

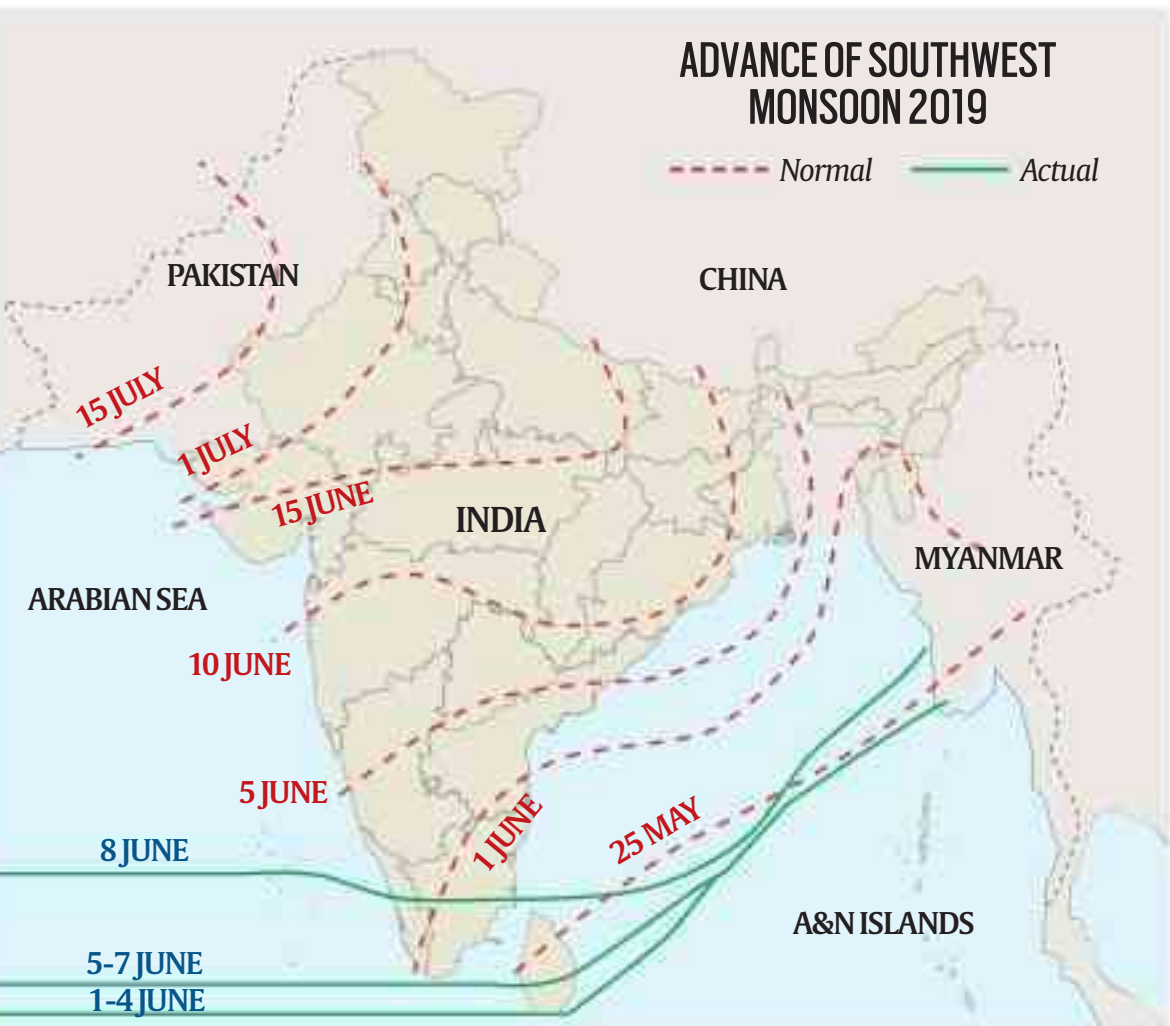


@ieExplained  
#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@expressindia.com](mailto:explained@expressindia.com)

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

WHY LATE MONSOON IS NOT RELATED TO TOTAL SEASONAL RAINFALL



THE ONSET of the southwest monsoon over Kerala, which happened on June 8, marks the beginning of the four-month monsoon season over India. It came a week after its normal date of June 1.

The southwest monsoon brings over 70% of India's annual rainfall. Though an important marker for the season, the timing of the onset does not have any bearing on the quality or amount of rainfall during the season. It is just an event during the progress of the monsoon.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands generally start getting monsoon rainfall between May 15 and 20, and the Kerala coast generally begins to have monsoon rainfall sometime in the last week of May. The onset of the monsoon is announced when certain criteria are fulfilled after May 10. If at least 60% of the 14 designated meteorological stations in Kerala and Lakshadweep report at least 2.5 mm rain for two consecutive days after May 10 — and a few other conditions relating to wind and temperature are also fulfilled — the onset of monsoon is said to have taken place; if not, it is not declared. The IMD announced that all the conditions were fulfilled on the morning of June 8.

A delayed onset has the potential to delay the arrival of the monsoon in other parts of the country as well, especially in south India, most of which starts getting rainfall within days of it reaching the Kerala coast. However, it does not mean that the monsoon over the entire country would be delayed. The northward progression of the monsoon from the Kerala coast depends on a lot of local factors, including the creation of low pressure areas. It is possible, therefore, that despite the onset happening late, other parts of the country start getting rains on time.

The IMD has maintained that most of the northern and eastern parts of the country, which start receiving rainfall only towards the end of June and early July, would have monsoon rain on time. But southern and central India, which have normal monsoon arrival dates in the first, second and third weeks of June, would obviously get delayed rains.

The delay in the onset over the Kerala coast also means that the June rainfall is likely to be deficient. But the IMD has predicted that some of this deficiency would be made up for in July and August, and that the overall seasonal rainfall would be around the 96% of the normal that it has predicted. India as a whole receives about 89 cm of rainfall in a normal monsoon season.

AMITABH SINHA

TIP FOR READING LIST

LIFE THROUGH WOMEN'S HIDDEN POCKETS

BEFORE WOMEN'S dresses had modern pockets sewn into their seams, they carried detachable pouches which the women would tie around their waists and hide under their skirts. In *The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives, 1660-1900*, Barbara Burman and Ariane Fennetaux explore what women used to keep in these pockets — pencils, a sketchbook, cake, thimbles, keys, money — and use these accessories as a lens to explore the complexities of women's experiences. For example, in a London household in 1765, a "pretty bulky" pocket gave domestic help Frances Burk away, revealing that she had helped herself to a silk handkerchief, a pair of stays, and other items. Another example is Annie Chapman, one of Jack the Ripper's victims in 1888. Her pocket was "tom down the front and also at the side" and contained an envelope, pills, a small comb and a piece of coarse muslin that she had been hoping to pawn or sell. "What particularly interests Burman and Fennetaux is the way in which women of all classes have historically used these tie-on pockets as a supplementary body part to help them negotiate their way through a world that was not built to suit them," *The Guardian* writes in its review.



RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

ON MAY 31, a committee set up for drafting a new National Education Policy submitted its report to the HRD Minister. The draft policy is in the public domain for feedback and suggestions. A meeting with all state governments has also been called later this month to seek their views. Once feedback is received, the government will finalise the policy and move it in Parliament. Some of the broad draft recommendations on school education:

Pre-primary education

The draft NEP acknowledges a "severe learning crisis" in India, where children in primary school fail to attain basic math and reading skills. Attributing a major part of this crisis to a "tragic deficiency" in early childhood care and education (ECCE) of children in the age group 3-6 years, the draft recommends that ECCE be made an integral part of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Once ECCE becomes a justiciable right, it will be "obligatory for the public system to provide appropriate and quality educational infrastructure, facilities, and educators to all children in the age group 3-6 years".

To strengthen and expand ECCE, the draft policy recommends increased investment in existing *anganwadi* centres (meant for providing basic nutrition, healthcare and pre-school education to 3-to-6-year-olds), locating *anganwadi* centres in primary schools, encouraging primary schools to add pre-school, and building high-quality standalone pre-schools in areas where existing *anganwadis* and primary schools are not able to fulfill ECCE requirements. To ensure continuity from pre-primary to primary schools, the draft advocates bringing all aspects of ECCE under the purview of the Human Resource Development Ministry.

Reading and math skills

A large number of children currently in elementary school — perhaps over 5 crore — cannot read and understand basic text and solve simple addition and subtraction problems, the report states. Many of them eventually drop out. To address this, the draft policy proposes a host of interventions:

- Redesigning of school curriculum for Grades 1 to 5 to include dedicated mathematics and reading hours every day, activities that relate classroom maths to real-life maths, weekly puzzle-solving sessions to inculcate logical thinking, and language and maths-focused morning assemblies.
- A 'National Tutors Programme' that will enrol the best performers of each school for up to five hours a week as tutors for students who have fallen behind.
- A 'Remedial Instructional Aides Programme' to draw instructors from the local community to hold remedial classes during schools hours, after school hours and during summer vacations for students who need help.
- A school preparation module to be prepared by NCERT for all Grade 1 students to ensure they have the required learning levels (letters, shapes, colours, numbers) before starting the Grade 1 syllabus.
- Vacancies to be filled urgently to ensure a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1.
- A nutritious breakfast, in addition to the midday meal, for improved learning.

Curriculum and pedagogy

While the 1986 education policy standardised school education with its push for a uniform 10+2 structure, the 2018 draft pitches for reconfiguration of curriculum and pedagogy in a "5+3+3+4" design, which recognises different stages of development of cognitive abilities in children. This corresponds to the age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage), 8-11 (preparatory stage), 11-14 (middle stage), and 14-18 (secondary stage).

The foundational phase (from three years of pre-school to Grade 2), the draft policy recommends, should comprise five years of flex-

SIMPLY PUT

Govt wish list for schools

Draft for new National Education Policy is public, open for feedback, suggestions, discussion. What does it prescribe for schools, from enhancing learning to restructuring curriculum and Board exam format?

WHY NEW EDUCATION POLICY

1

**FROM THE CENTRE, UP TO THE STATES**

**THE POLICY:** The National Education Policy (NEP) serves as a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education. A new policy has come along every few decades and offered the government of the day an opportunity to leave its imprint on the education system.

**NOT MANDATORY.** Although the state governments are expected to follow NEP, they are not bound to do so. Tamil Nadu, even today, does not follow the three-language formula prescribed by the first education policy in 1968.

2

**BEFORE THIS ONE, 1968 AND 1986**

**SO FAR:** There have been two National Education Policies, in 1968 and 1986, during the respective regimes of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. The NEP of 1986 was revised in 1992 when P V Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister.

**NEP & BJP:** The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, or the BJP in its original form, was part of the 1977-79 Janata Party government, which attempted to draw up a policy in 1979, but it was not approved by the Central Advisory Board for Education. In a way, this is the BJP's second attempt at drafting the NEP.

3

**THE LATEST ONE, AFTER DELAYS**

**NDA's NEP:** Since 2014, the NDA government has set up two committees to draft the new NEP. The second panel, led by former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, submitted its report to the HRD Minister on May 31, after five deadline extensions.

**WHAT NEXT:** The draft policy is now in the public domain for feedback and suggestions. A meeting with all state governments has been called later this month to seek their views. After assimilating feedback, the government will finalise the policy and present it in Parliament.



Students in Chandigarh after a CBSE Class 10 paper this year. Draft policy proposes that the 10+2 format be replaced with 5+3+3+4, covering ages 3 to 18. Jaipal Singh

ible "play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based" learning and interaction. Instilling multilingual skills in children will be the key focus of this stage.

"This is followed by a preparatory phase consisting of three years (Grades 3, 4 and 5) of basic education incorporating some textbooks as well as aspects of more formal classroom learning. The next three years of middle school education (Grades 6, 7 and 8) would involve developing more abstract thinking and subject teaching leading up to a secondary education phase of four years (Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12)," the report reads.

The secondary phase will comprise four years of multidisciplinary study, with each year divided into two semesters. Grades 11 and 12 will be considered a part of the secondary stage (not junior college or higher secondary).

"There will be some essential common subjects for all, while simultaneously there will be a great flexibility in selecting elective courses... so that all students can expand their horizons as they see fit and explore their individual interests and talents," the draft states. It adds that the choice among science, arts and commerce should be delayed so that it is based on a student's experience and interests and not dictated by parents and society. It proposes no hard separation of school content in terms of curricular, extracurricular, or co-curricular areas, and between arts and sciences.

**Languages**

While the draft recommends continuance of the three-language formula, it has proposed flexibility in the choice of languages, as long as students can show proficiency in any three languages. Hindi and English are no

longer the stipulated languages that students must study from Grade 6.

Further, it advocates reduction in curriculum load and reorientation of curriculum to promote multilingualism, ancient Indian knowledge systems, scientific temper, ethical reasoning, social responsibility, digital literacy and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities. The National Curriculum Framework 2005, it states, should be revised by end-2020.

**Board exam restructure**

Class 10 and 12 Board examinations, according to the draft NEP 2018, should serve as a "check for basic learning, skills and analysis", which one should pass comfortably without coaching and cramming. To eliminate the "life-determining" and "high stakes" nature of Board examinations, it calls for changes including allowing students to sit for the examination twice in any given school year. "Eventually, when computerised adaptive testing becomes widely available, multiple attempts for Board examinations could be allowed," it proposes.

It also pitches a shift to a "modular" approach in which a student is able to sit for the Board exam in a range of subjects across eight semesters. "Students will be expected to take a total of at least 24 subjects (such as science, economics, Indian history, philosophy, digital literacy, physical education) Board Examinations, or on average three a semester (every six months), and these examinations would be in lieu of in-school final examinations so as not to be any additional burden on students or teachers," the draft reads.

**Governance of schools**

At present, the Department of School

Education (DSE) in a state is in charge of operation, regulation and policy-making. The draft NEP 2018 calls for decentralisation, with each of these functions carried out by separate bodies — policy-making by a 'Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog' (Education Commission at national level, headed by the PM); operation by DSE; regulation by an independent 'State School Regulatory Authority' or SSRA in each state, which will set basic and uniform standards for both public and private schools; academic matters, including standard setting and curriculum, to be continued to be led by the State Councils of Educational Research and Training.

While the policy advocates an end to "loading of regulatory requirements" against private institutions, it also recommends that school management committees or SMCs be set up in private schools. SMCs (with parents as members) are currently mandatory for government schools and play a significant role in governance and functioning.

For fee hikes in private schools, the draft states that the percentage of increase, based on inflation, will be decided by SSRA for every three-year period. Private schools will not use the word "public" in their names in any communication, documentation or declaration of status, it recommends.

**Right to Education Act**

The policy envisages a detailed review and subsequent amendment of the RTE Act for extension "downwards to include up to three years of early childhood education prior to Grade 1, and upwards to include Grades 11 and 12". It calls for a review of Clause 12(1)(c) — providing for mandatory 25% reservation for economically weaker section students in private schools — in the wake of its alleged misuse.

**Other recommendations**

- Early vocational exposure, with basic knowledge of various livelihoods (gardening, pottery, electric work, etc) will be taught at Foundational and Elementary levels.
- Students' progress throughout school, and not just at the end of Grades 10 and 12, should be mapped regularly through state census examination in Grades 3, 5, and 8.
- Teachers will not be engaged in time-consuming, non-teaching work such as electioneering and cooking of midday meals.
- "Para-teacher" (Shikshakarmi, Shikshamitra, etc) systems to be stopped by 2022.
- Excessive teacher transfers to be halted immediately.
- All schools will be accredited as per the School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework.

**NEXT**  
HIGHER EDUCATION

Traffic Index 2018: how Mumbai congestion was measured at world high

SRINATH RAO  
MUMBAI, JUNE 9

A RECENT study has ranked Mumbai as the most traffic-congested city in the world for the second straight year, and Delhi at fourth place. How was this determined, and what do the findings say of traffic across the world?

The study

The findings, published Tuesday, are part of the Traffic Index 2018 published by TomTom, an Amsterdam-based company that offers traffic solutions, uses location technology to collect traffic information, and has been publishing city rankings for eight years. The latest index ranks 403 cities across 56 countries, including 13 new cities.


The measure

For this study, congestion has been de-

fined in terms of the additional time taken to reach a destination as opposed to when the road would have been clear of traffic. Mumbai's 2018 congestion level of 65%, therefore, means that the extra travel time is 65% more than an average trip would take during uncongested conditions. For Delhi, by the same yardstick, the extra travel time is 58% more.

Average times are of actual taken trips, across every vehicle in the entire network, 24/7, TomTom explains on its website. This is worked out by establishing a baseline of travel times during uncongested conditions across each road segment in each city; travel times are analysed across the entire year (24/7) for each city, the company website states.

TomTom states that it factors for peak hours, accidents, inclement weather, construction work and all other factors likely to cause disruptions. It adds that its statis-

MOST CONGESTED CITIES				
RANK CITY		CONGESTION LEVEL		
		2018	2017	
1	Mumbai (India)	65%	66%	
2	Bogota (Colombia)	63%	62%	
3	Lima (Peru)	58%	50%	
4	New Delhi (India)	58%	62%	
5	Moscow (Russia)	56%	57%	
6	Istanbul (Turkey)	53%	59%	
7	Jakarta (Indonesia)	53%	61%	
8	Bangkok (Thailand)	53%	55%	
9	Mexico City (Mexico)	52%	52%	
10	Recife (Brazil)	49%	47%	

Source: TomTom Traffic Index 2018

Prem Nath Pandey

tics are "calculated using GPA data from navigation devices, in-dash systems and smartphones".

Mumbai and Delhi

In both Indian cities, traffic congestion during morning and evening peak hours varies between 73% and 102%. Last year, August 8 (83%) was the worst day to drive in Delhi, owing to the movement of VIPs and restrictions put in place in the run-up to Independence Day celebrations. In Mumbai, August 21 (102%) was the worst day on the road, because of heavy showers and work on multiple Metro rail lines. The index found that traffic flows most freely between 2 am and 5 am in both cities. The least congestion last year happened on March 2 (-16%), the second day of Holi.

Around the world

Nearly 75% of the cities part of the 2018







The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA  
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

LUCKNOW’S LONG ARM

The three arrests by UP police for a tweet and a video are an attack on free speech — they need a strong rebuff

THE HEART OF the matter is a video in which a woman makes several claims regarding herself and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. She is, according to her family, seeking medical help for her “mental condition”. But the Uttar Pradesh Police, which prides itself on the dubious way it has “encountered” criminals, promptly files an FIR in Hazratganj, Lucknow, on a tweet referencing the video by freelance journalist Prashant Kanojia in Delhi, picks him up from his Delhi home and takes him to Lucknow. Also arrested are Ishika Singh and Anuj Shukla, who work with the TV channel which aired the video. If the police forces were to spend their days making arrests for the unverified content that people tweet about from buses and trains, from bedrooms and even from bathrooms, it would offer relief to real criminals, who could live their lives more richly, without fear of state intimidation. Clearly, therefore, this response of the police is an attempt to intimidate anyone who takes a swipe at those in power.

In this, the UP police are doing what is, disturbingly, becoming frequent, evident in the shameful string of arrests of men and women across the country for posting or even forwarding material critical of those in power. An FIR is lodged, a quick arrest made — and the stain spreads. In this case, it’s no outraged citizen who has filed the case, it is the police themselves. How should the TV channel have treated this video is a question for the channel to answer — there’s due process available to all sides to deal with content that’s allegedly defamatory. But arrests for airing the video and sharing it are a clear violation of that process. Of course, it is too much to expect the mandarins of the UP police to read the legal provisions carefully, including the ringing Supreme Court verdict that extended the contours of free speech to online. Recall the observations of the Supreme Court in 2015, in the matter of Shreya Singhal vs Union of India. Therein, the court had struck down as unconstitutional Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which had been repeatedly misused to launch witch-hunts against ordinary people who had spoken online against the powerful. The specific ground for quashing the section was the vagueness of the terms inviting charges — “annoying” or “offensive” comments, for instance. The term “objectionable”, which the UP Police has used to justify driving down to Delhi to make arrests, is no less vague and unconstitutional.

Hopefully, the courts, which have had a tradition of upholding free speech against the excesses of the state, will step in and show UP police their rightful place.

BREAKING THE ICE

In the new India-Pak normal, Islamabad will need to go beyond optics to revive bilateral dialogue

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan’s letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterating his call for dialogue to resolve the problems between the two countries is unexceptionable. However, the Indian experience of dialogue with Pakistan is unfortunately one in which Pakistan-based terror groups have repeatedly played spoiler — witness Mumbai 2006, Mumbai 2008, Pathankot 2016 — with Islamabad pretending helplessness, or spouting denial. Yet, Pakistan has also shown several times it is not entirely without control over its so-called “non-state actors”. Whenever push has come to shove, it has taken steps against such groups, but as events proved, only for momentary optics. Now for Prime Minister Modi to pick up Khan’s olive branch, after a poll campaign that highlighted the Balakot action, Islamabad will need to go beyond such optics.

In the new India-Pakistan normal, restraining a Hafiz Saeed from leading the customary Eid prayers at Lahore’s Gaddafi stadium, or restraining a Masood Azhar to his home or hospital, is insufficient. Pakistan is readying for the Financial Action Task Force plenary later this month, where it will be tested against its commitments last year on actions against terrorist groups. Modi has signalled through the guest list of leaders from the region at his swearing in that there will be no friendly overtures toward Pakistan for now. It was, therefore, not surprising that India has declared there will be no meeting between Prime Ministers Modi and Khan at Bishkek, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Just as well. Public meetings between the two sides have served little purpose in recent years. Conducted under the glare of media, they have tended to descend into a bitter point-scoring exercise for the benefit of domestic galleries on each side.

It would be folly, however, to pretend that Pakistan does not exist in the Indian neighbourhood. Despite all the rhetoric, Modi 2.0’s plans for Kashmir, whatever those might be, cannot be delinked from India’s relations with Pakistan. The second reality is Pakistan’s involvement in the US engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan, with which India has to come to terms. Despite all the hostility, the two sides remain engaged in arrangements for pilgrims from India to access Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. In the NDA government’s previous term, the two NSAs met in secret regularly. Given that India does not want to hand Pakistan the satisfaction — or victory — of an official bilateral engagement when its long-demanded conditions for dialogue are yet to be met, the best way forward is for Delhi and Islamabad to set up a similar backchannel process. Such an engagement cannot hurt, even if it does not help.

FREEZE FRAME



Way forward in Kashmir



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

Actions intended to change the state’s status and demographics will intensify alienation

WITH ELECTIONS BEHIND us, and Narendra Modi armed with a comfortable majority for five more years, difficult national questions should be looked at. One of the hardest — as hard as creating millions of jobs, or restoring life to rural India, or protecting vulnerable children, women and men across the land — is the situation in Kashmir.

In August 1947, when India and Pakistan emerged as independent nations, Pakistan claimed the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir on the ground that Muslims constituted its majority. Less than three months later, Pakistan seized control of two-fifths of Jammu and Kashmir. For the next few years, India’s stand before the world was that the Kashmiri ruler had signed his state’s accession to India and that Kashmiris, whether Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, wished to remain with India.

Speaking for India before the UN, Kashmir’s popular leader, Sheikh Abdullah, defended this position. Over time, however, with unresolved discontent in Kashmir and a man like Abdullah in and out of prison, India’s reasoning over Kashmir was modified.

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, it was explained, enjoyed equal rights in India, but inter-communal harmony was a delicate matter. Calls to detach Kashmir from India would hurt Muslims across India. Moreover, such calls would make sense only if India were a Hindu state, which it was not.

In a typical comment, Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai wrote in *Asian Survey* May 1994: “For India, Kashmir is symbolic of secular nationalism.” A Muslim-majority area living and prospering in a Hindu-majority country was a matter of pride. It’s a wholly different scene today. The number of MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha who want India to become a Hindu state may not be known exactly, but it is not small.

Why should an Indian government hesitate before launching tough new policies over Kashmir? It should hesitate because Kashmiris are human beings who matter, and because India is different from China and from Israel. Today almost every country in the world has a significant Indian presence. Millions of Indian citizens live in the Gulf and in other Muslim-majority countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Millions more live in countries with Christian or Buddhist majorities.

INDIA VERSUS BHARAT

Electoral compromises of BJP indicate that idea of India has prevailed over Bharat



JYOTI PUNWANI

DOES THE TRIUMPHANT return of Narendra Modi, and the humiliating defeat of the Congress, signify the end of the “idea of India”? The RSS seems to think so, for twice since the result, they have extolled the “idea of Bharat” and contrasted it with the “Idea of India”. The former is said to be indigenous and inclusive, symbolised by the phrase “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, while the latter is described as an alien concept where differences of identity are emphasised.

The exact meaning of the “idea of Bharat” is available in a note by Ramakant Tiwari, co-convenor of the Delhi BJP Intellectual Cell. Titled “Idea of Bharat supercedes idea of India”, the note explains how the “idea of Bharat” draws on India’s ancient cultural heritage, symbolised by dharma, shakti, the guru-shishya parampara, maya, rebirth, the primacy of Sanskrit and the scriptures, teertha (pilgrimages), and the Kumbh Mela. Bharat was the rashtra chosen by Brahma for his incarnations, including the Buddha, writes Tiwari.

This, then, is the original genius of India. Compare that to the “malevolent” “idea of India”, traced by Tiwari not to our “first PM J L Nehru”, but to Lord Macaulay. This “malafide” foreign idea replaced our decentralised, dharma-based, democratic civilisation where “honoured visitors” were welcomed and assimilated. What we got instead was centralised planning, invaders, “selfish identities intruding from all corners of the world”, contrived phrases such as “unity in diversity”, the “conspiracy of secularism” replacing sarva dharma sama bhava, cowardice as ahimsa, subservience as “tolerance” and socialism/communism replacing our own arthashastra.

The BJP has almost dropped the ‘idea of Bharat’ in its policies in the North East and Goa, where it has not only allied with parties led by Christians but even refrained from its core belief that beef must be banned. Now, the ‘idea of Bharat’ is getting even more diluted as BJP leaders with RSS backgrounds don topic and grace iftars. Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis even had an Arab-style gamchha draped around him at his party’s iftar.

It is clear that the “idea of Bharat” is not merely an exclusively Hindu view of the country but an “upper caste” one. The British destroyed our ancient gurukuls which guaranteed 100 per cent literacy, says Tiwari. Surely he means 100 per cent “upper caste” literacy?

Today there’s no way this “idea of Bharat” can prevail. And it’s not because of the *tukde tukde* gang.

The reason this idea is impossible today is because of the politics followed by the political arm of the RSS. From 2014 to 2019, the BJP has gone out of its way to woo every caste, no matter how small, and also to give tickets to candidates based on their caste. Whereas the “idea of Bharat” signifies an “upper caste” utopia, the BJP this time ensured that “lower castes”, who were not expected to vote for it, were the first recipients of its welfare schemes in a crucial state like UP, where the challenge to the BJP was primarily caste-based.

So coloured by caste is the BJP’s electoral worldview that, in the 2017 UP assembly polls, it projected our national icon, Emperor Ashok, as belonging to the Maurya caste. This Lok Sabha election, UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath called Hanuman a Dalit, while his own minister for religious affairs said the deity was a Jat.

The BJP has almost dropped the “idea of Bharat” in its policies in the Northeast and Goa, where it has not only allied with parties led by Christians but even refrained from its core belief that beef must be banned.

Now, the “idea of Bharat” is getting even more diluted as BJP leaders with RSS backgrounds don topic and grace iftars. Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis even

had an Arab-style gamchha draped around him at his party’s iftar. These events are particularly hated by Hindutva-vadis who see them as political appeasement of a community that forms no part of the Hindu/Bharatiya ethos. Union minister Giriraj Singh was, in fact, expressing the “idea of Bharat” in his tweet against BJP ally Ram Vilas Paswan’s iftar, attended by Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and deputy CM Sushil Modi.

As Gujarat CM, Narendra Modi famously refused to wear a topi, and after he became PM, neither did he host an iftar nor did he attend President Pranab Mukherjee’s iftars at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. After President Ramnath Kovind took over, the Rashtrapati Bhavan iftar, and even the singing of Xmas carols there, has stopped. Now that’s the “idea of Bharat”.

Partly in 2014, and much more so in 2019, PM Modi’s campaign, and that of party president Amit Shah, was in keeping with this Hindu-centric idea. His allegiance to this idea came through also in his indifference to the continuous lynchings and Una-like incidents affecting Muslims and Dalits.

Despite that, in his first speech in Parliament, both in 2014 and 2019, the PM-elect made it a point to include minorities while describing his vision of the country. And Amit Shah reprimanded Giriraj Singh for his tweet.

Now if that’s not the victory, however superficial, of the “idea of India” over the “idea of Bharat”, what is? To make it endure is everyone’s job.

The writer is a Mumbai-based freelance journalist

JUNE 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



ASIAN POWERS UNITE  
EVEN AS BLEARY-EYED delegates went about coaxing the hard-line Arabs and the Egyptians to arrive at something resembling consensus on the language in which the treaty with Israel is to be mentioned in the final communique of the conference, Indian and Sri Lanka foreign ministers, AB Vajpayee and Shahul Hameed went about more positive business. They have been jointly promoting an idea of an Asian bloc of nations, like an association of Asian Unity. Vajpayee has personally sounded out several leaders of delegations from Asian countries, and the response has been positive. The nucleus of such a grouping might take shape in Havana when

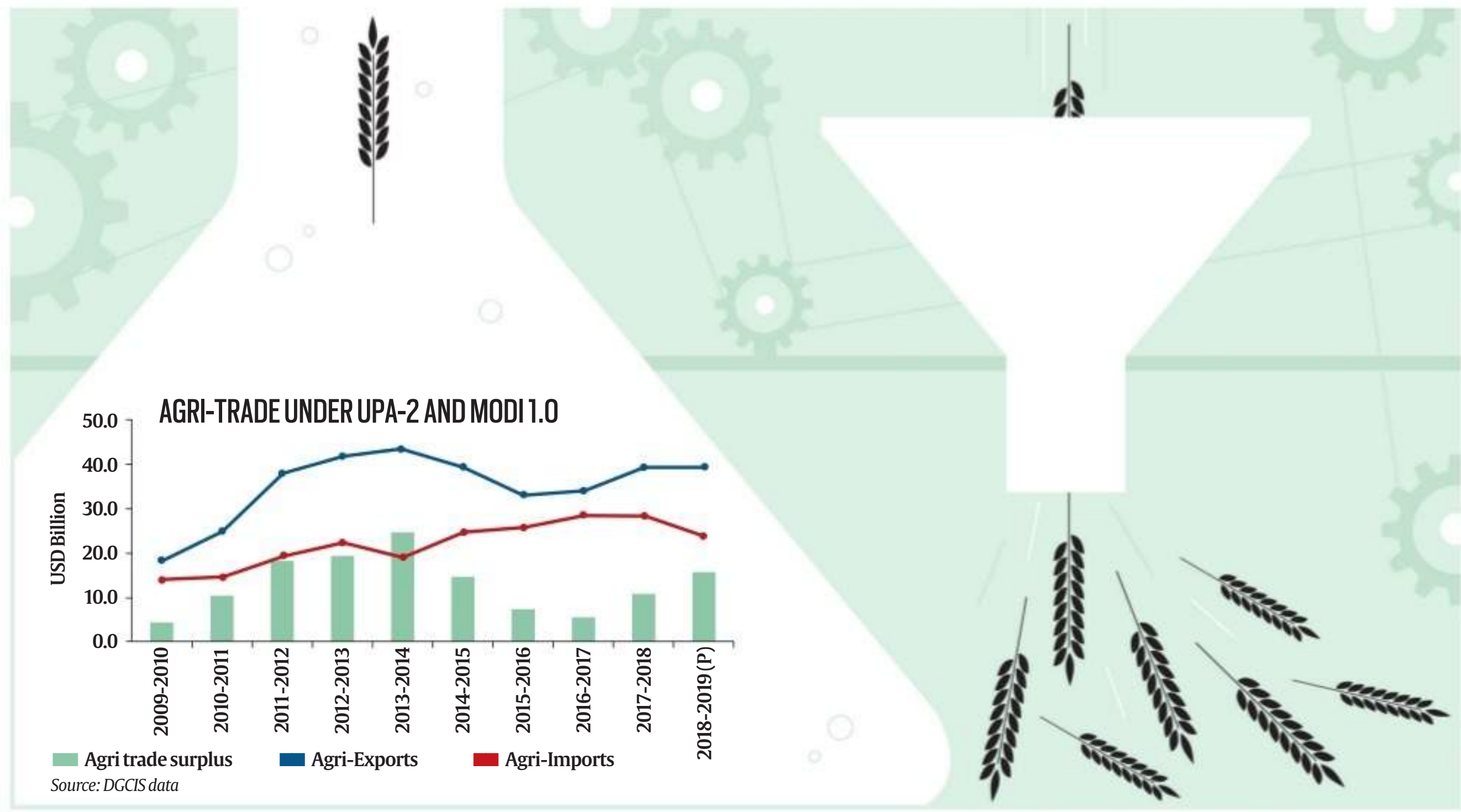
the heads of states meet for the non-aligned summit in September.

JUPITER’S VOLCANOES  
VOYAGER 1 HAS TRANSMITTED some major data regarding Jupiter, which leads space scientists to believe that the planet may have, barring the earth, the only active volcanoes in the entire solar system. Larry Soderblom of the US said that the discovery had been made in the course of the scrutiny of a film taken by the spacecraft when it encountered the planet on March 5 last. UNI adds: The film revealed some red spots on Jupiter which rotated like cyclones with the atmosphere on the planet being very turbulent. Another dis-

covery was the eight volcanoes... These were claimed to be the only active ones in the entire solar system, other than those on earth.

CONGRESS SPLITS  
THE CONGRESS (I) in West Bengal has split. In view of Indira Gandhi’s open support, however, the official group led by A B Gani Khan Chowdhury and Subrata Mukherjee, has so long been on the top. But things started changing from the day the two groups fought in the presence of Mrs Gandhi at the airport hotel. The immediate provocation was perhaps the official group’s decision to invite Sanjay Gandhi to lead the Congress (I) march to Writers Building on June 22.





C R Sasikumar

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Starting from the two leaders' firm political will, the stable China-Russia strategic relationship today is deeply rooted in the two countries' national interests. .”  
— GLOBAL TIMES CHINA

# The original Khan Market Gang

Long before the epithet was made a topic of debate by the PM, a bunch of teenagers ruled the roost in the now controversial area



SOMYA LAKHANI

DAMN, IT FEELS good to be a gangster. At least in retrospect. It was on a winter afternoon in 2003 when, unwittingly, I joined a gang — one that swindled innocent juniors of their pocket money and squandered them on gol-gappas. The gang members — teenagers, all of us — dressed in rust sweaters and grey skirts and trousers, operated from the confines of a noisy school canteen, past the sand pit in the junior school and all the way to the notorious Khan Market.

It took me 16 years and a one-liner by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to accept that I am, in fact, the OG (original gangster) of Khan Market, since my beloved school, Sardar Patel Vidyalaya (SPV) is only a five-minute walk from there.

In the early 2000s, when my parents reluctantly agreed to let me saunter outside school with two friends, “Khan” was the obvious, most doable option. With Rs 30 in my pocket, the heavy school bag on my back, I galloped away to freedom aka Bengal Sweets, the makers of XL size chole bhature and buttery pav bhaji.

That day, no one could convince me that I was any less of a gangster in my tiny universe of school friends and crushes to impress. Life taught us many lessons as we grew up, and one of them was to not take our Khan Market status seriously.

Before the wisdom of adult life had kicked in, back in the early 2000s, I found myself a best friend in school and together, we convinced Javed bhai and Saleem bhai of Khan Chacha to give our “order” of muton seekh rolls and paneer tikka rolls priority — much like our Patelian seniors and juniors. When the brothers saw “rust sweater”-sporting kids approaching their *khokha*, they knew it was time to delay the rest of the orders.

Their clients envied us school children as we raced back to school with our order to catch the bus back home. We, however, swore lifelong loyalty to the “best kebab shop” in town. When money was sparse but the desire was strong, a senior would



ONE OF  
800  
MILLION  
A VOICE, UNDER 35

order an onion roll — a paratha stuffed with onions and green chutney — for Rs 5.

In 2010, as a cub reporter with *The Indian Express*, I filed a story on Khan Chacha turning into a swanky two-storeyed restaurant in the market. The rolls were costlier, and us old-timers were sceptical but Javed and Saleem's familiar smiles kept us coming back — till they, tragically, shut shop in Khan Market after a trademark battle a few years ago.

The Khan Market gang was in deep despair, and battled the charm of other kebab shops. Aggressive Twitter and Facebook appeals to “save Khan Chacha” didn't create a ripple. Not entirely disheartened, we continued to visit our beloved market, with its quaint terrace restaurants that now served “global” cuisine. And the Parisian patisseries replaced Mrs Kaur's Crepes & More; the mysterious Mrs Kaur who sated many a craving without ever having met us.

But before we get distracted by the grown-ups, let's rewind to the gang-wars of Khan Market. For a single afternoon, after the last exam of the semester, the market

would be flooded with various gangs: The Patelians, the Modernites, the St. Columba's boys. Arch enemies on the basketball court and acutely aware of past ego battles, the gangs of boys and girls — in their school uniforms — gave each other cold stares. Since there was no Facebook or Instagram, senior-school scandals began at tournaments and reared their ugly heads at Khan Market.

The dogs of Khan Market grew fatter in front of us and the pet shop there was a revelation to me, as near my house — in the ignored Jamna Paar — pet shops hadn't yet arrived. On one such visit, my mother picked up a red belt for me excitedly, only to be told by an embarrassed teenaged daughter that it was for a dog!

Another cherished memory of the gang members was bumping into former cricketer Ajay Jadeja — a Patelian — in Khan Market, occasionally. It was a rule to do the SPV wave (if you know it, you know it) at him every single time he was spotted.

Now, the gang is in their 30s and spread across the world — a photographer, a filmmaker, a journalist — and with a whole bunch of challenges and fewer solutions. But every single time when the OGs reunite in Khan Market, a rush of memories take over — the first sip of beer at a famous dingy bar, Javed and Saleem Bhai's gracious service, and the cookies at Mrs Kaur. At the time, little did we know we were the Khan Market Gang. Thank you, Prime Minister.

somya.lakhani@expressindia.com

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### EC FALLS SHORT

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The burden of elections’ (IE, June 7). The writer's exhortation to avoid sullyng the reputation of Election Commission is lopsided. A range of questionable decisions and dissent by one of the top officials in EC has surely eroded the public's trust that was once reposed in the body. Moreover, the article denigrates the significance of raising questions and keeping constitutional bodies in check for their behaviour in checking — or failing to check — nationalist rhetoric. Such questioning is essential to the healthy functioning of democracy, as well as the institutions that stand as its pillars.

Ali Rizwan, Kalyan

### FREE RIDES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘A ticket to ride’ (IE, June 5). The idea behind free travel for women in DTC buses and the Delhi metro is right. It could improve the presence of women in Delhi's labour force. However, the move needs to be thought through. There will be logistical issues. How will the DMRC, for example, register the passengers who opt for the scheme? Will there be separate gates for them? What about the revenue foregone by Delhi's exchequer?

Sushanto Mitra, Delhi

### PRAGYA'S APPEAL

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Pragya seeks exemption from court appearance’ (IE, June 7). It seems to have become fashionable for political leaders to seek exemption from appearing in court for hearings on health grounds. It is surprising that Pragya Singh Thakur, the prime accused in the Malegaon 2008 blasts, who actively canvassed without any health problems during



## FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI

AS PER THE last report of National Statistical Office (NSO) released on May 31, the Gross Value Added (GVA) at basic prices (2011-12 prices) for the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2018-19 has slumped to 5.7 per cent for the overall economy, 3.1 per cent for manufacturing, and -0.1 per cent for agriculture, forestry and fishery. However, for the entire financial year, FY19, GVA growth is more respectable — 6.6 per cent for the economy, 6.9 per cent for manufacturing and 2.9 per cent for agriculture.

Incidentally, for the Narendra Modi government's first five-year stint (2014-15 to 2018-19), agri-GDP grew at 2.9 per cent per annum. Many experts believe that agriculture cannot grow at more than 3 per cent per annum on a sustainable basis. Swaminathan A Aiyar, for example — whose brilliant writings I admire — has recently written that “no country has managed more than 3 per cent agricultural growth over a long period”.

This is not correct. China, for example, registered an agri-GDP growth of 4.5 per cent per annum during 1978-2016, a very long period indeed. In fact, the first thing Chinese government did in 1978, when it started off economic reforms was to reform agriculture. Agri-GDP in China grew at 7.1 per cent per annum during 1978-84, and because the Chinese government also liberated price controls on agri-commodities, farmers' real incomes increased at 15 per cent per annum. That set the stage for the manufacturing revolution, which was revved up through town and village enterprises (TVEs) to cater to domestic demand from rural areas. The rest is history.

Indian industry is today complaining that the rural demand is collapsing. Tractor sales are down by 13 per cent, two-wheeler sales are down by 16 per cent, car sales are down by

similar percentage, and even FMCG (fast move consumer goods) sales are down in April 2019 over April 2018. One of the reasons is that India has never had any major agri-reforms and farmers' incomes have remained very low. But there have been periods, reasonably long enough, when agri-GDP has grown well above 3 per cent. In fact during the 10 years of UPA from 2004-05 to 2013-14, agri-GDP grew at 3.7 per cent per annum. This dropped to 2.9 per cent during the NDA's stint between 2014-2019. When the masses do not gain, the demand for manufactured goods remains limited, slowing down the wheels of industry. So, if industry wants to prosper, we must aim at an agri-GDP growth of more than 4 per cent. My assessment is that it can grow even at 5 per cent per annum at least for a decade, provided we are focused on reforming this sector.

For that, we need to raise farm productivity in a manner that can cut down unit costs and make Indian agriculture more competitive, enabling higher exports. Unfortunately, agri-exports had a negative growth during Modi 1.0 (see graph).

During UPA-2, agri-exports more than doubled, from \$18.4 billion in 2009-10 to \$43.6 billion in 2013-14. But during Modi 1.0, they declined, going down to \$33.3 billion in 2015-16 and then recovering to \$39.4 billion by 2018-19 — but still below the peak of 2013-14.

Officials managing agri-trade need to pay heed to this massive failure as it has implications not only for overall agri-GDP growth, but also for slowing down of manufacturing growth due to sluggish demand for industrial products in rural areas. There is ample evidence that much of Indian agriculture is globally competitive. But our restrictive policies constrain the private sector from building direct supply chains from farms to ports, which bypass the *mandi* system. This leads to a weak infrastructure for agri-exports. The net result of all this is that Indian farmers do not get full advantage of global markets. Further, an obsessive focus on inflation targeting by suppressing food prices through myriad controls works against the farmer. If these policies continue, Prime Minister Modi's target of doubling farmers' real incomes by 2022-23 will re-

There is ample evidence that much of Indian agriculture is globally competitive. But our restrictive policies constrain the private sector from building direct supply chains from farms to ports, which bypass the mandi system. This leads to a weak infrastructure for agri-exports. The net result of all this is that Indian farmers do not get full advantage of global markets.

main a pipe-dream.

It has to be noted that any attempt to artificially prop up farmers' prices through higher minimum support prices (MSPs), especially in relation to global prices, can be counterproductive. Normally, MSPs remain largely ineffective for most commodities in larger parts of India. But even if they are operational through massive procurement operations, a policy of high MSPs can backfire when it goes beyond global prices.

Take the case of rice. India is the largest exporter of rice in the world, exporting about 12 to 13 MMT of the cereal per year. If the government raises the MSP of rice, by say 20 per cent, rice exports will drop and stocks with the government will rise to levels far beyond the buffer stock norms. It would be a loss of scarce resources. Besides, it would create unnecessary distortions adversely impacting the diversification process in agriculture towards high-value crops. This needs to be avoided.

Our global competitiveness in agriculture can be bolstered by investment in agri-R&D and its extension from lab to land, investment in managing water efficiently and investment in infrastructure for agri-exports value chains. Today, India spends roughly 0.7 per cent of agri-GDP on agri-R&D and extension together. This needs to double in the next five years. The returns are enormous. The meagre investments in Pusa Basmati 1121 and 1509, for example, have yielded basmati exports between \$ 4 and 5 billion annually. The returns from the sugarcane variety Co-0238 in Uttar Pradesh are similarly impressive. The recovery ratio has increased from about 9.2 in 2012-13 to more than 11 per cent today. Massive investments are also needed in managing our water resources more efficiently, to produce more with less.

But augmenting productivity alone — without pushing for export markets — can lead to glut at a home and depress farm prices, shrinking their profitability. So, first think of markets and then give a push to raise productivity and exports simultaneously.

Can all this be done under Modi 2.0? Only time will tell.

The writer is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

## VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

## URGE TO TALK

THE JUNE 9 editorial in *Dawn* begins with the assertion of a sentiment that has become common in Pakistan when it comes to talks with India: “While the messages coming from New Delhi are mixed, Islamabad is clear in its vision: Let both nations come to the negotiating table and find a way forward to shed the animosity of the past seven decades — and counting — and attempt a new start in South Asia”.

It recalls that post the Pulwama attacks, the two countries were on the “brink of war”, and given that scare, “the importance of talks cannot be overstated”. The editorial contends that post the elections in India, it remains unclear what position Prime Minister Narendra Modi intends to adopt vis a vis Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Kyrgyzstan is an opportunity for Imran Khan and Modi to break the ice.

The editorial even goes on to suggest a trajectory for a possible diplomatic detente: “Let both start with the ‘soft’ issues (CBMs, people-to-people contact) and work their way up to the major issues (Kashmir, violence). It is clear that if these opportunities are lost, then only further turbulence is likely in one of the most tortured geopolitical relationships in the world”. It does not, how-

ever, mention New Delhi oft-stated pre-condition — “terror and talks can't go together”.

### SRI LANKA, UNFORGED

WHILE THE NEWS pages of the Sri Lankan English language media have given extensive coverage to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country, on the eve of his arrival, there were few editorials or opinion articles on the visit. Instead, the social cleavages and political turmoil that have come to the fore since the Easter terror attacks continue, understandably, to dominate the conversation. Siri Hettige, Chair of Sri Lanka Studies at the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg argues in *The Daily Mirror* on June 6 that “what we witness today is an extraordinary situation that we can ignore only at our own peril. It is the culmination of a series of long-neglected economic, political and societal issues. If we fail to identify the gravity of the emergent situation in the country today and explore all possible avenues and find a way out of this unprecedented crisis, consequences for the country and the people can be dire”.

On the political front, he argues, “people inhabiting this landmass have not come together as a cohesive political community transcending ethnic, religious and linguistic divisions. This is largely due to the failure of

post-independence regimes over the last sixty years to adopt appropriate national policies to achieve such a national goal. The result has been intermittent inter-community violence and conflict that not only led to an enormous waste of financial and human resources but also encouraged many people to leave the country”.

On the economy, uneven development and the retreat of the state led to much dissatisfaction, as was seen during the Tamil insurgency.

Finally, and most importantly, governments have failed in their primary duty of being the arbiters of violence: “Successive governments including the present one have failed to even effectively enforce the law against the perpetrators of violence. It is against this background that we need to look at the most recent terrorist attacks and other violent incidents that followed. The way the government leaders have reacted to these recent developments has made the situation worse”.

### READING AN ELECTION

MUHAMMAD ZAMIR, A former diplomat and foreign affairs analyst weighs on Narendra Modi's decisive election to a second term by the people of India in *The Dhaka Tribune* on June 9. Zamir highlights the grow-

ing and deepening relationship between Bangladesh and India, as well as the fact the PM Sheikh Hasina was among the first to congratulate Modi.

Yet, as has been the trend in Bangladesh since the issue of the NRC in Assam and the Citizenship Bill has become salient in India, Zamir flags many issues. Among these is Amit Shah's (now home minister) divisive and offensive rhetoric against Muslims and Bangladeshis in political speeches: “Shah... also needs to understand that fuelling nationalist sentiment by accusing others of appeasing Muslims can only create instability. This needs to be avoided.”

Zamir also points out that the election win in India has been seen globally in complex ways: The foreign media have acknowledged that a mixture of development and nationalism has worked in Modi's favour. There has been a subtle juxtaposition of nationalist rhetoric, subtle religious polarisation, and a swing of welfare programs, and these have helped the BJP considerably. Modi and the BJP managed to fuse nationalism and development with technology as the common denominator. He has promised the citizens safety and security through the protection of India's “land, air, and outer space,” and also targeted welfare schemes for the poor — homes, toilets, credit, and cooking gas”.

