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TELLING NUMBERS

Public spending on health: Jammu & Kashmir, Assam lead

JAMMU AND Kashmir and Assam spent the largest fraction of their Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) on public health, according to National Health Accounts Estimates 2015-16, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare told Parliament last week.

The share of Government Health Expenditure (GHE) in the GSDPs of J&K and Assam were 1.7% and 1.5% respectively, the data show. Haryana and Maharashtra are towards the lower end of the table, having spent 0.6% and 0.7% of their GSDPs on health respectively.

In his reply to questions by Su. Thirunavukkarasar of the Congress, and Rajiv Ranjan Singh and Kaushalendra Kumar of the JD(U), Minister of State Ashwini Kumar Choubey said the National Health Policy of 2017 envisaged "increasing state sector health spending to more than 8% of their budget by 2020".

The NITI Aayog's Three Year Action



Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20' calls for a significant increase in government expenditure on public health "to cover screenings for the entire population, active case detection, and disease surveillance from the private sector".

It also envisions the mainstreaming of "evidence-based preventive health interventions" such as breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding during up to the age of two through adequate budgetary allocations and national level action plans.

GOVERNMENT HEALTH EXPENDITURE (GHE) AS %AGE OF GSDP

MOST		LEAST	
Jammu and Kashmir	1.7	Haryana	0.6
Assam	1.5	Maharashtra	0.7
Himachal Pradesh	1.4	Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu	0.8
Uttar Pradesh	1.3	Telangana, Uttarakhand	0.9
Bihar, Rajasthan	1.2	Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Odisha	1

Source: National Health Accounts Estimates 2015-16

THIS WORD MEANS

TIANGONG-2

China's decommissioned manned space station

TIANGONG-2 WAS a manned Chinese space station that was destroyed upon its controlled re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean on July 19. Tiangong-2 was retired from service after it had completed its experiments in space.

Tiangong-2 was 10.4 metres long and 3.35 metres wide at its widest point, and weighed 8.6 metric tonnes. It was launched on September 15, 2016 and, in late 2016, hosted two Chinese astronauts for 30 days in what was China's longest manned space mission so far.

The recently decommissioned space lab followed the Tiangong-1, China's first space station, which crashed into the southern Pacific Ocean on April 1, 2018 after Chinese scientists lost control of the spacecraft in March 2016. China had launched Tiangong-1 in 2011 as proof-of-concept of technologies for future stations. The lab was visited by two teams of Chinese astronauts for 11 days and 13 days respectively.

Unlike Tiangong-1, scientists were always in control of Tiangong-2. The space lab, which China had never intended to be a permanent post in space, was visited by an uncrewed mission in April 2017. The mission refuelled the station, tested



The Tiangong-2 space station. China Manned Space Engineering Office via The NYT

out a new spacecraft, and conducted some "robotic demonstrations". Tiangong means "Heavenly Palace".

Most of Tiangong-2 burnt up in the atmosphere, and the remaining debris fell near Point Nemo, the most remote location on Earth, which is so far from land that its nearest neighbours are often astronauts in space. China expects to complete its space station, Tianhe, which will be able to host three astronauts for long durations, around 2022.

MEHR GILL

SIMPLY PUT

Reading Trump's Kashmir offer

There is a history of the US seeking to mediate between India and Pakistan. But India has always thwarted these efforts — or ensured the US acts on New Delhi's terms. What could be on Donald Trump's mind?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, JULY 23

WITH THE visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan by his side, US President Donald Trump said Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked him to mediate on Kashmir, and that he "would love to help".

Trump's claim has since been rebutted by Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Raveesh Kumar and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. India has reiterated its longstanding position that there is no room for mediation in Kashmir or on any other India-Pakistan issue and that all outstanding matters between the two countries would be resolved through bilateral dialogue — but only when Pakistan ends cross-border terrorism in India.

India then, has all but called President Trump a liar. How this impacts on the present uneven and unpredictable relations with the United States remains to be seen. The response from both sides may well be to bury the episode quietly and move ahead.

Hours after Trump's statement, the State Department tweeted to control the damage: "While Kashmir is a bilateral issue for both parties to discuss, the Trump administration welcomes Pakistan and India sitting down and the United States stands ready to assist."

US Congressmen on both sides of the political divide were reported to have "reiterated support for the longstanding US position on the Kashmir dispute", and criticised Trump's "amateurish and embarrassing mistake".

Why India insists on bilateralism with Pakistan

The Indian position has historically stemmed from its mistrust of outsiders meddling in its internal affairs, the strongly felt need to protect its secular nationhood project, and suspicion that mediators viewed Kashmir through Pakistani eyes.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who took Pakistan's invasion in 1947 to the United Nations, was quick to realise his mistake. The UN missions flowing from the resolutions, including the Dixon Mission, which led to the Dixon Plan of 1950 for partition of some areas of Jammu & Kashmir between India and Pakistan (Ladakh to India, PoK and Northern Areas to Pakistan, with Jammu divided between the two), plus a plebiscite in the Valley, strengthened India's determination to shut the door on international mediation. (See A G Noorani on Dixon Plan, *Frontline*, October 12-25, 2002)

The framework for bilateral resolution of problems between India and Pakistan was written into the 1972 Simla Agreement and reiterated 27 years later in the Lahore Declaration. Nonetheless, Pakistan has continued to view the "internationalisation" of the Kashmir issue as its best bet towards reversing J&K's accession to India, and has used every global forum to criticise India's "illegal occupation" of Kashmir.

The American 'hand', playing out earlier too

While India has mostly succeeded in conveying that it would brook no third-party mediation, Trump's offer is not the first time that an American leader has sought to "help" India and Pakistan resolve the Kashmir dispute.

In 1993, Robin Raphel, who headed the State Department's newly created South Asia division in the first Clinton Administration, sought to junk the Instrument of Accession, and asserted that for the US, Kashmir was "disputed territory", undermining years of Indian diplomatic efforts.

Her statement was taken far more seriously than Trump's remark on Monday, and in India, she was seen as being pro-Pakistan and anti-India. It was at that time that the Kashmiri people began to be viewed as the third side to what was until then perceived as an issue between just India and Pakistan. In 1995, Raphel told the US Senate Foreign



Robin Raphel, a senior State Department official in the first Clinton Administration (seen here with Farooq Abdullah) asserted that for the United States, Kashmir was "disputed territory" and that it had offered to help resolve it. Express Archive

Relations Committee that "[o]ur top foreign policy goals in South Asia reflect the Administration's global priorities. Reducing tensions and helping to resolve conflicts peacefully... We are continuing efforts to persuade them to begin a serious attempt to resolve this dispute... The United States has offered to assist with this process, if India and Pakistan so request. We have no preferred outcome. But we recognize that a resolution is long overdue and essential for the long term stability of the region as a whole."

As New Delhi's post-liberalisation economic clout grew, Raphel's influence in the State Department faded. Clinton 2.0 embraced the Indian stand on bilateralism. But as Pakistan's hand in the 1990's uprising in Kashmir and cross-border terrorism became apparent, it was India that sought outside help to rein in Pakistani meddling in the Valley.

In 1999, the year after India and Pakistan went nuclear, it was US intervention that brought the Kargil crisis to an end. The Vajpayee government had been in touch with the Clinton Administration to get the Nawaz Sharif government to call off the intrusion in Kargil, even as the Indian Army fought the Pakistani forces.

Sharif arrived in Washington on July 3, seeking Clinton's help for a face-saving ceasefire that would include a US-guaranteed settlement on Kashmir. But he had to agree to an unconditional withdrawal of Pakistani forces back to the Line of Control. Clinton denied him a face-saver on Kashmir, and reaffirmed

the US commitment to the bilateral Lahore Declaration signed earlier that year as the best way forward to resolve Kashmir and other issues.

After 9/11, which ushered in the UNSC-backed international legal regime against terrorism, India has looked increasingly to the world for help in dealing with Pakistan. But this was on one issue alone: an end to the terrorist groups that flourish on Pakistani territory, to put pressure on the Pakistan Army and political leadership to desist from permitting anti-India terrorist activity on its territory, and to censure it when such attacks took place. It was the US again that defused tensions, and persuaded India away from a war with Pakistan after the 2001 Jaish-e-Mohammad attack on Parliament.

Asking international players for help on Pakistan on one thing, and telling them to respect India's red lines on other kinds of involvement has had its moments. But for the same reasons that India has been able to get its way mostly on this — the nuclearisation of South Asia and the growing global interest in India's economy — members of the global community have, from time to time, also evinced interest in mediation in Kashmir.

In 2008, when Barack Obama was a candidate for his first term in the White House, he told *Time* in response to a question on Taliban attacks in Afghanistan from across the Pakistan border: "Working with Pakistan and India to try to resolve Kashmir crisis in a serious way... [is among the] critical tasks for the next administration. Kashmir in particular is an interesting situation where that is obviously a potential tar pit diplomatically. But, for us to devote serious diplomatic resources to get a special envoy in there, to figure out a plausible approach, and essentially make the argument to the Indians, you guys are on the brink of being an economic superpower, why do you want to keep on messing with this? To make the argument to the Pakistanis, look at India and what they are doing, why do you want to... [be] bogged down with this particularly at a time where the biggest threat now is coming from the Afghan border? I think there is a moment where potentially we could get their attention. It won't be easy, but it's important."

India was quick to disabuse him of this

idea, and Obama never brought this up again in the eight years of his presidency.

Other efforts: The United Kingdom and Norway

The United Kingdom, which has a large diaspora from the PoK, has also shown interest in being a mediator. International interest in Kashmir has usually found expression when there's a vacuum in India-Pakistan engagement, when "nothing" seems to be happening on the bilateral front, and especially if the Kashmir issue is also on the boil in the same period, as it has been over the last five years.

Last year, apart from the UN Human Rights Council's stinging report on Kashmir, former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik visited Srinagar, met with the separatist leadership there and, after returning, went on to visit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Norway's long history of mediation in conflict situations prompted much speculation over Bondevik's visit. On the Indian side, he told *The Indian Express*, he had been invited by Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The Indian government, which had evidently cleared and facilitated his trip to the Valley, did not comment; the Norwegian Ambassador to India later clarified that it was a personal visit.

Understanding President Trump's comment

There could be several reasons for Trump trying to wade into Kashmir.

For one, he may think it is easy. In February this year, he claimed to have defused the India-Pakistan standoff that arose from the Pulwama attack. The US is said to have played a part in the release of an Indian Air Force pilot who was captured across the LoC.

The US also played a role in forcing China to agree to the designation of Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a "global terrorist".

And most recently, Trump took credit for the arrest of Hafiz Saeed. Perhaps, the US President thinks he is already half way to solving the problem. He may also believe that if his Administration succeeded in dragging the Taliban to the negotiating table in Afghanistan, it can do the same with India and Pakistan.

What are the Mauritius Leaks, why are they important?

RITU SARIN

NEW DELHI, JULY 23

What are the Mauritius Leaks?

After Swiss Leaks, Panama Papers and Paradise Papers, over 200,000 emails, contracts and bank statements leaked from Mauritius show how the island nation was used by a long list of corporates to facilitate partnerships with multinationals and, without paying any capital gains tax, remit profits as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to India.

At the heart of the 18-country collaborative investigation by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and *The Indian Express* are data from Conyers Dill & Pearman, an offshore specialist law firm with several Fortune 500 companies as clients, which started operations in 1928 from Bahamas — and in 2009 from Mauritius for investments being routed to Africa and Asia.

What is Conyers Dill & Pearman, the company at the centre of the leaks?

In 1998, Bermuda-based financial analyst Roger Crombie described the company in his book as a "full-service" law firm with an emphasis on corporate and commercial law, and offering property, trust and management services to companies and individuals.

The firm's three founders — James Reginald Conyers, Nicholas Bayard Dill and James Eugene Pearman — were all knighted and held public positions in Bermuda. Over the decades, its Private Client department helped individuals minimise their exposure to taxation, and protect family assets, through various Trust structures. The company opened offices across the world — in Guernsey, Cayman Islands, Hong Kong, London and the British Virgin Islands (BVI) — with offshore entities incorporated at these sites under an affiliate company, the Codan Trust.

Why is the Mauritius connection important?

Conyers Dill & Pearman was among those who benefitted in the decades when there were tax breaks for companies and corpora-

tions routing their investments to India via Mauritius, among other offshore destinations. In 2016, India amended its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Mauritius, and the new provisions — capital gains tax, instance — are now fully applicable.

In an interview published in the June 2019 edition of business magazine *CEO Today*, Ashvan Luckraz, an associate in the firm's Mauritius office, said: "The challenges include the recent changes made to the double taxation avoidance agreement between Mauritius and India, which has brought uncertainty to the market. Furthermore, the advent of GAAR (General Anti Avoidance Rule) in India... and CRS (Common Reporting Standard) across major financial centers are bringing the Mauritius corporate structure under more scrutiny."

What did the law firm do in Mauritius before the treaty was amended?

It offers to set up funds, supply local directors, registered local offices, secretarial and administrative services, and assist in bank account opening/government filing.

A power-point presentation of the firm, which is part of the leaks, claims that it can set up a GBCI (Global Business Company, tax resident in Mauritius) within 10 working days for an annual licence fee of \$1,750. It points out that companies registered in Mauritius had to pay an effective income tax slab not exceeding 3% and no capital gains tax.

The presentation notes: "We act on a large number of inward and outward investment transactions involving India and Africa (as well as other jurisdictions) and are notably established in the traditional markets



ICIJ
THE INDIAN EXPRESS
INVESTIGATION

that invest in India and Mauritius."

It offers attractive "tax benefits and favorable fiscal regime" from Mauritius. They claim to introduce clients and companies to a "low/zero tax regime" where no capital gains tax would be payable in Mauritius.

What are some of the "transactions" listed by the firm in the leaks?

Advised Vodafone Group plc on its \$5.46 billion acquisition of a 33% stake in Vodafone Essar Ltd, a joint venture between Vodafone and Essar.

Advised on the formation of two Mauritius-domiciled investment funds (with a Swiss Bank as manager), which are both investing in India, in listed securities and fixed income products.

Advised a leading venture capital fund on restructuring its India-focused funds, which are domiciled in Mauritius and the Cayman Islands, and advising on the formation of new funds.

How did the tightening of rules in India

affect the firm?

Leaked data show that before countries like India decided to rein in tax treaty benefits to increase their own tax base, bankers and companies like Conyers Dill & Pearman raised red flags over tightening regulations and compliance.

One leaked letter, received by Ashvan Luckraz, lists the concerns of several members of the Association of Trust & Management Companies of Mauritius. One member notes how banks like HSBC and Standard Chartered have removed non-profitable account holders for "compliance reasons".

Another notes: "I believe that insane levels of responsibility and due diligence requirements heaped onto them (the banks) has rendered the service all but impossible, and therefore uneconomical. Every time India or the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) clears its throat, we overreact with more destructive regulation..."

The change triangle

Things are panning out in favour of a US-Pak thaw.
Time may also be right for India-Pak normalisation



KHALED AHMED

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan was accompanied by Pakistan’s Army Chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, when he went to the United States on July 20 to meet President Donald Trump at his invitation. The general had to accompany him and take part in the discussions to “legitimise” them. (The widely held view is that the army really rules Pakistan.)

The meeting went unexpectedly well as both leaders abandoned their well-known loose-tongued aggression and agreed on getting together on Afghanistan to help the United States get out of that country. It was clear that Washington believed that Pakistan could get the Afghan Taliban to settle with the Ashraf Ghani government in Kabul while controlling half of Afghanistan. Its unblocking of \$1.2 billion aid to Pakistan clearly signalled this optimism.

The Pakistan-US thaw was coming, mainly because Pakistan, driven into a corner, was willing to change its policy. Clearly, Trump softened after Pakistan submitted to the fiat of the Forward Action Task Force (FATF) to clean up its act of proxy war and arrested its non-state actors bothering India across the Line of Control in Kashmir. General Bajwa had earlier joined Imran Khan to promote “normalisation” with India through the facility of the Kartarpur Corridor — which President Trump pointedly appreciated — and had talked of developing trade and “connectivity” with India.

Things are panning out in favour of a US-Pakistan thaw. The four-party meeting on the Afghan peace process earlier this month, comprising China, the US, Russia and Pakistan, had come up with a “peace settlement” in Afghanistan that literally ousted India and Iran from the conflict. Reacting to the move on July 14, ex-Indian diplomat MK Bhadrakumar wrote that India has lost the Afghan proxy war: “In a

regional setting, it also signifies that Pakistan has inflicted a heavy defeat on India in the decade-old proxy war in Afghanistan.”

For Pakistan, Trump’s decision to declare the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) as terrorist came as an unexpected gesture despite there being a pro-Free Balochistan lobby in the US Congress. Bhadrakumar’s reference to “proxy war” pointed to this development. (Pakistan holds a naval officer of India, accusing him of being a secret agent orchestrating terrorist acts in Balochistan.) Trump also jolted India by accusing it of not opening the Indian economy enough for American trade and threatened to clamp new tariffs on Indian exports to America. New sanctions on Iran also affected Indian trade with Iran. It was forced to stop buying Iranian oil and spend less on its Chabahar Port project. India has also come to the conclusion that Chabahar must be downgraded and has decided to reduce its allocation to the deep-sea port by two-thirds: From Rs 150 crore to Rs 45 crore.

Surprisingly, Trump has also offered to facilitate India-Pakistan normalisation of relations through a resolution of the Kashmir issue. He said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had requested him to play this role; and Imran Khan immediately accepted it although it is yet unclear how Trump can walk into a strictly bilateral dispute, unless India and Pakistan decide to become normal neighbours.

As the revisionist state, Pakistan realises it has to do most of the changing. After the Pulwama crisis which led to an air skirmish — the first dogfight in 48 years between India and Pakistan — it returned the captured Indian pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman, to India. It can make another gesture of seeking peace with India through the return of Kulbhushan Jadhav. The question is: Does it

want a real normalisation?

India and Pakistan should not discuss Kashmir. They have done it through their bureaucrats a number of times and the results have been disappointing. This “discussion” encourages conflict to which there is no end. The world is disturbed by the action India has taken in Kashmir and what it is doing to its Muslims in the rest of the country through cow vigilantes. The world, however, doesn’t want Pakistan to grab Kashmir.

The world knows that Pakistan is helpless in the face of its own internal lack of sovereignty vis-à-vis its non-state underworld of “jihad”. It is trying to “reform” its 32,000 madrassas that nurse youths with no real function within Pakistan, threatening it today more than India. It needs India’s help to ensure its own survival and that help can come only through normalisation of relations, through connectivity “with” and “through” Pakistan.

The Pakistan Army realises that Pakistan is now threatened on its western border. It is building a wire fence on the Durand Line and wants to cool its eastern border which means it must end its irredentist approach to the Kashmir issue. The eastern border can be cooled by opening up trade and investment with India, allowing it to reach Afghanistan and the Central Asian states through a road network that will transform Pakistan just as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor promises to do; and which persuades China to pressure Pakistan to seek normalisation with India. The leaders involved are “transformational”, too, albeit with their negative aspects.

Imran Khan and Narendra Modi can transform South Asia and make it prosperous, or doom it through conflict.

*The writer is consulting editor,
Newsweek Pakistan*

THE RIGHT TO KNOW

Government must address apprehensions over amendments to RTI law, send bill to a parliamentary committee

THE AMENDMENTS TO the RTI Act passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday have rightly drawn criticism from the Opposition and a large section of the civil society. The bill, which threatens to dilute the autonomy of the Information Commission at the Centre as well as states, should have been debated extensively in public forums before its passage through the Lok Sabha. The RTI Act was the outcome of grass roots advocacy and public mobilisation by civil society groups. The law has pushed the case for transparency in administration and been a precious tool for activists to force the bureaucracy to share information concerning public policy and delivery of services and goods in the public domain.

The proposed amendments concern Sections 13, 16 and 27 of the RTI Act. These relate to the rank, tenure, salary, terms of service of the information commissioners at the Centre and the states. So far, the appointment of information commissioners has been for a fixed term of five years or up to the age of 65. The amendment proposes that these appointments should be for “such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government”. The unamended Act prescribes salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state chief information commissioner as “the same as that of an Election Commissioner”, and the salaries and other terms of service of the state information commissioners as “the same as that of the Chief Secretary to the State Government” — the amendment proposes that these “shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government”. Critics argue that these changes are a precursor to the government curtailing the autonomy of the Information Commission. Nearly 60 lakh applications are filed by citizens under the Act to source information. Not surprisingly, state institutions and ruling parties, particularly the BJP, have been hostile to this Act. The pushback has come in the form of exclusion of various offices from the ambit of the Act, deliberate slowing of the process, refusal to fill up vacancies and clear the backlog of RTI applications.

The government should send the bill to a parliamentary standing committee, as demanded by some Opposition MPs. It is unfortunate that changes are proposed to a law meant to make the system more transparent in a non-transparent manner.

OLD TRICKS

FaceApp is being accused of stealing data. The paranoia could be a welcome sign of digital literacy

WHEN YOU GET old, you’ll look like yourself, only older. The fact that there’s an app to visually illustrate the obvious, should come as no surprise. Nor, perhaps, should the joy that millions of celebrities and commoners seem to be getting by posting digitally-aged photos of themselves. What is a surprise, a refreshing one, is the suspicion over FaceApp’s surge in popularity. While the app was first launched in 2017, it has had over 100 million downloads since it introduced the “ageing” feature last month, which allows users to upload a photograph and have it morphed, through a “neural network” AI system-based filter.

Much like Facebook’s 10-year-challenge that went viral earlier this year, FaceApp sparked concerns that the vast inventory of photographs it is collecting will be used to develop facial recognition software, make possible identity theft. The “terms of service” of the app state that users grant its creators “perpetual, irrevocable, nonexclusive, royalty-free, worldwide” use of any data they share. The panic around privacy has been enhanced by the fact that FaceApp’s parent-company is Russia-based, “Russian hacking” having become synonymous for some Americans with fixing elections, undermining choice.

The panic around FaceApp could be dismissed as a throwback to Cold War-era paranoia. But in the off chance that Vladimir Putin isn’t actually interested in your beach-side selfie, (FaceApp has clarified that it deletes most of its data every 48 hours and stores it on temporary servers in the US), the paranoia may be a positive thing. It could mean that a degree of data literacy has permeated internet users, that the cost of every internet fad will now be weighed and measured.



KANCHA ILAIAH SHEPHERD

THE ELEVATION OF D Raja to General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI) is a historic step. Raja is not only a well-known national communist leader but also a Dalit leader who rose to the status of a seasoned communist, theoretician and inspirational figure. Ever since the pro and anti-Mandal movements changed the course of Indian politics, Raja has been the only communist leader from within the left parties to negotiate between Dalit-Bahujans and communists as a authentic voice.

After Damodaram Sanjivayya, even the Congress has not made a Dalit party president. The BJP promoted Bangaru Laxman, not a very well-known leader in his own right, to the party president’s post. Unfortunately, Laxman was caught on camera accepting cash in a sting operation. The only Dalit who has served with distinction as the President of India is K R Narayanan, an intellectual in his own capacity. Ram Nath Kovind is in office now and we will have to wait and see the imprint he will leave on that office.

The CPI first split in 1964. The breakaway group, the CPM, split again with Maoist factions leaving the party. These Left parties could not become a national alternative in the settled constitutional-democratic set up of India. Even so, the CPI remains the fountainhead of the communist ideology, though the CPM has a bigger following and electoral strength.

With the Mandal movement and the growth of Ambedkarite ideology shifting the social and political status of the Dalits-Bahujans, the communist parties suffered a moral setback. In the long history of their existence, since 1925, not a single Dalit leader could become general secretary of either the

A NEW CAST

By elevating D Raja to the post of general secretary, CPI makes history

CPI or CPM. By elevating Raja at this juncture, and since no ruling party has so far produced a leader of Raja’s stature within the party structure — including the Congress, BJP and CPM — the CPI has salvaged the communist movement from the stigma of prejudice.

Though Raja has earned his new position, his party deserves appreciation given the fact that the CPM has not promoted a single Dalit or Adivasi to its Politburo. This is the reason why the Dalit/Adivasi forces see no difference between the CPM and the RSS, which has also not promoted a single Dalit/Adivasi to the top ranks.

The communists need to lead by example, not just by talking. They must understand that the lower-caste masses have produced their own intellectuals who can judge everybody by deeds. As Zhou Enlai, the first premier of the People’s Republic of China said, if the communist movement is like a wave in the “Sea of People”, the leaders are like the foam that emerge from the waves. But in India, the waves came from the Dalit-Bahujan communities — as workers, peasants and labour — and the leaders came from outside the waves, from the upper castes. The communist leadership from the early days should have cultivated a Dalit-Bahujan leadership, at least from West Bengal and Kerala. But they did not. That gave the impression that the upper-caste leaders were deliberately keeping the Dalit/Adivasi activists at the mass level, never allowing them to become the foam atop the wave.

In a way, the Indian communist leaders believed more in Lenin who said that the intellectual leadership comes from outside the working class. For example, the Brahmins were never supporters of the communist movement but the communist intellectual leaders came from among the Brahmins.

These people were always with the RSS-BJP, as these formations were close to their socio-spiritual heart and mind. On the contrary, the Dalit/OBC masses were with communist parties but not many intellectual leaders have emerged from them. Of course, education and intellectual exposure were a problem among the base mass of the communist parties. This is why their special focus should have been to train leaders from the base. By the time an intellectual class from these communities emerged from universities like JNU, Ambedkarism had generated suspicion among the left-leaning Dalit/OBC youth that the top leadership in the communist parties does not allow lower castes to emerge as leaders.

Raja’s elevation definitely creates a new atmosphere between the Left and Ambedkarite circles, as Raja maintained a living relationship between the two. Raja has emerged from Tamil Nadu, which has a long history of lower caste leadership emerging from the days of Periyar E V Ramasamy. Karunanidhi emerged from a barber community (whose ancestors were temple musicians and singers). Now, Raja has emerged from a Dalit community. But Raja’s own talent, the sagacity to be a communist through thick and thin, cannot be undermined.

Raja is a non-sectarian leader who can engage with any group without leaving his ideological ground. He is more suited to unite the parliamentary communist parties and groups and take India on the path of Nepal. One hopes that the CPM also uses this opportunity to bring in positive changes in the communist movement.

Shepherd is a political theorist, social activist and author



JULY 24, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIRA WITH CHARAN
INDIRA GANDHI HAS extended unconditional support to Charan Singh. But even then the picture is far from clear. Charan Singh now has the support of 177 members — 71 of the Congress (I) and 106 of his own, including 10 each of the H N Bahuguna and the Madhu Limaye-George Fernandes groups. There is now a question mark over the support of 75 members of the Congress, who at one time were firmly on Charan Singh’s side. Members from the South and those belonging to the Sharad Pawar group — in all 35 — are having second thoughts. Had the Congress remained solidly behind Charan Singh, he would have had every chance of

forming the next government.

RAJASTHAN FLOODS

THE DEATH TOLL in the Rajasthan floods has now reached 113. Reports of 19 more deaths from Jodhpur district and 16 more from Jalore district were received at the relief headquarters in Jaipur. The maximum number of deaths — 74 — has been reported from Jodhpur district, closely followed by 17 in Jalore district. The break-up of deaths in other districts is Pali (nine), Barmer (six), Ajmer (five), Nagaur (one) and Bhilwara (one). The death toll is likely to rise further as the number of missing persons in Jodhpur district alone has now gone up to 74.

PRESIDENT’S LETTER

THE PRESIDENT HAS written to Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, the two contenders for prime ministership, to send to him lists of their supporters within two days to prove that they enjoy majority support in the Lok Sabha. The President is reported to have sent identical letters to the two leaders in reply to the communications he has received from them staking their rival claims for forming the government. Shortly after receiving the letter from the President, Desai drove to Rashtrapati Bhavan and met N Sanjiva Reddy for about half an hour. He declined to comment on what he discussed with the President.



How not to educate India

Draft National Education Policy ignores role of states, fails to examine role of private sector, undermines importance of English



ABUSALEH SHARIFF

THE DRAFT NATIONAL Education Policy 2019 (DNEP19) is a must-read document as it has implications for India's ability to reap its "demographic dividend". Accelerated economic development is dependent upon the value added by a youthful labour force, which can occur only through appropriate investments in human development, including education. Education is a powerful instrument for reducing poverty and inequality; and it enhances competitiveness in the global economy. Ensuring access to quality education for all is central to the economic and social development of India, according to the World Bank.

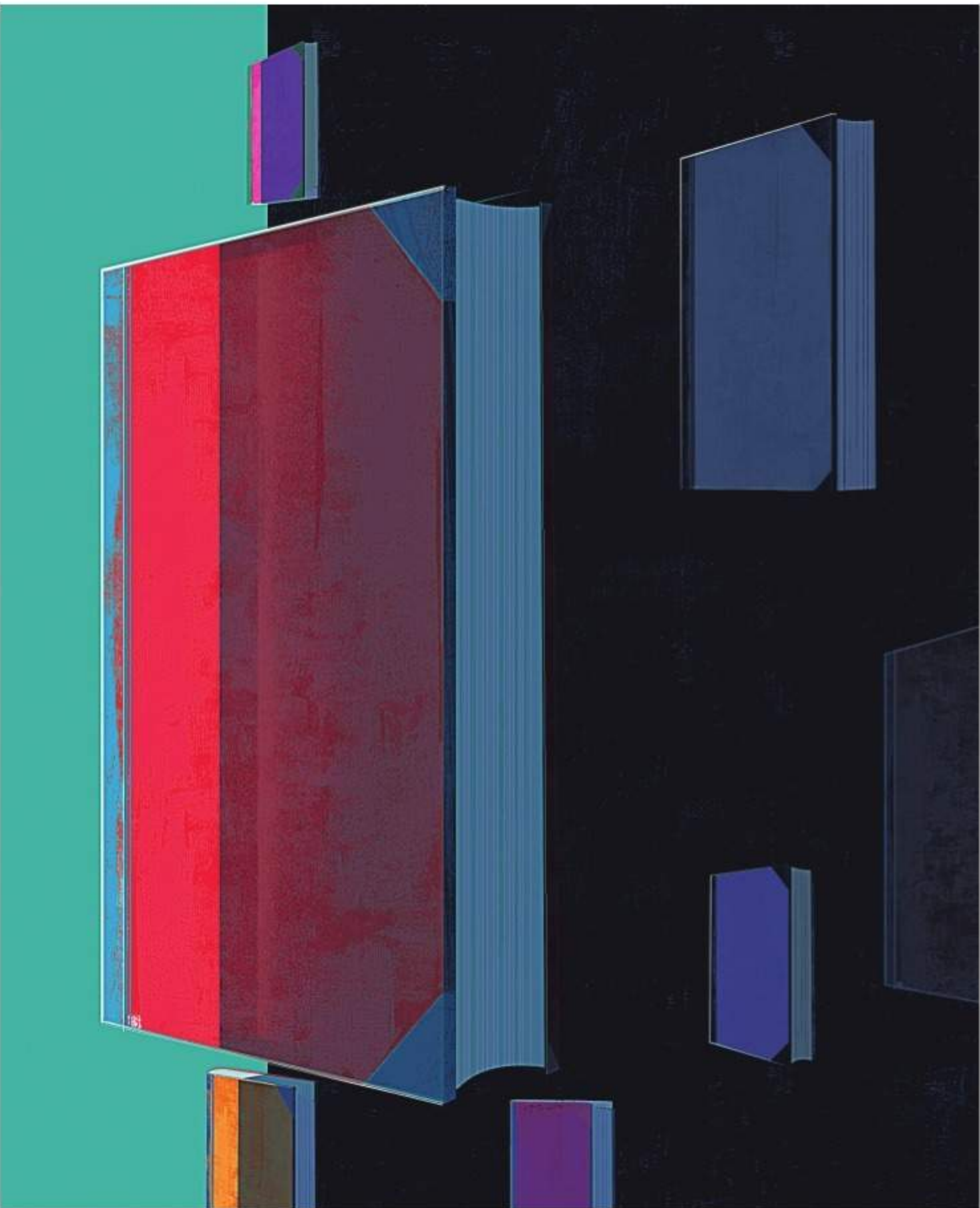
The DNEP19 lays out a vision for, and even romanticises, the need for affordable and quality education for all. This is an elaborate draft of 477 pages, with four parts, an addendum — 23 chapters in all. However, it does not address several relevant issues.

I will discuss five issues that the draft must consider incorporating: One, financing of education; two, privatisation; three, technology (ICT) as a leveler and equity enhancer; four, English as a medium of instruction and five, the state's responsibility in educating the masses. Only the fourth point has been discussed in the DNEP19, and that too mostly by undermining the role and importance of the English language. Given the state of education in India, this report lost an opportunity to discuss the advantages of public investments in elementary and high school education that generate "public good", as against the university-level policy focus on promoting "private good".

The DNEP19 targets investments in education to the tune of 20 per cent of the government's annual revenue. But it forgets to review why India has failed to reach the internationally-recognised level of expenditure (6 per cent of GDP) earmarked for this sector. The current allocation (both Centre and states) amounts to only 3.3 per cent of GDP. This report has appealed to philanthropists and companies to route their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to supplement government efforts, but it forgets that such funds will not be ideologically neutral. The report has also not recognised or estimated the role of private investments in education, and the proliferation of private English-medium schools across India. Reckless and unregulated private schools and colleges, besides compromising on quality, will only increase (not reduce) social inequalities in India.

According to the 71st round of the National Sample Survey, 21 per cent of rural and 42 per cent of urban school-going children are enrolled in private-unaided schools. Adjusting for children aged 6-18 years who do not go to school (non-enrollment and dropouts), there are an estimated 50 million children in private schools. It is of utmost importance that primary education is imparted through public sector facilities and that children belonging to various castes, classes and religions must be taught in such schools to generate a sense of belonging and nationalism. One of the main reasons for the emergence of religious intolerance in India is policies that promote segregated primary and elementary education on the lines of caste, religion, class and language.

The report also fails to estimate the share of income that households spend on education. The financing of each level of education — elementary, intermediate and higher-level — comes with its own set of challenges. For example, the government-aided schooling system prevalent in the state of Kerala is not even referred to as a viable model of institutionalised education financing. Maybe a new "public-private-partnership" model will succeed in achieving the objectives of quality, affordability and equality of access.



Suvajit Dey

Education reform must focus on certain fundamental principles — standardised yet personalised learning, literacy and numeracy, scientific temper, systems that promote both competition and collaboration between schools and ensure equity of outcomes.

In the 21st century, technology is the most secular and equitable source of education across the world. A common example is the knowledge-sharing done by the Khan Academy, used even by Bill Gates (by his own admission). Such technological platforms must be immediately harnessed to impart equitable access at primary, elementary and high school levels and to increase the quality of education. Consider this: It is quite possible that a child in Dharavi, Mumbai or in Rampur, in the tribal belt of Chhattisgarh, accesses quality education imparted at the best school in US — the Thomas Jefferson High School located in the vicinity of Washington D C. Children all over the world have the same right to education and it must be imparted in an affordable manner to all. Technology has provided a solution which must be used.

Respect the DNEP19 for emphasising the need to protect and promote our culture through the study of classical languages, mother tongues and regional languages. Yet, one cannot deny the income-augmenting character of English in India. Those who are fluent in the English language live in house-

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holds with three times higher income than those without any knowledge of English. By ignoring this, the DNEP19 has laid out a "language trap", which will create social inequality and impede economic growth due to loss of the demographic dividend.

The report does not emphasise enough the role and importance of state governments in imparting education to the masses. Special education zones targeting unrepresented groups are talked about; but such a targeting strategy will fail without identifying the states which are laggards in education and reaching out to them.

In the health sector, frequent comparisons are made between states so that the budgetary and policy initiatives are aligned to the best practices and are implemented across states. There is adequate indication that through this report, and possibly through a new bill, "education" will be compromised by being placed under the complete control of the national government. The DNEP19 has not assessed or reviewed the past efforts of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan; rather, it has devoted a whole chapter on how to establish and centrally manage the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog or the National Education Commission. This points towards a centralisation of the education system, which is not only inimical to the economy but also to social harmony.

The writer is with the US-India Policy Institute, Washington DC

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"If Hong Kong continues to regard rule of law as its core value, it must treat police law enforcement correctly." — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Cricketers in arms

Cricket might be 'war minus shooting', but in reality few Indian cricketers have seen combat



SUSHANT SINGH

Will M S Dhoni serve with his Territorial Army (TA) battalion stationed in the Kashmir Valley or will he just train with them? That is a significant difference because serving in an operational deployment carries its own risks which training — however grueling it may be — does not have. As someone bestowed with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel after India's world cup win in 2011, Dhoni doesn't need to do either. Other professionals who join the TA after a selection process of ten get waivers for their annual attachment with the battalion for training.

Cricket and military training, though, have a linkage. The Pakistan cricket team trained at the country's military academy before the 2016 England tour and the players were doing push-ups after reaching a landmark, the way rookie military recruits celebrate their success. Pakistani cricket and its army have quite a connection — and we are not referring to Imran Khan being "selected" as PM by its army last year — which can be seen by a cursory search on YouTube of Wasim Akram acing a military field obstacle course.

But these training were for the purpose of improving their chosen game of cricket. They weren't for operational deployment, for which Dhoni has already shown his penchant by completing five parachute jumps. It points to a level of interest and commitment which has not been witnessed among any of the other sportsmen who were given an honorary rank. Sachin Tendulkar is a Group Captain in the IAF and is present in uniform on most Air Force Day parades, sitting in the front row, and has taken a joy ride in a fighter jet, but his linkage ends there.

The connection between cricket and military in India has been rather tenuous so far. The only name that comes to mind is of Colonel CK Nayudu, who was given the rank as a honour in the Holkar's army for being an outstanding cricketer. Then there was Lt Colonel Hemu Adhikari, an army officer whose military career doesn't show any active combat experience in uniform. Adhikari captained India in one Test against the West Indies, the fourth captain in a five-match series, and he agreed to take the responsibility because of a military order.

When the selectors approached him, Adhikari was posted at Dharamshala and he initially refused to lead India in the Test; he even turned down his wife's request. He recalled: "My chief sent me a message asking me to come and report to him immediately. He told me the same thing: India needs you. Your country is bigger than the individual. Just go and play and let the public feel what wrong the Board has done to you."

But in the active wars fought by India since Independence, there have perhaps been no Test cricketers who have participated. Besides Adhikari, five other military

personnel played Test cricket for India: Chandrasekhar Gadkari, Narain Swamy, Raman Surendranath, Apoorva Sengupta, and Venatappa Muddiah. Of these Sengupta played only a solitary Test but retired as a three-star general from the armoured corps.

Even though cricket between India and Pakistan has often been compared to war, there was a time when both players were in the same team as the two countries were at war. In his memoirs, Sunil Gavaskar has recounted that some of the Indian and Pakistani players were playing for the Rest of the World XI in Australia during the 1971 War and were still close to each other as they followed the news, worried about the fate of their families and hometowns.

Gavaskar and Tendulkar may not have joined military service but another batting great, Don Bradman did join the Australian Air Force in June 1940. Subsequently shifted to Australian Army, he was commissioned as a lieutenant, with the task of Physical Training Officer. But he was diagnosed with fibrositis of the back and discharged from service in June 1941. For a year, the world's greatest batsman was known as Lieutenant Bradman.

Len Hutton, who had joined as a sergeant instructor, sustained serious injury when he fell in gymnasium in York on military service. An operation and bone grafts left his left-arm shorter and weaker than his right but he still piled on the runs after the war.

But not everyone was as fortunate as the legendary English cricketer. Nigel McCrery's The Coming Storm: Test and First-Class Cricketers Killed in World War Two provides details of 12 test cricketers — five Englishmen, two South Africans, one Australian and one New Zealander — who perished in the Second World War along with 130 other first class cricketers. The most famous among them was the great Hedley Verity who died in gunfire in Caserta, Italy in 1943 as he led his troops as an army captain in capturing a building. Other Test cricketers who lost their lives were Dooley Briscoe and Arthur Langton of South Africa, Maurice Turnbull, George Macaulay, Ken Farnes and Geoffrey Legge of England, Ross Gregory of Australia and Sonny Moloney of New Zealand.

Most of these cricketers were recruited for the regular service as the countries needed all able-bodied men to ward off the German-Japanese challenge. But like Dhoni now, Denis Compton was with TA during the war and was posted in Mhow in central India. He ended up scoring 249 not out for Holkar vs Bombay in the final of the Ranji Trophy in 1944-45, with India being the only country where first-class cricket continued to be played during the Second World War.

If Dhoni goes on to serve in an operational area and see real combat with the army, his experience would probably mirror that of Australian Keith Miller who became a fighter pilot. Answering a question from Michael Parkinson before one of the Victory Tests played in England immediately after the Second World War, he said, "Pressure? There is no pressure in Test cricket. Real pressure is when you are flying a Mosquito with a Messerschmitt up your arse."

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

MOON SHINE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Off to the moon' (IE, July 23). The launch of Chandrayaan 2 to the moon will mark a turning point for India if it lands successfully on the lunar surface. India will be the fourth nation to achieve this feat. The scientists at ISRO must be congratulated, and we must be proud as a nation. More importantly, the journey to space should be an occasion for Indians to look beyond petty differences and unite as we venture forth to new horizons.

PN Garg, via email

NO JUSTICE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Getting away' (IE, July 23). The spate of acquittals in cases pertaining to the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 shows our legal process in poor light. Unless the long-pending police reforms are brought in, shielding the law from political interference, this travesty of justice is bound to continue, more so in riots where "faceless mobs" are involved. Witnesses must be given due protection. Also, the convoluted judicial proceedings need to become more swift. A stop must be put on buying time as well as buying witnesses.

Vijai Pant Hempur.

ENGAGE ALL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Does India remember Kargil?' (IE, July 23). Pakistan has been the source of the most important national security challenge India has been facing since its Independence.

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

The troika of the Pakistan army, military intelligence and bureaucracy script the country's narrative towards India. Delhi recently articulated its red line on the various international manoeuvres over Afghanistan, where the message was that India is no longer averse to the idea of engaging with any actor that holds sway over the situation in the larger interest. India needs to invoke a similar principle while dealing with Pakistan and engage with all stakeholders to negotiate peace.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

LESSONS FROM KARGIL

THE LATEST ISSUE of *Organiser* has an insightful analysis of the Kargil war by General V P Malik, who was the Chief of Army Staff during the conflict. "Have We Learnt the Lessons?", he asks and flags half-a-dozen lessons from the 1999 war. One, as long as there are territorial disputes, as India has with China and Pakistan, the adversary can indulge in a proxy or a limited convention war. Two, there being a reluctance on the part of India to adopt a proactive strategy, it is essential for the country to have credible strategic and tactical intelligence, effective surveillance and a close defence of the border. Three, a credible deterrence may prevent a war and thus give more room for manoeuvre in diplomacy and conflict. Four, "the new strategic environment calls for faster decision-making, versatile combat organi-

sations, rapid deployment and synergy amongst all elements involved in the war effort, particularly the three services". Five, "it is essential to keep the military leadership within the security and strategic decision-making loop." Six, "the political requirement of a military operation and to retain moral high ground (and deny that to the adversary), the country needs a comprehensive media and information strategy."

In conclusion, General Malik writes: "An enduring lesson of Kargil war, indeed most wars, is that for national security, sound defence enables sound domestic and foreign policies."

PAKISTAN DECODED

THERE HAVE BEEN a series of important developments vis-a-vis Pakistan — the International Court of Justice verdict in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case, the arrest of Hafiz Saeed, the re-opening of air space for Indian aircraft and the removal of Khalistan-supporter, Gopal Chawla, from the Kartarpur committee. The natural question, therefore, is: Will Islamabad "mend its behaviour and not allow its soil to breed terrorism, especially against Bharat?" "No!" says Prafulla

Ketkar, editor of *Organiser*, in a signed editorial.

"The very existence of Pakistan," according to Ketkar, "is dependent on an anti-Bharat narrative." The military is the torchbearer of that philosophy. Unless there is a change from within and Pakistan as a society shows a clear sign of reversing the trend and construct a positive idea of existence, there is no reason to believe the little bit of softening and succumbing to pressure.

"Pakistan has deceived the world many times, and after the Lahore Bus initiative, Kargil was the clear case of deception and betrayal," the editorial argues.

The Kulbhushan Jadhav case verdict has proven that Pakistan is a violator of the Geneva Convention. The human rights record and the hypocrisy of the military-run kangaroo courts in Pakistan have also been exposed.

The directive to ensure a free and fair trial to Jadhav along with consular access has not only vindicated India's stance, but also proved that the systems in Pakistan are not in tune with international standards. Similarly, the arrest of Hafiz Saeed by Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Department is acknowledgment that the Mumbai attack mastermind is a terrorist.

MEDIA IN CROSSWIRE

PANCHJANYA'S EDITORIAL IS a critique of clumsy reporting in the media. It claims that certain news cause a lot of noise because it is spiced up by the media.

The editorial cites reports concerning the opposition of an upper caste BJP MLA from UP to his daughter's marriage to a Dalit as evidence. The editorial claims that the legislator's objection to the inter-caste marriage was on account of the age difference between the bride and the bridegroom. The editorial wonders why the MLA was targeted, which was tantamount to targeting a "Hindu". It also discusses an instance of some Muslim barbers in Moradabad refusing to render their services to Scheduled Castes. "The media is not interested in this open display of hatred for scheduled castes," the editorial says. Three other incidents of discrimination and violence against Hindus by Muslims are also discussed. "The anti-Hindu attitude of the Lutyens and Khan Market media has been exposed by its exclusion of news reflecting the pain of Hindus of Kerala, West Bengal and Kashmir from newspaper pages and TV screens," the editorial claims.

Compiled by Pradeep Kaushal