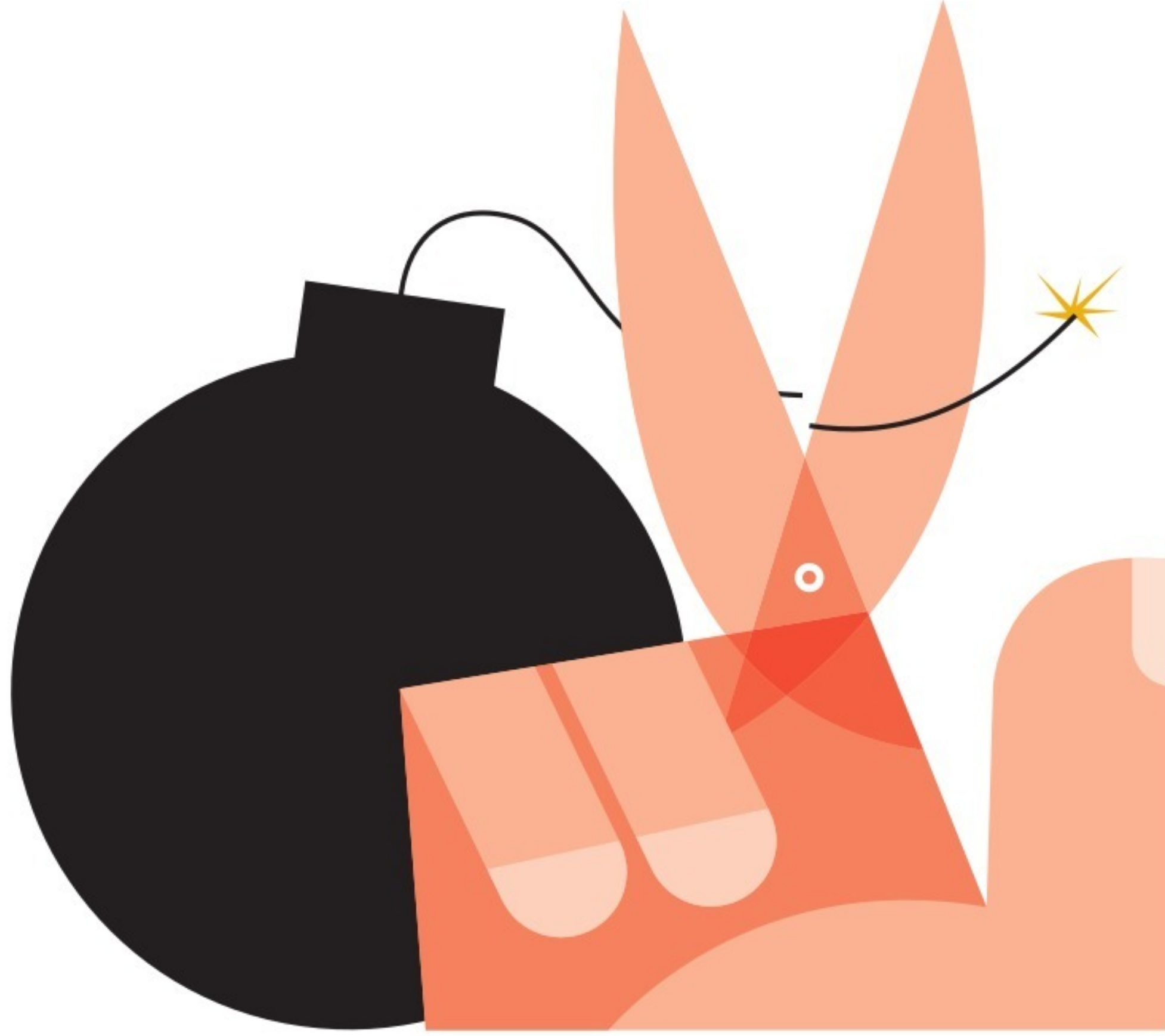
The Chinese bureaucracy is much more cumbersome than ours. Each step forward needed approval from the top — whatever the “top” meant — and the country representative is helpless in the absence of the same. It was a test of patience for Indian representatives and those of other countries. At one point, the US had to threaten to bring in another resolution demanding open voting on the subject. That would have forced China to spell out its reasons for protecting the dreaded terrorist beyond the so-called “technical hold”.

Finally, the Chinese have blinked. As the learned former Ambassador to China, Gautam Bambawale, observed, it was a situation where the costs outweighed benefits for China, compelling it to withdraw its objections.

The nation should have welcomed this decision of the UNSC. But the Doubting Thomases went overboard, raising all sorts of doubts and suspicions. There was a quid pro quo with China, some insisted, never spelling out what that quid pro quo was all about. A senior Opposition leader insinuated that all references to Kashmir were removed before the said resolution was passed at the UNSC.

The Masood Azhar matter before the Security Council was 10 years old. India had first approached the UNSC in 2009 demanding the listing of Masood Azhar in the 1267 Resolution. The matter depended entirely on the dossier India submitted to all the member countries at that time and subsequently, as and when it came up before the 1267 Sanctions Committee. It contained all the details of the activities of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Azhar, its founder. From the Parliament attack in 2001 to the Mumbai terror attack in 2008 to the Pulwama attack in 2019, Azhar's footprints were present in many a terror attack in India. All this material has been placed before all the member countries through the dossier.

India is not a member country during the



CR Sasikumar

current term of the Security Council. Hence, it was France which moved this matter at the 1267 Committee, seeking the listing of Masood Azhar as a designated global terrorist. Not only the US and UK, but even countries like Indonesia, which is the chair of the Security Council at the moment, strongly supported France. Finally, 14 out of 15 members of the UNSC were in its favour forcing the 15th member — and a permanent member at the UNSC, China — to concede.

Announcing the inclusion of Azhar's name in the notorious list of global terrorists, the Sanctions Committee cited the reasons as: “Participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf of, or in support of... supplying, selling or transferring arms and related material to... recruiting for... otherwise supporting acts or activities of... and... other acts or activities indicating association with... Jaish-i-Mohammed”.

It is clear from the above description that the Indian dossier was comprehensively and extensively used by the Council in arriving at the conclusion on May 1. Now to argue that Kashmir was not mentioned in the resolution is flimsy.

This action of the UNSC offers Pakistan an excellent opportunity. Thus far, it succeeded in protecting terrorists and terror organisations because of the support it got from China. Now its isolation is complete. It can convert this isolation into an opportunity by sincerely following up on the UNSC resolution with the mandated actions, which include freezing of Masood Azhar's accounts, fund flows and other assets; restricting his travel; and a total

The new leadership in Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan can use the UNSC resolution to show its sincerity in the fight against terror by taking effective measures against the terror networks in his country. That would not only help Pakistan come out of its global isolation, but also create a conducive atmosphere for breaking the logjam with India. The onus squarely lies with Pakistan's leadership.

embargo on weapons' sales. It effectively means that Azhar has to be literally immobilised and all his activities, including running terror camps, stopped.

Pakistan is a sanctuary to more than a dozen terror groups that have been proscribed by the UN. But the nonchalance of the Pakistan establishment allows these organisations to carry on their activities unhindered. If Pakistan wishes to overcome this isolation and ignominy, it has to join the world community in the fight against terror.

Five weeks from now, on June 15, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit meeting is going to take place at Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, where the prime ministers of India and Pakistan are going to face each other after a long gap. After the Pathankot attack in early January 2016, the Indian side had frozen bilateral engagements with Pakistan.

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“New Pakistan doesn't want anybody to indulge in terrorism from its soil,” Imran Khan declared recently. It is time he walked the talk.

The writer is national general secretary of the BJP and director, India Foundation

# The quest for a military footprint

China and India competing for foreign military bases is a definitive moment in their political evolution



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

IN THE ANNUAL report to the US Congress on Chinese military power released last week, the US Defence Department has pointed to China's vigorous quest for foreign military bases, including in Pakistan. This should not surprise Delhi, which closely tracks the expansion of China's military footprint in the Subcontinent and beyond in the Indian Ocean.

India's response so far has developed along three axes. One is to counter potential threats from China's military bases in its immediate neighbourhood. Second, to strengthen military partnerships with its friends and partners to balance China. The third is to emulate Beijing's quest for foreign military presence.

That China and India compete for foreign military bases is not merely an extension of their very familiar rivalry but a definitive moment in their overall political evolution as modern states. Few nations have been so vehement in their opposition to foreign military bases. Few nations, now, appear under as much compulsion as China and India to seek them. While Beijing is racing ahead in the search for foreign military presence, Delhi has some catching up to do.

Demanding that the Western powers withdraw from their military bases in Asia and the Indian Ocean was very much part of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial framework of Chinese and Indian foreign policies. Soon enough, they began to adapt to the realities of international life. They began to see the question of foreign military bases not through the lens of ideology but of security interests.

As it fought with fellow communists in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, Mao's China turned to the US for regional balance and stopped making a big deal of American military bases in Asia. Beijing began to justify American forward military presence necessary to counter the “Soviet social imperialism” and constrain the potential for “Japanese militarism”.

India, which vigorously objected to US military alliances in Asia and Pakistan's participation in them, eventually built an alliance-like relationship with the Soviet Union. The objective was to balance the US and Chinese alliances with Pakistan. Today, China is already a great power and India is rising, slowly but certainly. One of the big changes in their strategic outlooks has been the quiet change in their attitudes towards foreign military bases.

As China's economic interests begin to span the entire globe, it was inevitable that Beijing would try and secure them eventually through its own military means. That is what all great powers do. As the world's second-largest economy (aggregate GDP of \$13 trillion) and the second-largest annual defence budget (\$250 billion), China has both the motivation and the means to

acquire foreign military bases.

China's transition follows the familiar dictum that flag follows trade. As the Pentagon's annual report put it: “China's advancement of projects such as the ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiative (OBOR) will probably drive military overseas basing through a perceived need to provide security for OBOR projects”.

Over the last decade, Chinese media outlets associated with the People's Liberation Army have openly debated the need for foreign military bases as well as the potential challenges in seeking and sustaining them. That debate was settled with China establishing its first military base in Djibouti in 2017. There will be more.

The Pentagon report argues that “China will seek to establish additional military bases in countries with which it has a long-standing friendly relationship and similar strategic interests”. No surprise that Pakistan fits the bill perfectly. The Pentagon notes, Pakistan has the precedent of hosting foreign military bases. Pakistan is undoubtedly China's closest political and military partner. While there is no formal “base”, the integration of Pakistan into China's military strategy and operations has steadily advanced.

The Pakistan army's determination to limit India's power means there is little political opposition to hosting Chinese bases and facilities. The depth of the anti-India alliance between the two “iron brothers” means Delhi can't prevent Beijing developing bases and strategic military facilities — that perform a number of functions ranging from hosting PLA Navy warships to China's satellite tracking.

What it can't stop, Delhi must deal with. That Chinese warships and submarines might soon be based on a permanent basis in Karachi or Gwadar is surely part of India's military planning for the future. In other places where it has some political influence — say Sri Lanka and Maldives — India has indeed sought to contest and limit the nature and scope of Chinese military activities.

Unlike in the past, when India operated as a lone ranger in the Indian Ocean, Delhi is now making its armed forces interoperable with its friends and partners. After prolonged reluctance, India has signed agreements with the US and France for mutual peacetime use of military bases. It is a matter of time before it signs such agreements with other powers like Japan and Australia.

In the third leg of India's strategy, Delhi is seeking access to military facilities in a number of countries. The logic of Delhi's quest for foreign military bases is very similar to that of China. India's growing and globalised economy is now close to \$3 trillion and Delhi's political ambition is to raise it to \$5 trillion in the next five years. Delhi's security imperatives are no longer limited to its borders and it needs to secure its widely dispersed interests with forward military presence in the Indo-Pacific. Where Delhi lags behind Beijing is in the structuring of a purposeful policy on foreign military bases and the creation of organisational structures to implement it.

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# Hindutva's new lab

Sadhvi Pragya's candidature reveals BJP's political project in Bhopal



N K SINGH

THE BJP HAS made Bhopal the epicentre of its Hindutva ideology by fielding terror-accused Pragma Singh Thakur as its candidate for the Bhopal Lok Sabha seat. A BJP bastion for the past 30 years, Bhopal has suddenly become the site of one of the most interesting electoral and ideological battles in the country.

Thakur's candidature took many by surprise. The BJP has no dearth of tall leaders in Madhya Pradesh to challenge Digvijaya Singh, the Congress candidate from Bhopal who was the state's chief minister for a decade. They have the hugely popular Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who ruled MP for a record 13 years. Charismatic Uma Bharti, who trounced Singh 15 years ago, is still around. So is former CM Babulal Gaur, who holds the enviable record of representing Bhopal in the state assembly for 10 terms, winning the seat every time with an increased margin.

Yet, the BJP chose Thakur, facing trial in a case of terrorism: The 2008 Malegaon blasts killed six persons and injured 101 others. Apparently, it has discovered a new Hindutva mascot in Thakur. The BJP, though, alleges that its predecessor, the Congress government, implicated Thakur and other radical Hindu activists in fake cases. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described Thakur's candidacy as a symbolic answer to those who falsely labelled Hindus as terror-

ists. BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya says bluntly: “The Congress tried to prove a Hindu is a terrorist. Now Hindus should give a reply through votes.”

While the RSS prides itself on “nation building”, opponents like Singh have accused it of violence and communal politics. His candidature from Bhopal was an open challenge to the BJP that had been winning the seat since 1989. Along with its earlier avatar, the Jana Sangh, it ruled the state for more than 20 years. Although it lost power in the state five months ago, it actually polled more votes than the Congress.

As the Congress flexed its muscles, the BJP bared its fangs. It knows that fielding Thakur against Singh would lead to polarisation. That seems to be its ideological agenda. The 49-year-old Thakur started her political career as an ABVP activist in her home district of Bhind, in Chambal valley.

Maharashtra's ATS arrested her in 2008 as one of the “principal conspirators” in the Malegaon blasts and she spent nine years in jail. In 2015, a year after the BJP came to power, the NIA sought to drop the charges against her. However, the court refused to go along with the NIA's decision, and, framed charges against her for terror activ-

ities, criminal conspiracy and murder. The public prosecutor in the case quit four years ago, alleging government pressure.

Thakur was also arrested, along with seven others, in the sensational 2007 murder of Sunil Joshi, her colleague and a former RSS activist. The court, however, acquitted all eight accused two years ago as the prosecution failed to prove its case. The murder remains unsolved.

During her campaign, Thakur portrays herself as a “victim” of the plot to malign Hindutva, often breaking down while narrating vivid stories of how she was stripped naked, hung upside down and tortured in police custody until she “lost consciousness”. She alleges that as a result of “inhuman treatment”, she developed cancer. However, now she is supposedly cured, thanks to the cow urine therapy she undertook.

The BJP soon discovered that it has found not only a mascot but also a loose cannon in Thakur. At a meeting she vilified Maharashtra ATS officer Hemant Karkare, winner of the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award, after he was shot dead in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. Karkare, she pronounced, died after she had “cursed” him for torturing her in custody. Her offensive remarks shocked most people. Even as a political firestorm broke out, Thakur boasted that she had climbed atop

the Babri Masjid and demolished it, saying, “we removed a blot on the nation.”

The Election Commission may slap notices on her, but there is little doubt about the direction of this campaign. Faced with Hindutva's onslaught, Singh is weaving his campaign around the development plank. This is ironic because as chief minister he believed that elections are won not by development but by political management and social engineering.

Singh has tried to reinvent himself as a born-again Hindu. He started his campaign by visiting temples. Last heard, his supporters were distributing bottles of holy Narmada water to woo voters! Singh had undertaken a 3,300-km arduous pilgrimage along the Narmada last year. He hoped that the 192-day march on foot would help him shed the anti-Hindu image that his detractors have imposed on him.

Ironically, Singh is a devout Hindu in his personal life. In fact, once as chief minister he took his entire cabinet to Mathura for a 24-km foot march around a hill that Hindus consider holy. A senior BJP leader commented that the Bhopal election has become a litmus test for RSS's Hindutva: “We have taken a big risk. If we lose, it will mean voters have rejected Hindutva”. And, if it wins?

The writer is a Bhopal-based journalist

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### JUDICIARY SUSPECT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Listen to your own’ (IE, May 6). The procedure adopted by the judiciary and the committee — pre-judging the serious matter of sexual harassment allegations against the chief justice — is gross violation of due process. The manner in which the apex court has acted is only increasing suspicion. The truth of the allegations is for the investigators and adjudicators to determine. What is needed is a transparent and impartial inquiry.

Divya Singla, Patiala

### PRIVATE VICES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Boardroom rot’ (IE, May 4). Poor corporate governance in India's premium private sector companies must draw the immediate attention of the government, since huge amounts of public money is invested in these companies. Until the ICICI bank scam came to light, only public sector enterprises faced blistering criticism for corporate misconduct. Undoubtedly, top private firms feature professional managers. But apart from managerial and business skills, good corporate governance requires moral standards and the right intention to keep ethics and values intact.

### COURT'S BURDEN

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Don't probe

### 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

in woman's absence, hurts SC name: Justice Chandrachud to panel’ (IE, May 5). The complainant's withdrawal from the proceedings in the matter of the chief justice being accused of sexual harassment is justified. She was denied a lawyer and the proceedings were not being recorded. The Supreme Court must give justice to the woman.

SS Paul, Nadia