



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Asian cats, Western monkeys

Across Asia, focus is turning to multiple geopolitical quarrels. Western powers are back in play, arbitrating



SANJAYA BARU

ONE STORY from the *Panchatantra* which holds a lesson for students of geopolitics and international relations is that of the clever monkey and the quarrelling cats. Seeking to arbitrate between two cats fighting over some leftovers, the monkey brings in a weighing scale to ensure equal division. Finding one part of the cake bigger than the other, the monkey takes a bite of the bigger slice to make them equal. Finding it has bitten off too much, it takes a bite of the other side to ensure balance. And so it goes on, till the entire cake is devoured.

Divide and rule has been around for ages as a tactic of control and domination. With Japan and the Koreans quarrelling, China and India quarrelling, Pakistan and India quarrelling, the Arabs and the Iranians quarrelling, there are so many Asian cats chasing each other's tail that western monkeys are back in play, arbitrating across Asia.

The story over the past quarter century was the much heralded "geo-economic" rise, or resurgence, of Asia. The focus this year seems to be turning to multiple geopolitical quarrels among Asians. That a rapidly retreating Britain would allow its capital city to become a stage for an old South Asian quarrel it facilitated over a century is as much a comment on the monkey's delusions of past grandeur as on the cats' lack of wisdom.

Equally, if not more, China's questioning of India on matters pertaining to territory on one side of its borders sounds fanciful given its quarrels with many neighbours all around. Not long back, a Chinese premier said to his Indian counterpart that when India and China shake hands the whole world looks at them. What was not stated was that some would look with hope and others with concern. Today, when China and India quarrel on the status of Jammu and Kashmir, it could be said again that the whole world looks at them, some with hope and others with concern. The hope this time is that quarrelling Asians will bring to a halt the narrative of a "Rising Asia".

In 2007, the late Lee Kuan Yew, founder-

mentor of Singapore, famously said that China and India were the twin engines of the Asian aircraft and that together the two engines would lift the continent as a whole onto a new trajectory of growth. Have we, within the decade, come to a point when "differences turning into disputes", not just between the two Asian giants but between so many Asian neighbours, could ground the Asian aircraft and delay the dawn of the so-called "Asian century"? Does China imagine its future is secure without Asian stability?

It is no secret that the US is now engaged in a "geo-economic containment" of China, as originally theorised by the Harvard scholar Edward Luttwak in his wonderfully crafted book, *The Rise of China and the Logic of Conflict* (2012). Of course, the Chinese understand this. Must they, then, pick a quarrel with so many of their neighbours, making many of them turn West, seeking balance? Would a burnt-out power like Britain have the courage to voice concern about human rights in Hong Kong but for the courage it derives from concerns around Asia? Would it allow anti-India demonstrators to disrupt traffic in the heart of London but for the fact that it sees new opportunities to regain lost influence?

Major Asian powers have a responsibility towards the continent as a whole. No power, however big and powerful, can hope to dominate the continent. Asia will never become China's backyard the way the US converted western Europe into its backyard after the Second World War. If the US succeeds in the "geo-economic containment" of China it will be because of China's inability to reassure its neighbours rather than because Asians will once again wish to be dominated by the West. The real and present challenge for all of Asia is the slowing down of its growth engines. Sure, the global growth engine is itself slowing down, but for most Asian countries the slowdown threatens livelihoods, not merely lifestyles.

For India, the slowdown is even more

challenging since it is now clear that it is not merely a cyclical downturn that can be addressed with fiscal and monetary policy intervention but has deep-rooted structural foundations that need urgent fixing. Analysts have pointed to inadequate improvement in labour productivity, reduced rates of saving and investment, inadequate demand constrained by inequalities in wealth and income as structural factors that are holding the Indian economy back.

Many other Asian economies, including China, are facing structural constraints to growth. Given global demographics and income distribution, any hope of restoring momentum to global growth depends vitally on the Asian growth process rebounding. But, for growth to return to Asia, the continent needs geopolitical stability. Asia cannot look to the West for a return to such stability for a variety of reasons. Europe is constrained by a lack of vision and capability while the US is actively engaged in disrupting global growth to ensure its own continued dominance.

Luttwak's advice for the US leadership was to seek the geo-economic containment of China. However, President Donald Trump has acted as if he is seeking the geo-economic containment of Asia as a whole. Indeed, many in Europe see him as disrupting the prospects for growth in Europe too. As for Latin America and Africa, all hopes of their growth articulated so convincingly a decade ago seem less plausible now.

Against this background, Asian leaderships across the continent have a responsibility to the future. A decade ago, it was hoped across Asia that China and India can offer that kind of leadership to the continent. Today, that hope has receded. If Asians will not shape Asia's future, who would want to? This question ought to be the agenda for the next meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping.

The writer is Distinguished Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies & Analysis, New Delhi

THE WRONG COUNSEL

The Press Council is primarily the autonomous guardian of press freedom — on J&K it has gone against its own mandate

THE FIRST PRESS Commission recommended the establishment of a Press Council of India (PCI) in the 1950s. It was in response to a survey of yellow journalism, but the first element of the commission's mandate for the proposed statutory body was to secure the freedom of the press. The problematics of media bias were secondary, since only a free press could be called upon to be responsible. The PCI has been on the side of the angels in some of the most disturbing periods in contemporary history, like the insurgency in Punjab and the violent polarisation triggered by the Ram Jannabhoomi movement. It produced a good report on the media in Kashmir in 2017. But now, it has actually gone against the mandate set for it well before its inception in 1966. The PCI has sought to intervene in the matter of a petition filed by *Kashmir Times* in the Supreme Court, seeking removal of press curbs which have crippled reporting from Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370. The PCI's mandate would place it on the side of the petitioner, but it has sought to balance the priority of press freedom against the "national interest of integrity and sovereignty". Chairman Justice CK Prasad appears to have overridden the dissent of members representing the press on the ground that freedom is contingent upon responsibility.

Responsibility to whom? The PCI's move appeals to the imperative of national interest, and extraordinary circumstances may indeed demand emergency interventions. But national interest, at all the times, is served by the truth. And especially in times when it is contested, by reporting, fairly and accurately, without fear or favour. The job of the press in a democracy is to keep the public accurately informed as the situation unfolds in Jammu and Kashmir. The PCI does not need to remind the Indian press about its responsibilities in this matter — from the time when lethal insurgency broke out in Kashmir in 1990, the mainstream press has reported from the region very responsibly, serving the interests of both security and human rights.

There is room for a meaningful intervention in Kashmir, where local media has not been allowed to function at all, while national and international media have found it hard to get their stories out. And there has been a rash of sunny stories, especially on television, depicting a Kashmir that is surreally normal. By calling for curbs that effectively suppress the freedom of expression of a local publication, the PCI undermines itself as the institution charged with the responsibility of safeguarding one of the pillars of Indian democracy.

AGENDA FOR THE BANK

Measures unveiled for financial sector may be short-term balm. India's banking industry needs a design change

LAST WEEK, FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a raft of measures aimed at reviving the economy and boosting investor sentiment. As part of this package, the government announced that it would frontload the release of Rs 70,000 crore to state-owned banks for recapitalisation, and the linking of the interest rate on loans to the RBI's key policy rate, the repo rate, besides promising bankers that they would be protected in cases where bonafide decisions are taken by them while lending. The upfront release of what is growth capital for banks should help lenders to plan their asset growth better instead of scrambling for funds and ensure that the pipeline of loans is healthy. But where the government, central bank and banks may be on sticky ground is on linking the interest rate on loans to the repo rate.

The rationale for pricing loans based on what is essentially an overnight borrowing rate is not clear, especially in the context of funding costs for banks. Ideally, such a benchmarking should be to liquid bonds or securities and across different average maturities or tenures such as three-months, six-months and one-year, like the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate or Libor. It's a challenge that the RBI and the Indian banking industry have faced over the last few decades following the freeing up of interest rates after having tried out the base rate system and then a marginal cost of funds based lending rate. Similarly, it may be too optimistic to expect bankers to push loan growth in the absence of more credible assurances of protection from over zealous investigative agencies.

Essentially, some of the measures unveiled last week for the financial sector may prove only to be short-term balm. India's banking industry, dominated by PSU lenders, will be competitive, more efficient and profitable only if there is a structural design change which features operational independence, empowered bank boards, better governance standards and quality of lending besides a government shareholder which acts like a sovereign wealth fund. That will have to be accompanied by stable government and regulatory policies. During its first term, the Narendra Modi-led government may have been late in addressing the problem of bad loans which forced the government to infuse over Rs 2 lakh crore for recapitalisation. A government with a powerful political mandate and facing the rising threat of a deepening domestic slowdown and global downturn, cannot be seen to be kicking the can down the road now.

THE CHAMPION

PV Sindhu shows it is possible to come back after defeat, and win over the world

PV SINDHU TOOK just 38 minutes to win the World Badminton Championship final and become the first Indian to reach that dizzy height. This giant leap for Indian badminton was as much about her ruthless triumph on D-Day as it was about the way she has repeatedly bounced back after confidence-shattering defeats. It was a result of waking up the morning after and resetting her targets, no matter how hurtful the loss was, that had seen Sindhu collect a bunch of medals — at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, now five at the World Championships and an Olympics silver.

Indian shuttlers have had little history of excellence at the world championships. Prakash Padukone had a bronze, Pullela Gopichand had none, Saina Nehwal had faltered in six quarterfinals before eventually medaling, and the men's singles shuttlers couldn't find the breakthrough till a minor toe-hold this year. Arguably the world's most talented player, Tai Tzu-Ying, whom Sindhu beat in the quarters, has struggled to medal at the Worlds and even the legendary Lee Chong Wei had to retire with a big bunch of silvers, but no gold. Being crowned World Champion is no fortuitous happenstance, for even a bronze is hard-earned. To be the only constant in the podium pictures for three straight years is an achievement that guarantees an entry into badminton's Hall of Fame.

It is no secret that India struggles for medals at Olympics, the frustration reaching tipping point three years back in Rio. But Sindhu was in a stratosphere of her own — revealing in ousting shuttlers with big reputations, including the mighty Chinese Wang Yihan, before losing a classic final. She never settled for it, and it was to be the start of an assault on every peak — India had never medaled in women's singles at the Asian Games before her silver. No Indian, male or female, had made the World Championship finals. No Indian had won the year-ending circuit finale. A solitary global medal — not necessarily gold — makes grand news in India. But Sindhu's is an unapologetic ambition to win over the world, and she will do everything within her prowess to keep winning.



JOYASHREE ROY

THE 2018 IPCC Special Report on Global warming of 1.5°C delivered a clear message: Human activities have caused an approximately 0.87°C rise in global average temperature over pre-industrial times. The latest IPCC report on 'Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems' takes the warning further and states that the land surface air temperature has risen by nearly twice the global average temperature, at about 1.3°C.

Given the direct impact the world's land systems have on human well-being, livelihood, food security and water security, the report cannot be overlooked, and especially not by acutely vulnerable India.

Desertification of land under agricultural use will exacerbate the already worsening dangers of declining crop yields and crop failures. Combating it requires the urgent implementation of measures from the set of several remedial options proposed in the report, including reduced tillage, planting cover crops, improvements in grazing management and greater use of agroforestry.

However, another key component is maintaining and extending forest cover, as forests act as enormous natural carbon sinks. In this context recent news that suggests the dilution of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in India seems regressive. Industrial development and environmental protection can be planned prudently to be compatible. Land sparing industrialisation, appropriate zoning and environmental safeguards are possible without being in conflict with replacement

THE LAST WINDOW

Like other countries, India too must act quickly and decisively on the IPCC report

of the ecological services provided by the natural growth-forest ecosystem.

Every developing nation needs industrial growth, but given the severity of the threat we face in climate change, not factoring in the importance of preserving prudently chosen and managed forest cover would be ill-advised. Global assessment reports have also shown that consulting indigenous people is an important way of integrating local knowledge with scientific knowledge.

Water management is also critical. Agriculture in India accounts for more an estimated 86 per cent of the country's freshwater use. The water intensity of Indian paddy is also below global best practices. The 2019 HIMAP report by ICIMOD has shown that with receding glaciers, there is need to manage water better both in the short and in the long run — especially in India — to address the challenge of food security.

The Union government has commendably taken up the goal of "irrigation water productivity". Yet, promoting compatible irrigation practices like drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation, shifting away from water-intensive cash crops, alternate wetting and drying (AWR) practices in paddy cultivation, extension services for providing access and sensitising farmers to the efficient water use technologies and practices and the use of water efficient agricultural practices needs to be taken up on a war footing. The largely forgotten traditional rainwater harvesting practices like building tanks and artificial ponds in low-lying catchment areas need to be scaled up across the nation.

Consumption and waste management in

the food sector is considered to have climate implications as well. A shift towards a more plant-based based diet is considered a healthy sustainable dietary option in the IPCC report. The UN estimates that the world's population could breach 9.7 billion by 2050, so the need to augment food supplies per unit availability of land and water is a necessary target. The shift is even more pertinent for India as its yet largely poor population will be one of the first to be affected by constrained food supplies. Diversification of the food system, balanced diets, low meat diets are all identified with health benefits, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development benefits. Livestock sector management with crop management is necessary for multiple benefits.

Unlike many countries which have crossed the health safety limits of meat consumption with rising incomes, India need not follow the same path. Here, education can play an important role in managing meat consumption. Market incentives too need to be aligned with human health benefits.

Like for many other countries, there is a very small window left for India's policymakers to respond to the severity of the threat. However, there are some cultural advantages for India and multiple options for adopting sustainable practices to avoid a carbon-intensive development path. It is hoped that the well-being of the masses will take precedence over short-term economic gains for a few.

The writer is currently Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand



AUGUST 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

LEFT UNITY

THE CPM WILL have seats adjustments with the Janata(S)-Congress combine but no electoral alliance. This may well be the attitude of other Left parties also. At the same time, the five Left parties — CPM, CPI, RSP, PWP and Forward Bloc — will go for a common manifesto and joint electoral programme and are unwilling to be an integral part of the Janata(S)-Congress alliance. This strategy has almost been finalised during the CPM politburo meeting. CPI leader Rajeshwara Rao's appeal to Left parties to chalk out a programme to contain the "communal and authoritarian forces" has been welcomed by Marxist leaders. Rao's statement, it is pointed

out, indicates that there is no love lost in the CPI for the Congress-I. Much significance is attached to the CPI national council's censure of the Kerala unit of the CPI for making adjustments with the Congress-I in the state.

NANAJI ON ALLIANCE

JANATA PARTY GENERAL Secretary Nanaji Deshmukh ruled out any electoral adjustment with the Congress-I anywhere in the country for the Lok Sabha mid-term poll. He was commenting on West Bengal Janata Leader P C Sen's statement indicating such a partnership. Deshmukh said all the sitting members of his party would be given tickets, unless they chose not to contest. He

added that Janata would contest nearly all the 543 Lok Sabha seats. However, some seats could be left for parties like the RPI (Khobragade group).

HAVANA FOR NAM

CUBAN LEADERS ARE confident that the sixth non-aligned summit, which opens in Havana on August 28, will be a success despite the highly-charged atmosphere in which the conference was meeting. Cuban Vice-President Rafael Rodriguez and other top political and government functionaries said that as the host nation, Cuba will leave no stones unturned to preserve the unity of the non-aligned movement.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

In Atal ji's mould

Like Vajpayee, Arun Jaitley was a quintessential democrat. Atal ji used poetry to express himself, Jaitley used prose



RAM MADHAV

WHAT A CRUEL destiny it is to be forced into writing obituaries every few months. In the past five years, we in the BJP have lost six young and dedicated leaders to untimely deaths. First, it was Gopinath Munde, followed by Anil Madhav Dave, Ananth Kumar, Manohar Parrikar, Sushma Swaraj, and now Arun Jaitley. We lost our beloved Atal ji too. No single political party in Indian history has faced such tragedy.

"Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuham". Those who are born shall die, said Lord Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita. Yet, when promising leaders pass on in their prime, we long for better answers. The void that these leaders have left behind is hard to fill.

Arun Jaitley was a gentleman politician — suave, sophisticated, humane and witty. He was not just a leader; in over three decades of political life, Jaitley had become an institution. He was our one-stop reference for everything — whether it was the challenges faced by the government or the party or questions about the nation's future or political issues. From leaders in the states to ministers in the cabinet, from the BJP's alliance partners to parties on the other side, everyone would turn to him for solutions and guidance. For the media, he was the source of information and the "line-giver". He was simply indispensable.

Jaitley rose through the party ranks. A find of the Atal-Advani era, he came into prominence through hard work, dedication and talent. An activist of the ABVP, he was incarcerated during the Emergency. When a lucrative offer to contest polls was in sight during the Janata Party regime, Jaitley chose to establish himself as a successful professional before taking the political plunge. A decade in the rugged terrain of the Indian legal system had probably helped him become an expert in matters of law and justice and constitutional intricacies. By the time he became an integral part of the BJP in the late 1980s, Jaitley had made a reputation as a legal and constitutional luminary. This expertise, coupled with his raw sense of grass roots politics, made Jaitley a great asset for the BJP.

Jaitley's used to be the last word on many legal and constitutional questions that the party would face in the states or at the national level. Law and matters related to the Constitution were at his fingertips. But the solutions he would provide were not just those of a lawyer or a constitutional expert, but also of a shrewd politician, who had his nose to the ground. He had an amazing understanding of the country's grass roots political reality.

Jaitley was a versatile genius. He handled the finance and defence ministries with equal aplomb. Under two prime ministers, he held portfolios as diverse as law, information and broadcasting, disinvestment, finance, and defence. As the Leader of Opposition or Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, he led or participated in several committees and commissions, always



CR Sasikumar

adding great value to their functioning.

Jaitley was a quintessential democrat. If we were to name one leader as a successor of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's legacy in politics, it was him. He never believed in political untouchability. He had as many friends in the Opposition as in his party. Like Vajpayee, he too endured criticism with dignity. Like Vajpayee, Jaitley was a man of ideas, feelings, and words. Atal ji used poetry to express himself while Jaitley used prose. Both were superb orators. Jaitley inherited Atal ji's sense of humour as well. Satire used to be a cherished ingredient in politics in the past. But of late, it has become a rarity. The exception was Arun Jaitley. A player with words, he would use puns frequently in his political discourse to score points without offending the other side. An ability to lighten a heavy debate through his ready wit was Jaitley's forte. He also had the unique ability to lift a discourse intellectually. He was one of the few leaders in Indian politics with whom one could have an intelligent and profound conversation.

Jaitley's fondness for cricket is well-known. He was an office-bearer at the BCCI and led the Delhi and District Cricket Association from the front. During his tenure, he promoted many young talents who later became star players in the Indian cricket team. In politics, he was like an all-rounder in cricket. He knew how to hit sixes for the ruling side, how to bowl out the

In over three decades of political life, Jaitley had moulded himself into an institution. He was our one-stop reference for everything — whether it was the challenges faced by the government or the party or questions about the nation's future or political issues. From leaders in the states to ministers in the cabinet, from the BJP's alliance partners to parties on the other side, everyone would turn to him for solutions and guidance. For the media, he was the source of information and the 'line-giver'. He was simply indispensable.

Opposition through tough arguments and how to field the interests of his party in challenging times.

Jaitley owed his rise in politics to the Atal-Advani leadership, when young leaders were spotted and promoted by the party. During the past three decades, Jaitley too spotted, supported and promoted several young talents in Indian politics. Several leaders in today's BJP, including several in the government, owe their political rise to Jaitley.

With Jaitley, one had the freedom to disagree yet continue to have dialogue and a cordial relationship. He never saw disagreements on issues to be matters of personal prestige. He was a Kashmir specialist. He diligently guided me and Haseeb Drabu in drafting the Agenda of Alliance between the BJP and the PDP. I vividly remember how after 40 days of intense deliberations, we were stuck over a couple of points. At Prime Minister Narendra Modi's advice, we approached Jaitley who was busy giving final touches to the Union Budget. He joined us outside the North Block at 1 am, standing on the road between South and North Block, nudging us towards closing the matter to mutual satisfaction.

Jaitley is no more. As songwriter Irving Berlin wrote: "The song is ended; but the melody lingers on."

The writer is a national general secretary, BJP, and director, India Foundation

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India, riding a wave of triumphalism stoked by hyper nationalist rhetoric, needs to know the world is not indifferent to the consequences of two nuclear-armed countries inching closer to a tipping point." — DAWN

Beyond Kashmir

World powers are focused on other issues. India must prepare for global disruptions



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi wraps up his participation in the G-7 Summit in France, the immediate focus might well be about what US President Donald Trump said or did not say about "mediating" between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

But the longer term question in Delhi ought to be about India's problems and possibilities in a turbulent world that is marked not only by deepening economic conflict among the major powers but also sharpening political divisions within the West.

India's challenge today is less about keeping the world at bay in Kashmir, but responding purposefully to the breakdown of the current global order and contribute to the shaping a new one.

To be sure, India has a problem in Kashmir — of reworking the political compact with the people of the Valley and generating sustainable support for the new constitutional arrangement. That task is certainly complicated by Pakistan's furious bid to internationalise the issue.

But, Kashmir is not making world leaders lose sleep. Barring China, few major powers want to take advantage of India's problems in Kashmir. Pakistan might whip itself into a frenzy about every word on Kashmir dripping out from the world's chancelleries. But, there is little reason for Delhi to be too excited. After all, the world has other problems at hand.

Take a look at the just concluded G-7 summit. One surprising visitor to the summit venue was the Iranian foreign minister Jawad Zarif. The French President Emmanuel Macron, observers believe, was trying his hand at "mediating" between Trump and the Islamic Republic. Quite clearly, the world has more mediations to work with than Kashmir.

Besides Iran, G-7 is worrying about a lot of other issues — from the Amazon forest fires to Brexit and the escalating tariff war between the US and China, to the French threat to impose new taxes on American technology companies.

Kashmir might certainly be there if the situation in the Valley gets out of hand and the military tension between India and Pakistan escalates. Indian diplomacy has handled these situations again and again over the last three decades. While India needs to watch out, there is no reason to be overanxious.

If Delhi is smart, it will recognise that Trump values a trade deal with India a lot more than winning the Nobel Prize for solving the Kashmir problem.

In any case, India should worry less about what Trump might say about Kashmir, and pay more attention to his breath-taking disruption of the current global economic and political order. For more than seven decades, the idea of a coherent political West, championing global capitalism, security alliances, and multilateral institutions has been

an unshakeable assumption.

In the seven decades following the Second World War, "Western primacy" was seen as immutable. Communists, socialist nationalists and nationalists in the East and the South seemed to agree; they demonised the West and railed against its hegemony.

Few would have expected that the "leader of the Free World" — the US President — would be the one taking the political axe to the West and its core institutions.

Consider what Trump has done to the G-7 forum that was founded in the 1970s as some kind of "Politburo" to orchestrate political and economic coordination between the Western powers. At the first G-7 Summit that Trump attended in the summer of 2017, he announced the withdrawal from the 2015 Paris accord on the mitigation of climate change.

Last year, Trump left the meeting in Canada before it came to a close and dissociated himself from the final communique and damned his host Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "dishonest". This year, President Macron was smart enough to dispense with the joint communique.

Trump has been ever harsher with the World Trade Organisation that was designed by the West to advance globalising capitalism. Trump believes the WTO has not worked for the American labour. He is ready to bring the global trading architecture down in favour of bilateral deals.

Trump appears to be set on undermining US military alliances in Europe and Asia — a prospect that Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping could only have dreamt of. He is also eager to end America's "endless wars" in the greater Middle East, including Afghanistan.

We do not know whether Trump will be recalled as a short-term aberration or the accidental catalyst for big structural changes in the world. What we do know is that the post-War economic and political institutions are under extraordinary stress. Few of them are likely to survive the next few years intact.

The Trump disruption demands that India take a fresh look at its economic and security policies and adapt to structural changes in the global order, far more sweeping than the ones India confronted at the turn of the 1990s — the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the new wave of economic globalisation.

India's strategy of incremental reform is increasingly incapable of coping with the disruptions unfolding in the world. The longer India takes to rework its internal and external economic strategies, the harder it will be to cope with the emerging global political challenges.

But an India that quickly adapts to the new dynamic can easily elevate its place in the new global pecking order that is bound to emerge when the dust settles from the current world turmoil. If India gets its economic house in order and returns to a high growth path, Delhi might discover that there was no better time than now to change the rules of the game on Kashmir as well as on the two state parties to the problem — Pakistan and China.

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



HARSH MANDER

Chronicle of an acquittal foretold

Pehlu Khan verdict underlines subversion of justice by police and bureaucracy

ON THE eve of India's 73rd Independence Day, slogans — "Bharat Mata ki jai", "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi hai toh mumkin hai" — were raised in the corridors of the additional district judge court in Alwar. Two groups of men had waited in sweltering heat the whole day for the court to announce its verdict in the case involving the lynching of dairy farmer Pehlu Khan on April 1, 2017. One was of the men accused of the killing and their associates. The other comprised supporters of the dead man, elders from the village and human rights workers who had helped them fight for justice.

Close to sundown, word emerged from the courtroom that the judge, Sarita Swami, had acquitted all the adult men accused of killing Pehlu Khan. The burst of triumphalist sloganeering of the accused men and their supporters was matched only by the despair of the family and neighbours of Pehlu Khan. Jaibuna Begum, Khan's widow, said she was "heart-broken". Irshad Khan, his older son, reportedly said: "We have lost faith in the law. For two-and-a-half years, we have been waiting. We thought that justice would be delivered and it would give peace to my father's soul. Our hopes were shattered."

Independence Day was a sombre one across Nuh. The news of the acquittal had travelled across the district. For Meo Muslim dairy farmers, terrorised by the lynching of Pehlu Khan and other dairy farmers after him, the judgment signalled not only the wanton denial of justice for the family of Pehlu Khan. It was about them, gesturing whether they could hope to live as equal citizens, and work

their ancestral livelihood of dairying without fear. People everywhere in the district were shrouded in a sense of profound betrayal, of loss, of uncertainty about their futures, and of a kind of settled hopelessness.

Yet this was an acquittal foretold. From the day of the attack, the police did everything they could to subvert the possibility of any punishment of the men, who planned or executed before video cameras, the public lynching of Pehlu Khan.

Gulab Chand Kataria, the then home minister of Rajasthan, indicated very early where his government stood. Defending the cow vigilantes, he said, "The problem is from both sides. People know cow-trafficking is illegal but they do it. Gau Bhaktis [sic] try to stop those who indulge in such crimes." Alwar SP, Rahul Prakash, declared that was "100 per cent" certain that the lynched man and his associates were "cow smugglers".

Pehlu Khan had listed six men in his statement in hospital before he died. The police did not follow the legal requirement of obtaining a certificate from a doctor that he was fit to give the statement, enabling the court to discount it. Under the law, a dying declaration is sufficient to convict a person even if there is no collaborative evidence. In this case, five months later, police removed the names of all these six men from the list of the accused, claiming that they were not even present at the site of the lynching. Instead, nine more people, including two minors, were charged with the crime, based partly on two videos that had been taken of the crime. But

the police did not send the video for forensic verification of its authenticity, nor did they locate the mobile phone from which it was recorded. So, once again the court rejected this crucial evidence.

Months after the lynching, NDTV reporters captured on secret camera the main accused, Vipin Yadav, bragging, "We kept beating him (Pehlu Khan) up for one and a half hours," he told the undercover reporters. "First there were 10 people, then the crowd swelled." But this video was neither authenticated, nor presented before the court. The victims were not even made to identify the accused.

It is undisputed that many men were already present at the crime scene when Khan and his companions reached the spot, suggesting prior knowledge and planning; and that the mob attack was clearly a hate-crime targeting the dairy farmers on account of their religion. Still, the police did not include sections on criminal conspiracy and promoting enmity between groups on the grounds of religion in its charges, thereby eliminating any chance of evidence that this was an organised crime by Hindutva outfits. Additionally, because the victims claimed that the mob tore up their permit, they should have been charged under Section 204 for destruction of evidence.

The case, therefore, fell apart so comprehensively because it was designed to do so. What made the sting of this acquittal even more agonising was that less than a month before this, and that too under a Congress government, Pehlu Khan's sons and nephews

were charge-sheeted under the Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act 1995 for transporting milch animals across state borders without required documents. The fact is they had not crossed any state border when they were attacked. That they were transporting dairy cows and calves makes it evident that they could not possibly have been taking them for slaughter. You don't pay Rs 50,000 for a milking cow, and then sell her for slaughter, which would at best get you one-tenth of the price. Third, they claimed to have the required documents. Even if not, at most they were guilty of a technical transgression, not of any intent to harm any cow.

But none of this matters. It is evident that the rules of crime and punishment are rewritten in an India rapidly being remoulded as a Hindu nation. By these new rules, if anyone is lynched for causing harm to the cow, the persons who have been lynched are considered the original sinners. After all, they sought to injure or kill the cow sacred to Hindus. The lynch mob is the true victim in all cases of cow lynching: They are understandably provoked by the malfeasance of cow-killers; therefore, their violence is righteous and heroic. The cow-killing communities are the enemies, whereas the lynch mob are the soldiers of the Hindu nation.

In this new India, the desolation of the Meo Muslim people of Nuh on Independence Day is not hard to understand. Do we have any solace to offer to them?

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A GENTLEMAN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Mr Jaitley' (IE, August 26). It is rightly believed that politics is for the thick skinned, but the stories about Arun Jaitley tell us how different he was from his ilk. He was sensitive and empathetic. His affable demeanour across the political spectrum made him the "go-to" man for his party.

Vijai Pant Hempur.

OLD FRIENDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A two-way street', (IE, August 26). India and France see each other as reliable partners in ensuring a multipolar world order. There was a quest for such a world during the heydays of the Cold War as well, when the two countries defied the idea of taking shelter in one of the two camps. The French supported India after its first nuclear test. The engagement between the two countries has moved beyond the traditional realm of strategic and economic partnership to areas such as clean energy and environment.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

WELL DONE SINDHU

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'She's world champion' (IE, August 26). Sophisticated wrist work was in full display during the PV Sindhu-Nozomi Okuhara match. A gold medal at the World Championship was long due for Sindhu considering that she has started her journey in 2013 with a World

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

Championship Bronze at 18. Since then she has won Olympic, Asiad and Commonwealth Games medals. But a gold medal at a major event has been elusive. Now, she has become first Indian to win the World Championship medal and joint first in the number of medals at World Championships along with Chinese Zhang Ning. With the Olympics less than a year away, she must chose her tournaments judiciously and reserve her best for Tokyo.

Bal Govind, Noida



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

TELLING NUMBERS

Cardiovascular disease burden in India, and state highs & lows

STROKE IN INDIAN STATES (DALY LOST PER LAKH POPULATION)

HIGHEST BURDEN			
West Bengal	2,821	Punjab	5,758
Odisha	2,259	Tamil Nadu	4,788
Tripura	2,259	Haryana	4,244
Assam	2,229	Andhra Pradesh	4,023
Chhattisgarh	2,142	Karnataka	3,892

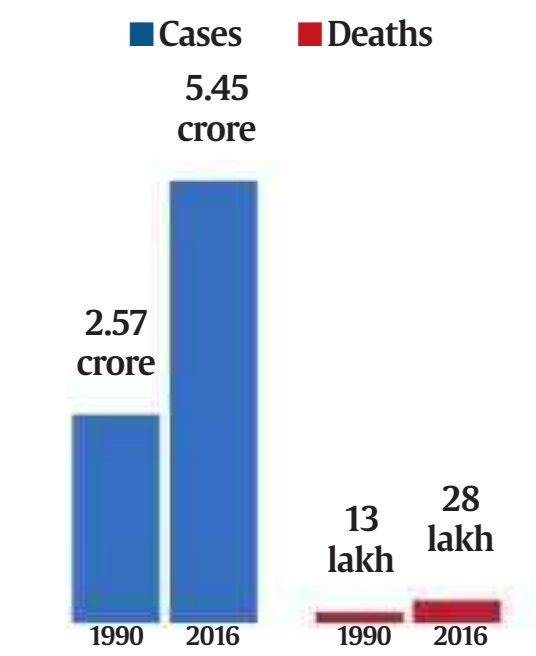
LOWEST BURDEN			
Mizoram	455	Mizoram	663
Sikkim	488	Arunachal Pradesh	957
Delhi	561	Meghalaya	957
Himachal Pradesh	656	Nagaland	1,167
Arunachal Pradesh	739	Sikkim	1,526

LAST WEEK, *The Lancet* published the results of a clinical trial with PolyPill tablets (a combination of aspirin and atorvastatin) conducted on older patients of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in Iranian adults. It concluded that a fixed dose of the tablets along with therapy may help reduce the CVD burden, particularly in low and middle income countries. Three-quarters of CVD-related deaths happen in lower-middle income countries, according to the World Health Organization, which classifies India among such countries.

Among CVDs, heart attacks and strokes are the most common cause of death and disability in Iran. In India, too, the leading CVD diseases are ischaemic heart disease and stroke, contributing 61.4 per cent and 24.9 per cent of total DALYs (Daily Adjusted Life Years) lost from CVDs, according to an earlier *Lancet* study (2018).

The 2018 study found that among Indian states, West Bengal, Odisha and Tripura have the highest burden of strokes in terms of crude DALY rates. Crude rates are calculated by factoring in incidence along with the pop-

CVD BURDEN IN INDIA

Source for all data: *The Lancet*

ulation of a region. Mizoram, Sikkim and Delhi have the lowest burden of stroke in terms of DALYs per 1,00,000. In the case of ischaemic heart disease, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have the highest burden while Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have the lowest.

MEHR GILL

SIMPLY PUT

Repo cut: reasons, implications

The minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee reveal how its six members read the state of the economy. But is a repo rate cut enough, and how will linking repo rate to lending and deposits rates impact people?

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 26

ON AUGUST 7, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a cut of 35 basis points in the repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI lends to the banking system. On August 21 (that is, 14 days since the decision), as is the norm, the RBI released the minutes of the MPC's deliberations. The importance of the minutes lie in the details they provide about how different MPC members view the state of the Indian economy, and what they believe is the key area of concern.

The MPC is made up of six members — three nominated by the Union government (Chetan Ghate, professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, Pami Dua, Director of Delhi School of Economics, and Ravindra Dholakia, former professor at IIM-Ahmedabad), and three representing the RBI (Governor Shaktikanta Das, B P Kanungo, and Michael Patra). The MPC meets every two months to review the monetary policy stance of the RBI.

Benign inflation trajectory

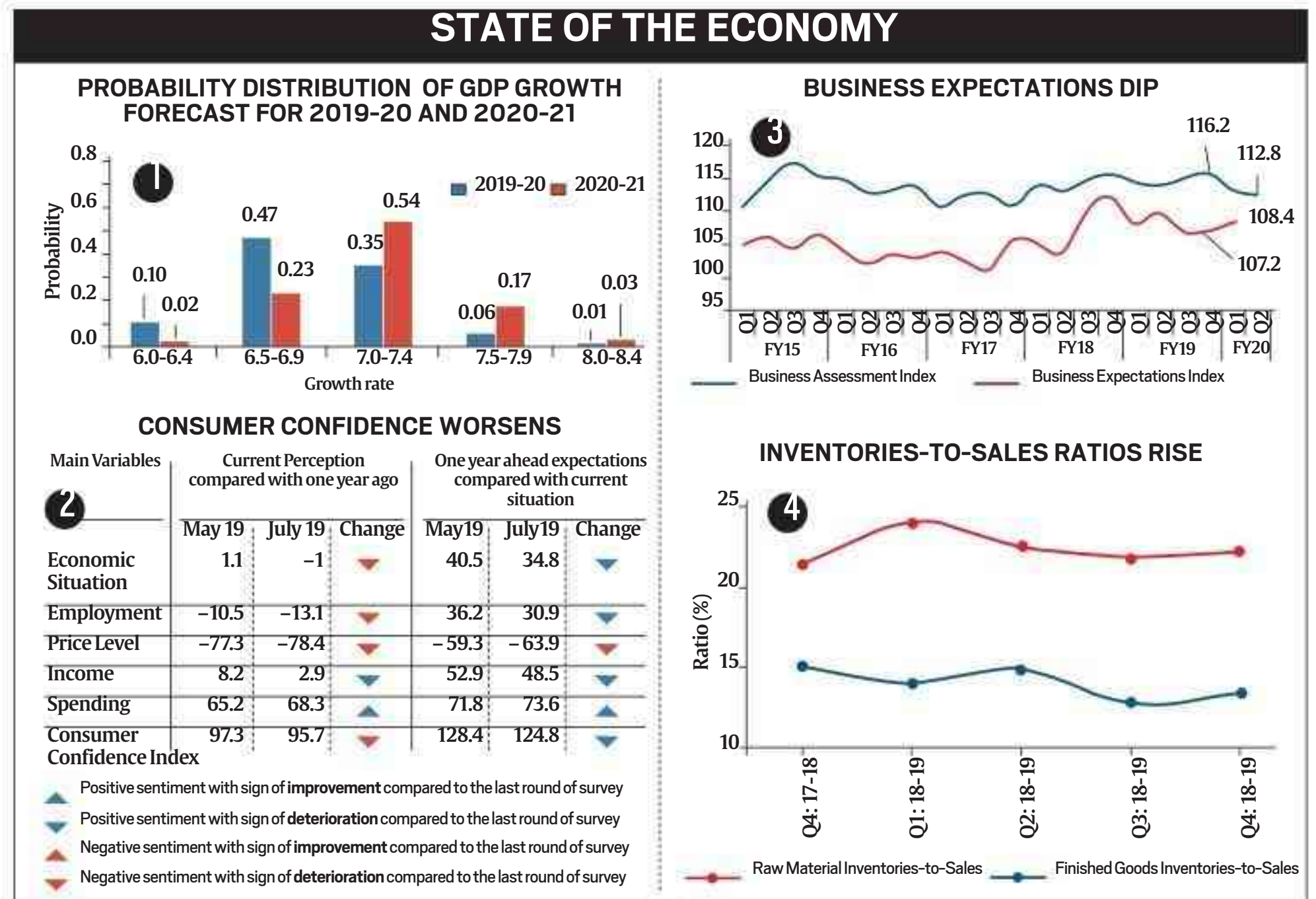
The MPC is mandated by law to ensure that retail inflation stays within a band of two percentage points of the target inflation rate of 4%. Since inflation has been well below the 4% mark, the MPC members have found it logical to repeatedly vote for rate cuts since February. This time was no different, and every member found enough policy space to cut the repo rate, even though two members (Dua and Ghate) voted for smaller cuts (25 bps) and one member (Dholakia) wanted a 40 bps cut.

Decelerating growth

With inflation worries out of the way for the time being, all members focussed on economic growth concerns. They quoted extensively from a whole bunch of RBI surveys that suggest that growth is under pressure. As chart 1 shows, professional forecasters project GDP growth to be less than 7% this financial year. The chances of touching 8% — either in the current fiscal or in the next — are almost non-existent. Similarly, as chart 2 shows, consumer confidence has worsened; even where it is positive, it is less so since the last survey. Chart 3 shows a similar story for business sentiment. Chart 4 shows how inventory-to-sales ratios are on their way up, thanks to the dip in sales.

Investment vs Consumption

Overall GDP can be boosted by one of four drivers: private consumption, private business investment, government expenditure, and exports. With government finances at



Source: RBI

their limit and exports lagging because of low global demand and trade tensions, the toss-up was between encouraging businesses to invest more, and incentivising individuals to consume more.

A rate cut does both but the minutes reveal MPC members differed on why they wanted a rate cut. In turn, this showed what they thought was the real problem in the economy that needed to be addressed.

For instance, Dholakia focussed on boosting the private sector's investment in the economy by reducing real interest rates. "It is well recognized... that investment is a primary driver for economic growth and employment creation. In order to boost investment activities, positive sentiments and business-conducive environment need to be enhanced. It requires carrying out several economic reform measures in the land and labour markets, tariffs of electricity and other resources, and taxation of income and goods and services, besides urgently correcting prevailing high real interest rates in India. While most of these measures are not within the purview of the monetary policy, correction of high real interest rates to a certain extent is".

In contrast, Patra and Kanungo were more concerned about the sharp fall in private consumption demand. "What is worri-

some though is that other components of aggregate demand could be joining investment in the loss of speed. Private consumption, the bedrock of domestic demand (57 per cent of GDP), is losing momentum in both urban and rural areas... The overarching goal is to reinvigorate domestic demand and the time to do it is now," stated Patra.

Monetary transmission

The MPC has cut the repo rate by 110 bps since February but only about 40 bps have been transmitted to borrowers. Poor monetary transmission has consistently undermined the effectiveness of the MPC's decisions. Banks don't pass on the full cut because their cost of funds depends largely on the interest they pay on the deposits — both short and long term ones — that they accept. Unless those deposit rates also change, banks' cost of funds will continue to stay high; this is why they are unable to pass on the benefit. An SBI analysis claims that if deposit rates were to come down by 100 bps, lending rates could fall by 40-50 bps.

That is why, even though all MPC members voted for a cut, some also cautioned about the limits to such cuts. "It should also be highlighted that there has been inadequate monetary transmission given the

quantum of past rate cuts... By a large cut (35 bps) I feel we will be burning through monetary policy space without much to show for it. While the real economy needs some support, we should wait for more transmission to happen," stated Ghate. Similarly, Patra stated: "Monetary policy has been proactive and front-loaded as the first line of defence. From here on, the space for monetary policy action has to be calibrated to the evolving situation, especially as the nature and depth of the slowdown is still unravelling and elbow room may be needed if it deepens."

Implication of linking lending and deposit rates to repo rate

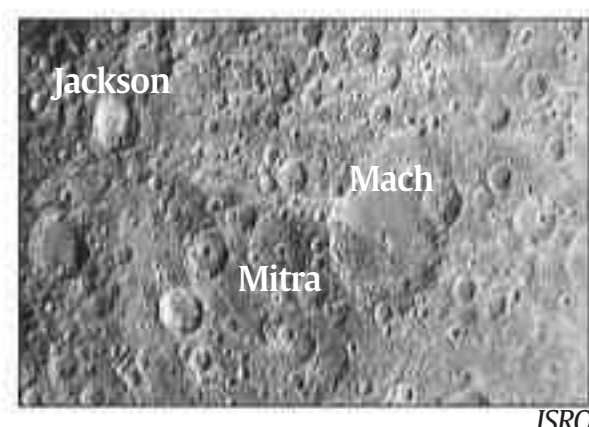
As mentioned earlier, banks can't be expected to "only" link their lending rates (the interest rate they ask from borrowers) to repo without linking their deposit rates (the interest rate they pay to depositors) to repo as well. If they were to link both lending and deposit rates to repo, as SBI has done to some extent since May 1, it can improve monetary transmission. But there is a flip side — if this is done industry-wide, borrowers will rejoice every time the repo falls (since their EMIs will fall); however, savers such as the elderly will be unhappy (since their money will earn lower returns).

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

IMAGES FROM CHANDRAYAAN-2: HOW DID CRATERS GET NAMES LIKE 'MITRA'?

ON MONDAY, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) released images of the lunar surface captured from the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft orbiting the Moon. Taken on August 23 by the Terrain Mapping Camera-2 of Chandrayaan-2 from an altitude of about 4,375 km, the images show impact craters named after various scientists — (Arnold) Sommerfeld (Germany), (Daniel) Kirkwood (US), (John) Jackson (Scotland), (Ernst) Mach (Austria), (Sergei) Korolev (former USSR), (Sisir) Mitra (India), (John) Plaskett (Canada), (Dmitry) Rozhdestvenskiy (former USSR) and (Charles) Hermite (France). Mitra (1890-1963), born in Bengal, was a physicist and Padma Bhushan winner.

The first attempts at naming lunar craters date back to the 17th century. K B Shingareva and G A Burba write in their book *The Lunar Nomenclature: The Reverse Side of the Moon, 1961-1973*. Some used the names of prominent personalities — scientists, philosophers and even members of royalty — while others named the



lunar features after comparable features on Earth.

The system of nomenclature evolved over the years and is now standardised. In a resolution by the International Astronomical Union in 1973, crater and crater-like formations are given the names of astronomers or eminent scientists, posthumously. Among other lunar features, mountains are given names corresponding to the geographical names of mountains of the Earth, while extensive dark surfaces are given names that correspond to the mental states of humans.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 26

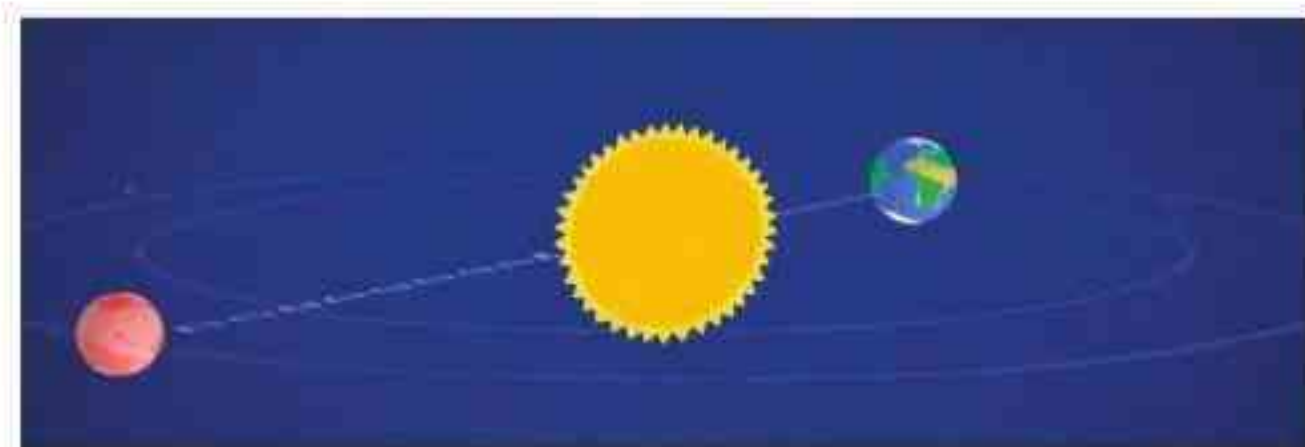
FOR MORE than a week, the daily chatter between Earth and Mars will go silent.

On the surface of Mars are NASA's Curiosity rover and InSight lander. Above Mars are several orbiters, including India's Mars Orbiter Spacecraft (Mangalyaan), which has completed its official mission life but remains in orbit. Antennas on Earth and those on active spacecraft on or around Mars regularly exchange data.

Now this will pause because of a phenomenon called Mars solar conjunction. For NASA's spacecraft, this will happen between August 28 and September 7.

The cause

During Mars solar conjunction, Mars and Earth will be on opposite sides of the Sun. The Sun expels hot, ionised gas from its corona, which extends far into space. During solar conjunction, this gas can interfere with



During Mars solar conjunction (August 28-September 7), Mars will be on the opposite side of the Sun from Earth. Radio transmissions can be interrupted. NASA

radio signals when engineers try to communicate with spacecraft at Mars, corrupting commands and resulting in unexpected behaviour from those space explorers, NASA said in a statement. When Mars disappears far enough behind the Sun's corona that there is increased risk of radio interference, engineers hold off on sending commands. Solar conjunction occurs every two years.

This time, the hold on issuing commands — called a "command moratorium" — will run from August 28 to September 7, NASA said. In 2015, the conjunction period for Mangalyaan had lasted for more than a month — from May 27 to July 1.

The pause

Besides Curiosity and Insight on the Mars

surface, NASA has the Odyssey orbiter, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the MAVEN orbiter. Some instruments aboard spacecraft will be inactive, especially cameras that generate large amounts of data. However, NASA said, all of its Mars spacecraft "will continue their science; they'll just have much simpler 'to-do' lists than they normally would carry out".

On the surface, Curiosity will stop driving and InSight will not move its robotic arm. Above, Odyssey and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter will continue collecting data from Curiosity and InSight, but only Odyssey will attempt to relay that data to Earth before conjunction ends. MAVEN will continue to collect its own science data but won't support any relay operations during this time.

All of this means that there will be a temporary pause in the stream of raw images available. Once conjunction is over, the spacecraft will beam the data they have collected. If any of the collected science data are corrupted, they can usually have that data retransmitted, NASA said.

International protection for 'cute' otters: what is CITES, what does it do?

SANJANA BHALERAO
MUMBAI, AUGUST 26

OVER A hundred nations, acting within the framework of an inter-governmental agreement, approved a proposal by India, Nepal, and Bangladesh Sunday to prohibit commercial international trade in a species of otter native to the subcontinent and some other parts of Asia.

One hundred and two votes were cast in favour and 15 against, with 11 abstentions, at the ongoing Eighteenth Conference of the Parties (CoP18) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Geneva. The vote must be confirmed at the Plenary of the meeting, which concludes Wednesday.

The Conference also accepted a separate proposal by India, moved together with the EU, the US and the Philippines, for inclusion of a species of gecko lizard found widely in South and Southeast Asia, the US, and Madagascar for protection as a "species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival".

Animals and appendices

Members at the Conference have voted to move the smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) from CITES Appendix II to CITES Appendix I "because it is considered to be facing a high risk of extinction and is detrimentally affected by international trade, as well as habitat loss and degradation and persecution associated with con-

flict with people (and fisheries)".

The other proposal that was passed was to include the Tokay gecko (*Gekko gekko*) in CITES Appendix II.

Appendix I includes species "threatened with extinction"; according to the CITES website, "trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances". Appendix II provides a lower level of protection. There is also an Appendix III, which "contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade".

An AFP report said smooth-coated otter numbers in the wild had fallen by at least 30% over the past 30 years, and in Japan, where keeping otters as "cute" pets is a fad, otter cafes offer baby otters for up to



Smooth-coated otter in Kabini river; Tokay gecko. Wikipedia

\$10,000 (almost Rs 7.2 lakh) each.

The proposal moved at CITES CoP18 flagged threats to all subspecies of otters from "man-made changes to aquatic habitats", poaching, illegal trade for use as pets, and for the animals' fur and for use in traditional medicine. Between 1980 and 2017, 5,881 otter pelts were seized across 15 coun-

tries in Asia, with about half of the seizures being made in India, the proposal said.

The proposal on protecting the Tokay gecko mentioned threats from hunting and collection for use in traditional medicine.

Apart from the smooth-coated otter, India had proposed Appendix I status for the small-clawed otter, mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), the Indian star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) and the Tokay gecko.

The International Convention

The CITES website describes it as an international agreement aimed at ensuring "that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival".

CITES was drafted after a resolution was adopted at a meeting of the members of the

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1963. The text of the Convention was agreed at a meeting of the representatives of 80 countries in Washington, DC, on March 3, 1973; the Convention is, therefore, sometimes referred to as the Washington Convention.

CITES entered into force on July 1, 1975, and now has 183 parties. States and regional economic integration organisations adhere voluntarily to CITES. The Convention is legally binding on the Parties in the sense that they are committed to implementing it; however, it does not take the place of national laws.

In effect, CITES provides a framework for Parties to make domestic legislation to ensure that the Convention is implemented effectively in their national jurisdictions.