



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## FORCE OF REFORM

Test of PM's announcement of Chief of Defence Staff will lie in delineation of office's powers. It needs a purposeful mandate

IT HAS BEEN clear for two decades that big military reforms cannot take place without political will. On August 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi signalled that such political will had been summoned when he announced that the armed forces would now have a Chief of Defence Staff, a post for which there was a long felt need. Its creation was recommended two decades ago by the Group of Ministers in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government that was tasked with studying the Kargil Review Committee and coming up with concrete proposals from it. The KRC had redflagged the urgent need for structural reforms in the military. The GoM proposed a five star CDS who would bring unity of command between the three services, rising above the often competing views and claims of the Army, Navy and Air Force, to advise the prime minister and defence minister on a host of issues such as strategy, procurement of weaponry, manpower requirements, as well as work towards tri-service operational "jointmanship".

However, through all these years, the proposal could never find enough backers either in the political class or the defence bureaucracy. The three services were not convinced either. Politicians were worried that concentrating power in the hands of a high military official would give rise to praetorian tendencies; the defence ministry feared a change in the civilian-military equation that would result in its own loss of supremacy; and the Air Force and Navy opposed it because they believed that the CDS system would be dominated by the Army. Even a watered down version of the CDS suggested by the 2011 Naresh Chandra Committee, which was essentially a slightly more empowered version of the existing Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee system, did not see the light of day.

The decision to appoint a CDS would be meaningful only if the government clears these speedbreakers, which still exist. In addition, now there is also the Defence Planning Committee headed by the powerful NSA, who is the de facto CDS. The real test of Modi's announcement will be known when the time comes to delineate the powers of this office. Without a purposeful mandate, it would end up becoming just another military office. It is clear that the CDS must be able to report to the prime minister and defence minister, and must be seen as the senior-most military official, rather than as just "first among equals" with the service chiefs. In the US, the powers of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are defined by a 1986 law. In the hierarchy, he is placed above the service chiefs, and his role defined as that of the "principal military advisor" to the president and defence secretary. The same law also lays out what the CJCS cannot do. For sure, there will be resistance to an empowered CDS, because the military, like most organisations, is loath to change. But the Indian armed forces know, too, that this is the best way forward to a modern army that is prepared for today's challenges.

## SLOW AND SLOWER

Instead of short-term palliatives, government should keep the focus on fixing structural issues plaguing the economy

THERE IS MORE bad news on the economy. On Tuesday, data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers showed that sales dropped by 18.7 per cent in July — the sharpest decline in nearly 19 years. On Wednesday, data released by the commerce ministry showed that non-oil, non-gold imports, an indicator of domestic demand, contracted in July — they have contracted every month this financial year. The corporate results season also points to depressed demand. Clearly, household demand, which has been the bulwark of growth over the past few years, has slowed down substantially over the past few quarters. Why is this so? And can it be reversed?

Part of the explanation can be traced to household borrowings. Slower income/wage growth over the past few years led to households stepping up their borrowings to finance their consumption. In just two years, household financial liabilities went up from Rs 3.85 lakh crore in 2015-16 to Rs 7.4 lakh crore in 2017-18 — a period that also coincides with the sharp growth of NBFCs. This changed with the collapse of IL&FS. With the crisis engulfing the NBFC sector, the capacity of households to borrow to finance their consumption has been restricted. Bank lending is yet to offset this decline. This raises the question: If growth over the past few years was driven largely by households gorging on debt, which is unsustainable beyond a point, will policy interventions designed to fuel household consumption without addressing the underlying reason, the slowdown in income growth, be the prudent approach?

With the primary drivers of growth struggling, an argument is being made for a fiscal stimulus. Notwithstanding that the budget, which was presented just a few weeks ago, shied away from doing so, the space for a meaningful stimulus does not exist as the government is likely to find it difficult to meet its budgeted fiscal deficit target this year — its tax revenues are growing well below nominal GDP growth. In any case, higher government spending will be counterproductive — it will push up bond yields, restricting transmission of the interest rate cuts by the MPC. Reports also suggest that the government is considering a slew of measures to reverse the slowdown. At this juncture, the temptation to rely solely on short-term palliatives should be avoided. While sector-specific measures, such as addressing the concerns of the auto sector could be explored, the focus should be on addressing the structural issues that plague the economy.

## THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

A Buddhist temple in Japan has an android for a priest. But in India, even such an advanced AI may not be able to adapt

HERE'S WHERE KARL Marx got it wrong: Opium sells itself, while religion requires marketing. The Kodaiji Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan, is just 400 years old. But its latest priest, Kannon, can technically live forever, acquire unlimited knowledge and like Douglas Adams' fictional supercomputer, Deep Thought, could hold the answer to "life, the universe and everything". Kannon is an android priest, with silicon skin and a camera for a left eye. It began conducting sermons earlier this year and preaches about compassion and the dangers of desire, anger and ego.

Apart from the tricky theological questions, an android does provide the perfect vessel to preach detachment. When it talks of desire and ego, it can counsel without hypocrisy. Ironically, though, the motive behind the technological update may not be so detached as the new priest. The clergy at the Kodaiji temple reportedly hopes that Kannon will attract younger people, amongst whom the influence of religion is waning.

Closer home, too, robotic intervention holds much promise for religion to get with the times — and we can do it cheaper. The repetition of mantras, whether at weddings or funerals, is set and, frankly, requires little engagement from the audience. Given that most people are not well acquainted with classical Sanskrit, the vedic android will require programming no more sophisticated than a tape recorder. The only thing preventing the complete digitisation of religion is that even the most sophisticated artificial intelligence cannot perform the moral gymnastics that human beings who deal with religion and public life are able to. For instance, what will be the caste of a robot priest? Some questions trump even the most sophisticated technologies.

# The long disarm of the law

Even by its own spotty standards, abdication of the legal profession in leading the charge for liberty is striking



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE CONSTITUTIONALITY AND wisdom of rendering Article 370 irrelevant to Kashmir can be debated. But no matter which side of the debate you are on, the spectre of the Indian legal system abdicating its responsibility to protect the liberties of ordinary Indians should alarm all of us.

There are three tragic ironies in the current moment. First, the very act of supposedly "integrating" Kashmir more fully into India starts off by virtually putting the whole population of the Valley under a pall of suspicion. The normal rights to movement, communication and expression have been suspended for a large section of the population. Admittedly, there are security exigencies in Kashmir, and the state has an interest in preventing violence. But to put a state under a communication lockdown of protracted and uncertain duration, to detain almost the entire political leadership of the state, to deny ordinary citizens their liberties, reeks of a conduct that befits a colonial power, not a liberal democracy.

The second alarming thing is the casualness with which all of this is justified. This casualness only underscores the lack of empathetic imagination and the weakening commitment to freedom that characterised the rest of India; it is as if we are saying, we will win over Kashmiris by imposing even more hardship on them. But the third irony is that their first experience of Indian law as a Union Territory is untrammelled executive power writ large, where anyone can be detained or prevented from travelling on any pretext whatsoever. Indian courts have had a spotty record in defending our civil liberties. But even by that spotty standard, the abdication of the legal profession in leading the charge for liberty is striking.

There are a few petitions pending in the Supreme Court. But the court has already abdicated its responsibility by kicking the can down the road. In the case of detention, where mass political arrests have taken place, time is of the essence. What is the point of habeas corpus protection if it applies only after the state has done its deeds? Even if, for argument's sake, some measures of detention or restrictions on public assembly are necessary, the justification, duration, form and location can at least be scrutinised. Even

if the Supreme Court wanted to take more time on Article 370 issues, taking up issues of "liberty" cases should have been its top priority.

But, more generally, there is an extraordinary listlessness in the legal profession in the defence of liberty. One would have thought that this was a time for the legal profession to blitzkrieg the court with habeas corpus petitions. One would have thought that if Shah Faesal was denied the right to travel, prominent lawyers would invoke memories of the famous Maneka Gandhi case, and draw their swords on behalf of the right to travel. In fact, the tribe of senior counsel who are never shy to claim chivalrous custodianship of the Indian Constitution, are strikingly missing in leading the charge in the public sphere for liberty and rule of law in Kashmir. There are honourable exceptions, but such high degrees of deference in the legal culture of judges and lawyers to executive power does not portend well for Indian democracy.

Perhaps this is not surprising. So much of the public rhetoric is reminiscent of the Emergency. You had, then, Justice Y V Chandrachud arguing, in *ADM Jabalpur*, in a manner reminiscent of current discourse, that liberties could be ignored since political prisoners would not be mistreated. He had a "diamond bright" and "diamond hard" hope that such things would never come to pass. You had Justice A N Ray warning counsel not to "paint pictures of diabolic distortion and mendacious malignment of the government of the country."

H M Seervai's gloss on *ADM Jabalpur* is still worth quoting: "The majority judgment gave charter to every government servant to do his will against the helpless people, stripped by the Supreme Court of the protection of law. A rigid censorship concealed the extent of the injury inflicted by the judgment from the public gaze. But the evidence which has come to light since then shows how little justification there was for any judge to speak of 'motherly care' shown to detainees, or to express 'diamond bright and diamond hard hopes', that the kind of misdeeds which counsel for detainees feared had not tarnished the record of free India and would not do so."

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## THE CALIPH OF THE COURT

Pakistan's Chief Justice Saqib Nisar neglected cases to campaign for a dam



KHALED AHMED

IN PAKISTAN, JUDGES at the top of the judiciary have a way of going berserk, taking seriously Islam's "justice on the street" legend about the caliphs of Baghdad. When this happens, the dubious practice of "suo motu" gets out of hand: The judge, instead of worrying about his backlog, creates new cases on his own and absents himself from his real job. Pakistan suffered the suo motu psychosis of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Iftikhar Chaudhry (2005-2013) and the state had to pay damages abroad because Chaudhry, heady with false charisma, rescinded foreign contracts. The lawyers who had supported him in his row with the government lived to regret their stupidity.

Chief Justice Saqib Nisar (2016-2019), watching the theatre of the absurd, of suo motu, of his predecessor, thought he could actually improve on the Caliph of Baghdad's act. He wanted to leave a blazing legacy, but left the reputation of the judiciary in tatters. His main "achievement" pertains to the Basha Dam.

Justice Nisar paraded around, collecting "dam funds" and toured the UK to lobby expat Pakistanis. The dam is estimated to cost \$14 billion. One estimate indicates that Nisar collected Rs 9 billion but cost the government Rs 13 billion in publicity ads.

Justice Nisar took cover behind Article 184 (3) of the constitution, which empow-

ered him "to act in matters of public importance involving fundamental rights". The dam is a bit of a stretch and may take a long time — and a lot of money that Pakistan doesn't have — to build. But his Basha shenanigans went on: A member of the Sindh Assembly was asked to deposit Rs 3 million in the dam fund for assaulting a citizen. Nisar asked a cement factory to deposit Rs 100 million in a case involving environmental damage to the temples of Katas Raj in district Chakwal, which did nothing to restore the Hindu temples.

As the backlog of cases at Justice Nisar's court mounted — from 38,129 in 2017 to 40,254 in 2018 — and the litigants whimpered in protest, he started favouring lawyers who sought long adjournments in return for — guess what — donations to the dam fund. Cases cited in the press included upscale housing billionaire Malik Riaz who was asked to chip in with "tens of billions of rupees"; and the Khokhar brothers accused of land-grabbing in Lahore, who had to cough up Rs 100 million. He went on his fund-raising binge and was often flanked by Prime Minister Imran Khan himself. As he circulated like the legendary Caliph of Baghdad, he thought he should give himself a name reflecting the "blessing" he was proving for the Pakistani masses. He chose the funny nickname, Baba Rehmeta.

Some lawyers — not all, because most of them are deeply religious — noted that he was going overboard with his blending of ideology with nationalism. One instance often cited was what he said in a speech in Quetta: "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was probably the first thinker who conceived the two-nation theory, that there were two nations; one was Muslims and the other — well, I don't even want to utter the word." He preened over downgrading the Hindu community, protected as equal citizens by the constitution he was supposed to uphold.

Some judges in the higher judiciary didn't like what Nisar was doing. It is difficult to say whether they really objected because Nisar was legally out of bounds or simply because he looked ridiculous. One judge was Justice Qazi Faez Isa, whom he removed from a hearing midway for questioning his exercise of the suo motu. Unfortunately, Justice Isa is today facing dismissal at the Supreme Judicial Council after a reference by the Imran Khan government. You have to pay for not being the Caliph of Baghdad.

Then, on June 28 came the curtains. Three events planned in London with former chief justice Saqib Nisar and a federal minister failed to go ahead "for lack of interest".

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

## AUGUST 17, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### FUEL PRICE RISE

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ordered increases in the prices of almost all petroleum products. The decision to increase prices was taken at a meeting of the cabinet this morning in the wake of unprecedented increases in the prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the world market. Naphtha, fuel oil and low sulphur heavy stock (LSHS), used as feedstock for the fertiliser industry, and lubricants of various grades, have been left untouched. While feedstocks for the fertiliser industry have been exempted from price increase to prevent any escalations in the prices of fertilisers in the interest of agricultural production, lubricants have been protected be-

cause they are already very highly priced in comparison with other products.

### CPM VOLTE FACE

AFTER REPEATED ASSERTIONS that it will not back a political combination dependent on the RSS-Jana Sangh or the Congress (I), the CPM decided to support the Charan Singh ministry even while recognising that the government has not "yet freed itself" from the support of Indira Gandhi's party. Explaining the party's volte face, the CPM central committee said in a statement after its two-day-long deliberations in Delhi that it was necessary for it to back the government in order to prevent "the Jana Sangh-

dominated Janata Party from coming back."

**NANAJI'S DUTY**  
JANATA LEADER NANAJI Deshmukh has told the prime minister that by raising certain questions and highlighting the inconsistencies in his (Charan Singh's) views about Morarji Desai, H N Bahuguna, Indira Gandhi and on other matters, he was only doing "national duty". In a letter to Singh, Deshmukh refuted the charge that he was travelling all over the country abusing him. He reminded Singh about the grave charges of corruption levelled by the latter against H N Bahuguna when both were members of Desai's government.





# 13 THE IDEAS PAGE

## By numbers alone

The change in Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional status is democratic only in one sense — it had a parliamentary majority. But democracy is much more than that



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

DID THE ABROGATION of Jammu and Kashmir's special status express India's democratic wish, or did it violate basic democratic canons? The government's claim is the former, critics say it is the latter. How do we judge?

Democracy has at least four meanings. Democracy, first of all, is a system of electoral power. The BJP received 229 million votes in the recent elections. If all voters were to exercise franchise in Jammu and Kashmir, the erstwhile state would have at best eight million votes, of which the Kashmir Valley had approximately 4.5 million. The BJP has been committed to the abrogation of Article 370, saying it gave undue privileges to India's only Muslim-majority state. Having received a larger mandate for the directly-elected Lower House of Parliament, and confident that it could get enough votes in the indirectly elected Upper House, it went ahead with its ideological project and removed Article 370 via parliamentary majorities. This is consistent with the first meaning of democracy — namely, electoral majorities as a cornerstone of democratic power.

But elections alone do not define a democracy. The second idea of democracy is that it is not simply a system of majority rule, but also a system of minority protection. All post-Nazi democracies since 1945 have had this character. The Nazi regime and its theorists, such as Carl Schmitt, had argued that democracy was only about majority wishes and if the German majority wanted Jews to be second-class citizens, the Jewish minority of German lands would have no choice but to submit. Only liberalism, argued Schmitt, protected the Jews, not democracy.

The logical culmination of this view of democracy was the concentration camp, or the incarceration and death of several million Jews because their loyalties to the German nation were considered suspect by those who won power. Unless minority rights constrain the majority-rule principle, democracies can, in principle, lead to concentration camps. That is why post-1945, democracies have tended to be liberal democracies, not simply electoral democracies. Modern democracy first enables majority rule and then also checks and balances it with minority rights.

In and of themselves, 4.5 million votes cannot carry greater democratic weight than 229 million votes. Election winners do get the right to frame policies or enact laws in a democracy, but in post-Nazi democracies, this rule is radically modified when the 229 million voters are primarily of one religion (or race), and the 4.5 million votes are overwhelmingly from a minority religion (or race), as opposed to both being racially, religiously, ethnically so mixed that voters can be identified primarily as individual citizens, not as members of the religiously defined majorities and minorities. The problem is not rule by a majority, but rule by a religiously (ethnically or racially) defined majority.

Nearly 44 per cent of Hindus voted for the BJP in the recent elections and only eight per cent of Muslims did. India is about 80 per cent Hindu, and the Kashmir Valley over 96 per cent Muslim. The minority-protec-



C R Sasikumar

tion principle of democracy means that even with 229 million overwhelmingly Hindu votes, the BJP should not impose its will on seven million Kashmiris. The agreements made to protect minority rights — Articles 370 and 35A — would have to be respected, unless the minority itself agreed to their termination.

It is suggested that Kashmiri Muslims have no right to this reasoning because in the early 1990s, with the insurgency at its peak, they actively engineered the outmigration of Kashmiri Hindus, a minority community in the Valley where Muslims are a majority. This argument is flawed. All it can logically require is (a) identifying and punishing those organisations that forced the outmigration, and (b) insisting on the return of Kashmiri Hindus. By no democratic reasoning does it entitle a government to inflict majoritarian retribution on an entire community — to avenge an earlier majoritarian excess.

The third meaning of democracy is that it is a constitutionally-governed system. All modern democracies, except the British, are constitutionally-based. Elections establish who will rule, but the rulers so elected are also constitutionally bound. Here, there are three key questions.

First, can routine legislative action scrap an article of the constitution? Or, was a special legislative procedure, mandated by a constitutional amendment, required? If the latter, the change should also have been proposed as a constitutional amendment, and super majorities in the two Houses of the central legislature pursued ex-ante, not celebrated post-fact. Second, can the governor's approval, procured in this case, be taken as the state's consent for change? Constitutionally, the governor represents Delhi, not the state in question. The governor cannot be called a substitute for the state's elected political representatives. If the elected state legislature is not in session, a constitutional change pertaining to the state must await the return of

Article 3 of India's Constitution allows the change of state boundaries without the approval of state assemblies, but the Centre, on August 6, did not simply hive off Ladakh from a state, a la Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It also demoted Jammu and Kashmir. Can India's Parliament, without a constitutional amendment, turn a state with full federal rights into a union territory, which has reduced rights and whose law and order are centrally governed, not by the state? It is analogous to turning Pennsylvania, a state in the American federation, into a Washington DC, which is not a state.

elected representatives. Third, we know that Article 3 of India's Constitution allows the change of state boundaries without the approval of state assemblies, but the Centre, on August 6, did not simply hive off Ladakh from a state, a la Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It also demoted Jammu and Kashmir. Can India's Parliament, without a constitutional amendment, turn a state with full federal rights into a Union Territory, which has reduced rights and whose law and order are centrally governed, not by the state? It is analogous to turning Pennsylvania, a state in the American federation, into a Washington DC, which is not a state.

The fourth meaning of democracy is that it is a system of political ethics. In a democracy, those vitally affected by a decision are given a chance to speak, even if they are likely, or destined, to lose. Losers are silenced in authoritarian polities, not in democracies. The Kashmir Valley is vitally affected by this constitutional change, but it was locked down, its leaders arrested, and a curfew imposed. This is similar to what happened on the eve of the Emergency, on June 25, 1975. Indira Gandhi arrested major Opposition leaders before a president-approved order was presented to Parliament and democracy suspended. Since August 5, we have witnessed a Kashmir-level emergency, though clearly not a national emergency.

In short, only in one democratic sense — democracy as a system of electoral power — can the decision to change Kashmir's status be called potentially legitimate. In all other democratic senses, we have witnessed severely anti-democratic conduct. It was electorally-enabled brute majoritarianism.

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## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The demonstrators (in Hong Kong) should give Beijing no excuse for violent suppression. But the behaviour of a small minority does not justify a ruthless response to the movement as a whole." — THE GUARDIAN

## A jan andolan for water

Proposed Jal Jeevan Mission will be a decentralised, community-managed and sustainable water management scheme



PARAMESWARAN IYER

ON AUGUST 15, during the first Independence Day speech of his second tenure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Jal Jeevan Mission, which plans to supply water to all households by 2024. Five years ago, on the same occasion, he had made an equally audacious pronouncement: That India would become open defecation free by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Having delivered on that promise, the PM has now set another BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) and, without a doubt, an idea whose time has come.

For many years, the central and state governments have been making efforts to increase access to safe and adequate drinking water. While the provision of a basic quantity of drinking water in rural India has been achieved through handpumps, dug wells or public stand posts, at the top of the aspirational ladder has always been household water supply (HWS). Thus, while states like Sikkim and Gujarat have managed to achieve high levels of HWS, a relatively low percentage of rural Indian households have access to this service. The strategy so far to increase access to HWS faced obstacles, including not paying enough attention to sustaining or recharging groundwater, the primary source, and treating service delivery primarily as an engineering solution, without adequate involvement of the users.

A further challenge at the policy level was that, until now, the institutional landscape for water at both the Centre and state government has been somewhat fragmented, with several ministries in Delhi and departments in states dealing with different aspects of water management, with overlapping roles and responsibilities. No single body had the ultimate oversight and authority necessary to resolve conflicting issues and take the necessary decisions. The creation of the Jal Shakti Mantralaya in the Government of India to integrate the management of India's water resources and supply of drinking water is a landmark step in diagnosing and addressing the problem. At a policy level, therefore, the stage has been set to deliver integrated water management solutions.

One of the main implementation challenges in rural drinking water service delivery has been the inadequate attention to taking concrete measures to sustain the source of the water, in most cases groundwater. The traditional approach to source sustainability by the large engineering departments in states has either been to assume that the groundwater source is infinite or that it is some other department's problem. Instead of taking simple and local measures, like creating rainwater harvesting structures and point recharge structures in the vicinity of borewells, the emphasis has been more on maximising the pumping of water and distributing it through pipes. This led to many of the systems either shutting down or func-

tioning suboptimally due to the groundwater source having dried up. The proposed Jal Jeevan Mission will make source sustainability measures mandatory prior to pumping and distributing water to households.

Another major issue with the traditional approach to service delivery was that the provision of drinking water was viewed primarily as an engineering solution, with schemes being planned and executed by the public health and engineering departments. However, water is an ideal sector for the applicability of the principle of subsidiarity — the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. Programmes like the Swajal project in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and the WASMO programme in Gujarat, demonstrated that with adequate capacity building and training, water can be most efficiently managed at the lowest appropriate level. Adopting this principle, the Jal Jeevan Mission's first preference will be to have single village ground water-based schemes, wherever sufficient quantity and good quality of groundwater exists. These schemes would be managed by the community itself through the setting up of a village water and sanitation committee, a sub-committee of the gram panchayat. Wherever adequate quantity of safe groundwater is not present, or where it may be technically not feasible to have single-village schemes, surface water-based multi-village schemes will be promoted. Further, in some remote regions, where it may not be technologically feasible to have household water supply schemes, local innovations, such as solar-based schemes will be encouraged.

It is not commonly known that household waste water, mainly from the kitchen and bathing, from household water supply amounts to about 75 per cent of the amount of water supplied. Under the proposed Jal Jeevan Mission, with rural households planned to get household water supply, huge quantities of household waste water will be generated across the country, therefore making its effective management critical. It is, therefore, planned to include a mandatory provision under the Jal Jeevan Mission for the effective channeling and treatment of household waste water (known as grey water), through appropriate and low cost drainage and treatment systems. Once appropriately treated, the grey water can be used for both recharge of ground water as well as for irrigation purposes.

On the lines of the Swachh Bharat Mission, extensive information, education and communication will be needed to create a jan andolan for water management. The ongoing Jal Shakti Abhiyan will help in creating awareness about the importance of integrating source sustainability and water reuse with the provision of household water supply. This integrated approach to decentralised, community managed, and sustainable water management is the backbone of the government's plan to ensure that every household gets the benefits of water supply. The Jal Jeevan Mission will be a major step towards improving our people's ease of living and meeting their aspirations of a New India.

The writer is secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti. Views are personal



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

## Summer of Love 2.0

The world needs another Woodstock and all that it stood for

FIFTYEARS AGO, in August 1969, half a million people gathered for three days on a 600-acre dairy farm at Bethel, New York to celebrate peace, love and music. The event became known as the Woodstock Rock Festival. The festival became world-famous after a soundtrack album and an award-winning documentary by the same name was released subsequently. Nearly 30 bands and musicians performed at the Woodstock Festival over four days, including Ravi Shankar, Joan Baez, Jimi Hendrix, Santana, The Grateful Dead, The Who, Jefferson Airplane, Joe Cockar and many others. Despite the famous absentees — like Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel — Woodstock became a symbol of anti-Vietnam contestation and the global counterculture movement. Unlike today's youth, who is thinking in terms of money and jobs and becoming increasingly conformist and complacent, the young people of the 1960s were feeling frustrated and rejected by the socio-political systems of their time. In American society in particular, young people were disgusted by the Jim Crow laws in the Southern US and the assassinations of the African-American emancipation movement leaders, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. They were also strongly opposed to the Vietnam war and the draft system — which mainly drew from

the Black population, minorities and lower-class whites. Increasingly disillusioned with the American political debate, the rebellious youth turned towards new radical values expressed by Black Power, Maoism and the hippie movement.

The hippie movement was reinforced by the escalation of US involvement in Vietnam, followed by unrest on college campuses. It included hundreds of thousands of young Americans across the country who showed their rebelliousness by way of their long hair and beards, colourful dresses, drug use and adherence to a host of oriental spiritual philosophies — things that American society had never heard of. Among the distinctive signs and attitudes related to those of this generation was the love of psychedelic and progressive rock music. In fact, the American counterculture movement was not only influenced by the philosophies of the Beat poets and writers like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, and some Freud-Marxist icons like Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm; but it was also motivated by the music of rock bands like The Mamas and the Papas who popularised the Hippie image of California when they sang "If you're going to San Francisco/Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair."

In July 1967, Time magazine published a cover story on the Hippie movement, de-

scribing it as the "Summer of Love". According to the article, the movement was "blooming in every major US city from Boston to Seattle, from Detroit to New Orleans," embracing hundreds of thousands of souls. These were mostly young people in their twenties and thirties who dreamed of a place where they could practise free love, take acid and listen to their favorite bands: This is what the Woodstock Music Festival provided them with in August 1969. No other music festival had attracted so many counterculture people in one place. The Monterey International Pop Music Festival in 1967 and The Atlantic City Pop Music Festival had each attracted around 1,00,000 people. The specificity of the Woodstock Music Festival was that it embodied the zeitgeist of the 1960s, represented by political radicalism, women's liberation movement, anti-war partisanship and, finally, cultural transformation.

Max Yasgur, the man who rented out his farm for the Woodstock festival in 1969 died in 1973. In 1984, a plaque was placed at the site of the festival commemorating the historical event and years later, in 2008, the ashes of Richie Havens, one of the artists who participated at Woodstock, were scattered across the field. Several years ago, Michael Lang, who was one of the organisers of the original Woodstock event, decided to celebrate the

50th anniversary of the event in August 2019. However, the investors who had promised to help Lang in this enterprise walked out. Though Lang continued his dream of organising a Woodstock 50 with help from Oppenheimer & Co., the concert was finally cancelled in late July. Consequently, in an interview with the magazine Variety, Lang underlined that Woodstock remained committed to "social change, and the values of compassion, human dignity, and the beauty of our differences."

But the truth is, that times have changed and Woodstock is no more in the hearts and minds of today's youth. The Woodstock Music Festival was organised in 1969, a year after the sons and daughters of the most privileged sections of the United States and of Europe decided to change the world. The year that Grace Slick and Jefferson Airplane sang, "Now it's time for you and me to have a revolution." As such, the Woodstock Music Festival was the result of all that rebelliousness which seemed to be in the air, and it seemed to be everywhere. It was a moral revolt against a mode of living which has now taken over our universities and workplaces. Fifty years later, maybe, it is time to re-invent Woodstock.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SOLID DEFENCE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Unifying the command' (IE, August 16). The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as permanent chairman of the chiefs of staff committee (COSC) will ensure inter-services co-ordination and operational synergy between three defence services. CDS as the single point of contact between the defence services and the civilian leadership will aid policy coherence. The pivotal role of the National Security Council as an advisory body to the PMO in matters of national security should remain unaltered to maintain the upper hand of the civilian leadership.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

### STORY IN HER EYES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Goddess of small things' (IE, August 16). Vidya Sinha was a star of the middle-of-the-road cinema that balanced itself between the blatantly commercial and the laboriously intellectual genres. With extraordinary flair, she emoted ordinary, run-of-the-mill moments. She will always be remembered as the actress whose eyes carried a story.

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

### JINGOISM AGAIN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The PM's message'. The most notable feature of all the PM's speeches has been drawing

### LETTER OF THE WEEK

#### MINISTRY'S TASKS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Face the deluge' (IE, August 14). In June, the government created an integrated Ministry of Jal Shakti. Some states have received less rainfall while others face a deluge. Both the situations have to be addressed. The Jal Shakti ministry should intervene in situations such as the one in Maharashtra and Karnataka. A lot of damage could have been avoided if the two states had agreed to a timely discharge of waters from the Almati dam.

Krishan Chugh, Delhi

parallels with non-BJP governments and condemning them, no matter how solemn the occasion. The country is undergoing serious economic troubles and there is political turmoil in J&K. The PM has rightfully said that all the citizens should take ownership of change. However, the country is gripped with jingoism and any dissent is viewed in bad light.

Deepak Singhal, Noida