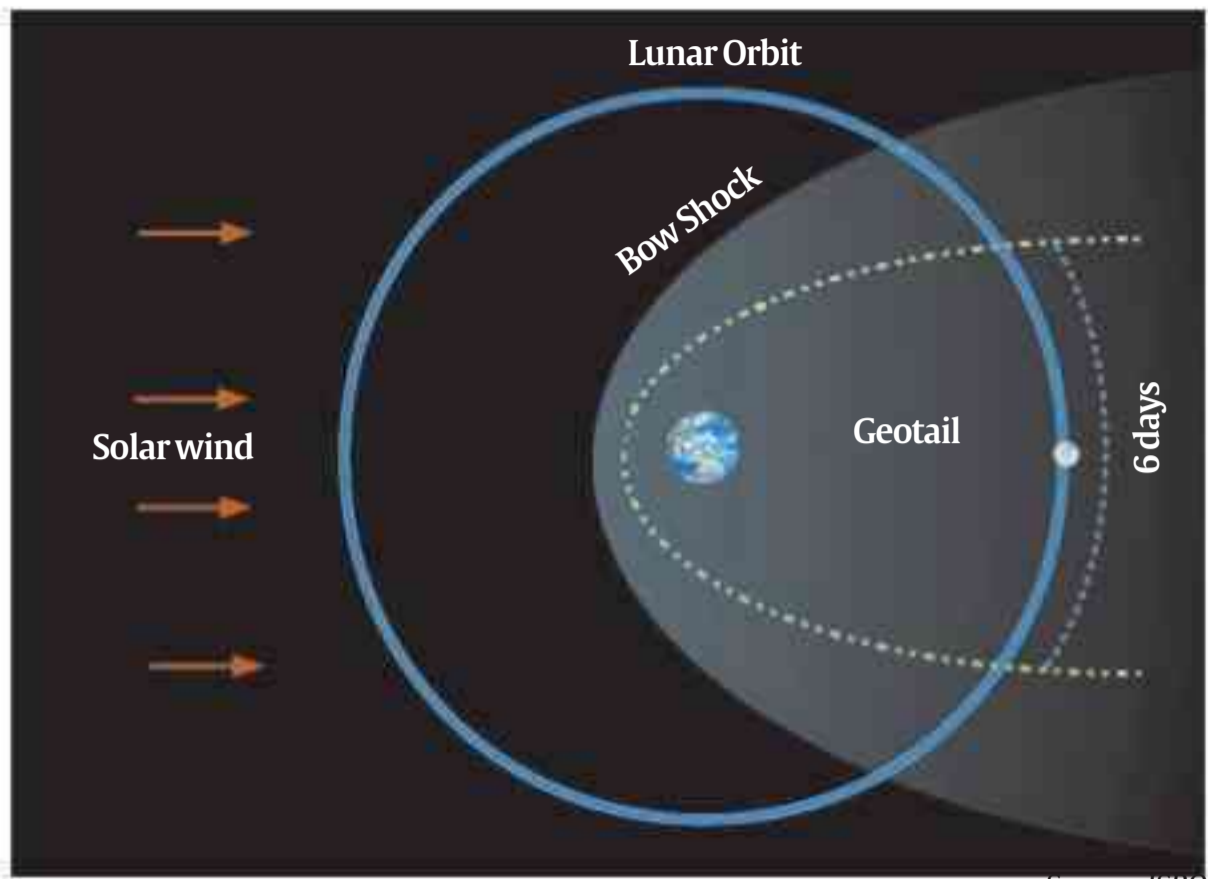


**THIS WORD MEANS**  
**GEOTAIL**

A region formed by interaction between Earth and Sun. How is it helping Chandrayaan-2 learn about Moon?



Source: ISRO

LAST WEEK, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) tweeted that an instrument on Chandrayaan-2, CLASS, designed to detect signatures of elements in the Moon's soil, had detected charged particles during the mission. This happened in September, during the orbiter's passage through the "geotail".

The geotail is a region in space that allows the best observations. The region exists as a result of the interactions between the Sun and Earth. On its website, ISRO explains how the region is formed, and how it helps scientific observations.

The Sun emits the solar wind, which is a continuous stream of charged particles. These particles are embedded in the extended magnetic field of the Sun. Since the Earth has a magnetic field, it obstructs the solar wind plasma. This interaction results in the formation of a magnetic envelope around Earth (see illustration). On

the Earth side facing the Sun, the envelope is compressed into a region that is approximately three to four times the Earth radius. On the opposite side, the envelope is stretched into a long tail, which extends beyond the orbit of the Moon. It is this tail that is called the geotail.

Once every 29 days, the Moon traverses the geotail for about six days. When Chandrayaan-2, which is orbiting the Moon, crosses the geotail, its instruments can study the properties of the geotail, ISRO said.

For the CLASS instrument seeking to detect element signatures, the lunar soil can be best observed when a solar flare provides a rich source of X-rays to illuminate the surface. Secondary X-ray emission resulting from this can be detected by CLASS to directly detect the presence of key elements like Na, Ca, Al, Si, Ti and Fe, ISRO said.

**TIP FOR READING LIST**

**HOW MILK SHAPED HUMAN HISTORY**

MOTHER'S MILK is known to be best, but it is the milk of other mammals that humans have cultivated for more than 10,000 years. The milk of domesticated animals was originally used as a source of products such as cheese or yoghurt, because humans could not digest lactose in those days — many still cannot — but as more and more humans evolved to become lactose-tolerant, they began to drink other mammals' milk itself.

*Milk! A 10,000-Year Food Fracas*, by historian Mark Kurlansky, looks at the history of humans' relationship with milk. The book can be seen, as *The New York Times* observes in its review, as "nothing less than an attempt to tell the history of the world via what is, let's face it, a bodily fluid". Kurlansky has written similar accounts of history in his earlier books *Cod*, *Salt* and *Paper*.

*Milk!* traces the liquid's history from antiquity to the present, and details its role in cultural evolution, religion, nutrition, politics, and economics. It starts with the ancient Greeks, who believed the goddess Hera's breast milk became the

Milky Way galaxy — a word that derives from 'gala', meaning milk. It goes on to at the time when families kept dairy cows, before milk went into mass production during the 19th century. This made milk a safety issue, with milk-borne illnesses a common cause of death. Today, "milk is a test case in the most pressing issues in food politics, from industrial farming and animal rights to GMOs, the locavore movement, and advocates for raw milk, who controversially reject pasteurisation", the publisher's note points out.

The NYT review describes the book as "often fascinating" ("Thomas Jefferson liked to serve ice cream on sponge cake with a lightly baked meringue on top"), sometimes mundane ("In addition to milk, cheese and porridge, the Dutch ate huge quantities of butter") and occasionally weird ("There are also records of women in the highlands of New Guinea breast-feeding piglets, pre-European Hawaiians breast-feeding puppies, and Guyanese women breast-feeding deer"). *The Guardian* calls it a "wonderfully wide-ranging study".



**UDIT MISRA**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

LAST WEEK, the Reserve Bank of India released its annual study of state-level budgets. With each passing year, understanding about state government finances is becoming more and more important. That's because of two broad reasons.

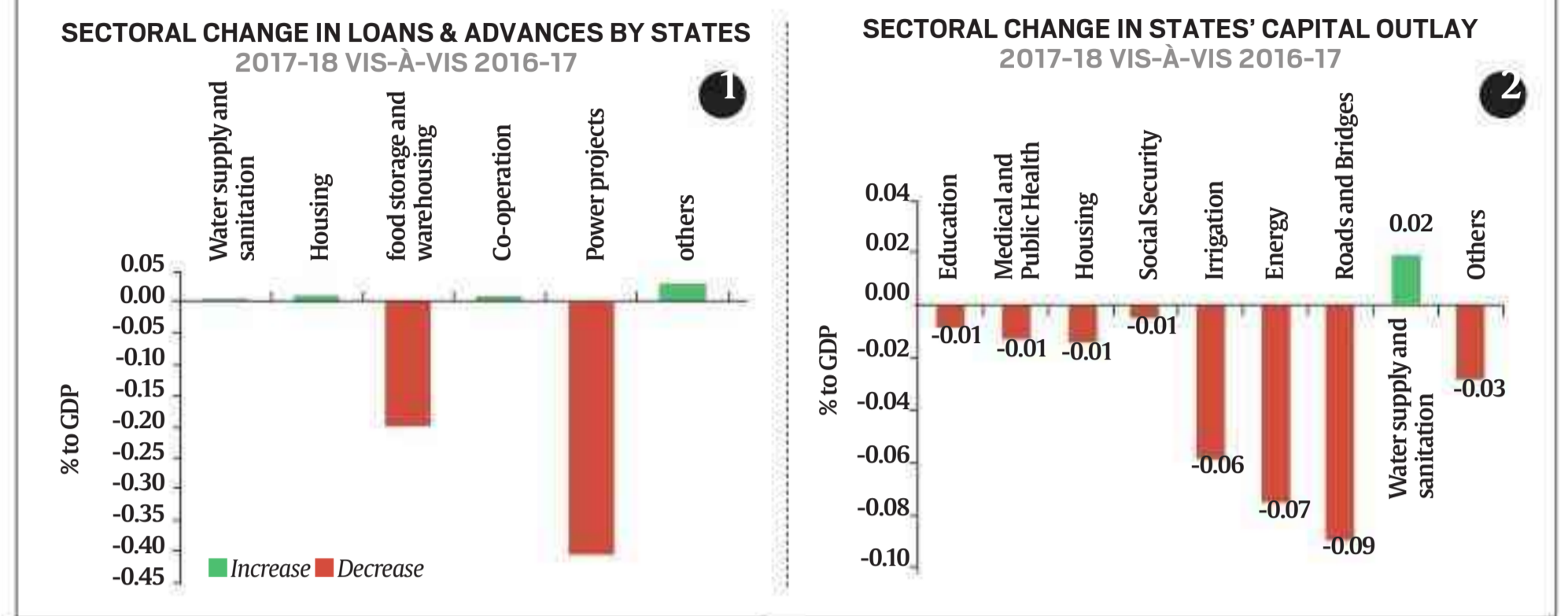
One, states now spend one-and-a-half times more than the Union government and, in doing so, they employ five times more people than the Centre. What these two trends mean is that not only do states have a greater role to play in determining India's GDP than the Centre, they are also the bigger employment generators. As such, it is crucial to understand their spending pattern. If, for example, their combined expenditure contracts from one year to the other, then it will bring down India's GDP.

Two, since 2014-15, states have increasingly borrowed money from the market — a trend captured in the fiscal deficit figure. In fact, their total borrowing almost rivals the borrowing by the Union government. This trend, too, has serious implications on the interest rates charged in the economy, the availability of funds for businesses to invest in new factories, and the ability of the private sector to employ new labour.

**Why fiscal deficit matters**

Suppose there is only Rs 100 in the economy that is available in the form of investible savings. This money could be borrowed either by private businesses (to invest in a new or existing venture) or by the government (to make roads, pay salaries etc.). Suppose again that initially, businesses borrow Rs 50 and the central government borrows Rs 50. If, however, state governments also start borrowing, say Rs 20, then private businesses will have only Rs 30 left to borrow and invest. Worse, this Rs 30 would come at a higher interest rate because the same number of people would be now vying for less money. That is why economy observers and businesses fuss over the fiscal deficit number the most.

There is another reason why states borrowing more and more should raise concerns especially when they borrow to meet unexpected policy goals such as farm loan waivers. Each year's borrowing (or deficit) adds to the total debt. Paying back this debt depends on a state's ability to raise revenues. If a state, or all the states in aggregate, find it difficult to raise revenues, a rising mountain of debt —



**GROSS FISCAL DEFICIT (% OF GDP)**  
All States and Union Territories with Legislature

2006-11 (average)	2.2
2011-16 (average)	2.4
2015-16	3.0
2016-17	3.5
2017-18	2.4
2018-19 (BE)	2.6
2018-19 (RE)	2.9
2019-20 (BE)	2.6

**OUTSTANDING LIABILITIES OF STATES & UTS (DEBT AS % OF GDP)**

2013	22.6
2014	22.3
2015	22.0
2016	23.7
2017	25.1
2018	25.1
2019 (RE)	24.8
2020 (BE)	24.9

\*Years as of end-March

captured in the debt-to-GDP ratio — could start a vicious cycle wherein states end up paying more and more towards interest payments instead of spending their revenues on creating new assets that provide better education, health and welfare for their residents. In short, with each passing year, state government finances have become more and

more important not only for India's GDP growth and job creation but also for its macro-economic stability. That is why, the 14th Finance Commission had mandated prudent levels of both fiscal deficit (3% of state GDP) and debt-to-GDP (25%) that must not be breached.

**What RBI found**

The first thing of note that the RBI report has found is that, except during 2016-17, state governments have regularly met their fiscal deficit target of 3% of GDP (see Chart 3). On the face of it, this should allay a lot of apprehensions about state-level finances, especially in the wake of extensive farm loan waivers that many states announced as well as the extra burden that was put on state budgets after the UDAY scheme for the power sector was introduced in 2014-15. Under UDAY, state governments had to take over the debts of power distribution companies (discoms). However, any relief on the fiscal deficit front is of limited value because most states ended up meeting the fiscal deficit target not by increasing their revenues but by reducing their expenditure and increasingly borrowing from the market.

Nothing brings this out better than what happened in 2017-18. As one can see from Chart 1, fiscal deficit for all states had breached the 3% (of GDP) mark in 2016-17. But in the very next year, states reduced the fiscal deficit by 109 basis points and brought it down to just 2.4%. But the bulk of this cut was achieved by cutting expenditure — and that too capital expenditure, which was cut by 86 basis points.

But this cut had a flip side. It adversely affected (Chart 1) the loans that state govern-

ments provided to power projects, food storage and warehousing. It also hurt (Chart 2) the states' capital budget allocation for key social and infrastructure sectors.

**Impact on national economy**

The RBI's report states that this reduction in overall size of state budgets likely worsened the economic slowdown that was slowly setting in since the start of 2016-17, when India had grown by 8.2% "... There has been a reduction in the overall size of the state budget in 2017-19. This retarding fiscal impulse ... has coincided with a cyclical downswing in domestic economic activity and may have inadvertently deepened it," it states. It is noteworthy that 2017-18 saw India's GDP growth rate decline to 7.2% and it has been declining since.

Possibly the most worrisome observation by the RBI is that while states have met their fiscal deficits, the overall level of debt-to-GDP (Chart 4) has reached the 25% of GDP prudential mark. "A slightly stringent criterion as prescribed by the FRBM Review Committee and in line with the revised FRBM implied debt target of 20 per cent will put most of the states above the threshold," warns the RBI.

The trouble is states have found it difficult to raise revenues. As the report explains, "States' revenue prospects are confronted with low tax buoyancies, shrinking revenue autonomy under the GST framework and unpredictability associated with transfers of IGST and grants. Unrealistic revenue forecasts in budget estimates thereby leave no option for states than expenditure compression in even the most productive and employment-generating heads."

**TELLING NUMBERS**

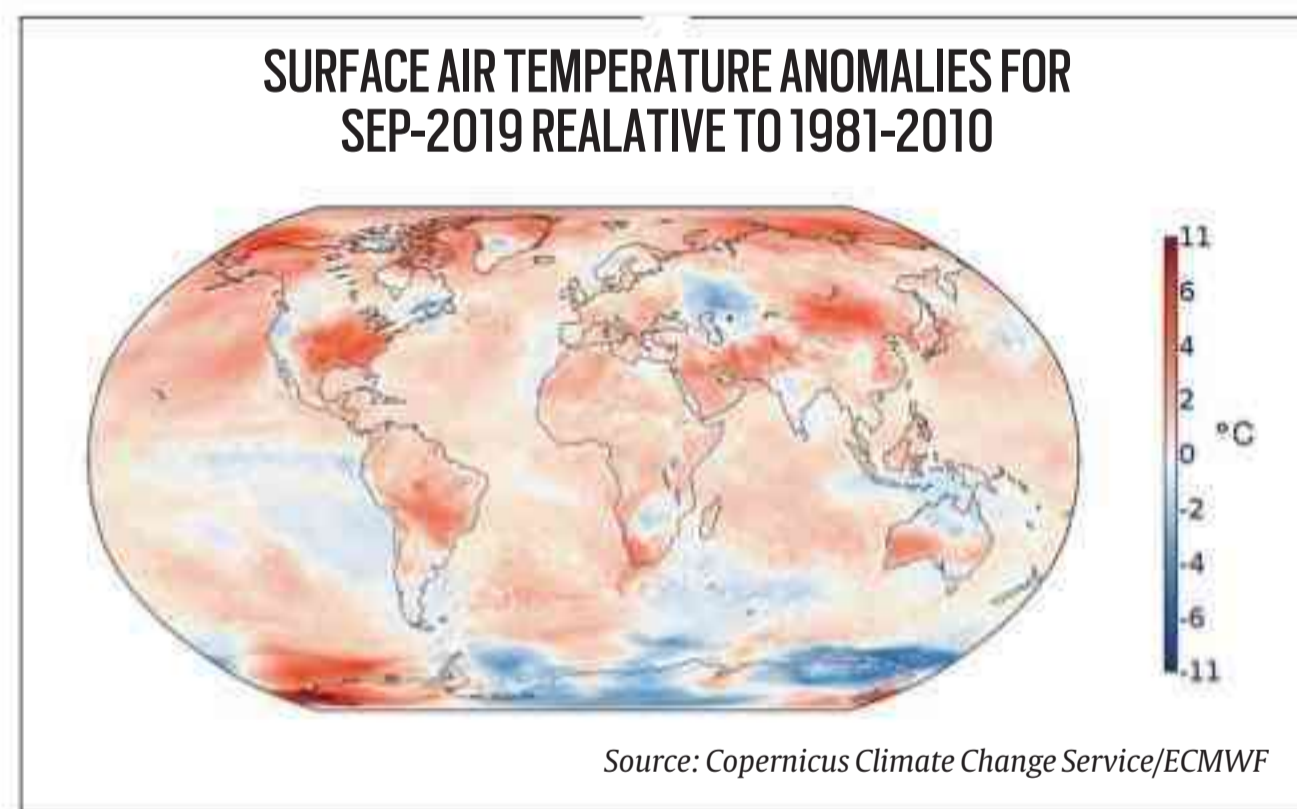
**Warmest ever September, and a running trend**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

IN ITS latest monthly bulletin, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service has said that the last month was the warmest September on record. This follows a trend over the last few months.

**September stats**  
**0.57°C WARMER** (September 2019) than the average September during 1981-2010 — narrowly the warmest September.  
**0.02°C WARMER** than September 2016, the previous warmest September.

**Previous 3 months**  
**0.54°C WARMER** than average June during 1981-2010, June 2019 was the warmest



Source: Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF

June on record (0.11°C warmer than June 2016, the previous warmest).

**0.56°C WARMER** than the average July (1981-2010), July 2019 was narrowly the warmest July — about 0.04°C warmer than July 2016, the previous warmest on record.

**0.53°C WARMER** than average August (1981-10), August 2019 was second warmest (about 0.04°C colder than August 2016).

**Last 12 months**  
Globally, the 12-month period from October 2018 to September 2019 was 0.55°C warmer than the 1981-2010 average, Copernicus said. The warmest October-September period was 2015-16 (0.66°C above average). 2016 is the warmest calendar year on record, with a global temperature 0.63°C above the 1981-2010 average, followed by 2017 (0.54°C above) and 2018 (0.46°C above).

**The importance of Sultanpur Lodhi in the life & work of Guru Nanak Dev**

**MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 6

A SLEEPY town in Punjab's Kapurthala district, Sultanpur Lodhi, is at the centrestage of the 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev, founder of the Sikh religion. It is here that the main anniversary programme will be held on November 12, with the Prime Minister expected to attend.

**The Guru Nanak Dev link**

It was in Sultanpur Lodhi that the Sikhism founder is believed to have attained enlightenment. The *Janamsakhis* — birth stories or biographies of Guru Nanak Dev written towards the end of the 16th century — say he was a changed man after he took a dip in the rivulet Kali Bein that flowed through the middle of the town, and disappeared for three days.

Prof J S Grewal, historian and former vice-chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, said when the Guru resurfaced after three days, he uttered the seminal words, "Na koi Hindu, Na koi Mussalman

(People are neither Hindu nor Muslim)". "He declared his own way. He had his own views about liberation. And it was after this that he started his mission."

The Guru also said he had seen the "navkhand". "Those days, geographers had divided the earth into nine continents. It is after this episode in Kali Bein that Guru Nanak said he had seen all the nine continents," Grewal said.

**The duration of his stay**

Guru Nanak was born at Rai-Bhoi-Di Talwandi in Sheikhpura district (now in Pakistan) in 1469. His father Mehta Kalyan Das is variously described as a revenue officer (*patwari*) or a chief accountant.

He moved to Sultanpur Lodhi between late 1480 and 1490 at the invitation of his elder sister Nanaki and her husband Jai Ram, who was in charge of the grain storage depot (Modikhana) of Daulat Khan Lodhi, the then *shiqqdar* (commissioner) of Sultanpur Lodhi, who later rose to become the governor of Lahore.

There are conflicting accounts of the duration of his stay at Sultanpur Lodhi. While



historian Dr Ganda Singh writes he was there for 10 years between the ages of 18 and 27, Dr Hari Ram Gupta, another scholar, claims he was here from the ages of 16 to 30. But most scholars agree that he lived in the town for around a decade until 1500, when he decided to undertake his travels, called *udasis*. Since the revenue from 40-odd villages in Daulat Khan's *jagir* was collected in the form of grains, Modikhana was akin to a



Gurdwara Ber Sahib. Wikipedia

treasury. Nanak also started working there.

**Legacy of Sultanpur Lodhi**

Historians say it was in Sultanpur Lodhi that Guru Nanak came into intimate contact with Islam.

The *Janamsakhis* depict the tension between a section of the clergy and Guru Nanak following his enlightenment. His utterances were not received kindly by the *qazi*. He complained to Daulat Khan Lodhi

that Nanak was being blasphemous. Prof Grewal said Daulat Khan Lodhi also challenged Guru Nanak Dev to say the *namaaz* with him. "Lore has it that after the *namaaz*, Nanak told him your prayers will not be accepted because all along you were worried about your foal falling into an open well in your courtyard."

It is here that he said what you say is not as important as what you do.

*Janamsakhis* claim Daulat Khan Lodhi became very fond of Nanak and defended him against critics. When Nanak decided to leave the town in 1500, he is said to have urged him to stay. But Nanak said it was a call from the supreme being and not his decision. Over time, Bhai Mardana, who accompanied Nanak on all his travels, and Daulat Khan, came to be considered among his two principal Muslim followers.

Today the town is home to several gurdwaras in the memory of Guru Nanak. Most of them were commissioned during the Khalsa empire when the Sikh rulers staked out the places associated with Guru Nanak and built gurdwaras there. Gurdwara Ber Sahib, built by the side of an old tree that

is believed to be the one under which Guru Nanak would sit in meditation along the Kali Bein, was commissioned by Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala. The cornerstone was laid by Bhai Arjan Singh of Bagarian in 1937, and Maharaja Yadavinder Singh of Patiala presided over its completion in 1941.

**Architectural history**

Vikas Chand Sharma, an assistant professor of architecture at Chandigarh University, who has researched the architectural history of Sultanpur Lodhi, said it was a major centre of Buddhism from the first century to the sixth century when it was called Sarwmanpur.

In the 11th century, the town was founded by Sultan Khan Lodhi, a general of Mohammad Ghaznavi. Sikander Lodhi, assigned the construction of Sultanpur to Daulat Khan in the 15th century. It was the central point in the trade route between Delhi and Lahore. Grewal said a footnote in *Babamama*, the autobiography of Mughal emperor Babur, mentions Daulat Khan Lodhi as the founder of the town.



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### GOOD GOING

But with Dhaka something's missing: Economic policy making in Delhi needs to be more sensitive to the regional dimension

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH Hasina's visit to Delhi over the weekend highlights the deepening bilateral relationship with Dhaka and also its important structural consequence — growing interdependence with Bangladesh. India's foreign policy can claim great success for the former — relations with Bangladesh have never been as good as they are today. They are also the best when viewed in comparison with our other neighbours. But India's economic policy makers can be rather insensitive to the logic of interdependence. Hasina's visit saw agreements on expanding connectivity and transit, easing travel across the border, strengthening trade and investment ties, boosting development cooperation, putting the fledgling defence cooperation on a firmer basis and promoting regional cooperation. Even as Delhi celebrates the golden age in the relationship with Dhaka, however, it must heed some important warning signs.

That Hasina publicly complained, albeit in a light hearted manner, about the impact of India's recent move to ban onion exports on her kitchen, underlines the headaches in the neighbourhood that Delhi's economic decisions generate. Hasina was not objecting to the decision itself that has produced immediate onion shortages in Bangladesh. She was pointing to its sudden and unilateral nature. If Delhi had informed Dhaka in advance, Hasina said, her government could have made alternative arrangements for onion import. The problem goes deeper and reveals a lingering autarkic and anti-market orientation in Delhi's economic policy even as India's national strategy calls for regional integration. For example, governments in Delhi, both Congress and BJP-led ones, have long resisted export of cattle to Bangladesh where beef is a staple. In doing so, Delhi has created an incentive for cattle-smuggling across the border. Few in government had anticipated that the demonetisation of the Indian rupee at the end of 2016 might have consequences for Nepal and Bhutan that are so tied into the Indian economy. As India rises and integrates with Bangladesh, that is now one of the world's fastest growing economies, Delhi must get its economic bureaucrats to integrate the regional dimension into their national policy thinking.

Beyond onions, Hasina was also channeling growing anxiety in Bangladesh at India's implementation of the National Register of Citizens in Assam and the threats at the highest level about throwing foreigners (read Bengali Muslims) from the state. Given the deep political trust between PM Hasina and PM Narendra Modi, the problem appears to be under control. But the situation could easily get out of hand, become a major controversy in Dhaka's domestic politics, severely constraining Hasina's positive approach to India. The problem in Assam is part of the tragic legacy of the Subcontinent's partition in 1947 and the movement of people across the new frontiers in the east since then. As two strong leaders focused on problem-solving, Modi and Hasina must try and develop a long-term joint strategy that will facilitate national identification and generate a system of work-permits for legitimate movement of labour. Today's digital technologies offer solutions to difficult political problems that Delhi and Dhaka have inherited from the past. The markets demand it.

### CROSSING THE LINE

For want of a multilateral regulator, the reach of European internet law now extends worldwide. It is deeply problematic

THE PAST OF the internet has caught up with its acrimonious present. The European Court of Justice has decreed that Facebook must comply globally with a takedown order issued by the national court of any of the 28 member-nations of the European Union. All because an Austrian politician was called a "corrupt oaf" online, and her national court agreed that it amounted to vilification. Europe sees itself at the cutting edge of internet regulation, and is impatient with America's inability or unwillingness to rein in the Silicon giants based on its soil. While Facebook is believed to have facilitated illegal intervention in politics in the US and UK, talk of breaking it up remains just that. But nothing can justify another nation or group of nations pinning on the badge of internet supercop. Such a projection of the laws of one country onto the world has not been seen since colonial times.

Concerns are being raised about the growing purview of European law online, but the ruling also sets a precedent for other nations, which are developing their own privacy and hate speech laws. Wait till a country like India, notoriously thin-skinned and a champion in filing takedown requests, starts wondering why Europe should have all the fun. Or consider a nation like Pakistan, where speech online is governed by blasphemy law. Imagine the consequences for the global conversation if local sensitivities were projected worldwide. Besides, as national laws clash, international disputes would be inevitable. The ruling of the European Court of Justice — which, incidentally, cannot be appealed — raises uncomfortable questions. It will only cause alarms, excursions and fulminations, and its only victim would be the freedom of speech.

The ruling has foregrounded a paradox that has been ignored for too long. The internet was originally spelled with a capital I, to indicate that it is a separate territory, abstracted from geography and its jurisdictions. But for decades, national laws have been applied domestically to digital communications, and issues are settled bilaterally between governments and courts on the one hand and providers or platforms on the other. Now, the European ruling against Facebook has crossed the line, projecting the laws of the bloc internationally. It calls attention to the need for regulation commonly agreed upon by nations, like the law of the high seas, and a multilateral mechanism or body to oversee regulation globally.

### FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



## Saffron side up

Ahead of assembly polls, BJP has rearranged Maharashtra's political field to its own advantage



GIRISH KUBER

MAHARASHTRA HAS NEVER seen such an intricate weave in its politics before this election. It is unprecedented as the state's polity may prove traditional caste biases redundant. Historically, Maharashtra has been a Congress bastion. The Congress had always enjoyed strong support amongst the state's Marathas who account for over 31 per cent of the population. But the Marathas are not only significant for their size. The community is synonymous with both money and muscle power. Maharashtra's cooperative movement, which distinguishes it from other states, is almost entirely controlled by the Marathas. Control of these cooperatives — be it sugar factories, dairies or banks — was always the key to power.

But not anymore. Devendra Fadnavis's rise and rise has changed the landscape. Fadnavis is a Brahmin — the community is just about 3.5 per cent of the state's population: Brahmins in the pre-Mandal era dominated the bureaucracy, but when it came to political power, they were not even on the fringes. The state has had just two Brahmin chief ministers, Manohar Joshi and the incumbent Fadnavis. Before the Maharashtra state came into being on May 1, 1960, there was B G Kher, who was CM of Bombay State. To break the Congress's hold over the Marathas, the BJP slowly won over OBCs, estimated to be around 30 per cent of the population. With Brahmins and upper castes already on their side, the BJP soon became a formidable force.

Then followed the breakdown of the Maratha power structure. To achieve this, the BJP adopted a two-pronged strategy: The ever-dangling carrot of Maratha reservation and engineering of near-en masse defections of leaders from the community. Fadnavis executed both with surgical skill. He dropped the reservation carrot at a time when the state was witnessing widespread Maratha mobilisations. Fadnavis's move to give reservation — though the order is yet to be cleared by the Supreme Court — not only nipped political unrest in the bud, but it eventually triggered a large exodus of Marathas to the BJP. In recent times, the BJP has wiped out the Maratha leadership, barring a few who had some gumption left — like Sharad Pawar — to take

on the "resourceful" ruling party. Those who initially refused to buckle were forced to change their mind, thanks to various investigation agencies. Now, the state BJP houses many such regional Maratha satraps who it earlier accused of corruption. More than comic relief — even as these once-upon-a-time "corrupt" appear on the BJP stage with saffron stoles — they offer a glimpse of an aggressive BJP.

Elections will prove whether such moves have been successful. They are unlikely to fail because the new-look BJP in Maharashtra has become a kind of conglomerate of winnable candidates, brought in from various parties. Though it will continue to serve the saffron juice, it will now have a dash of the Congress and NCP flavour.

Fadnavis has also skillfully — and completely — neutralised its troublesome ally, the Shiv Sena. In the saffron camp, the Sena dominated state politics as long as its founder, Balasaheb Thackeray, was around. Its marginalisation began with the Sena patriarch's demise, and today, it is a pale shadow of its former self.

Fadnavis kept the Sena at bay with the carrot-and-stick approach: The carrot of offering them "lucrative" posts, while the stick was the fear of breaking the party. It may sound strange, but today a large number of Sena MLAs owe their allegiance to Fadnavis, not to Uddhav Thackeray. Such was the Sena's plight that the BJP didn't even bother to show the courtesy of making a joint pre-poll announcement. Instead, it unilaterally announced its decision to contest 164 seats, leaving a mere 124 of the 288 seats to the Sena. The Sena, which demanded an equal number of seats initially, lost steam — it was compelled to accept whatever was left by the BJP. Between the two, the arrangement was that the Sena will play a bigger role in Maharashtra while the BJP will dominate parliamentary seats. That is history now, with the Sena conceding its space to the BJP. The election outcome may further marginalise the Sena. Though it is too early to predict, the upcoming election could permanently convert the Sena into the B-team of the BJP.

On the opposite side of the fence, the

Congress looks completely rudderless and demoralised. Not that it doesn't have capable leaders. What's holding it back is a complete absence of strategy. Like at the national level, it has failed miserably in creating its own counter-narrative, which voters can find credible. It is also rattled by the brazenness with which the BJP engineered defections. It appeared, for a while, that every Congress leader was up for grabs. And, barring a few, they were.

Adding to the Congress's crisis is its dilemma vis-a-vis Sharad Pawar and his NCP. While the Congress's Delhi leadership views the Maratha strongman as its secular saviour, the party's Maharashtra unit refuses to buy in to this charitable view. The misgivings the state Congress has about Pawar continue to spoil the chances of Opposition unity. It's rather unfortunate for India's grand old party that the leader it loathed till a few years ago is now its only hope in Maharashtra. But Pawar's problem is that his outfit is also an organisation of regional chieftains, many of whom have either joined the BJP or are scared of it, and hence, are reluctant to fight. Many of them have skeletons in their closets. The party has also failed to make inroads in cities, especially Mumbai and Thane, which have as many as 60 MLAs.

The Maharashtra Navanirman Sena made a promising start but soon faded into oblivion due to part-time politics by its founder, Raj Thackeray. The younger Thackeray displayed leadership qualities, but lost momentum even before the party could bloom. His early love for Narendra Modi, that later turned to hatred, also cost his party dearly.

Thus, the political situation in Maharashtra has become a conundrum for the voters. Candidates the people voted for the last time are now in the party they didn't vote for. And, the party that voters may want to see ruling the state, is filled with candidates who were punished the last time for the party they represented. With defections reaching unprecedented heights, saner voters will find it difficult to decide the lesser evil. That's certainly not a happy situation for democracy.

The writer is editor, Loksatta

## GANDHI, THE MINIMALIST

His critique of modernity shows millennials a more responsible consumption



### IN GOOD FAITH

SREEJITH SUGUNAN

ASA MILLENNIAL who completed his schooling in India during the decade sandwiched between the ongoing and previous millennia, my early memories of Gandhi are largely hagiographic. It is only recently that the Indian public sphere embraced the vocabulary of thinkers like BR Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh and V D Savarkar, who were critical of the Gandhian project. By the time we were born, non-violence had become a common-sense ethic embedded within our constitutional morality and liberal-democratic ethos. One didn't really need Gandhi to point out the importance of being non-violent.

Alongside this quintessentially postmodern political irreverence came a renewed scrutiny of Gandhi's attitude towards Dalits in India, the Zulus in South Africa and more recently, towards his grand-niece Manubehn. Gandhi's moral hygiene is under attack in India, and allegations of casteism, racism and misogyny continue to be levelled against him.

Does Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence have significance for the millennial and post-millennial generations whose understanding and experience of politics are vastly different from those addressed by Gandhi in colonial India? The issues we face today are different and global in nature, be it the climate crisis, inequality or issues of identity.

Gandhi also believed that minimalism led to freedom. But his minimalism differed, both in its form and substance. For Gandhi, minimalism was not a tool to find freedom. Minimalism was an end in itself and arose out of the ethical obligations to the "other", which included fellow humans, animals and nature. In this framework, freedom is achieved not in realising our best self but is implicit in those actions that recognise and respond to the other, especially the weak and the powerless.

Does Gandhi help us navigate these contemporary and urgent challenges? Yes, he does, but only if we start paying attention to the substantive aspects of Gandhi's critique of modernity. Minimalism or simple living is at the heart of Gandhi's idea of responsible living. Minimalism, as practised today, is focused on simplifying our life by implementing a philosophy of decluttering, whereby we remove distractions and reduce possessions that don't add value to our lives. And by doing this, we are able to focus better on our most important pursuits. The existential intentionality associated with this school of life makes it extremely empowering, especially at a time when our senses are constantly bombarded by attention grabbing algorithms and unending notifications. But the more important question remains: What values do we prioritise when it comes to intentional living?

Our answer has been to place freedom and happiness at the forefront of minimalism — freedom from "fear, worry, guilt, depression and the trappings of the consumer culture".

Gandhi also believed that minimalism led to freedom. But his minimalism differed, both in its form and substance. For Gandhi, minimalism was not a tool to find freedom. Minimalism was an end in itself and arose out of the ethical obligations to the "other", which included fellow humans, animals and nature. In this framework, freedom is achieved not in realising our best self but is implicit in those

actions that recognise and respond to the other, especially the weak and the powerless. Unlike the liberal self who can afford to be indifferent to the other, or the conservative self who is outrightly antagonistic, the Gandhian self trusts the other, even the "enemy", and acts out of love.

Gandhi's minimalism thus traverses a complex ethical web. It calls for intentional living by being conscious and considerate of the diverse and varied relationships we maintain with our own surroundings. It is not the passion of the self that is at the forefront of this minimalism but our responsibility towards the other. It is in this vein that Gandhi asks us to be "trustees" of this planet, not its owner. He reminds us to use technology as a means to increase our moral fibre, not shareholder dividends. He shows us how to be responsible consumers, in what we eat, wear and use, by being conscious of the unintended consequences of our consumption practices. And most importantly, he wants us to be self-sufficient or self-reliant as individuals.

Because it is only when we are not dependent on exploitative economic and social arrangements that we can inspire ourselves and others to not cooperate with systems that don't fulfill ethical obligations. Gandhi's minimalism hopes to thus liberate the other, and in the process liberate one's own self.

The writer is a research scholar at the department of political science, JNU

## OCTOBER 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**TEXTILE STRIKE**  
THE LONGEST EVER textile workers strike in Delhi has entered the 102nd day. Around 24,000 workers belonging to the capital's five mills have been on strike since June 27 on the call given by the Sangharsh Samiti comprising nine unions. During the agitation, over 700 workers have courted arrest, countless rallies have been organised, one "Delhi bandh" held, and another is scheduled for October 11. With elections around the corner, the political parties have belatedly begun to make sympathetic noises. Two governments — the Desai government fell about a month after the strike — have promised to help end the strike, but although the matter

has been referred to the Delhi labour tribunal, no immediate settlement is in sight.

**SOVIET WITHDRAWAL**  
SOVIET PRESIDENT LEONID Brezhnev announced that the Soviet Union would withdraw up to 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany. At the same time, Brezhnev warned the US and West Germany that the Warsaw Pact "would not watch indifferently the efforts of NATO militarists" to station medium-range nuclear rockets in Western Europe. Brezhnev said the decision to reduce Soviet forces was aimed at speeding up the six-year negotiations on East-West force reductions in Central Europe.

**CONG-CPM ALLIANCE**  
CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE member, Chandrajit Yadav, held talks with the West Bengal CPM leaders on the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. Yadav came as a special emissary of the Congress President Devaraj Urs to gauge the CPM's attitudes towards the Congress and explore the possibility of an electoral alliance. Yadav said that the CPM leaders had agreed with him that the prime need now was to fight the twin evils of authoritarianism as represented by Indira Gandhi and that of communalism of the Jana Sangh-RSS type. Yadav described today's talks as "breaking of the ice" in the relations between the two parties.



# 11 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Boris Johnson calls it a compromise. But, once again, the Conservatives are talking only to themselves, not to Ireland and the EU." — THE GUARDIAN

## Gandhi for the future

His vision of a liberal, non-violent society can save humanity from ecological and other disasters



SUDARSHAN IYENGAR

I NEED GANDHI today for three reasons. First and foremost, I need him for self-development. The most important lesson that I have learned from him is how he was eternally vigilant about his self and went on correcting and developing his inner self. Ignorance and intellectual arrogance have made many reject him and as a result invite disaster in their personal lives. Honesty and integrity are at stake in personal and public life. The Western libertarian thesis promised that the virtue of civil society, if left to its own devices, would include good character, honesty, duty, self-sacrifice, honour, service, self-discipline, tolerance, respect, justice, civility, fortitude, courage, integrity, diligence, patriotism, consideration for others, thrift and reverence. Unfortunately, gluttony, pride, selfishness, and greed have become prominent. It has permitted permissive behaviour and left the aberrant behaviour to be corrected by systemic checks loaded with ever new technologies.

Gandhi, too, was a strong votary of individual liberty. But he differed from Mill and Spencer. His concept of liberty for *vyakti* (individual) arose from the individual's responsibility for self-regulation. He practised and subscribed to 11 vows. *Satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *brahmacharya* (self-control), *aparigraha* (non-possession), *asteya* (non-stealing), *abhaya* (fearlessness), *asvaad* (palate), *shareer shram* (bread-labour) were eight vows for self-regulation, and *swadeshi* (local), *sprushya bhavna* (removal of untouchability) and *sarva dharma sama bhava* (tolerance or equal respect for all religions) were for bringing back rural, decentralised economy and bringing harmony among castes and religion. This has to be woven in education and practice.

The second reason I need Gandhi is to work toward peace among warring sections of humanity. *Samashiti* or humanity as a whole is at war. Caste, race and religion are a political façade and a socio-cultural menace. Gandhi had sensed this in South Africa and came up with *ahimsa* or love force. It was not only a strategic alliance of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis, but of all castes and creeds that lived in South Africa and suffered the humiliation and violation of human rights. He earnestly wanted humanity to live together in peace and harmony. He was "Gandhibhai" for all and he was fearless in facing any brute force. After his return to India in 1915, he could touch the hearts of all and identified himself with all. He carried them and led them to *swaraj*, although conceding that it would only be political freedom to begin with. His message reached the world humanity and people saw new hope amidst two world

wars. As India reached political freedom, he was betrayed by leaders and not by people, and hunger for power and hatred speared him. He was down but not out. He walked alone in Noakhali to wipe tears and apply the love force which he had expressed in *Hind Swaraj* quoting Tulsidas: *Of religion, pity, or love, is the root, as egotism of the body/Therefore, we should not abandon pity, so long as we are alive.*

Gandhi's faith in *daya* or love force was so deep and he practised it with such passion that during the communal riots before and after Independence, then Governor General Lord Mountbatten famously said, "In Punjab, we have 55,000 soldiers, and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal, our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting."

Unfortunately, it is not only hatred that is back with a vengeance, it is deeply tempered by control over natural resources and concentration of economic power among communities and nation states. In our own country, newly defined nationalism has become hyper and is threatening to tear apart the finely woven socio-cultural fabric of the country. It is not incidental that after struggling for more than 60 years, the UN declared in 2007 Gandhi's birthday as the day of non-violence. Humanity has to embrace all those who have been hurt intentionally or unintentionally and heal the injury with love.

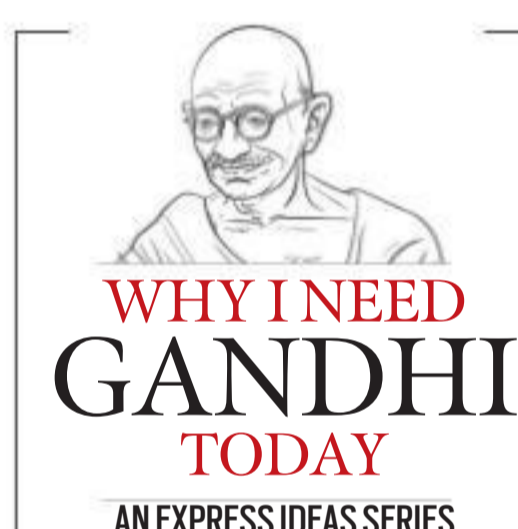
The third reason I need Gandhi today is because his vision of non-violent society will save the humanity from ecological disaster that seems to be looming large. Our relation with *prakruti* (nature) has to significantly alter. Humanity in general has been optimistic and so it should be. But, a business as usual approach can, and has, landed the humanity in deep crisis. In recent times, however, many of the crises are manmade. Gandhi had sensed it and voiced in 1909 in *Hind Swaraj*: "Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word 'civilisation'. Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life."

He questioned whether big houses, many clothes, big cars, fancy food, globe destructing war material and luxuriant indulgence and leisure, was modern civilisation. In the 1930s, he wrote that if India wanted to ape the British standard of living then, it would require resources equivalent of three earths. How prophetic! The market is not innocently responding to price signals. It is manipulating tastes and preferences in favour of a particular self-indulgent life style and converting them into demand

Gandhi talked about local first and global later. Swadeshi is promoting a decentralised economy that is mainly rural. Gandhi does not deny the relevance and use of technology for survival. But he called for political, social and individual behaviour to become self-aware and substantially change.

Gandhi offered to India and the world a wise and compassionate vision of harmony between *vyakti*, *samashiti* and *prakruti*.

The writer is former Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad



## A buffer called Saudi Arabia

Cooperation with the West Asian kingdom could shield India's oil and gas assets against Pakistani threat



OVER THE BARREL BY VIKRAM S MEHTA

TWO UNCONNECTED "developments" and one "fact" lead me to suggest India should deepen its economic linkages with Saudi Arabia through interlocking cross country investments. The first development is the recent attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil and gas infrastructure. The second is the muscular, albeit irresponsible, anti Indian diatribe by the Pakistani leadership. They have introduced the nuclear option in their language. The "fact" is the location of a substantial part of our petroleum assets on or offshore our Western coastline. In my view, when seen through a common lens, these three matters reveal a heightened security risk scenario for India but also offer a non-military option for mitigating the consequential outcome. Saudi Arabian investments in India's petroleum infrastructure and vice versa lie at the core of this option.

Saudi Arabia's oil and gas infrastructure have been attacked repeatedly over the past several months. On May 12, four oil tankers, two of which belonged to Saudi Arabia were damaged by limpet mines. On May 14, the East West oil pipeline that runs for 1,200 km across the Arabian peninsula was bombed. On August 17, its super giant Shaybah oil field was sabotaged. And on September 14, unmanned drones destroyed the Abqaiq oil processing facilities and the giant Khurais oil field. This latter attack took out 5.7 mbd or 60 per cent of Saudi Arabia's production of 9.8mbd. It was the largest disruption of oil supplies ever.

The Abqaiq attack compelled India to contemplate drawing on its strategic reserves and also look for alternative supplies. Fortunately, the supply shortfall was made up quickly and prices which had shot up by 12 per cent in the immediate aftermath returned to pre-attack

levels within days. India did not suffer greatly from this disruption.

The attack also compelled India to ask questions related to Middle East geopolitics. Is the status quo sustainable? How might the US react? Would they limit their response to the non-violent options of sanctions and cyber attacks? Or would they support a (covert or overt) retaliatory attack on Iranian assets? (The Kharg island facilities would be a proportionate target). India has admitted it has no clear answers to these questions. In fact, it appears, no one does. US President Donald Trump is talking of "maximum pressure" but he has refrained from a military response. Iran has said "no war, no negotiation" but it has signalled that it may be amenable to the resumption of talks.

The attack has also compelled reflection on the state of the security of India's oil and gas infrastructure. The Saudi assets were ringed by sophisticated US Patriot anti-missile defence systems. Yet, 17 facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais were hit by 25 low flying cruise missiles. What does this say about the sanctity of defence systems against the forces of weaponised artificial intelligence. How vulnerable are our oil and gas assets on the western coast? Specifically, the Mumbai High oil and gas fields, the Jamnagar refinery complex and the LNG regasification terminals in Dahej, Hazira, Dabhol and Cochin. What, if any, are the steps that India should take to tighten security safeguards, given the heightened anti-India rhetoric by Pakistan. And, perhaps most important, what should it do to lengthen the odds of an attack against such facilities?

It is in the context of this last question that I suggest that India should encourage cross country investments with Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan is heavily in debt to Saudi Arabia and it depends hugely on the kingdom's largesse to avoid economic collapse. Saudi Arabia has consequently considerable leverage over Pakistan and the latter in turn cannot afford to ignore Saudi economic interests when war gaming an offensive strategy against India. Were the Saudis invested in India oil and gas assets, it might deter Pakistan from bringing these assets into their strategic calculus.

In this regard, there are already two initiatives on the anvil. If even one of them is successful, Saudi Arabia would acquire a ma-

terial stake in this sector. One is the 40 billion dollar joint venture refinery project in Ratnagiri. The partners are Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil. This project is currently stalled because of land acquisition and environmental clearance. And as matters stand, it could be years before it sees the light of day. All parties, however, remain committed. The second is the investment by Saudi Aramco in Reliance Industries. Mukesh Ambani has announced that Reliance and Aramco are in discussion about the acquisition of a 20 per cent stake by Aramco in these businesses. The commercial logic for Aramco is compelling. It would secure a captive outlet for 5,00,000 barrels of crude oil a day and a foothold in India's downstream market. For India (as distinct from Reliance), the strategic logic is comparably compelling. It would give Aramco a material stake in the petroleum sector.

There is a third initiative, albeit in the opposite direction that should also be considered. This relates to Saudi Aramco's planned offering through an international public offer (IPO) of up to 5 per cent of its shares to the public. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) is driving this initiative. Its success is a matter of great personal importance to him especially since the financing of his economic plan is centred around the revenues raised through the IPO. The IPO may get delayed because of the attacks and the escalating tensions in the region, but when it is finally announced, India should look at it through a financial and strategic lens. The purchase of even a small stake would please MBS and deepen his commitment to prevent Pakistani adventurism.

No one should assume that such cross country investments will provide an iron clad guarantee. There can be no such assurance. Pakistan's behaviour is now so influenced by political emotions, domestic pressures and jingoistic fervour that there is little room for rational logic and dialogue. But as any student of history will know, it does not take much for irresponsible rhetoric to translate into violence. India should consequently pursue any and all ideas that lengthen the odds of such an outcome. A "Saudi buffer" is one such idea.

The writer is chairman & senior fellow, Brookings India

Pakistan is dependent on Saudi largesse to avoid economic collapse. It cannot afford to ignore the kingdom's economic interests. It would be cautious in targeting Indian assets in which Saudi had a stake. India should, therefore, for strategic and security reasons encourage Saudi Arabia to invest in our petroleum sector.

## VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

### DHAKA WOES

IN INDIA, THE growing and deepening ties between New Delhi and Dhaka are widely touted as an unmitigated diplomatic success. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India, then, assumes great significance. The view from our eastern neighbour, though, is not as rosy. Sarwar Jahan Chowdhury, writing in *The Dhaka Tribune*, remarks, "The renewal of the BJP government in Delhi for another term isn't something very pleasant for Bangladesh — uncertainty about the consequence of NRC in Assam, little Indian support on the Rohingya issue, persecution of Muslims in India, oppression of Kashmiris, and more."

After recounting some of the diplomatic highs between the two countries, Chowdhury implies that the relationship with Bangladesh is particularly significant for India: "Bangladesh's good relations with India and support for the latter have helped India ward off, to some extent, the notion that India is disliked in South Asia by its neighbours due to its big-brotherly behaviour. It is also important for Bangladesh to resume the already reasonably good tie with its big neighbour after the re-election of the incumbent and try resolving the other bilateral issue with the latter. The people of Bangladesh are generally a bit suspicious

about India, and give and takes with tangible benefits would actually help to mend this traditional doubt. Hence, the ongoing trip of Bangladeshi PM to India bears significance."

The key breakthrough now required is on the issue of sharing of the Teesta's waters: "The water sharing issue of more common rivers in the conflict between Delhi and the West Bengal state government of populist Mamata Banerjee. On one hand, water sharing of international rivers is a subject of the centre, on the other Delhi keeps telling Bangladesh that it has to move in the spirit of federalism and take Kolkata on board before making a decision on water. Mamata, on the other hand, says she needs central compensation in terms of investment in water preservation before she agrees to release due share of Bangladesh's water. This has been going on for years now. It's time for Modi to act and solve the issue. There are options, and which one he takes is India's internal matter. There is no point dragging Bangladesh into India's internal spirit of the federalism debate."

### OPTIMISM ON INDIA

The editorial in *The Dhaka Tribune* on October 4, though, is much more positive about India: "For Bangladesh, staying on the path to sustainable development involves

fostering a strong partnership with neighbouring India. In that regard, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been tireless in her efforts, and her current visit to India is an example of the sort of diplomacy required to ensure Bangladesh's position in the world, and to ensure that our citizens are provided for."

It also remarks on the significance of the concrete outcomes from the visit: "Most importantly, the main purpose of this visit is the signing of almost a dozen memorandums of understanding, covering a diverse range of issues such as youth and sports, ocean research, ICT, and the establishment of economic zones."

### THE SEDITION ALBATROSS

The charge of sedition filed against 49 artists, intellectuals and other public figures due to their open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to have ceded, in a limited sense, the democratic, liberal moral high-ground that India once enjoyed vis-à-vis Pakistan. The October 6 editorial in *Dawn* begins on an alarmist, rhetorical note: "India's descent into totalitarianism is acquiring chilling new dimensions by the day."

After remarking on the fact that the letter merely opposed the ideology and working of the ruling party and government, the editorial goes on to criticise the BJP government for what it perceives as its high-handed, anti-dem-

ocratic behaviour: "Since it came to power at the centre five years ago, the BJP has embarked upon an organised and relentless campaign to not only quash dissent in the public discourse but to vilify such dissent as being 'unpatriotic.'"

The editorial is symptomatic of a larger trend that can be spotted in the Pakistan print media — particularly in *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*. Beginning with the reports of lynchings that became common after the BJP came to power in 2014, political developments in India have been used to discredit New Delhi's stance on bilateral and multilateral issues. This position relies on a logical leap — that the Indian state is a reflection of the politics of the government of the day. This is most visible currently, with the Kashmir issue.

The real nub of the argument in the editorial, though, comes at the end, when a comparison with the situation in Kashmir is drawn and the Indian media is criticised for being a "cheerleader of the government". The editorial ends on the following note: "This craven surrender (by the Indian media) was perhaps never better illustrated than when... Kashmir was stripped of its special autonomy two months ago. The triumphalism that coursed through the media landscape, with barely a murmur of dissent — above all, the total media blackout in the beleaguered territory — leaves no doubt that the world's biggest democracy is no longer worthy of that distinction."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GAME IS BIGGER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'For a free and fair game' (IE, October 4). There is no doubting the contributions of the likes of Sourav Ganguly and Sachin Tendulkar. But they cannot be allowed to breach the conflict of interest clause.

Bal Govind, Noida

### FLOOD WARNING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Write in water' (IE, October 3). The revival of water bodies is the need of the hour. Improper drainage system is another reason for these fatal floods.

Aayush Sapra, Ujjain

### EMERGENCY REDUX

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'PM speech not aired, DD official suspended' (IE, October 3). The suspension is reminiscent of a similar incident during the Emergency. A news reader of an All India Radio station in Madhya Pradesh was suspended because he did not prefix the word "mammoth" before the word "rally". This rally was addressed

### 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](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

by then PM Indira Gandhi. Harishankar Upadhyay, Thane