

TELLING NUMBERS

N-E crowds list of states with most dense tree & forest cover

A QUARTER of India's geographical area (24.49 per cent) is under forest and tree cover, according to data shared in Parliament by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. These assessments are done by the Forest Survey of India, whose findings are published in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The last report was published in 2017.

The lowest forest and tree cover in the country is in Haryana, at 6.79 per cent of its geographical area. Punjab follows with 6.87 per cent. Rajasthan's forest and tree cover is over 7.26 per cent of its geographical area while Madhya Pradesh's is 9.18 per cent. At 97 per cent, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is on top - its geographical area is only 30 square km. Among the six states with the highest forest and tree cover, four are in the Northeast - Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Goa and Kerala are two other

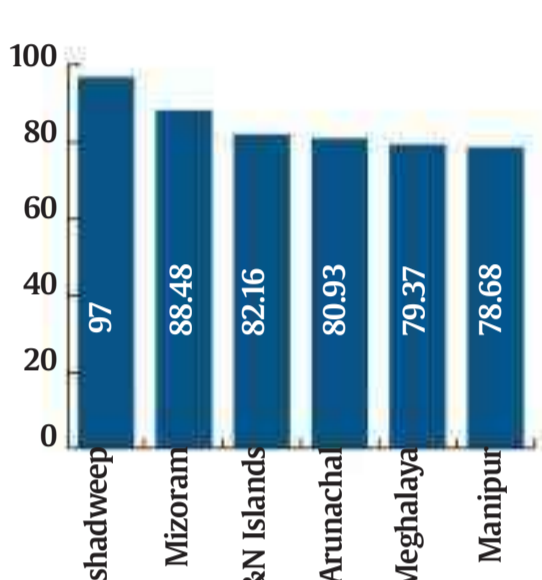


Tree planting drive in Chandigarh in 2016. File photo

states with more than 50 per cent of their geographical area under forest and tree cover.

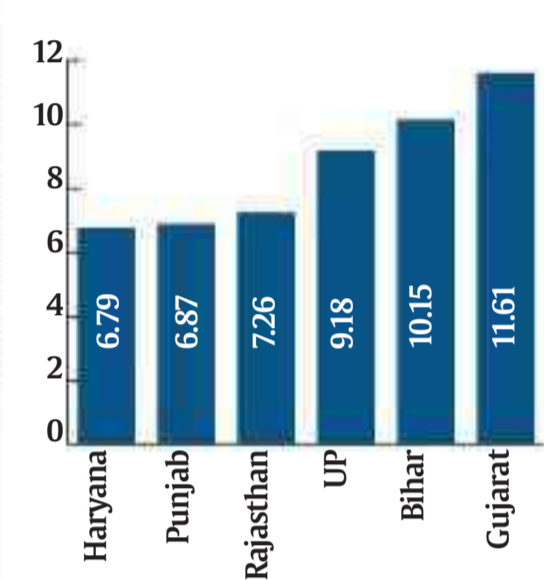
In terms of geographical area, the highest tree and forest cover is in Madhya Pradesh, with 85,487 sq km.

TOP SIX



Tree plus forest cover as a percentage of geographical area
Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

BOTTOM SIX



TIP FOR READING LIST

TRY ALL TRADES TO MASTER ONE

IF SOMEONE wants herself or her child to develop a skill and excel in it, say playing a musical instrument, how intensely do they focus? Experts would argue that they start early in life, practise for as long as possible, and specialise. Journalist David Epstein argues that it pays more to generalise than to specialise. In *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialised World*, Epstein uses data from surveys of individual cases of eminent musicians, inventors, scientists, artists, and athletes to argue that generalists, while they take longer to make their mark, tend to outshine specialists because of their varied interests, creativity, and their ability to see across domains. The path to excellence, therefore, lies not through early specialisation but in trying out multiple domains and broadening skills.

Among young musicians, one survey found, the most successful ones were

those who found their instrument of choice only after having tried other ones. Scientists who won a Nobel prize, as opposed to the scientists who didn't, were 22 times more likely to have also tried

their skills as actors, dancers, musicians, or other performers. Epstein gives the example of tennis player Roger Federer, whose parents encouraged him to try various sports, including basketball, handball, skiing, skateboarding, swimming, table tennis, and wrestling, before he finally chose tennis.

Epstein not only argues in favour of experimenting with various skills, but also that one should quit frequently. He cautions, though, that it is critically important to know when to quit, and suggests premeditated possible scenarios that would warrant quitting a job before even accepting it.



KABIR FIRAUQUE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

LAST WEEK, the Supreme Court refused to be drawn into a debate over the leak of National Register of Citizens (NRC) data in Assam, stressing that it wants the final NRC out on schedule (August 31) "irrespective of who likes it or who doesn't". This capped a week of controversy that began with the state government tabling the data in the Assembly, and demanding verification.

What kind of data were presented in the Assembly?

According to the government, these are from the draft final NRC published in July last year. It showed the number of people included in and excluded from the NRC in each of Assam's 33 districts. In fact, sections of the Assamese vernacular media had published district-wise data last year itself, but the NRC authorities had never commented on their authenticity. Besides, the numbers of inclusions and exclusions will now have changed, following the processes of claims and objections.

Last year, the NRC authorities did not give a district-wise breakup and only released all-Assam totals - 3,29,91,384 applicants, out of whom 2,89,83,677 were included as citizens and 40,07,707 were left out. In the data tabled in the Assembly, the totals are slightly different - 3,29,91,385 applicants, 2,89,83,668 inclusions and 40,07,717 exclusions.

What is the significance of data broken up district-wise?

It is about demographic profiles and geographic locations. BJP minister and government spokesperson Chandra Mohan Patowary, who presented the data, highlighted a trend - the inclusion rate is higher in Bangladesh-border districts, and lower in districts with a predominant indigenous population. The government cited these trends to claim the NRC is flawed. This argument presumes that the number of illegal immigrants will be higher in border districts. Migrants from East Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh have, however, been settling in various parts of Assam for decades.

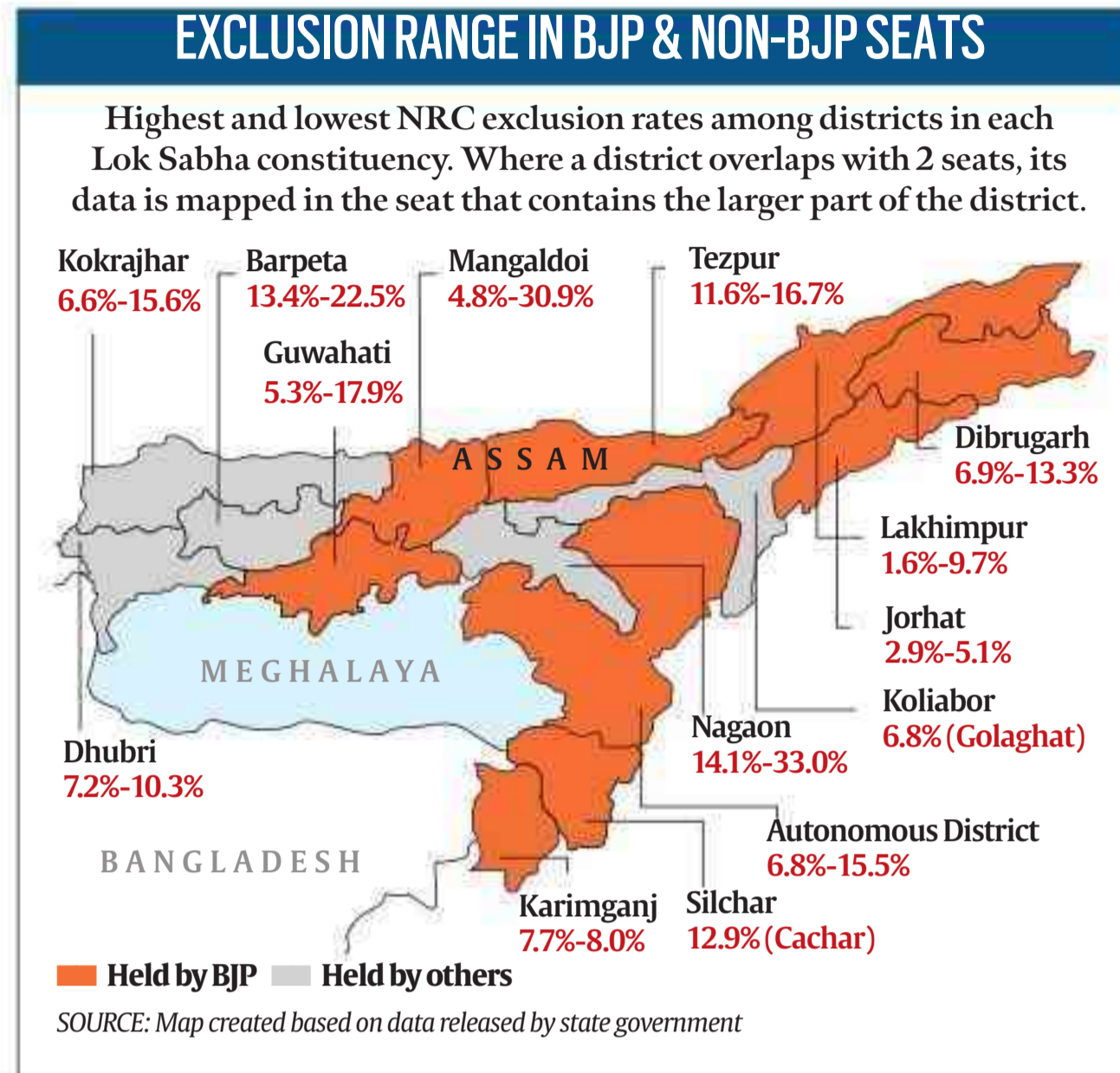
The three border districts - Dhubri, South Salmara and Karimganj - happen to be Muslim majority. On the other hand, the two districts with the highest exclusion rates - Hojai and Darrang - too have high Muslim populations but are far from the border.

What do demographic profiles tell us

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How to read leaked NRC data

Data released by Assam government caused a storm in Assembly but NRC process stays on schedule. What trends was the govt trying to highlight, and what is their demographic and political significance?



about immigration?

While it is widely accepted that the migrant-origin population is predominantly Muslim, the counter-argument is that Bengali Muslims have been entering Assam since British rule. Migration is considered illegal only when someone has entered Assam after March 24, 1971. As such, the relationship between population profiles and immigration has been a subject of debate among demographers.

Dr Nandita Saikia, Assistant Professor of Population Studies at JNU, has analysed Census figures since 1891 to conclude that Muslims comprised 85 per cent of migrants from East Bengal during 1891-1951, and about two-thirds of migrants from East Pakistan during 1951-71. For the period between 1971-2011, she concludes that the Muslim population growth in Assam (from about 25% to 34%) cannot be explained as a natural increase.

Abdul Mannan, former professor of statistics at Gauhati University, has gone into the same population trends in his book *Infiltration: Genesis of Assam Movement* and concluded that the Muslim population growth has been driven by natural factors rather than migration. "A segment of the

Muslim population has a higher fertility rate, unfortunately, because of illiteracy, backwardness and other factors," Mannan said. Some districts have always had a high Muslim population, such as Karimganj since Independence, and undivided Goalpara district since the first census of 1871, he said.

Leave alone religious profiles, even the extent of overall migration is debated. "Over decades, scholars, activists and politicians have struggled, jostled and claimed vastly different figures for in-migration," noted Sanjoy Hazarika, journalist, author and International Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. "The issues are far more complex than a simple sum game, much more than the demographics of religion. There are community growth rates, overall and group fertility rates (the number of children that women will bear between different ages), mortality data and replacement rates," Hazarika said. "... The fact of the matter is that no one has a clear idea. Bangladesh has denied for decades that any of its nationals migrate to India."

Won't the NRC clear the uncertainty?

Hazarika said the NRC, "if it had been done clearly and correctly, had been the best bet to

develop a reasonable figure. Now it is mired in so many controversies over data and who's on or off it and why, that it will continue to be a long and tortuous process. And the poorest and most vulnerable are bound to suffer the most. Ad hoc, knee-jerk rhetorical flourishes may make for good sound bites, but they often are far from reality, logic or facts."

Among researchers, Saikia questioned the NRC, saying it was not scientific as it was done without a pilot project (an attempt in 2010 was foiled by protests), adding there are fundamental flaws in the field verification process, and calling it unfortunate that the Supreme Court has not agreed to re-verification. She said the total exclusion was lower than figures declared by the Centre from time to time. "During 1971-2011, the population growth of those districts which experienced established immigration trends before 1951 is unbelievably high. However, they have the highest inclusion in NRC. Whatever exclusion is happening, they too will be included in the final list as excluded people's close relatives are included," she said.

Mannan, on the other hand, described the government narrative around the NRC data as "sheer propaganda not supported by statistics". He said the cutoff date of 1971 is not acceptable to the government, which is trying various ways to delay the NRC. "If they cannot bring the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) before the NRC, a large number of those who came after 1971 and who do not have documents... a majority of them will not find their names in the NRC."

Why should exclusion, and not inclusion, cause the government anxiety?

Higher Muslim inclusion also implies higher Bengali Hindu exclusion, a base that the BJP is trying to protect. Over the last one year, minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other BJP leaders have publicly cited their estimates about a high proportion of Hindus among the exclusions. If they are still out of the NRC, the BJP is hoping that they would be eligible for Indian citizenship if the CAB is passed.

Ranjit Dass, state BJP president, told *The Indian Express*: "We have appealed to our central committee that unless a Foreigners Tribunal or a higher court declares a person a foreigner, one should not be declared as such only based on the NRC. Also, people who are eligible under CAB will be included as citizens once it's passed - and we are committed to passing it... There is no question of vote bank but it's all about a moral responsibility."

With inputs from Abhishek Saha in Guwahati

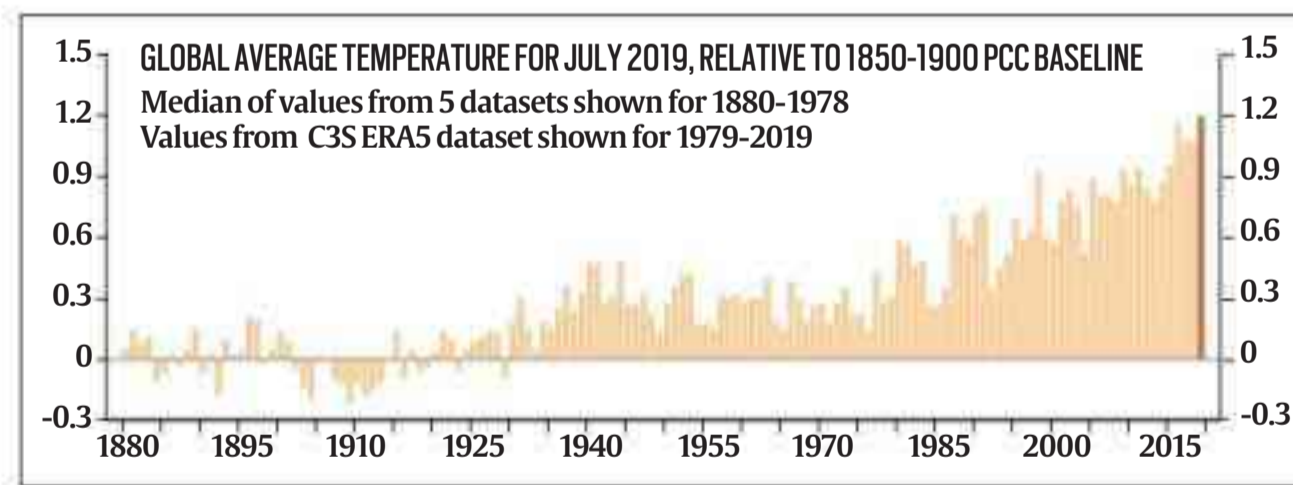
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

THIS MONTH, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that July 2019 matched, and possibly broke, the record for the hottest month since analysis began.

Trends: The finding emerged from analysis of new data from the WMO and the Copernicus Climate Change Programme, run by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts. The previous warmest month on record was July 2016, and July 2019 was at least on par with it.

Every month in 2019 has ranked among the four warmest for the month in question, and June was the warmest June ever recorded, the Copernicus Programme said in a state-



Source: Copernicus Climate Change Programme

ment. July 2019 was close to 1.2°C above the pre-industrial level. The Paris Agreement set specific 'temperature targets' with a goal to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

Why it's a concern: Exceptional heat has been observed across the globe in recent weeks, with several European countries recording temperature highs. "The extraordinary heat was accompanied by dramatic ice melt in Greenland, in the Arctic and on

European glaciers. Unprecedented wildfires raged in the Arctic for the second consecutive month, devastating once-pristine forests which used to absorb carbon dioxide and instead turning them into fiery sources of greenhouse gases. This is not science fiction. It is the reality of climate change. It is happening now and it will worsen in the future without urgent climate action," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement.

The statement quoted UN Secretary-General António Guterres as saying: "This year alone, we have seen temperature records shattered from New Delhi to Anchorage, from Paris to Santiago, from Adelaide and to the Arctic Circle. If we do not take action on climate change now, these extreme weather events are just the tip of the iceberg. And, indeed, the iceberg is also rapidly melting."

How PoK has featured in RSS, Jana Sangh discourse for nearly 7 decades

SHYAMLAL YADAV

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

HOME MINISTER Amit Shah reiterated in Lok Sabha last week that the creation of the two new Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh did not mean the dilution of India's claim over the entire original state of Jammu and Kashmir, including the portions occupied by Pakistan and China. While this has always been India's position, for the RSS and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), Kashmir and PoK have been especially important.

Jana Sangh

The BJP perceives an inalienable link between Jammu and Kashmir and its own inception, both as a party and as an ideology. Kashmir was one of the issues on which the founder president of the BJS - the predecessor and first avatar of the BJP - Syama Prasad Mookerjee, walked out of the Cabinet of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The Jana Sangh was founded in 1951, and Mookerjee told Nehru that it would be "nothing short of national disgrace and humiliation" if India failed to recover the part of Kashmir that

Pakistan had illegally occupied. On June 23, 1953, Mookerjee died in jail in Srinagar, where he had been kept by the government of Sheikh Abdullah after he entered Kashmir in violation of prohibitory orders. The slogan "Jahaan hue balidaan Mookerjee, wo Kashmir hamara hai" has been raised by the BJS and BJP ever since.

In its first annual conclave in Kanpur in January 1952, the BJS under Mookerjee expressed concern over the central government's policies which had resulted in the "invader Pakistan's occupation of 1/3rd land of the state (Jammu and Kashmir)".

In its meeting in Allahabad (now Prayagraj) on August 15, 1953, the BJS passed a resolution saying "Bharat-Pakistan friendship" was not possible until the "return of 2/5th of Pak-Occupied-Kashmir".

In its third annual conclave in Jodhpur in January 1955, the BJS reiterated its demand that "Government must clearly and decisively declare that it will make all efforts to take back Kashmir's one-third part occupied by Pakistan illegally."

In its fourth conclave in Jaipur in April 1956, the BJS again demanded that Nehru's government should "make all possible efforts to take back PoK at the earliest".

In its national executive meeting in Jaipur in April 1957, the party asked the government to "make all efforts to take back Pak-Occupied-Kashmir". The BJS manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections in 1957 said India "should try to take the one-third part of Kashmir back".

This demand was reiterated in the sixth all-India conclave in Ambala in April 1958, and in its meeting in Surat in December 1959.

The BJS manifesto for the 1962 Lok Sabha elections promised to "make all efforts to take Pak-Occupied-Kashmir back."

The national executive meeting in Kota in May 1962 expressed concern over the Pakistan-China alliance against India, and demanded that "active steps must be taken to take back Pak-Occupied-Kashmir".

In January 1966, the BJS national executive meeting in Kanpur said: "It is the duty of the central government to get PoK back. It should be the only issue in the dialogue between India and Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir."

The manifesto for the 1967 Lok Sabha elections did not mention PoK, but went a step further: "BJS believes in integration of Bharat and Pakistan".

The 1971 manifesto did not mention PoK. But the November 1972 meeting in Jaipur criticised the Simla Agreement, and the calling back of the Indian Army "without liberating the areas of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan since 1947".

RSS

The RSS's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), Kendra Karyakari Mandal (KKM), and Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal (ABKM), too, have repeatedly raised the issue of PoK.

In 1960, the KKM said the government, "by giving its silent consent to the construction of Mangala Dam in Pak-occupied Kashmir, shown its mental preparedness to give up its claim over that strategic area".

In 1962, the RSS passed a resolution in its KKM opposing concessions to Pakistan on Kashmir and other issues: "Pakistan herself is an aggressor in Kashmir. If India acquiesces before one aggressor, it can't resist the other."

In 1963, the ABPS said the core issue in India-Pak talks on Kashmir should be "the question of getting Pakistan's aggression vacated from the one-third part of Kashmir".

In 1990, an ABKM resolution said

"Tension there (in Kashmir) could get defused only if Pakistan withdraws from the 2/5th part of Kashmir forcibly occupied by it."

In 1994, after Parliament unanimously resolved that "Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression", the ABPS said it "hopes that this timely expression of national solidarity will spur the government to abandon its hitherto ambivalent attitude towards the Kashmir issue".

In 1995, the ABKM said "It is very strange that all the brave talk on the floor of the Parliament and on various international fora about Jammu and Kashmir's irrevocable integration with Bharat and the declaration that the only problem that remains is one of vacation by Pakistan of its occupied parts in Kashmir should have evaporated so soon."

In 1997, in the light of discussions on greater autonomy for the state, the ABPS warned that greater autonomy "will close all options before our country to take steps in the light of the unanimous resolution of the Parliament".

In 2003, in a resolution on "International Scenario", the RSS's ABKM called upon the government "To draft our



WORDLY WISE
GREAT FLOODS HAVE FLOWN FROM
SIMPLE SOURCES.
— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

J&K and the world

India's strategies for internal security, territorial defence and diplomacy will have to act in unison



C RAJA MOHAN

THE REWIND

Return of Sonia as interim president, Congress failure to look beyond its first family, signals its inadequacy in a challenging political moment

IN HIS RESIGNATION letter from the post of Congress president, Rahul Gandhi had called for a transformation of the party. Later, he said that the Congress must pick a president from outside the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to move forward from the general election defeat. However, on Saturday, nearly two-and-half months after Rahul quit as party chief, the Congress Working Committee, the party's top decision-making body, named Sonia Gandhi the interim president. Sonia, who helmed the party for a record 19 years till 2017, will hold the post until organisational elections are held and a new president is appointed.

Predictably, senior Congress leaders have hailed the choice. In fact, however, the party's move to fall back on a former president from the dynasty is a symptom of the crisis plaguing the Congress. Clearly, India's Grand Old Party seems to be lacking in young talent. Or, its privileged and entitled establishment that has so abysmally failed to challenge the BJP juggernaut rolling over the country's political landscape, is unwilling to step aside for a new leadership. Either way, given the absence of any structures and processes or ideological framework, it seems that the only glue that can hold the party together is still the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The Congress has also exposed itself as a timid party unwilling to face up to the new reality. India, today, has a predominantly young electorate. Under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, the BJP appeals to the Indian state. The Congress, however, appears to be in a state of confusion as the Modi-Shah regime resets the nation's policies and priorities. The party's failure to produce a coherent response to the Centre's decision to amend Article 370 and change the status of Jammu and Kashmir is only the latest illustration of its listless character today.

The absence of leadership and lack of direction in the Congress has prodded many leaders to leave the party. Sonia's return as president may stem the bleeding. But the party will need to do much more if it wants to regain credibility among voters. A first step could be to end the nomination culture in the party and hold elections for leadership positions. That itself could rejuvenate the party and help it attract young, energetic people. The Congress also needs to restate its principles so that citizens know where it stands on crucial national issues. It needs fresh faces, bold strategies and a new political language to come back into the reckoning. It could take a leaf from the BJP, which recast its leadership after losing the 2009 general election and acquired a new edge. Even though the return of Sonia at the helm draws attention to the impoverishment of Congress options, she could step up to this moment and ensure a genuine transition by taking the tough decisions.

WHEN YOU CREATE new facts on the ground, especially in a contested terrain, you must be prepared for push back. As Pakistan mounts a political offensive against India's decision to alter the status of Jammu and Kashmir, there will surely be international ripples. The Indian diplomatic objective is to get the rest of the world to live with the new reality in Kashmir, if not accept it.

This is not the first time that India has created new facts on the ground. India's Pokhran tests of 1998 come readily to mind. It took about 10 years for the international system to move from a very harsh initial reaction to lifting by 2008 the four-decade-old nuclear blockade against India.

That is good diplomatic precedent for Delhi in coping with whatever Pakistan throws at India. But there should be no underestimating the complexity of the challenge. India's diplomatic response must be at multiple levels. One is the legal dimension. Realists might scoff at legal niceties. But legal arguments are important and Delhi must present a solid legal brief about its actions, since there is little international understanding of the complex historical evolution of Kashmir. That applies more broadly to the international public opinion, where the Pakistani narrative on Kashmir continues to prevail, thanks to the nature of the international media coverage of Kashmir. Of special interest are the Western legislatures that tend to generate policy pressures on their executive establishments.

Traditionally, Pakistan has been good at mobilising opinion in these quarters, especially in Britain and Europe. India has done quite well in the US over the years, where it has outsmarted separatist propaganda backed by Pakistan. But Delhi should note that Pakistan is learning from the Indian playbook in the US. It has mobilised the not insignificant Pakistani diaspora and won over small but key sections of the Congress.

Then comes the question of "internationalisation". Pakistan loves the idea and India deeply resents it. Going to the UNSC has been the instinctive first reaction of Pakistan. But neither Pakistan's faith in the UN nor India's concerns stand up to close scrutiny. The UN's ability to impose solutions on disputes between nations has rarely been impressive. But for India taking the Kashmir question to it, there was no way the UN would loom so large on Kashmir. During the Cold War, divisions

among major powers limited the UN Security Council's peace-making role. After the end of the Cold War, though, there was a brief moment when Russia and China seemed to acquiesce in the interventionist agenda that Western liberals had set for the UN.

Great powers are quarrelling again and they are unlikely to agree on the Kashmir question. India's task is to simply prevent such an agreement.

This does not mean India's engagement with the UN and multilateral agencies is unimportant. Some multilateral activity can be quite useful. For example, the recent Indian campaign at the UN on designating Masood Azhar as a terrorist has been good at highlighting Pakistan's role as a safe haven for violent extremism. Even more valuable has been India's engagement with the Financial Action Task Force, which has ratcheted up the pressures on Pakistan to stop support for terrorism. What matters, therefore, is not the general principle of "internationalisation", but the specifics of the context and the nature of the forum.

Pakistan's proclaimed faith in mediation is touching because there is no evidence that third-party involvement in the Kashmir dispute has benefited Pakistan. Consider, for example, Islamabad's efforts to mobilise the international community for mediation in the Kargil War two decades ago. It ended up in the US compelling Pakistan to accept the sanctity of the Line of Control. Rather than getting rattled by Pakistan's posturing on mediation, Delhi should concentrate on the attitudes of the major powers to the current dynamic in the Subcontinent. Bilateralism is the key to outcomes on the multilateral domain. Consider the five permanent members of the UNSC.

China is a party to the dispute on Kashmir twice over. The border between India and China in Ladakh is disputed; China also occupies a piece of Kashmir that Pakistan ceded to it in 1963. China is certainly part of India's Kashmir problem. China, however, has problems of its own in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Beijing surely knows that those living in glass houses should not be throwing stones.

Russia, once upon a time, was India's go-to veto-wielder at the UN on Kashmir. Delhi too has stood by Moscow when it is in some difficulty, for example when Russia changed the facts on the ground in Crimea during 2011. In recent times, Russia has drawn closer to China and is often tempted to take "even-

handed" positions between India and Pakistan. But dispelling all doubts, Moscow has come out last week in support of India's Kashmir move.

Over the last two decades, France has emerged as a reliable strategic partner — a sort of "new Russia" for India. In recent years, it has played a key role in the FATF as well as the UNSC on terror-related issues. Delhi can certainly bank on political support from Paris at the current juncture.

When it comes to Kashmir and Pakistan, Britain is always suspect in Delhi's eyes. There is speculation that London played a key role in facilitating the current US reset on Pakistan. As Britain defines its post-Brexit global strategy, Delhi must encourage London to take into account its long-term interests in India and end its persistent ambiguity on Kashmir.

In the end, though, it's really the US that has the most important role in shaping the international reaction to the developments in Kashmir. For nearly two years, its been the relentless pressure from Washington that has forced Pakistan to count the costs of its support for terrorism. And it is the US decision to quit Afghanistan that seems to have emboldened Pakistan to ramp up pressures on Kashmir.

India can't quibble with the US decision not to spend more of its blood and treasure in Afghanistan. Beyond that, there is much room for discussion between Delhi and Washington on a range of issues relating to the future of Afghanistan and the sources of terror in Pakistan. It should not be impossible to find a way to secure the interests of both, especially since the India-US bilateral relationship has acquired much greater depth over the last two decades, and covers a much wider region than the Subcontinent.

The real test for Indian diplomacy, including with the US, comes when Delhi lifts the massive security blanket over Kashmir and Pakistan unleashes its terror proxies. That in turn sets the stage for a muscular Indian response, an inevitable escalation of the conflict with Pakistan and the intensification of great power interest in Kashmir. That is when India's strategies for internal security, territorial defence and diplomacy will have to act in unison.

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

A FLOOD OF DOUBTS

Maharashtra floods revive questions of coordination and efficiency in water resource management

AFTER BEING BATTERED by unprecedented rains for over a week, nearly 4 lakh people have been rescued from flood-hit villages in the Pune, Sangli and Satara districts of Maharashtra and relocated to 300-odd camps. The state government, the armed forces and the NDRF completed commendable rescue missions, but around 30 lives were lost, including 10 who died tragically when a rescue boat capsized in Sangli. The Met department has predicted a slowing down of rains in the state over the next few days, and while lakhs of homes will need rebuilding, about 1.5 lakh hectares including some of Western India's most productive farmland, including sugar-producing regions, is now destroyed for this year's critical kharif season.

Running through the centre of this crisis is the river Krishna, which blesses agricultural land in south-western Maharashtra with bountiful harvests. The very heavy rains in the upstream areas of the Krishna began at the start of the month. By Monday, August 5, parts of Pune district experienced floods even as Kolhapur city faced a partial blackout as transformers and feeders went under. By Tuesday, very large parts of the region were flooded as the dangerously swollen Krishna breached its banks. On Tuesday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis spoke to his Karnataka counterpart BS Yediyurappa, requesting that more water be discharged from the Almatti, the first dam across the Krishna in the neighbouring district, in order to provide some relief in the upstream regions in Maharashtra. But only on Friday did the discharge from Almatti cross five lakh cusecs, likely on account of the neighbouring state's bureaucracy, concerned about its own water stocks. By Saturday, parts of Sangli and Kolhapur had been flooded for six days and dozens of villages marooned as roads and major highways were inundated. Without a doubt, the rains were unprecedented — Pune has now received 140 per cent in excess of its average rain for this time of the year, while Satara and Sangli have recorded 81 per cent and 59 per cent in excess. But the upstream dams on the Krishna were discharging water from their reservoirs early last week, and the delay in coaxing more water to be released from Almatti was perhaps critical. Fadnavis has said the need of the hour is more accurate rain forecasts, more detailed warnings in place of the current categorisation as "heavy" or "very heavy". But in reality, while weather forecasting models will continue to develop, there was fair warning of last week's deluge. So the state must now look into whether there was adequate coordination between various arms of the bureaucracy in managing dam waters in the Krishna river basin, whether a pre-planned and controlled release of waters over a few days could have prevented some of the widespread destruction caused by sudden discharges.

Similar questions over whether reservoir waters should have been released in a controlled manner over several days were raised after previous Maharashtra floods too. Flood management can no longer be seen as minimising economic and physical losses. As plans get afoot to build more big dams and river linking projects, the state will need intelligent and nimble — and transparent — water resource management.



IN GOOD FAITH

ASHWINI MOKASHI

THE PURSUIT OF wisdom, virtue and happiness are lifelong goals, and the process of attaining these goals itself is a worthwhile experience. Such themes from ancient texts continue into contemporary conversation, while the quest for happiness is pursued anew with each generation.

The wise person of the Gita, Sthitaprajna, is concerned with what is right action and how to exercise right judgement. In doing so, the sage becomes a jnana yogi, and by performing the right actions, the Sthitaprajna also becomes a karma yogi. The Sthitaprajna must possess, according to the Gita, a number of characteristics. First, she/he engages and excels in one's own duties (svadharma). Second, the Sthitaprajna is a believer in the teachings of the Gita (shraddha). Third, she displays equanimity to pleasure and pain (samatvam). And finally, there is the development of non-attachment (anasakti) and tranquility (shanti).

Wise people abandon all desires. They have no sense of possessiveness, sense of "mine". They discard their ego (ahamkara). Their concern for the self is absorbed into a concern for the divine. They are tranquil and

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The Gita and philosopher Seneca provide a roadmap to tranquility

happy. This state is known as the state of wisdom (sthitaprajna) or the state of Brahman establishment (brahmi sthiti). This state is no doubt difficult to attain but once attained, it stays with the Sthitaprajna until the end.

The wise person of the Stoic, Seneca — Sapiens — embodies the ethical tenets of Stoicism, which bring them permanent happiness. Seneca describes how to be wise by incorporating the Stoic ethical concepts such as appropriate actions (kathekonta), what belongs to oneself (oikeiosis), virtue (arete), detachment (apatheia), telos (goal) of living in accordance with nature, knowledge of the laws of nature, which together lead to happiness (eudaimonia). For Seneca, happiness essentially means peace of mind, which results from a constant practice of virtue, and intellectual exercise, which is required to perform moral actions. Seneca's critique of emotions such as anger and grief highlights both the utility and futility of emotions.

In both systems, a wise person is one who has the capacity for making correct judgements when undertaking action, and for these she then assumes complete responsibility. Right thinking results in right action, essential for peace of mind and happiness: Right or moral actions lead to virtue. Happiness results from knowing one has done the right thing at the right time.

the right time.

There are, however, also significant differences between Seneca's vision and that of the Gita. The Gita's metaphysical concept of moksha has no parallel in Stoicism. The Sthitaprajna becomes a virtuous person, achieves moksha and becomes a part of the divine Brahman. The Sapiens becomes virtuous in preparation for death. The conceptual differences illustrate that while the definition of a Sthitaprajna or one with steady wisdom would be applicable to the Sapiens, the terms Yogastha (established in Yoga) or Samadhistha (wrapped in meditation) would not.

Seneca's treatment of various emotions is one of the most unique features of his philosophical writings. Seneca treats different emotions with the skill of a psychological therapist and shows the futility of those emotions in a logical and sensitive way, without making it sound like a Stoic mandate of denying passions to any individual. Seneca's great contribution is to make this concept available to everyone by giving people directions instead of merely asking them to rise to a high standard of the ethical expectations of Stoicism.

Mokashi is the author of Sapiens and Sthitaprajna: A Comparative Study in Seneca's Stoicism and the Bhagavad-Gita

AUGUST 12, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

STRIKERS ARRESTED

VIOLENCE IN SEVERAL parts of the city, resulting in the arrest of around 300 persons, marred the strike called in Delhi by all the central trade unions. Industrial units, as well as buses, shops and hotels were stoned by groups of striking industrial workers. The bandh, called to express solidarity with the striking textile workers and to demand an increase in the minimum wage laid down by the Delhi administration, was only partially successful. Essential services such as water supply, electricity and milk were unaffected. However, these workers had in any case been exempted from the "bandh" call given by the trade unions.

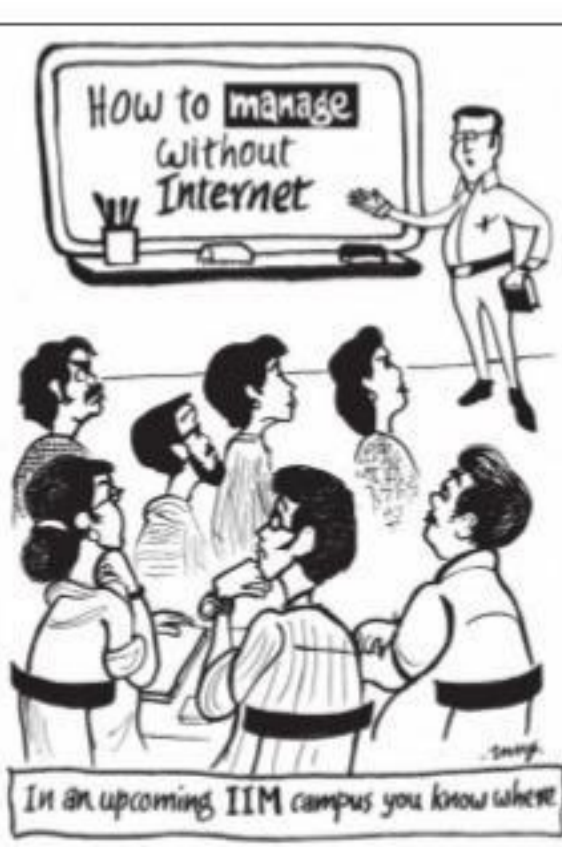
NARMADA FLOODS

THE ARMY WAS called out in Broach to assist relief operations as the swirling waters of the Narmada entered the city and the help of the Air Force was sought to rescue over a thousand people marooned in the floods at Wankaner in Rajkot district in Gujarat. The flood waters entered the city last night, disrupting normal life. Narmada was flowing at 31.5 feet this morning after crossing the danger mark of 22 last night at Golden bridge near Ahmedabad. The low-lying areas of Broach were completely submerged.

FAVOURABLE DESTINATION

INDIA HAS BECOME the safest place in the

world for the members of the western underworld to change their identity. "Shedding skin" — as the process of changing identity is called in the underworld lingo — is as easy here as buying tickets at a railway booking window. A source in the foreigners regional registration office said that nowhere in the world can a Canadian Tony Wilson change himself into an American Jack Smith as early as in India. The modus operandi is simple. All that is needed is a passport and one or two other identity papers. The US social security card is among the hot favourites. The racket in passport trading, which was first exposed by *The Indian Express* in December 1975, has become active again with wider ramifications.



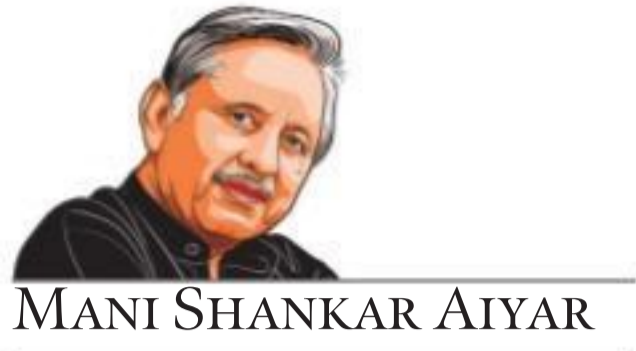
FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY

THE IDEAS PAGE

A long night in the Valley

Who are we to teach Kashmiris the virtues of democracy? What is sought to be drowned out is the legacy of unflinching patriotism to India that the Kashmiri Muslim has displayed



MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

NARENDRA MODI AND Amit Shah have just created a Palestine on our northern border. To do so, they first floated the deceitful rumour of an imminent massive Pakistani terror attack on the Valley to induct around 35,000 additional armed personnel into a region already bristling with lakhs of jawans. They then forcibly evacuated tens of thousands of Amarnath yatis and tourists from Kashmir. They have detained over 400 local leaders. They have shut down schools and colleges, shops and hotels, petrol pumps and gas outlets, and rendered the usually bustling streets of Srinagar and other Valley towns an empty wilderness. All communications have been severed other than those they do not have the technological capacity to cut. Parents in the Valley are unable to contact their sons and daughters in the rest of the country.

In the name of Fundamental Rights, the fundamental rights of the people of Kashmir are being extinguished. The Directive Principles of the Constitution are being enforced by transgressing the letter and spirit of the Directive Principles. A well-known Aya Ram-Gaya Ram of Uttar Pradesh is being paraded as the "voice of the people" of Kashmir. Why such suppression of seven million Kashmiris if they are in fact being "liberated" from the stranglehold of "three families"?

Modi-Shah have learned their lessons well from their mentor, Benjamin Netanyahu and the Zionists, including Menachem Begin, who preceded Netanyahu. They have learned how to trample on the freedom, dignity and self-respect of the Kashmiris even as Israel has tried to get away with seven decades of merciless oppression of the Palestinians. The Palestinians have retaliated by running a ceaseless insurrection ever since Al-Naqba ("The Catastrophe") of May 14, 1948, when they were crushed by the Zionist war machine, funded and supplied by western imperialism. Intifada has followed intifada. All have been mowed down but miraculously spring up again. That so many Arab allies have abandoned them and their own liberation movement has split down the middle has not ended Palestinian protest, however heavy the cost to the ordinary Palestinian in terms of death, injuries and incarceration.

Modi-Shah have promised the Kashmiris "development" in exchange for forced integration at the point of the rifle and pellet shots into the eyes of their children. Even as the Palestinians, whatever their internecine differences, have unanimously spurned the Manama package of US/petrodollars goodies in exchange for quiescence, so too are the Kashmiris spurning the Modi offer of an enslaved prosperity. Modi's political ancestors, of course, played no part in our freedom movement but had they done so they would have known that whatever the colonial investments made in railways and the telegraph, in industry and trade, in tea and jute,



CR Sasikumar

in "development" so-called, We the People of India (barring the Hindutva-ites) answered the British with the call of "Quit India".

What is sought to be drowned out is the legacy of unflinching patriotism to India that the Kashmiri Muslim has displayed, first in being the only Muslim-majority concentration in undivided India to close their ears to the siren call of Pakistan. They refused to believe that "Islam" was "in danger" because Independence was coming to secular Bharat. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was delivered a knock-out blow. In 1965, every single Pakistani intruder sent into the Valley under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's notorious Operation Gibraltar was picked up and reported to the Indian authorities. By whom? By the Kashmiri aam aadmi, who else, almost all Muslim to the last man, woman and child. How betrayed must they be feeling now that "freedom" is being thrust down their throat, like castor oil to a recalcitrant child, by the largest deployment ever of armed might inside an integral part of the country? How must the Naga and the Mizo, protected by the Article following the now deleted 370, namely, Article 371 of the Constitution, be looking at the purses of gold being flung at them by a patronising central government driving a Faustian bargain to buy adherence to a contemptuous India?

What the full-fledged Constitution of India promises to the Kashmiri is but a pale shadow of the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto adopted by the National Conference 75 years ago, on September 29-30, 1944. The principal draftsman was B P L Bedi (the father of actor Kabir Bedi). The leading lights of the National Conference included Prem Nath Bazaz, Kashyap Bandhu, Jia Lal Kilam and

Modi-Shah have promised the Kashmiris 'development' in exchange for forced integration at the point of the rifle and pellet shots into the eyes of their children. Even as the Palestinians, whatever their internecine differences, have unanimously spurned the Manama package of US/petrodollars goodies in exchange for quiescence, so too are the Kashmiris spurning the Modi offer of an enslaved prosperity.

Pandit Sudama Sidhu, besides Sardar Budh Singh. It was a Naya Kashmir for all the religious communities of the Riyasat. Writing in 1966, the renowned scholar of Kashmir affairs, Sisir Gupta, in his magisterial study, had this to say: "Socialistic in its approach, the plan in New Kashmir has ever since 1944 provided the guiding principles of the National Conference's approach to the problems of Kashmir". In other words, left to themselves, the Kashmiris might have given themselves an even more liberal order than they are now being offered with a pistol to their temple. To quote Gupta again, the proposed constitution "envisaged equality of citizens irrespective of religion, race, nationality of birth", freedom of conscience and worship, (as well as) of speech, of the press, of assembly and meetings, and of street processions" and the "right to work", "equal rights to men and women" and even children, besides "cheap, quick, impartial justice". In particular, there was a huge emphasis on women's rights with separate sections detailing women's rights in the political, economic, social, legal, and educational spheres. Modiji, Shah sahib, they were there long before us. So, who are we to teach Kashmiris the virtues of democracy?

Instead of *achhe din*, what Parliament has ensured is a long, dark night in the Valley, and perhaps even the rest of the country, with simmering communalism, rising political tensions, unending hit-and-run terrorism, asymmetric armed struggle, and guerrilla insurrection. This is what happened in East Pakistan in 1971. We are now bringing a similar disaster upon our heads. Be warned.

The writer is a former Union minister

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Why did Pakistan appear to have been taken by surprise when the Indian government scrapped Article 370? After all, one of the main planks of Mr Modi's hyper-nationalistic re-election campaign was the promise to do away with Kashmir's special status." — DAWN

Creation of order

Consider the larger picture: Abrogation of Articles 370, 35A will help integrate the Valley



SARJAN SHAH

EVEN MORE THAN the obvious economic benefits of expanded private and public investment in the territories of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir, the government's moves on Articles 370 and 35A shall strike at the heart of the festering politics of the Valley. Far from actually protecting any rights or privileges of the local people (who, if the critics are to be believed, have been living in tortuous circumstances under the jackbooted heels of Indian "occupation forces", even while having the proverbial shields of 370 and 35A), these temporary and conditional provisions of the Indian Constitution only served to extend and exacerbate an environment in which the people of the Kashmir valley felt an "otherness" towards their fellow Indians from the rest of the country.

Why, in a country that has the world's finest historical record on minority protections when adjusted for income, education and development levels, should a Muslim-majority state feel the need to have autonomy and special privileges? These "articles" had become little more than articles of faith for separatists to exploit, mainstream leaders to use when convenient and for all forms of nefarious influences to keep the Kashmiri Muslims in a constant state of "siege mentality". If, everyday, your leaders tout two provisions of the Indian Constitution as being the only reasons for the continued existence and viability of a Kashmiri civilisation; and, if those two provisions essentially limit the applicability of the very same Constitution of which they are a part — and from which they draw their authority and legitimacy — should it surprise outsiders that Kashmiris have at times been found as distrustful of the Indian state?

Considering the horrific circumstances that Indian security forces have had to endure since the start of militancy in the early 1990s, and without obfuscating the occasional lapses in judgment that have undoubtedly occurred, I feel proud that overall, the Kashmiri people have had to face far fewer deprivations than the Hindu, Sikh and Christian minorities in the western-most territories of united India (that is, West Pakistan). I am even more proud when the record of the Indian security forces in Kashmir is compared with the record of the Pakistani army in its own eastern territories, and against its own Bengali-speaking population.

There can be no doubt that the Indian state has spent more than 70 years attempting dialogue, cultural exchange and even rehabilitation of separatists and militants. Only when attacked by local or foreign militants have the Indian armed forces been compelled to respond with a heavy hand. Overall, the Kashmiri state has functioned — in fact, the very statistics being touted by

critics to show that J&K outclasses some hinterland Indian states along multiple development indices goes a long way to show that the Indian administration has provided education, nutrition and basic amenities to the local population in a relatively consistent manner, over a long period of time. And this, while constantly battling surprise hit-and-run attacks from heavily armed and externally-supported gunmen.

Given the circumstances, therefore, it seems that some form of drastic action was needed not only to accelerate the physical integration of the region with the rest of India — through investment in plant and machinery, expanded tourism and real estate, road, rail and air connectivity and the like — but also to accelerate the psychological and emotional integration of the Kashmiri people with the rest of India. In the post-370/35A era, even the maintenance of the same level of administration and governance, with the same level of judicial redress and other rights as the Kashmiris have enjoyed in the past, will be enough to finally drive home the point to every Kashmiri: That trusting the Indian state, its institutions and its secular fabric, is something they can do without fear.

Finally, a lot of criticism has been focused on the "means" used to conduct this sudden strike against the offending provisions of the Constitution. On this front, it is clear to me that maintenance of law and order, and the protection of our territorial integrity, are higher priorities than the temporary abeyance of certain rights and freedoms. A few days in detention for leaders who would have undoubtedly utilised this as an opportunity to stoke Kashmiri passion against the straw man of the tyrannical Indian state, a clampdown on avowed pro-Pakistani separatists and the prevention of mass media in an era of rampant fake news — these are patently sensible precautions for a state to take when attempting radical and far-reaching change. These precautions have to survive for weeks, not months.

The fact that the number of incidents of stone-pelting and militancy has been falling consistently since governor's rule began in Kashmir, and that there seem to have been no major or minor incidents of civil disobedience in the last week — while the administration has ensured smooth provision of basic amenities to the people — proves the tactical expediency of the "means" used. I am fully aware of the dangerous, slippery slope that curtailment of any kind of rights involves. However, I do believe that in dangerous times, in a dangerous neighbourhood (which South Asia undoubtedly is), and, when faced with one of the world's great intractable problems, "order" must take precedence over a superficial form of immediate justice. Only in the creation of long-term order, can we ever hope to have truly substantive justice for the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, who, I can say with the utmost conviction, are better off with us than they ever could be with our dear neighbours.

The writer is an alumnus of London School of Economics, Cambridge and Harvard, and lives and works in Mumbai



M M ANSARI

Was Kashmir listening to PM?

His contention that Article 370 is source of all misgovernance is belied by facts

IN HIS INDEPENDENCE Day speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort in 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Kashmir's problems can be solved only by embracing the people of Kashmir, not with bullets or abuses (*Na goli se, na gaali se, Kashmir ki samasya suljhegi gale lagane se*). The strategy of resolving the Kashmir imbroglio has changed.

In his speech on August 8, PM Modi justified his government's action on the abrogation of Article 370 by saying that the provision had outlived its utility. Major stakeholders in Kashmir were, however, not consulted before the government announced its move. Many important leaders were put under house arrest.

The communication system in Kashmir has been blocked and restrictions have been placed under Section 144. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge the extent to which the government's unilateral decision has hurt the sentiments of Kashmiris. But the lockdown in the Valley is unprecedented. After having blocked all telephone lines, the PM delivered a statesman-like discourse, one which sounded as a message of hope and harbinger of development. Its impact hasn't been assessed. But was anyone in the Valley listening to the PM?

Under Article 370, the Centre's legislative power was confined to three subjects — defence, external affairs and communications. And, the assembly of the erstwhile state had the power to decide which Central laws would apply to Jammu and Kashmir. Article 35A, also revoked, gave Jammu and

Kashmir's legislature the power to designate permanent residents and grant them special rights and privileges, including the right to own property. With the abrogation of special status, people of Kashmir would have rights enjoyed by the rest of the country, the PM said.

In 2010-11, then chief minister of the state, Omar Abdullah and the late Mufti Mohammed Sayeed told us that they were the most powerful CMs in the country because Article 370 gave them powers to execute development plans. In contrast, the PM dwelt at length on what he called the "discriminatory nature of these provisions" — a part of the compact with the Indian Union and Kashmir during the time of its accession. Necessary legislative changes have been made from time to time through democratic consultations.

In spite of perpetual turmoil, J&K's human development indicators compare favourably with other advanced Indian states. The trouble, however, is that confidence building measures were never implemented effectively. For instance, the Line of Control (LoC) trade, which offers opportunities to Kashmiris to promote business and employment, has been frequently disrupted by the Centre. Likewise, the PM's Special Scholarship Scheme for J&K students, of which a mention was made in the speech, has never been implemented in letter and spirit. Money was rarely disbursed on time to students and institutions. Therefore, the PM's criticism that Article 370 is a major source of misgovernance, including militancy, is un-

acceptable. He listed a number of welfare measures that could not be implemented due to Article 370. But it was the Centre, which did not do enough to effectively implement the BJP-PDP Agenda of Alliance. For instance, there was no headway in the rehabilitation of migrant Kashmiri Pandits, an important part of the agenda.

PM Modi made repeated reference to dynastic politics and said that leadership opportunities to the youth have been denied. He assured people in Kashmir of free and fair elections. The PM, however, did not explain as to why the state assembly elections were not conducted along with the recent parliamentary elections.

In fact, the government seemed to have made up its mind to abrogate Kashmir's special status and split it into two UTs. When PDP-NC decided to form the government, the assembly was dissolved on the pretext of failed communication.

The PM said that products of the state should be taken to the world but he was silent on why Srinagar could not have an international airport to facilitate exports. At the time of peak tourism when the Amarnath Yatra was on, visitors were told that the government apprehended terror attacks. This deprived many workers of their wages and livelihoods. The government knew what was going on, but the people were misled.

The PM commended the role of panchayats in delivering services to people. Unfortunately, the three-tier system for effective functioning of panchayats was never constituted, even when the BJP was a partner

in governance or when Jammu and Kashmir was under governor's rule. Elections at the block level have not been conducted. These omissions have nothing to do with the much-maligned Article 370.

While the PM has rightly said that J&K is an integral part of India, care should have been taken of international agreements, particularly the issues discussed with Pakistan from time to time. Under the Simla Agreement, India and Pakistan have agreed, *inter alia*, "Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both shall prevent the organisations, assistance or encroachment of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations". The unilateral abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two UTs is tantamount to violation of the above provision.

The PM has made repeated commitments to follow Atal Bihari Vajpayee's principle of resolving Kashmir dispute within the realm of 'Insaniyat, Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat'. But the government has not bothered to follow this principle.

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A could help the BJP in the upcoming state elections, divert attention from the sliding economy and cover up the failed attempts to contain militancy in J&K. But will these moves bring peace to Kashmir?

The writer is a former UGC member, CIC and interlocutor on Jammu and Kashmir

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WITHOUT PRINCIPLE
THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Silence of the successful' (IE, August 9). The parallels drawn by the author between the demolition of the Babri Masjid and revocation of Article 370 are shockingly true. The actions of the government which have unleashed emotional and passionate responses are an assault on the Constitution. The way the Presidential Order was passed to modify Article 367 may not be understood by lay people. But legal experts will know that it undermines the Constitutional spirit.

jasleen kaur, Delhi

UNHEALTHY VOID

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Coming apart' (IE, August 9). The entire Opposition was stumped by the government's move to scrap the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. When the Congress whip Bhubaneswar Kalita resigned on the day of this announcement and later, young leaders like Jyotiraditya Scindia and Milind Deora favoured the government's move, it was the Congress which stood exposed.

Bal Govind, Noida

HARD DECISIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unlock the Valley' (IE, August 9). Much harm was done in Kashmir due to the insertion of Articles 370 and 35A. An impression had been created among Kashmiris that they were different from the other residents of the country. In order to bring them into national mainstream, hard decisions will have to be undertaken. A thorough check is to be

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

placed on anti-national elements. LR Gupta, Lucknow

STUMPED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Self flagellation in Pakistan' (IE, August 8). The Narendra Modi government's decision to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A has come as a surprise to Pakistan. The Pakistan government's decision to halt trade with India looks to be reactive rather than proactive. It would be more of a bane for Pakistan than for India as India is doing better economically.

Atharva Kajwadkar, via e-mail