

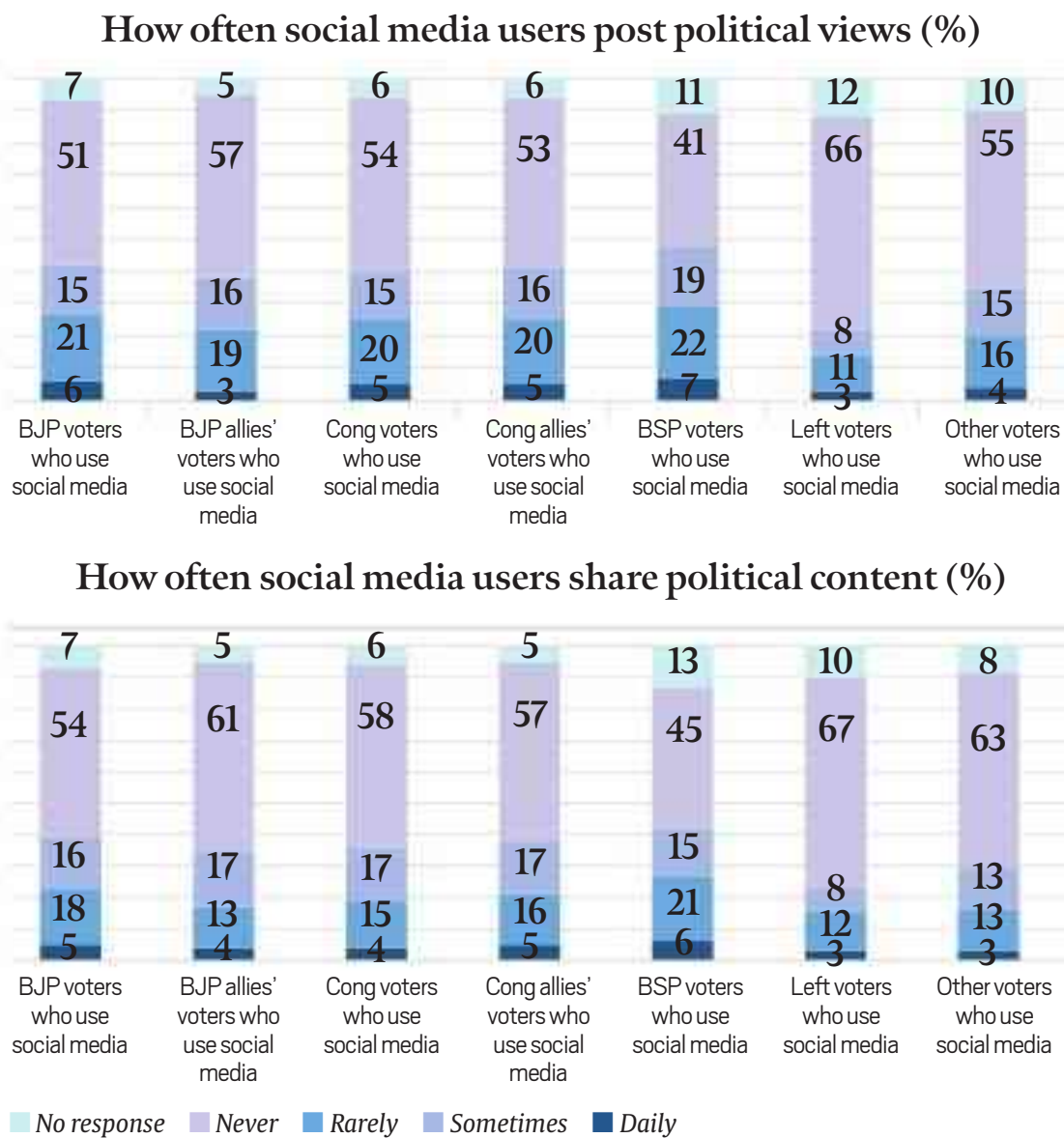


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## TELLING NUMBERS

### Voters rarely share political views, content online: Study



Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

IN A new study that examined links between social media use and political behaviour, some aspects of which were reported in *The Indian Express* on Tuesday, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) asked social media users how often they express their political views online, and how often they share political material. Very few of them were found to do so. Only one in every four users express their personal views on politics daily or sometimes, and over half said they never do it. Again, only one in every five users said that they share or forward politics news/material daily

or sometimes, while a majority said that they never do so. The CSDS study found very little variation between BJP and Congress voters. Most of these voters said that they never do either of the two things, and only about one-fourth said that they do both regularly (daily or sometimes). BSP voters who use social media, on the other hand, were slightly more likely than voters of other parties to say that they express their political views and share political material on social media regularly. Left voters on social media were found to be least likely to do so.

## THIS WORD MEANS

### FRUIT BAT

Also called flying fox, the suspected source of Nipah virus in Kerala. How is it different from other bats?

LOOKING TO identify the source of the Nipah virus that has caused one confirmed infection in Kerala this month, scientists are examining if it came from a guava he had eaten (*The Indian Express*, June 12). The reasoning is that the guava itself could have been infected by a fruit bat. The Nipah virus is zoonotic — it spreads primarily between animals and humans — and fruit bats are known to spread it. Fruit bats, as opposed to insectivorous bats, survive largely on a diet of fruit, which they locate with their sense of smell (insectivorous bats locate their prey through echolocation, or by locating



Indian flying fox.  
Wikipedia

the source of the echoes of their own sound). Fruit bats belong to the *Pteropodidae* family; those in the *Pteropus* genus within this family are natural hosts for the Nipah virus. Such bats are widely found in South and South East Asia, and are also known as flying foxes. After last year's Nipah outbreak in Kerala, which claimed 17 lives, studies by the National Institute of Virology had concluded that the virus was first transmitted from fruit bats identified as *Pteropus spp.* (the suffix indicates that the exact species within that genus has not been confirmed).

## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# 5,000 dry villages, 6,500 tankers

Record number of tankers are sole source of water in large parts of state. Behind the crisis, late monsoon following a deficit year, depleting groundwater in 279 talukas, under 10% live storage in 13 key reservoirs.

SANDEEP ASHAR  
MUMBAI, JUNE 12

MAHARASHTRA IS facing a water emergency of unprecedented proportions. Following years of drought, the rivers' currents have ebbed, water in dams and reservoirs has depleted and over-exploitation of groundwater has raised concerns over the long-term availability of water. With the weather department forecasting a delayed onset of monsoon, the state government has now deployed the highest ever number of water tankers — 6,597 as of June 10 — to meet the drinking water needs of parched regions. This is over three times the number of tankers deployed around this time last year (1,777). In 2016, due to another deficient monsoon, 6,016 tankers were deployed during peak scarcity.

#### How severe is the crisis?

Until June 3, residents of 5,127 villages and 10,867 hamlets were solely dependent on tanker water supply for their daily needs. Between May 20 and June 3 alone, 512 villages and 728 hamlets were added to the list of areas being catered. More than half the tankers have been deployed in Marathwada, which is the worst-hit region. These include 1,146 tankers in Aurangabad, where more than 761 villages are facing water shortage, and 939 tankers in Beed (652 villages). In North Maharashtra, 822 tankers have been deployed in Ahmednagar and 358 in Nashik. In Western Maharashtra with its drought-prone belts, Solapur is the worst-hit with 275 villages and 1,671 hamlets facing a shortage. The water scarcity has also hit livestock, with about 10.68 lakh animals sheltered in cattle camps for fodder and water needs.

#### How much water is stored in reservoirs?

Out of 17 major reservoirs listed by the Central Water Commission (CWC), with a total live capacity of 14.073 billion cubic metres, the live storage until June 6 is just 0.778 BCM, or 5.5%. A CWC bulletin listed live storage as nil in five of these — Paithon, Bhima (Ujjani), Yeldari, Upper Tapi and Pench. In eight more reservoirs, current



A parched area in Palghar district, where villagers often walk miles to fetch water.  
Amit Chakravarty

live storage was between 1 and 10%. Only Khadakvasla (39%), Bhatasa (28%), Upper Vaitarna (15%) and Upper Wardha (14%) had more than 10%.

#### How depleted are groundwater levels?

The latest survey of the Groundwater Survey and Development Agency found that of Maharashtra's 353 talukas, 279 have experienced depletion in ground water levels. Parts of Marathwada and North Maharashtra are among the worst-hit. In 2,642 villages across the state, groundwater levels were found to be more than 3 metres lower than the five-year average — a pointer to uncontrolled extraction of water and damage to groundwater aquifers. GSDA officials blame non-implementation of the Maharashtra Groundwater (Development and Management) Act, which was enacted to regulate extraction. With food production in rain-shadow belts also dependent on groundwater use, depleting water levels are



**29 OF 34 DISTRICTS**  
With tankers deployed; over 5,000 villages and over 10,000 hamlets

**5.5%**  
Live storage in the state's 17 major water reservoirs

**27%**  
Rainfall shortage in Marathwada (15% in Madhya Maharashtra)

putting the state's harvest at risk.

#### How dry has the weather been?

In weather regions as classified by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Marathwada had annual rainfall of 601.5 mm in 2018 (27% short of the normal of 821.6 mm), Madhya Maharashtra had 744.3 (15% short of 876.8 mm) and Vidarbha had 923.9 mm (15% short of 1,084.5 mm). The forecast, however, is for a "normal monsoon outlook" (96-104% of long period average). In a presentation to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis last week, the IMD forecast that a full-blown monsoon would hit Mumbai's coastline by June 17, and spread to the rest of the state within hours. The forecast for pre-monsoon rain spells is weak.

#### Besides deploying tankers, what measures has the government taken?

Last week, the Cabinet sanctioned a Rs-30-crore proposal for cloud-seeding experiments in dam catchment areas of Marathwada, North Maharashtra, and Vidarbha. "We will undertake the experiments, if required, based on the advice of experts," said Kishore Raje Nimbalkar, Secretary, Relief and Rehabilitation. The effectiveness of cloud-seeding has been questioned ever since India's first such experiments in in Tamil Nadu in 1983. Maharashtra first tried it in 1992, in the catchments of dams that supply water to Mumbai. In 2015, the state conducted 47 aerial runs and contended that these induced about 1,300 mm rainfall. In 2017, Chief Minister Fadnis had set 2019 as the year to make Maharashtra tanker-free as a result of water conservation works, with community participation, under the flagship initiative Jalyukt Shivar. With the deadline missed, the Opposition has been questioning the way the initiative is being implemented. Nimbalkar said, "While the state is facing a severe drought and water shortage, adequate mitigation measures have been put in place. Implementation is being monitored at the highest level. A water management plan is in place till the monsoon sets in." Fadnis recently directed senior bureaucrats to visit water-parched areas for reviewing the implementation of various works. The government has taken up repair and restoration of water supply schemes and acquisition of wells in affected areas on priority.

# Hijacking Act: why a hoax led to a life term

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

ON TUESDAY, a special court in Ahmedabad sentenced a man to life and fined him Rs 5 crore for creating a hijack scare aboard a Jet Airways Mumbai-Delhi flight and forcing it to land in Ahmedabad in October 2017. Birju Kishor Salla had left a printed note claiming there were 12 hijackers aboard. Arrested by the National Investigation Agency, Salla was not armed and his intention was merely to ensure that his girlfriend, a Jet employee in Delhi, moved to Mumbai after this scare.

Yet it invited a life sentence, because of the provisions of the recently passed Anti Hijacking Act, 2016. This is the first conviction under the Act.

#### Why the new Act

It was brought in to replace the Anti Hijacking Act, 1982, which the government considered obsolete in the face of emerging threats. The new Act aims to enforce the Hague Hijacking Convention and the 2010 Beijing Protocol Supplementary to the Convention. The Hague Convention (Convention for the

Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft) sets out the principle of *aut dedere aut judicare* — a state that is party to the Convention must prosecute an aircraft hijacker if no other state requests his or her extradition for prosecution. The 2010 Protocol Supplementary, which made amendments and additions, came into effect on January 1, 2018, and had 27 signatories as of September 2018.

#### Threat counts as hijack

The Act aims to punish not only an actual act of hijacking, but even a false threat that may appear genuine. It practically means that a hoax call that forces an aircraft to land at a place different from the place intended would be treated as hijacking and attract similar punishment.

The Act takes into account that armed possession of an aircraft may not be necessary for hijacking and that it may be hijacked remotely through a technological threat.

Under section 3(1): "Whoever unlawfully and intentionally seizes or exercises control of an aircraft in service by force or threat thereof, or by coercion, or by any other form of intimidation, or by any technological means, commits the offence of hijacking". It adds that "a

person shall also be deemed to have committed the offence of hijacking" if such a person "makes a threat to commit such offence or unlawfully and intentionally causes any person to receive such threat under circumstances which indicate that the threat is credible".

Hijacking attempts, directing others to commit hijacking, being an accomplice and assisting another person to evade investigation are punishable as hijacking. So is preparation for hijacking. Whether or not actual hijacking has even been attempted, if a person has agreed with one or more persons to commit such an offence and any act in furtherance of the intention has taken place, it shall be deemed hijacking.

#### The punishment

If hijacking leads to death of a passenger or a crew member, it is punishable with death. If not, the hijacking is punishable with life imprisonment.

The Act also provides for fine and confiscation of movable and immovable assets. The hijacker would also be charged with any other offence that takes place during the hijacking.

The Act provides for detention in custody for up to 30 days, and a bail application will not

be entertained unless the public prosecutor is given a chance to oppose it. If opposed, the court would have to be reasonably satisfied that no offence of hijacking was committed.

#### Old Act, new Act

The key new introductions are the death penalty, life sentence for hoax calls, and a wider definition for aircraft "in service".

Under the old Act, an aircraft was considered "in service" between the time the doors shut and the time every passenger had disembarked. Under the new Act, "an aircraft shall be considered to be 'in service' from the beginning of the pre-flight preparation of the aircraft by ground personnel or by the crew for a specific flight until twenty-four hours after any landing". In case of forced landing, "the flight shall be deemed to continue until the competent authorities take over the responsibility for the aircraft".

The new Act applies even if the offence is committed outside India but the aircraft is registered in India or leased to Indians, or the offender is Indian, or the offender is stateless but lives in India (such as an illegal Bangladeshi migrant), or the offence is committed against Indians.

# What SCO summit means for India's global and regional interests

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

ON THURSDAY, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek to attend a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Formerly the Shanghai Five and formed in 1996, the SCO has eight members today including India and Pakistan, which became part of it in 2017.

#### What kind of a grouping is the SCO?

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the then security and economic architecture in the Eurasian region dissolved and new structures had to come up. The original Shanghai Five were China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The SCO was formed in 2001, with Uzbekistan included. It expanded in 2017 to include India and Pakistan.

Since its formation, the SCO has focused

on regional non-traditional security, with counter-terrorism as a priority: The fight against the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism has become its mantra. Today, areas of cooperation include themes such as economics and culture.

#### Under what circumstances did India enter the SCO?

While Central Asian countries and China were not in favour of expansion initially, the main supporter — of India's entry in particular — was Russia. A widely held view is that Russia's growing unease about an increasingly powerful China prompted it to push for its expansion. From 2009 onwards, Russia officially supported India's ambition to join the SCO. China then asked for its all-weather friend Pakistan's entry.

New Delhi expressed its serious interest to join the grouping in 2009. Months after the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008, Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Asif Ali Zardari had their first meeting

in Ekaterinberg in Russia in June 2009. The occasion was the annual summit of the SCO, where both India and Pakistan were "observers". The highlight was Singh's message to Zardari: "'I am happy to meet you, but my mandate is to tell you that the territory of Pakistan must not be used for terrorism.'"

It was the first time India had shown an interest in joining the SCO. Ten years of efforts, pushed by then Joint Secretary (Eurasia) Ajay Bisaria, who is currently India's High Commissioner to Pakistan, fructified in June 2017, when the SCO inducted both India and Pakistan in Astana in Kazakhstan.

#### How does membership of the SCO help India?

For India, two important objectives are counter-terrorism and connectivity. These sit well with the SCO's main objective of working cooperatively against the "three evils". India wants access to intelligence and information from SCO's counter-terrorism



The summit provides Indian and Pakistani leaders an opportunity to meet informally.

body, the Tashkent-based Regional Anti Terror Structure (RATS). A stable Afghanistan too is in India's interest, and RATS provides access to non-Pakistan-centred counter-terrorism information there.

Connectivity is important for India's Connect Central Asia policy. Energy cooperation dominates its interest — and it's in China's neighbourhood. But India will also

have to deal with an assertive China, which will push its Belt and Road Initiative during the summit.

SCO membership also bolsters India's status as a major pan-Asian player, which is boxed in the South Asian paradigm.

#### How does global geopolitics play out for SCO and India?

The US' power struggle with China, exit from the Iran nuclear deal JCPOA (affects India's oil imports from Iran), and adversarial attitude towards Russia (affects India's defence purchase like S-400) have forced India to choose sides. While Washington's stance against Islamabad after the Pulwama attack was evidence of its support to New Delhi, India has had a strained relationship with China after the Doklam stand-off, followed by attempts to reset relations in Wuhan.

In the SCO, India's sitting down with less-than-free regimes, Russia and China has always had the West worried. India, however, has always been tactful in not



*The Indian* **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Forging national security

Defence reforms should be a priority, the most vital being the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff



ARUN PRAKASH

EACH OF INDIA'S post-Independence conflicts has seen the Indian public aroused by intense patriotic fervour; a phenomenon duly accompanied by suitable bombast from politicians. But no sooner has the crisis passed, that more mundane and pressing concerns about issues like “*roti, kapda, makan, naukari*”, rightly, resume their significance in the lives of people as well as “netas”. India's politicians have, traditionally, not considered national security worth their time and attention because it was never a “vote-catching” issue. Therefore, for 70 years, they happily left the management of defence and security to the bureaucracy, and devoted themselves to political survival.

The run-up to the 2019 general election seems to have changed this forever. The Pulwama terror strike and its sequel saw a major shift of political focus with national security issues being accorded prime importance in election rhetoric. Post-election analysis has convincingly shown that the ordinary voter was indeed swayed by security issues. The NDA government's show of resolve, as demonstrated by the September 2016 cross-border raids and the February 2019 air strikes on Pakistani targets, was noted and applauded. These audacious actions also seemed to have mitigated resentment on account of demonetisation and overtaken concerns regarding unemployment and other issues amongst both rural and urban voters.

While this dramatic paradigm shift may have upset the Opposition's calculations and led to their rout, it should bring cheer to the security and defence establishments. National security, having proved itself a prime “vote-catcher”, is guaranteed henceforth to garner the politician's close attention. Another more recent development that prima facie bodes well for national security is the upgradation of the NSA from minister of state to cabinet rank.

The prime minister, by creating a full-fledged “Minister for Security”, has added a sixth member to his Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), currently comprising ministers of home, defence, finance and external affairs. The present NSA's credentials and expertise in the fields of internal security and intelligence as well as the affairs of our “near abroad” are well-known and his elevation

could be the key to ensuring that focus is retained on national security.

There are, however, certain critical aspects of national security where the current state of play leaves room for ambiguity and uncertainty, starting with haziness of the concept itself. Theoretically defined as “multifaceted and all-encompassing”, national security is often stretched to include a mind-boggling diversity of issues. This is precisely the reason why repeated endeavours at formulating a national security doctrine have failed. India's bureaucracy is simply incapable of digesting and processing draft doctrines that have attempted to address vast agendas ranging from economic, food, cyber and energy-security to border-management, governance and Centre-state relations.

There is clearly a need to view national security through a narrower prism and evolve a less ambitious doctrine that focuses on matters directly related to defence and security. It must provide strategic guidance to the military within clearly defined national aims and objectives. But for this to happen, a crucial “grey area” in our higher defence organisation (HDO) needs to be addressed.

The Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), has many key roles to play in the HDO but his current status and empowerment constitute a serious national security lacuna, which has neither been acknowledged nor rectified by successive governments. As the senior-most serving officer of the armed forces, the primary function of the Chairman COSC is to oversee functioning of “joint” formations like the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the Andaman & Nicobar Command, as well as tri-service training institutions through an Integrated Defence Staff, created post-Kargil to support him.

Far more critical is the chairman's role in the nuclear command chain. As “boss” of the CincSFC, who tasks the army's missiles, the navy's submarines and air force fighter-bombers for nuclear weapon delivery, he constitutes the key link and military interface between the prime minister, who is the head of India's Nuclear Command Authority, and India's nuclear forces. Bringing clarity to the role and responsibilities of Chairman COSC will reinforce the credibility of our nuclear command and control, especially with

nuclear-armed INS *Arihant* and the Agni-V inter-continental ballistic missile on the horizon.

Under existing rules, this post is held in rotation by serving Chiefs who discharge the chairman's duties on a part-time basis. The enormous incongruity and farcical nature of this system has recently been demonstrated. The retiring Naval chief passed the mantle of Chairman COSC to the Air Chief, who has three months to serve, before the latter hands it over to the Army Chief, who retires just three months later!

Both the UPA and NDA governments have, over the past 15 years, spurned expert recommendations that India's nuclear-deterrent, as well as demands of 21st century warfare call for urgent defence reforms, the most vital being creation of a Chief of Defence Staff. As an interim measure, they suggest the appointment of a full-time “Permanent Chairman COSC” with a fixed tenure. Having ignored this advice, the last government went on to constitute a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) headed by the NSA to “facilitate comprehensive and integrated planning for defence matters”. This step, sidelining the Raksha Mantri, was another reminder that the NSA's role and charter in the nuclear command chain and his relationship with the Chairman COSC need early formalisation and promulgation.

Given the radical military transformation, modernisation and down-sizing recently undertaken by China, it would be extremely myopic for India to stall defence reforms any longer. Such reforms, the world over, are wrought by visionary and enlightened politicians often in the face of fierce opposition by service chiefs. In the UK, three defence ministers — Sandys, Heseltine and Nott — are celebrated for their reformist role in creating a genuinely integrated MoD and enforcing jointness. In the US it took herculean struggle by two pro-active politicians, Senator Goldwater and Congressman Nichols, to bring about radical security reform through an act of the US Congress.

Is it possible that Rajnath Singh could be India's man of the hour?

*The writer is a former chief of naval staff, and chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee*

## WHAT LIES BENEATH

Conflict over mining in Bailadila points to a broader issue — the failure of institutions mandated to protect tribal rights

IN ORDERING A stay on all mining in a block at the Bailadila hills in Chhattisgarh, the state's chief minister, Bhupesh Baghel, has flagged an important issue. “We have decided to investigate the gram sabha clearances,” he said. Since the range falls under Schedule V of the Constitution, it is governed by the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996. The Act makes it incumbent on an agency that undertakes development activity in such an area to take the gram sabha's consent. However, Adivasis, who have been protesting against mining in the area, allege violations of due processes. The gram sabha was reportedly convened in July 2014 but the residents contend that the village body's approval to industrial activity was “faked”. The Chhattisgarh government's decision to probe these allegations is welcome.

The Bailadila hills are known for world-class iron-ore reserves. The objections of the Adivasis pertain to one block of the range, Deposit Number 13. Developed by the NCL, a joint venture of the National Mineral Development Corporation and the Chhattisgarh Mineral Development Corporation Ltd, Deposit 13 or Nandaraj is a place of faith for the area's Adivasis — much like the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha. Their agitation also raised concerns about Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) being contracted by NCL to undertake operations in the area. The state-owned enterprise contends that AEL was brought in only as a “developer” and it has not transferred the mining lease to the private outfit. The Chhattisgarh government has decided to review this permission as well.

The concerns raised during the imbroiglio should also occasion revisiting broader issues that lie at the intersection of mineral wealth governance and tribal rights. When it was enacted, PESA was seen as a revolutionary piece of legislation as it empowered gram sabhas to take decisions on contested issues such as land alienation and customary laws. But dogged by low participation and frequent hijacking by influential interests, these bodies have struggled to stay afloat. The Virginus Xaxa Committee report submitted to the NDA government in 2014 noted that “lack of consent before land acquisition... persists in the implementation of PESA”. That is what seems to have happened in Bailadila. The Chhattisgarh government needs to go back to the Xaxa Committee's recommendation: “Strengthen the institutional system to support the implementation of PESA, including the Gram Sabhas.”

## COMING OUT

Bhupen Khakhar's work, now sold at a record price, marks a moment of rupture in Indian art history

FEW MONTHS BEFORE his death in August 2003, Bhupen Khakhar said in an interview, “When I feel I'm telling the truth, then there is no restraint”. It is this absence of restraint that marks Khakhar as a rupture in the history of modern Indian art. A self-taught artist, Khakhar fearlessly spoke his truth to a largely conservative society. The explicit homoeroticism in his canvases was unprecedented in modern Indian art and stands out as one of the earliest attempts at starting a conversation about gay life, his own homosexuality, and gay rights. His paintings, done in bright colours, were remarkable studies of urban life. True to the narrative tradition of the Baroda school, a major influence on his career, Khakhar sought to tell stories, laced with sarcasm and self-deprecating humour. The stories were about people made vulnerable by their sexual choices and hence, forced to embrace a tortuous social exile. Works like *Two Men in Benaras* and *You Can't Please All* challenged the prevailing morality on sexuality.

Earlier this week, *Two Men in Benaras* was sold at Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art sale for Rs 22.39 crore, setting a record for modern Indian art. Three years ago, Tate Modern had held a retrospective of the artist. Both are indicators of a growing international recognition of Khakhar's vision and pioneering radicalism. His unflinching social gaze, risking censorship, ignominy and social ostracisation, speaks of a rare courage that may have resonance in a society that increasingly frowns on artistic license and freedoms.

It's a moot point whether the radical edge in Khakhar's work has seeped down and transformed notions of public morality. For instance, can a 1982-work like *Two Men in Benaras*, at this moment the most expensive Indian painting, be put up for public viewing in India?



FIROZ BAKHT AHMED

BY ANNOUNCING THE creation of 100 madrasas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it clear that there are no walls between the Muslim community and the BJP-RSS. The PM's message to the community is to modernise and while remaining rooted. “Ek hath mein Quran, ek mein computer” (Quran in one hand and computer in the other), he said. Earlier, the PM also expressed his concern for the Muslims being used as a vote bank, stalling their progress.

Fundamental changes have been underway in our educational curriculum. Religious instruction across all faiths cannot stay isolated from this transformation. In 1996, the first BJP-led government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee talked of combining the ideals of Vedanta and Islam. I have held the view that it is important to continuously engage with the BJP and Sangh to build a bridge of understanding.

The bitterness which our leaders have allowed to grow between the two sister communities and the immeasurable suffering it has led to, could have been easily avoided. Now, if the Muslim leadership wants to engage, it should be without any preconditions.

Today's Muslim leadership has lost both its voice and utility. Nothing has changed since Independence and Muslims continue to be seen with a begging bowl. During every election, it has been proved that all of them are power-brokers indulging in pernicious

## TIME FOR ASSIMILATION

Muslim voters must give BJP a chance, see if their genuine aspirations are addressed

After Modi had stated in his speech in Parliament that he wanted to provide justice to the exploited Muslim community, it was welcomed as well as treated with suspicion. Even in 2014, Muslims got to know their political mandate had been rendered futile. Rather than wasting their vote, they should try once at least to consolidate behind the BJP and see if their genuine issues are addressed.

vote-bank manipulation, then acquiring state patronage themselves and leaving ordinary Muslims to the mercy of God. In terms of electoral politics, the biggest mistake committed by most in the Muslim community has been the diatribe against the BJP, particularly during elections, exhorting people from the community to vote to keep the BJP out. By doing so, they not only communalise the scenario but also help unite the majority Hindu vote.

This ghetto mindset has rendered the 170-odd million Muslim community at a crossroads. Muslims have also observed in the recent election that the “Mahagathbandhan” of the so-called secular brigade too has miserably failed as its sole purpose was not development but to pull the rug from under Modi's feet. After the result, even when the votes of the “Mahagathbandhan” and Congress in UP were added together, they could not overcome the BJP candidate's tally.

This year, Modi magic worked and 10 to 20 per cent or more votes were polled for the BJP in UP alone and 36 constituencies with substantial Muslim presence were won by the NDA-BJP. In East Delhi, which has about 20 per cent Muslim electorate, Gautam Gambhir polled 57,000 votes in Zakir Nagar ward where the number of Muslim electorate is 3.10 lakh. Is the Muslim paradigm shifting?

After Modi had stated in his speech in Parliament that he wanted to provide justice to the exploited Muslim community, it was

welcomed as well as treated with suspicion. Even in 2014, Muslims got to know their political mandate had been rendered futile. Rather than wasting their vote, they should try once at least to consolidate behind the BJP and see if their genuine issues are addressed.

Muslim voters have to shift their perspective from treating the BJP as politically untouchable. They must keep in mind which party and candidate can fulfil their aspirations. At the same time, while Modi believes in making India, some of his MPs and other supporters seem to believe in breaking India through their vitriolic remarks. The lynching of Muslims, which is going on unabated, must stop and those indulging in it must be given exemplary punishment.

If Muslims have voted for the Congress for six decades, they must in the next election, vote en bloc for the BJP and see the change.

The message of the recent mandate for the Muslim community is to distance itself from the rabble-rousing leaders like Asaduddin Owaisi and Azam Khan. This will pave the way for them to enter the political mainstream and reap the benefits that ensue. They should not harp on reservations and raise emotive issues. Assimilation is the watchword for the Muslim community.

*The writer is chancellor, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad*

## JUNE 13, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### RAJ NARAIN REMOVED

THE CENTRAL DISCIPLINARY action committee of the Janata party ordered that the former health minister, Raj Narain, be removed from the membership of the national executive of the party for one year for breach of party discipline. The committee also debarred Narain from seeking re-entry to the executive for one year. While Narain's removal from the national executive has been ordered for his public statements criticising the working of the government and his call to the people to “gherao” MPs of their areas, he has been warned for showing disregard to the party president, Chandra Shekhar.

### INDO-SOVIET TALKS

THE TWO-DAY Indo-Soviet talks concluded in Moscow with clear indications that Moscow wants India and the Soviet Union to have a common approach towards ensuring Afghanistan's protection from the threat of incursions from Pakistan. At the banquet speech in honour of the Indian PM, Leonid Brezhnev made it clear that Moscow will not leave Afghanistan in the lurch. Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, made it clear that the Soviet Union “will be protecting Afghanistan”.

### NO ESCAPE

THE SUPREME COURT today ordered that





# Terms of engagement

The context of India-Pakistan relationship has changed significantly. Any framework for dialogue must reflect the new situation



C RAJA MOHAN

"NO MAN EVER steps in the same river twice", the Greek philosopher Heraclitus had said back in the 6th century BC. He explained by adding, "for it's not the same river and he's not the same man". The thought from Heraclitus might help explain why India is unwilling to get back to the kind of dialogue it pursued with Pakistan in the recent past.

Pakistan premier Imran Khan has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, appealing for a resumption of the dialogue that has stalled for some years now. Khan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has urged the same in a separate letter to his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. The Indian response, if any, is not in the public domain. One thing, though, is quite certain. If and when India agrees to resume the dialogue with Pakistan, it is unlikely to be the one that Pakistan wants to resume.

For the context of the relationship between India and Pakistan has changed since the early 1990s, when the current series of talks began. Further, it is not the same India that Pakistan dealt with a quarter century ago. Even more important, PM Modi is very different from his recent predecessors — Manmohan Singh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Inder Kumar Gujral and PV Narasimha Rao.

Returning to Heraclitus for a moment, the peace process between India and Pakistan is not the same river and the prime minister of India is not the same man.

The old peace process was dead when PM Modi's visit to Lahore on short notice on the Christmas day of 2015 was followed by an attack on Pathankot when the new year dawned a week later. What was this framework and why is it so difficult to redeem now?

The peace process had its origins in a time when the balance in the Subcontinent tilted in favour of Pakistan. By the turn of the 1990s, Pakistan was triumphalist and India was down in the dumps. Pakistan had acquired nuclear weapons by the late 1980s. That seemed to neutralise India's conventional military superiority over Pakistan and established "nuclear parity" between the two subcontinental siblings. Beyond the nuclear, Pakistan was on high having just humbled a superpower — the Soviet Union. Moscow was compelled to withdraw from Afghanistan after a decade of occupation. Pakistan's use of jihadi violence played no mean part in the strategic humiliation of Russia. To its west, Pakistan was eager to extend its sway into Afghanistan and beyond. In the east, it was time to take revenge for India's vivisection of Pakistan in 1971.

If Pakistan was riding high, India seemed to be plumb new depths. Its economy had collapsed and Delhi went into the IMF's receivership. Political stability was dead with the demise of the so-called Congress system. The weak coalition governments in Delhi that followed had struggled to produce consensus on difficult policy choices. Meanwhile, the



C R Sasikumar

deepening faultlines of caste and religion seemed poised to tear Indian society apart. And its frontier regions — Punjab, Kashmir and the Northeast were all on the boil. Externally, India's lone ally, the Soviet Union broke up into pieces and Delhi had to recalibrate its foreign relations.

Pakistan could easily be forgiven if it had thought India was now a pushover. It turned the Afghan jihadi experience to Kashmir where Delhi had made matters difficult for itself. The strategic impunity created by the nuclear weapons seemed to embolden the Pakistan army. Its immediate objective was to force a reluctant India to open up talks on the Kashmir question. It had two new instruments. One was the leverage over the militant groups in the Kashmir Valley and the creation of a sanctuary for anti-India terror groups. The other was the renewed international interest in resolving the Kashmir dispute. Washington convinced itself that Kashmir was the world's most dangerous nuclear flashpoint. The pressure from Pakistan to reopen the Kashmir question was matched by that from the international community to start talking Kashmir.

India, willy nilly, agreed to put Kashmir back on the table by the end of the late 1990s. But it was only by 2004 — after a series of military crises rocked the bilateral relationship that there was an agreed methodology for a comprehensive negotiation with Pakistan. The three-fold framework involved a commitment from India to negotiate seriously on Kashmir, Pakistan's promise to create a violence-free environment, and a joint pursuit of confidence building measures.

Outlined in January 2004 in Vajpayee's talks with Pervez Musharraf, the process gained momentum in Manmohan Singh's first term. The two sides expanded a range of CBMs, came close to solving some difficult issues like the dispute over Siachen glacier, and negotiated a broad understanding on Kashmir. But the process collapsed for a variety of reasons; there was plenty of blame to go around. From the Indian perspective, though, the main problem was the persistent cross-border terror backed by the Pakistan army.

After his initial outreach to Pakistan failed, Modi sought to break the frustrating talks-terror-talks cycle with Pakistan. The new ap-

proach had a number of elements. First, discard the pretence that the Hurriyat in Kashmir had a role in the talks with Pakistan; two, refuse to talk to Pakistan until it shows real progress on limiting cross-border terror; three, challenge Pakistan's nuclear impunity through military escalation on the Line of Control, cross-border attacks and the use of air power after the Pulwama attack; and mobilise international pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism in Kashmir.

India has had a measure of success with this strategy, thanks to the evolution of the international context and the regional balance of power in India's favour. From pressing India to talk Kashmir after every major military crisis, the major powers (with the exception of China) are now demanding that Pakistan put an end to terror first. Few in the world are today itching to resolve the Kashmir conflict. This change is rooted in turn in the dramatic reversal of the economic fortunes of Pakistan.

Until the early 1990s, Pakistan's economy grew at a much faster pace than that of India. As economic reforms kicked in, India grew rapidly. A quarter century later, the Indian economy is nearly 10 times larger than Pakistan's. Bangladesh, once the poor cousin, is now set to become a larger economy than Pakistan. As its army privileged jihadi violence, Pakistan has long ceased to be the attractive state that it once was — a dynamic economy, moderate political orientation and a natural leader of the Islamic world.

Is India taking full advantage of the shift in the regional balance of power? That is a far more interesting question than others at play today: Whether and when might Delhi talk to Islamabad? If India does resume talks, what weight might Delhi attach to the Kashmir question? If the old framework of dialogue with Pakistan was rooted in India's weakness, Delhi now may see no reason to return to it. But "not talking to Pakistan" can't be an end in itself. It should be about finding new terms of engagement with Pakistan.

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

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## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US should understand that China's rapid development is driven by the wish of the Chinese people to live a better life."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

# The enigma of English

Progress can be achieved using the language one is born into and grows up with



DHANANJAY SINGH

WITH ENGLISH, ONE arrives at the doorstep of power. Without it, despite any measure of excellence in any language of Indian origin, there is no hope. While this may be an exaggeration, it is largely true — English is more than a language in India. It is in this context that I disagree with your editorial's assertion that the growth of English is largely organic to India ('Tongue twisted', IE, June 4).

More than 70 years after the end of colonial rule, English sounds still reverberate an aura of awe, especially across large parts of India outside the metropolis. From a small district in Arunachal Pradesh, where my uncle was a schoolteacher, we would go to my village in Bihar for the summer vacation: When I was in Class V, the villagers would often gather around and demand English. Flustered that I still had no expressive abil-

ity, as I studied at a government school, I would utter a flurry of randomly assorted verbs and nouns accentuated with no semantic connections whatsoever, peppered with a long-sounding "and". It left the crowd mesmerised. Years later, when I was in college in Bomdila, I saw my now old uncle come home depressed and humiliated. The district education officer had scolded him publicly: The humiliation felt was particular for being called a stupid Bihari.

With my newly-adorned English reputation, I drafted a letter I would myself be unable to understand a word of. A sense of resentment for the officer combined with compassion for the old teacher produced a mishmash of outlandish words and convoluted sentences that simply made no sense. Subsequently, the intended reader invited me to his office. He looked at me with vague admiration and cynicism. He offered the letter to his subordinate, who read it and looked flummoxed. After some moments of gestural consultation, they looked at me. "Very high class English, umm?" he said. I was offered tea, and asked what I actually wanted. Then, as if to show that he was not far behind in owning English, he dictated a letter of apology, often substituting a simple expression with a verbose one.

It is such attitudes and assumptions associated with the language that the draft national education policy seeks to redress. In villages and small towns, English schools are mushrooming. The teachers in these schools are often less than proficient in the language. They mutter half-understood content to an unsuspecting but confused lot of school children. There is nothing wrong in the intent expressed in the draft

which echoes what the acclaimed Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o wrote in his influential book, *Decolonising the Mind* (1986): "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world." It seeks to find a common ground between the language of culture and language of education and professional life.

The editorial claims "the exhortation," in the draft, "to value languages other than English in the workplace, especially hiring, is perplexing". Well, rather than perplexing, it is seeking a course correction. The consumer base for all the companies ultimately are the masses of the country, and the vast majority of them are non-English speakers. We can already see a change over the last decade or so when it comes to the use of Hindi and other Indian languages in the business world. This has, perhaps, been possible due to the greater presence of these languages in the cultural and public sphere, especially through social media. The draft seeks to ensure that the language of culture also remains the language of education and profession.

The elite, in the universities or the workplaces, often deride and exclude people with weak English language skills. There are cases where a student who is otherwise brilliant either drops out of a university or continues, but with a dented self-esteem adversely affecting their performance. Some may say that English is also a language of emancipation against various inequalities. English lifts an individual from a social environment of deprivation to

a life of freedom and prestige. This may be true in particular and limited cases, but widespread progress can be achieved only in a language that one is born into and grows up with, in the family and the society.

However, the Draft is unfairly dismissive of English. It is not English in itself that is a problem: English has been the only available language of communication between Indians who speak languages that are mutually unintelligible. The Indian variety of English is recognised the world over as Indian English, and it has produced some great works of literature and art. The Sahitya Akademi has instituted an award for the best work written in English. For a small community of Indians, English is indeed their first language, and, for many, their second language. A respectable number of Indians living in the cities have English as one of the languages of their bilingual identity. Not only this, socially and culturally, English is lending its words to the languages of Indian origin. Even an unlettered Indian has no substitute, for example, to "missed call" in her own language.

English is an enigma. Like all issues of social importance in the country, there is no one way of thinking and arguing about it.

The writer is professor, Centre for English Studies, JNU



HARSH GUPTA

# Passing the tax smell test

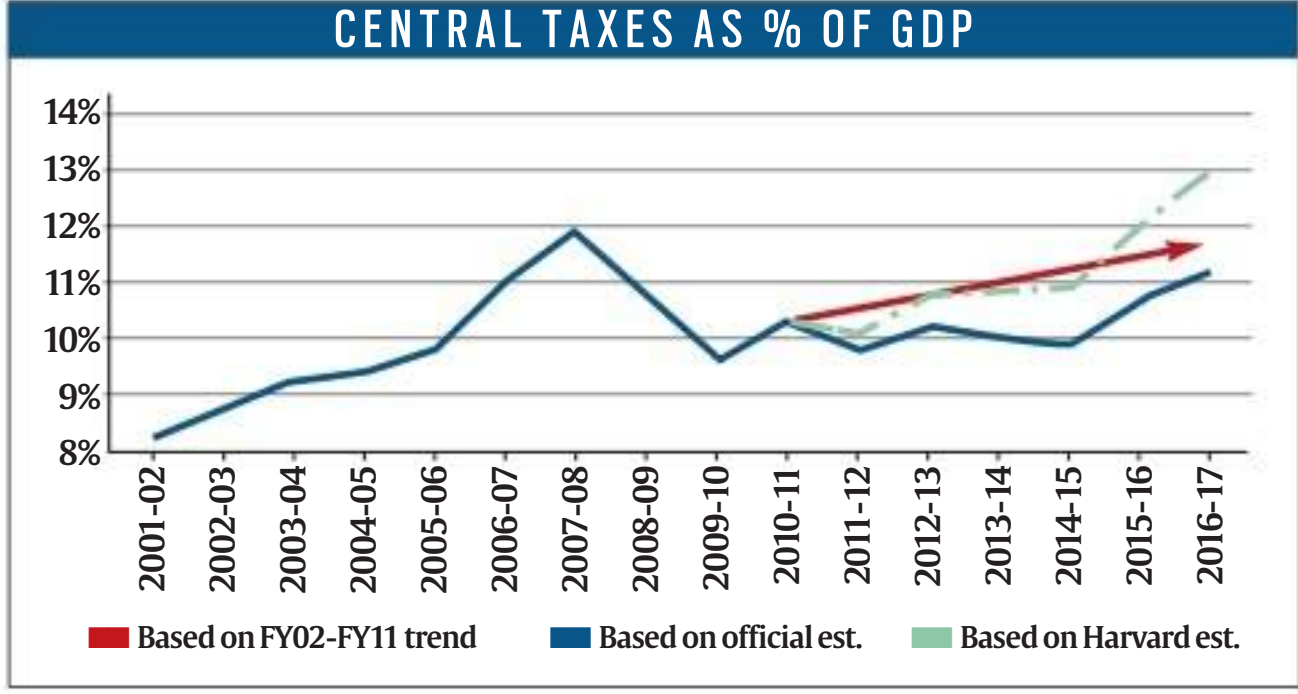
Subramanian's growth claims would imply a strange boost in tax to GDP ratio

FORMER CHIEF ECONOMIC Advisor Arvind Subramanian has released a working paper wherein he claims that the actual growth rate of the Indian economy has been overestimated by around 2.5 percentage points from 2011-12 to 2016-17: He has summarised his argument in these pages ('India's GDP growth: New evidence for fresh beginnings', IE, June 11). Instead of the official growth rate of around 7 per cent, actual growth was between 3.5 per cent and 5.5 per cent with a high statistical "confidence interval".

To arrive at these numbers, he looks at the correlation of growth with some "real indicators" such as two-wheeler and commercial vehicle sales, electricity, inflation-adjusted credit off-take, industrial indices and so on across different periods. He concludes that the economy in FY17 was "overstated by about 9-21 per cent" because of slower growth.

Similar real indicators have been used on the Chinese economy. Therefore, such an analysis on India, albeit a preliminary one, should be taken seriously and must be used as a springboard for further discussion. Moreover, the years under consideration cover both governments almost equally so this should not be taken as a partisan critique.

However, the critique is not without its flaws. Surprisingly, it does "not use tax indicators because of the major changes in direct and indirect taxes in the post-2011 period which render the tax-to-GDP relationship different and unstable, and hence make the indicators unreliable proxies for GDP growth." However, GST (indirect tax reform) came into effect on July 1, 2017 (or FY18 while our analysis stops at FY17) and no radical direct tax overhaul has been implemented since 2011.



Why could this omission be important? Because, the total tax to GDP ratio ("ratio" hereafter) would be unusually higher if the GDP since FY12 was to be reduced by 2.5 per cent every year (cumulatively). If we focus only on the central kitty to begin with, the ratio would be more than 13 per cent in FY17 based on the Harvard paper but based on official estimates it was a bit more than 11 per cent.

The official number is closer to the extrapolated trend from FY02 to FY11: This is important as over time one does expect a secular though gradual increase in the ratio as an emerging economy grows and formalises. Yet, if the economy grew at half the rate of earlier years — one should *ceteris paribus* — expect a significant fall in the ratio as tax buoyancy is sensitive to growth. But based on the Subramanian GDP estimates, our tax to GDP ratio has even crossed the records of the FY08

boom. Remember, taxes are real cash and no one I know is saying even tax figures have been fudged for around a decade.

As central tax numbers above contain a portion that is devolved to the states and since devolution changes due to finance commissions, etc, I conducted a similar exercise with total central and state taxes just to be sure. Again, the same results. The official ratio for FY12 to FY17 is in line with historical estimates, and is in fact a bit below the extrapolated trend based on FY02 to FY11. Subramanian's lower estimates for GDP would mean a 20 per cent ratio whereas the official is at 17 per cent, the trend suggests 18 per cent, and even the FY08 peak had not crossed 18 per cent. If growth really was so slow for around the first half of this decade, the ratio should be much lower.

None of this is, of course, the final word on the GDP debate. I am just raising some pertinent doubts about other valid doubts — even

the Subramanian paper acknowledges the need to double check its thesis by cross verifying production and consumption numbers. However, the big question remains: How does one square the circle of the official numbers suggesting stable and high growth for almost two decades, with the second half, roughly speaking, seeing a slowdown in many real non-government indicators? One hypothesis is an increase in efficiency or total factor productivity (TFP) over and above hard inputs such as capital. This could be due to technology and/or a more literate workforce as well as other factors.

We are selling fewer cars because thanks to Ola and Uber the same number of cars are being used more aggressively instead of lying idle. Blue collar workers have opportunities to work as "delivery boys" almost 24x7 as opposed to jobs where there was often large, though intermittent downtime. The spread of cheap smartphones and the internet is forcing middlemen everywhere to "shape up or ship out". Blue-collar real wages are up and often higher than entry-level white collar post-tax salaries. Farm mechanisation is proceeding despite agrarian distress. Some of it is caught in the numbers — not all of it, yet. And even if growth was overestimated, the extent suggested (150-350 basis points) does seem very high.

TFP is almost always measured as a "residual" — so I cannot further quantify my hypothesis here, but the tax to GDP "smell test" is very real and needs to be answered if the revisionist GDP estimates are to be considered genuinely robust.

The writer is a public markets investor

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### KATHUA JUSTICE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Healing a wound' (IE, June 12). Justice has been delivered for the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua, with a Punjab court awarding life terms to three men and five years' imprisonment to three others. Moral policing and limited avenues for social interactions between adult men and women have created an unhealthy sexual culture in India. Sexual predators are emboldened by a weak policing system. Recruiting more police personnel, improving infrastructure like forensic labs, disposing of cases faster, and making police stations and courts women and child-friendly will require significant public investment. But it is a price worth paying to ensure a safe and humane society.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

### MULTIPOLAR ERA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'India and Sino Russian alliance' (IE, June 11). The US, because of its military prowess and sound economy, has strangled many other economies by imposing unwarranted sanctions. Now, in the wake of a multipolar era, it is not advisable to continue the policy of "America first". Russia getting closer to China is a cause of concern for the global community in general and the US in particular. The US should realise that it needs to follow a pragmatic approach while dealing with the other superpowers now.

Kushal Gadkari, Vadodra

### WAR AND SPORT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Must've

### 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

been glove, but it's over now' (IE, June 12). The author is right in stating that war is too serious a business to be mixed with sports. However, there is nothing wrong in M S Dhoni wearing his military uniform for an award function at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The author may not be aware that Dhoni has undergone a basic para jump course to earn his para-wing: He took this risk when he was at the peak of his cricketering career. A nasty parachute injury could have permanently sealed his career. Incidentally, a commando dagger is a military insignia and not a para-military insignia as stated by the author.

H N Bhagwat, via email