



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A NEW PLAYBOOK

Defence Minister's remarks on no-first-use signal to Pak, China, that old rules constraining India in Kashmir don't hold

IT IS NOT surprising that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's comments last week that India's commitment to "no first use" of nuclear weapons is not cast in stone have elicited widespread reaction in the Subcontinent and beyond. A number of factors make the minister's statement a major departure in the evolution of India's nuclear strategy. One is the choice of place and occasion. For his statement, the minister chose the site of India's nuclear weapon tests on the death anniversary of former prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had declared India as a nuclear weapon power after the 1998 tests. That it comes in the middle of an unfolding political crisis with Pakistan lends greater salience to the statement.

A similar statement was made in 2016, by one of Singh's predecessors in the defence ministry — Manohar Parrikar. But the government quickly intervened to insist that there was no change in policy. This time, there has been no denial or correction. Domestic and international critics have underlined the dangers of creating a credible first use policy. They suggest that abandoning no-first-use increases the danger of using nuclear weapons, especially in military crises of the kind that have become frequent on India's borders with Pakistan and China. Others point to the demanding requirements of a first-use policy — a large inventory of nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them, strong intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, and a sophisticated command and control system. If no-first-use offers a simple, robust and relatively inexpensive basis for deterring atomic adversaries, the structure to support a first-use doctrine is costly and inherently unstable. Some have argued that the steady accretion of India's nuclear and related capabilities in recent years may be giving the NDA government the confidence to abandon the no-first-use policy.

The immediate motivation appears to be less technical, and more political. It is about managing India's ties with Pakistan and China following Delhi's decision to revoke the special constitutional status of J&K and the bifurcation of the state into Union Territories. Delhi is warning Pakistan and China — both of whom have nuclear weapons — that India will not be intimidated by Rawalpindi's threats to trigger violence in Kashmir and then limit India's responses with the threat of a nuclear escalation. Delhi is signalling its readiness to go to any extent, including the first use of nuclear weapons, in defending the changes it has initiated in Kashmir. This tough message is of a piece with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to launch air strikes on Pakistan's territory last February, for the first time since the 1971 war, following the terror attack in Pulwama. In reorganising the political structures of Kashmir, demonstrating that it will use conventional force against terror camps in Pakistan, and affirming that it will not accept nuclear blackmail, Modi is declaring that the old rules that constrained India in Kashmir are no longer valid. We may be in uncharted waters until there are new rules to regulate the triangular nuclear dynamic between the three nations and their contestation in Kashmir.

WRONG CALLS

Phone tapping controversy in Karnataka reveals absence of checks and balances in state's political and police systems

THE PHONE-TAPPING CONTROVERSY involving senior police officers in Karnataka has exposed the deep mistrust between the JD-S and Congress leaderships that led to the collapse of the coalition government. It has also cast the spotlight on former chief minister, HD Kumaraswamy, who is now suspected of misusing the state police to spy on politicians, legislators, bureaucrats and even journalists. Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa has said that he will ask the CBI to investigate the allegations of illegal surveillance. It is necessary that the administration comes clean on this and action is taken against officials if there has been any transgression.

It was an internal feud within the Karnataka police that brought out how officers apparently gamed the system for personal gains. The allegation is that Alok Kumar, who was appointed Bengaluru Police Commissioner by Kumaraswamy after superseding 21 officers, had ordered surveillance of several persons illegally. This came to light after a police probe, ordered after a TV channel broadcast an audio clip, allegedly of the present commissioner, Bhaskar Rao, pleading with a political fixer for favours. The police can claim it has the authority to tap the telephones of persons suspected to be a threat to the state. However, there are clear norms that regulate this authority. The preliminary probe in this case points to its gross misuse, purportedly to serve the interests of those wielding power. The fractured verdict in the assembly elections last year had forced rival political parties to stitch coalitions of convenience to form government. Bitter rivals, Congress and JD-S, had outsmarted the BJP to form a government. But soon, the JD-S and Congress started to undercut each other, which left the government exposed to the manipulations of politicians and officials. Institutions failed to act when rumours started to float about posts in the administration being auctioned and fixed for patronage and cash being offered to legislators.

Karnataka politics has been rocked by allegations of illegal phone tapping in the past as well. In 1988, then chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde had to resign over a telephone tapping allegation. But the system seems to have neither put in place checks and balances nor internalised the need to respect norms in the case of surveillance.

THIS ISN'T CRICKET

The relentless jeering of Steve Smith showed a mirror to the dark underside of the game

ONE WOULD HAVE thought that the English cricket fans would stop booing a bruised Steve Smith, returning to fight for his team after he was felled by a bouncer, but they didn't. The relentless jeering showed a mirror to the dark underside of the game. Smith's stupendous knocks in this series deserve grudging respect even from the most hostile fan — even though he was returning after a year away from the game, following his ban by Cricket Australia for ball tampering in 2018.

The orchestrated booing doesn't even seem to have been an authentic emotion of displeasure. It didn't appear to stem from a genuine feeling of betrayal and anger at an opponent who has indulged in skulduggery. For long, football fans in England were tagged with hooliganism. But it seems to have now caught on in cricket in a land that prides itself as the game's home.

Smith has responded by piling up the runs. Every little act he does at the crease is contrary to what batsmen are expected to do. Stillness is demanded of them; he twitches, walks, and at times teasingly leaves the middle and leg stump exposed. They are expected to stretch forward to drive; he retreats and drives off the back foot. Calmness is expected; he can be a furious blur of energy. He is a counter-intuitive batsman; a contrarian who should make any open-minded fan curious. By their relentless booing, the English fans may have achieved the opposite effect of what they set out to do. The crowd behaviour may have hastened forgiveness, even triggered sympathy and respect for the player at the receiving end.



RAJAT KATHURIA

ANOTHER SALVO FROM Washington, on our Independence Day, strips us (and China) of the "developing nations" status. At any other moment, both India and China would have been pleased to rid themselves of this tag, but not at this time. For, there is a catch. President Donald Trump has reiterated his long-standing belief that India and China have benefited immensely by misusing the developing country tag, thereby profiting unduly from privileges conferred on such countries. He blamed the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for this lapse, and reiterated his threat to leave the world's largest multilateral trade forum.

Meanwhile, the narrative from China is one of injury to the national psyche due in part to the "centuries of humiliation" they claim to have suffered at the hands of western powers. Their growing economic and military might presents the Chinese, in their own words, an opportunity to set the historical record straight. For the US, these are anxious times for fear of losing the mantle of the world's preeminent power after at least three decades of unchecked hegemony. Chinese rise and US fears are straining their bilateral trade and causing serious collateral damage to the institution that has served well the cause of trade, growth and stability of the world economy in the post-WWII period.

A question uppermost on trade economists' minds is whether the WTO is worth saving. One way to evaluate the question is to investigate its achievements, with the obvious caveat that the past is an imperfect guide to the future. Since the WTO came into being in 1995, the world has witnessed massive changes, some deeply structural in nature. New technologies have transformed the way we live, communicate, and trade. In 1995, less than 0.8 per cent of the world's population used the internet; in June 2019 it was around 57 per cent. Communication technologies and containerisation lowered costs and boosted volumes of components moving in and out of countries allowing production chains to become increasingly international and also much more complex. An iPhone, for example, has about 14 main components that are manufactured by 7-8 multinational companies with branches in more than 40 countries. Overall trade in goods has nearly quadrupled since 1995, while WTO members' import tariffs have declined by an average of 15 per cent. Over half of world trade is now tariff-free

It takes many

For all its current troubles, WTO may still emerge as the lynchpin of global trade governance

There is no doubt that the multilateral process needs to be fortified and it cannot happen until the strongest member is vested in it. Multilateralism implies that every country agrees to bind itself to the same rules as other (smaller) countries even when it conflicts with self-interest. Admittedly, trade is much more complex now; negotiation among 164 members on standards to generate consensus is at best hard, and at worst, impossible. The alternative, regionalism, involves a limited number of countries and ostensibly relies less on 'altruism' of the members and more on mutual gain. But it suffers from an exclusionary bias.

(WTO, 2015). Growth in trade has exceeded growth in world GDP and has been associated with improved standards of living. Today, the WTO regulates more than 98 per cent of global trade flows among its members.

It also monitors the implementation of free trade agreements, produces research on global trade and economic policy, and serves as a forum for settling trade disputes between nations. An alternate way to look at the WTO's success is not to focus on how much trade it has helped create and the corresponding tariff reductions, but the damage in trade value it has helped avert. One estimate puts the value of avoided trade wars at \$340 billion per year.

When the US-China trade conflict began in July 2018, many were lulled into believing that the sabre-rattling was temporary and the aggressive unilateralism that defined US actions would die a natural death. The US had earlier used Super-301 legislation to designate specific countries as unfair traders, and to threaten them with higher tariffs unless they fell in line. Some countries complied with US pressure to avoid escalation, while others such as India and Brazil refused to negotiate under threat of US sanctions.

In the current instance, however, it does not seem likely that the US will back off. Neither does it seem that the Chinese (or India) will agree to negotiate under duress. In all likelihood, the Chinese will not brook another humiliation, while India at the current juncture is little more than collateral damage. Moreover, it is not possible for India to trade in the developing country status in the WTO without a fight.

In any case, a unilateral finding of unfair trading practices and subsequent action by the US ignoring their own WTO commitments, places other countries on higher moral ground. Under the rules, a measure is defined as unilateral if it is imposed by a country without invoking the WTO dispute settlement procedures or other multilateral international rules and procedures, and which is based solely upon invoking the country's own criteria. Unilateral measures are inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of multilateralism. Article 23 of the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) explicitly prohibits members from doing so.

A gracious explanation is that the US is using its power to discipline the trading system for the benefit of all. China (and India), they

claim, has been a free-rider for long having taken advantage of the open trading regime while itself being opaque on subsidies, state owned enterprises and intellectual property. And since dispute settlement in the WTO has become dysfunctional and appeals to the appellate body (AB) are taking longer than the prescribed 90 days, the US has taken matters in its own hands, playing the part of benign dictator for the common good.

While this view might have some isolated resonance, it is extremely charitable. There is no justification for subverting the multilateral process, especially by the country that was instrumental in putting it together in the first place. Further, the AB will cease to function in December unless the US agrees to appoint a replacement to maintain the required quorum of three members. Without the AB, the law of the jungle will replace the rule of law, hurting the weak and destroying the credibility of the entire process.

There is no doubt that the multilateral process needs to be fortified and it cannot happen until the strongest member is vested in it. Multilateralism implies that every country agrees to bind itself to the same rules as other (smaller) countries even when it conflicts with self-interest. Admittedly, trade is much more complex now; negotiation among 164 members on standards to generate consensus is at best hard, and at worst, impossible. The alternative, regionalism, involves a limited number of countries and ostensibly relies less on "altruism" of the members and more on mutual gain. But it suffers from an exclusionary bias.

Multilateral agreement is still the best, and when reasonable men and women sit around the table, a solution can be found. In the absence of pure multilateral negotiations, interested members could negotiate plurilaterally with the aim of achieving multilateral outcomes. But burden-sharing, as opposed to altruism among the big players, will remain an integral part of the multilateral approach. The WTO may still emerge as the lynchpin of global trade governance. For, as the Mirza Ghalib said: Ranjh se khugar hua insaan to mit jaata hai ranj/ Mushkilein mujh par padi itni ki aasaan ho gayeen.

The writer is director and chief executive, ICRIER. Views are personal. Neha Gupta, Fellow, ICRIER, contributed to the article



SHAH ALAM KHAN

THE NATIONAL MEDICAL Commission (NMC) Bill 2019 was passed by the Lok Sabha on July 29 and the Rajya Sabha on August 1. Reading this important Act, which will decide the future course of medical education and medical ethics in this country, one gets a feeling that it offers little when compared to the Indian Medical Council Act 1956 (which saw multiple amendments), that led to the formation of the Medical Council of India (MCI), a body which was accused of rampant corruption. The NMC Act, in the garb of change, has some provisions which are far more problematic than those in the amended MCI Act.

The constitution of the medical commission as proposed in the Act has issues of subjugating federalism at multiple levels. The nomination of important functionaries of the NMC will rest exclusively with the Centre: This will give rise to nepotism and the promotion of a lackey culture, that had infested the MCI. Even the Medical Advisory Council, proposed in the Act, has nominated members from the states, thereby reducing the role of states to being consultative.

The other contentious point in the NMC Act is the creation of a cadre of Community Health Providers with the limited licence to practice medicine at the mid-level. This provision is a means to promote quackery within

BAD PRESCRIPTION

National Medical Council Act offers little change, brings in a host of new problems

The NMC bill is an opportunity for positive change, but unfortunately it fails to address the deficiencies in medical education and healthcare in this country. It fails to learn from the 65 years of past experience with the MCI. A robust bill would have been one that would have taken out medical education from the silos of traditional blocks and incorporated a culture of democratic practice in the field.

the scientific practice of medicine. In recent times, anti-scientific remarks by the political leadership of the country have already significantly eroded scientific temper. By providing the licence to practice medicine in such manner, the credibility the scientific community will be further eroded among citizens. There is no doubt that at the current doctor-patient ratio of 1:10,189 (WHO recommendation is 1:1,000), India is in dire need of doctors. Successful models incorporating allied health-care professionals/alternative systems into allopathic medical practice are present throughout the globe, but their involvement — and quality — is thoroughly regulated. The NMC Act does not propose any means to ensure this. Also, there is ambiguity on which alternative health professionals will be allowed a licence.

The Act has proposed a common exit examination — National Exit Test (NEXT), at the end of the MBBS course. This test shall be held to grant a licence to practice and will also be the basis of admission to postgraduate courses. It appears that this provision is based on the premise that exit examinations produce good students. This premise has been under scrutiny the world over. More so, evaluating an MBBS student at the end of the final year through multiple choice questions (MCQs) is not a good idea: Existing evidence

from across the world clearly favours subjective clinical evaluation as the best means to evaluate an upcoming doctor. It would have been better if a common exit exam had been held after ensuring that the level of medical education throughout the country is uniform.

Besides failing to address people-centric issues like recommendations for retention of doctors in rural health services, the NMC Act appears to heavily favour private medical colleges. Allowing the private medical colleges to "sell" 50 per cent seats is a serious threat to healthcare. It sets a dangerous precedent of usurping deserving students from becoming doctors merely on the basis of money.

The NMC Act fails to learn from the 65 years of experience with the MCI. A robust law would have been one that would have taken out medical education from the silos of traditional blocks and incorporated a culture of democratic practice in the field. Medical pedagogy is different from non-medical education. It is dependent on both didactics as well as clinical training. Evaluation of doctors should be a logically-regulated moral process, not a cruel retribution.

The writer is professor of orthopaedics, AIIMS, New Delhi and author of Announcing the Monster. Views are personal



AUGUST 20, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

ODDS AGAINST CHARAN

ON THE EVE of the crucial debate on the confidence motion the odds seemed to be weighted against Charan Singh tonight. The Lok Sabha will tomorrow discuss for seven hours at a stretch the Prime Minister's motion seeking confidence of the House. At 6 pm sharp, 533 members will be asked to cast their vote to decide whether Charan Singh can continue in office. Only Indira Gandhi, who commands 74 Congress-I votes in the Lok Sabha can bail out Charan Singh, but taking into account the Party Working Committee yesterday and the Parliamentary Party today, it is highly unlikely that she will rescue Charan Singh.

MINISTERS RESIGN

ALL THE FIVE Punjab Janata ministers submitted their resignations from the state cabinet following the Akali Dal's decision to support Charan Singh on the vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha. The Akali Dal had taken the decision last night to support the Charan Singh Ministry without joining it. The Punjab Janata Party ministers, the deputy speaker of the state vidhan sabha and about half a dozen Janata legislators had come to Delhi to watch the Akali Dal's decision unfold. The resignations of the Janata ministers were handed over to the chief minister, Parkash Singh Badal, by the state Janata president, Yagya Dutt Sharma this afternoon.

MORVI DISASTER

The Indian Air Force helicopter hovers over Morvi, then dips suddenly, like a roller coaster hurtling down at a sharp angle, according to a first-person account by Saeed Naqvi. From the air, Morvi looks like a still from an old war movie — devastated and desolate. There are rows upon rows of houses without roofs. What were once streets are now covered with heaps of rubble. A sample of the tragedy is available even in Rajkot, in the 10 odd refugee camps, in the voiceless wailing of women sitting huddled in a corner — they have lost all the members of their family. But the real tragedy is in the expressionless eyes of the people.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US president has enlisted Benjamin Netanyahu in his campaign for re-election. That is an alarming development for both countries."

—THE GUARDIAN

What India has to offer in the Gulf

Delhi should support the region's reform agenda, deepen economic and security cooperation



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain this week underlines Delhi's continuing commitment to the transformation of India's relations with the Gulf region. Although, the Gulf's value for India had steadily risen for more than four decades, Modi is the first one to pay sustained high-level political attention to the region.

If no prime minister of India had travelled to the UAE for more than three decades, before 2015, Modi is about to head to the Emirates for the third time since then. That Modi is being honoured with the Zayed Medal, the highest civilian honour in the Emirates, underlines the new good will, trust and personal intimacy between PM Modi and the UAE leadership. The Zayed Medal is named after the founder of the kingdom, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

If India tended to see the Gulf region through the prism of Pakistan in the past, it has now learnt that the conservative Gulf Kingdoms are quite eager to develop an independent relationship with Delhi. Three areas highlight the region's new approach to India.

First, some Gulf countries have expanded counter-terror cooperation with Delhi, extending support to India in the unfolding conflict over Jammu and Kashmir, and have sought to open the OIC platform for India despite Pakistan's objections. Delhi has long chafed at Pakistan's routine mobilisation of the Organisation Islamic Cooperation against India.

Second, recognising Modi's special interest in the welfare of the Indian diaspora and expatriate labour, the Gulf Kingdoms have begun to address many of the long-standing Indian concerns. Third, the oil rich Gulf has begun to see India, one of the world's leading energy importers, as a major economic partner. The recent Saudi decision to pick up 20 per cent stake in the oil business of Reliance Industries Limited and UAE's support for the construction of India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve are two examples of deepening energy interdependence.

Modi's non-defensive and non-ideological approach to the Gulf has been a major contribution to India's foreign policy. But there is one weakness that remains to be overcome. If the focus of Modi's first term was on what India can get from the region, the emphasis in the second must be on what Delhi can do for the Gulf. Three opportunities present themselves for India.

The first is about paying greater attention to the domestic dynamics in the different kingdoms of the Gulf amidst the region's deepening political turbulence. One important new trend has been the effort to promote moderate Islam in the region. The

UAE has been at the forefront of this effort aimed at modernising and stabilising the Arab Gulf societies. In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has taken some small but significant steps to liberalise the economy and society.

While the West has reacted with scepticism or is demanding faster pace in these reforms, Delhi should offer strong public support for the reform agenda in the region. No country has a higher stake in the efforts to reclaim the legacy of peaceful co-existence of religions in the Gulf. Supporting positive reform will lend greater weight to India's concerns about the continuing negative trends in the region, such as the support for extremist ideologies.

Second, Delhi must reciprocate more productively to the enthusiasm in the Gulf region for strategic economic cooperation with India — ranging from energy and digital innovation to arms production and space technology. While the region is ready to deploy its considerable amounts of capital in India's growth story, Delhi has been tardy in facilitating investments from the Gulf.

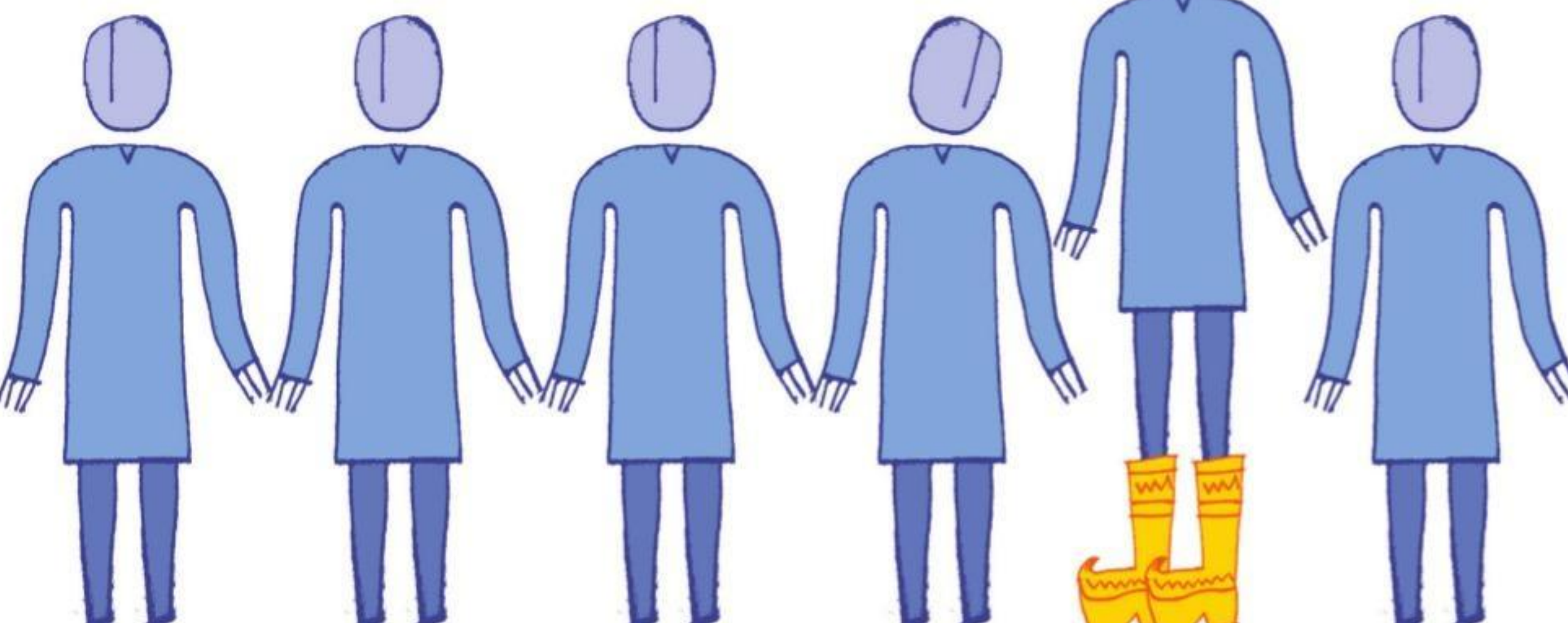
China, in contrast, has moved quickly to elevate its economic and commercial profile in the region. As India begins to take the dangers of an economic slowdown seriously, it should try and unplug multiple bureaucratic and policy obstacles to investments from the Gulf.

Third, security cooperation, where the unrealised potential remains huge. The highly vulnerable Gulf regimes have long depended upon Britain and the US to protect themselves from threats — internal, regional and international. Amidst the current domestic turmoil in the Anglo-American world, President Donald Trump's talk on downsizing America's role in the Gulf is encouraging the region to diversify its security partnerships.

It is time Delhi showed some initiative to develop a more pro-active strategy for defence cooperation in the region. Inaction now will necessarily lead to reaction as other Asian powers like China carve out a larger security role in the Gulf. Russia and France have already stepped up their involvement in the Gulf region's security affairs.

As the internal conflicts within the Gulf region — the intra-Arab, as well as between the Arabs and the Iranians — sharpened in recent years, Delhi's instinct was to avoid getting drawn into these. But ducking can't be a permanent Indian security strategy in the Gulf. Thanks to the potential American retrenchment, the Gulf powers are recognising the importance of engaging each other. The recent talks on maritime security between UAE and Iran, who have had a troubled relationship for long, could be a sign of things to come. The question for India is no longer about taking sides; it is about contributing to the regional security in whatever manner it can.

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CR Sasikumar

Babasaheb and Article 370

BR Ambedkar opposed the special status for Jammu and Kashmir. He would have agreed with its abrogation now



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

Essary legislation to grant special status to J&K. On May 27, 1949, Ayyangar introduced a motion which contained an alternative method of selecting the representatives from J&K for the Constituent Assembly. Ayyangar recommended that all four persons from the state be nominated by the ruler on the advice of his prime minister. After a brief debate, the measure was adopted by the members of the Constituent Assembly. The interim government led by Abdullah nominated Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg, Maulana Mohammed Syed Masoodi and Moti Ram Baigra, in addition to Abdullah himself. Ayyangar came up with the draft of Article 306 A in consultation with these four National Conference leaders.

On October 17, 1949, Nehru was in the US and Ayyangar was entrusted with the motion for the insertion of Article 306A in the constituent assembly. After the introduction of the motion, Maulana Hasrat Mohani tried to oppose the special provision, but he didn't get much time. The motion was adopted on the same day and Article 306A was renumbered Article 370 at the revision stage. Ambedkar's opposition to this move is evident from the fact that he had refused even to attend the session that passed the motion.

From time to time and on various platforms, Ambedkar had opposed the policies of the Nehru government related to J&K. In 1951, the election manifesto of the Scheduled Caste Federation, a party formed by Ambedkar stated: "The policies if continued will lead to perpetual enmity between India and Pakistan, and the possibility of war between the two countries." It was his farsightedness that his words became reality and there have been three wars between India and Pakistan. While criticising the Nehru government on the J&K issue on the floor of the House during the Budget (General) 1952-53 discussion, Ambedkar meticulously made the point confronting the additional Rs 50 crore in the defence budget because of the Kashmir imbroglio. Ayyangar was the defence minister during this time and Ambedkar reminded him

that a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem was related to the abrogation of Article 370. Under Nehru's influence, the government did not pay any heed to this advice. In another instance, during a debate on Article 370, Nehru told the House that it is a temporary provision and its erosion will happen gradually. But Article 370 did not erode. It became stronger, making the lives of common citizens difficult in the erstwhile state of J&K.

Ambedkar realised that J&K's special status would create another layer of sovereignty within sovereign India, which can be detrimental to the unity and integrity of the Republic. Article 370 led to the creation of a separate flag and separate constitution, which engendered feelings of separatism and regional autonomy, misleading the youths and ultimately gave birth to terrorism, corruption and misgovernance. The state had to face isolation from mainstream development programmes and policies brought in by central governments.

Ambedkar and Syama Prasad Mookerjee were the two non-Congress ministers in the interim government (1947-52) led by Nehru. It is important to note that on the issues related to J&K, the concurrence in the views of both intellectuals is clearly visible. During the first general election (1951-52), the Praja Parishad and Jana Sangh, led by Mookerjee, adopted a stand similar to that of Ambedkar — to bring J&K fully under the Constitution of India by repealing Article 370. In 1964, a few Congress parliamentarians also supported the move to abrogate Article 370.

Now, with the scrapping of Article 370, the country has taken a historic decision and a new era has begun in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. It appears that the measure taken by Narendra Modi to correct a historic blunder is a humble tribute to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar.

The writer is Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises

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Spy who came in from the cold

RN Kao, R&AW's first chief, laid the foundations of Indian espionage



VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN

allowed them to gain influence in the game of power politics. Kao was groomed by Mullik in undertaking these external intelligence tasks.

Kao's first overseas assignment was helping the Hong Kong police in investigating one of the earliest cases of aviation terrorism. On April 11, 1955 Air India's "Kashmir Princess" to Jakarta, carrying delegates for the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, crashed into the sea. China's Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, who was to have been on the flight, escaped since he cancelled his trip at the last moment. Investigation revealed suspected Taiwanese involvement through an airport cleaner, who planted American made MK-7 detonator. Years later, a French source revealed that Zhou, who was the founder of Chinese intelligence, was alerted in advance by his sources.

The 1971 Indo-Pak war which split Pakistan was the high point of Kao's career. However, the task was not easy as Kao had to face bureaucratic hurdles at every stage in 1968 to create a separate foreign intelligence unit. He used to tell me that apart from old colleagues' obstructive tactics, he also had to overcome a scheming deputy secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, who would whittle down all higher level decisions on financial, administrative and operational issues.

Kao founded the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) in 1968 and headed it till 1977. Within a short time after setting it up, he was able to recruit a large number of persons with special skills, not available through nor-

mal bureaucratic channels, with great results. He hired a retired army officer whose unit could intercept advance intelligence on Pakistan's pre-emptive air attack on December 3, 1971. The satellite monitoring facility set up by his part-time aide, who was working full-time in another technical department, came in handy even later during the Pakistan's clandestine nuclear bomb project period.

Kao would not agree to record his significant role in creating Bangladesh. Former minister Jairam Ramesh has done a great service in unearthing the historical record of the 1971 operations while writing his seminal biography of P N Haksar (PNH). He could find from PNH's archives the latter's proposal to the prime minister to make Kao the coordinator of a high-level committee on deciding aid to Bangladesh freedom fighters. Indira Gandhi issued the order on March 2, 1971, constituting this committee designating Kao as the convener.

Kao was at his best while interacting with foreign intelligence chiefs with whom he cultivated personal bonds. Volumes could be written on his silent contribution in building up high-level relationship to protect and expand our strategic interests, achieving what normal diplomacy could not. Mossad chief Nahum Admoni has told me that he was an admirer of Kao. I was a witness to Kao's personal friendship with the then French external intelligence chief, Le Conte Alexandre de Marenches, the colourful aris-

ocrat, nick named "Porthos" because of his size, who held the longest tenure of directorship of the French external service DSECE, now called DGSE.

It was Marenches-Kao-Nematollah Nassiri (of Iran's Savak) who conceived the idea of "Trilateral cooperation" between France, India and the Shah's Iran in the mid Seventies to carve out an independent role, to offset the growing US-USSR rivalry in the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, this secret project could not last as Kao demitted office in 1977, Nassiri was killed by the Khomeni regime in 1979 and Marenches was sacked by President Mitterrand.

When Indira Gandhi returned to power, she made Kao the senior security advisor in 1981. Kao was the first to conclude that it was not enough that intelligence is collected through different agencies but that somebody should coordinate and arbitrate the output before presenting it to the policy makers. He thus set up the foundations of a future National Security Council system by establishing a "Policy and Research Staff" (PARS) to function as a think tank and policy adviser to the government. In doing this, he practised what Henry Kissinger said much later: "The Security Adviser's contact with media and foreign diplomats should be to the minimum. Conduct of foreign policy should be left to the Secretary of State".

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIALOGUE NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'World and Valley' (IE, August 19). That we need to engage with the world over the current and past issues in Jammu and Kashmir with more alacrity and less reservation is evident from the nuanced responses from both our traditional friends and foes. Domestically, too, there is a need for dialogue and transparency with respect to the Opposition. Kashmir is just one among many issues that will test us as a polity. A healthy attitude towards the Opposition, and an internal dialogue, can only add to our standing in globally.

R Narayanan, Navi Mumbai

A MIRAGE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Valley's new dawn' (IE, August 19). It is surprising that Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has not mentioned the "new dawn" of a sense of alienation and betrayal in the Valley, which has been consolidated by the short-sightedness of the current government on August 5. Just talking about some success stories and building a narrative that a new dawn of development has come constitute a mirage. The government does not seem to realise that armies can win territories but not hearts.

Mohsin Ilahi, Aligarh

AFTER MONSOON

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A game of

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

change' (IE, August 19). The monsoon and Indian agriculture have been connected for a long time. The farmers' cropping cycle is also a result of this relationship. Before the era of artificial irrigation, most of our cropland were rain-fed. So, the farm community dug ponds as reservoirs of water and kept the water for use in the non-monsoon season. Those practices must be revived and strengthened, especially as climate change is making the monsoon more unreliable.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Katwa,

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#ExpressExplainedIf there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

THIS WORD MEANS

TARDIGRADE, THE WATER BEARThey can survive the most difficult conditions.
Have they now populated the Moon?

Getty Images

ON APRIL 11, the Israeli spacecraft Beresheet attempted to land on the Moon, but crashed on the surface. It was carrying a number of items — including thousands of specimens of a living organism called tardigrade. The tardigrade, also known as water bear, is among the toughest and most resilient creatures on Earth. The question is: did the thousands of dehydrated tardigrades on Beresheet survive the crash? And if they did, are they now living on the Moon?

The tardigrade can only be seen under a microscope. Half a millimetre long, it is essentially a water-dweller but also inhabits land and, a 2008 study found, can survive in the cold vacuum of outer space. In 2017, another study found that if all other life were to be wiped out by a cataclysmic event — a large asteroid impact, a supernova or a gamma-ray burst — the tardigrade would be the likeliest to survive. The tardigrade can endure extreme hot and cold temperature levels.

Although the tardigrades on the spacecraft were dehydrated, the organism is known to “come back to life” on rehydration. In fact, they themselves expel water from their bodies and set off a mechanism to protect their cells, and can

still revive if placed in water later. However, there is no evidence of liquid water on the Moon, although there is ice. Without liquid water, it is possible that the tardigrades will remain in their current state, unless future astronauts find them and revive them in water.

The tardigrade derives its name from the fact that it looks like an eight-legged bear, with a mouth that can project out like a tongue. Its body has four segments supported by four pairs of clawed legs. A tardigrade typically eats fluids, using its claws and mouth to tear open plant and animal cells, so that it can suck nutrients out of them. It is also known to feast on bacteria and, in some cases, to kill and eat other tardigrades. Although they are famed for their resilience, they are destructible too. Should a human being swallow a tardigrade with her food, her stomach acid will cause the flesh of the tardigrade to disintegrate.

On the Moon, should they find liquid water and revive, the tardigrades might not last very long in the absence of food and air, according to *Live Science* magazine, which quoted Kazuharu Arakawa, a tardigrade researcher at Keio University in Tokyo.

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 19

BOND YIELDS have featured in news reports both globally and within India in recent months. In India, government bond yields fell sharply in the wake of the Union Budget, although they have come off the lows in the past few weeks. Internationally, US treasury bond yields plummeted last week, but they too have moderated after it became clear that governments almost everywhere have shown the desire to boost economic growth.

What are bonds?

A bond is an instrument to borrow money. It is like an IOU. A bond could be floated/issued by a country's government or by a company to raise funds. Since government bonds (referred to as G-secs in India, Treasury in the US, and Gilts in the UK) come with the sovereign's guarantee, they are considered one of the safest investments. As a result, they also give the lowest returns on investment (or yield). Investments in corporate bonds tend to be riskier because the chances of failure (and, therefore, the chances of the company not repaying the loan) are higher.

What are bonds yields?

Simply put, the yield of a bond is the effective rate of return that it earns. But the rate of return is not fixed — it changes with the price of the bond. But to understand that, one must first understand how bonds are structured. Every bond has a face value and a coupon payment. There is also the price of the bond, which may or may not be equal to the face value of the bond.

Suppose the face value of a 10-year G-sec is Rs 100, and its coupon payment is Rs 5. Buyers of this bond will give the government Rs 100 (the face value); in return, the government will pay them Rs 5 (the coupon payment) every year for the next 10 years, and will pay back their Rs 100 at the end of the tenure. In this case, the bond's yield, or effective rate of interest, is 5%. The yield is the investor's reward for parting with Rs 100 today, but for staying without it for 10 years.

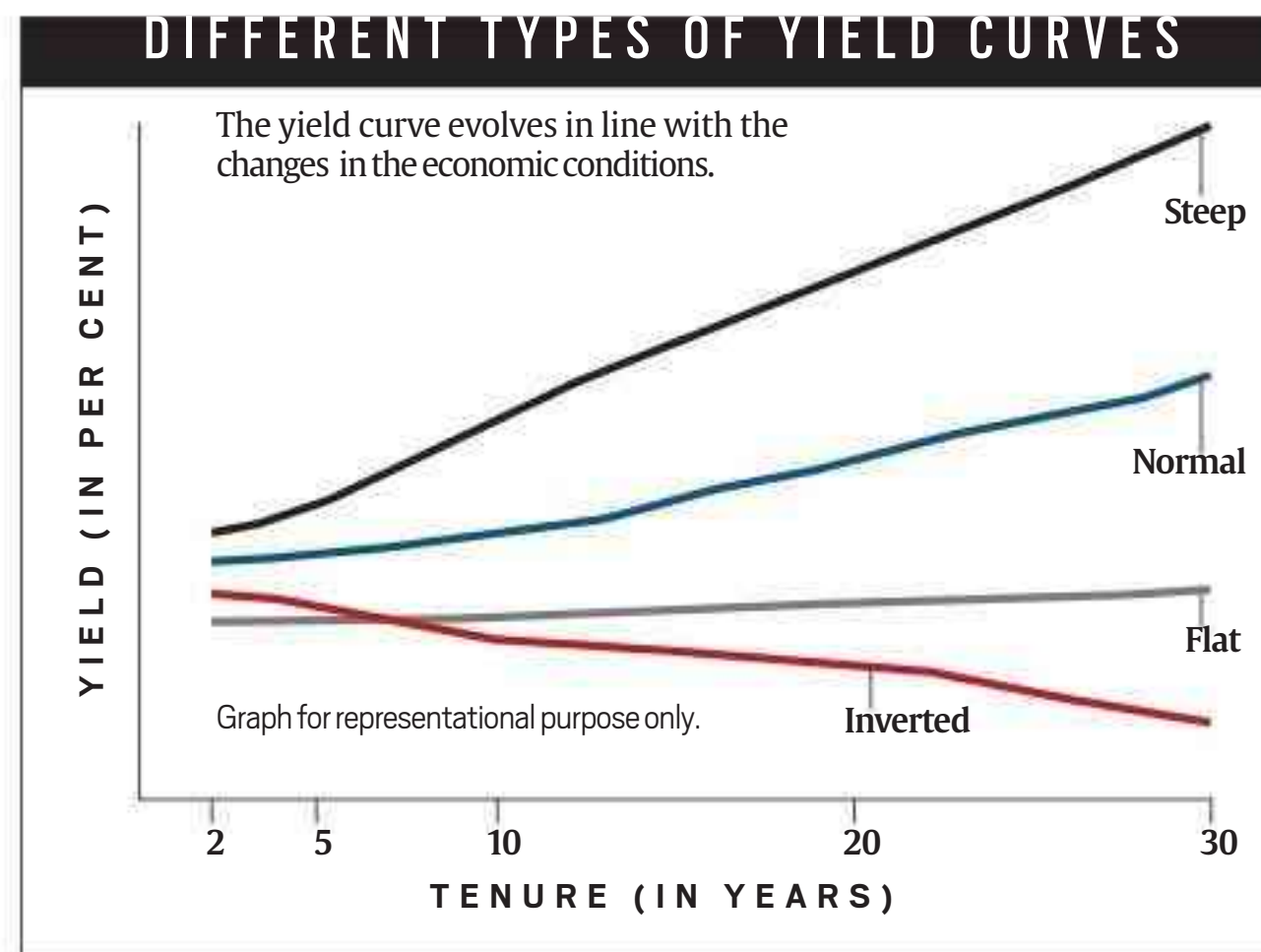
Why and how do yields go up and down?

Imagine a situation in which there is just one bond, and two buyers (or people willing

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Bonds, yields, and inversion

As talk of a recession gets louder globally, bond yields are being keenly watched. A government bond yield curve most accurately reflects what investors think about current and future economic growth prospects



to lend to the government). In such a scenario, the selling price of the bond may go from Rs 100 to Rs 105 or Rs 110 because of competitive bidding by the two buyers. Importantly, even if the bond is sold at Rs 110, the coupon payment of Rs 5 will not change. Thus, as the price of the bond increases from Rs 100 to Rs 110, the yield falls to 4.5%.

Similarly, if the interest rate in the broader economy is different from the initial coupon payment promised by a bond, market forces quickly ensure that the yield aligns itself with the economy's interest rate. In that sense, G-sec yields are in close sync with the prevailing interest rate in an economy. With reference to the above example, if the prevailing interest rate is 4% and the government announces a bond with a yield of 5% (that is, a face value of Rs 100 and a coupon of Rs 5) then a lot of people will rush to buy such a bond to earn a higher interest rate. This increased demand will start pushing up bond prices, even as the yields fall. This will carry on until the time the bond price reaches Rs 125 — at that point, a Rs-5 coupon payment would be equivalent to a yield of 4%, the same as in the rest of the economy.

This process of bringing yields in line with the prevailing interest rate in the economy works in the reverse manner when interest rates are higher than the initially

promised yields.

What is happening to US gov't bond yields at present? What does it signify?

The global economy has been slowing down for the better part of the last two years. Some of the biggest economies are either growing at a slower rate (such as the US and China) or actually contracting (such as Germany).

As a result, last week, US Treasury bond yields fell sharply as there was confirmation of slowdown in Germany and China. Reason: investors, both inside the US and outside, figured that if growth prospects are plummeting, it makes little sense to invest in stocks or even riskier assets. It made more sense rather, to invest in something that was both safe and liquid (that is, something that can be converted into cash quickly). US Treasury bonds are the safest bet in this regard. So, many investors lined up to buy US Treasury bonds, which led to their prices going up, and their yields falling sharply.

The fall in the yields of 10-year government bonds showed that the bond investors expected the demand for money in the future to fall. That is why future interest rates are likely to be lower. A lower demand for money in the future, in turn, will happen only

when growth falters further. So government bond yields falling typically suggests that economic participants “expect” growth to slow down in the future.

Of course, the bond yields are just “suggesting” this — they do not “cause” the growth to “reduce” in the future.

And what is a yield curve, and what does it signify?

A yield curve is a graphical representation of yields for bonds (with an equal credit rating) over different time horizons. Typically, the term is used for government bonds — which come with the same sovereign guarantee. So the yield curve for US treasuries shows how yields change when the tenure (or the time for which one lends to the government) changes.

If bond investors expect the US economy to grow normally, then they would expect to be rewarded more (that is, get more yield) when they lend for a longer period. This gives rise to a normal — upward sloping — yield curve (see chart).

The steepness of this yield curve is determined by how fast an economy is expected to grow. The faster it is expected to grow the more the yield for longer tenures. When the economy is expected to grow only marginally, the yield curve is “flat”.

What then is yield inversion, and what does it mean?

Yield inversion happens when the yield on a longer tenure bond becomes less than the yield for a shorter tenure bond. This, too, happened last week when the 10-year Treasury yield fell below the 2-year Treasury yield.

A yield inversion typically portends a recession. An inverted yield curve shows that investors expect the future growth to fall sharply; in other words, the demand for money would be much lower than what it is today and hence the yields are also lower.

How good is yield inversion at predicting a recession?

Although US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross was quoted as saying Monday that “eventually there'll be a recession but this inversion is not as reliable, in my view, as people think”, yet US data show historically that barring one episode in the mid-1960s, a yield inversion has always been followed by a recession.

TIP FOR READING LIST

A MACHINE CALLED SOCIAL MEDIA

IN 1922, the Swiss-German painter Paul Klee sketched “Twittering Machine” in watercolour and pen-and-ink oil transfer on paper, showing some birds on a wire (or branch) connected to a hand-crank. It has been interpreted in various ways — including as a depiction of machinery lurking nature to its ruin. In an online presentation, New York's Museum of Modern Art describes the relationship between birds and machines: “The ‘twittering’ in the title doubtless refers to the birds, while the ‘machine’ is suggested by the hand crank. The two elements are, literally, a fusing of the natural with the industrial world...”

Political writer and broadcaster Richard Seymour argues that the artwork is a metaphor for humans' present-day relationship with social media. His new book has the same name as Klee's sketch.

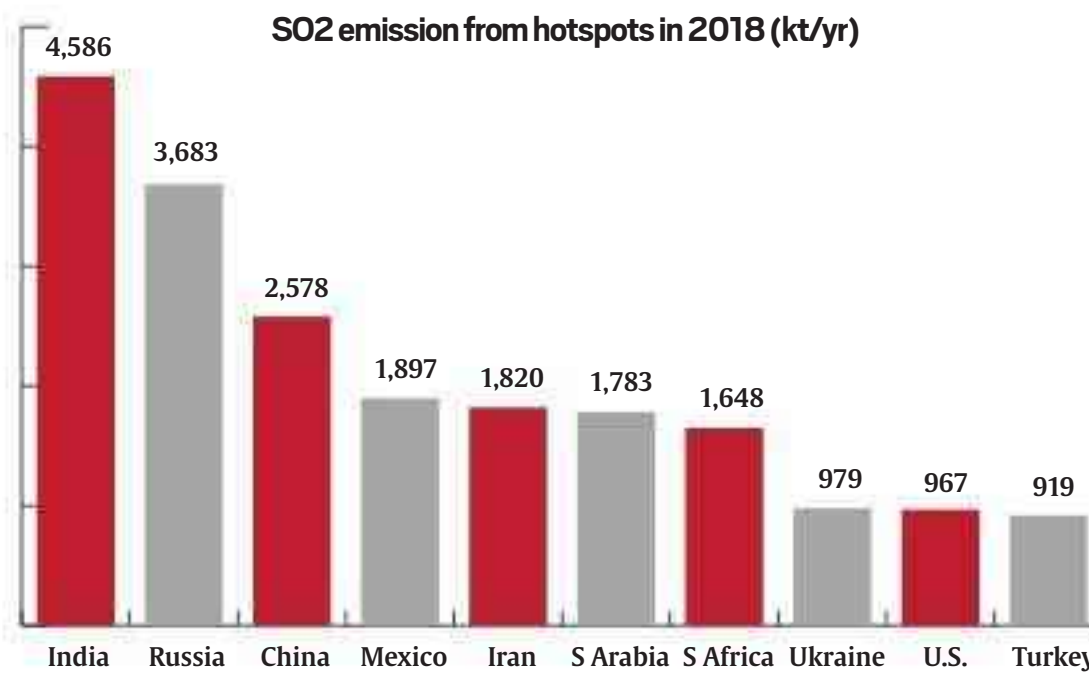
The Twittering Machine uses insights from users, developers, security experts

and others to probe what we are getting out of the social media machine, and what we are getting into. It argues that the system is an addiction-machine. “We are users, waiting for our next hit as we like, comment and share. We write to the machine as individuals, but it responds by aggregating our fantasies, desires and frailties into data, and returning them to us as a commodity experience,” the publisher's description says.

In its review of the book, *The Guardian* says: “The twittering machine, as Seymour calls it, has no innate morality, but it preys on our weaknesses to monopolise our attention and modify our behaviour. We are left jangled, needy, constantly alert for the chirp that announces some new and unnecessary missive, ever ready to resume our chore of clicking the ‘like’ button, surrendering to the advertisers who gather up the personal data we so guilelessly provide.”



TELLING NUMBERS

**India biggest emitter of sulphur dioxide: report using NASA data**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BEIJING, AUGUST 19

A NEW report by Greenpeace India shows the country is the largest emitter of sulphur dioxide in the world, with more than 15% of all the anthropogenic sulphur dioxide hotspots detected by the NASA OMI (Ozone Monitoring Instrument) satellite. Almost all of these emissions in India are because of coal-burning, the report says.

The vast majority of coal-based power plants in India lack flue-gas desulphurisation technology to reduce air pollution.

The Singrauli, Neyveli, Talcher, Jharsuguda, Korba, Kutch, Chennai, Ramagundam, Chandrapur and Koradi thermal power plants or clusters are the major emission hotspots in India, the report says.

In a first step to combat pollution levels, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change introduced, for the first time, sulphur dioxide emission limits for coal-fired power plants in December 2015. But the

deadline for the installation of flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) in power plants has been extended from 2017 to 2022.

The report also includes NASA data on the largest point sources of sulphur dioxide.

The largest sulphur dioxide emission hotspots have been found in Russia, South Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia, India, Mexico, United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Serbia.

Air pollutant emissions from power plants and other industries continue to increase in India, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the report says.

In Russia, South Africa, Mexico and Turkey, emissions are currently not increasing — however, there is not a lot of progress in tackling them either.

Of the world's major emitters, China and the United States have been able to reduce emissions rapidly. They have achieved this feat by switching to clean energy sources; China, in particular, has achieved success by dramatically improving emission standards and enforcement for sulphur dioxide control.

From American Wild West to Europe war theatres, evolution of razor wireSMITA NAIR
PANAJI, AUGUST 19

AT A number of places in the Kashmir Valley, security forces have put coils of concertina wire on roads to enforce restrictions on movement. Concertina wire fences are used along territorial borders and in theatres of conflict around the world, to keep out combatants, terrorists, or refugees.

The Nomenclature

The expandable spools of barbed or razor wire get their name from concertina, a hand-held musical instrument similar to the accordion, with bellows that expand and contract. Concertina wire coils were an improvisation on the barbed wire obstacles used during World War I. The flat, collapsible coils with intermittent barbs or blades were designed to be carried along by infantry, and deployed on battlefields to prevent or slow down enemy movement.

The early avatars

The Englishman Richard Newton is credited with creating the first barbed wire around 1845; the first patent for “a double wire clipped with diamond shaped barbs” was given to Louis François Janin of France. In the United States, the first patent was registered by Lucien B Smith on June 25, 1867, for a prairie fence made of fireproof iron wire. Design innovations and more patents followed; Michael Kelly twisted razor wires together to form a cable of wires.

The American businessman Joseph F Glidden is considered to be the father of the modern barbed wire. His design of two strands of intertwined wire held by sharp prongs at regular intervals, won a famous legal victory against the US Patent and Trademark Office in 1874.

Non-military uses

Barbed wire was initially an agrarian fencing invention intended to confine cattle and sheep, which unlike lumber, was



A coil of concertina wire in Srinagar last week. PTI

largely resistant to fire and bad weather. An advertorial published in the US in 1885 under the title “Why Barb Fencing Is Better Than Any Other”, argued that “it does not decay; boys cannot crawl through or over it; nor dogs; nor cats; nor any other animal; it watches with argus eyes the inside and outside, up, down and lengthwise; it prevents the ‘ins’ from being ‘outs’, and the ‘outs’ from being ‘ins’, watches at day-break, at noon-tide, at sunset and all night long...”

Barbed wire soon became a symbol of power and property, changing the sociopolitical and economic landscape of the American West, converting the undefined prairies into private properties, and making the roaming cowboy on horseback increasingly redundant.

Evolution of concertina

Barbed wire was put to military use in the Siege of Santiago in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, and by the British in the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 to

confine the families of the Afrikaans-speaking Boer fighters.

World War I saw extensive use of barbed wire — and German military engineers are credited with improvising the earliest concertina coils on the battlefield. They spun barbed wire put up by the Allied soldiers along the Hindenburg Line on the Western Front into circles, making it more effective against infantry charges. Both sides eventually used concertina wire, which did not, unlike traditional barbed wire, require too much support infrastructure or nailing down, and could simply be spread on the battlefield.

Use in Jammu and Kashmir

The fence erected by India along the Line of Control to keep out terrorist infiltrators consists of rows of concertina wire coils held by iron angles. Concertina coils have long been deployed during curfews in the Valley. They are now commonly seen elsewhere in India too, and are used to secure private properties as well.