



What suits Trump

The U.S. President violated diplomatic protocols in talking of mediation on Kashmir

Facing a furore in Parliament over the issue, the government has clarified in no uncertain terms that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not request U.S. President Donald Trump to "mediate or arbitrate" on the Kashmir issue, as Mr. Trump claimed on Monday. Addressing Parliament, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said India remains committed to its policy of discussing all outstanding issues with Pakistan only bilaterally, and assured the House that Mr. Modi did not raise this with Mr. Trump at their recent meeting in Osaka during the G-20 summit. In making the claim that has been roundly denied by New Delhi, Mr. Trump breached several well-laid diplomatic protocols, including one against discussing privileged conversations with a leader, during a public conversation with another. Mr. Trump also said a "lot" of his talks with the Pakistan Prime Minister would focus on India and Afghanistan, an odd departure from the precept of putting bilateral issues to the fore, and being more discreet when discussing sensitive relations involving other countries. For New Delhi, it may be time to recognise that Mr. Trump's comments are a sign of new realities in international diplomacy, where leaders care less about niceties and more about open communication. Mr. Modi will have to prepare accordingly for some plain-speaking when he visits the U.S. and meets with Mr. Trump, as he is expected to, in September this year.

In the short term, the government's decision to address the claim by Mr. Trump will have nipped any repercussions in the bud. The government should pursue the issue through diplomatic channels with the U.S. government, and determine whether Mr. Trump made the comments out of confusion or deliberately. India has always opposed any suggestion of third-party mediation on Jammu and Kashmir; both the 1972 Shimla Agreement and the 1999 Lahore declaration included India's and Pakistan's commitment to resolving issues between them. It is unlikely that Mr. Modi would have spoken out of line with this policy, and the most charitable explanation for Mr. Trump's new contention is that he mistook India's appeal to the international community to hold Pakistan accountable for terror groups on its soil that carry out attacks in Kashmir, for a general desire for mediation. Mr. Trump's comment in March that the U.S. successfully mediated for the release of captured fighter pilot Abhinandan by Pakistan may have even given him some hope that the U.S. could play a larger role on the Kashmir issue, and New Delhi would need to address that. A more worrying proposition is that Mr. Trump took the line favoured by his Pakistani interlocutors on Kashmir as a way of enhancing his own plans for a pullout from Afghanistan with Pakistan's help on security and talks with the Taliban. While the damage from Mr. Trump's words may not have a very lasting impact on India-U.S. ties, that from any rushed measures to force a resolution in Afghanistan will have far-reaching and lasting impact, including on India.

Caribbean cruise

India goes to the West Indies sensing more cricketing opportunities than threats

In the past, a tour of the West Indies was deemed the toughest endeavour for any cricketer. Reputations were either enhanced or lost and fractures seemed imminent in the battles against the fiery fast bowlers, while the crowds requested the perfume-ball, a euphemism for a nasty bouncer. But times change, and the inherent quality of the Caribbean squads has declined so much that a sporting visit to the isles with their sunny beaches is seen as an exercise towards etching triumphs, fattening batting averages and multiplying bowling yields. With this as the backdrop, India will fly halfway across the earth for a set of three Twenty20s – interestingly, two of them are being hosted in the United States of America – three ODIs and two Tests against the West Indies from August 3 to September 3. India will be the favourites across the three formats, though in limited overs games, where the abridged nature of the sport tends to iron out the flaws, the host might fancy its chances. The tour, coming as it does close on the heels of the World Cup in England, presents an opportunity for India to look ahead, make a few changes in personnel and prepare for the future. Transition always coincides with the quadrennial World Cup and India too is part of that global trend.

M.S. Dhoni has straddled three generations, the one that had Sachin Tendulkar, the second with the likes of Yuvraj Singh and the latest under Virat Kohli as captain. The former India captain has held firm in a storied career of triumphs, losses, frenzied runs, sharp catches and quicksilver stumpings, but at 38 he is near his cricketing twilight. Though he avoided retiring from the blue shade by preferring to serve the Army in his role as an honorary lieutenant colonel, Dhoni presented an opportunity to M.S.K. Prasad and his fellow selectors to fast-track Rishabh Pant as the first-choice wicket-keeper batsman across all formats. Dhoni, who retired from Tests in 2014, might still make appearances in the shorter versions, and there is speculation about next year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia being his preferred last stop. But it all depends on what the selectors and Kohli prefer as they look at building the team afresh for the 2023 World Cup in India. The imminent West Indies tour will help the team management get a fair idea about the potential in the likes of Shreyas Iyer, Mayank Agarwal, Manish Pandey, Rahul Chahar, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, Khaleel Ahmed, Deepak Chahar and Navdeep Saini, besides the other regulars. The opposition may be depleted, but for these players, hope floats and a crucial August awaits.

A bridge across the India-Pakistan abyss

It would be a travesty to waste the opportunities made possible by the Kartarpur corridor plan



SUHASINI HAIDER

Ties between India and Pakistan are at an ebb – their lowest in two decades. The thread from this phase, as a series of events – the Kargil war (1999), the Agra Summit (2001), the attack on Parliament (2001) and Operation Parakram (2001-02) – meant a sustained period of deep hostilities, with diplomatic missions downgraded and travel routes truncated. Since 2015 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lahore visit in the same year, the leaders of both countries have not met for talks. In mid-2018, the backchannel diplomacy between the National Security Advisers of both countries was called off by Pakistan, while in September 2018, India called off a planned meeting between the Foreign Ministers in New York. In the wake of the Pulwama terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir in February this year, India attacked terror targets in Pakistan which in turn sent fighter jets to the border. Subsequently, after India moved missiles and deployed submarines, Pakistan raised a full air alert and imposed an airspace ban that lasted till mid-July.

Unbroken thread

What has been disconnected from all those tensions are the talks on the Kartarpur corridor. The offer from Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to open the corridor was conveyed first by Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and accepted by Mr. Modi, marking a rare moment of coordination between the two nations.

That the talks have continued through one of the most difficult years in the relationship is equally remarkable; there have been three rounds of technical-level meetings to ensure both sides complete the infrastructure needed before November 2019, the 550th anniversary of Sikhism's founder Guru Nanak.

The symbolism for pilgrims who will be able to travel from Dehra Baba Nanak town in Punjab to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur just a few kilometres inside Pakistan, which are sites where Guru Nanak spent his last few years, goes well beyond the date and year. This is a route that the Guru and his followers traversed with ease for half a millennium until Partition resulted in the India-Pakistan border cutting through it. While Sikh pilgrims have been given easy access since then to Guru Nanak's birthplace at Nankana Sahib, the circuitous 200 km route to Kartarpur via Amritsar-Wagah has been off limits. The Kartarpur shrine has one of the last copies of the original Guru Granth Sahib; there are some who believe that it contains not only the wisdom of the 10 Gurus but is itself the 11th and last Guru. Giving life to the wishes of so many will also ensure political dividends in India, an aspect no government in the State or at the Centre can ignore.

Some irritants

Despite the rich significance of the corridor, there were many reasons for the earlier hesitation to revive the project. The Kartarpur corridor project is an issue that has been raised by India for several decades, with New Delhi's reasons for wanting the corridor clear. However, in the case of Pakistan, these have not been as transparent, with the military establishment's surprise backing only raising doubts on whether Islam-



bad has an ulterior motive. In a dossier handed over during the last round of talks on Kartarpur on July 14, India spelt out its apprehensions over Pakistan allowing separatist Khalistani groups, including those funded by groups based in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, to try and influence pilgrims. Of specific concern is the 'Referendum 2020' plan by the Sikhs for Justice group (banned by India).

This group has already held a series of public events in the U.S. and the U.K. demanding a 'worldwide referendum' on a separate Sikh state. The other irritant is the possible use of the corridor for drugs and arms movement; there are many routes and tunnels at the border between the two Punjabs. The terror threat by Pakistani Punjab-based anti-India groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed is also a constant concern.

Agreeing to the Kartarpur corridor means the government has made an exception from a matter concerning national policy for a matter of faith. In the last few years, every avenue has been shut down from those for official, bilateral and regional (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) talks to even those for travel and tourism. Trade too has ground to a halt with cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade route suspension the latest casualty.

With such strictures in place, New Delhi's decision to embark on a course that will need regular and repeated India-Pakistan meetings is nothing short of a breach of its otherwise firm "no talks without terror ending" policy. For example, at a time when Indian and Pakistani Ministers do not even hold talks when they meet at multilateral conferences, New Delhi sent two senior Ministers to Pakistan to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the event. It remains to be seen who the government will send to the inauguration, and whether Mr. Modi, who has likened building the Kartarpur corridor to the fall of the Berlin wall, will grace the occasion.

A range of possibilities

With the Kartarpur exception to India's policy on Pakistan now established, it is necessary to see whether it can be built on to create a mechanism for broader conversations between India and Pakistan.

The obvious extension from this would be for having other faith-based "corridors" for Hindu, Muslim and Sikh pilgrims in both countries; this would be in addition to the list of 20 shrines (15 in Pakistan, five in India) that were negotiated under the 1974 Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines.

The template that Kartarpur has given both sides is also worth considering for the format of other bilateral negotiations given that the talks have been immunised from both terror attacks and election rhetoric. The venue of the talks, at the Attari-Wagah zero point, lends itself to more successful outcomes too away from the glare of the media, without focus on arrangements for both parties. The two sides can cross over, meet for the duration of talks and return after issuing a pre-arranged joint statement.

The timing of the Kartarpur

opening may also lend itself to exploring other bilateral engagements.

Ahead of the next plenary of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in October, Pakistan will remain under pressure to keep terror groups subdued. According to various reports, infiltration figures at the LoC are significantly lower (a 43% reduction since the Balakot strikes in February); officials have marked about 20 terror camps in PoK they believe have been "shut down" recently. Civilian and military casualties from ceasefire violations have also reduced. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's government, which has been buoyed by Mr. Khan's U.S. visit and by Pakistan's new-found acceptance in the international community for its role in Taliban talks, and Mr. Modi's government, which has been bolstered by its strong electoral mandate, will also be in the strongest positions politically to forge agreements.

Thus, it would be a travesty to waste the opportunity made possible by the Kartarpur corridor, and by extension, the founder of the Sikh faith himself (revered by Hindus and Muslims in India and Pakistan) to bring both countries back to the table for talks. The most famous story at Kartarpur is the one of the 'miracle' that Guru Nanak wrought after his death as his Hindu and Muslim followers debated late into the night whether their Guru should be cremated or buried. When they awoke, his body had vanished, replaced by flowers which they divided up. The Guru Nanak's 'samadhi' and grave were built side by side. As pilgrims across the border pay a visit in November, it should be clear what the bigger miracle is: that the Kartarpur exception has been made at all.

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Faltering steps in the anti-AIDS march

The commitment to end the AIDS pandemic by 2030 needs strong and fearless leadership



J.V.R. PRASADA RAO

The Joint UN programme on AIDS, commonly known as UNAIDS, is facing one of the worst challenges afflicting the global AIDS response – this time an existential threat questioning its very relevance. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, is expected to appoint a new executive director after the departure of Michel Sidibé in May 2019 on the recommendation of the programme coordinating board which manages the organisation. There are strong contenders from Africa and the U.S. in the reckoning among those who have been shortlisted.

A pivotal role

At such a crucial time, it is disturbing to hear voices again questioning the relevance of UNAIDS for the global response.

There are suggestions that AIDS should go back to the World Health Organisation (WHO) where it originally belonged to some 25 years ago. And that the new executive director should be equipped

with an exit strategy to wind up the organisation.

Since its establishment in 1994, UNAIDS has been able to successfully mobilise world opinion to mount an exceptional response to an epidemic which has consumed over 20 million lives with still no effective treatment or cure. The UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) 2001 was a game changer with the adoption of a political resolution that itself was exceptional in many ways. The creation of a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and the slashing of prices of AIDS drugs by Indian generics have brought treatment within the reach of many countries. Today some 22 million people are under antiretroviral therapy (ART) and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has become an achievable goal by 2020. The organisation has provided leadership to many countries which in 10 years (2001-2010) could halt the epidemic and reverse the trend.

The epidemic is still alive

However, at a time when it should be leading the global response to end AIDS as a public health threat, the organisation has started to falter in its strategy. First came the extremely optimistic messaging blitz that the world was going to



see the end of AIDS very soon. This is far from true. Regions such as eastern Europe and Central Asia and West Asia are nowhere near reaching that goal, with many countries such as Russia witnessing a raging epidemic among drug users and men who have sex with men (MSM) communities. With the top leadership in UNAIDS exhorting countries to bring AIDS "out of isolation" and integrate with health systems, the political leadership in many countries have thought that AIDS is no more a challenge.

Second has been the thinking that the AIDS epidemic can simply be treated away by saturating antiretroviral (ART) coverage. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is forgotten that AIDS affects the poor, the marginalised and criminalised communities disproportionately as they face challenges in accessing the 'test and treat' programmes. The ever increasing number of young people who are

joining the ranks of vulnerable populations do not get prevention messages like in the past. National programmes do not any more consider condoms, sexual education and drug harm reduction as central to the prevention of HIV transmission that results from unprotected sex and drug use. Funding for non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations working on prevention has virtually dried up.

Third has been the weakening of country leadership of UNAIDS in many high-prevalence countries. Senior country-level positions are, in many instances, held by people who do not possess the core competence to constructively engage political leadership to undertake legal reforms and provide access to services to marginalised populations.

Weakening activism

But the biggest setback has been the lost voice of vulnerable communities which was the main driving force of AIDS response in the decade after UNGASS. Activism surrounding AIDS has suddenly fizzled out emboldening many countries, especially in Africa, to further stigmatise and discriminate by enacting new laws that criminalise vulnerable sections of society.

To add to its woes, the charges against one of the senior most staff and his exit from the organisation have seriously compromised UNAIDS at a time when the global response needs its leadership the most. The new executive director will have an unenviable task of not just restoring the credibility and relevance of the organisation but strengthening its presence at country level and making it more meaningful to the communities which look to it for leadership. The new executive director has to work relentlessly to place prevention of the epidemic and empowering communities at the centre of global response.

With 1.7 million new infections and one million deaths occurring every year, we can't afford to drop the ball half way. The commitment to end AIDS by 2030 is ambitious but not impossible to achieve. What we need is a re-energised UNAIDS with a strong and fearless leadership from a person of high integrity and commitment along with a sincere effort to remove the deadwood from the organisation. Any thought of winding it up or giving the mandate back to WHO would be suicidal at this moment.

J.V.R. Prasada Rao is a former Health Secretary, Government of India. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Trump and the 'K' word

The claim by U.S. President Donald Trump that Prime Minister Narendra Modi broached the subject of Mr. Trump's mediation on the Kashmir issue during the meeting of the two leaders in Osaka in June, is stunning (Page 1, "I would love to be a mediator on Kashmir: Donald Trump", July 23). Is it a white lie? Or is it a political gimmick?

Even if India had sought his assistance, the fact that the U.S. has all along been providing military assistance to Pakistan would by itself make America very unsuitable as a mediator.

B.V.K. THAMPI,
Thiruvananthapuram

relationship but self-interest has always been a priority in American foreign policy. The offer may be a part of a strategy relating to Pakistan-China policy. Once we are drawn to the mediation table, our contention of sovereignty over Kashmir will be jeopardised.

S. RAJAGOPALAN,
Chennai

■ It is significant that as no less than the POTUS himself has named the Indian Prime Minister as personally having sought Mr. Trump's mediation, it is in the fitness of things and in keeping with the best parliamentary traditions that the Prime Minister offers his own clarification on the floor of the House even if it means causing personal embarrassment to Mr. Trump, who is not known to observe diplomatic niceties. If Mr. Modi chooses to remain silent fearing a diplomatic backlash from the

U.S., a doubt about who is economical with the truth will gain ground hurting the Prime Minister's credibility.

S.K. CHOWDHURY,
Bengaluru

■ India may maintain that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally but the fact is that there have been regular global interventions as far as India-Pakistan relations are concerned. During the Kargil intrusions in 1999, it was the Clinton administration which led Pakistan to step back. Also after 9/11, it was the U.S. and the U.K. which helped in blacklisting Pakistan-based terror outfits. India has relied on global support when it comes to cornering Pakistan. Therefore, Mr. Trump wanting to be a mediator should not raise hackles.

HARVINDER SINGH CHUGH,
Jalandhar, Punjab

■ Mr. Trump is turning out to be an inexperienced

statesman, examples being his meddling in Obamacare, his unilaterally scrapping the Iran nuclear deal, verbal attacks on European leaders and his mishandling of the immigrants issue in the U.S. Mr. Trump needs to set his own house in order first before he can even think of mediating on Kashmir.

T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

■ The U.S. has most often been at the wrong end of understanding the geopolitical affairs of developing countries, Vietnam, Iran and Iraq being examples. America's attempt to help these countries has ended in disastrous results. In the Kashmir conflict, a mediator must understand the socio-cultural context of the State as well as its history which Mr. Trump is clearly unaware of. I am sure that the Prime Minister, despite his shortcomings, did not raise

the question of mediation seriously with Mr. Trump. Observing the U.S.'s previous attempts at mediation, it would be much better if the process involved only India and Pakistan even if it takes another 70 years.

HANNAH JACOB P.,
Bengaluru

■ **The ISRO model**
The successful launch of Chandrayaan-2 demonstrates what India is capable of doing if there is unwavering focus and funding. The successful model of ISRO should be replicated in the defence sector especially when India is spending billions of rupees buying arms. If we can develop a credible weapons manufacturing ecosystem that is on a par with our space industry, we can save billions and also tap the billion dollar international weapons market.

D. N. RATHAN PRASAD REDDY,
Gajwel, Telangana

Narcotic hub
That it is not just youngsters from 'dysfunctional families' but also those from 'perfectly normal families' who are becoming drug victims "solely for recreational purposes" is alarming ('Ground Zero' page, "Ecstasy and the agony", July 20). This is possibly due to a lack of proper parental monitoring, compounded when one or both

The complexities of Naga identity

The Nagaland govt. will face many hurdles in its quest to compile a list of indigenous inhabitants



SUSHANTA TALUKDAR



Sumi tribesmen performing a warrior dance during the Tuluni festival in Dimapur, Nagaland, in 2016. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The Nagaland government's move to compile a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) opens up possibilities in the context of the decision to link the register to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system without a consensus on the definition of an 'indigenous inhabitant'.

One such possibility is of RIIN pushing the negotiators engaged in the ongoing Naga peace talks to articulate new and hardened positions on the contentious issue of integration of contiguous Naga-inhabited areas.

Though the official notification on RIIN has not mentioned a cut-off date to compile the proposed register, the authorities in Nagaland have till date issued indigenous inhabitant certificates using December 1, 1963 as the cut-off date. Nagaland was inaugurated as India's 16th State on this date following the '16-point agreement' between the government of India and the Naga People's Convention on July 26, 1960.

Opposition from NSCN (I-M)
The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), which has been engaged in peace talks with the government of India since 1997, has opposed the compilation of RIIN asserting that "all Nagas, wherever they are, are indigenous in their land by virtue of their common history".

A statement issued by the 'Ministry of Information and Publicity' of the self-styled Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland reads: "The present move of the State government to implement [the] Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) is contradictory to the inherent rights of the Nagas. It is politically motivated to suit the interest of the groups advocating for the '16-Point Agreement'. The 'Nagaland State' does not and will not represent the national decision of the Naga people. It was formed purely to divide the Nagas." The self-styled government of the People's Republic of Nagaland is the parallel government run by the NSCN(I-M).

On June 29, the Nagaland government notified that RIIN "will be the master-list of all indigenous inhabitants" of the State. All those to be included will be issued "barcoded and numbered indigenous inhabitant certificates". It added that all existing indigenous inhabitant certificates would become invalid once the process of compiling RIIN is completed and fresh certificates issued.

RIIN is different from Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) as exclusion or inclusion in RIIN is not going to determine the Indian citizenship of anyone in Nagaland.

Three conditions

Since 1977, a person, in order to be eligible to obtain a certificate of indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland, has to fulfil either of these three conditions: a) the person settled permanently in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963; b) his or her parents or legitimate guardians were paying house tax prior to this cut-off date; and c) the applicant, or his/her parents or legitimate guardians, acquired property and a patta (land certificate) prior to this cut-off date.

The compilation of RIIN also involves the complexities of deciding claims in respect of children of non-Naga fathers as well as non-Naga children adopted by Naga parents.

If the Nagaland government goes ahead with a compilation of RIIN

with this cut-off date, then all Naga people who have migrated to the State from the neighbouring States of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and elsewhere in India after this day will have to be excluded.

The NSCN(I-M) statement adds, "Nothing is conclusive on the Naga issue, until and unless a mutually agreed honourable political solution is signed between the two entities. Therefore, any attempt to dilute the final political settlement by justifying any past accord of treasons should be seriously viewed by all Nagas."

This clearly indicates the opposition the Nagaland government may have to face if it goes ahead with the move to compile RIIN. The Centre and the NSCN (I-M), which is the largest among all armed Naga rebel groups, signed a Framework Agreement in 2015, the content of which has still not been made public, in turn leaving room for speculation on the contentious issue of integration of all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Unless otherwise clarified through an official notification, the proposed linking of RIIN with the ILP system may require large numbers of non-indigenous inhabitants of Dimapur district, more particularly the commercial hub (Dimapur town), to obtain an ILP to carry out day-to-day activities. Most of them migrated from other

States and have been carrying out trade, business and other activities for decades. Migration also explains the higher density of population in Dimapur district (409 persons per sq. km) when compared to all the other districts in the State. The ILP is a travel document issued by the government of India to allow a 'domestic tourist' to enter Nagaland, and is valid for 30 days.

Streamlining ILP

The Supreme Court, on July 2, dismissed a Public Interest Litigation seeking a directive against the Nagaland government's move to implement the ILP in the entire State including Dimapur district, which had so far been kept out of the purview of the ILP system.

A report prepared by the government, in collaboration with the UNDP in 2009, gave information on migration patterns in Nagaland. Titled 'Rural-Urban Migration: A Thematic Report', it said that in 2001, Assam was the State with the highest number of migrants to Nagaland (19,176 people), followed by Bihar (7,249 people) and Manipur (4,569 people). A large section of people (about 45% of them in the case of Assam, 59% in the case of Bihar and 25% in the case of Manipur) had migrated for better employment and business opportunities.

While the move to streamline the ILP system to curb the influx of "illegal migration" to Nagaland has been welcomed by civil society, public opinion is still divided on compiling RIIN without a consensus on the cut-off date.

As the Nagaland government has begun a consultation process on RIIN, it will be under pressure to de-link the work of streamlining the ILP mechanism from the proposed register and put it on hold till the ongoing peace process concludes and the final solution is worked out.

Besides this, the complexities that may arise in streamlining the ILP mechanism due to non-issuance of domicile certificates or permanent residence certificates to a large number of non-Naga, non-indigenous inhabitants could also make the task even more difficult for the Neiphiu Rio-led Nagaland government.

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Making the water-guzzling thermal plants accountable

An improved monitoring mechanism can play a key role



PARUL KUMAR
BHARATH JAIRAJ

The advancing monsoon has brought relief to many parts of India, but its progress has been slower than average and the country is still in the midst of a rainfall deficit, with millions facing an acute water shortage. Water is essential for human survival, and for agriculture and industry. It is important that India – which has only 4% of the world's renewable water resources but about 18% of the world's population – consumes water more sensibly.

In India's pursuit of 100% electrification goal, the country's installed power capacity will need to be doubled. Even with the growth of renewable energy (RE), coal has been projected to be the backbone of the electricity sector till 2030 and beyond. Managing the electricity needs of a country that's already dealing with water scarcity will be a challenge.

Located in water-scarce areas

Thermal power plants (TPPs) consume significant amounts of water during the electricity generation process. Most of India's TPPs are located in water-stressed areas, and water shortages have led to electricity-generation disruptions and significant revenue losses to the economy.

In December 2015, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a notification setting limits for water consumption by TPPs. However, the amended Environment Protection (EP) Rules codified in June 2018 ended up permitting TPPs to use more water than what was initially specified. There are certain mechanisms that need to be strengthened to make these regulations more effective.

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) recently released the format for TPPs to report on their annual water consumption. The power plants were asked to specify both metered and un-metered usage, report on the source (like river, canal or sea), and state the percentage of deviation from the water norms, along with the reasons and the corrective measures undertaken.

These guidelines can be strengthened by including other relevant inputs. First, TPPs should disclose the amount of water consumed by them in previous years, so that a baseline for water consumption per TPP can

be established, and subsequent reductions in water consumption can be quantified. Second, these reporting requirements – currently in the form of an Excel sheet on the CEA website – must be added to the EP Rules, to accord the disclosure process greater transparency and enforceability. Third, TPPs should also be required to submit verifiable evidence (for example, water bills) to support and substantiate the disclosures. Without these, the self-reporting guidelines will remain weak.

Finally, the data supplied by TPPs should be placed in the public domain, so that the parameters disclosed can be studied in the context of region-specific water shortages, outages in the plants, and future research and analysis in this field.

Specifying penalties

Section 15 of the EP Act provides for a blanket penalty for contravention of any provisions of the Environment Protection Act or EP Rules: up to five years of imprisonment and/or up to ₹1 lakh fine along with additional daily fines for continuing offences. However, the Act does not stipulate specific penalties for specific offences. Perhaps this is an area for review by the government, so that we have a more nuanced framework for enforcement and penalties.

Further, the relevant officials in charge of enforcement, across the Ministry and the CEA, should be identified, and their roles clearly defined. The implementation of these norms should include milestones and time-based targets, and periodic monitoring of the progress of TPPs in making improvements.

In addition to reducing the stress caused by TPPs, shifting to a more aggressive RE pathway will help India achieve its global climate targets. However, this will need further work – particularly to regulate water consumption by specific RE technologies. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has taken a first step by issuing a notice to State governments on reducing water use for cleaning solar panels and to explore alternative mechanisms to ensure that solar panels remain efficient.

India will need to balance the needs of its growing economy with its heightening water stress. Stringent implementation of standards for judicious water use by TPPs, combined with the promotion of RE and energy efficiency, will offer pathways for achieving these goals.

The writers work with the energy programme at the World Resources Institute, India

Giving ties with Seoul a facelift

India-South Korea relations are yet to reach their full potential despite making significant strides

LAKHVINDEER SINGH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met South Korean President Moon Jae-in on the sidelines of the G20 summit last month in Osaka. Both agreed to find common ground between Seoul's 'New Southern Policy' and New Delhi's 'Act East Policy'.

Today, India and South Korea have the shared values of open society, democracy and liberal international economic order and their mutual engagement is at a historically unprecedented level. Significant strides have been made in several areas of science and technology.

The Indo-Korea Science and Technology Centre, established in Bengaluru in 2010 as a collaboration between the Indian Institute of Science and the Korean Institute of Science and Technology, is a shining example in this regard.

The emerging balance of power in the region has also started influencing the trajectory of defence ties. Co-production of the K9 Thunder howitzer is a prime example of the ongoing defence collaboration. With technology transfer from South Korea, India's Larsen and Toubro plans to achieve over 50% localisation by manufacturing the key components of these weapon systems domestically as part of 'Make in India'. Further, both countries have regularised education exchanges. Additionally, there is regular security dialogue between India's National Security Adviser and the intelligence agencies of Korea.



domestic market, its cheap labour costs and a stable legal system.

At the Osaka meeting, both leaders emphasised the need to create a new "synergy" to meet new challenges. Since India opened up its economy in the early 1990s, India-South Korea trade ties have grown from few hundred million dollars to \$22 billion at the end of 2018. Today the major items that India exports to South Korea include mineral fuels, oil distillates (mainly naphtha), cereals and, iron and steel. South Korea's main exports to India include automobile parts and telecommunication equipment, among others.

Trade target likely to be missed
However, despite the robust ties, not everything is going as planned. The trade target of \$50 billion by 2030 is most likely to be missed due to lack of adequate efforts. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, originally the core mechanism for economic ties, requires immediate upgrading. An early harvest agreed to last year, under which India agreed to reduce tariff on 11 commodities and South Korea on 17, failed to see completion.

More than eight years into its existence, the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ICCK), is struggling to find its due space in promoting economic and business ties and spends most of its time organising social and cultural events. A new, empowered commerce body is the urgent need of the hour. The Indian Cultural Centre, established more than ten years ago, has failed to reach out to common South Koreans, who still fail to differentiate between India and Indonesia. While it teaches regional dance forms to children, the bigger picture of introducing India to the general South Korean population has been lost. Further, social and economic discrimination against Indians working and living in South Korea is still a regular occurrence.

The fallout of trade war

The ongoing trade war between U.S. and China has also started playing into India-South Korea bilateral ties as South Korean companies are now finding it more difficult to sell their products in the U.S., whenever they are produced in their Chinese branches. Growing trade tensions have forced South Korean companies to contemplate moving their production facilities to locations outside China. India is emerging as a prime beneficiary here, not least because of the considerable size of the Indian



DATA POINT

Advantage Indians?

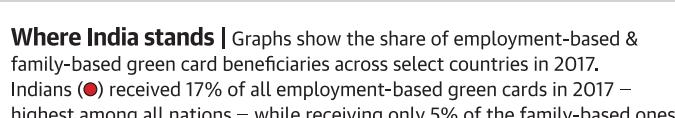
Skill over family | The merit-based immigration proposal aims to increase the share of green cards issued based on employment from 12% to 57%



The U.S. is mulling a reduction in the number of green cards issued based on family ties and an increase in the share of skills-based immigrants. As the total number of green cards issued is proposed to remain the same, the idea may benefit highly-skilled Indians who wish to settle in the U.S. By Suman Sen & Niharika Pandya

Where India stands | Graphs show the share of employment-based & family-based green card beneficiaries across select countries in 2017.

Indians (●) received 17% of all employment-based green cards in 2017 – highest among all nations – while receiving only 5% of the family-based ones



Better skilled

Between 2012 and 2017, over 86% of the total Indian immigrants in the U.S. had at least a bachelor's degree. This is the largest proportion of highly-skilled immigrants among all nations. On the contrary, such immigrants from China and Mexico accounted for 58% and 16% of their total respectively. The graph plots the total immigrants against the high-skilled from each country.

Longer queues

The table shows avg. years waited, until green card became available under quota, across select nationalities as of 2018. The wait time was longest for Indians.

Last word

The proposal to shift from family-based immigration to employment-based may help the highly-skilled Indian green card hopefuls to get the permanent resident status in higher numbers and may also reduce their wait period.

Source: DHS, U.S. Cato Institute, Migration policy.org, USCIS, White House

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 24, 1969

Space workshop to be put in orbit

The United States plans to put a space workshop into orbit in 1972, the Space Agency announced here [Houston] yesterday [July 22]. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said the third stage of the giant Saturn 5 rocket used to send Apollo spaceships to the moon would be used to house the orbiting laboratory and observatory. The project will study man's physiological and psychological responses in the space environment, and provide more detailed information on his capabilities for extended manned flight. The workshop is to be fitted out on the ground and will be launched into a 220 nautical mile circular earth orbit. It will be occupied by a crew of three astronauts who will follow in a smaller rocket about a day later. At first, the astronaut-scientists will spend about 28 days in the orbiting workshop, but later visits lasting up to 56 days are planned. The laboratory will be built into a modified S-IVB third stage of the Saturn 5 rocket. The S-IVB is used as the Saturn 1B's second stage.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 24, 1919.

Castor-oil prices.

Indian castor-oil has now been proved to be an excellent lubricant and the scarcity of mineral oils here has made people to resort to the vegetable lubricant so much so that its prices have soared very high in the past some months. In February 1918 the export of castor-oil was restricted to the United Kingdom but the restriction was removed on 22nd February 1919. Owing to the failure of the south-west monsoon in June and July, the 1918-1919 crop of castor-seed was about 25 per cent, smaller than the large crop of 1917-1918. There was a strong local demand for the oil which was extensively used as a lubricant in the absence of the usual mineral lubricating oil. Local prices helped by speculation, it is stated, rose considerably varying from Rs. 125 to Rs. 225 per candy of 500 lb. and reached figures at which the Ministry of Food was unwilling to buy and increase its large stocks in England. The total shipments amounted to 559,881 gallons in 1918-19 against 920,758 gallons during the previous year, practically the whole of which went to the United Kingdom. The scope for the increased production of castor as a lubricant thus promises to be wide; and it would be well if the Agricultural Department would devote some attention to this raising of castor seeds.