



YESTERDAY I WAS A DOG. TODAY I'M A DOG.
TOMORROW I'LL PROBABLY STILL BE A DOG. SIGH!
THERE'S SO LITTLE HOPE FOR ADVANCEMENT.
— CHARLES M. SCHULZ

The Indian **EXPRESS**
FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

NOT JUST NUMBERS

PM is right, Opposition should stand up and be counted — but it's the government's job to help it do that

ON THE FIRST day of the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of the elephant in the House: The severely diminished space of the Opposition in Parliament. And the prime ministerial words were reassuring. Parties of the Opposition, he said, should not worry about their paltry numbers as every word of theirs was “valuable” for his government. An “active Opposition, an effective Opposition”, he said, “is a pre-requisite for parliamentary democracy” and expressed confidence that the spirit of bi-partisanship would trump and transcend the faultlines of “paksh” and “vipaksh”, government and Opposition. After a Lok Sabha election which saw the ruling NDA return to power with an overweening majority — the BJP alone has 303 seats in the 543-member House, and the NDA has 353, while the Congress falls three seats short of the number required to stake claim to the status of Leader of Opposition — the PM and his party will be held to his assurance of accommodation and the democratic spirit. It will, of course, be the Opposition's challenge to make itself heard in the BJP-dominated House. But the larger responsibility for the conduct of debate in a way that includes and respects all and not just the majority's views, lies with the government. The PM has done well to acknowledge that at the very outset of his second term.

The PM's assurance will be tested in a session in which controversial issues and contentious legislation may come up — be it the proposed switch to one-nation-one-election or the bill criminalising triple talaq that failed to become law in the preceding Modi regime. But it is also shadowed by the way Parliament functioned, or failed to, in the last five years. As the Congress has been quick to point out, the 16th Lok Sabha saw the government take the ordinance route all too often, evidently to bypass questions and debate, instead of treating it as an emergency measure. Key bills were pushed through without according them the necessary and desirable legislative scrutiny through committees. The way in which the government with a decisive mandate relegated the Opposition inside Parliament, while remaining in what seemed to be permanent electoral campaign mode outside it, has led to a disbelief in its commitment to listen to the political opponent, not just have its own way. It will be the government's task, most of all, to reach out, and address that disbelief. It must ensure that the norms of constitutional democracy, not the brute dead-ends of majoritarianism, prevail.

For the Opposition, an uphill journey begins now. It cannot just depend on the government's generosity or scruple. It will be watched for how it pools its strengths, how well or poorly it marshals its resources and uses its opportunities to influence legislation and hold the government to account.

A FAILING STATE

The death of children in Muzaffarpur due to AES, a preventable disease, shows that malnutrition needs to be addressed urgently

MORE THAN 100 children in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district have died of acute encephalitis syndrome (AES), with the state's medical authorities initially blaming the deaths on the heat wave, hypoglycemia (sudden drop in blood sugar levels) and lack of awareness. Now, belatedly, they have acknowledged the two most critical reasons for the deaths — malnutrition and the inadequacy of primary health centres (PHCs).

The state government's lack of preparedness is indefensible. AES has struck Muzaffarpur with regularity in the summers since 1995. The disease claimed nearly 1,000 children between 2010 and 2014. It seemed to have become less virulent after 2014. At the same time, however, a growing body of literature on AES underlined that the medical authorities had no room for complacency. For example, a 2014 study by researchers from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta in the US showed how a combination of factors, unique to Muzaffarpur, sharpened the vulnerability of its children to the disease. The district is a major litchi-growing region and the study found that toxins present in the fruit were a source of AES. But the fruit was a triggering factor only in the case of children who had not received proper nutrition, the study reported. It said that the toxins in the fruit assume lethal proportions when a poorly-nourished child eats litchis during the day and then goes to sleep without a proper meal. The links between the fruit and AES have been debated but most researchers agree that the disease affects only under-nourished children. However, the state government has not taken the cue from medical research. It does not have a special nutrition programme for AES-prone areas.

Medical literature has also shown that AES can be contained if the child is administered dextrose within four hours of the onset of symptoms. But every AES outbreak in the past 10 years has shown that Muzaffarpur's PHCs — the first point of healthcare for most AES patients — are ill-equipped to deal with the disease. Most of them do not have glycometers to monitor blood sugar levels. The Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital, the designated hospital in Muzaffarpur to deal with the disease, does not have a virology lab or adequate number of paediatric beds. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has assured that these shortcomings will be remedied urgently. The state government has also issued similar assurances. Both the Centre and the state will be watched in how they deal with an eminently-preventable disease.

PUPPY EYES

It turns out that dogs have evolved to manipulate human emotions. Dog-owners know it doesn't matter

IT'S ALL IN the eyes. They look up at you, imploring you to part with the tiniest morsel from your plate, a scrap really. Or they can apologise — express guilt and contrition — with just a twitch of the brow, a muzzle pointed downwards. Move over Mata Hari, the greatest manipulator of human beings has been our best friend. Only the truly heartless — or the pathologically psychopathic — can maintain their resolve against “the look” that a canine throws at you at the dinner table, or after having chewed through an over-priced pair of patent leather shoes. But there is now consolation for those who have been defeated by the cuteness of their puppies. Research at the Centre for Comparative and Evolutionary Psychology at the University of Portsmouth has proven that millennia of evolution have ensured that the very biology of dogs makes us vulnerable to their expressions. As wolves began to be domesticated by early humans, dogs developed a new forehead muscle — the levator anguli oculi medialis (LAOM). In a process that relies on “survival of the fittest”, the LAOM allowed dogs to generate facial expressions that human beings are particularly susceptible to, and which generate feelings of protectiveness and affection. In doing so, our canine companions have ensured that they are fed and showered with affection.

The question is whether the LAOM is just a physical advantage, or whether, as dog-owners claim, their furry friends are genuinely capable of emotional attachment. Anyone who has returned home from work to the excitable affection of their best friend knows the answer. And as manipulations go, things can be far worse. After all, it's not like we are talking about cats.



THOMAS ABRAHAM

HONG KONG IS like a pressure cooker on a stove, hissing steam when the temperature from China rises, and subsiding when the powers that be lower the flame. Last week, over a million protestors, many young, took to the streets to protest a new law that would allow people from Hong Kong to be extradited to China, a move that would threaten critics of the Chinese regime who have till recently found relatively safe haven in Hong Kong. After clashes between the police and protestors, the head of the Hong Kong government, Carrie Lam, was forced to temporarily shelve the extradition law.

The current wave of protests will perhaps gradually die down, but there is little doubt that new explosions are going to occur in the future, just as they have, periodically, over the last decade.

At the heart of the discontent in Hong Kong lies the peculiar arrangement worked out in the 1980s between the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and China's strongman, Deng Xiaoping, for the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty after 150 years of British colonial rule. In order to calm British as well as Hong Kong anxieties about the city's future, Deng propounded the so-called “one country two systems” formula, under which Hong Kong, though part of China, would enjoy a high degree of autonomy and retain the economic and administrative structures that the British had bequeathed, including western liberal freedoms of thought, expression, an independent judiciary, and a liberal capitalist market system. This autonomy is to last till 2047, for 50 years after the British departure in 1997.

At the time he propounded it, “one country two systems” was hailed as another master stroke of Deng Xiaoping's fabled pragmatism: It ensured Hong Kong's return to the motherland after more than a century of British occupation, while at the same time showing to the world a new, flexible China, shorn of the rigidities of the Maoist era.

But there are contradictions within this arrangement, that both Hong Kong and the

Hong Kong has always seen itself as a westernised global city, open to the rest of the world, a place where people can go about their daily lives protected by the rule of law. In the eyes of most Hong Kongers, the biggest threat to the city's future comes from its slow, creeping, absorption into the larger fabric of Communist China. It is particularly telling that the generation that was born and grew up in Hong Kong after the British left, a generation that has known only Chinese rule under one-country-two-systems, is at the forefront of the protests against Hong Kong's further integration with China.

Chinese government have found hard to resolve.

Take the incident that sparked the latest troubles: An extradition law that would allow Hong Kong to send wanted people back to China. The fact that Hong Kong, a Chinese city, needs to have an extradition arrangement with the rest of China, is an indication of Hong Kong's autonomy. But it is also bound to cause friction. From the Chinese point of view, if Hong Kong is part of China, then it is necessary to have a mechanism whereby people fleeing from the Chinese authorities should not be able to find safe haven in Hong Kong. Otherwise, what is the point of saying that Hong Kong is part of China?

But those in Hong Kong feel differently. In the 22 years since the hand-over, suspicion of China has increased, and if there is one thing that unites the city, it is the desire to preserve its British era institutions and Hong Kong's unique way of life, and not become “just another Chinese city.”

Hong Kong has always seen itself as a westernised global city, open to the rest of the world, a place where people can go about their daily lives protected by the rule of law. In the eyes of most Hong Kongers, the biggest threat to the city's future comes from its slow, creeping, absorption into the larger fabric of Communist China.

It is particularly telling that the generation that was born and grew up in Hong Kong after the British left, a generation that has known only Chinese rule under one-country-two-systems, is at the forefront of the protests against Hong Kong's further integration with China. China's leaders probably felt in 1997 that with the passing of time, a new generation would be born in Hong Kong that would be increasingly comfortable with being part of China. Instead, the opposite seems to have happened. Hong Kong's young look outward to the rest of the world, rather than inward to China, and see liberal democracy, rather than communist rule, as a political ideal to aspire to.

China had earlier tried to get the Hong

Kong government to reform the school education system to instil greater “patriotism” and Chinese “national spirit” among the young. But this only served to spark the first big popular protest in Hong Kong in recent times, forcing the government to shelve plans for patriotic education.

The rising discontent in Hong Kong will be cause for unease in China. Hong Kong's autonomy under the 1997 agreement formally ends in 2047, and by default, the city will become like any other Chinese city. But as new generations of Hong Kongers drift further away from the Chinese motherland, both culturally and politically, the worry in Beijing must be that it will have to contend with an increasingly ungovernable city on its southern coast.

The Chinese Communist Party has traditionally dealt with unrest with a heavy hand, as the violent crackdown on pro-democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 showed. If Hong Kong was any other Chinese city, the response from Beijing would have been harsh. The leaders of the agitation would be thrown into jail for long periods of time, and the protestors would be brutally dispersed.

But this is not an option that China can use in Hong Kong, an international city where events occur under the full glare of the media. Heavy handed repression will set back China's aim of becoming a global leader by several decades.

Repression is not an option, and persuasion to become “more patriotic” has not worked either. The sensible option is to give Hong Kong greater space to run its own affairs, rather than trying to integrate it more closely. But this goes against the grain of all that the Chinese Communist Party has stood for. So there is a real danger that the Hong Kong pressure cooker will reach a point where an explosion becomes inevitable.

The writer, a former editor of The South China Morning Post in Hong Kong, is now based in Bengaluru



CHAKSHU ROY

A WATCHFUL PARLIAMENT forms the foundation of a well-functioning democracy. The presiding officers of Parliament are the key to securing the effectiveness of this institution. The MPs look to them to facilitate debate, protect their rights and uphold the dignity of Parliament. On Wednesday, Lok Sabha MPs are set to elect one amongst themselves, to play the pivotal role of the presiding officer for the 17th Lok Sabha.

The primary challenge before the new Speaker will be to conduct the proceedings of the Lok Sabha free from disruptions. To do so, the Speaker will have to earn the trust of the Members of Parliament: One way to earn the trust of MPs will be by being neutral, both in practice and perception while running the House.

Securing the neutrality of the Speaker is a question that experts in India have been grappling with for 60-plus years. In Britain, the promise of continuity in office for many terms is used to ensure the Speaker's impartiality. By convention, political parties (usually) do not field a candidate against the Speaker at the time of general elections. And the Speaker can continue in office, until deciding otherwise. By convention, the Speaker also gives up the membership of his/her political party.

The first Speaker of the Lok Sabha, G V Mavalankar, was aware that the British convention for securing the neutrality of the Speaker might not be an easy sell in the nascent years of our democracy. In his 1952 ac-

VOICE OF INCLUSION

Speakers must rise above party loyalties, with Constitution as their guiding light

Other than the election of Mavalankar, every other Lok Sabha Speaker has been elected unanimously. After the election, the Speaker is escorted to her/ his chair by the leaders of both the ruling and opposition party. These conventions are meant to reflect that after her/ his election, the Speaker belongs to the entire House. For the next five years, all her/ his actions will be weighed on the scale of neutrality.

ceptance speech as Speaker of the first Lok Sabha, he said: “We have yet to evolve political parties and healthy conventions about Speakership, the principle of which is that, once a Speaker he is not opposed by any party in the matter of his election, whether in the constituency or in the House, so long as he wishes to continue as Speaker.” He went on to say, “to expect the Speaker to be out of politics altogether without the corresponding convention is perhaps entertaining contradictory expectations.”

In 1951 and 1953, the Conference of Presiding Officers of legislatures in India passed a resolution for the adoption of the British Convention. Mavalankar tried to create a consensus among political parties on adopting this British convention but was unable to make much headway. The 1954 decision of the Working Committee of Congress in response to Mavalankar's attempts sealed the fate of the issue. It stated, “The Working Committee considered Shri G V Mavalankar's letter for establishing a convention for the uncontested election of Speakers and felt that this was not a feasible proposition for the present in view of other political parties being involved in the question.”

With no security in the continuity of office, the Speaker is dependent on his or her political party for reelection. This makes the Speaker susceptible to pulls and pressures from her/ his political party in the conduct of the proceedings of the Lok Sabha.

Jawaharlal Nehru alluded to this aspect of the Speaker's responsibility in 1948. At the unveiling of the portrait of Vithalbhai Patel, he said: “We would like the distinguished occupant of this chair now and always to guard the freedom and liberty of those from every possible danger, even from the danger of an executive incursion. There is always that danger even from a National Government — that it may choose to ride roughshod over the opinions of a minority, and it is here that the Speaker comes in to protect each single member, or each single group from any such unjust activity by a dominant group or a dominant government.”

Other than the election of Mavalankar, every other Lok Sabha Speaker has been elected unanimously. After the election, the Speaker is escorted to her/ his chair by the leaders of both the ruling and opposition party. These conventions are meant to reflect that after her/ his election, the Speaker belongs to the entire House. For the next five years, all her/ his actions will be weighed on the scale of neutrality. She/ he will have to be vigilant to defend the sanctity of the institution and also have the vision to strengthen it. In this challenging journey, her/ his guiding light will be the Constitution and the rules of procedure of Lok Sabha.

The writer is head of outreach, PRS Legislative Research



JUNE 19, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SINO-SOVIET EQUATION
CHINESE LEADER HUA Guofeng (Hua Kuofeng) said that prospects for negotiations with the Soviet Union on improving relations depend on whether the Soviet government makes a substantive change in its position. Hua told the National People's Congress that the Soviet government had agreed to hold negotiations, but asked: “Did this change the essence of the matter?”. China has accused the Soviet Union repeatedly of wanting to subjugate China and using Vietnam to set up a Soviet outpost in South-East Asia.

SALT II TREATY
SITTING AT A gilded palace table, the US pres-

ident, Jimmy Carter, and the Soviet president, Leonid Brezhnev, signed the SALT II treaty. Carter termed it a victory for peace but warned that “the threat of a nuclear holocaust still hangs over us.” Brezhnev declared: “We are helping to defend the most sacred right of every man — the right to live.” Earlier, the two presidents signed the treaty texts in Russian and English, and then got up and kissed each other on both cheeks. The crowd applauded with enthusiasm.

WHAT TO IMPORT
THE MINISTER FOR Commerce and Civil Supplies, Mohan Dharia, said that the government would import the essential com-

modities included for the public distribution scheme, wherever necessary, to ensure its smooth functioning. Under the scheme, to be launched from July 1, 13 items have been selected for distribution including wheat, wheat products, rice, coarse grains, processed oils, kerosene, controlled cloth, common varieties of cheap cloth, matches, toilet soaps and washing soaps, exercise books, tea and coffee. Dharia said that the real emphasis of the scheme should be viewed from the fact that it would be a production-cum-distribution scheme. Production of all the items to be distributed would be ensured before their distribution is undertaken by public distribution outlets.

Once upon a time, a nation

The ground for the 2019 election outcome was prepared in advance. Story-telling took precedence over reality and what ails the nation faded into the background



NAYANTARA SAHGAL

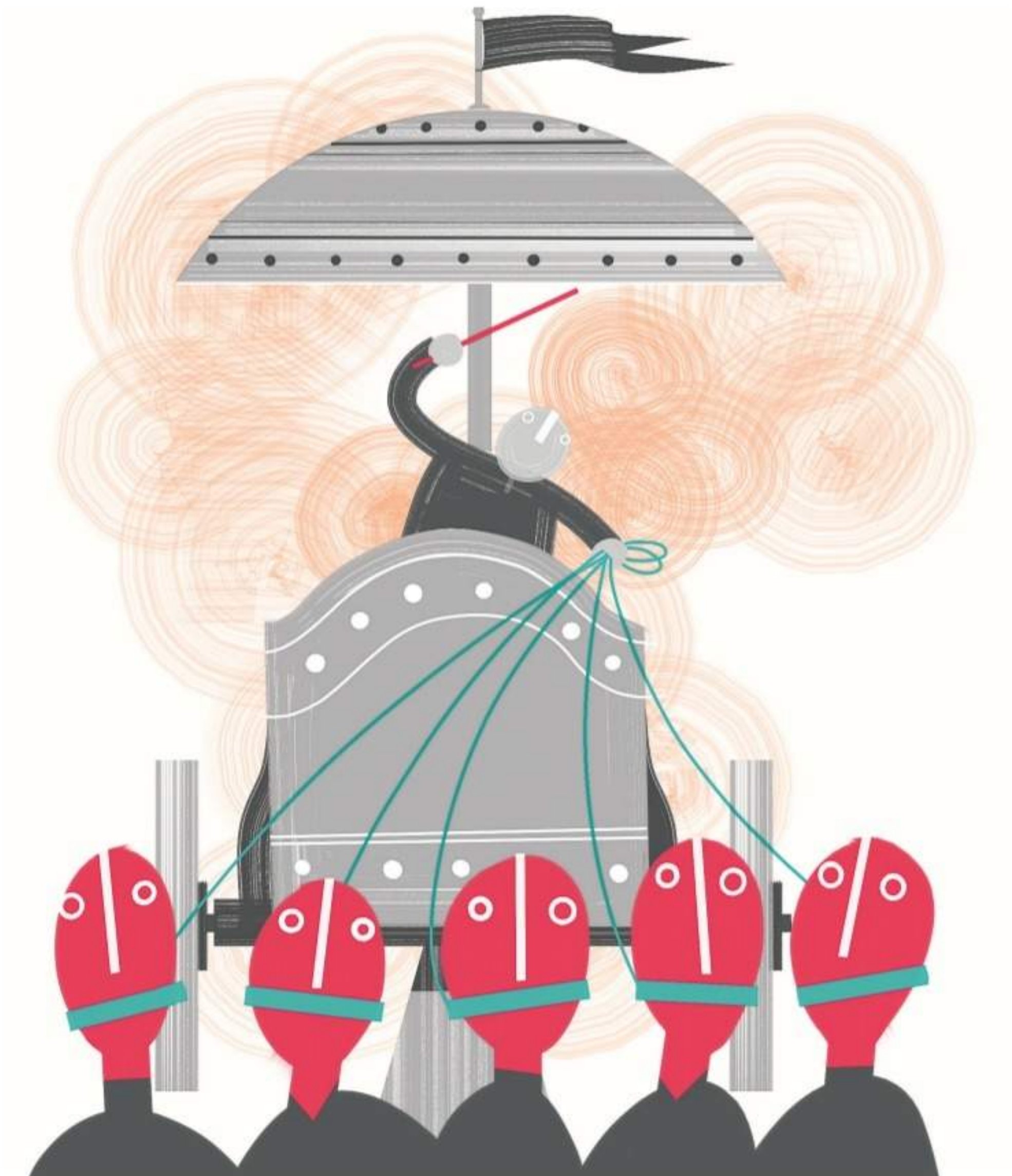
NOW THAT THE dust has settled on India's most hard-fought national election, and it has been hailed as a spectacular democratic victory, it is possible to take a quiet look at the election result. It was no surprise to me for I had not only expected it but realised it could have gone no other way. I had the help of literature in seeing it as a story with only one possible ending. My favourite novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is titled *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. With the ending already known, the novel goes backward to unravel the path that makes it inevitable. The 2019 election has been the same kind of fascinating exercise whose outcome could not have been otherwise, given the precise path that was taken to achieve it.

The other help I had in foreseeing the result came from a philosophy professor. As Marquez's novel spells out the sequence of events that lead inevitably to the "death foretold" in his story, a philosophy professor at Yale University, Jason Stanley, has made a study of the swing to right-wing extremism and the resulting breakdown of democracy in countries across the world. He has found that there is a standard formula by which democracy is broken down and a climate of intolerance built up in its place in which hatred, violence and criminal behaviour become acceptable to people. On this prepared ground, an ideology such as fascism, or any other similar doctrine, takes over unopposed. The professor has found this formula common to all breakdowns of democracy wherever they have occurred or are now occurring, and he spells it out in two books: *How Propaganda Works* and *How Fascism Works*.

To begin with, the majority community is made to feel threatened and victimised by minority groups. Once this seed is planted, it breeds resentment, anger, and a mood of vengeance mounting to hysteria against those named as offenders. They are classed as outsiders (to the religion and culture of the majority) and usurpers who are preying upon the rights and privileges of the dominant community. The definition of outsider covers socialists, communists and atheists, and all differences of opinion from the ruling view. These citizens, branded anti-national, are therefore to be feared as enemies of the state. Fear is spread by cutting out all rational argument and appealing to the emotions for an emotional arousal. The next step is then taken.

Step two warns that the nation is in danger from the designs of its internal and external enemies. Conspiracy theories are manufactured to prove the point. Citizens labelled anti-national are accused of conspiring against the state. The focus is on defending the nation from its enemies. In this atmosphere, the need of the hour is a "strong" militant leader who alone can protect the country and the people. The nation's leader is glorified. The military takes centrestage and pride of place alongside him and shares his glory.

In this wholesale absence of facts, the disappearance of truth is complete. Democracy fights for survival and loses. Long held values — freedom of expression, equality, fraternity, human rights — are discarded as being of no use. In fact, they are seen as a hindrance in dealing with the dangers the nation faces. Authority and hierarchy take their place. The hierarchy can be ethnic, or religious, or gender-based. One



CR Sasikumar

ethnic group gets placed over others, one religion over others, men over women. And the yawning vacuum, where truth used to be, is filled by myth. Fantasy now substitutes as reality. In Stanley's words, the myth that replaces reality is one "of a glorious by-gone era, where the nation was supposedly ethnically or religiously pure, and rural patriarchal values reigned supreme". To this description, I am adding "racially pure" since racial purity has loomed large in right-wing extremism. In a chilling conclusion Stanley adds, "History shows that such propaganda licenses extreme brutality".

The standard formula he describes has an uncanny resemblance to the path India has followed since 2014, including the "extreme brutality" the path licenses. Writers, artists, students, teachers and journalists have been punished for their independent views. Four famous writers have been assassinated. On television, we have seen the torture and murder of workers by "gau rakshaks" and other armed vigilante mobs, with the police and public standing by. We have heard these crimes being justified on the grounds that they were committed by patriots against the nation's enemies. In some cases, alleged acts of terror have been rewarded, as recently with a seat in Parliament. Such behaviour towards fellow citizens, and brutality against them, doesn't just happen. It is taught. It is the end result of the indoctrination that has taken place.

From what we have seen here, it is clear that the formula works and that story-telling takes precedence over reality. Unemployment, rural and urban distress, well-documented corruption and whatever ails the nation fade into the background. They are no match for the story-teller's fine art of invention; no match for the mood of involvement, expectation and enthrallment a story builds up in its readers/listeners as it unfolds; and no match for the ageless allure of 'Once Upon a Time'. Those who master the art of story-telling create the mood of their choice — as music and all forms of art also do in their different artistic mediums.

The formula has been faithfully followed in other respects. In a democracy the military stays out of politics and out of the public eye, and war is not celebrated. The nation's leader is not held in awe. He is held accountable. He is required to face the press and answer questions. The leader of a democracy who does not uphold and nurture this democratic tradition, shows himself to be above it, as has been evident here.

From what we have seen here, it is clear that the formula works and that story-telling takes precedence over reality. Unemployment, rural and urban distress, well-documented corruption and whatever ails the nation fade into the background. They are no match for the story-teller's fine art of invention; no match for the mood of involvement, expectation and enthrallment a story builds up in its readers/listeners as it unfolds; and no match for the ageless allure of "once upon a time". Those who master the art of story-telling create the mood of their choice — as music and all forms of art also do in their different artistic mediums.

Could this be why art and literature are deemed dangerous and why they must be controlled to ensure that they create the mood a regime desires and no other?

Sahgal is a novelist and a commentator. Her latest work of fiction is *The Fate of Butterflies*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Previously apolitical sections of Hong Kong society have been radicalised and are making sure they are heard.

— THE GUARDIAN

The general's job

With Pakistan's economy in dire straits and rising political tensions, the 'internal security' expertise of the new ISI chief could come into play



TILAK DEVASHER

LT GENERAL FAIZ Hameed is the third ISI chief appointed by Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. Soon after becoming chief on November 26, 2016, Bajwa had appointed Lt General Naveed Mukhtar (Armoured Corps) as the ISI Chief on December 11, 2016, in place of Lt General Rizwan Akhtar (Frontier Force), who was shifted out prematurely.

Following Mukhtar's retirement in October 2018, Lt Gen Asim Munir (Frontier Force) was appointed DG ISI. Barely eight months into his tenure, Munir has been shifted out as Corps Commander Gujranwala. Hameed has been appointed as DG ISI in his stead. Both Hameed and General Bajwa are from the Baloch regiment. Like Munir, who had headed military intelligence, Hameed too has intelligence experience, having headed the internal security wing of the ISI.

Bajwa had hand-picked Munir as DG ISI. He had served as Force Commander Northern Areas (FCNA) when Bajwa was Corps Commander X Corps. To understand the reasons for the sudden curtailment of his tenure, several dots, both external and internal, need to be connected.

The Pulwama terror strike in February 2019 took place when Munir was DG ISI. There is a realisation in Pakistan and in the international community that the incident could have precipitated a major clash between India and Pakistan. Following the Balakot air strike, there is recognition of the fact that India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will not turn the other cheek but take the battle into Pakistan. The doctrine of pre-emption articulated by the Indian foreign secretary also makes it more likely that India will hit back in the future too. This view has been bolstered with PM Modi's massive victory in the recently-concluded elections. With a renewed and larger mandate, PM Modi will be in a stronger position to retaliate against any adventurism indulged in by Pakistan.

Against this backdrop, according to a report in this newspaper, Pakistan is said to have shared information on a possible terrorist attack in Pulwama district, probably near Awantipora using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED). The attack is supposedly to avenge the killing of Zakir Musa in the Tral area by Indian security forces last month. Musa had broken away from the Hizbul Mujahideen in May 2017 and launched and headed an al Qaeda affiliate called Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind.

Pakistan sharing such information with India is intriguing. It could either be a case of ensuring that it is not blamed in case of an attack; or since it is an al Qaeda linked group, Pakistan is not really concerned if

the attack was foiled. The latter is difficult to believe since any violence in Kashmir is seen positively in Pakistan.

At this stage, another major terrorist attack in India does not suit Pakistan. Given how Pulwama could have led to disaster and the fact that the US, Saudi Arabia and China had prevailed upon Pakistan to de-escalate the crisis by releasing the captured Indian pilot, it is clear that even Pakistan's remaining friends will not look kindly at a similar kind of attack. Hence, the information would have been reluctantly shared with India.

It is quite likely, therefore, that Munir is being held responsible for not keeping the jihadi flock in control and potentially putting Pakistan in grave danger. Despite all its bluster and bravado, Pakistan is not looking for a clash with India at this stage. Its plate is already full with a fragile economy desperately in need of bailouts, pressures from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), internal unrest in the Pashtun areas, among other issues. The last thing it would want at this juncture is giving India a pretext to retaliate again with deep strikes inside its territory.

There are also important internal developments that Lt General Hameed may be able to handle better. He played an important role in defusing the 2017 Faizabad dharna of the Barelvi outfit, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). He was also instrumental in ensuring Imran Khan's "victory" in the July 2018 elections. With the economy in dire straits and opposition parties gearing up to destabilise the government, the internal "security" expertise of the new DG ISI could come in very handy to ensure the health of the Imran Khan government.

Another critical issue is the clumsy manner in which the Pashtun protests have been dealt with. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) has been growing in strength and its call to end violence and harassment in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has been getting traction among the Pashtuns in Pakistan. The army sees its latest slogan, *lar-o-bar yaw Afghan* — the spectre of the merging of Pakistani Pashtun (lar) with their Afghan brethren (bar) within a so-called Greater Afghanistan — as indicative of secessionist tendencies. Given that about 20 per cent of the Pakistan army consists of Pashtuns, the PTM could pose a clear and present danger.

Lt General Hameed's task is cut out. He has to ensure that things do not get out of control internally in Pakistan. However, as far as India is concerned, the lull — if one can call it that — would only be temporary till the situation cools down. Once international pressure eases, the Pakistan economy is under an IMF programme and the threat of being blacklisted by the FATF recedes, it will be back to business as usual for the new DG ISI.

Devasher is the author of *Pakistan: Courting the Abyss* and *Pakistan: At the Helm. He is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India and is currently member, National Security Advisory Board and consultant, Vivekananda International Foundation*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FOCUS ON QUALITY

THIS REFERS to the editorial, 'Search for cure' (IE, June 18). Expecting more empathy from overstressed is asking for too much. The root cause of the troubled doctor-patient relationship is the skewed doctor- patient ratio. This is exacerbated by crumbling infrastructure in our hospitals. It appears that the aim of hospitals is to attend to the ever growing number of patients without focusing on the quality of treatment. State run hospitals require radical reform.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

A CASH-LITE ECONOMY

THIS REFERS to the report, 'Digital transactions set to rise four times by 2021' (IE, June 17). Digital payment channels like mobile banking, UPI and IMPS are comparatively safe and convenient. The use of UPI is gaining momentum because it leads immediate settlement of funds round the clock. More PoS terminals will be the game changer in a building "cash-lite economy".

Amiyavrat Kumar, Navi Mumbai

CLEAN THE ROT

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Case for compassion' (IE, June 17). Violence upon doctors cannot be seen simplistically. It is a result of factors such as inadequate healthcare facilities in public hospitals, lack of compassion from doctors, over-treatment and under treatment of poor patients. These issues require attention in order to improve the doctor-patient relationship.

Dilip Kumar Duta, Midnapore

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

SPACE MATTERS

THIS REFERS to the editorial, 'A home in space' (IE June 15). ISRO's has announced its ambitions plans to build a space station. This comes at a time when the NASA's ISS is set to retire by 2028. While some may consider the project as too expensive, we must remember that Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme, had said that while the world may ridicule the space ambitions of a third world country, we must focus on building and developing a robust space programme.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

COMMUNAL MINORITIES

IN RESPONSE to the call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure his government has "Sabka Vishwas" some Muslim leaders have written an open letter appreciating the PM's initiative with a rider— undertake more "Confidence Building Measures" (CBMs). The editorial in *Organiser* says that though there is an absence of consensus about this initiative within the Muslim community, as many pessimists have raised red flags, CBMs must be considered at the community level, rather than just as a matter for the government. It claims that it is not that the Modi government did not try to reach out to all sections in the first term. The problem lies somewhere else, and addressing it goes beyond mere economic or educational benefits.

The editorial theorises that the entire division of majority and minority is based on flawed considerations and is a creation of the colonial rulers. "Barring Muslims and to some extent Christians, no religious commu-

nity feels insecure or threatened in Bharat. The so-called majority has many sects, and still, they share a common worldview of acceptance and respect for all. The mindset of being erstwhile rulers and the fundamental belief that our 'Truth' revealed by certain Prophet or Book is the only and ultimate truth, and everyone has to follow the same are at the root of insecurities (sic)," says the editorial.

It adds that recently, many incidents of heinous crimes like child rapes are getting communalised. "Do we need to bring in religion either of a perpetrator or a victim in the case of a heinous crime? There are many people from the so-called majority who raise the voice against such criminal mindsets, how many of the so-called minorities, especially Muslims have raised voice against the brutal rapes during the pious month of Ramzan? How many columns could we see against the attack on the resident doctors in West Bengal?" it asks.

YOGA IS MAGIC

AS INTERNATIONAL Yoga Day approaches, *Organiser* and *Panchjanya* have a series of articles about Yoga and its benefits. An article in *Organiser* says that "Hindutva is the best choice for humanity, it's a gift from India, to India and the world, and yoga marries so well

with Hindutva". The article says that yoga truly is magic for the mind, body and soul and it aligns all these together so your body and thought are in harmony. The article claims that yoga is growing rapidly in the US and adds that the yoga industry in 2012 was \$6.9 billion and by 2020 it will reach \$11.56 billion. "Sadly, there are a lot of certified teachers in the USA who just get their certificate because it is a money making generator. They are missing out of the core fundamentals of the spirituality and magic of yoga," asserts the article.

Another article says that in "vedic and yogic thought, consciousness is the supreme reality, not matter, energy or mind... Consciousness is all-pervasive like space, self-effulgent like light, uniting everything in the universe in the highest awareness and bliss as the Self of all." It also says that the yogic science of consciousness is India's greatest contribution to human knowledge and probably the most important science we have as a species because "it alone grants true knowledge of the Infinite and Eternal". Dharmic education, it claims, requires a yogic approach.

IMRAN'S NIGHTMARE

AN OPINION article in *Organiser* claims that the "biggest nightmare" for Pakistan's prime

minister, Imran Khan, is the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — a Paris-based inter-governmental body that sets standards and promotes effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terror financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. It says that on the basis of its assessments, the institution puts rogue nations on the "Grey List" and very serious cases on the "Black List". Pakistan was placed on the Grey List in 2018.

The article claims that Pakistan is continuing with attempts to place itself on a high moral pedestal in the global arena, not realising that the international community is worried about the impact of the breeding of violence in Pakistan. The best option for Pakistan, according to the article, is to make an honest effort to tackle terrorism and get on the right side of the global order, which includes India. The article adds that there is only one factor that is hindering Pakistan from taking this path — the need to feed terrorism in Kashmir. "It is reluctant to touch many many terrorist organisations operating on its soil that deal with Kashmir. It now remains to be seen if Pakistan can read the writing on the wall and mend its ways before it is too late," the article asserts.

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

