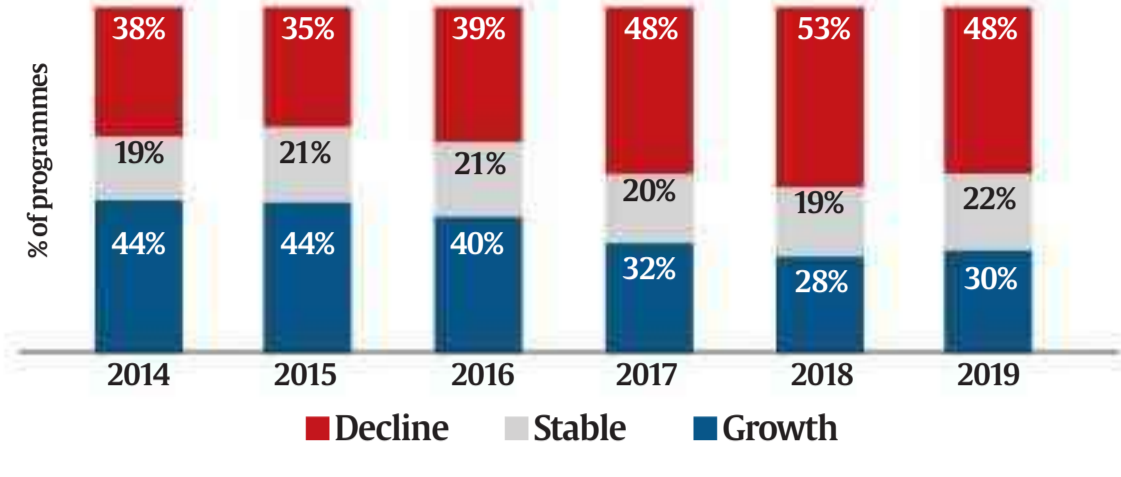


TELLING NUMBERS

In US B-schools, dip in interest from global students: report

YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGES IN GLOBAL APPLICANTS, US

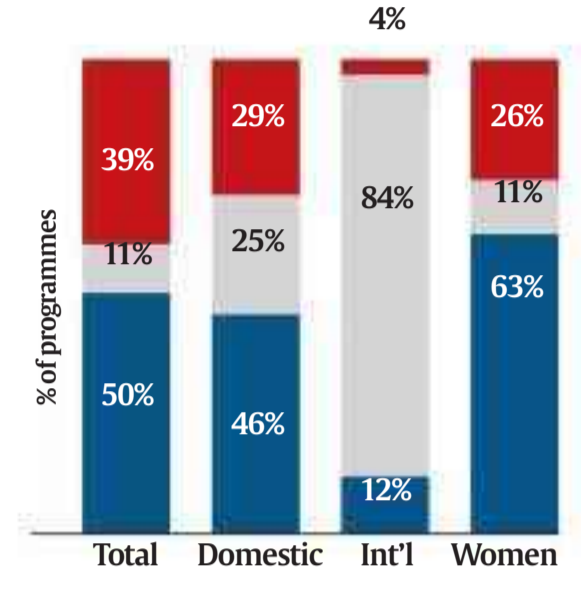


THIS WEEK, 50 deans and 13 CEOs of business schools at major US universities wrote an open letter to President Donald Trump, seeking re-examination of the country's visa policy and reform of the H-1B visa programme. They flagged an international non-profit organisation's findings that the number of foreign students studying at US business schools has fallen.

The non-profit body, Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), has put up the data on its website. The data show that during the three years from 2016 to 2018, the volume of foreign applicants in US business schools witnessed growth in fewer and fewer programmes, and declined in more and more programmes.

The GMAC study shows the percentage of programmes in various countries reporting year-on-year changes in application volumes. In US business schools, there has been a steady reduction in the percentage of programmes that have registered growth in applications from international students. In half the programmes (48% in 2019), such applications have seen a decline. The GMAC

INDIAN B-SCHOOLS, 2019



attributed this trend to the "harsh rhetoric in the US on visa policies and immigration (that) is driving international students elsewhere."

About 28 Indian business schools, it said: "Consistent with past years, the vast majority of applications to Indian programs were domestic this year (95%). Forty-six percent of programs grew their domestic application volume and 25 percent report that it stayed the same. Less than 1 in 3 report domestic application declines (29%)."

Source: GMAC

THIS WORD MEANS

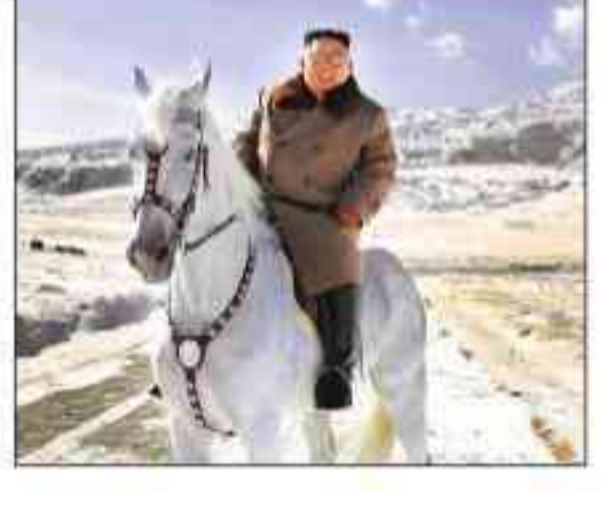
MOUNT PAKTU

Where Kim Jong-Un rode horseback. Why is it symbolically significant for Koreans?

ON WEDNESDAY, North Korea's state news agency KCNA released a series of photographs showing the country's leader Kim Jong-Un riding a white horse to a sacred mountain. The mountain, Mount Paektu, is also known as Baekdusan (translated: white-head mountain) and Changbaishan in Chinese.

Mount Paektu is on the border of North Korea and China and rises to about 9,000 feet. It is the highest peak in the Korean peninsula and for centuries has been considered sacred by Koreans. They believe that it is the spiritual birthplace of the Korean kingdom. The peak has also played a significant role in the Kim dynasty's claim that Kim Jong-Un's father Kim Jong-Il was born on its slope. The peak features in the state emblem of North Korea.

Kim has often ridden to the mountain before key decisions. Most recently, he climbed the mountain in 2018 with South



Kim Jong Un on Mount Paektu. KCNA via Reuters

Korean President Moon Jae-in, and in 2017 after he announced the launch of North Korea's largest intercontinental ballistic missile. His latest climb has given rise to speculation about another announcement.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Reading the livestock census

Indigenous cattle population is further down while crossbred numbers have gone up. Latest census also shows an eastward shift as West Bengal overtakes UP with highest cattle count. A look at these trends

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 17

ON WEDNESDAY, the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying released the results of the latest livestock census, which provides headcount data of domesticated animals in the country. The census shows a further decline in the indigenous cattle population. It also shows that the cow belt of the country has shifted eastwards with West Bengal emerging as a state with the largest cattle population, leaving behind Uttar Pradesh.

What is the livestock census?
Under the livestock census, various species of animals possessed by households, household enterprises or non-household enterprises and institutions are counted at site — both in rural and urban areas. In other words, it covers all domesticated animals in a given period of time. India has been conducting livestock censuses periodically since 1919-20. This is the 20th one, started in October 2018. The last livestock census was conducted in 2012.

Which animals and birds are counted in this census?
The census tracks the population of various species of domesticated animals such as cattle, buffalo, mithun, yak, sheep, goat, pig, horse, pony, mule, donkey camel, dog, rabbit and elephant and poultry birds (fowl, duck, emu, turkeys, quail and other poultry birds). The breed-wise headcount of animals and poultry birds has been carried out in about 6.6 lakh villages and 89,000 urban wards across the country covering more than 27 crore households and non-households. However, the key results released on Wednesday do not include the latest animal count for Delhi as the census operations in have not been completed as yet in the national capital. So the Delhi-specific figures are from the previous census.

For the first time, livestock data has been collected online through tablet computers.

What are the key results, and changes since the last census?

In 2019, the total livestock population is 535.78 million; cattle (192.90 million) is the largest animal group in the country followed by goats (148.88 million), buffaloes (109.85 million), sheep (74.26 million) and pigs (9.06 million). All other animals taken together contribute just 0.23 per cent of the total livestock population in the country.

CATTLE marginally UP, GOATS AND SHEEP RISE SHARPLY

CHART 1: LIVESTOCK POPULATION (MAJOR SPECIES)			CHART 2: CATTLE POPULATION (MAJOR STATES)		
Category	2019 Population (in million)	% Growth	Category	2019 Population (in million)	% Growth
Cattle	192.49	0.83	West Bengal	19.0	15.18
Buffalo	109.85	1.06	Uttar Pradesh	18.8	-3.93
Sheep	74.26	14.13	Madhya Pradesh	18.7	-4.42
Goat	148.88	10.14	Bihar	15.3	25.18
Pig	9.06	-12.03	Maharashtra	13.9	-10.07
Mithun	0.38	26.66	Rajasthan	13.9	4.41
Yak	0.06	-25	Jharkhand	11.2	28.16
Horses & Ponies	0.34	-45.58	Assam	10.9	5.29
Mule	0.08	-57.09	Chhattisgarh	10.0	1.63
Donkey	0.12	-61.23	Odisha	9.9	-15.01
Camel	0.25	-37.05			
Total Livestock	535.78	4.63			

CHART 3: CROSSBRED POPULATION GROWING FAST; INDIGENOUS DECLINING		
Category	2019 Population (in million)	% Growth
Total Exotic/Crossbred	50.42	26.9
Total Indigenous/Non-Descript	142.11	-6



As Chart 1 shows, in 2019, the total livestock population has registered a growth of 4.6 per cent over the last census in 2012 (512.06 million). The total population was 529.70 million at the time of 18th census in 2007.

However, the numbers of some animals such as pig, yak, horses and ponies, mule, donkey and camel have come down drastically.

The cattle population has grown marginally by 0.83 per cent, and the buffalo population by 1.06 per cent. The populations of sheep (14.13%), goat (10.14%) and mithun (26.66%) have risen significantly, underlining the preference of farmers for keeping milch animals.

What are the population trends for different kinds of cattle?

As Chart 2 shows, while the overall cattle population has increased by 0.8 per cent between 2012-19, the population of indigenous cattle has come down by 6 per cent — from 151 million to 142.11 million. However, this pace of decline is much slower than the 9 per cent decline between 2007 and 2012.

In contrast, the population of the total exotic/crossbred cattle has increased by almost 27 per cent to 50.42 million in 2019.

How do the data show an eastward shift

where a business has a sustained and significant involvement in the economy of a market jurisdiction, such as through consumer interaction and engagement, irrespective of its level of physical presence in that jurisdiction," said the OECD report.

The proposal suggests designing the new rule and determining significant involvement in the jurisdiction by assigning a revenue threshold in the market. It considers a 750-million-Euro revenue threshold. This would allow the rule to encompass those who enter the market through a distributor. It also means the rules would apply not just to large tech multinationals, but any firms with a presence online, such as automakers.

The proposal focuses on "large consumer-facing businesses, broadly defined, e.g. businesses that generate revenue from supplying consumer products or providing digital services that have a consumer facing element". The report states that this definition will need further articulation, but its recom-

mendation exempts resource extraction companies like oil companies.

What's next

The proposal leaves many questions unanswered — in particular, how much profit should be reallocated to the country. "The choice of this amount will ultimately be the result of a political agreement that needs to be acceptable to all members of the Inclusive Framework, small and large, developed and developing," the report states.

Stakeholders can submit their responses by November 12.

Officials hope a new tax framework could be agreed upon by early 2020. G20 finance ministers are expected to discuss the proposal this week, and countries in favour of new laws could begin negotiations thereafter.

Among Internet giants, Amazon has welcomed the proposal, according to a report in *The New York Times* quoting a company spokesperson.

How to tax tech giants profiting from 'away'

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 17

THE ORGANISATION of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the global grouping of 36 mostly high-income, free-market economies, has released a consultation paper proposing changes in the rules for taxing Internet giants such as Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon, and Netflix.

In essence, the proposal, called "Unified Approach", is to shift the standard of taxation from physical presence to sales in a particular market. That is, the companies will have to pay more taxes in the markets in which they sell more.

"Countries like India understand that we can't go ahead without seriously improving tax certainty," Pascal Saint-Amans, head of tax at the OECD's Centre for Tax Policy and Administration, said in the *International Tax Review*.

Why new taxation laws

The ongoing global battle over how to tax the digital economy is yet to reach resolution. As of now, "highly digitalised businesses" can operate remotely and have high profits. Many companies have moved their source of profits to countries with low tax rates, such as Ireland.

The proposal would give new taxing rights to countries with many users of such business models. India is among countries that rely on a "significant economic presence model". In April, the Income-Tax Department proposed new taxing norms for MNCs, with a different weightage for digital companies, incorporating the number of users in India.

Designing a new rule

The key to the proposal is that the "new nexus" would be based on sales. A "nexus" in international tax refers to the operating presence in a country that makes a company taxable. "The new nexus rule would address this issue by being applicable in all cases

RSS and Sikhs: defining a religion, and how their relationship has evolved

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, OCTOBER 17

FOLLOWING RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's speech on Dussehra, during which he said India is a Hindu nation, Sikh community leaders such as Akal Takht jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh and SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) president Gobind Singh Longowal have reacted sharply. A look at the RSS view of Sikhism, and its relationship with the community over the years:

Arya Samaj, Sikhs and RSS

"The Hindu-Sikh tension... was a thing unknown during the Sikh rule up to middle of the last [19th] century," historian Dr Ganda Singh wrote in his paper 'The origin of the Hindu-Sikh Tension in the Punjab'.

In 1875, the Arya Samaj published the book *Satyarth Prakash* which, Sikhs held, made defamatory references to Sikh gurus. It was followed by the Singh Sabha movement which, while countering these references, focused on a larger objective of as-

serting the Sikh identity as unique. The SGPC, formed in 1920, adopted the Sikh Rehat Maryada code of conduct, defined "who is a Sikh" and also underlined that Sikhism is an independent religion.

The RSS has had differences with the Arya Samaj, which shows in their relationship with Sikhs too. The RSS and late VD Savarkar have often praised the Sikh gurus; the RSS also celebrates their birth anniversaries.

How RSS defines Sikhism

In the RSS understanding, all religions originating in India are part of a Hindu Rashtra, an idea that the Akal Takht finds problematic.

G S Gill, president of RSS affiliate Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, said: "Mohan Bhagwat has said nothing new or objectionable. It is the basic concept of the RSS that India is a Hindu nation. But the RSS chief has explained what 'Hindu nation' means: it means all communities who have been participating in the development of the nation. Also Bhagwat has widened the vision of Hindu Rashtra by saying that all indigenous

religions are part of it"

Dr Sukhpreet Singh Udoke, a writer who has officially advised the Akal Takht on RSS issues in the past, explained the RSS view. "The RSS thinks that Sikhs fought Mughal invaders and saved the indigenous ideology," he said. "The RSS treats Sikhs as part of a Hindu nation like Jains and Buddhists, and unlike Christians and Muslims. Sikhs oppose this RSS idea about them; they believe their history is not about fighting Muslims... Sikhs also see themselves as an independent religion and with a unique identity. They fear the RSS wants them to assimilate into Hinduism."

"Unlike the Arya Samaj, the RSS has respect for Sikh gurus. But the problem is that most of the RSS and BJP leadership in Punjab came from Arya Samaj and Congress backgrounds. The local leadership didn't understand that the RSS approach to Sikh gurus is different from the Arya Samaj approach. So there is a problem within RSS about how they want to see Sikhs, which is complicating the relationship with the Akal Takht," said a professor of religion with

Guru Nanak Dev University.

Flashpoints

Beyond the RSS leadership, stands taken by the Jana Sangh and the BJP leadership on key issues have contributed to creating differences between the RSS and Sikhs.

In Jalandhar in 1960, then RSS chief Guru Golwalkar said Punjabi is the mother tongue of every Punjabi. RSS affiliate Jana Sangh, however, had joined the "Save Hindi agitation" launched by the Arya Paritidhi Sabha in 1956. Its participants sought to convince Punjabi Hindus to mention Hindi as their mother tongue in the 1961 Census.

In 1984, the BJP extended support to Operation Blue Star on the Golden Temple complex. In 2009, the party revised its stand and the late Arun Jaitley described the operation as a "historical blunder" of the Congress.

In 1999, then RSS chief KS Sudarshan visited the headquarters of the Damdami Taksal, which was once headed by the militant leader Jamail Singh Bhindranwale. The Akali Dal was already in alliance with the BJP then.

On July 13, 2004, the Akal Takht issued

a directive cautioning Sikhs about activities of the RSS and Rashtriya Sikh Sangat. Both organisations had taken up celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib, and published literature that the Akal Takht read as an RSS interpretation of Sikh beliefs.

Rulda Singh, former Rashtriya Sikh Sangat president who played a key role in organising Sudarshan's 1999 visit, was shot dead in 2009. In 2016, when RSS state vice president Brig Jagdish Gagneja was killed, police said Sikh militants were responsible. In 2017, when RSS leader Ravinder Gosain was murdered in Ludhiana, the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat said misconceptions among a section of Sikhs, allegedly created in the name of an Akal Takht decree, could be a reason behind the murder.

Rashtriya Sikh Sangat spokesperson Avtar Singh had said: "The RSS is always open to dialogue and discussing the misconceptions with Akal Takht."

Greater activism

The Rashtriya Sikh Sangat has of late been taking up issues on which the SGPC

used to be the sole voice earlier, such as Sikh prisoners, Sikhs on a government blacklist, or justice for the 1984 riots. The RSS has been staking claim to campaigns such as ending the blacklisting and celebrating Guru Nanak Dev's birth anniversary in Indian embassies. The Sikh Sangat has also been criticising the SGPC over a range of issues.

Meanwhile, the BJP government at the Centre has been negotiating with former Sikh militants. One of them, Jaswant Singh Thekedar, back in India after decades, has said on record: "It is not the Akali Dal that has ended the blacklisting; it is the Narendra Modi government..."

Giani Harpreet Singh, the Akal Takht jathedar who has objected to Bhagwat's remark, said: "When we oppose the RSS, then it is not opposition of Hindus; it should be clearly understood. The RSS can preach Hinduism; we have no problem with that. But they should stop defining Sikhism. Sikhs have many institutions to decide who they are. We don't want outsiders to tell us who we are... We are not part of the Hindu nation of the RSS."



WHEN I GIVE FOOD TO THE POOR, THEY CALL ME A SAINT. WHEN I ASK WHY THE POOR HAVE NO FOOD, THEY CALL ME A COMMUNIST. — HELDER CAMARA

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The BJP's double engine

In Maharashtra, the party works on constructing all-India politics while also appropriating the regional space



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

CHIPPING AWAY RTI

Downgrading information commissioners will further weaken the Act, reduce power of citizen vis-a-vis government

THE NEW RULES downgrading the office of the chief and other information commissioners at the Centre and in the states, flowing from the July 2019 amendments to the 2005 Right to Information Act, send out disturbing signals about the fate of one of the most progressive, democracy-enhancing pieces of legislation to be enacted in free India. If the amendments were the first step in hollowing out the Act, the rules, as reported in this newspaper, have added the finishing touches. So far the CIC received the same salary and perks as that of the Chief Election Commissioner or a judge of the Supreme Court. The new rules, framed by the Department of Personnel and Training - yet to be approved by the prime minister - make the CIC an equivalent of the cabinet secretary, and central information commissioners the same as secretary to the government in terms of salary. The tenure has been reduced from five years to three. In the states, the downgrading will be to the level of secretary to the government, and additional secretary respectively. To view these reductions simply as a matter of pay, and therefore not of consequence, would be to miss the point. The CICs and ICs at both the Centre and states have the power to review the functioning of government public information officials, and intervene on behalf of citizens seeking information about decisions of the government. The new rules effectively undermine their authority. These statutory officials have zero powers to enforce their orders, except the imposition of a fine for non-compliance. But over the years, if government departments coughed out information that was demanded of them under the provisions of the Act, it was because they were seen in the same league and of the same authority as the CEC and Supreme Court judges.

Even before this dramatic downgrade, governments at the Centre and states, from the time the legislation came into being, have pushed back against the promise of transparency in the RTI Act. Appointments to the posts have been used to grant sinecures to favoured retired bureaucrats, or dispense favours to camp-followers. There has been an enormous reluctance in many states to appoint the full strength of commissioners, leading to a large pendency. The CIC returns a large number of complaints and appeals on minor grounds. Even so, the RTI Act helped ordinary citizens feel empowered, and equipped with some means, even if not entirely imperfect, to take on corruption.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has reportedly remarked that the government wants to put out as much information in the public domain as possible in order to reduce the need for RTI applications. High-minded though this may be, what the government wants to put out is rarely matched with what citizens want to know about its decisions. But destroying the authority of the RTI will certainly ensure that the number of applications reduce on their own.

NUTRITION IS NO PUZZLE

Global Hunger Index figures are stark. They bring home urgency of long-term investments in nutrition, health, sanitation

LAST YEAR, THE Centre launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) to ensure a "malnutrition free India" by 2022. The Global Hunger Index (GHI), released on Tuesday, has sobering figures for this inter-ministerial mission. India is one of the 47 countries that have "serious levels of hunger", according to the study. Though the country's position has gone up a notch since last year, this is not an improvement since this year's GHI mapped two more countries. It is particularly worrying that India is among the worst-performing countries on the acute under-nutrition parameter. "India's wasting rate (indicative of acute under-nutrition) is extremely high at 20.8 per cent - the highest wasting rate of any country for which data or estimates were available," the report states.

Malnutrition is most often a product of several factors including poverty, inadequate availability of food, genetic predisposition, environmental factors and poor health and sanitation services. And, the oft-repeated complaint of policymakers that there is no real-time data that brings all these factors together to show the extent of India's malnutrition problem is valid to an extent. However, it is also clear that providing nutritious food to the country's children is more a matter of political will and effective policy implementation at the grass roots level than solving a difficult puzzle. For example, in May-June, the Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) outbreak in Bihar bared the failure of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in the state. Moreover, by its own admission, the state government did not have any special nutritional programme to combat a disease that has been a scourge for at least 10 years.

The ICDS has also been vexed by disagreements over the constituents of the mid-day meal programme. In the past four years, the Centre has increasingly laid emphasis on the use of "fortified varieties" of salt, wheat flour and edible oil. A section of policymakers have also advocated the use of Ready To Use Therapeutic Food (RTUF). The debate on the nutritional quality of "fortified food" is far from settled. But the emphasis on such food has led to the increasing centralisation of the mid-day meal scheme and moreover, has not addressed local food sensitivities and tastes. Also, as a study published, this week, in *PLoS Medicine* shows, long-term investments in health, sanitation and nutrition are far more effective in preventing deaths due to severe acute malnutrition than measures such as RTUF. The NNM would do well to keep such studies in mind. But most of all, it should be bear in mind that the GHI figures are too stark for any further prevarication.

BOURBON, SCOTCH & BEER

There is every chance that US whiskey and chicken will become cheaper. At last, trade for the everyman

ANY FORM OF revelry in north India requires two things - whiskey and chicken. Too often, these simple pleasures are swept aside in the broad sweep of diplomacy, and the technicality of negotiations on trade and tariffs make them all too distant from the concerns of the everyman. But thanks to the uncertainties wrought by Donald Trump's pledge to put "America First", and perhaps even due to the paeans of praise that the leaders of India and the US heaped on each other at "Howdy, Modi", the diplomatic corps is all set to ensure that bourbon and chicken imported from the US will become cheaper for Indians. An expectant nation holds its breath, and readies the ice cubes and mint chutney.

Slashing the import duties on whiskey, frozen chicken, walnuts, milk albumin and un-denatured ethanol are part of the basket of goods - food and beverages and ingredients for biofuels - will be discussed at a secretary-level inter-ministerial panel to be held on October 21. Reportedly, the government is considering the reduction of import tariffs on bourbon whiskey from 150 per cent to 30 per cent and on frozen chicken cuts from 100 per cent to 30 per cent. It will also consider a reduction of import duty on walnuts from 100 per cent to 10 per cent and on apples from 50 to 10 per cent will also be discussed.

The rise in import duties was in retaliation to a similar action by the US on Indian goods. And luckily, free trade itself can enable a less expensive way to celebrate it. Of course, given the size of the Indian market, and the appetites of so many of its people, other countries may cry foul. Perhaps the next step ought to be to make other fruits, dairy and their fermented products a little less expensive as well. Beyond whiskey and chicken, Indians may like a taste of some French wine, Swiss cheese, Spanish sausages and Belgian beer.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF Maharashtra brought about by the "double engine" of Narendra (Modi) and Devendra (Fadnavis) may be a matter of contention, but this engine is surely pumping in a lot of political energy into the BJP's electoral campaign in the state, which votes on October 21. Election outcomes tend to spring surprises, but it will be a real surprise if the Maharashtra assembly results are not what they are generally expected to be.

The campaign would be remembered as among the most most lacklustre ones in the state. The 2019 election to the Maharashtra assembly election has been marked by a lack of curiosity and the absence of an alternative to the BJP. This was not the case in 2014 when the party managed to form a government with the Shiv Sena's support. It is true that the past cannot be explained in terms of ifs and buts. Nevertheless, the Shiv Sena's capitulation in 2014, and consistently thereafter, has helped the BJP jockey itself into a position of advantage. The victory of Modi's BJP in the 2019 parliamentary elections not only enthused the party's state unit but also demoralised the Congress in Maharashtra completely.

This is not to take any credit away from the state BJP and the Fadnavis government. The strategies adopted by them are instructive not only to understand the BJP's possible victory in next week's election; they are also useful to comprehend the BJP's overall approach to competitive politics - and the dilemma of overcoming issues specific to a state.

To begin with, the entrapment of the Shiv Sena, and the Congress and NCP's demoralisation, are not merely the failures of these parties. The predicaments of these parties have been systematically orchestrated. Both in 2014 and now in 2019, the BJP has accommodated defectors. The entry of a variety of characters into the BJP may invite criticism, but it has ensured the weakening of the Opposition parties and created confusion among them. This open-door policy has been the hallmark of the BJP across states - Assam, Haryana, West Bengal and Maharashtra.

At the same time, various corruption-related enquiries have kept the Opposition under stress.

Such moves often cause analytical confusion as to how an ideological party like the BJP keeps amalgamating power-seekers from competing parties. But in reality, such moves only represent the party's willingness to employ political force and, at the same time,

shine a light on its long-term objective of building social acceptability. While the party is busy crafting hegemony in the societal realm, it is equally busy crushing competition, threatening its opponents and coercing non-BJP politicians into deploying their political energies in favour of the BJP. A ruthless fortress of dominance is under construction along with creating a suave and sophisticated image that befits a hegemonic power.

The Fadnavis government has also ensured that it does not slip below the minimum governance standards - it could be favourably compared with the Congress-NCP government of the past without necessarily faring very well on the criteria of welfare, programme delivery, law and order or development. The prime minister could extol the Fadnavis government's development record not necessarily because Maharashtra has seen any great development but because the state did not decline from where it stood in 2014. Moreover, the state's publicity machinery has been smart in presenting the government's achievements, real and imagined.

At the same time, the Fadnavis government has kept away from ideological controversies. This was possible due to a complex differentiation between the government and party. While BJP functionaries did not abjure ideological assaults, the government would claim that it was engaged in governance. The recent statement by the BJP's Mumbai chief is an instance of such duality - crassness among party workers but caution within the formal circles of power.

But the more important factor leading to the BJP's ascendance pertains to the party's handling of the dominant caste syndrome. For long, the BJP has adopted the strategy of mobilising the non-dominant - and mainly OBC - communities. This helped the party to evolve a social base and make it electorally competitive. Once that stage was reached, it took on the task of neutralising the politics of the dominant caste. The BJP has been flexible about absorbing political actors from the dominant community. This ensured the fragmentation of the Maratha political elite. At the same time, through the lure of reservations as well as through the deployment of grand narratives of Hindutva and masculine nationalism, the BJP left members of the dominant community scarcely any option other than extending support to the party.

Riding on its success in the Lok Sabha election, the BJP knows that its real strength is the construction of a new all-India politics.

The party has carefully woven the national element into the state assembly election. While talking of unprecedented development in the state under the Fadnavis government, the prime minister took a doob maro jibe at those who question the relevance of the Kashmir issue to Maharashtra's elections - he talked about the sacrifices of Maharashtra's sons fighting terrorism in Kashmir. The one thing the BJP is wary about - not just in Maharashtra, but in all state elections - is that state specificity can upset its electoral chances, especially if local issues and local factors rear their head. This explains its strategy of intermixing local/regional issues with national ones.

The elevation of V D Savarkar certainly suits the BJP's ideological position. But it is significant that the Bharat Ratna for Savarkar has entered the discourse around the time of the state assembly elections and found a mention in the party's manifesto. This is an instance of appropriating the regional space - neutralising state specificity - and also tactically pushing the Opposition to participate in debates that are bound to be counterproductive for them. The double engine analogy, thus, fits the BJP's approach to resolving the dilemma of balancing regional aspirations with the party's all-India perspective.

These strategic and tactical moves have created favourable prospects for the BJP in Maharashtra. The failures of the state government are obvious, both on rural and urban issues. But the ruling parties are banking on an edge in the war of perceptions. One, they are trying to create a perception that the state government has done well. Two, they are hoping to be assessed as better than their predecessors. And three, in the time of the politics of images, the BJP is relying on its all-India image and its all-India leadership - key handicaps of the Opposition.

This election has not been marked by any great voter excitement but an absence of explicit voter disaffection is all that the BJP needs for the moment. With the Opposition clueless and bankrupt, this factor alone could help the BJP - and its piggyback partner - wade through the electoral challenge. It is another matter that victories in the backdrop of voter disinterest do not represent a mandate. But when majorities are enough to form a government, who cares for mandates?

The writer taught political science at the Savitribai Phule Pune University and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics



YOGINDER K ALAGH

BAPU, YOUR WORK ISN'T OVER

You will have to tell us how to wipe the tears from every person's eye

ONE HUNDRED and fifty years of a major event calls for gala spectacle. In ancient Rome, such spectacles would take place at the Coliseum. We do that in two-minute bytes on TV channels. I was also asked to participate, but chose to stay away. I remembered the Urdu poet "Hum has deiyeh; hum chup rabe" (I laughed; I kept quiet). The only serious byte I got was that by the Gandhian, Sudarshan lyengar, angrily telling one anchor that we have done nothing on Gandhi's views on a terribly important issue, agriculture. Then there was an anguished piece by Tushar Gandhi.

In 1997, Bapu's memories were fading with the globalising reform regime. The Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti organised "Freedom 50 Lectures" in different parts of India. The director of the Samiti, N Radhakrishnan, was able to get some of these lectures published in a book, *Gandhi and the Changing Facets of India*. I am told it sold reasonably well - it had pieces by EMS Namboodripad, C Subrahmaniam, Ravindra Verma, Surendra Mohan and me, among others. I wrote on Gandhi and the Indian economy in the 21st century.

Let us critically examine the relevance of Gandhi's main economic ideas. The first is that wants should be limited. This is im-

portant in a poor economy. You have to provide for the future (high savings rate) and the poor. But the policy-makers were against "forced savings" and now consumption is the driving force of the economy. Khadi is passe, unless presented on the ramp. Such communication makes consumption both a product and an industry. If you say China has a savings rate of 40 per cent and ours has gone down from 32 per cent to 29 per cent, you are against reform.

The more serious question is that the world of finite resources in a fundamental sense can't afford such consumption. China and India are consumerist regimes but if their per capita consumption exceeds a quarter of the American levels, the world will explode or more correctly drown in climate change.

Bapu wanted self-reliant villages and relevant technologies. On the last bit we followed him and succeeded beyond dreams. That was Verghese Kurien. In fact, at a more basic level, computerisation, new communication and fibre optics did it. So dairy, agro-based development did the trick. Bapu's technologically savvy village became a reality. But not self-reliant. It provided for itself and trade.

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NDDB, Amul. They are now going global.

Now, this is where I differ with Gandhi and duck. He was against trade. This is important, when you are addressing the imperialist. But, after the imperialist went, Bapu, we must trade. In fact, being a Bania from Porbandar, you may well agree with me. Most Gandhians don't.

They are wrong and I am right. Fair trade helps both the seller and the buyer. Non-trading societies become authoritarian because wealth is dispensed by plutocrats. Yes, trade can degenerate into exploitation. But after independence, we can elect regimes which regulate fairly. If they don't, we must change them.

Bapu, you made us a mighty machine. A 100-crore people in a democratic phalanx. We are unbeatable if the goal is clear and we are organised for it. But, your work remains. Will we love the neighbour? Will we be your "vaishnav jana"? Will the tear be wiped from his eye? Come in our dreams Bapu and tell us how. Until then, you cannot just be the lord of the 150 years' celebration because you still have a lot of work to do.

The writer, a former Union minister, is an economist



OCTOBER 18, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

MOTHER TERESA'S NOBEL MOTHER TERESA, CALCUTTA'S "Saint of the Gutters," was awarded the 1979 Nobel peace prize for her work among the poor of India. The Yugoslavia-born Roman Catholic nun is the sixth woman to win the prize. The Norwegian Nobel committee said Mother Teresa was given the prize "in recognition of her work in bringing help to suffering humanity". In 1947, Mother Teresa moved into Calcutta's slums "to serve God among the poorest of the poor". The order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity, is best known for its "Home for the Destitute Dying" which opened in Calcutta in 1952. She is the first Indian citizen to win the peace prize since it

was instituted in 1901.

PAK HOUSE ARREST IN ISLAMABAD, AUTHORITIES placed several political leaders under house arrest early on Wednesday following President General Zia-ul-Haq's order banning political parties and putting off national elections indefinitely. Official sources said the heads of most of the parties and other leaders were ordered detained in their homes for three months. There was no official explanation for the action, but observers said its purpose was to stifle political activity. The offices of all the parties, including their branches in various cities, have been sealed by the government.

TN COP STRIKE

SERVICES OF THE Border Security Force (BSF) have been requisitioned by the Tamil Nadu government as the agitation by a section of Tamil Nadu policemen intensified. It is learnt that the BSF battalions are to move in tonight. The number of battalions sought had not been disclosed, but police sources said that the strength would be "adequate". The ultimatum issued by the Director-General of Police, E L Stracey, that the striking policemen should withdraw their stir and resume duty has had little effect. On the contrary, the agitation, which was limited to Madurai and Coimbatore districts initially, has since spread to five other nearby districts.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

A space for the future

The lines Supreme Court draws in the Ayodhya judgment will determine whether it responds to the mood of the moment or leaves room for the next generation



SEEMA CHISHTI

SOPHIE HOWE IS a Future Generations Commissioner in Wales. Her job, as defined by a law that was enacted in Wales in the UK in 2017, is to make sure that public bodies are accountable to the future. As she said in a recent podcast: "My job description, as set out in law, is to act as the guardian of the interests of future generations." Her duty is to make sure that decisions, which the next generation could have to pay for in 30 years, are not made.

The spirit behind this Welsh law is: Rushed judgments and decisions that appear like they would "settle" disputes, often do the opposite. They draw lines in ways that make it very difficult for future inhabitants of the planet to escape them. The latter can only shuffle and adjust to decisions made without any imagination of, or concern about, the troubled future — these are often built into actions aimed at present-day concerns.

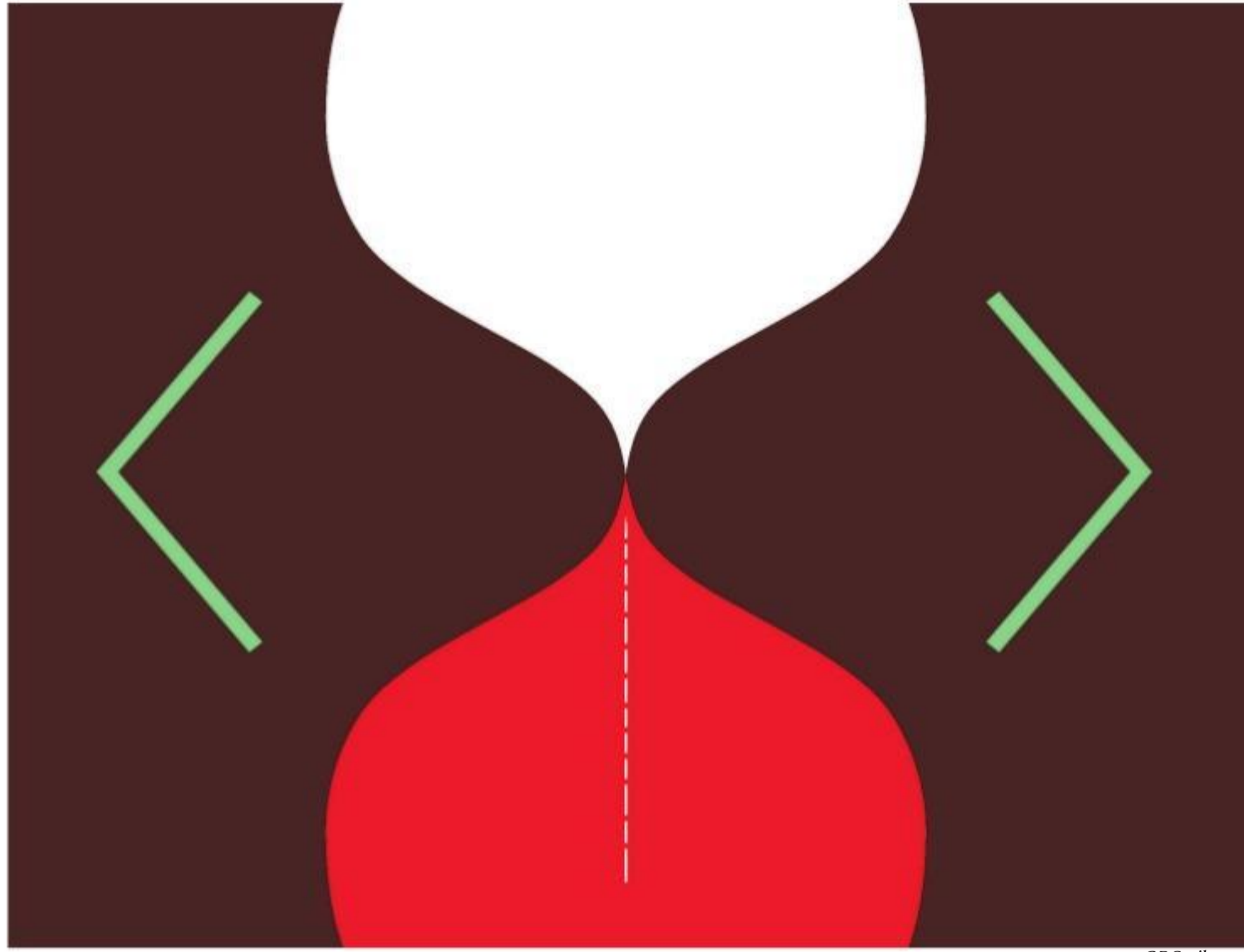
As the 40 days of hearings are over, and just before the Lordships are set to rule on the matter, it is good to recall that it will be 27 years since the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya this December. And longer than that since judicial activity over the title suit of the land with competing claims began. It reached the Supreme Court after appeals were made to the Allahabad High Court order, nine years ago.

The matter coming to the Supreme Court carries an expectation from all sides. It is hoped that the answers it finds would be judicious, fair and draw a line on this matter. A matter which has exhausted much national energy ever since a series of events made Ayodhya a topic of discussion that went beyond the poetry the city once inspired — its legendary evenings by the spires alongside the Sarayu, of Tulsidas and Amir Khusrau.

The Supreme Court has done this "drawing the line" with some aplomb in the past. Its judgments and judges are remembered for the ways in which they have enabled the deepening of democracy. Reading down Section 377 liberated a sexual minority which seldom drew empathy. On the Right to Privacy, the Court read "life" as expansively as possible and gave each citizen a feeling of being important enough to be protected from the peering eyes of the state. Despite stumbling, as it did in cases controversially calling for assuaging the "collective conscience" of a nation, there are innumerable times when the Court has been able to push aside the hectoring of "public opinion" and set the tone for a just and robust beginning, enabling a reset in the public discourse.

There are many judgments known more for the dissent than the majority view. And there are times when this pillar of Indian democracy is asked to provide some sort of closure to big debates that are social, not just political, and have repercussions on the lived reality of millions.

Top courts in other societies and democracies like Germany, the UK and the US also sometimes find themselves in situations where lines must be drawn — and sometimes erased — in order to let citizens achieve higher aims. In countries with a younger demography and more plural populations, like South Africa or India, the task is harder, but by definition, more important. No wonder then,



C R Sasikumar

as Granville Austin has pointed out, of all things, the Constituent Assembly debates spent the maximum amount of time on securing an independent judiciary — the salaries of its judges coming from the Consolidated Fund of India and it being vested with the power of contempt. The framers of the Constitution figured that a judiciary which could truly rise above any pressures from the other pillars of democracy would decide how free India would eventually be, even of its own limitations.

South Africa had its transformational moment when the apartheid regime was forced to shut shop. Nelson Mandela, with the massive credibility he enjoyed, could have steered the ship any which way but he chose to take it to a safe harbour when he proposed "Truth and Reconciliation". The simple formulation hid the large and elegant message that a revolutionary chose to give as he went about setting the terms of a new South Africa. In the words of Dullah Omar, former minister of justice in South Africa, the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation was "a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation".

The matter at hand has seen all kinds of archaeology at work. There is the Archaeological Survey of India, which conjectures about what is true, authentic or "indigenous". But excavating definitive truth from all the layers is hardly a straightforward task. Is it Ayodhya or Saketa? Is the matter just about a title suit? Is it about belief, and if yes, then the beliefs of how many? It is a case that traverses so much of India's past and its journeys. The mounds being dug at Muziris or at Keeladi currently could gently point to the palimpsest that India is and the importance of recognising how perilous it is to label any one layer as being the seminal one.

The judiciary has often been the one arm of Indian democracy that has had to insulate itself from the "mood of the moment", and

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deliver more than just the law of the land. There is a long and fractious debate on how "transformatively" the courts must intervene in support of what "many" think must be done. And, how much they need to weigh in on behalf of those who stand for "progress", often antithetical to the "mood".

Sometimes, legislatures have attempted to draw a line. The Places of Worship (Special Provisions Act), 1991 intends to do this: "An Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

There was a time when diversity, the salad bowl/melting pot/khichdi was celebrated and Ganga-Jamuni was not something seen as an "insult" by the late arrivals to the self-proclaimed "originals". Things appear to have changed with the powerful not-so-hesitant to exert power in their quest to re-examine the Indianness of the millions here for generations.

As an aside, among the most striking things about Jerusalem is the cheek-by-jowl-ness of the Wall — where Jews worship — the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Dome of the Rock in Al Aqsa. This is not to airbrush the politics and separation that plays out there.

Whatever may be the verdict of this five-judge bench, after all the effort that has gone into it and the long hearings, it may prove to be foundational and responsible for providing closure and calm for India. If we would rather laugh at the idea of Future Commissioners, we could open the doors for more chaos and leave no scope for the future. It is a choice that will have serious implications for India.

We will know on judgment day, about where the line is finally drawn.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The prime minister ran out of time playing political games (with Brexit), and he wants British workers to pay the price for his bungling." — THE GUARDIAN

Reform, not compliance

A law alone will not serve as a panacea against torture by police in India. What is needed is 'ease of policing', better training and infrastructure



YASHOVARDHAN AZAD

COMMON CAUSE'S recent survey on the Status of Policing in India is said to have affirmed that the black sheep in the police force find nothing wrong with beating up criminals to extract a confession. It is still, however, too judgemental to suggest that torture is endemic to Indian policing, as Maja Daruwala does ('Exorcising third-degree', IE, September 27). There is still an overwhelming majority of IPS and other police officers in the country who abhor torture and have faith in human dignity. Torture is not justified under any circumstance. It is a wound in the soul that demeans the society.

India signed the UN Convention Against Torture on October 14, 1997, but is yet to ratify it by enacting the law on torture. It does, though, have instruments in place to take immediate action in torture cases. Any custodial or other case of death in police custody is enquired into by a magistrate and in some cases, a judicial enquiry can also be ordered. Criminal cases under substantive sections can also be instituted against the accused policemen. Complaints against policemen have been filed in courts, which have taken severe action in such cases. Installation of CCTV cameras covering hawal rooms in police stations has been made mandatory. In addition, the National Human Rights Commission acts as the watchdog of human rights. Why then are such cases still coming to light? The state must take the responsibility of fixing these instruments to ensure that they deliver justice to the victims of human rights abuse. And it must implement the Supreme Court's directive on setting up a Police Complaints Authority in every state of India.

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 10, 1984, and came into force on June 26, 1987. In November 2017, the Law Commission of India in its 273rd report recommended that the government ratify the convention. The Commission also presented a draft of a new Prevention of Torture Bill to the government, which has not yet been adopted.

But ratification of the global human rights treaty alone is not a panacea for the ills of torture. Cases of police torture still surface in all the 160 nations that have enacted laws on torture to ratify the treaty. In South Asia, detainee torture and custodial deaths remain at a disturbingly high level — in Pakistan (which signed the convention on April 17, 2008, and ratified on June 3, 2010) as well as in Afghanistan (signed the convention on February 4, 1985, and ratified on April 1, 1987). China, for instance, signed the Convention on December 12, 1986, and hurriedly ratified the treaty on October 4, 1988. Yet, the country is con-

demned for horrific state repression while interrogating detainees and suppressing political dissent. It will be unfair to infer that we are amongst the worst in this respect because India has not yet adopted the Prevention of Torture Bill.

On the other hand, it is about time we took a closer look at the reality of policing in India. Police stations in outlying rural areas lack even the basic technology, forensic aid and materials for crime detection. Many of them are located in signal gap zones, where mobile phones barely work and internet connectivity is weak or non-existent. The roads are unmotorable. A single big police station looks after 70 to 80 villages in large states. Crime is rampant. The building infrastructure in many cases is still poor and unliveable — forget about interrogation or detention cells. Life there is torture anyway, even when one is held in custody for 24 hours.

With a severe manpower deficit, India's police force is grossly overworked. The heavy pendency of work is coupled with brazen political interference. Work stress is inordinately high and the quality of life poor and demotivating. The urgency to improve the crime detection rate is a matter of constant worry. All this, regrettably, does make the police lose patience in trying to bring cases to a quick culmination.

These are not "pocketful of ready excuses" as Daruwala suggests but debilitating conditions. Ricketty infrastructure with rudimentary facilities cannot inspire high grade, enlightened policing. All police stations need to be provided with modern-day amenities and connectivity. A dire need is the state-of-the-art technology and equipment to promote hassle-free interrogation and crime detection. The police force needs to be trained at regular intervals and special training should be imparted to the state police personnel by the CBI on questioning suspects. But more often than not, they cannot be spared for refresher courses.

Working on the identified but long pending gaps in criminal justice system that may disincentivise torture — like separation of the law and order and investigation wings at police stations, strengthening the prosecution apparatus and provision of legal advisors in the district police set up — will enable the police supervisory structures to reduce torture to a great extent. It may sound ironical but a sustained focus on Ease of Doing Policing and measures for empowering the police within a well-established accountability framework could prove to be the biggest step towards reducing this practice. Finally, the recruitment process for the police has to be equipped with modern psychoanalytical tools to shun the entry of those with a grain of brutality. This will help weed out the instinct to torture from the core of the system.

Ratification of the UN convention against torture needs to be done in letter and spirit. Unless we upgrade our infrastructure, ramp up our capacities, strengthen our police force, enacting the Prevention of Torture Bill will be just another exercise of official compliance to free our conscience.

The writer is a former IPS officer and Central Information Commissioner



THANGKHANLAL NGAIHTE

The path to peace

Centre should not insist on the three-month deadline for Naga peace talks

THE NAGA peace talks are back in the headlines. The scramble started on August 17 when the interlocutor for the talks, and now governor of Nagaland, RN Ravi disclosed that the prime minister has asked him to conclude the talks in three months. "In the last five years, we have resolved all the substantive issues," he said.

This has been the government's position for some time. Last year, Ravi told a parliamentary committee that the framework agreement of 2015 was signed after the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak Muivah), or NSCN-IM, gave up the idea of Naga sovereignty and "agreed for a settlement within the Indian federation". Subsequently, the NSCN-IM also came to accept that the "boundaries of any state will neither be changed nor altered". The NSCN-IM is the body representing the Nagas in the talks. On its part, the Indian government reaffirmed its recognition of the uniqueness of Naga history. A special status on the lines of Article 371-A will be explored for Naga areas outside Nagaland.

Given this, there is nothing surprising about the prime minister getting impatient with the talks. But then, other things happened. On August 5, the Narendra Modi government abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the

Constitution. This provoked anxiety in Nagaland and other northeastern states, most of which are endowed with different levels of special status under different sections of Article 371. It also emerged that the demands for a separate Naga flag and constitution — the very same things that were taken from Jammu and Kashmir — were what had stalled the talks.

The response from the NSCN-IM came through a series of aggressive statements. On September 11, the group stated that "the Nagas will not merge with the Union of India"; that they "do not accept Indian Constitution, but Nagas and Indians will share sovereign powers based on competencies". This follows the group's statement on August 24 that an "honourable" accord demands acceptance of the Naga national flag and constitution and that "talks sans integration of all the contiguous Naga areas will be a futile exercise". Thousands of Nagas had sacrificed their lives for these causes and we cannot dishonour their sacrifices, Muivah said. The three-month deadline was denounced as a unilateral ultimatum.

With this, the unlikely honeymoon between the overtly Christian NSCN-IM and the Hindu BJP regime comes to an end. Should we be surprised?

It is important to remember that the two foundational, and explicit aims of the Naga movement — from Phizo to Muivah — were sovereign statehood and territorial integration. Sovereignty was claimed on the basis of prior sovereign existence and difference, which is today expressed in terms of "uniqueness". Second, the "artificial boundaries" separating the Nagas will be dismantled and be placed under one administration.

On sovereignty, the NSCN-IM's manifesto was categorical: "We stand for the unquestionable sovereign right of the Naga people over every inch of Nagaland whatever it may be and admit of no other existence whatever." Yet, the goal of sovereignty was effectively given up long ago. And territorial integration also turned out to be not possible. According to Ravi, the NSCN-IM had already accepted that.

So, the NSCN-IM was left with little of substance to begin with. No amount of grand spectacle can hide this cold reality. And when the symbolic yet significant demands for a flag and constitution are not acceded to, what are they left with? The Naga side cannot simply walk away now when everyone is expecting a final solution. They had oversold their prospects and over-interpreted the government's recognition of Naga uniqueness.

The taste of relative peace since 1997 emboldened the people and they are unlikely

to be happy with renewed violence. Against the NSCN-IM's objections, other Naga groups are asserting themselves and the government is happy to indulge them. The NSCN-IM manifesto warned that negotiations, if indispensable, should be done only from a position of strength. Today, they seem to be grasping at straws.

Muivah faces an inevitable dilemma. The uncompromising, hardline position that gave them legitimacy during the struggle returns to haunt them in the end when they realise that compromises are the only way to a solution. Ironically, it was Muivah's former comrade-turned-enemy S S Khaplang, who had predicted this. The book, *Rendezvous with Rebels*, recorded Khaplang's thoughts on the peace talks: It was a "huge mistake" that will preclude sovereignty and integration. And ultimately, "they will have to be satisfied with whatever scraps the government concedes".

The NSCN-IM is apparently weighing its dwindling options. Modi, who has invested so much, will be ill-advised to insist on his three-month deadline and end up with a non-final agreement. The next few weeks may tell us where the road will lead.

The writer teaches political science at Churachandpur College, Manipur

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POVERTY & HEALTH

THIS REFERS TO 'Easing poverty' (IE, October 18). The Nobel Prize to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Dufflo and Michael Kremer sends a message to those trying to reduce poverty. They should not treat the poor as mere subjects of welfare. Even though the global economy has grown faster than ever, millions have failed to reap its benefits. It might not be enough to announce free vaccination programme to reduce child mortality, giving some incentive like milk, might make mothers walk an extra mile to bring their children to the vaccination centre. Banerjee and Dufflo have set up what they call a poverty action lab at MIT to develop such insights. Some one has rightly said that the "the biggest enemy of health in the developing countries is poverty".

Lal Singh, East Mohan Nagar

ALLY SPURNED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Pullback and chaos' (IE, October 17). The Kurds were an ally of the US against the ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The editorial talks about the rough treatment meted out to them. President Donald Trump's behaviour is not new. From North Korea to China to the Kurds, there has never been any consistency in Trump's policies. Indian diplomats and foreign policy makers must always keep Trump's unpredictability in mind. India cannot rely on the US administration's words for support when it comes to New

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.

Delhi's interests.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

COURT STEPS IN

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Place before us all your orders imposing curbs on J&K, SC tells Centre' (IE, October 11). Kashmir is open for tourists but the lock down is still not over. One may feel good that the state won't lose any tourism revenue but the condition of people remains the same. The government must address the issue. It is time that they start lifting the curbs and as per the Supreme Court's order, should they ever decide to impose new curbs, they must submit all the details on the same to the Supreme Court.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata