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TELLING NUMBERS

How the number and size of districts vary from state to state

ON THURSDAY, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami announced that Vellore district would be trifurcated to create two more districts, Ranipet and Tirupattur. In January and July this year, the Tamil Nadu government had created three new districts, and the latest move will take the total number of districts to 37. The idea behind creating new districts in any state is, generally, that it is expected to make governance easier; sometimes, the decision is driven by local demands.

The larger states predicably have a higher number of districts, with Uttar Pradesh (75) leading the count, followed by Madhya Pradesh (52), while the smallest state, Goa (2), has the lowest number. However, the number of districts in a state is not always a function of the area of the state, or of its population.

For example, Andhra Pradesh is the seventh largest state by area but has among the smallest counts of districts at 13. As such, it has only one district for every 12,000 sq km, which is the largest average size for a district in any Indian state. At the other end of the scale is

Tripura. Being a small state, it has only eight districts, but even that is high, when compared to any other states, in terms of the number of districts per unit area. Tripura has one district for every 1,300 sq km, the smallest average district size in the country. It means an average Andhra Pradesh district is more than nine times the size of an average Tripura district. An Andhra Pradesh district has an average population of 38 lakh while a Tripura district has only 4.5 lakh. Most of the Northeastern states have smaller districts — which means a higher number of districts per unit area.

Tamil Nadu's 37 districts will be the fourth highest count in the country, just behind Bihar's 38. The average size of a Tamil Nadu district will now be around 3,500 sq km, down from 4,000 sq km before January.

Behind UP, MP, Bihar and Tamil Nadu, the highest district counts are 36 in Maharashtra (average 8,547 sq km); 33 each in Assam (average 2,377 sq km), Rajasthan (10,371 sq km) and Gujarat (5,940 sq km); 31 in Telangana (3,615 sq km); and 30 each in Karnataka (6,393 sq km) and Odisha (5,190 sq km).

STATES WITH LARGER DISTRICTS

State	Districts	Area (sq km)		Population (lakh)	
		State	Avg/district	State	Avg/district
Andhra	13	1,60,205	12,323	496	38
Rajasthan	33	3,42,239	10,371	685	21
Maharashtra	36	3,07,713	8,548	1,123	31
Karnataka	30	1,91,796	6,393	611	20
MP	52	3,08,252	6,044	726	14
Gujarat	33	1,96,024	5,940	604	18

STATES WITH SMALLER DISTRICTS

State	Districts	Area (sq km)		Population (lakh)	
		State	Avg/district	State	Avg/district
Tripura	8	10,492	1,311	36	4.5
Manipur	16	22,327	1,395	28	1.8
Nagaland	11	16,579	1,507	20	1.8
Sikkim	4	7,096	1,774	6	1.5
Goa	2	3,702	1,851	14.5	7.3
Haryana	22	44,212	2,010	253	11.5

Source: Census 2011 and state government websites

TIP FOR READING LIST

THE LANGUAGE OF THE INTERNET

GRETCHEN MCCULLOCH describes herself as an "Internet linguist", someone who "live(s) on the Internet", and "analyze(s) the language of the Internet for the people of the Internet". She summarizes her book, *Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language*, as "a linguistically informed look at how our digital world is transforming the English language".

McCulloch asks — and answers — some questions that are likely to have struck most people at some point of their experience with the digital-virtual world. "Why did emoji become so popular so quickly? What's the deal with how people of different ages punctuate their emails and text messages so differently? Why does the language in memes often look so wonderfully strange?"

The official promo for the book asserts that "even the most absurd-looking slang has genuine patterns behind it". McCulloch, it says, "explains how your first social Internet experience influences whether you prefer 'LOL' or 'lol', why ~sparkly tildes~ succeeded where cen-

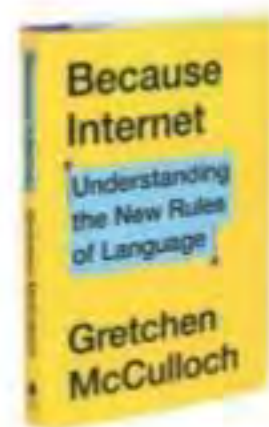
tures of proposals for irony punctuation had failed, what emoji have in common with physical gestures, and how the artfully disarrayed language of animal memes like lolcats and doggo made them more likely to spread".

A review of the book in *The New York Times* illustrates McCulloch's project through the LOL/lol distinction that most

of us see frequently (and some of us wonder about). "As early Internet slang, 'LOL' meant 'laughing out loud', but then its definition softened, acquiring additional layers of meaning," says the review. The lowercase 'lol' is still a 'word in transition', signifying, as McCulloch says, "amusement, irony and even passive aggression".

"It can temper a statement that might otherwise sound confrontational ('what are you doing out so late lol') or gently poke fun at someone ('good morning lol' to a friend who woke up at noon)," she says.

The review describes the book as "inclusive and entertaining", and McCulloch as "lucid, friendly, unequivocally excited about her subject".



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Understanding post of CDS

What is the office of Chief of Defence Staff that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day address? Where did the idea come from, and what is the CDS supposed to do?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

IN HIS Independence Day address Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff to provide "effective leadership at the top level" to the three wings of the armed forces, and to help improve coordination among them.

What is the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)?

The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services, and offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive (in India's case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, "jointmanship" in operations.

In most democracies, the CDS is seen as being above inter-Service rivalries and the immediate operational preoccupations of the individual military chiefs. The role of the CDS becomes critical in times of conflict.

Most countries with advanced militaries have such a post, albeit with varying degrees of power and authority. The United States Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), for example, is extremely powerful, with a legislated mandate and sharply delineated powers.

He is the most senior military officer and military adviser to the President, and his remit extends to the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Defence Secretary.

The Chiefs of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and National Guard too, are members of the JCSC. All, including the CJCS, are four-star officers, but by statute only the CJCS is designated as the "principal military adviser". However, the CJCS is barred from exercising any operational authority over combat commanders in varied theatres; this authority rests exclusively with the US President.

So, why had India not appointed a CDS until now?

India has had a feeble equivalent known as the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC); but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured. The senior-most among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC, an office that lapses with the incumbent's retirement.

The current Chairman CoSC is Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, who succeeded the former Chief of the Naval Staff



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Red Fort on Thursday. Neeraj Priyadarshi

Admiral Sunil Lanba on May 31. When ACM Dhanoa retires at the end of September 2019, he would have served as Chairman CoSC for a mere four months.

In 2015, then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had described the CoSC arrangement as "unsatisfactory", and its Chairman as a "figurehead". The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets, he had said.

The CoSC system is a leftover from the colonial era, with only minor changes being carried out over the years. Apprehensions in the political class about a powerful military leader, along with inter-Service bickering, have long worked to disincentivise the upgrade of the post.

The first proposal for a CDS came from the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC), which called for a reorganisation of the "entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters". The Group of Ministers Task Force that studied the KRC Report and recommendations, proposed to the Cabinet Committee on Security that a CDS, who would be five-star officer, be created.

In preparation for the post, the government created the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) in late 2002, which was to eventually serve as the CDS's Secretariat. However, over the past 17 years, this has remained yet another nebulous department within the military establishment.

But what happened to the proposal?

No consensus emerged among the Services, with the IAF especially opposed to such a move. The Congress, then in opposi-

tion, was against the idea of concentrating too much military power in the CDS's post. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) too, opposed it subtly for the same reasons, and because it could disrupt civil-military ties in the latter's favour.

"A CDS with direct access to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister was the last thing that the MoD wanted," said Lt Gen H S Panag (ret), who served as the GOC-in-C, Northern and Central Commands. According to Gen Panag, a major reason why the CDS idea could not be implemented was that the MoD bureaucracy was loath to relinquish its power over the three Services. Consequently, the MoD played one Service against the other.

"Besides," Gen Panag said, "each Service has its own ethos, and the Chiefs feel that under a CDS, they will be rendered virtual nonentities."

The smaller Air Force and Navy fear that the CDS would be from the Army, by far the largest Service. The IAF has long argued that unlike the United States and other western militaries, the Indian Services are not an expeditionary force, for which a CDS is a necessity. The appointment of a CDS would also lead to theatre commands, another aspect that the IAF opposes, fearing a diminution of its operational role.

In 2011, more than a decade after the KRC Report, the UPA government, led by the Congress, which had opposed the CDS proposal when in opposition, set up the Nares Chandra Committee on defence and security. The 14-member Committee, comprising retired Service Chiefs and other defence experts, suggested a watered-down version of the CDS proposal, in which the Chairman CoSC in the rank of a four-star officer would have a fixed tenure of two years. He would have significantly more authority and pow-

ers than the Chairman CoSC, and would be a CDS in all but name.

What is the case for having a CDS?

Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — it underlined the need for more coordination among the three Services, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.

The KRC Report pointed out that India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure. It observed that Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles, "often resulting in negative results". Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate. Also, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased.

The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of "theatre commands", integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military. India has 17 Service commands at different locations and duplicating assets, Gen Panag said. In 2016, China integrated its military and other police and paramilitaries into five theatres from the earlier seven area commands, each with its own inclusive headquarters, one of which has responsibility for the Indian border. In contrast, India's border with China is split between the Eastern, Western, and Northern Commands, Gen Panag said.

And what are the arguments against?

Theoretically, the appointment of a CDS is long overdue, but there appears to be no clear blueprint for the office to ensure its effectiveness. India's political establishment is seen as being largely ignorant of, or at best indifferent towards, security matters, and hence incapable of ensuring that a CDS works.

Militaries by nature tend to resist transformation. In the US, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act elevated the Chairman from first among equals to the "principal military advisor" to the President and the Secretary of Defence. In the Indian context, critics fear, the absence of foresight and understanding might end up making the CDS just another case of "jobs for the boys".

Who at present advises India's Prime Minister on military matters?

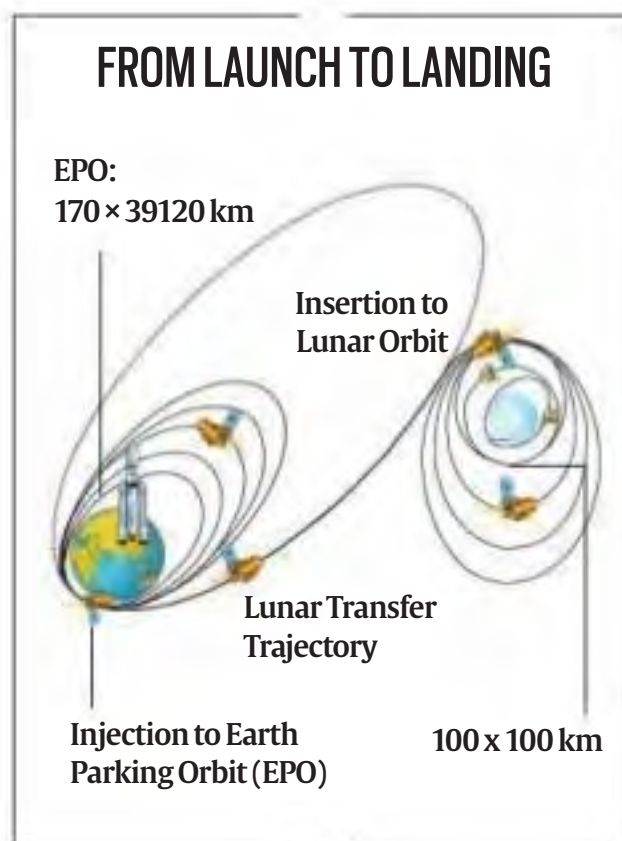
In effect it is the National Security Adviser. This has been especially so after the Defence Planning Committee was created in 2018, with NSA Ajit Doval as its chairman, and the foreign, defence, and expenditure secretaries, and the three Service Chiefs as members.

Moon mission reaches key stage, what next?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

ON WEDNESDAY, the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft left Earth's orbit and moved towards the Moon, which it will orbit over a series of manoeuvres before the ultimate soft landing, scheduled on September 7.

SO FAR, since its launch on July 22, Chandrayaan-2 had been orbiting the Earth, moving into higher and orbits. This is achieved by a series of "Earth-bound orbit-raising manoeuvres". There were five such manoeuvres before the mission left Earth orbit on Wednesday. These raised the orbits around Earth successively to 230 × 45,163 km (July 24), 251 × 54,829 km (July 26), 276 × 71,792 km (July 29), 277 × 89,472 km (August 2) and 276 × 1,42,975 km (August 6). The two figures with each orbit refer to the distance



at the nearest and farthest points.

ON WEDNESDAY, the final orbit-raising manoeuvre was carried out. Chandrayaan 2 has now entered the Lunar Transfer Trajectory, and is now heading for its next orbit, which will be around the Moon.

ON AUGUST 20, Chandrayaan-2 will approach Moon and the spacecraft's liquid engine will be fired again to insert the spacecraft into a lunar orbit. Following this, there will be further four orbit manoeuvres to take the spacecraft into its final orbit, passing over the lunar poles at a distance of about 100 km from the Moon's surface (see table).

After that, the soft landing. The Vikram lander will separate from the orbiter on September 2. Two orbit manoeuvres will be performed on the lander before the initiation of powered descent on September 7.

Chandrayaan 2 will land on the Moon's south polar region, unexplored by science so

COMING UP, STAGE BY STAGE

Date	Time	Orbit around Moon* (km)
August 20	8:30-9:30 am	118 × 18078
August 21	12:30 - 1:30 pm	121 × 4303
August 28	5:30 - 6:30 am	178 × 1411
August 30	6 - 7 pm	126 × 164
Sept 1	6 - 7 pm	114 × 128

*The two figures represent nearest and farthest distances from Moon

Source for text, data and illustration: ISRO

far. ISRO said in a statement that the south pole is especially interesting because of the lunar surface area here that remains in shadow is much larger than that at the north pole. There is a possibility of the presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it.

Fertility rate: What the data show

PM has flagged 'challenges' posed by India's 'population explosion'. While India is expected to soon overtake China as the world's most populous country, the total fertility rate has been falling almost everywhere in India

RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE GRAPH shows trends for the total fertility rate (TFR) in various states. TFR, defined as the number of children born to a woman until the end of her child-bearing age, is a key indicator for population trends.

During his Independence Day speech Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined challenges posed by population growth in the country. "I would like to highlight the issue of population explosion in our country from the aegis of the Red Fort today. This rapidly increasing population poses various new challenges for us and our future generations," the Prime Minister said.

The graph is based on TFR data from the Sample Registration System (SRS) under-

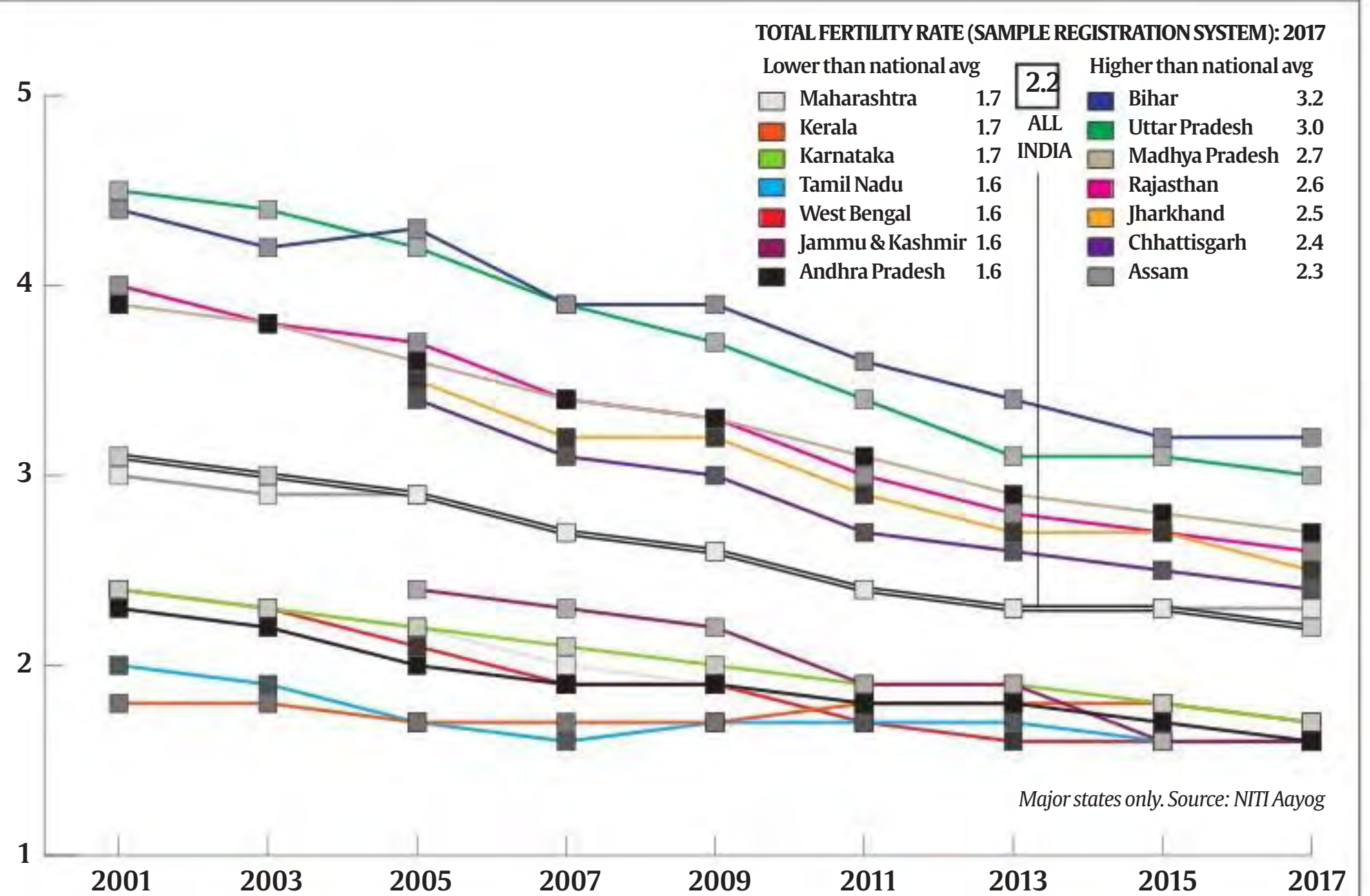
taken by the Office of the Registrar General of India. The SRS also looks at other indicators such as crude birth rate, general fertility rate, age specific/marital fertility rate, gross reproduction rate along with sex ratio at birth. While Census figures provide the total population every decade, the regular SRS estimates provide dynamic trends underlying the population growth.

After four successive years (2013-2016) when the TFR stagnated at 2.3 births per woman of child-bearing age, the latest SRS estimates (2017) show the TFR dropping to 2.2. This figure is only marginally higher than the fertility rate (2.1) required for replacement of the existing population.

SRS estimates over the last decade and more, meanwhile, show a declining trend across the country. Even the states that have a higher TFR — Uttar Pradesh (3.0),

Bihar (3.2), MP (2.7), Rajasthan (2.6), Assam (2.3), Chhattisgarh (2.4) and Jharkhand (2.5) — have been witnessing a declining trend in fertility rates. These seven states account for about 45 per cent of the total population in the 2011 Census. Two more states, Gujarat and Haryana, recorded a TFR of 2.2, which is above the replacement rate but is equal to the national average. Taken together, these nine major states account for 52 per cent of the 2011 population.

This means that in the states barring these nine, and accounting for almost half the population, the replacement level is either 2.1 or has gone below it. These states with a lower TFR include Kerala (1.7), Tamil Nadu (1.6), Karnataka (1.7), Maharashtra (1.7), Andhra Pradesh (1.6), Telangana (1.7), West Bengal (1.6), Jammu and Kashmir (1.6) and Odisha (1.9).



Major states only. Source: NITI Aayog



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

One speech, many PMs

On I-Day, we heard the aspiring statesman, the man of ideas, the debater, the polemicist, the ruthless executive



SUHASH PALSHIKAR

THE PM'S MESSAGE

It was most powerful for invitation to the people to own their change, will resonate when curbs are lifted in the Valley

RUNNING THROUGH PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's first Independence Day speech in his second term, were themes that have come to be identified with his political personality. One, he sought to portray himself as a changemaker. While it attached easily to him in 2014, when he projected himself as an outsider and a challenger of the certitudes and corruptions that Congress regimes had presided over in national politics, his continuing courtship of the image of change agent, despite a five-year incumbency, is remarkable. On August 15, he spoke for making big leaps and against incrementalism, and drew stark oppositions to make his case: 70 years vs five years, even 70 years vs 10 weeks of his second term so far. In the PM's picture, the past is a place of darkness, while the last five years were an effort to fulfill the people's necessities, and the next five will be dedicated to meeting their aspirations. Two, he exhorted the people to own the change and participate in it — be it Swachh Bharat then, or the Jal Jeevan Mission now, he spoke of an abhiyan (campaign) that engages jan samanya (ordinary people), does not remain sarkari (government-driven). And three, even as the PM seemed to throw the ball to a diverse people, he also, paradoxically, underlined a sharply unitary message: One-nation-one-tax (GST), one nation-one-election (simultaneous polls), one-nation-one-constitution (in J&K).

The PM also announced significant policy and institutional shifts. A chief of defence staff, a long standing proposal to ensure better coordination and more efficient decision-making in the defence forces, will finally be appointed. The PM promised to go beyond "ease of doing business", which, incidentally, has had debatable success so far, to "ease of living", which would presumably reorient the relationship between government and citizens across a range of arenas and sectors. This also raises questions, given that, for all the promises of "minimum government and maximum government", the Modi regime is yet to make government less intrusive in matters ranging from tax policy to data privacy. The PM announced a new campaign against single-use plastic, and expressed the hope that it would be promoted by a range of stakeholders, from shopkeepers, who will start selling cloth/jute bags to people who will gift these bags to each other on Diwali. More controversially, PM Modi announced a shift in the conversation on population policy from "demographic dividend" to "population explosion" ("jansankhya visrot"). This is tricky terrain, given the unhappy spectres invoked by the latter formulation from another regime that spoke of the need to control the population.

Most controversial was the part of the PM's speech where he spoke of the decision to downsize Kashmir, abrogate Article 370. Here, the PM's message hit a wall of his government's making — the continued lockdown of people and detention of leaders, in the wake of its consequential August 5 move. If the most engaging part of the PM's message to the nation was the invitation to the people to take ownership of the change, it will resonate across the country when restrictions on the people in the Valley are lifted.

INJUSTICE SYSTEM

Acquittals in the Pehlu Khan lynching case point to subversion of due process. Gehlot government must urgently make amends

THE ACQUITTAL OF all six persons accused of lynching Pehlu Khan, a cattle trader, near Alwar, is an indictment of the Rajasthan government and its law enforcement agencies. The trial court judge gave the benefit of doubt to the accused and ordered their release because the Rajasthan Police probe had "serious shortcomings" and signified "gross negligence". Simply put, due process was subverted by shoddy investigation, procedural infirmities and poor monitoring of the probe by state authorities. The Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan government is appealing against the verdict, but it still needs to answer for the derailment of a high-profile probe that was seen as a test case of the state's commitment to ensuring justice.

A mob had attacked Khan in Alwar on April 1, 2017, following a rumour that he was smuggling cows. He died in a hospital two days later, after naming six persons in his dying declaration to the police. Onlookers made recordings of the attack and circulated them on social media. On TV, persons in the mob proudly claimed responsibility for the murder. However, the police seems to have ignored due procedures when Khan made his statement, and did not authenticate the videos before submitting them in court. Not surprisingly, then, the admissible material proved insufficient to prove the crime. In fact, controversies have stalked the case right from the beginning. First, Rajasthan Police cleared the persons named by Khan. Later, in May 2019, the police charged Khan's sons and the driver of the pick-up truck that Pehlu Khan had hired to transport cattle, with violating the provisions of the Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act. The Congress chief minister, Ashok Gehlot, had then said his government would probe if the investigation was biased.

The Pehlu Khan murder is among the earliest lynching cases involving cow vigilantes — the first incident was reported from Jharkhand in March, 2016. The spree of mob lynchings since then — from UP, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir — provoked the Supreme Court to ask the government to formulate a law specific to the crime in July, 2018. But law can be a deterrent only if the law enforcers are keen to implement it in letter and spirit. Now, the Gehlot government will be tested on its commitment to justice.

GODDESS OF SMALL THINGS

Vidya Sinha will be remembered for being part of a cinema that eschewed formula, struck a chord with the people

VIDYA SINHA, WHO passed away on Thursday, will be remembered for her roles in films that had none of the trappings of Bollywood blockbusters. She made her mark in an interesting period in the history of Hindi films. In 1973, Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* announced the arrival of the angry young man, Amitabh Bachchan's Vijay. A year later, Basu Chatterjee's *Rajnigandha* made its mark at the box office and swept the Filmfare Awards. In several ways, *Rajnigandha* was a counterpoint to *Zanjeer*: Centred on a woman starting out in her career, caught between the affections of two lovers, Chatterjee's film was an ode to a world very different from the predominantly masculine troposphere of the Mehra-Bachchan potboiler. *Rajnigandha* was Sinha's debut. She did not eschew playing Bollywood's formulaic characters. But Sinha was at her best in films where lovers could be painfully shy and loved blossomed during bus rides.

There was nothing larger than life about the characters of such films. Sinha's second film, *Chhoti Si Baat*, depicted the everyday life of an office-going woman. The world in such films was far gentler than the violent landscapes of Bollywood potboilers. But this was no escapist cinema. Bombay, the locale of most films in which Sinha distinguished herself, placed its demands. As a character in *Chhoti Si Baat* remarks, "You can escape the queue system in Delhi or Calcutta but not in Bombay". Getting a job often meant negotiating layers of nepotism, a delay in getting to work would result in a stern reprimand from the boss and finding a house was tough for a newly-married couple with limited means.

This was also cinema that subtly depicted the intricacies of human relationships. They brought out the best in Sinha, even when she spoke very little. Like in *Rajnigandha*, when in a taxi with an ex lover, the character she plays sits glued to the door and yet can't resist from looking furtively at him.

RIGHT FROM HIS first Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been struggling to present himself as a visionary, a statesman, a dreamer, and someone striving to rise above the partisan and the momentary. This year's speech was no exception. His speeches follow an implicit template: Touching upon ideas and dipping into the mundane, floating big plans and getting lost in small matters, highlighting problems but exhorting citizens to do things on their own. This template allows the faithful to detect elements of the extraordinary, leaving behind the ordinary or the controversial as only memory.

But the aspiring statesman got easily overshadowed by three other personas. The PM began as a debater defending an argument. Claiming that his second government has done in 70 days what could not happen in 70 years, he listed out the accomplishments of the past couple of months, three in particular: A passing reference to the changes made in existing anti-terror law; a proud claim of abolishing triple talaq; and a defence of changes made in J&K. Of course, he did not bother to reconcile democracy with the intimidating changes in the terror law; he did not find it necessary to explain the need to criminalise triple talaq; he was not interested in assuaging the fears over central interventions in federal features when talking about what was done in J&K.

But in defending these actions, another personality of the PM (and his government) came to the fore: The ruthless executive. As the PM proudly pointed out, his government does not avoid problems, nor entertains them. He went on to say that the government will set aside whatever obstacles come in the way. It is these qualities of the PM — debating skills and a show of strength and ruthlessness — that have endeared him to many Indians. But he also probably gets carried away by these characteristics to the extent of sidelining the more ambitious project of writing himself into history as a visionary.

Therefore, a third persona kept making its appearance in the speech: Modi himself. Five minutes into the speech, the PM slipped from the more vague "hum" (we) to the more personal "mein" (I), saying "mujhe awsar diya" (people have given me the opportunity). This was not a one-off mention in the first person

singular. Phrases such as "mein", "mujhe", "mera" kept popping up — along with the inevitable reference to his selflessness ("mera apna kuchh nahin"). It is not easy to dismiss this recourse to the first person as a slip; rather, it reminded of his natural connect with the 130 crore Indians. In the course of the speech, the PM made a reference to the union between him and the people by saying that the election was fought not the party, nor the leader, but 130 crore Indians. Conflating the individual with the larger category of "people", showing off ruthlessness and defending policies of the government, took the PM to what he excels in — polemics. Modi the polemicist could not avoid the temptation of mentioning "parivarwad" somewhat out of context, and taking a snipe at previous governments over not making Article 370 permanent, while seeking to delegitimise opposition to his J&K policies as politics for votes (chunavi rajniti).

The PM and his PR machine would like us to remember his speech for the ideas, vision and dreams. These touched a wide range of topics, some particularly close to the middle classes such as tourism or the five trillion dollar economy. And included many non-controversial subjects, such as plastic waste, infrastructure etc. Like the Swachh Bharat Mission in his first I-Day speech in 2014, the PM would want to be remembered for the mission on water now. He also spoke of poverty, but instead of elaborating a road map for poverty eradication, he hedged the issue by saying that the poor had the courage and capacity to fight for their own wellbeing.

Four ideas from the speech need to be engaged with more seriously for their problematic nature. First, and not entirely new, is the penchant for linking everything to "one nation" — GST, common electricity grid and simultaneous elections. While India has been moving towards many policies and initiatives that are common (or similar) across states, the PM's emphasis on uniformity as the underlying value is problematic, suggests a clear preference for the non-federal approach.

Two, the PM's somewhat long exposition on population was deeply problematic. It is one thing to argue that the idea of demographic dividend is debatable but the way the PM lauded the "small sections" who have

adopted the small family norm could easily put the poor in the dock and humiliate them. Already, ill-conceived ideas of penalising government servants if they give birth to a third child or disqualifying such families from being representatives in local bodies have gained ground. The PM's exhortation from the pulpit would further encourage non-democratic measures for pushing "population control" as a service to nation.

Third, the PM spoke about giving a fillip to the rural economy by supporting local initiatives. This sentiment would be attractive to many, but in economic terms, it is unclear how the government would reconcile its search for growth and foreign investment with the protectionist idea of localisation of consumer practices. In the political context, it would be interesting to watch how this idea would be received by the aspirational middle class the PM is so enamoured of. In any case, it could be seen as a tactical response to complications that globalisation is bringing. But is this not an abdication of governmental responsibility to ensure a fair balance between global capital and local entrepreneurship?

Finally, repackaging his earlier idea of maximum governance-minimum government, the PM spoke about "ease of living". This goes much beyond the industry-driven idea of ease of doing business and it would certainly get him headlines in international circles. He theorised that government should be there to help but it should not cramp the citizens. This sounds interesting but with increasing bureaucratic interventions in individual lives, with non-regulated intrusions into citizens' privacy, with controversial attempts of allowing surveillance and with government's track record of using all regulatory mechanisms for allegedly partisan action, the idea of a friendly but non-interfering government is bound to remain only a chimera.

So, even if we discount the debater, the polemicist and the self-consciously self-centred leader, the PM's ideas remain short on promise, high on word play and potent with controversial takes on what we mean by democracy, nation and governance.

The writer taught political science and is currently chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

UNIFYING THE COMMAND

Appointment of chief of defence staff will fill a void in India's defence system



ALOK BANSAL

ONE OF THE most significant announcements made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence Day is the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to ensure better coordination between the three services. This has been a long pending demand of the defence forces and was recommended by both the Kargil Review Committee led by K Subrahmanyam in 1999, as well as the Committee of Experts set up by Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of General D B Shekatkar. Although, the exact terms of responsibility and assignment of the CDS have not been made public, in all probability it would be a four-star military officer, who would act as the single point adviser to the government on military matters. The CDS would also coordinate amongst the three services and bridge the differences.

Modern military battles cannot be fought by each service fighting independently. The present Indian Armed Forces are colonial constructs and were configured primarily to serve the interest of their colonial masters during the great wars. The restructuring of armed forces, therefore, has been a crying need as future wars are going to be short intense affairs where all organs of the state are likely to be employed simultaneously. Such a scenario would require unity of command, which is feasible only when the country has a unified command structure led by the CDS. However, political insecurities and bureaucratic stranglehold over the Ministry of Defence prevented this important void from being filled.

The appointment of the CDS will make the armed forces more effective. However, the mere creation of the office is not enough. This will need to be augmented by restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and creating integrated theatre commands.

After the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee which had recommended a CDS as well as a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS), a group of ministers headed by the then Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani examined it and recommended CDS with a tri-service joint planning staff. Accordingly, the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS) was created in October 2001. But, bureaucrats succeeded in stalling the appointment of the CDS by creating the perception that it would be far easier for a CDS to stage a coup. Consequently, an anomalous situation was created wherein an organisation was created, which has been functioning without a head for the past 18 years.

The VCDS was reconfigured as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC). The absence of the CDS has limited the ability of CISC to mediate between the three services. More significantly, being lower in rank, he was never accepted as the sole adviser to the government in a rigidly hierarchical organisation like the military. Consequently, HQIDS was mostly duplicating the jobs being undertaken by service headquarters, rather than performing the tasks the office was meant for.

The appointment of the CDS will make the armed forces more effective. However, the mere creation of the office is not enough. This will need to be augmented by restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and creating integrated theatre commands. The CDS has to be a cerebral warrior with good under-

standing of the global security environment and functioning of the three services. It should not be a rotational appointment; the government must select one after interviewing top officials of the three services.

Despite the PM's announcement, it is not going to be a smooth affair. First, the bureaucrats afraid of losing their salience will create bottlenecks. On top of that, individual services, afraid of losing their turf, are bound to resist the CDS's involvement in their affairs. The government may have to take a leaf out of the US Goldwater-Nichols Act and push the three services. To begin with, all defence land and capital budget must be put under the CDS and appointments in inter-service organisations must be made essential for further promotions. For the CDS to be effective, he must have direct access to the defence minister and through him to the prime minister.

After the reorganisation of MoD and establishment of theatre commands, they should directly be responsible to the defence minister through the CDS for all combat operations. Each service chief should only be responsible for equipping, organising and training of the forces. The creation of the CDS will need to be followed up with further reforms to reconfigure the armed forces to meet India's aspirations to be a global power.

The writer is a former naval officer and is currently director, India Foundation and adjunct professor at New Delhi Institute of Management. Views are personal.



AUGUST 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM'S I-DAY SPEECH
PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh declared in New Delhi that if Pakistan makes an atomic bomb, India will have to reconsider its decision not to make one. Addressing the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on the 32nd anniversary of Independence, the prime minister said Pakistan's sole aim in going in for the bomb was to use it against India. "Pakistan has friendly relations with China, it has no serious differences with the Soviet Union and it is absurd to think that the bomb will be used against Afghanistan. The bomb is obviously aimed at us and it poses a dan-

ger to our peace and security," Singh declared. In his 21-minute speech, Singh dealt with issues ranging from foreign policy, economy, the people and, of course, politics. It was his first major speech since he took over as Prime Minister last month.

BANGLA BORDER QUIET
THE INDIA-BANGLADESH border in West Bengal was quiet today after the threatened long march to Pakistan by non-Bengali Muslims flopped. But the vigil mounted by BSF continued without any let-up. Official sources said border officials were in constant

touch with Bangladesh Rifles to ascertain the movement of the refugees since they had made no formal announcement to abandon the march. Reports from across the border had indicated that they might attempt to revive their march again on August 25 after Eid.

MNF ARMS SEIZED
SECURITY FORCES CHANCED upon a hide-out of the banned Mizo National Front rebels in north western Mizoram near the Cachar boundary and captured a large number of rebels with arms and ammunition following an encounter.

11 THE IDEAS PAGE

Why Article 370 had to go

The constitutional, democratic, historical and moral arguments being marshalled against the Centre's move are unfounded



ABHINAV KUMAR

IT IS NOT always that a writer has to quickly deal with the practical consequences of what he wrote about recently. My last article ('A New Deal for Kashmir,' July 5), published in these pages, looked at the difficult choices India faced in Kashmir and suggested that we should have a wider debate about repealing Article 370 as one of the options. Predictably, it caused a furore amongst a section of our intelligentsia for whom Article 370 was more an article of faith than anything else.

Around midnight on August 4, when we received our orders to go on high alert and prepare for some important announcement in Parliament the next day, little did I realise that what I had advocated for debate, had actually been decided. Starting midnight, we began to go into lockdown mode. The communication blackout was total. It would be a few days before one would get access to a mobile phone — voice only, no data. And a few more days before one had limited access to internet at speeds that brought back memories of the dial-up modem era.

As one watched the home minister stand up to speak in Parliament to announce the intended changes in the relationship of the state of J&K with the Union of India, one realised that one was witness to something of profound historical significance. A decision that would create immediate professional challenges for all of us serving in positions of responsibility in Kashmir. In the last two weeks of July, all of us had expected that some important decision about J&K was going to be taken. However, the direction and scope of the decision came as a complete surprise.

The first week has seen a whirlwind of activity. On Monday evening, the NSA himself arrived to take charge of the situation. He quickly spelt out the expectations of the Government of India. Our first task was to ensure that the prohibitory orders were effectively enforced to ensure that there was no widespread unrest or violence. We were asked to mitigate the worst effects of the lockdown for those citizens in genuine need, such as for medical emergencies. It is too early to comment on how well these directions have been implemented on the ground, but, so far, so good.

As contact with the rest of the world was reestablished, one began to engage with the public response to this decision. The usual suspects on the Left have gone apoplectic for the usual reasons. Some self-styled nationalists have welcomed this decision with a most offensive and inappropriate display of bigotry and hate-filled language. They deserve the condemnation of all right-thinking Indians and where possible should be booked for inciting hatred and trying to inflame an already explosive situation. One group of critics shows a poor understanding of our national interest and the other is patently oblivious to our civilisational values that celebrate diversity and tolerance.

Broadly speaking, the criticism of the decision to alter 370 and scrap 35 A, takes four main approaches.

First, there is the Constitutional argument that there is serious legal infirmity in the manner in which this was done. Second, the democratic argument that the will of the people of J&K was not ascertained. Third, the appeal to the historical argument that even if these Articles can be legally modified, the Constitutional guarantees offered by Nehru at the time of accession of Kashmir to India must be honoured in perpetuity. The fourth is the moral argument that the harsh security crackdown in Kashmir is unjust and immoral. This kind of curtailment of civil liberties and communications is simply unacceptable in a modern democracy. Each of these arguments deserves serious analysis.



CR Sasikumar

The legal argument is already before the Supreme Court. I would like to see the legal logic that will persuade the SC that Article 370 is somehow part of the basic structure of the Constitution, and therefore, cannot be altered in any way. With regard to the specific wording of 370, it would be interesting to see if the Court rules that amongst all the articles of the Constitution, 370 alone has the privilege of choosing the mechanism of its own repeal. Article 368 is for commoners of the Constitution. Article 370 is some kind of royalty. Is the will of an extinct constituent assembly of J&K somehow expected to prevail in perpetuity over the will of Parliament? I am sure these issues will come up before the Court.

Coming to the democratic argument, the changes announced by the home minister have been passed by both houses of Parliament and have received the assent of the President of India. They were enacted by a government which has just won a sweeping majority in a general election where Kashmir was a central issue. Should the purported wishes of the Valley somehow override the wishes of the people of India? And the wishes of the people of Jammu and Ladakh? This is an extraordinary claim of democratic entitlement.

Coming to the historical argument — there is plenty of evidence to question that the conventional wisdom about these guarantees is misplaced. What was the original intent of Nehru behind offering these guarantees over the objections of Patel and Ambedkar? Did he genuinely want to leave an opening for Kashmir to secede from India? Or did he see these guarantees as a necessary stopgap measure to eventually secure Kashmir's complete assimilation with India? Were these guarantees a one-way ticket to flirt with azaadi? Or were they a bargain that also required Kashmir to offer something in return? It is hard to believe that Nehru intended Article 370 to be some kind of a blank cheque with no expiry date. And people conveniently forget that our

It is, of course, an extremely challenging time to serve in Kashmir. I, for one, regard it as an extraordinary privilege and honour to be a part of this historical exercise. While we cannot satisfy all the prophets of doom and gloom, we are sure that an overwhelming majority of the citizens of India appreciate the challenges ahead and we have their confidence and support. There was never a better moment to serve India in uniform.

neighbour has been shuffling the legal status of PoK like a deck of cards.

The last argument, namely, the appeal to morality and civil liberties, comes in the context of a land that has seen 30 years of terrorism and ethnic cleansing. The concerns of public order and public safety are paramount. Abrogating these articles was a difficult decision, bound to have a violent reaction in the valley. Trying to pre-empt large-scale violence is not immoral, rather, it is the duty of a responsible government. The restrictions in place are quite sensitive to ground realities. As and when the situation improves, they will be eased. We simply cannot allow jihadis to have free run to incite mob violence. It is entirely understandable that our civil society has concerns about the present curbs on civil liberties. They are harsh but not unprecedented. It remains the primary concern of all of us enforcing these restrictions to ensure that they are lifted as early as possible with minimal violence and loss of life. Kashmiris too have an obligation to express their sentiments about these decisions without letting their protests be hijacked by violent unrest or terrorism. The fact that Friday prayers, Eid and Independence Day have passed off peacefully is extremely encouraging and I am sure that we will see a calibrated lifting of restrictions and minimisation of inconveniences faced by all Indians in the Kashmir valley.

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The author is a serving IPS officer posted in Kashmir. Views are personal.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The tyranny of snobbery is bad enough when it comes to taste. Let's not add the tyranny of computers too". — THE GUARDIAN

The girl from Barabanki

Her truth-telling recalls Gandhi's scepticism about the state's ability to protect democracy



KRISHNA KUMAR

CONSTANT HUMIDITY MAKES the air feel heavy in August, but memories too have a lot to do with that feeling. Some of these memories refer to the distant past which, for many, extends back to the Gandhi decades. We who were born after freedom and Partition, learnt about them at school. As usual, the school was quick to give us the news, but took a while to explain it. By that time, our parents' memories of freedom and Partition had mutated into the nation's dreams and fantasies.

Whose dreams were they? Not everyone today seems excited about them. Many want to alter the content of those dreams. For instance, the dream of equality does not please a lot of people, including the young. Quite a few of them feel that they have been tricked by the idea of equality. When the reservation policy and minority rights are taught in a school, teachers warn the students that their personal feelings will spoil their marks.

Another dream that irks many is that of a secular India. It is argued sometimes that the term was not part of the original text of the Constitution. Legal debates have clarified that although the term "secular" was inserted during the Emergency, a secular outlook was embedded in the basic structure of the Constitution. However, the debate continues on what it means for India to be secular. Must every Indian be secular or only the state? Some teachers do point out that the idea of a secular state is reflected in all the rights guaranteed in Part III of the Constitution. It forms the edifice of a non-discriminating state.

How keen some of today's children are to practice these fundamental rights was reflected in a gathering of schoolgirls in Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh. A video showing one of them asking a few questions is a testimony to the effect of mass education. The occasion was a senior-level police officer's visit to raise awareness about the guarantee of protection available to women. He emphasised the value of their protest when they face threats. After his speech, a Grade XI girl asked him whether a girl's protest is treated differently when the person threatening her is politically powerful. She cited the Unnao case to show that her doubt is valid. The police officer was apparently speechless. All he could quote was the helpline number.

In the media, colleges and universities, the freedom and space to discuss things without fear of consequences has been shrinking. Why has it not shrunk in a Barabanki school?

There can be several answers to this question. One that I find plausible points to adolescent idealism. It is intact despite the learning crisis some literacy fundamentalists are projecting as a national concern. If you watch the one-minute long Barabanki video, you notice the girl's awareness of her audience, which includes the visiting officer

and her classmates. They applaud when she elaborates on her basic query and uses proper nouns instead of vague indicators. During each applause, you can notice a faint momentary smile on her face. It disappears when she elaborates on her question in stern Hindi. You are left in no doubt that she is voicing a collective distrust in the police and political power. Equally clearly, you realise that she knows why she is right.

She can be compared to Olga Misik, the 17-year old Russian girl who read aloud the constitution of her country to the riot police in the middle of a demonstration in Moscow last month. Like her, the Barabanki girl — who cannot be named in the prevailing ethos — conveys the spontaneous confidence that only the very young can feel in a complex political situation. Unawareness of the difficulties awaiting them is their strength.

This quality of mind is hardly adequate to sustain the will to assert one's rights. Nor can it suffice for a whole nation to maintain its progress towards democracy. Its value lies in the solace it offers to adults in a moment of pervasive anxiety. It lightens the load of humid, polluted air pervading our public ethos, promising that Constitutional values do have a future. Apart from the Supreme Court, schools have succeeded in promoting these values despite the many weaknesses of the education system.

The ideals listed in the Preamble and the rights listed in Part III of the Constitution portray an individual in whose character and outlook India was destined to be reborn as a free country. The Barabanki girl fits the portrait. The question she posed to a police officer is essentially Gandhian. It asks him to either acknowledge or to deny the truth. That he does not challenge her is more important than his inability to come up with an answer. His official role puts him in a dilemma. It reminds us of Gandhi's anticipatory disillusionment with the process of Constitution-making. Having played a massive role in pushing India to freedom, Gandhi had little hope that the state by itself will suffice to protect democracy and civilisation.

Gandhi was deeply sceptical about the state, especially about the power vested in its colonial apparatus. Yet, he and the Constitution have so far served as two key objects of appreciative national consensus. Both are now being subjected to fresh debates. Not everyone appreciated Gandhi's focus on the village and self-reliance, but no one had so far won an election after praising his murderer. As for the Constitution, it enjoyed a status above religious faith.

As an annual memoir, August reminds us to ask why Gandhi entertained doubts about so many things that we take for granted. He had doubts about the pursuit of material progress for its sake, about the role it might play in choking provinciality and its regenerative vitality. If we look at contemporary life through Gandhi's window, we can figure out why a schoolgirl who speaks the blunt truth in a small provincial town must now feel scared. That is the news we are receiving. Let us hope that the voice we have heard will survive the passage of adolescence and its idealism.

Kumar is a former director of NCERT and a writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INVEST IN FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let's draw lines in water' (IE, August 15). Debates on agricultural crisis have been going on for years. Direct Benefit Transfers instead of subsidy on fertilisers and food grains, diverting the water guzzling crops from dry areas, focusing on food processing sector and investment in agri R&D will double farmers income and eradicate agri-distress. Moreover, it would create a "new middle class" which could be the harbinger for a large market for goods and services. This could rectify the demand side slowdown of the economy.

Anish Manchanda, via e-mail

CLASSROOM MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Over to the teacher' (IE, August 15). Mathematics is a cause for panic for several students. English, a foreign language, could be imposing to a first-generation learner. These subjects require special teaching arrangements. So Odisha's move to extend the teaching hours for these subjects is not unscientific.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Burdwan

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Over to the teacher' (IE, August 15). Odisha's move to increase teaching time of Mathematics, English and Science is imprudent. The state government should create a conducive environment for education in terms of better infrastructure and an improved student-teacher ratio. Teachers should be competent to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their wards and promote critical thinking.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

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

DYNASTY CONTINUES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ringing in the old' (IE August 13). The selection of Sonia Gandhi as an interim chief of the Congress Party has come at a time when after the Lok Sabha elections, the party has been relegated to the margins of the country's political firmament. It's not that the party lacks talent, but it seems that Congress leaders hesitate to take initiatives for fear of incurring the wrath of the Gandhi family. Sonia Gandhi's task would be to introspect on the party's fortunes and take measures to plug the faultlines.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

AYODHYA

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, on August 3, welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court to conduct daily hearings on the Ayodhya title suit matter and is hopeful that the Court will come to a *haatami faisla* (final judgement). The paper's editorial says this should have happened much earlier.

Etemaad on August 3, has an editorial on the failed mediation on the Ayodhya issue. It writes, "It is believed that all the participants did not think that a compact was possible in the prevailing political atmosphere." It makes a significant observation: "The Modi government has managed to convince the majority that irrespective of the Court order, a law in Parliament will facilitate matters...Any party that refuses to go with this will be labeled 'anti-Hindu' and the doors of its political future will be shut" It contends that "the way the BJP has been able to push several pieces of legislations in the current session of Parliament raises questions about the sincerity of the secular parties."

Compiled by Seema Chishti

THE Urdu PRESS

KASHMIR, ARTICLE 370

Munsif, on August 6, has an editorial titled, 'Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat aur Jamhooriyat ka qatl' (the annihilation of Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat and Jamhooriyat). Another editorial in the paper, on August 7, raises several questions. "Why just Kashmir?... 10 states benefit from special provisions," it points out. The editorial notes that in parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Sikkim and Mizoram "residents get reservations in jobs and special land purchase options." It cites the case of Sikkim, "where elections are held once every four years." The editorial asks: "Why is it that the special measures are questioned only in the case of Kashmir. Is that because Kashmir is a Muslim majority state?...LK Advani said the cancellation of Kashmir's special status marked the fulfillment of the Jana Sangh's old promise. So should we consider this a decision as one for the benefit of the Kashmiri people?"

AIMIM's daily, Etemaad, on August 6 views the revocation of Kashmir's special status as the fulfillment of the BJP's "electoral agenda". It traces the plan's origins to the time when

the BJP ended its alliance with Mehbooba Mufti's People's Democratic Party (PDP). The editorial notes that in spite of Article 370 and 35A, the people of Jammu and Kashmir were "mired in poverty, illiteracy and educational backwardness." It talks of a complex global situation, and points out that the US president's statement about PM Modi asking him to mediate in Kashmir had created a complicated situation for the latter. It speaks of "India's friend, Afghanistan" witnessing a change with the withdrawal of the US on the cards. The editorial points out that that India must manage its home and external situation carefully, after seriously taking stock of developments in the rest of the world.

Siasat's editorial on August 6 notes that "now that Jammu and Kashmir's special status has been revoked, the government must brace up to answer queries of common people". The editorial goes into the question of land being available for people outside the state to buy. Land prices may ease, but locals could be rendered as "employees (*mullaazim*)" on their own land, the editorial notes. It also argues that "businessmen and people from outside J&K will benefit."

However, people may take "to the courts" to try and stop the new laws from taking effect, the editorial contends.

Inqilab and Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, in a marked shift of tone, welcome the move. Sahara, so far circumspect, expresses happiness, in its editorial on August 14, about the Supreme Court refusing to interfere in the matter. It urges the people of J&K to not get embroiled in *khaamakhaa* (frivolous) matters and "not give an opportunity to militants to take advantage of the situation." Inqilab, on August 10, speaks of the PM's address on the matter as a "*marham*" (balm). It says that "the Kashmiri leaders raising hell on the revocation of Article 370 must answer, how have these articles helped the people? Articles 370 and 35A "pushed the state into a morass and kept it separate from the rest of India." The editorial builds a case for "successful central schemes to be pushed into J&K for improvements in education and progress in economic and social life." Akhbaar-e-Mashriq, on August 10, also uses the phrase "soothing balm" for PM Modi's address. It also says that "it was significant for the PM to say that if terror ends, the present status of J&K will be restored."