

TELLING NUMBERS

How plastic pollutes, how much waste the states generate

IN HIS Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for freeing India from "single-use plastic". The environmental harm caused by plastic has been the subject of international research and government reports over the years.

Worldwide, 75 per cent of all plastic produced is waste, and 87 per cent of this is leaked into the environment. A study by the University of Newcastle, Australia, and published by the World Wildlife Foundation this year concluded that an average person may be ingesting 5 grams of plastic every week. Over one-third of plastic waste ends up in nature, especially water, which is the largest source of plastic ingestion according to the report. India ranks number three in terms of plastic fibres found in a sample of tap water - 82.4 per cent of tap water sampled in India contained over four plastic fibres per 500 ml, the study found.

In India, the last Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report that assessed adherence to the Plastic Waste Management Rules was published for

PLASTIC IN TAP WATER

Country	Tap water samples containing plastic fibres	Average plastic fibres /500 ml
United States	94.4%	4.8
Ecuador	79.2%	2.2
Europe	72.2%	1.9

Source: University of Newcastle via World Wildlife Fund, 2019

2017-18. The Rules were amended in 2018. As per the 2017-18 report, only 14 states and UTs had submitted their annual reports to the CPCB. Of these 14, Uttar Pradesh generated 2.06 lakh TPA (tonnes per annum) plastic waste and had 16 unregistered manufacturing/recycling units. Gujarat followed with 2.6 lakh TPA of plastic waste generated and zero unregistered manufacturing/recycling units.

PLASTIC GENERATED IN INDIAN STATES

State	Plastic waste generation Tonnes per annum	Manufacturing/recycling units	
		Registered	Unregistered
UP	2.06 lakh	133	16
Gujarat	2.69 lakh	882	0
MP	0.61 lakh	71	20
Punjab	0.54 lakh	144	246
Nagaland	0.14 lakh	6	-
Odisha	0.12 lakh	20	-

Source: Central Pollution Control Board, 2017-18

THIS WORD MEANS

PARKER SOLAR PROBE



Artist's impression of the Parker Solar Probe approaching the sun. NASA

ON AUGUST 12, NASA's Parker Solar Probe completed a year in service. It is part of NASA's "Living With a Star" programme that explores different aspects of the Sun-Earth system. The probe seeks to gather information about the Sun's atmosphere and NASA says that it "will revolutionise our understanding of the Sun". It is also the closest a human-made object has ever gone to the Sun.

On August 16, the Parker Solar Probe turned on its four instrument suites. During the spacecraft's first two solar encounters, the instruments were turned on when Parker was about 0.25 AU from

the Sun and powered off again at the same distance on the outbound side of the orbit. For this third solar encounter, the mission team turned on the instruments when the spacecraft was around 0.45 AU from the Sun on the inbound side of its orbit and will turn them off when the spacecraft is about 0.5 AU from the Sun on the outbound side.

The mission's central aim is to trace how energy and heat move through the Sun's corona and to study the source of the solar wind's acceleration. The mission is likely to last for seven years during which it will complete 24 orbits.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How states are split into seats

With J&K reorganised, all eyes are on how Election Commission will proceed with delimitation of constituencies. What aspects will it look into, and how often has delimitation been done earlier?

RITIKA CHOPRA
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

SINCE THE bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir state into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, delimitation of their electoral constituencies has been inevitable. While the government has not formally notified the Election Commission yet, the EC has held "internal discussions" on the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, particularly its provisions on delimitation.

Why is delimitation needed?

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population. In this process, the number of seats allocated to different states in Lok Sabha and the total number seats in a Legislative Assembly may also change. The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population. It also aims at a fair division of geographical areas so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election. Delimitation is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission. The Constitution mandates that its orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.

How is delimitation carried out?

Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census. Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission made up of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner and the respective State Election Commissioners. The Commission is supposed to determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats, so far as practicable, is the same. The Commission is also tasked with identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; these are where their population is relatively large. All this is done on the basis of the latest Census and, in case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.

The draft proposals of the Delimitation Commission are published in the Gazette of India, official gazettes of the states concerned and at least two vernacular papers for public feedback. The Commission also holds



Then CEPT N Seshan with Election Commissioners G V G Krsignamurthy and MS Gill, along with Home Secretary K Padmanabhaiah, in 1996 at the Election Commission office where they announced polls for J&K. R K Dayal/Express Archive

public sittings. After hearing the public, it considers objections and suggestions, received in writing or orally during public sittings, and carries out changes, if any, in the draft proposal. The final order is published in the Gazette of India and the State Gazette and comes into force on a date specified by the President.

How often has delimitation been done in the past?

The first delimitation exercise in 1950-51 was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission), as the Constitution at that time was silent on who should undertake the division of states into Lok Sabha seats. This delimitation was temporary as the Constitution mandated redrawing of boundaries after every Census. Hence, another delimitation was due after the 1951 Census. Pointing out that the first delimitation had left many political parties and individuals unhappy, the EC advised the government that all future exercises should be carried out by an independent commission. This suggestion was accepted and the Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952. Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times - 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.

Why was there no delimitation then?

by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting". Parliament can then pass a law to this effect.

States with LCs

Currently, six states have Legislative Councils (see box). Jammu and Kashmir too had one, until the state was bifurcated into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Tamil Nadu's then DMK government had passed a law to set up a Council but the subsequent AIADMK government withdrew it after coming to power in 2010. Andhra Pradesh's Legislative Council, set up in 1958, was abolished in 1985, then reconstituted in 2007. The Odisha Assembly recently passed a resolution for a Legislative Council. Proposals to create Councils in Rajasthan and Assam are pending in Parliament; the PRS Legislative Research website lists the status of both Bill as pending.

Members

Under Article 171 of the Constitution, the Legislative Council of a state shall not have more than one-third of the number of MLAs of the state, and not less than 40 members. In Madhya Pradesh, which has 230 MLAs, the

The Constitution mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is, as far as practicable, the same for all states. Although unintended, this provision implied that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament. The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced. To allay these fears, the Constitution was amended during Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.

Despite the embargo, there were a few occasions that called for readjustment in the number of Parliament and Assembly seats allocated to a state. These include statehood attained by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1986, the creation of a Legislative Assembly for the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and creation of new states such as Uttarakhand.

Although the freeze on the number of seats in Lok Sabha and Assemblies should have been lifted after the 2001 Census, another amendment postponed this until 2026. This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026. So, the last delimitation exercise - started in July 2002 and completed on May 31, 2008 - was based on the 2001 Census and only readjusted boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworked the number

of reserved seats.

Why is delimitation for Jammu and Kashmir in the news now?

Delimitation of Jammu and Kashmir's Lok Sabha seats is governed by the Indian Constitution, but delimitation of its Assembly seats (until special status was abrogated recently) was governed separately by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957. As far as delimitation of Lok Sabha seats is concerned, the last Delimitation Commission of 2002 was not entrusted with this task. Hence, J&K parliamentary seats remain as delimited on the basis of the 1971 Census.

As for Assembly seats, although the delimitation provisions of the J&K Constitution and the J&K Representation of the People Act, 1957, are similar to those of the Indian Constitution and Delimitation Acts, they mandate a separate Delimitation Commission for J&K. In actual practice, the same central Delimitation Commission set up for other states was adopted by J&K in 1963 and 1973.

While the amendment of 1976 to the Indian Constitution suspended delimitation in the rest of the country till 2001, no corresponding amendment was made to the J&K Constitution. Hence, unlike the rest of the country, the Assembly seats of J&K were delimited based on the 1981 Census, which formed the basis of the state elections in 1996. There was no census in the state in 1991 and no Delimitation Commission was set up by the state government after the 2001 Census as the J&K Assembly passed a law putting a freeze on fresh delimitation until 2026. This freeze was upheld by the Supreme Court. The J&K Assembly has 87 seats - 46 in Kashmir, 37 in Jammu and 4 in Ladakh. Twenty-four seats are reserved for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The freeze, some political parties argue, has created inequity for Jammu region.

This month, the Union government scrapped the state's special status and turned J&K into a Union Territory. Under this law, delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in J&K UT will be as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The Act also states that in the next delimitation exercise, which is expected to kickstart soon, the number of Assembly seats will increase from 107 to 114. The increase in seats is expected to benefit Jammu region.

MP wants Legislative Council: what it entails

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

THE MADHYA PRADESH government has indicated that it plans to initiate steps towards creation of a Legislative Council (*The Indian Express*, August 17).

Why a second House

Just as Parliament has two Houses, so can the states, if they choose to. Article 71 of the Constitution provides for the option of a state to have a Legislative Council in addition to its Legislative Assembly. As in Rajya Sabha, members of a Legislative Council are not directly elected by voters.

Opinion in the Constituent Assembly was divided on the idea. Among the arguments in its favour, a second House can help check hasty actions by the directly elected House, and also enable non-elected individuals to contribute to the legislative process. The arguments against the idea: a Legislative Council can be used to delay legislation, and to park leaders who have not been able to win an election.

Under Article 169, a Legislative Council can be formed "if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect

STATES WITH TWO HOUSES

State	MLA seats*	MLC seats
Andhra	176	58
Bihar	243	58
Karnataka	225	75
Maharashtra	289	78
Telangana	119	40
UP	404	100

* Including nominated members

services in various fields.

LC vis-à-vis Rajya Sabha

The legislative power of the Councils is limited. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack a constitutional mandate to do so; Assemblies can override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council. Again, unlike Rajya Sabha MPs, MLCs cannot vote in elections for the President and Vice President. The Vice President is the Rajya Sabha Chairperson; an MLC is the Council Chairperson.

What next in MP

Having promised a Legislative Council for Madhya Pradesh in its election manifesto, the ruling Congress is working on a resolution that will be presented in the next Assembly session. Rajendra Singh, chairman of the Congress manifesto committee in 2018, said the party has discussed the issue and is serious about constituting a second House.

A senior bureaucrat in the Parliamentary Affairs Department said the proposal is under consideration but it would be too early to give a timeline.

Monarchy to long-term CM to instability: how did Sikkim get here?

ESHAROY
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

LAST WEEK, Sikkim's longest serving Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, became the sole elected Opposition representative in the Assembly after the remaining 12 Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) MLAs defected, with 10 joining the BJP and another two joining the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM). Political instability is new to this relatively young state, where Chamling served as Chief Minister for 25 years starting 1994. It began when the SKM voted out the SDF with a slim margin in April this year.

What happened in the Assembly elections?

It was actually the 2014 elections that had heralded the arrival of the SKM, formed the previous year by Chamling's former protégé P S Tamang, also known as P S Golay,

The SKM won 10 of the 32 Assembly seats with 40.8 per cent of the vote, while the SDF held on with 22 seats and 55 per cent.

This year, the SKM edged out the SDF by 17 seats to 15 but was marginally behind in vote shares, at 47.03 per cent to the SDF's 47.63 per cent. In terms of actual members, the SDF had 13 because two of them had won from two seats each.

It was the first time in the state that a government has been voted out. Sikkim has had a change in government twice earlier, but the incumbent government had already fallen before the new one was voted in. Some analysts look at the current situation as the birth of Sikkim as a true democracy. A kingdom until recently, Sikkim was seen as continuing with a "monarchic psychology" as long as Chamling was in the chair.

Why has there been political instability after the elections?

Behind in vote shares, the SKM won nar-

rowly in most seats, while the SDF's margins were generally much wider. As such, the SKM government has looked tentative. The SKM will look to consolidate in upcoming byelections to three seats, two of these held by the SDF and one by the SKM itself.

Golay himself is in a precarious position. He did not contest the elections, having been convicted of corruption by a Sikkim court based on charges brought by the previous SDF government. He has approached the Supreme Court to overturn the conviction, as well as the Election Commission to allow him to contest the bypolls. He served a year in jail and was released in August 2018.

How is the BJP placed?

On the face of it, the BJP's gains do not directly strengthen the SKM but appear to have weakened the SDF's hopes of toppling the government. The 10 defections, however, signal the BJP's arrival in the state where it had won only 0.7 per cent of the

vote share in 2014 and 1.6 per cent in 2019, after having contested 13 seats on both occasions. Both the SDF and the SKM are part of the NEDA nationally but contest separately from the BJP in the state.

In a state dominated by regional parties, the defection of 10 SDF MLAs has suddenly made BJP the main opposition. SDF leaders claim that the MLAs have switched parties for fear of persecution from the SKM. Sources said SDF leaders maintain cordial relations with the BJP, despite the defections.

How did the SKM gain ground?

During the SDF regime, Sikkim had done well on many social and economic indicators. According to state government data, its per capita income is Rs 2,33,311 as opposed to the national average of Rs 86,660; its life expectancy is 73.15 compared to the national average of 68.6; and its literacy rate for both men and women is above 90 per cent as compared to the national average of

74 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. According to NITI Aayog data, Sikkim's infant mortality rate is 16 per 1,000 live births (2016) compared to the national IMR of 34. Sikkim was also the first state to be declared open-defecation free.

The SKM campaigned by questioning these achievements and highlighting reports of corruption within the SDF government. Unemployment is seen as a major driver for change, especially with 60 per cent of voters being under the age of 40, and 16 per cent being first-time voters.

What was Sikkim's history before this new phase of political instability?

According to the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, representatives of the British Crown and the Emperor of China mutually agreed that Sikkim would remain a protectorate of the British Government. Sikkim itself was not consulted for the agreement.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Valley's new dawn

Article 370 was used to deny the people of J&K their rights. An era of development and inclusion beckons



RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

WORLD AND VALLEY

On J&K, it may be a long diplomatic haul ahead for India at the United Nations

LAST WEEK, DELHI fended off a vigorous Chinese attempt at getting the United Nations Security Council to pronounce, after more than five decades, on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. But it is too early to celebrate. For, Pakistan's campaign to draw the international community into the Kashmir question has just begun. When the government surprised the nation and the world by revoking the special status of J&K and bifurcated the state into union territories, the internationalisation of the issues was central to Pakistan's furious response. China has been an eager accomplice. The resolute support from the US and France to the Indian position that the political rearrangement of J&K was an "internal matter" prevented a formal discussion and a potential statement or resolution at the UNSC. Russia, which had exercised its veto in favour of India during the Cold War years when Kashmir was on the UNSC agenda, insisted that the problems between India and Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally. Britain, apparently, tilted towards the Chinese view that the UNSC must issue a statement.

Although the weight of collective opinion at the UNSC was in India's favour, Delhi knows it has a prolonged diplomatic challenge at hand. Delhi can easily dismiss Islamabad's claim that the very fact that there were consultations on the Kashmir question at the UNSC is a political triumph for Pakistan. But India can't ignore Islamabad's declared intention to keep returning to the UNSC with China's support. How the UNSC might respond the next time will depend on the ground situation in Kashmir.

Any breakdown of law and order in the Kashmir Valley and Delhi's use of force against civilians will certainly weaken international support for India. Any serious escalation of military tensions with Pakistan on the LoC could be seen as a "threat to international peace and security" and provide the basis for the UNSC's political intervention. India then faces a three-fold attack from the Pakistan-China strategic axis. Pakistan is likely to unleash its proxies to trigger violence in the Valley. It may also raise the military temperature on the LoC. China has signalled its intent to bring its full weight to bear at the UNSC against India. Delhi may have no time to contemplate a fourth dimension — of Beijing's potential to open a second military front on its long and contested borders with India. After all, Beijing has accused Delhi of "challenging China's sovereign interests" by altering the internal political status quo in Kashmir. The accusation might have no basis in reality, but it underlines China's deepening political hostility towards India. If Delhi can't afford to underestimate the challenges — domestic, trans-border and international — arising from its Kashmir move, it also knows that failure on any front is not an option.

ARTICLE 370 HAD to go for the benefit of Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K) common people. We need to applaud the courage of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the determination of Home Minister Amit Shah, who ensured that a 70-year-old problem became history in less than 70 days of their assuming office.

Article 370 was inserted in the Constitution as a temporary provision under unfair circumstances. More than 560 former princely states became part of India without any provisional arrangement like Article 370. People of all communities with great cultural diversities lived in these territories. Yet, the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, who were leaders of great wisdom and foresight, did not accord any special provision for these princely states. The only inference one can draw is that, except J&K, all were handled by Sardar Patel and they all are today a proud part of India. J&K was handled by Jawaharlal Nehru, much to the embarrassment of Patel, who, as the deputy prime minister handling the ministry of home and princely states, ought to have handled it as well.

For more than 70 years, the problem of J&K has been lingering. Nearly 42,000 lives have been lost. Kashmiri Pandits were forced to leave their homes at gun-point. The so-called special arrangement led to separatism. Sheikh Abdullah was imprisoned for 11 years by the Congress government at the Centre. Between 1990 and 1996, the Valley remained under curfew on an average 200 days in a year. In retrospect, Nehru's emotional attachment clouded an objective assessment about J&K.

Who benefited from Article 370? Obviously, the common people of J&K did not. The Shia community, Gujjars, Bakkarwals, Gaddis, other Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and people living in Ladakh and Kargil did not get any substantial benefit either.

There was a thinking in New Delhi that if a few families of J&K are handled well, then problems of the entire state will be taken care of. These few families perpetuated their power, indulged in rank corruption and whenever accountability was sought, they took shelter behind Article 370. How can any-

one justify that the Prevention of Corruption Act — which lays down elaborate legal provisions that insist on criminal accountability against authorities, both political and bureaucratic, for abuse of power and corruption — was not made applicable in the state? Why were laws like the Right to Education, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the Right to Information Act and the law prohibiting manual scavenging not made applicable in that state? Article 370 was abused to deny the people of the state free and fair elections. People still remember one of the fairest elections held after a long time was when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister.

Most importantly, when many brave Kashmiri Muslims like army officer Ummer Fayaz, rifleman Aurangzeb and many others were killed by terrorists in the most gruesome manner, those speaking aggressively against Article 370 maintained a conspicuous silence.

We need to recall that the constituent assembly of the state of Jammu and Kashmir enacted the constitution of the state in 1956. Under Part II, Article 3, it was specifically provided, "the state of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India". Article 147, under Part XII, provided for the amendment of this constitution, where it was clearly stipulated that no Bill or Amendment inter alia seeking to make any change in the provision of Section 3 (J&K shall be the integral part of Union of India) shall be introduced or moved in either House of the state legislature. Once the constituent assembly of J&K enacted a constitution, which proudly declared the state to be an integral part of India that shall remain unalterable, then in many ways Article 370 lost its relevance.

Article 370 was deliberately kept as a temporary provision and the prime minister rightly observed that those supporting it never had the courage to make it permanent. It is significant that once the Constituent Assembly enacted the Constitution, it served its purpose and any further amendment as per Article 147 of the state constitution was given to the state legislative assembly. In this light, it was perfectly justified to declare by a presidential notification that the expression constituent assembly under Article 370 (3)

shall be read as state legislative assembly and since the state was under President's Rule, its power was constitutionally exercised by the Parliament under Article 356 (1) (b) of the Indian Constitution.

During the debate in the two Houses of Parliament, voices from all the regions of Jammu and Kashmir were heard. This fact also needs to be stressed that the BJP had received a resounding mandate from the people of India on its promise to remove Article 370. The arguments that like Article 370 other special provision dealing with welfare of Northeastern regions and tribal areas may also be removed is completely misplaced. Article 371 (a) to (j) are special provisions and not temporary provisions and will remain. After creation of new states, special provisions have been incorporated for the development of a particular region or for particular tribes. These, being special provisions, are permanent in nature.

There are many cases of young Muslim girls from the Valley getting married to people outside the state and losing all their rights. Recently, I met a young officer of the All India Service from Jammu and she was a Hindu, who told me that she lost all her rights in the state because she married a civil servant from outside her home state. With moist eyes, she expressed her gratitude towards PM Modi for abrogating Article 370.

With the developmental initiatives of the Government of India, BPOs are operating from places like Srinagar, Sopore, Budgam, Bhandarwah and Jammu; 3,158 Common Service Centres are functional in the state, working as a window to deliver digital services to citizens. Whenever I meet them, I see sparks in their eyes. Some of these young boys and girls told me that they should get more opportunities to make a better future for themselves.

Surely, this is a new dawn of development and inclusion for Jammu and Kashmir, which will give a voice to those who were deprived and marginalised. Obviously, the patrons of terrorism and separatism are unhappy but this is not an India where they will find a place.

The writer is Union minister for Law & Justice, Communications and Electronics & IT

A GAME OF CHANCE

Monsoon's increasing unpredictability calls for greater efficiency in rainwater storage and use

IN JUNE, RAINFALL was 32.8 per cent deficient on an average across India and the prospect of a monsoon failure loomed large. And with the dry spell extending from September in many parts, the return of food inflation, it seemed, would present the re-elected Narendra Modi government with its first big challenge. But in July, the rains turned out 4.6 per cent more than the average. In this month, till August 17, they have been a whopping 34.9 per cent above normal. As a result, cumulative rainfall for the southwest monsoon season (June-September), which was almost one-third deficit till June-end, has now become 1.9 per cent surplus. Such a dramatic turnaround is, perhaps, unprecedented. There has been only one year in recent times — 2012 — when the monsoon ended up being normal despite a massive June deficit. The current revival has also helped substantially close the gap in kharif crop plantings: Till July 5, the total area sown by farmers was 26.7 per cent lower than last year's corresponding coverage. That has since narrowed to just 5.3 per cent, which should considerably assuage food inflation fears.

The relief, however, should not take away attention from the underlying problem — the monsoon's increasing unpredictability, with fewer rainy days and more extreme precipitation. Thus, Kerala, southern Karnataka and Gujarat, which were heavily deficient till July, have moved to the surplus zone within days. For the farmer, this is a nightmare. When the rains don't come on time, pour when they do, or take extended breaks, it disrupts the entire cropping cycle from the sowing, vegetative and reproductive growth stage right up to harvesting. Agriculture is a gamble in the best of times; but now it becomes a game of pure chance embodying risk as well as uncertainty. And blaming it all on climate change is hardly helpful.

The right approach would be to take monsoon vagaries as a given, and plan accordingly. So long as the overall rainfall in the season isn't showing wild variations — there's no proof of that yet — it should be possible to harvest this water from above to the maximum extent. India has some 107 major reservoirs with over 166 billion cubic meters' active storage capacity. A time-bound programme for lining of irrigation channels — or even better, replacing all open canals with pressurised HDPE/PVC piped distribution networks — will enable the water filled in these dams during the monsoon to be used for a longer period. The same water can be further conveyed to farmers' fields through drip/sprinkler irrigation. Harvesting of rainwater, whether in large reservoirs or farm ponds, and which can take place any time during the monsoon season, will give farmers greater flexibility in their cropping operations. A significant part of the country's agricultural production today is already happening in the non-monsoon rabi season. With efficient rainwater storage and use, the monsoon's timing and schedule should matter even less.



AANCHAL MAGAZINE

LET'S GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

My family bore the burden of exile. Coming generations of Kashmiris deserve better

IS 370 AN article of faith or just a number? A privileged identity or a misplaced entitlement. If I leave out the middle number, 30 remains. My age. The years in exile. The age of my mother when she carried me out as an infant from our homeland Kashmir into an unknown land.

As I held her hand in the corridors of a Delhi hospital, I pondered over how it would have been for her to not be able to inform her parents for five months about migrating to Delhi in 1990 with two young daughters and her husband, from our initial transit point of Jammu, after our expulsion from Kashmir. Five months feel all the more arduous, when I imagine not speaking to my parents for even a day.

No, we weren't provided state transport buses to move out of our homeland. And no, we didn't turn rich overnight. We fled to save our lives from terrorism and religious extremism. Saving lives and staying together as a family through the long period of rebuilding lives from scratch, my mother often says, has been the only virtue of our exile, given that probably many others weren't even this fortunate. She doesn't want to talk about our years of struggle, which she faced with grit, patience and determination.

Almost 30 years later, we were trying to connect with her childhood friend, Khalida, in Kashmir. She asked at the hospital if the officials managing the helplines there could possibly help her speak to her friend. I had



ONE OF 800 MILLION
A VOICE, UNDER 35

When I hear the official announcements, there's no mention of us. But there's certainly a mention of the Kashmiris living there. A promise of hope, change and transformation. A promise of getting rid of deceit, terror and power nexus. A promise to give our much beloved motherland, Kashmir, a chance of peace.

no answer.

In our first post-displacement visit in 2012, my mother somehow arranged her friend's contact details and we went to meet Khalida at her home after marriage in the outskirts of Srinagar. For the first few minutes, while hugging each other, they didn't utter a word. Her friend said, "Ba aesus sochaan agar aseye maelav zaanh, che gachak na mae nafrat karaan" (I often hoped that if we ever met again in life, you shouldn't have hatred against me), and my mother broke down. She replied, "Che kyazyi karaeye nafrat, yimav kor taeman vuche paanaey hyerum" (why will I hate you, those who were responsible, their actions will be judged by the Supreme Power).

The previous day, my mother had taken us to her former home in Habba Kadal, Srinagar. The place where she grew up with her grandmother, parents, brother and two sisters. Though the new occupants welcomed her, as she hesitatingly made her way upstairs to show us the study, they made it a point to tell her she could roam around "unaccompanied" and may feel free to "steal" small things as the bigger ones would be difficult to take away. I had a lump in my throat. I looked at my mother, she just smiled calmly. She asked if they had retained some of her books/documents/certificates. "We thought you won't return, so we threw it all away." Neighbours, who had turned encroachers. Over the past two weeks, friends have

messaged to ask about my view on the abrogation of J&K's special status. Was I happy with the decision? In the almost 30 years of exile, it's the first time others have sought my view on Kashmir with such eagerness. And I want to tell them — it's not about us.

My maternal grandparents passed away yearning to return to our homeland. My parents struggled through their youth to raise us and now grapple with health issues, as they put us before themselves. I never got the chance to choose or ask questions, a childhood lost outside our homeland. When I hear the official announcements, there's no mention of us. But there's certainly a mention of the Kashmiris living there.

A promise of hope, change and transformation. A promise of getting rid of deceit, terror and the power nexus. A promise to give our much beloved motherland, Kashmir, a chance of peace. Will the promises hold? I don't know — the same life lesson that I have figured out while making my way through the uncertainties emanating from our displacement from Kashmir. But, what I do hope for is peace. In my birthplace. In my homeland. Kashmir, the place of saints, scholars and mystics.

Let's give peace a chance. The chance it deserves. I, as a Kashmiri, owe it to the next generation of Kashmiris.

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FREEZE FRAME

EP UNNY



AUGUST 19, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CHARAN GOV SHAKY
TWO DAYS BEFORE the Lok Sabha is to meet, Charan Singh's capacity to win a vote of confidence remains in doubt. What caused a serious setback in the hopes for survival of the three-week-old coalition government was the consensus arrived at the meeting of the Congress (I) working committee against supporting the government. Though the Congress (I) working committee can be overruled by the party's parliamentary board slated to meet by Monday morning — or by Indira Gandhi — the chances of the party supporting the government are slim.

WORKERS' RALLY
ON THE OPENING of Parliament, August 20,

the Delhi textile workers will hold a rally at the Boat Club "to show to the members of Parliament that they are alive and kicking and are willing to fight for their demands in spite of the hardships they have been suffering because of their 55-day-old strike." Representatives of the workers of the five mills in Delhi will present demands to members of Parliament after the rally.

CENTRE RULES SIKKIM
SIKKIM HAS BEEN brought under President's rule for the first time since it became the 22nd state of India in 1975. According to a presidential proclamation, President's rule has been imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution. The Union cabinet considered

the state governor B B Lal's report and recommended that President's rule should be imposed.

PAK N-BOMB
PAKISTAN IS ALL set to explode what is called the "Islamic bomb" most probably in October this year in the wastes of the Balochistan desert, according to the *Daily Telegraph*. The newspaper's special correspondent in Islamabad has said that there is a growing view among diplomats in the Pakistan capital that the country's nuclear capability is the direct result of close co-operation over many years with China. Reports of nuclear know-how being surreptitiously acquired in Europe, according to the correspondent.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

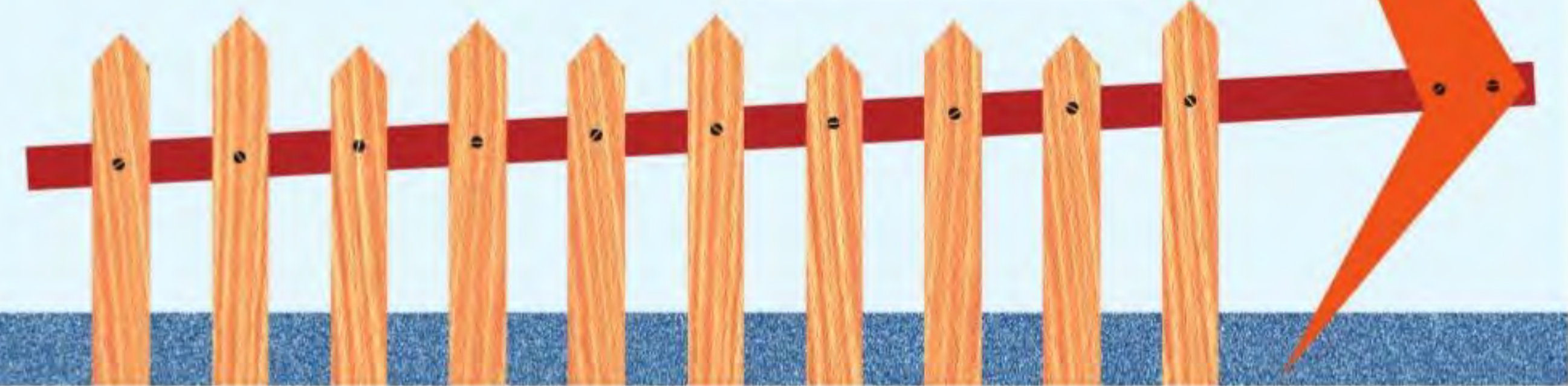
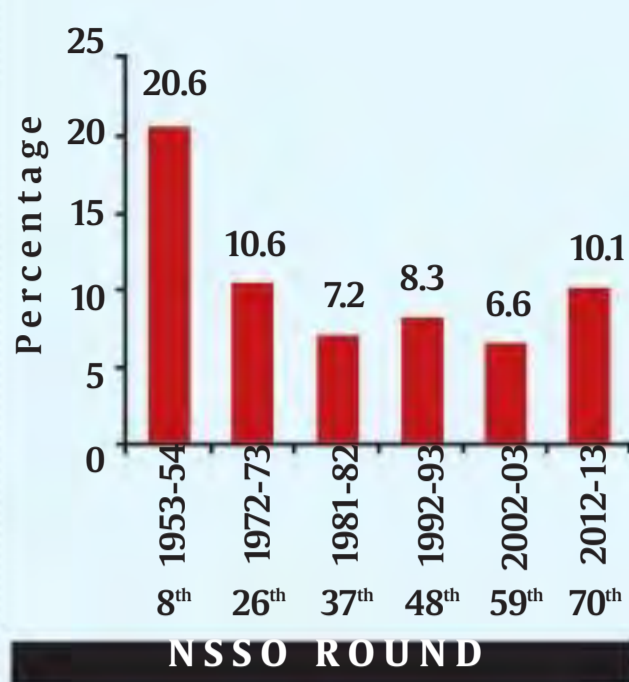
"Despotic governments indeed have much to fear from the internet."
—DAWN

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE SIZE OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AS PER DIFFERENT AGRICULTURE CENSUS



Source: Agriculture Census, 2015-16 and various issues of NSSO Reports

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF LEASED AREA



CR Sasikumar

Unlock the land markets

High powered committee for transformation of agriculture should reform restrictive tenancy laws, protect rights of landowners



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND RITIKA JUNEJA

ative that urgency is accorded to the liberalisation of land lease markets. One, the size of the average holding has been declining in India for long (see figure 1). This raises questions about the economic viability of such tracts, especially since they do not provide a respectable income to farmers. Two, restrictive tenancy laws have generated oral (informal) tenancy that is said to be much higher than formal tenancy in magnitude. This is adversely impacting land-use efficiency.

As per official records (NSSO, 2012-13), only about 10 per cent of agricultural land is under tenancy, down from 20 per cent in 1953-54 (see figure 2). However, experts believe that official estimates hugely under-report actual tenancy. It is generally believed, based on several micro-level surveys, that about a third of the agricultural land in India is under tenancy. It is oral tenants who are most insecure. They do not have legal sanction and are not recognised as farmers. This deprives them from availing institutional credit, crop insurance, government-sponsored social benefit schemes and relief support. The fear of eviction from the land also disincentivises them from making long-term investments in land improvement. This results in low capital formation and hurts farm productivity. Even the landowners fear losing their proprietary rights, if they lease out for longer periods. As a result, many of them prefer to keep their lands fallow. Rough estimates suggest that about 17 million hectares of cultivable land in the country is lying fallow.

In this context, it may be worth noting that China has lately revised its land lease laws, where farmers can lease out their land, even to corporate entities for cultivation for up to 30 years. Such a move can help attract long-term investments in high-value crops — those grown in orchards, for example.

One reason landowners fear leasing out their lands for long is the absence of tamper-proof land records with the revenue departments. So, one of the lowest hanging fruits is to digitise and geo-tag land records and link them with Aadhaar and the bank accounts of farmers. This will create a centralised,

transparent and easily assessable land records system. It can then help any class of farmers operating a piece of land to access bank credit and crop insurance. Some efforts are underway in this area, but the results are far from satisfactory. Only three states (not union territories) — Odisha, Sikkim and Tripura — have completed 100 per cent computerisation of land records. Many others have computerised 80 to 95 per cent of their land records. Liberalising land lease markets, with computerisation of land records and geo-tagging of farms, though challenging, can give a high pay-off with enhanced capital formation. Crop insurance could also be linked to this platform.

In this context, one may revisit Andhra Pradesh's Land Licensed Cultivators Act, which has provided suitable channels to deliver loans, subsidies, crop insurance and relief support. It does so by issuing eligibility cards to tenants, who raise crops with the explicit or implied permission of the owners.

Kerala's Kudumbashree initiative is another innovation that is making strides in poverty eradication and women empowerment. Under the initiative, women are motivated to become members of joint liability groups (JLG). They then cultivate leased land with assured access to agricultural credit from NABARD and other banking institutions, increasing their returns from farming. Andhra Pradesh's and Kerala's innovative institutional experiences offer key lessons for policymakers to liberalise restrictive land leasing laws in the country, while fully protecting the land rights of the owners.

Reforms in land markets have been pending for a long time due to lack of political will. But in its second stint, the Modi government has the political mandate to carry out these reforms. It is an opportune time for the High Powered Committee of Chief Ministers to carry out fundamental structural reforms in the institutions which govern land markets. Can they do so? Only time will tell.

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Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Juneja is a consultant at ICRIER

Where there is no free will

People's consent is missing in how J&K has been taken over by the 'rest of India'



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

TO INDIANS CELEBRATING the change in Jammu and Kashmir's status, I suggest that they reflect on the word "consent". All healthy human involvements seem to require the other person's consent.

While recently researching South Indian history from the 17th century to our times, I was struck by a comment of the French priest Abbe Dubois (1765-1848), who lived in Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil regions from 1792 to 1823. Dubois conceded that the people "cherish" and "respect" the administrative machinery the British had built after defeating Tipu in 1799. But, said Dubois, they "hate and despise their [new] rulers from the bottom of their hearts".

It was not for their skin colour that India's British rulers were hated. They were despised because they took the land by force, without consent.

Let us for a moment take leave of all our senses and imagine that the removal of Article 370 turns out to be a wondrous remedy, and that in five years it does for J&K what the finest efforts of governments thus far, whether PM Narendra Modi's or of previous PMs, had not achieved.

Let us assume that by 2024 the Valley becomes a model of harmony, prosperity and gender equality. In ease-of-doing-business, ease-of-residence, ease-of-movie-making and even, say, in employment opportunities, Kashmir is now better than Bengaluru, Pune or Jaipur!

Even if all this happens, a people whose consent was never taken will "hate and despise their rulers from the bottom of their hearts". For a hundred years, and longer.

Decades ago, after Nehru and his successors were unable to fulfil a pledge to obtain the Kashmiri people's consent to be part of India, a sense of betrayal entered the Valley's psyche. Now, a second betrayal stings that psyche. The BJP may have promised removal of Article 370 in successive manifestos to the Indian people, but it did say to Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in 2015 that it "would not touch Article 370".

Betrayals may be inevitable in our fallen world. Taking people for granted, however, and doing with them whatever we want without their consent, is going too far.

Given the chance to separate, Quebec in Canada and Scotland in the UK chose, in free voting, not to do so. Rightly or wrongly, New Delhi does not seem willing to offer such a chance to the Kashmir Valley.

But can you imagine the UK's English, Welsh and Irish telling their northern neighbours, without a previous word with any of them, that henceforth they — the Scots — have the privilege to belong to a "union ter-

ritory", that Scotland's special status and political institutions stand abolished?

Can you imagine all of Canada, from Vancouver to Toronto and the Atlantic islands, cheering a declaration, made without previous conversation with any Quebecois, that Quebec is now a "union territory"?

Some in China might indeed rejoice if, without discussion with Tibetans, the Tibet Autonomous Region is renamed the Proud Chinese Territory of Tibet. Would Tibetans celebrate?

We are told that many in Jammu and Ladakh are now celebrating, though statehood would have been preferred to a UT status. In our Northeast, however, where every region is jealous of its distinct culture, and where some states have their own versions of Article 370, people are now more anxious, suddenly, about their future.

Any message about Kashmir that India wishes to send to China or Pakistan would be stronger if Kashmiris endorse it. Conversely, images of an Indian government that acts without consent can only create nervousness or alienation in countries like Bangladesh and Nepal.

Dissenters should not expect Modi and Amit Shah to go back on their proclamation, but we can say this to them: "Ruling without consent is bad enough. Will you however make sure that the representatives, civilian and military, who govern in your name, truly serve the people of J, K & L?"

Kashmiris will never give up their resentment of who governs them. Still, remembering how numerous Indians responded to British administration, will you strive to make the people of Kashmir "cherish" and "respect" how you govern?"

Even if attempted, this won't be easy. Kashmir's long insurgency has made service in the Valley an unwelcome proposition. That insurgency has also made Kashmiris unpopular across India. Modi may claim that removing Article 370 will help the Kashmiri people. But much of the cheering for the removal comes from a feeling that the time has come to hurt the Kashmiris.

The rest of the cheering comes from an impression that Indians can now go to the Valley with a new equation in which humbler and quieter locals will more readily acknowledge the visitors' dominance.

If there is any road towards better relations between Kashmiris and India — or "the rest of India" as some would prefer to say — that road must contain a few Indians, official and private, who nurse a desire to win Kashmiri minds.

Then there are the peaks, waters and trees of Kashmir, whose consent no one thinks of seeking. If Chinese enthusiasm has dealt devastation to Tibet's ecosystem, the Vale of Kashmir and the peaks surrounding it will not be made purer by ease of access. To safeguard Kashmir's environment, a barrier much stronger than Article 370 was needed.

The writer is research professor at Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IT'S NO CURE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Curing the system' (IE, August 15). Only 20 per cent of National Medical Council members will be elected. This could pave way for favouritism and corruption. The article stresses on the role of community health providers (CHPs) by mentioning WHO's data of skewed doctor-to-patient ratio but the new Act has vaguely defined CHPs. This could allow people with inadequate qualifications to practice medicine. A new examination system will ensure that doctors across the country will have a shared minimum level of skills through a common final year undergraduate medical exam. But giving too much weightage to the final exam can have adverse impact on the career of medical aspirants.
Daniyal Hussain, Sultanpur

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Curing the system' (IE, August 15). The shortage of doctors in rural areas can be solved if it is mandated that medical students will get degrees only after serving a stipulated amount of time in primary health centres.
PC Joshi, Lucknow

PATH IN KASHMIR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A blunt reminder' (IE, August 15). Having committed historical blunders with respect to Kashmir, India needs to win over the minds of Kashmiris. For that, New Delhi needs to wage an "information war" along with the "psychological war". The information war will counter Pakistani propaganda through social and elec-

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.

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Mayur Yadav via e-mail

UNTRAINED TEACHERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Over to the teacher' (IE, August 15). The trinity of English, Science and Mathematics is a nightmare for a large number of school students. The Odisha government's decision to double the teaching time for these subjects shows its sincerity. But are teachers of these subjects trained to create interest in their pupils? Sadly, not the case.
Samiul Hassan Quadri, Bikaner

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

THE SILENT VALLEY

AS IS to be expected, there are opinion articles and editorials galore across South Asian English-language newspapers regarding the "scrapping" of Article 370 and 35A by the Narendra Modi government in New Delhi vis-a-vis Jammu and Kashmir. Across the board, the Pakistan media has condemned the decision, and each newspaper's position is harsher than the next. Even the rest of the South Asian press has hardly welcomed the change in Jammu and Kashmir's status.

Dawn, arguably the most anti-establishment paper in Pakistan, and one which has had a fairly consistent line on human rights violations in that country as well as alleged instances by Indian forces in Kashmir, has articulated its position, which can be seen as at least partially representing the views of Pakistan's liberals, in multiple editorials.

On August 16, Dawn focussed on the internet shutdown in particular and the blocking of communications in general in the Valley. It cites a report by an international advocacy group — Access Now — which says that India is responsible for the largest number of internet shutdowns in the world over the past three years. The current shutdown in Kashmir is the "53rd this year". The purpose of such blocking of communications, according to Dawn, is: "One of the singular

characteristics of a country's drift towards autocracy is an increasing curtailment of citizens' access to sources of information and communication. When the flow of diverse opinions and ideas is restricted, state propaganda is allowed free rein."

"Despotic governments," it states, "have much to fear from the internet".

On August 17, Dawn launched a more frontal attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The editorial begins by saying that "in attempting to illegally annex" Kashmir and then "mocking its people with claims that it was for their own good, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has only ensured that the cycle of violence will intensify in the months and years to come". The editorial draws an unfavourable parallel with Palestine (where India is Israel and Kashmir is "occupied") before lamenting the "lukewarm response" of the global community to New Delhi's actions.

It maintains, even within its polemical rhetoric, a sense of realism to balance the moral outrage: "As indicated in these columns earlier, the demands of realpolitik and global economics have taken precedence over human rights, justice and fair play. Unless Pakistan and other parties that have a feel for democracy step up their efforts to engage robustly with the diplomatic community on the issue, Mr Modi's reckless

act is unlikely to be challenged."

KASHMIR AND TAMILS

Outside of Pakistan, the rest of South Asia does not seem as outraged by the situation in Kashmir. However, this is not to say that it is seen as a welcome development. In Sri Lanka, for example, the August 18 editorial in the *Sunday Observer* mentions Kashmir only in passing, as the thrust of the editorial is the announcement by Mahinda Rajapaksa, former president of Sri Lanka, that his brother Gotabaya would be his party's presidential candidate. Mahinda was the first Sri Lankan leader to have mentioned the Kashmir situation in an interview while trying to circumvent a question about a federal setup that is fair to Sri Lanka and Tamils.

The editorial also references PM Modi, comparing Gotabaya's platform to the Indian leader's rather unfavourably: "Gotabaya's electoral platform bears striking resemblance to that of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is also riding the wings of 'cultural nationalism' (read, Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism), which has lately assumed strident overtones of Islamophobia. He's a platinum-grade populist, too. Interestingly, when asked about the SLPP's stance on the Sri Lankan Tamil problem, Mahinda Rajapaksa has blithely drawn the analogy of the Modi gov-

ernment's revocation of the special status for J&K".

The editorial also, in passing, questions India's political choices and the current political climate in the country.

IRONY SPOTTED

The *Kathmandu Post*, while not quite as outraged as Dawn, is unequivocal in its condemnation of the abrogation of Kashmir's special status. After recalling how Article 370 was scrapped and the lockdown in the Valley, it questions New Delhi's justification in the face of unfavourable international reports — that Jammu and Kashmir is an "internal matter". "Not only is the move by the nationalist Narendra Modi government illegal, according to its own federal constitution, it is also ironic, given its manoeuvres in Nepal. In 2015, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government had imposed an economic blockade on Nepal because India was unhappy with Nepal's new constitution, saying that it had failed to address the demands of marginalised communities, especially the Madhesis," the editorial says.

The editorial suggests that "Nepal, as chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, should also come out clearly and vociferously in favour of de-escalation".

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