WORDLY WISE

CASTE IS ANOTHER NAME FOR CONTROL.

— B R Ambedkar

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

MAKING AMENDS

SC's recall of 2018 order on SC/ST Act reflects institutional learning, resilience. And affirms new Dalit assertion

HE SUPREME COURT has done well to recall its 2018 order that diluted provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The three-judge bench observed that the March 20, 2018 judgment was "against the spirit of the Constitution". A two-judge bench had, then, forbidden the arrest of public servants and private persons without prior permission in cases filed under the SC/ST Act and insisted on a preliminary inquiry before registering an FIR in such cases. The Court also found that the guidelines for the execution of the Act given in the 2018 order were beyond its remit and an encroachment on the legislature's domain. Indeed, the 2018 order had read the Act apparently without taking into consideration the social context and imperatives that led to its enactment in the first place.

The 2018 order triggered unrest among Dalits and gave fresh impetus to the mobilisations that had started in the wake of a series of high-profile crimes against the community. The political churn following the rise of the BJP in the 2014 general election unleashed a new social dynamic. Even as the BJP's top leadership began a high-visibility outreach to Dalits, the latter came under attack from communities whose political-ideological prejudices found validation from elements of the Hindutva agenda such as cow protection. The public flogging of five Dalits by cow vigilantes in Una, Gujarat, became a symbol of the new political hooliganism. In western UP, attempts were made to crush Dalit assertion. Earlier, the suicide of Rohith Vemula, a research scholar in Hyderabad Central University, had bought to the fore the issue of caste discrimination on campus. While these incidents fitted the pattern of the anti-Dalit violence Indian society has been experiencing for centuries, they also created a new narrative of Dalit resistance and agency that led to the emergence of a new generation of leaders such as Jignesh Mevani and political outfits including the Bhim Army. The 2018 order came in the backdrop of this political ferment and stoked unrest in large sections of the SC/ST communities. A Bharat bandh called by Dalit groups was met with violence and at least nine persons were killed in police firing.

It is creditable that the Supreme Court has revisited its order and recalled it. The apex court's willingness to course-correct in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution points to institutional resilience, especially at a time when questions are being asked on the independence of institutions when a domineering political executive is armed with a large mandate.

WRIT IN WATER

Late monsoon floods are a warning of changing contours of climate that town planners and civic authorities must heed

NDIA'S MONSOON SEASON officially ended on Monday. But a telling image of the vagaries of climate was captured by a photograph taken that day. The visual showed Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi and his family, bag and baggage, after they were rescued from their flooded home in Patna by disaster relief personnel. Bihar is amongst the worst hit by the late monsoon rains that have inundated several parts of the country. Nearly 30 people have lost their lives in the state. In neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, floods have claimed more than 100 people. The death toll in Maharashtra is more than 20. A common feature of the flood stories in all three states is that of civic authorities caught unawares.

Normally, the monsoon begins to retreat in the first week of September. But this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) reckons that the monsoons will not withdraw from the northwest of the country before October 7. As a result, the rainy season is likely to linger till October 15. This, according to the IMD, is the most extended monsoon season in more than 50 years — in 1961, the monsoons withdrew on October 1. The recent floods are not the only ones to have hit the country in the current monsoon season. In fact, the season began with Bihar being deluged by a flash flood. Maharashtra, too, had an earlier spell of floods this year. Karnataka, Gujarat, Assam and Kerala have also suffered the ravages of incessant rainfall. Such extreme precipitation events interspersed by dry spells, several studies reckon, could become the new normal for the country.

Dealing with the changing contours of the monsoons would, however, require coordination between weather authorities and state governments. For instance, authorities in Bihar were not prepared in spite of the red alert issued by the met department. Moreover, the drainage systems of most Indian cities are ill-equipped to withstand this change in precipitation patterns. Patna, for example, had more than 1,000 water bodies, which would absorb excess rainfall, 30 years ago. Their number has gone down to less than 500. Pune's canals and streams are similarly encroached upon. Disregard for hydrology has, in fact, been the Achilles heel of planning in most Indian cities. Reviving drainage systems might take time. But civic authorities could make a beginning by unclogging stormwater drains, which often become garbage dumps in several Indian cities. Urban planners should read the warning in the floods this year.

FLIX AND ORKA

The Star Wars universe has its first openly queer couple. It's about time

S WITH ALBUS Dumbledore and the Potterverse, many fans of *Star Wars* Resistance, an animated children's programme set "a long long time ago in a galaxy far far away", suspected that Orka and Flix were in a gay relationship. The creators of the show confirmed the rumours earlier this week, adding the pair to a small but much-publicised list of queer characters in mainstream entertainment for children and young adults.

The characters, and the acknowledgment of their sexuality, are welcome and long overdue. After all, the Star Wars saga has contained from its very inception in the 1970s, talking bear-like creatures, lascivious blob-villains, creatures of every size and shape really. Yet, like so many other fantasy series, its depictions and appeal managed to be restrictive — its protagonists were straight men, on the standard "hero's journey", finding themselves and, in the process, defeating evil. Princess Leia was strong, but also a motivation for Luke Skywalker and Han Solo. A change in that heterosexual male-centric outlook began with the series reboot in 2015, with the lead character now a woman. With Flix and Orka, the ambit of diversity in the vastly popular franchise has expanded, and that can only

help normalise something which should never have been not-normal to begin with. In fact, it is perhaps time to reveal more about the private lives of the Jedi, their friends and enemies. In the celibate order of warrior monks, the main conflict in the original Star Wars trilogy appeared from Anakin Skywalker having to repress his sexuality and hide his love. Such was the damage of being made to feel abnormal for his desire that he turned into one of the most dreaded villains of all time — Darth Vader. There is a lesson there for the writers of sci-fi as well as society at large. In the long run, it's always better to be open and accepting.

The rising storm

Citizenship Amendment Bill, a nation-wide NRC, will result in untold fear and dislocation of Muslim citizens



HARSH MANDER

THERE WAS, FOR a while now, the ominous rumbling of distant thunder. Today, this is fast gathering into a menacing storm, one which can ultimately destroy India as we know it. Many had hoped that the idea of amending citizenship laws in ways which exclude from citizenship people of just one religious identity would be abandoned in the face of vehement opposition in the states of India's Northeast. They also expected that talk during the communally-surcharged summer election campaign of 2019, of extending the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) to states outside Assam, was just electoral provocation, which would be stilled after the polarised election accomplished its objectives.

But it is now apparent that the Union government, the ruling party and their ideological lodestar, the RSS, are determined to introduce both the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and national NRC, in pursuit of their political agenda. Home Minister Amit Shah declares in Parliament his commitment to deport every "infiltrator" from every square inch of Indian soil, asks states to build detention centres for foreigners, and affirms his resolve to pass the CAB in ways that protect the interests of states of the Northeast. Several BJP chief ministers and leaders call for the extension of the NRC to their states. And Mohan Bhagwat, RSS chief, assures Hindus that they will not be harmed in any way by the NRC.

The result is widespread panic and dread in Muslim settlements across India, including in Bengal, Bihar, UP and the metropolises. People are desperately asking what documents will be required to prove they are Indian citizens, what the cut-off year will be

- 1971, 1947, 1951, 1987 - and what will be the consequences for those who cannot muster these documents. No one in the ruling establishment is supplying answers, and the trepidation and confusion only mounts each day. Even in our homeless shelters in Delhi, Muslim homeless people are asking us — "What will become of us? We have no documents." Meanwhile, Indians of all other religious persuasions are unperturbed.

For the first 40 years of freedom, until 1987, anyone born in India was deemed an Indian citizen. In 1987, the law was amended to require, in addition, that at least one parwho are of every religious identity except Muslim, to become Indian citizens. Combined with the 2003 amendment, this would mean that only Muslims who are unable to prove that they did not enter India unlawfully would be deemed illegal migrants. Not only they, but their children, and in turn their children, would be denied the right to Indian citizenship. This denial would be in perpetuity, because there is no redress in the law for the progeny of such persons to ever become Indian citizens, even though

The Citizenship

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fect, that the NRC will have no impact on people other than Muslims, because all others would qualify for Indian citizenship even if they are undocumented. The NRC, after the CAB, would, in operation, only require Muslim Indians to establish that they or their ancestors entered India lawfully. Other Indians may be mandated to produce documents, but even if they fail, they would qualify for citizenship. The Supreme Court has already shifted the burden of proof to individuals to prove their citizenship based on documents such as of birth, land ownership or voting rights, which most impoverished and poorly lettered citizens find difficult to muster. To make matters worse, the home ministry under Shah has already notified the right of every state government, and even district magistrates, to establish Foreigners' Tribunals, and for these tribunals to frame their own procedures and standards of proof.

ent was Indian. In 2003, I could become a cit-

izen only if one parent was Indian and the

other not an illegal migrant, defined as one

who has entered or stayed in India without

clusions which lie ahead. What the CAB, if

passed, would do is to allow illegal migrants

from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan,

they were born in India, and know and as-

This amendment would also mean, in ef-

pire for no other country.

This laid the seeds of the terrifying ex-

legal authorisation.

The Union government is confident of passing the CAB in the Rajya Sabha, given the divided and ideologically confused Opposition. But even before this change in law, the Union government, by a notification in 2015, had exempted non-Muslim "illegal immigrants" from the three neighbouring countries from adverse legal action, and in 2018, had accelerated the process for their citizenship.

The CAB, and indeed these notifications fly in the face of many fundamental rights under the Indian Constitution. One of these is the right to equality. After all, if religious persecution of illegal migrants in India's neighbourhood is deemed to qualify migrants for accelerated citizenship, then why not extend this to the Rohingya from Myanmar, Uyghurs from China, Ahmediyas and Shias from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and indeed secular bloggers and homosexual Muslims from these countries?

But even more fundamentally, these amendments strike at the soul of the secular democratic constitution of India. The India we inherited from Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad was a country which belonged equally, in every way, to all its people, regardless of which god they worshipped or if they chose to worship no god. India was not imagined as a country that would either exclude or include people on the basis of their religious identity.

A hundred years ago, the Hindu Mahasabha, and in 1925, the RSS, imagined another India, one in which Hindus would rule and dominate, and in which Muslims would be expelled or forced to live as secondclass citizens. The current ruling establishment believes that 100 years later, their time has come. The CAB, followed by a nationwide NRC, in which effectively only Muslims will have to prove their citizenship, will result in untold fear, suffering and dislocation of millions of Muslim citizens.

This is the fearful tempest that threatens to engulf India in the coming months, one which will destroy in its wake this country as it was imagined and promised. Our Muslim sisters and brothers are today seeing clearly the threat of this impending catastrophe. The rest of us continue with our lives, unconcerned.

Do we not realise that this will mark the death of India's secular democratic constitution?

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

A LEGACY, IN A SALT PAN

Remembering Gandhi means working for the poorest communities

PETER COOK

YESTERDAY, MILLIONS OF Indians around the world honoured one of the greatest figures in Indian history — Mahatma Gandhi. His struggle for equality, his support of the poorest and his non-violent protest for India's independence not just paved the way for modern India, but also served the greater global good by setting new standards for civil, social and economic rights. So many countries now treat these standards as fundamental basic rights that all citizens and society must enjoy.

How should we honour Gandhi in the year of his 150th anniversary? It is not an easy question. Particularly as I represent the country against which Gandhi spent a large part of his life rebelling. Of course, the best answer is not found in words but in deeds, supporting causes and communities that he

fought hard to defend. My team at the British Deputy High Commission in Gujarat had the pleasure of visiting the salt worker (Agariya) community in the Rann of Kutch earlier in the summer. The Agariyas are often forgotten souls who pan the salt in the most remote corner of Gujarat, working in the most inhospitable conditions. It is back-breaking work. They carry freshwater by hand 20 km into the desert. Cars, bikes and cycles cannot make it through the salt mud. There are no roads, only tracks which the line of salt workers have made with their feet. Walking on the salt damages their skin terribly. They have cal-

We all remember that Gandhi's famous salt march in 1930 against the British drew attention to the plight of the salt workers of Gujarat and the Agariya community. SEWA explained to us that many of the salt workers are trapped in a modern form of tied labour, incurring debts that they can never hope to repay. Since their existence is often hand to mouth, they needed to borrow money to pay for medicines, extra food and their children's education.

luses and sores and many suffer badly from skin cancers, eye damage and tuberculosis. Life expectancy for the community is rarely over 60. They do all this for a tiny amount. One of the Agariya women, Rudiben, told us that she started working for Rs 5 a day.

We have been working with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) to improve the lives of women across the state. SEWA defends and supports women, especially from the poorest communities. They have over two million members, all volunteers. Their story is an example of Gandhian philosophy that is alive and well today and it makes them an ideal partner to work with, especially in honouring Gandhi.

We all remember that Gandhi's famous salt march in 1930 against the British drew attention to the plight of the salt workers of Gujarat and the Agariya community. SEWA explained to us that many of the salt workers are trapped in a modern form of tied labour, incurring debts that they can never hope to repay. Since their existence is often hand to mouth, they needed to borrow money to pay for medicines, extra food and their children's education. The nearest school is many miles away and there is no transportation. The salt traders loan them money in return for future earnings from panning the salt. And so in the next salt season, in order to pay back their debts, more money has to be borrowed. The same cycle continues year after year.

SEWA realised that one way to help the Agariyas would be to provide loans and support to these women to use solar powered pumps instead of diesel pumps. Since they do not have to buy expensive diesel, and the sun is free, the Agariya families have a way to save money to pay off their debts. Over 1,100 Agariya families now have a solar panel installed. For the first time in generations, they have a chance at financial independence. They have been taught how to manage basic finances. Each of them now owns a solar panel and has money to buy medicines, extra food

and can afford to keep their children in school. SEWA asked us to help by training some of the younger Agariyas to manage and maintain the solar panels. We provided training courses so that simple repairs and maintenance could be carried out by young girls. Along with solar panels came Wellington boots. Rudiben told us that the help from SEWA and the UK has made an important difference in their lives. Gandhi's legacy lives on in the spirit of those who continue to support the poorest, who struggle for equality and who work for inter-communal harmony across society. We are pleased to have played a small part in honouring Gandhi on the occasion of his 150th anniversary and in upholding his values as an enduring force for good.

> The writer is British Deputy High Commissioner, Ahmedabad

INDIAN EXPRESS

OCTOBER 3, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

VIOLENCE AT RAJGHAT FOR THE FIRST time, Raighat was the scene of violence in fits and starts and the scent of flowers and incense was mingled with tear gas as the Delhi University Students' Union and its sympathisers tried to oppose the yagna of purification set up by the Lok Dal with Raj Narain presiding. In the violence, six policemen and five youths were injured. Members of the ABVP, DUSU and Janata Vidyarthi Morcha put the figure of injured youths of their group at over a score. Both agree that no one of the yagna party sustained any injuries. One thing that was obvious at Raighat this morning was the partisan

attitude of the police when it came to han-

dling the two factions. While the yagna group was accorded gentle treatment with kid gloves on, the university students were manhandled without any let.

CHARAN'S THREAT

PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh, in a sharp rebuke to his party's working president, Raj Narain, announced that he was resigning from the party at a public function but later withdrew his threat on request from his party colleagues. Singh's threat came during an altercation with Narain over tha latter's repeated demand that the general elections be postponed. The PM said whenever Narain

made a statement about the government's

policies, he faced the difficulty of contradicting them. Even so, it is said that Narain has the PM's tacit approval.

US DEPLOYMENT

US PRESIDENT JIMMY Carter announced a series of dramatic measures to counter the presence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba. They ranged from the establishment of a permanent fulltime Caribbean Joint Taskforce headquarters at Key West, Florida, to reinforcing America's presence in the Indian Ocean, from increasing survellance of Cuba to enhancing the capacity of US forces to respond to protect American interests and respond to requests of assistance from allies.

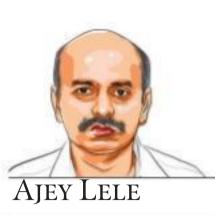
THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"With greater technological advancements, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, the ability to mislead the public through 'fake news' is only going to increase in the years to come." —DAWN

Red weapons, blue skies

CPC's 70th anniversary parade revealed China's well-established architecture for undertaking weather modification



CHINA'S PRESIDENT Xi Jinping announced that "no force" can shake China during the huge military parade to celebrate 70 years of Communist Party rule on October 1. China's progress in the military arena was on full display during this parade. One of the major military systems displayed was the new hypersonic ballistic nuclear missile. Such missiles are capable of breaching all existing anti-missile shields available with the major powers. However, one weapon, which China was expected not to "display" but to "demonstrate" was absent and that was the Weather Weapon.

Chinese authorities always try to ensure that they have blue skies during the conduct of such parades and festivities. However, this time, there was a cloud of smog hanging over Beijing. Though it did not dampen the spirits of the people, it did prove that the Chinese Communist Party may control many things but it still cannot control the weather. However, it is important to note that in recent past China has been manipulating the weather over a limited geographical area with some success before such mega events. There could be various reasons for China failing to do so this time.

In the past, on various occasions, China has successfully managed clear skies. The most talked-about incident was the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting held at Beijing during November 10-12, 2014. During this event, China ensured that Beijing, which is famous for its heavy haze and smog, would have absolutely blue skies. Since then, this Chinese ability to have blue skies on demand is famously referred as "APEC blue". In 2014, this became possible since Beijing and nearby regions were put under most stringent pollution control measures. It was a result of harsh 11-day emissions-reduction measures.

To have blue skies during the October 1 parade, the efforts started well in advance. August 20 onwards, no trucks were permitted to enter Beijing and all construction work was halted. Also, there was a major clampdown on mining activities and fireworks were totally banned. There was even a request for to stop production in the nearby industries. All this was leading to an improvement in the sky conditions. However, just few days before the event, a weather system in the form of a low-pressure front got positioned unfavourably and ended up pushing the pollution from the surrounding provinces towards Beijing. Also, there is a possibility that the authorities would not have employed heavyhanded practices against polluting industries for various reasons.

It is important to note that the Vice Premier Hu Chunhua had visited the China Meteorological Administration and had asked for possible meteorological support just before the 2019 parade. Normally, such support comes in the form of firing missiles/rockets on the rainbearing clouds, making them precipitate before they approach the Tiananmen Square parade ground. Such rockets (with "warheads" containing dry ice, salt and silver iodide) are part of weather modification experiments and make precipitation happen. Usually, such rain also cleans up the smog-filled atmosphere. Possibly, this time there were no clouds around Beijing and hence, there are no reports of firing of any rockets. Exactly 10 years ago during the 60th National Day Parade, China had managed clear skies through such attacks on clouds. As per reports, some 432 rockets were fired then.

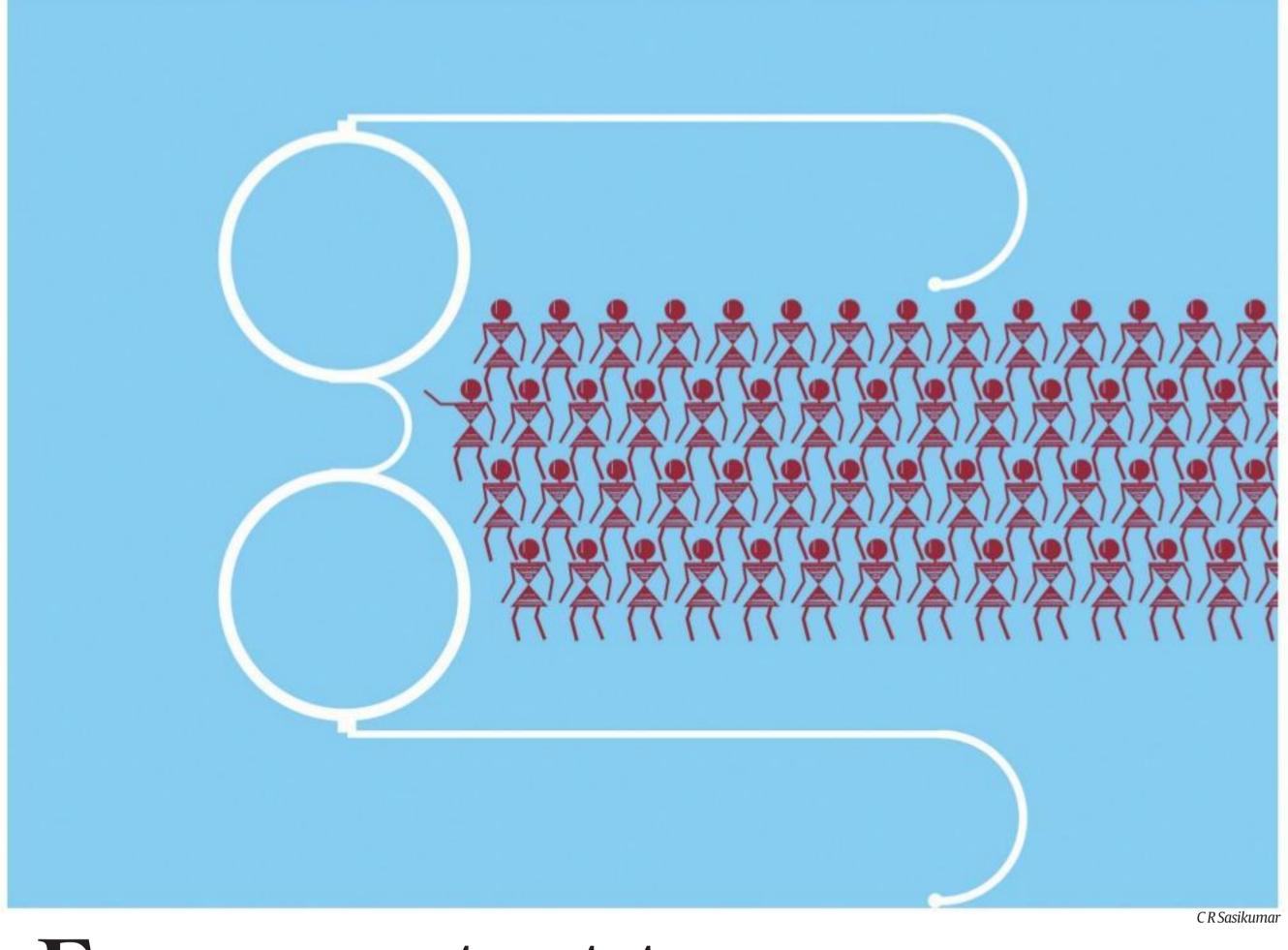
China has a well-developed infrastructure to undertake such tasks. They have many specialised vehicles ready to throw streams of air to chase away any approaching fog. Similarly, on August 8, 2008, the day of the Olympics opening ceremony, it was reported that the Chinese weather modification office had fired a total of 1,104 rain dispersal rockets. These rockets were fired to stop rain clouds approaching the Olympics arena. This operation lasted for eight hours and rockets were launched from 21 different sites.

There is evidence that in the past even during wars, states have used such techniques not only to help the advancement of their own forces, but also to cause flooding over enemy territory. During the Vietnam War (1967), US forces had launched Operation Popeye. This led to heavy flash floods and is known to have caused damage possibly worth three years of sustained bombing.

Today, China has a well-established architecture to undertake weather modification at will and runs one of the biggest weather modification programmes in the world, with investments touching millions of dollars. China has modified various aircraft to conduct weather modification experiments. They are keen to change the weather pattern over the Tibet region. There is a plan to use weather modification techniques to divert water vapour (Project "Sky River"). Many scientists are known to be working on the "art of mastering the weather".

There is a United Nations Convention called Environmental Modification or EN-MOD convention, which prohibits states from "engaging in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques". Various major countries are signatories to this. However, even during peacetime, any large-scale weather modification experiments possibly leading to changes in the ecological balance are not a healthy proposal. Artificial weather changes, which could be a boon for one geographical region, may turn out to be a bane for other nearby regions.

The writer is senior fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi



From protest to governance

Our Lokpal movement to schools, water, power — Gandhi's vision endures



AS A PRODUCT of the Gandhian Jan Lokpal movement against corruption in high places, I have witnessed the power of Gandhian methods of resistance and protest. Mass movements throughout independent India's history as well as around the world have taken inspiration from the original mobiliser of the masses, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. In this context, as long as there is injustice in the world, Gandhi will remain relevant.

What makes Gandhi especially relevant in the times we live in is his unflinching commitment to democracy and the wisdom of the people. The idea of decentralising power from the hands of a few to the hands of many was a romanticised utopia for many of us as activists. "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village," Gandhi wrote in Harijan.

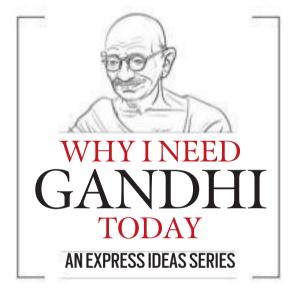
Long before India introduced the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, the Right to Information (RTI), and other decentralising measures, Gandhi had championed this powerful idea. He believed that the strength of democracy is when power is given not to the executive, but to the people themselves. This was the essence of the Anna movement as well. The movement was not merely a mobilisation against a corrupt regime. It was an attempt to compel the government to involve the people in the process of lawmaking. Unfortunately, the UPA did not see merit in hearing the voice of civil society and forced the ordinary people of our country to enter politics.

In the time I have been chief minister nearly five years, I have witnessed Gandhian decentralisation of power being brought to life. Before 2015, the education minister was the most powerful authority when it came to all issues related to schools. For the smallest of expenses, administrative authority lay with the minister. Such a top-heavy power structure can never effectively run any public system, even in a city-state like Delhi.

In 2015, I along with Manish Sisodia met 1,000 principals of Delhi government schools and asked them to give us a list of the things they have wanted to do in their schools, but have not been able to for lack of funds. We made proposals based on the principals' inputs and that is one of the reasons why Delhi's education budget suddenly doubled that year to consume 25 per cent of the entire state's budget. The year after that, instead of going back to the principals once again, we gave them complete discretion over funds, and the freedom to use them. For the first time in the history of India's education system, government school principals were given the means and resources to run their schools the way they wanted to. This transformed the school administration, suddenly making it more efficient and energetic.

Similarly, we formed groups of parents – School Management Committees — to help with the school management: Maintaining cleanliness, keeping up mid-day meal standards, among others. Involving the people in governance by providing them the power to take decisions for themselves, and giving them the means to exercise that power, is the key to progress.

Today, a government school principal, along with the parent-led SMC, is empowered to hire a resource person, maintain their school infrastructure, purchase books of their choice for libraries, bring in experts for teaching music, arts, sports. All of this, without sending a single file to the department for permission. This is Gandhian governance being realised.



In the last five years, the government of the common man has been led by the most Gandhian of philosophies — looking out for the last man in the queue. It was Gandhi's dream that we build a country where every child has access to good education, every person gets quality healthcare, and all people live together in peace and brotherhood. I am happy this has started to become a reality in today's Delhi.

In the last five years, the government of the common man has been led by the most Gandhian of philosophies — looking out for the last man in the queue. In one of his last notes before his tragic death, he had said, "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him." It was Gandhi's dream that we build a country where every child has access to good education, every person gets quality healthcare, and all people live together in peace and brotherhood. I am happy this has started to become a reality in today's Delhi.

Many of us believed that most Indian cities including Delhi have had 24 hours electricity supply for years now, but the reality is otherwise. Many parts of the city did not have access to such a basic necessity when we assumed office in February 2015. Our government had to push for more transformers, infrastructure upgrade to ensure all households have 24-hour electricity. Only about 58 per cent of the colonies were connected by water pipelines in 2015. Today, we have taken that number to 93 per cent, ensuring that lakhs of families do not have to rely on water tankers any more. Most importantly, the government of the common man has attempted to build a system where ordinary citizens no longer have to plead be-

fore bureaucrats for basic services. Gandhi envisioned a country where every person can dream of a better life. In Delhi, today, there is a semblance of opportunity for people to lift themselves out of poverty. We are working towards building a Delhi where a dignified life is the right of all citizens. It is humbling when one realises just how little of India's progress would have been possible without Gandhi and the idea of Gandhi. My heartfelt tribute to the man whose memory continues to inspire a billion Indians.

The writer is the Chief Minister of Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SWACHH LESSONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The people's policy' (IE October 2). It rightly describes the Swachh Bharat Mission as a benchmark of transformative policy making. Such policies can also be adopted for pollution control and environmental conservation. Environmental protection is not achievable only by the government's initiative and corporate sector's financial support. It requires public participation as well.

Jainil T Shah, Ahmedabad

TOLL ON STATES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'States at Centre' (IE, October 2). Doling out of subsidies, freebies, leakages/pilferage, over-staffed government departments and evasion of taxes are taking a toll on the financial health of the exchequers both at the state and Central levels. Disinvestment needs to be aggressive. Futile expenditure in the name of cow shelters and statues should be shunned. Advertising welfare schemes amounts to misuse of government resources. Rather than engaging in witch hunts, agencies should effectively uspin down tax dodgers.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

CLEAN AIR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Bad air but how bad' (IE, October 2). Crop residue burning in Punjab and Haryana is detrimental to the region's air quality, There is a need to exterminate this method of disposal of residue and create alternatives to stubble burning.

Nayan Agarwal, Ujjain

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.

mention their postal address and phone number. THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS**

PUBLICATIONS

Letter writers should

HISTORIAN, CRITIQUE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Her way of seeing' (IE, October 1). The writer says that his film was called good by two different political dispensations but not acceptable for airing on DD because one objected to Romila Thapar's critique of Emergency while another found the film's depiction of the Babri mosque's demolition objectionable. Thapar is above such narrow minded operators. "Caste is immutable while class is mutable," a sentence that I read in the early 1970s in a history book written by Thapar still rings true.

Basudev Mazumdar, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

GOING GLOBAL

IN THE WAKE of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US, the cover story of RSS mouthpiece Panchjanya has said that through the Howdy Modi event at Houston Texas, Modi has not only showcased a new, rising India, but has also exposed the reality of the neighbouring country to the world.

In a report titled 'Togetherness Improves Credibility', Panchianya said, "The America which had the image of being the world's policeman; which is needed by other countries of the world; on whose dias every leader wants to reach: the same America has come onto Modi's dias. Modi's address in Houston was that moment when the global superpower saw India as another superpower, when due to Modi's magic the American president became a guest in his own country. In that moment America felt elated to find Modi in its company."

The article said Modi made India's stand clear on Jammu and Kashmir and the abro-

epaper<mark>.indianex</mark>press.com

gation of Article 370. It said that through his references to 9/11 and the 26/11 attacks, Modi exposed Pakistan. It said the Houston event also showcased a new movement by India to connect with all expats across the

Attacking left liberals on the issue of terrorism, the article suggested President Donald Trump had exposed the lie of "terror has no religion". "Till now, on the issue of rising terrorism across the world and in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India, the so called seculars would say terrorism has no religion and that it should not be associated with any faith. But President Trump made it clear from the dais that he would fight extremist Islamic terrorism jointly," the report

GANDHI ON SAVARKAR

IN ITS LATEST issue dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, *Organiser* has attempted to clear the air on Hindutva ideologue Veer Savarkar's clemency plea to the British administration when he was lodged in the cellular jail in the Andaman islands.

The article, written by J Nandakumar, has claimed that Gandhi was all praise for Savarkar and had called him "brave", "clever" and "true son of Bharat". The article has said that filing clemency pleas with the British was commonplace in those times and the narrative of a chasm between Gandhi and Savarkar, and the latter's capitulation before the British power had been created by newage leftist historians in the wake of Congress's defeat post the emergency.

Quoting a note by Gandhi as published in a book, the article said Gandhi had positive views about Savarkar and his elder brother, GD Savarkar: "The Savarkar Brothers' talent should be utilised for public welfare. As it is, India is in danger of losing her two faithful sons, unless she wakes up in time. One of the brothers I know well. I had the pleasure of meeting him in London. He is brave. He is clever. He is a patriot. He was frankly a revolutionary. The evil, in its hideous form, of the present system of government, he saw much earlier than I did. He is in the Andamans for his having loved India too well. Under a just government, he would be occupying a high office. I therefore feel for him and his brother."

SWADESHI AND SWARAJ

IN ITS SPECIAL issue, Organiser has also carried an editorial espousing Swaraj and an article by Prof Bhagwati Prakash which has argued that India must shift from Make in India to Made by Bharat to realise the dream of Swaraj.

Claiming that liberal imports and FDI jeopardised the growth of domestic industry and trade and increased foreign ownership, the article has argued for "economic patriotism" and "techno-nationalism" through mandatory norms.

"To turnaround this situation of persistent rise in trade and current account deficits as well as in the deficit in investment income, and also to remedy our growing dependence over foreign investments. along with saving various sectors of the economy. from further slipping into foreign ownerships, India should chart a course of self-reliance and Swadeshi inter alia by developing 'Made by India' products and brands through endeavours like promoting and adopting technonationalism and economic patriotism," the article said.

It said that the development of homegrown technologies and promoting these should be done "through mandatory norms and other methods". It can alone help the country to launch 'Made by Bharat' products and brands to alleviate the country's growing dependence upon imports and FDI. "Economic patriotism inter alia reflects one's resolve to buy the Made by India goods, wherever available. Which can be said as pursuing 'Swadeshi'," the article added.

Compiled by Deeptiman Tiwary

#ExpressExplained

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

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

HOW TO READ NORTH KOREA'S LATEST MISSILE TEST



A report on N Korea firing what seems to have been a submarine-launched ballistic missile is broadcast on S Korean TV in Seoul on Wednesday. Reuters

ON WEDNESDAY morning, North Korea testfired a medium-range missile from an undersea platform — its 11th missile test in 2019, and its first submarinelaunched ballistic missile (SLBM) test since August 2016.

WHAT, WHEN, HOW: Japan said the missile was fired from a point in the Sea of Japan 17 km northeast of the North Korean naval base of Wonsan a little after 7 am, or 3.30 am India time. The projectile, launched from either a submarine or an offshore rig, landed in the waters of Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Jeong Kyeong-doo, the Defence Minister of South Korea, said the missile flew 450 km in a trajectory that peaked at 910 km

HOW BIG A THREAT: As it has done earlier too. North Korea fired the missile in a very steep trajectory; had the launch followed a more standard trajectory, it could have travelled 1,900 km, standard for a medium-range missile. Such a missile would reach South Korea and Japan easily, especially if it were launched from a submarine with a significant range. North Korea's 1990s vintage Romeo-class submarines are thought to be able to travel 7,000 km, or about the distance to

the United States territory of Hawaii. A saving grace, from the perspective of the West, is that these diesel-electric powered machines are extremely noisy, and can probably be detected.

WHAT TEST INDICATES:

Commentators have underlined the apparent range and capabilities of the missile, and the fact that it demonstrates continuing progress on Pyongyang's SLBM programme, long recognised as a very potent threat. It is difficult to anticipate the time and place of a submarine-borne strike, and SLBMs are seen as extending

crucial second-strike capabilities to militaries faced with a nuclear attack. However, it is not certain that North Korea's submarine programme is very advanced as yet. The missile test came days ahead of

the planned resumption of nuclear talks between North Korea and the United States. Negotiators from the two sides are scheduled to meet on Saturday — and several analysts said Wednesday that Pyongyang was trying to raise the stakes and send out the signal that it will return to the table on its own terms, and expected Washington to back off from its demands for full denuclearisation.

TIP FOR READING LIST

What drove Susan Sontag

EVER SINCE Susan Sontag, American writer and political activist, died in 2004, a number of books have been published on her. These include Swimming in a Sea of Death, which is her son David Rieff's account of the leukaemia that caused her demise, and Phillip Lopate's *Notes* on Sontag. The latest addition to

this list is Benjamin Moser's Sontag: Her Life and Work; it is the authorised biography. Sontag was a difficult subject, prone

to wild swings. Moser attempts to trace the roots of Sontag's troubled personality starting with the influence of her alcoholic mother, Mildred. Then came Sontag's troubled marriage to Phillip Reiff, her professor at the University of Chicago; by 19 she was a mother but

stuck in a marriage with a man who was the exact ideological opposite of her leftist self. But the book stands out not for its analysis but description.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Highway versus forest

Protests in Wayanad after Supreme Court asked Centre for alternatives that would enable permanent closure of Kerala-Karnataka highway that cuts through tiger reserve. A look at both sides of the debate

SITE OF DISCONTENT

SHAJU PHILIP THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCTOBER 2

OVER THE last one week, Kerala's Wayanad district has witnessed a series of protests against a ban on night traffic on the forest stretch of NH 766, a key highway between Karnataka and Kerala that passes through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. Although the night ban was first enforced a decade ago, the immediate trigger for the current agitation was a recent Supreme Court direction to the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to suggest alternative routes so that NH 766 could be shut down permanently. Since then, Wayanad has witnessed an ongoing indefinite hunger strike and several protest marches.

In what circumstances was night traffic on the highway banned?

In August 2009, the district administration of Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka, banned night traffic on the 19-km forest leg of NH 766. This was after the project officer of Bandipur Tiger Reserve had prepared a report on the number of animals being hit by vehicles at night. An inspection had found that 44 vehicles were on this 19-km stretch in a span of 30 minutes. The report said night traffic would affect behaviour biology such as breeding and parental care of animals, disrupt their life cycle and make them stray to human habitats.

Using the central Motor Vehicle Act read with the Karnataka Motor Vehicle Rules, the district administration banned traffic from 9 pm to 6 am. Vehicles were stopped on both sides of the stretch and allowed to resume the journey in the morning.

Were there no protests then?

After the ban, transport operators in both states and people's representatives in Kerala petitioned the Chamarajanagar Deputy Commissioner, who lifted the ban. Then conservationists moved the Karnataka High Court, which reinstated the ban by an interim order. At one point, the court observed that the interest of protecting wildlife is important, and no less important is the need to protect the interest of the public, who are commuters and traders.

In 2010, the court upheld the night traffic ban. Pointing to an alternative road that is 35 km longer than travelling through NH 766, the court directed the Karnataka government to upgrade this road, which runs from Mananthavady in Kerala to Mysuru via Gonikuppal in Kodagu district.



School students of Wayanad march in protest amid rain on Tuesday. PTI



The Kerala government moved a special leave petition in the Supreme Court; conservationists too were impleaded. The issue remained inconclusive despite discussions between the states. Kerala's suggestion for an elevated highway through the forest reserve was turned down by the ministry.

Has the night ban met its objective? According to Bandipur Tiger Reserve proj-

talities have come down significantly. "Before the ban, the stretch was reporting 100-odd animal deaths in accidents, but now it has come down to five to ten. If the highway is opened, fatalities would increase manifold. Over the last one decade, animal populations as well as traffic have gone up."

> Spread over 990.51 sq km, Bandipur Tiger Reserve is part of interconnected forests that

ect director Thippaiah Balachandra, animal fa-

include Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu), Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) and Nagarhole National Park (Karnataka). A large variety of wildlife including the elephant moves from one stretch to another, cutting the states. Once a hunting reserve for the Maharaja of Mysore, Bandipur is one of the oldest tiger reserves in the country, having been declared as such in 1973 and a national park in 1984. Bandipur has 140 tigers, 1,600 elephants and 25,000 spotted deer, forest department sources said.

Is there no way to avoid the highway?

The Kollegal-Mysuru-Kozhikode road has existed for 200 years and remains a major link. It was declared a national highway in 1989, then named NH 212, and later renamed NH 766. The opening of the Pune-Bengaluru Hyderabad-Bengaluru highways, along with the development of the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway, made NH 766 a major link between Kerala and the rest of the country. With 150-odd registered resorts and hundreds of homestay facilities, Wayanad has emerged a major hill destination, catering to tourists from Benagluru. NH 766 is also used by transporters of essential provisions from Karnataka to Kerala, and by commuters from Kerala to Bengaluru for want of good rail connectivity.

Two other roads exist between Wayanad and Karnataka. One of these, between Mysuru and Mananthavady (Wayanad), part of which passes through the Nagarhole National Park, has been closed for night traffic from 6 pm to 6 am since 2008, on the recommendation of an empowered committee appointed by the Supreme Court. The other road, the only alternative that remains available for night traffic, is the one that the High Court referred to in 2010. Also between Mananthavady and Mysuru, it runs via Kutta, Gonikuppal and Hunsur in Karanataka. This too cuts through forest.

Who are behind the present protest? On August 8, the Supreme Court upheld

the night traffic ban, which was supported by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu while Kerala wanted it lifted. The court asked the NHAI to upgrade the alternative road and sought the Centre's opinion on closing down NH 766 permanently. The protest in Wayanad, which picked up with the hunger-strike starting September 25, is backed by all political parties in Kerala, religious organisations, traders and youth organisations. People fear that a blanket ban on traffic would impact the economic development of Wayanad, particularly in Sulthan Bathery taluk, Besides, the alternative road is 35 km away, which would cost time and money besides raising prices of commodities.

TELLING NUMBERS

All the carbon in Earth, and CO₂ from volcanoes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 2

DEEP CARBON Observatory (DCO), a 10-year programme at the US National Academy of Sciences, has released a series of papers estimating the total carbon on Earth. This includes an analysis of the total carbon dioxide released by volcanoes, which are often viewed as a possible main contributor to such emissions, but which, it turns out, contribute much less than human activities.

1.85 BILLION GIGATONNES: TOTAL CARBON ON EARTH

BELOW THE SURFACE

1.845 BILLION Gigatonnes (Gt). This includes:

1.5 BILLION Gt in lower mantle. 315 MILLION Gt in continental and oceanic lithospheres

30 MILLION Gt carbon in the upper mantle

ABOVE THE SURFACE

43,500 Gt. This includes: **37,000 Gt** in the deep ocean (85.1%) **3,000 Gt** in marine sediments (6.9%)

2,000 Gt in terrestrial biosphere (4.6%) 900 GT in the surface ocean (2%) **590 Gt** in the atmosphere (1.4%)

Source: Deep Carbon Observatory

Carbon dioxide out-gassed to the atmosphere and oceans from volcanoes and other magmatically active regions is estimated at 280 to 360 million tonnes per year, including that released into the oceans from mid-ocear ridges. Humanity's annual carbon emissions through the burning of fossil fuels and forests etc, are 40 to 100 times greater than all vol-

canic emissions, DCO said in a statement.

Two-tenths of 1% of Earth's total carbon (43,500 gigatonnes) is above surface in the oceans, on land, and in the atmosphere. The rest is subsurface, 1.85 billion Gt in all, DCO said

Hasina in India: Amid some challenges, celebrating a special friendship

ASHIKUR RAHMAN DHAKA, OCTOBER 2

BANGLADESH and India's bilateral ties have rarely been a linear affair. That is why Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India beginning October 3 is a much-anticipated political event. There is little doubt that when India assisted Bangladesh to attain independence in 1971, many believed that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Mrs Indira Gandhi would forge a partnership rooted in progressive ideals and a common vision for their nations in South Asia and the world, one that would last for generations.

Trust and engagement

The assassination of Mujib and most of his family members in 1975, which resurrected the political, Islamic and military leaders from the political right between 1975 and 1996, meant that Bangladesh could not structure any lasting partnership with India. Its relationship with India reached an alltime low when the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami coalition government between 2001 and 2006 allowed Bangladeshi territory to host insurgent activities against the Northeastern states of India. This unfortunate nosedive in the Bangladesh-India relationship was decisively reversed after the electoral victory of the Awami League and Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina in December 2008. There is little disagreement today that Bangladesh-India ties have greatly benefited since then.

That is why, since 2009, Bangladesh and India have peacefully navigated many contested issues that had remained unresolved since 1947. In 2015, the Indian government led by the BIP ratified the 1974 Land Boundary Treaty which executed a land swap of enclaves, settling historical anomalies dating back to the Partition of the subcontinent. Bangladesh and India also peacefully obtained an international court ruling that allowed the two nations to explore resources in the Bay of Bengal without stepping on each other's toes. These milestones show that a partnership based on trust and a willingness to engage on equal terms can help sovereign nations resolve historical disagreements.

Rivers and credit lines

The upcoming trip of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina can be viewed as an effort to re-invest in the special friendship that Bangladesh and India have developed during her premiership. It will likely touch on a wide range of issues that will require improvisation and cooperation from both governments to find new solutions to old problems.

Specifically, Prime Minister Hasina is likely to request New Delhi's cooperation for an improved management of all rivers that Bangladesh and India share, so that a better frame-



Modi with Hasina in New York last week. Twitter photo via PTI

work is created to ensure their equitable distribution. The pending dispute over the Teesta river has shown how difficult it is for India's central government to offer amicable solutions on such matters. Finalisation of an efficient and mutually acceptable river management framework will test imaginations and capacities of the governments on both sides.

Dhaka is also likely to seek New Delhi's cooperation in upgrading its railways, roads, and shipping infrastructure, and might ask

for the export of more electricity to Bangladesh. As of 2017, India had extended three lines of credit worth approximately \$7.4 billion; however, the execution of projects under these credit pipelines has been very slow. Less than 10% of the cumulative commitments have been disbursed so far, while almost no money from the third line of credit promising \$4.5 billion has been utilised. Dhaka might seek both prompt disbursements of the existing commitments and, perhaps, an additional line of credit to finance infrastructure projects in the pipeline.

NRC and the Rohingya

Refuelling of the development partnership aside, some areas of concern too, are likely to be taken up during the deliberations. It remains unclear how the NRC saga will ultimately play out in Indian politics, and the implications it might have for Bangladesh. For now, it has definitely added an extreme level of suspicion about India among ordinary Bangladeshis. And while Prime Minister Modi has assured Prime Minister Hasina during a meeting at the UN that the NRC will have no implications for Bangladesh, this commitment needs continuous reiteration, because an element of

noise has been added to the partnership. Many among the Bangladeshi intelligentsia believe that if the NRC wave gets more air from communal political currents in India, politicians in India might fail to ensure that this wave does not reach international shores. Given that politicians often create forces that they cannot contain — most people are now familiar with the term "unintended consequences" in international policy literature the NRC is likely to remain a real concern for both neighbours, and Bangladesh is likely to keep a close watch on it irrespective of Prime Minister Modi's assurances.

Many in India are also concerned about

Bangladesh's growing partnership with China. This, by any standards, is a misplaced fear. Prime Minister Hasina's China diplomacy is focused to structure a win-win economic cooperation to address Bangladesh's developmental aspirations — and so far, there is no indication that this relationship has any possibility of adding a military dimension to it. This balancing act by Bangladesh is especially important because it needs the support of both China and India to mitigate the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis. Given India's historical friendship with Bangladesh, New Delhi bears the responsibility of going a few steps further than Beijing on the Rohingva crisis. To what extent Dhaka can convince New Delhi to make the maximum effort to push for a peaceful repatriation of the Rohingya, however, remains to be seen.

On the whole though, Prime Minister Hasina's visit will underline and nurture the special friendship between Dhaka and New Delhi. In a world where building walls and distrusting neighbours have become the international norm, Prime Ministers Hasina and Modi are likely to demonstrate that forward-looking partnerships on equal terms are possible when bilateral ties are rooted in trust, and a common vision of peace and economic progress.

(Dr Ashikur Rahman is Senior Economist, Policy Research Institute, Dhaka)