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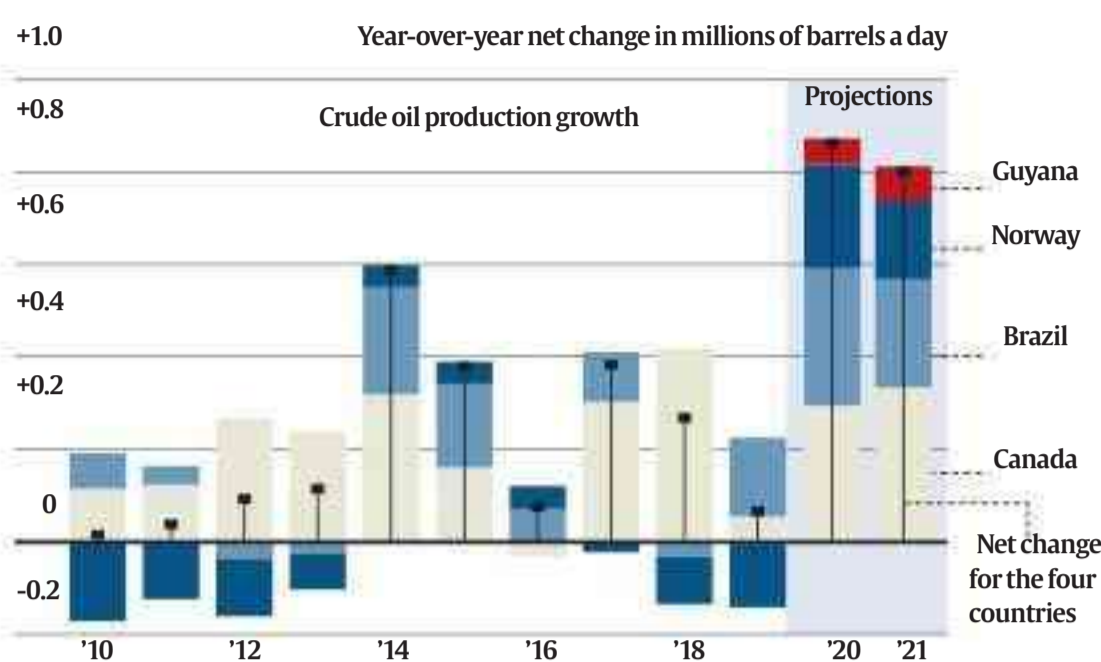
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TELLING NUMBERS

From four unlikely sources, a gush of crude may be on way

DRIVING NEW PRODUCTION



Source: IHS Markit Via The New York Times

AMONG THE reasons why Saudi Aramco has pushed ahead with what could be the world's largest initial stock offering ever, is an impending flood that is likely to hit global oil markets over the next couple of years.

The looming boom in production, which will likely push down prices and bring relief to oil importers like India, will come from unexpected quarters — Brazil, Canada, Norway, and Guyana, *The New York Times* reported.

Together, these countries could add nearly a million barrels per day (bpd) to the market in 2020, and nearly a million more in 2021. The current world crude output is about 80 million bpd.

NORWAY: Norway's rebound from 19 years of decline began a few weeks ago as Equinor ASA began production at its Johan Sverdrup deep-water field in the North Sea. The oil field, which is estimated to hold between 1.9 billion barrels and 3 billion barrels, will eventually produce 440,000 bpd, lifting Norway's output from 1.3 million bpd to 1.6 million bpd

next year, and 1.8 million bpd in 2021.

BRAZIL: In Brazil, after years of scandal and delays, new offshore production platforms are coming online. Production has climbed over the last year by 300,000 bpd, and the country is expected to add another 460,000 bpd by the end of 2021. Brazil's government will soon hold a major auction for offshore drilling rights.

CANADA: Work on the 1,000-mile Line 3 pipeline that will carry oil from Canada's Alberta fields to the American city of Superior in the border state of Wisconsin, is nearing completion. The pipeline could increase Canada's oil production by about 10%, or half a million bpd.

GUYANA: The most striking change is likely to be in Guyana, a small country on the northern tip of South America. Exxon Mobil has made a string of major discoveries over the last four years here. Production will reach 120,000 bpd early next year, and is likely to rise to at least 750,000 bpd by 2025.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

RCEP: Why India has said no

India believes that the trade deal doesn't provide adequate protection against possible surges of imported goods. In particular, India is concerned about cheap Chinese goods flooding the domestic market



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with other leaders at the 3rd RCEP Summit in Bangkok on Monday. PTI

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 4

ON MONDAY, India decided to hold off on signing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) until "significant outstanding issues" were resolved, even as all other 15 countries involved in the negotiations stated that they were ready to sign the mega trade deal in 2020.

Unsatisfactory negotiations pertaining to India's trade with China — India has an over \$50 billion trade deficit — is one of the major reasons for New Delhi not joining in at this stage.

What is the RCEP?

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a trade deal that was being negotiated between 16 countries. They include the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and the six countries with which the bloc has free trade agreements (FTAs) — India, Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand.

The purpose of the deal is to create an "integrated market" spanning all 16 countries. This means that it would be easier for the products and services of each of these countries to be available across the entire region.

The RCEP is billed to be the "largest" regional trading agreement yet — the countries involved account for almost half of the world's population, contribute over a quarter of world exports, and make up around 30% of the global Gross Domestic Product (the value of all goods and services produced in a year).

Negotiations to chart out the details of this deal have been on since 2013, and all participating countries had earlier aimed to finalise it by November 2019.

So what is the problem?

All the RCEP participating countries, except for India, have "concluded" text-based negotiations for all 20 chapters of the proposed deal, as well as their market access issues — and they are expected to be ready to ink the pact in 2020.

But India has held back because of "significant outstanding issues, which remain unresolved".

Stack and blueprint: Building digital infra for national health database

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 4

WITH THE launch last year of Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest state-funded health insurance programme, and the slow but certain progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the challenge of making quality and affordable healthcare accessible to every one of India's 135 crore citizens has acquired an altogether new dimension.

Effective use of technology is critical to this project — this is where the National Health Stack and its rulebook of sorts, the National Digital Health Blueprint, drawn up by a committee led by the former UIDAI chairman and Communications and IT secretary J Satyanarayana, comes in. The Committee submitted its final report to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan last week.

So, what is the National Health Stack (NHS)?

Unveiled by the NITI Aayog last year, NHS is digital infrastructure built with the aim of making the health insurance system more transparent and robust, while factoring in the uniqueness of India's health sector, and the political realities of federalism. There are five components of NHS:

- An electronic national health registry that would serve as a single source of health data for the nation;
- a coverage and claims platform that would serve as the building blocks for large health protection schemes, allow for the horizontal and vertical expansion of schemes like Ayushman Bharat by states, and enable a robust system of fraud detection;
- a federated personal health records (PHR) framework that would serve the twin purposes of access to their own health data by patients, and the availability of health data for medical research, which is critical for advancing the understanding of human health;
- a national health analytics platform that would provide a holistic view combin-

ing information on multiple health initiatives, and feed into smart policymaking, for instance, through improved predictive analytics; and

■ other horizontal components including a unique digital health ID, health data dictionaries and supply chain management for drugs, payment gateways, etc., shared across all health programmes.

And what is the National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB)?

The NDHB is the architectural document for the implementation of the NHS. Its vision is "to create a national digital health ecosystem that supports universal health coverage in an efficient, accessible, inclusive, affordable, timely and safe manner, through provision of a wide range of data, information, and infrastructure services, duly leveraging open, interoperable, standards-based digital systems, and ensuring the security, confidentiality and privacy of health-related personal information".



ALREADY IN DEFICIT

RCEP Member	India's Trade Balance in 2018-19
ASEAN	-\$21.85 billion
China	-\$53.58 billion
South Korea	-\$12.05 billion
Japan	-\$7.91 billion
New Zealand	-\$0.25 billion
Australia	-\$9.61 billion

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

The deal in its present form does not fully reflect "the basic spirit and the agreed guiding principles of RCEP", according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"When I measure the RCEP Agreement with respect to the interests of all Indians, I do not get a positive answer. Therefore, neither the Talisman of Gandhiji nor my own conscience permit me to join RCEP," he said in his statement at the 3rd RCEP Summit in Bangkok on Monday.

What are the outstanding issues?

Key issues that have prevented India from coming on board include "inadequate" protection against surges in imports. This is a major concern for India, as its industry has voiced fears that cheaper products from China would "flood" the market. India has been seeking an auto-trigger mechanism that would allow it to raise tariffs on products in instances where imports cross a certain threshold.

India has also not received any credible assurances on its demand for more market access, and its concerns over non-tariff barriers. RCEP participants like China are known to have used non-tariff barriers in the past to prevent India from growing its exports to the country.

India had also reportedly expressed apprehensions on lowering and eliminating tariffs on several products from the country. Its concerns on a "possible circumvention"

of rules of origin — the criteria used to determine the national source of a product — were also not addressed. Current provisions in the deal reportedly do not prevent countries from routing, through other countries, products on which India would maintain higher tariffs. This is anticipated to allow countries like China to pump in more products.

The Prime Minister had earlier told *The Bangkok Post* in the run-up to the Summit that India has "long pushed for other countries to allow greater movement of labour and services" in return for opening up its own market. Concerns over "unsustainable trade deficits" also needed to be addressed, he had said.

"It needs to be recognised that opening the vast Indian market must be matched by openings in some areas where our businesses can also benefit," he was quoted as having said. He added that the country had put forward "reasonable proposals in a clear manner", and was engaged in negotiations with sincerity.

Despite India already having separate, bilateral FTAs with most RCEP nations, it has recorded trade deficits with these countries (see chart above).

During negotiations, it was also not able to get a favourable outcome on its demands on the base year that would be used to reduce the tariffs on the products that would be traded as part of the pact.

India had sought to safeguard the inter-

ests of its domestic industry through measures like seeking a 2014 base year for tariff reductions instead of 2013, when negotiations on RCEP began, as it has raised import duties on several products between 2014 and 2019. Using a base year before 2014 would mean a drastic drop in the import duties on these products.

What are the concerns of India Inc., the civil society and the political opposition?

Throughout the RCEP negotiations, several sections of the Indian industry have raised concerns over India signing the deal. They have argued that some domestic sectors may take a hit due to cheaper alternatives from other participant countries. For instance, the dairy industry was expected to face stiff competition from Australia and New Zealand. Similarly, steel and textiles sectors have also demanded protection.

Given India's poor past track record with its existing FTAs, civil society bodies and trade experts have also raised questions over the possible gains from an RCEP deal.

In addition to opposition from the Left parties and the RSS's Swadeshi Jagran Manch, members of the previous United Progressive Alliance government, which had initiated the RCEP trade talks, also asked the government to avoid signing it.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh was reported to have said that the move would be "suicidal" for India, after the hits to the economy due to measures like demonetisation and the implementation of GST.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday said that joining RCEP would deal a "body blow" to the country's economy. She alleged that the economy was "under siege", and the government was "under complete denial". Sonia predicted that the move would result in "untold hardship for farmers, shopkeepers and small and medium enterprises".

What does this decision mean for India?

As all other RCEP nations have agreed to sign the treaty on the terms negotiated, they will likely try to persuade India to agree to the same. It remains to be seen whether those efforts ultimately lead. "All RCEP Participating Countries will work together to resolve these outstanding issues in a mutually satisfactory way. India's final decision will depend on satisfactory resolution of these issues," the joint statement by RCEP members said.

Is all the data going to be safe/secure?

One of the biggest concerns following the high-profile rollout of Ayushman Bharat has been regarding data security and privacy of patients. The concerns were aggravated after an Assam minister and a senior official of the National Health Authority posted patient details on Twitter.

More than a year after the Justice Srikrishna Committee prepared a draft data privacy law, there has been little meaningful movement on it. Critics have argued that in the backdrop of the Supreme Court's privacy judgment, the data privacy law should ideally have preceded the implementation of Ayushman Bharat.

The NDHB says: "The consent of the citizen plays a major role in ensuring that collection of data is done in a manner consistent with legal rights... It is also important to ensure that... the data captured is used and disclosed (in an identifiable or anonymised shape) in a manner appropriate in law and preserving the citizen-directed constraints."



WATER AND AIR, THE TWO ESSENTIAL FLUIDS ON WHICH ALL LIFE DEPENDS, HAVE BECOME GLOBAL GARBAGE CANS. — JACQUES-YVES COUSTEAU

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

No pact for India

In RCEP negotiations, Delhi has been consistent. It is right to put its own interests first



Soumya Kanti Ghosh

AFTER SEVEN YEARS, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations, started by leaders from the ASEAN countries and their free trade agreement (FTA) partners in November 2012, have concluded in Bangkok. The good thing is that India still has some unresolved issues, and this has resulted in it holding back its decision to join the RCEP. In fact, India has decided to maintain a consistent stand throughout the negotiations, and it is not reneging on any of the demands of its trading partners. It has decided to keep its self-interest at the forefront.

With many mature economies struggling to regain ground lost because of the global financial crisis in 2008, emerging economies are in focus for growth opportunities. The international trade focus has clearly shifted from the West towards developing economies in Asia and other regions. The developing markets' share of global trade has doubled from 16 per cent in 1991 to 32 per cent in 2011, an average increase of 0.8 percentage points a year. This was accelerated by the global recession. Since 2008, the rise has been almost twice as fast, at 1.5 percentage points a year. This significant increase in South-South trade is turning established trade patterns and practices on their head, and thus, the importance of India being a part of RCEP, but on its own terms, has never been so crucial. Interestingly, India has been vigorously pushing for such South-South trade through policies like "Look East" unveiled in recent times.

Coming back to the specifics of RCEP, when we look at the goods trade dynamic, India ran a merchandise trade deficit with 11 out of the 15 other members of RCEP in 2018-19, totaling \$107.28 billion. India's overall merchandise trade deficit was \$184.00 billion in 2018-19. In 2018-19, 34 per cent of India's imports were from this region, while only 21 per cent of India's exports went to this region. China is the biggest trade partner amongst these coun-

tries and the major concerns that India had throughout the negotiations were with regard to China.

China is a trade behemoth whose growth is built on the way it captured the world's manufacturing space. There is a fear that the imports of cheaper electronic and engineering goods from China could increase further post the signing of RCEP which in turn could have a negative impact on the manufacturing sector. Therefore, Indian negotiators have taken steps to ensure that domestic manufacturing is effectively protected from unfair competition.

For example, certain issues such as the move towards 2014 as the base year for tariff reduction, an automatic trigger mechanism to curb sudden surges in imports and the decision on which products it doesn't want to offer the same tariff concessions to all countries, need to be sorted out. India's electronics and mobile industry, for instance, is moving towards self-sufficiency, and a move towards 2014 rates could mean a huge step backwards.

Another area of hard bargaining for India is our unfulfilled want for exemptions from the Ratchet obligations. As per the Ratchet mechanism, if a country signs a trade agreement with another country where it relaxes tariffs and quotas on merchandise exports and imports, it cannot go back on them and bring in measures that are more restrictive. India wants a clear exemption from the Ratchet obligations, so that in the future, to protect the interests of exporters and importers, it can bring restrictive measures, if required.

This apart, across the country, many farmers and milk cooperatives have raised their concern on RCEP. In India, several small and marginal farmers are dependent on milk for their daily expenses as income from crops is seasonal. If India signs the RCEP, without exemptions for dairy and its products, it would allow the dairy industry of Australia and New Zealand to unfairly target its huge market. It is notable that New

Zealand exports 93.4 per cent of its milk powder, 94.5 per cent of its butter and 83.6 per cent of its cheese produce. However, the government has given its assurance that it would protect the interests of homegrown milk cooperatives through adequate safeguards.

So far, India has proceeded with extreme caution as just entering into agreements and focusing on tariff reduction has not helped the country, as it has seen in the mixed experience of its FTAs. The merchandise trade data shows that over the years, the merchandise trade deficit has widened with the ASEAN countries.

India's main requirement is that of a balanced outlook which is a win-win for all. India is running a services trade surplus with the world. Therefore, it is trying to push for a strong agreement on the services trade, including a deal on easier movement of skilled manpower. Even the IMF has said that services trade could be a substantial engine of growth for India and other south Asian economies. As per ILO data, around 58 per cent of India's workforce is medium-skilled and 16 per cent is high skilled, and to protect their interest is of paramount importance.

All these factors need to be kept in mind before India enters the RCEP. India commands around 1.7 per cent share of the world's total goods exports ranking 20th as per the WTO 2018 data. For achieving a 5 per cent share in world exports (the government targets \$1 trillion exports out of total global exports of \$20 trillion), India must build its manufacturing capabilities, and the recent steps by the government are in that direction. How India manoeuvres the geo-political space will determine how successful it is in becoming an export behemoth (in its quest towards a \$5 trillion economy). To this end India's current tough posturing is perfectly justified.

The writer is Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

Only a broad coalition can beat Delhi's smog, and a conversation between city and village is essential for it

DESPIITE A LIGHT shower, Delhi is having its breath taken away with air pollution levels at a three-year high. The government's odd-even traffic-reduction scheme has kicked in again, and Opposition leader Vijay Goel has defied it yet again in symbolic protest, at the trifling political cost of a Rs 4,000 traffic fine. It is precisely the sort of adversarial response that leads nowhere, in an annual crisis that cannot be defeated without a broad coalition. Elsewhere, a cumulative tragedy on such a scale, which could be blighting the lives of generations of citizens, would have seen the birth of a green political party. In Delhi, which goes to the polls in a few months, politics remains the game of blaming everyone else. The Delhi government blames neighbouring states for not curbing post-harvest stubble burning, which contributes to the problem, and the Opposition dismisses the government's odd-even scheme as a "gimmick". The pollution crisis results from the convergence of numerous factors — changing demographics and automobile usage patterns, changing agricultural practices in the neighbourhood, the rapid growth of concrete jungles, possibly even changing weather patterns, since the peaks coincide with a spell of windless days. But politically, posturing has trumped rigorous analysis and modelling, and therefore interventions remain contentious.

In the run-up to Delhi polls, can a coalition develop between politics, policy and technology, underpinned by the public will? Can a conversation develop between the states involved, and more importantly, between town and country? The issue of stubble burning is presented as a conflict between runaway urbanisation and stressed agriculture, between the farmer's right to make a living and the city-dweller's right to breathe. The town could pay for the disposal of the countryside's stubble, but the deal must be intelligently brokered. Placing legal curbs on stubble-burning in farms and automobile use in the cities may be parts of a solution, but such standalone interventions are insufficient. For a united front to develop, the blame game and moralistic point-scoring that we see every year has to stop.

By all accounts, besides, the public will has not been adequately mobilised. While concerned citizens and public interest institutions founded the clean air movement, despite the opposition or indifference of industry and government, the crisis at hand must be faced with a deepening of public involvement. Individual choices contribute to its making, and habits change only by conviction, not coercion by law and the apparatus of the state. The scope of the annual crisis must be rethought. This is no longer just Delhi's problem. A problem of such magnitude should qualify as a national disaster. It is everyone's problem.

DIMAPUR DEADLOCK

Naga talks process needs to be nurtured at all costs. Both Centre and rebels must respect popular aspirations for peace

THE CEASEFIRE IN Nagaland continues to hold, though the Centre had set October 31 as the deadline to conclude the peace deal with the NSCN-IM. The deadline has passed and there is no clarity yet on an accord. However, it is a welcome sign that all parties involved in the talks seem willing to wait and iron out the differences that appear to be holding them back from concluding a peace agreement. The talks between the Centre and Naga rebels, primarily the NSCN-IM, have been held for 22 years and the parties have covered much ground over these years. The Naga civil society, too, has invested heavily in the peace process and prepared the ground for a negotiated settlement to what has often been described as India's longest running insurgency. The rebels need to respect this sentiment for peace and the Centre must provide the negotiating space for the former to satisfy its constituency.

Reports suggest that the deadlock is over the rebels' demand for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland. They hint at the concept of "shared sovereignty" that the NSCN-IM leadership had talked about soon after it signed the Indo-Naga Framework Agreement in August 2015. The details of that agreement have not been revealed, but the leeway for such conceptual innovations may arguably have reduced following the Centre's actions in J&K. In August, the Narendra Modi government ended the special status accorded to J&K, which had allowed the state to have its own flag. While the Naga rebels have climbed down from their demand for full independence, they have persisted with the demand for Nagalim, a territorial entity much larger than the present state of Nagaland and which includes Naga inhabited areas that fall in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This is a fraught demand that can trigger unrest in Nagaland's neighbourhood. In fact, non-Naga populations in the region have warned of action if any attempt is made to redraw the existing state boundaries.

Both the Centre and the NSCN-IM will have to nuance their positions if a peace agreement is to become a reality. The rebels will have to re-imagine the idea of a Naga nation and de-link it from territory. The Centre may have to respect the sentiments of political groups founded on notions of ethnic exclusivity and desist from imposing unitarian notions of nationhood. Peace is precious, it must be protected at all costs.

PICTURE THIS

Climate activists in France are stealing President Macron's portraits. He might well overlook such benign protest

THE COURT IN Bourg-en-Bresse, a small township in eastern France, couldn't quite figure out how removing portraits of French President Emmanuel Macron from public offices would "save humanity from ecological disaster". The court is not alone. Across France, the judiciary has to decide whether stealing official portraits of the head of state is a crime worthy of prison time, or merely a creative act of civil disobedience. For once, there may be an easy answer. After all, the country practically invented the idea of revolution: What is some petty larceny compared to the guillotine or even May '68?

Through 2019, over 130 portraits of Macron have been stolen from town halls. The portrait-removers are mostly climate activists, who claim that the president's likeness is being removed to draw attention to his hypocrisy: Despite his rhetoric and promises about moving away from fossil fuels and the dangers of global warming, France is lagging behind in its international commitments in reducing emissions. To win the election, Macron — a relative novice in French politics — promised a contradiction in terms. A centrist revolution. He wanted to be friendly to business and please workers, fight for climate change while ensuring no real disruptions to the economy. And now, no one is pleased. When he tried to introduce a tax on fossil fuels last year, the country erupted with the Yellow Jacket protests, sometimes violent, in solidarity with the transport industry.

The portrait-thieves seem to have a simple aim. To call their country's leader to account, publicly. The trials, which have kept the issue of emissions in the limelight, seem to have achieved that. Like most public figures, especially politicians, Macron is unlikely to be happy about the manner of this protest. But considering the severity of the Yellow Jacket protests, the damage they caused to his image and the amount of political capital he has already lost, Macron might well overlook this benign form of civil disobedience.



Navtej Sarna

LEAD ON, GABON

As Delhi chokes on its air, the lessons a West African country offers

IT'S A FRIDAY evening and I am watching captivating television. No, it isn't Netflix. Not even KBC, but a programme on the successful preservation of wildlife, forests and environment in a country whose location many may have to google: Gabon, on the West African coast, just over a hundred thousand square miles large. I do a quick sum: twelve Gabons would fit into India.

You might well ask if I have nothing better to do on a Friday evening. Am I so out of it that I don't have a dinner to go to, or a club that will have me, or even a walk in the park behind the market? But you wouldn't ask if you took a look at the AQI, at which people now glance more often than they used to at the scoreboard in the final over of an India-Pakistan cricket match. The AQI is 419 at Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, the nearest to my hideout in front of the TV, and known to be artificially green and hence not truly representative.

Gabon has 13 national parks and they cover 11 per cent of its total land. It has 20 protected marine zones, and hold your breath, it has 88 per cent forest cover. Precious. And what's more, they clearly intend to keep it that way. While these forests form only 12 per cent of the Congo Basin forests, 60 per cent of Africa's forest elephants, wisdom dripping from their sober

eyes, live here. Africa's forests and peatlands store up to 70 billion tons of carbon; if they remain healthy, we have hope. As a reward for past performance, which promises success in the future, Norway has put a price on this effort and given Gabon 150 million dollars to carry on the good work. Meanwhile, on my screen, talking heads wearing kurtas with colour-coordinated pocket squares, unwisely stand in the smog on Vijay Chowk trading insults and blaming each other for Delhi's pollution, glancing frequently at their phones for tips from their backroom boys (by the way, talking of KBC, how many lifelines do these ones get?).

And let's not reach for the high horse, or intone patronisingly that that we have huge problems on a scale that Gabon cannot imagine. Gabon is rich in oil, to say nothing of gold and uranium, with the attendant pressures of exploitation. It is also not entirely populated by angels: A corruption scandal over illegal logging fueled by Chinese demand brought down a former forests minister. Nearly 400 containers of keazingo logs, a tree that takes 500 years to grow to its 40 feet, went missing. While the oil wealth has boosted GDP, one third of the country's population lives below the poverty line. It faces the challenges of water scarcity, deforestation and poaching. It has

greed too: The valuable mangrove trees that prevent coastal erosion when their extensive root systems are being ripped up to allow the rich to build bigger houses in the capital, Libreville.

But, Gabon is still doing something right: It is showing true grit in fighting the odds. It is fast becoming a unique eco-tourism destination, attracting people to come and see the gorillas, elephants, chimpanzees, hump-backed whales and leatherback turtles in their protected, clean natural habitat. While we, every year around Diwali, take out our face masks, like we used to take out pullovers in our childhood, and crib about some farmers burning stubble and glance at our number plates to see if they are odd or even and what day of the week it is, and choke on our own breath and wait for somebody else to do something. Or hunker down in karmic resignation till February. And, meanwhile, our roads become wider, the trees rarer, the buildings higher, reaching for the skies.

The next time I see a man from Gabon, I am going to shake his hand. That is if the air is clear enough for us to see each other, or he is brave enough to come to Delhi.

The writer is an author and former Ambassador of India to the US.



NOVEMBER 5, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SEIZING THE EMBASSY
US MARINE GUARDS hurled teargas containers in a three-hour skirmish today but were unable to hold back Iranian students who occupied the US embassy in Teheran and held about 100 staff members hostage, Teheran radio said. The students demanded that the US hand over the exiled and ailing Shah of Iran for trial, the broadcasts, monitored in London, said. No one on either side was seriously injured, said one broadcast, although the student invaders "bore great pain with fortitude and in an Islamic manner." The radio said the US Marines resisted for three hours with teargas. No mention was made of any other weapon. It said the Marines and other "mercenaries," totaling about 100 were safe in a room and, "no violent action has been taken against them."

ANTI-FARMER INDIRA
PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh in a statement said there had been a large increase in the number of big farms as also in the average size of these farms during the 10 years of Indira Gandhi's regime. Against this, the number of farmers had come down and that of agricultural labourers had gone up. This showed that Mrs Gandhi had cared little for the peasantry and the rural people. "It is not an accident that she receives the support of big landlords and industrial houses as was evidenced during the Emergency," he added. Singh's rejoinder to Mrs Gandhi was issued by the Lok Dal party headquarters, though the PM is out of town. Singh noted that the number of big farms had gone up from 23 lakhs to 28 lakhs and their average size had increased from 17 to 18 hectares.

RIGHT TO PROTEST
LOK DAL — A Gandhian party — should allow its members the right of individual satyagraha, party's working president, Raj Narain, said today. He told newsmen that individual satyagraha indicated self-discipline and this individual freedom should not be curtailed by the party. The party should not place any fetters on any member's right to agitate on a good public cause. He, however, said that the party could take action against the member if said agitation damaged the image of the party. Narain, who put forward certain suggestions for inclusion in the Lok Dal manifesto, also said that no one should be allowed to become prime minister, chief minister and minister for more than two terms.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“There are some simple things that could be done: forcing Facebook to reveal where parties are spending campaign cash and enforcing constituency spending limits would be a start.”
— THE GUARDIAN

Let's pay the price of clean air

We should stop expecting the farmer to single-handedly bear the burden. And accept that the right economic incentives are the only sustainable solution to this intractable problem



ANAND PRAKASH

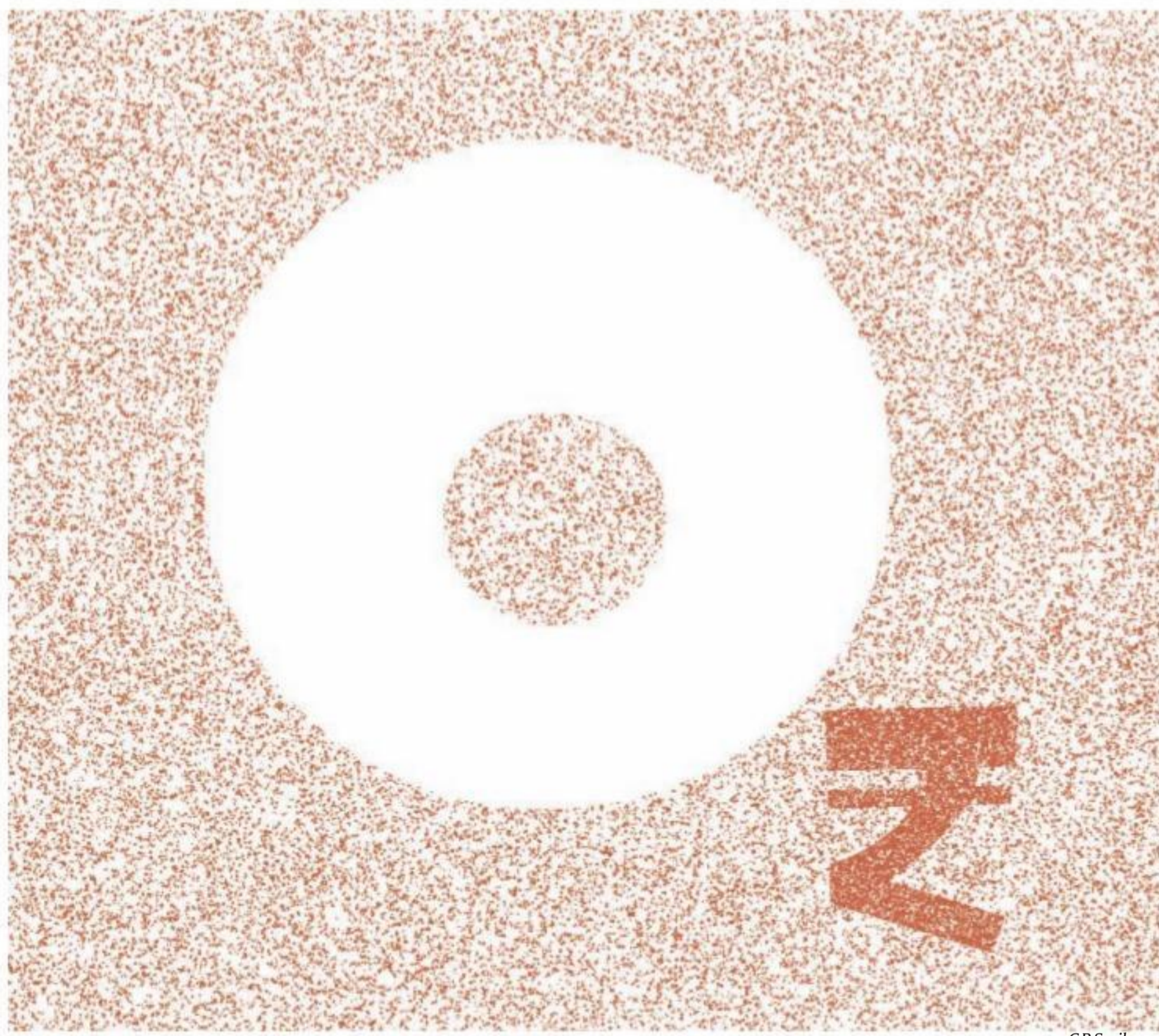
IN THE HOLLYWOOD classic *Groundhog Day*, the character played by Bill Murray finds himself waking up every morning to the exact same day as yesterday. Delhi and North India has its *Groundhog Day* moment every October, when stubble burning from paddy starts and blankets the already toxic air with a fresh inflow of aerial sewage. Like Murray, the residents of Delhi wring their hands while coughing their lungs out in total frustration. However, unlike the movie character, we do control our destiny and can break out of this vicious circle. The solutions are within our grasp provided there is political will and a willingness to use our purse to fund our way out of this problem.

Let us first understand the problem. Every year, when farmers harvest their paddy crop in north India, they are left with an annoying stubble that is hard, expensive to pull out of the ground and has no commercial use after extraction. The problem has progressively gotten worse over the years as the stubble has gotten even harder with increased use of fertilisers and pesticides, resulting in cattle instinctively avoiding rice straw and increasing farmer costs by dulling implements when cutting this straw. In order for Delhi to breathe better, this farmer needs to personally incur the cost of pulling this stubble, collecting it, and then transporting it to a place where it can be disposed properly. The collected stubble is tricky to handle because it is high volume but low weight, occupies land to store and requires high transportation cost to move around. In short, we expect the farmer to pay and be a good citizen so that we breathe better. Are we really expecting that the farmer “will do the right thing” when his economics incentivises him to clear his field cost-effectively by simply setting it on fire and fertilising his fields in the process as well?

Policy-makers and residents need to abandon the hope that enforcement of stubble-burning bans is a solution. On a trip to Punjab last week, I understood how disintegrated this problem is when I saw that the fields being burnt were both very small and quite large making enforcement by arresting and fining violators en masse completely out of the question. In general, enforcement of laws is not our strength in India and such enforcement against the powerful farming lobby is simply not going to happen.

The only solution to this annual stubble burning nightmare lies in changing the economics of the farmer by making collection and disposal of stubble more rewarding than burning. The stubble is actually valuable biomass fuel that can generate renewable electricity. The supply of such stubble by farmers to power plants can be a source of additional income instead of becoming a cost. North India can certainly use and pay for more renewable energy to feed its economic growth. The farmer will happily collect the stubble if there was a profit to be had. What would unlock such a win-win solution?

The solution lies in either individual state governments like Delhi or preferably the Central government, through one of



CR Sasikumar

their power procurement agencies like Power Trading Corporation or NTPC offering an attractive power price to private power producers for electricity generated from this stubble. The power price offered needs to both justify making an investment in a new power plant and also enabling the power producer to pay a price to the farmer for the stubble that justifies its collection and transportation. Since speed is of the essence, the government should offer an early completion bonus for projects that come online within 36 months with the bonus reducing every year, thereby rewarding companies that deliver a quicker solution to our lungs.

The reason I know this will work is because I have seen it work in Thailand. When I started investing in biomass generation in Thailand in 2004, rice husk (a completely different product than stubble) was viewed as a nuisance product by rice mills and there were limited uses of this husk. The government of Thailand introduced the “Very Small Power Plant” scheme for biomass projects below 10 MW that offered very attractive tariffs. Within the space of five years, this waste rice husk had gone from fetching the rice mills a price that barely recovered transportation cost to becoming a significant source of revenue and an essential source of profits for rice mill operations.

If Prime Minister Narendra Modi is serious about doubling farmer incomes and improving public health, finding a way to turn this agricultural waste into electricity in an environment-friendly manner is surely a starting point.

As an investor in renewable energy and

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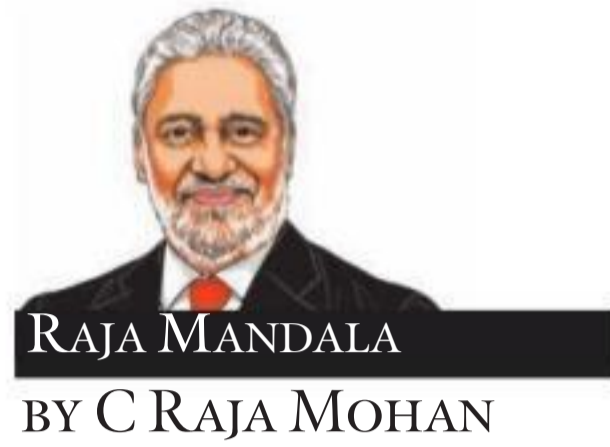
climate finance in India for nearly two decades, I have seen how quickly capital has been mobilised in India and projects implemented when economics justifies the investment. India has seen more than \$42 billion invested in renewable energy since 2014, mainly in new solar and wind power plants, simply because the power price was considered sufficiently lucrative to justify the risks. A fraction of this capital can permanently solve the stubble burning crisis and the same players in renewable energy that are now larger and much better financed can be the executors of this strategy.

Like all environmental problems, no one person or state government can solve this problem on their own. The Centre has to take the lead and take along the state governments of not only the states that are the source of stubble burning but the states whose residents are breathing these toxic fumes. We should stop expecting the farmer to single-handedly pay for our clean air and accept that the right economic incentives are the only sustainable solution to this intractable problem. We need to finally put a price on our health and our lungs and open up our wallets to buy our way out of this annual crisis. Perhaps then, like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*, we will unexpectedly wake up one year and find that it really is a new year.

The writer is a senior private equity leader in renewable energy and climate finance in Asia and India. He is currently a Senior Advisor to Saron Asset Management, a Canadian private equity fund manager in climate finance

The Afghanistan shadow

Kashmir stalemate will continue to simmer. But, it is the strategic fluidity in Afghanistan that threatens to upend the regional order once again



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS HE threatens to lock down Islamabad if Imran Khan does not resign, the leader of the Jamiat-ulema-e-Islam, Maulana Fazlur Rehman responded to two major charges from the Pakistani establishment. One was the accusation that he was promoting an Indian agenda. The Maulana responded by reminding his audience that it was Imran Khan who said that the re-election of Narendra Modi will help resolve the Kashmir dispute. Imran Khan's incompetence, Rehman said, led to Modi's “annexation” of Kashmir. In Islamabad, India is a whipping boy for all sides.

The establishment also pointed to the flags of Afghanistan and the Taliban being waved by many of the protestors. The Maulana dismissed these concerns as frivolous. While appealing to his followers not to wave the Taliban flags, he reminded the public that the governments of Pakistan and many others were embracing the Taliban. In any case, both the Maulana and Imran have long been supporters of the Taliban.

The broad agreement in Islamabad that India is the threat and the Taliban is an ally, hides an important reality — the greatest threat to Pakistan comes from Afghanistan rather than the unfinished agenda of Kashmir. Amidst the super-charged rhetoric in Pakistan about Kashmir, after the Indian decision to change the state's constitutional status, and the growing anxieties in Delhi about losing the argument in the global arena, it might be unfashionable to argue that the latest developments in Kashmir are a lot less significant than the unfolding prospects of a renewed civil war in Afghanistan.

Part of the problem is the prolonged political myth-making on Kashmir. Pakistan and India have propagated the myth that their nation-building is incomplete without full control over Kashmir. A second myth, about the territorial coherence of J&K, masks the fact that the region is a mere collection of diverse cantons that came together through a quirk of history.

A third myth is about the geopolitical significance of Kashmir as the “world's most dangerous nuclear flashpoint”. This was invented by the non-proliferation ayatollahs in Washington, ever eager to roll-back the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. It fed nicely into Rawalpindi's strategy to blackmail the world with the threat of nuclear escalation and get the international system to compel Delhi to cede territory.

The fourth myth suggests that Kashmir is the sole source of the conflict between India and Pakistan. But, it is by no means clear that if India settles the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan, Islamabad will become friends with India overnight. The conflict between India and Pakistan is more deeply rooted in the legacy of partition.

The fifth myth is that the world will ride in to liberate the Kashmiris from India. If Rawalpindi has been rather optimistic about

mobilising the international community to sever Kashmir from India, Delhi has been far too fearful about external intervention in its disputes with Pakistan. After seventy-odd years of conflict, the only concessions that Pakistan “wrested” from India were those “gifted” by Delhi, which voluntarily took the issue to the UN in 1947-48.

Despite the many wars and military crises, the enduring feature of Kashmir has been the military stalemate there. Consider the following: Despite throwing everything it had at India, Rawalpindi has not been able to materially alter the territorial distribution in Kashmir.

Finally, there is the myth that Kashmir has been central to the Subcontinent's evolution. Kashmir is certainly a very emotional issue for Pakistan. It is also an ideological legacy of the partition of the Subcontinent. To the GHQ in Rawalpindi, at least, it is about avenging India's vivisection of Pakistan in 1971. But, from a realist perspective, Kashmir has been essentially marginal to the heartland politics in Indo-Gangetic plains across the Indo-Pak divide.

Compare the stalemate in Kashmir to the impact of Afghanistan on the Subcontinent. Through the millennia, all great invasions of the Subcontinent have come through Afghanistan. Cut to modern times and see what Afghanistan has given to the Subcontinent and the world in the last four decades: The communist coup in 1978 followed by Soviet occupation, a Pakistan-backed jihad against the Red Army that brought Islamic radicals from all corners of the world, Zia's injection of Islam into Pakistan's polity, the end of Pakistan's brief experiment with constitutional democracy, the rise of the Taliban and al Qaeda, the 9/11 attacks, the American occupation, and its retreat, paving way for a possible return of the Taliban.

While Delhi is once removed from Afghanistan, Pakistan's problems on its western borders are unlikely to end any time soon. The open border with Afghanistan and the refusal of Afghans, including the Taliban, to recognise the Durand Line as the formal boundary between the two nations are one set of problems that Pakistan continues to cope with.

The Durand Line running was a matter of convenience for the British Raj. But the large Pashtun population that straddles the line is a huge challenge for Islamabad. The fear of an ethnic “Pashtunistan” that could undermine the Islamist basis of the nation has always worried Pakistan. Although the jihad against Russia and its role as the front-line state gave Pakistan many benefits, the prolonged war in Afghanistan has left Islamabad deeply vulnerable on its western frontiers.

The Kashmir stalemate will continue to simmer. But, it is the strategic fluidity in Afghanistan that threatens to upend the regional order once again. Pakistan will most likely bear the worst of the fallout. The Kashmir issue may not vanish from the regional and global agenda, but it is the Pashtun question which will continue to haunt the future of Pakistan and the Subcontinent. The Taliban flags blowing in the Islamabad wind are probably the sign of things to come.

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

Saving the peace

In Nagaland, Centre must be patient and generous, keep NSCN (IM) on board

SANDEEP PANDEY, BABLOO LOITONGBAM AND MEERA SANGHAMITRA

THUINGALENG MUIVAH, leader of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) told a group of civil society representatives, including two of the authors of this article, who met him at Camp Hebron on September 27, that Nagaland may be weaker in a material sense but it is strong politically. The NSCN-IM, which started as an insurgent group, could engage the government of India in dialogue for 22 years after a ceasefire agreement in 1997; Muivah headed the parallel government established by the NSCN as the Ato Kilonser or prime minister. Even though the Narendra Modi government has removed the limited autonomy enjoyed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Muivah continues to keep alive his vision of a shared sovereignty and peaceful co-existence that guided the agreement signed on August 3, 2015 in the presence of PM Modi. Muivah has good reasons to be hopeful.

Unlike J&K, no instrument of accession was signed by the then popular Naga rebel leader, Angami Zapu Phizo, with the GoI when the British left the subcontinent in 1947. Nagaland was first made a part of Assam by the British and then by independent India. The Nagas resisted both times, never surrendered and still believe that the ongoing dialogue will result in a political solution. Muivah asserts that Nagaland has never been under foreign rule, either by consent or conquest. The Nagas had told the

British that their fate should not be tied to the fate of independent India.

However, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sent an army into Nagaland, though Mahatma Gandhi had promised the Nagas that they will not be integrated into India by force. According to Muivah, Nehru never respected the Nagas. It was only much later when P V Narasimha Rao met with Isak and Muivah in Paris, that he agreed on a dialogue to be held without pre-conditions at the highest levels, outside India. Subsequently, then Indian PM Deve Gowda met Isak Chisi Swu and Muivah in Bangkok. He wanted the Nagas to accept the Indian Constitution, which was not agreeable to them, and Muivah suggested that the two parties should go their separate ways. Two years later, the government of India admitted that Nagas were never formally under Indian rule and a unique solution to their problem was required. It was only after this that the concept of shared sovereignty was floated. After talks with PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Amsterdam, the NSCN (IM) leadership decided to move back to India and continue the process of dialogue with the Manmohan Singh government.

The Modi government declared that an agreement had been reached with the NSCN (IM) leadership only to encounter the roadblock of a demand for a separate constitution and flag for Nagaland. Having taken

away the constitution of J&K — which mentioned that J&K was an integral part of India — and its flag as part of its One Nation, One Constitution narrative, the BJP-led government is in a bind with respect to the Naga demand for a separate constitution and flag.

The response of the interlocutor in the dialogue process, now the Nagaland governor, R N Ravi, has been to bring on board another stakeholder since 2017 — Naga National Political Groups, a conglomerate of seven organisations, in an attempt to counterbalance the NSCN (IM). But he should know that if the NSCN (IM) is cold-shouldered, the chances are that it will slip back into insurgency. The NSCN (IM), presently dormant in Myanmar, may also get reactivated.

The government should not rush into a solution by declaring deadlines to ensnare itself. It should patiently involve all stakeholders from within and outside the state of Nagaland without marginalising the NSCN (IM), and work towards a solution through a peaceful dialogue process that satisfies all. The NSCN (IM) must acknowledge that even though it may have been the only force to reckon with in the beginning, now there are others whose sensitivities will have to be kept in mind. For example, Kukis, another tribe engaged in fierce tussle with the Nagas in the Manipur hills, are unlikely to accept Naga dominance over their areas. I Kipgen, president of an organisation of Thodous, a

Kuki community, has expressed his apprehension to the interlocutor for Indo-Kuki talks.

While it is likely that groups within and outside Nagaland are being projected at this time by the government to blunt the edge of the demands made by the NSCN (IM), it is also a fact that societies like Manipur are ethnically plural. These have withstood the test of time for millennia. They are unlikely to acquiesce to any arrangement that requires them to part with their resources and polity. The government and the NSCN (IM) must be completely transparent in their approach and must take into confidence all genuine political formations, civil society and ethnic groups.

There was a time when Naga leaders were impatient and wanted to go back to Europe leaving the dialogue process open-ended. Now, the government seems to be in some kind of urgency. The Modi government would do well to resist the temptation of self-congratulatory grandiosity in deciding the fate of Nagaland without proper consultations. If the fragile ethnic balance of the region — which has a history of violence — is not handled sensitively, it can potentially lead to an ethnic implosion.

Pandey and Sanghamitra are with the National Alliance of People's Movements. Loitongbam is a Manipur-based human rights worker

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLOSE ENGAGEMENT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Engaging Germany’, (IE, November 4). India and the European Union (EU) had elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership back in 2004. It is expected that our European partners convey their priorities and apprehensions in an appropriate platform keeping in view of our sensitivities. India and Europe complement each other in various ways, a far closer engagement between the two will have a profound impact within their respective political borders and beyond.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

NOT A NOVICE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Because the name is Shakib’ (IE, November 4). Shakib Al Hasan is not a top notch all-rounder in all three formats of the game for nothing. He is an immensely talented player who has contributed a lot to Bangladesh cricketers. Since Bangladesh cricket fans are a passionate lot, their overreaction or lack of logic was not unexpected. What raises an alarm is the lenient approach of the ICC in this grave matter. What Shakib did was unpardonable, considering his stature in world cricket. He is not a novice in international cricket who does not know the rules.

Bal Govind, Noida

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.

BLIND TO POLLUTION

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Let's clear the air’ (IE, November 4). The writer's suggestion that amending the Air Act of 1981 is a solution to the pollution crisis does not cut much ice. Interestingly, the government is compromising on the environment by its inaction — as if those in power and their families can breathe unpolluted air due to the VIP status and privileges they enjoy. This false belief is so deeply internalised that it makes them indifferent the health hazard taking toll on so many Indians.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai