



I'M A FEDERALIST. I BELIEVE IN THE ITALY OF MUNICIPALITIES, OF THE RENAISSANCE, NOT IN MUSSOLINI'S CENTRALIZATION. — MATTEO SALVINI

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# On the reform track

Indian Railways needs restructuring and modernisation. Efforts since 2014 are bearing fruit



BIBEK DEBROY

## A TALL PLAN

Government's infrastructure push is welcome. More clarity over financing is needed

ON TUESDAY, FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled an ambitious infrastructure agenda, announcing projects worth Rs 102 lakh crore, to be implemented by 2024-25. As infrastructure investments (as a proportion of GDP) have fallen sharply over the twelfth five year plan period (2013-17), attempts to revive the investment cycle are welcome. However, considering that infrastructure investment over the past six years adds up to Rs 51.2 lakh crore, doubling this over the next six years is a tall order. These are not normal times. The economy has slowed down considerably.

The financial system remains choked. And a broad-based pick up in growth is unlikely in the near term. Reviving the investment cycle requires more than just ambitious targets. What is needed is a carefully thought through road-map. It is envisaged that the central and state governments will account for 39 per cent each of the projected investment, with the private sector expected to make up the balance. While this does indicate that the investment cycle will continue to be driven by the public sector, there is little clarity over how both the public and private sector will finance this massive push. A slowing economy has put government finances under pressure. It is now increasingly likely that both the Centre and the states will miss their fiscal deficit targets this year. A sustained fiscal push, as this plan envisions, therefore, seems unlikely. Add to that an overleveraged corporate sector that is in no mood to invest, and achieving these targets looks increasingly difficult. There are also questions over the nature of projects. Roughly a fourth of investments are estimated in the power sector. However, as existing plants are operating well below their peak capacity, whether the corporate sector will invest in new plants whose financial viability is unclear is debatable. Then, of the total projects, 31 per cent are still at the conceptual stage, while another 8 per cent are unclassified, suggesting little clarity over almost 40 per cent of the pipeline.

Given the state of government (Centre and state) finances, creating the necessary fiscal space for this kind of investment push requires rationalising subsidies such as food and fertiliser, as well as an aggressive push towards asset monetisation. The latter would entail selling off assets such as toll-generating highways to long-term investors such as global pension funds. And with bank lending slowing down considerably, banks will be wary of such long gestation projects which will expose them to risks of asset liability mismatches, the need for long-term financing options such as development finance institutions and a well-functioning bond market has never been greater. These need to be supplemented with measures to address the weaknesses in the current public private partnership models to encourage private sector participation.

ONE CAN QUIBBLE about Arthur Cotton and the Red Hill Railroad, built in 1836 but officially, the advent of the railways is dated to April 16, 1853, when a train left Bori Bunder for Thane (then Tannah), with three steam locomotives (Sindh, Sultan and Sahib) pulling it. "The railway-system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry." This is something Karl Marx wrote and most people are familiar with this quote. They may not remember where Marx wrote this and when.

The piece was titled "The Future Results of British Rule in India". He wrote it on July 22, 1853, though it was first published on August 8, 1853. In other words, Marx was probably aware of Bori Bunder to Thane. One can quibble about the way Indian Railways (IR) defines consequential accidents and related deaths. But with that as a constant, 2019-20 is the first time in 166 years (counting from 1853) that there have been zero passenger deaths (so far). This is a vivid example of the modernisation IR is going through. The IR set up a committee to examine restructuring. This is often known as the Debroy Committee. It submitted an interim report in March 2015 and a final report in June 2015. These two reports listed more than 20 committees that preceded the Debroy Committee and took stock of their recommendations.

There was a terminal goal we visualised, as did others. There must be competition and choice. With IRTs (IR trains, for want of a better word) as a public service provider of railway transport services, there must be private sector entry, with a regulator (say, a development authority). However, because of the way IR has historically evolved, one can't simply unbundle existing IR the way railways have been unbundled in other countries (sometimes unsuccessfully). Instead, one divides existing IR into a Railway Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) and the new IRTs. The RIC's common infrastructure is shared by both IRTs and private sector providers. The regulator's role is not

merely to set tariffs, but also ensure fair competition (such as access to track) between IRTs and private operators. The Railway Ministry sets broad policy, the regulator implements the principles of competition determined by that policy and the present Railway Board becomes a corporate board for the IRT. Skipping the finer details, this was the terminal goal. As a committee, we decided to focus more on the process, especially human resources and finance. Out of 20-odd committees, other than ours, it was the 1994 Prakash Tandon Committee that explored HR in detail.

The key ingredients of our reform template were the following: (1) allow private entry, including in running of private trains; (2) change the composition of the Railway Board; (3) decentralise decision-making to zones/divisions and even further below; (4) separate the core functions of running trains from non-core functions like schools and medical services; (5) set up a regulator; (6) unify various railway services; (7) transit to commercial accounting and (8), unite the Railway Budget with the Union Budget.

If one ticks the boxes, for an organisation that is so old and somewhat resistant to change, it is remarkable that so many reforms have been introduced since 2014. Reform (1) has been done and other than royal tourist trains, the Tejas Express is the first private passenger train, running on a pilot basis. Reform (2) has been recently announced, with the Board functionally pruned. Item (3) has been done and (4) is being implemented at the zonal level. Reform (7) has been completed at zonal level and (8) has been done. A clear computation of social costs is a function of (7) and is being carried out throughout the IR system. This leaves the regulator and unification of services. Recently, eight Group A services have been unified into the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS). While details are awaited, this will presumably first be done prospectively, for new entrants.

Retrospective application will always face more challenges.

As users of IR services, we often don't appreciate the silos that exist in the IR. Think of a station. Who takes care of station amenities? Platforms, drinking water, toilets, waiting rooms and over-bridges are the responsibility of civil engineering. Lights, lifts, escalators, fans and water-coolers are looked after by electrical. Public address systems, departure boards and train indicator boards are the responsibility of telecom. Reservation and ticketing is with commercial (with IT thrown in). Everything on-board (including sockets, fans and lights) is with mechanical. I did say drinking water is the responsibility of civil engineering. But do remember water-coolers are the responsibility of electrical. Within a station, there are tracks, platforms, places where passengers wait, toilets and perhaps even trains that come in. These need to be cleaned. In one station I visited, I counted 17 different cleaning contracts. Have you wondered about the use of hot-cases on trains? Why not microwave ovens? When it was proposed many years ago, there was departmental wrangling between those who looked after electrical and those who looked after utensils, those who looked after procurement and those who looked after catering contracts. Silos, not talking to each other, are common to many organisations. But this is compounded by separate services with separate lines of accountability and encadred posts for vertical mobility. In plain language, there are quotas, with posts reserved for specific services.

Departmentalism is worse than it was in the 1950s. And much worse than it was in 1905, when the Railway Board was formed. However, the Railway Board went through a major change in 1951. It was time for another change in 2019 and HR reform feeds into that.

The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. Views are personal

## HEED THE PUSHBACK

Centre must respond to the Kerala assembly resolution on CAA with sensitivity and care

THE NEAR UNANIMOUS resolution passed by the Kerala legislative assembly against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a sign of the unease and tension that has crept into the federal arrangement between states and the Centre. The Narendra Modi government had brushed aside the reservations that a cross-section of the Opposition and civil society expressed over the new citizenship law. At least seven states, including NDA-ruled Bihar, have since announced that they will not implement the CAA. The Kerala assembly resolution, which describes the CAA as being against "the basic values and principles" of the Constitution, indicates that the Union government continues to ignore the opposition of state governments at its own peril. The Centre needs to engage with the dissenting states and listen to their legitimate concerns about the Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens. Its attempt to read the opposition to the Act in a legalistic manner misses the big picture.

The emergence of the BJP as the main pole of the polity since 2014 has accentuated the tension that always existed between the Centre and the states. Under Modi and Amit Shah, the BJP has pushed the agenda of subsuming India's several diversities — religious, ethnic, linguistic, dietary, among others — under the rubric of One India. It evidently believes that the electoral endorsement it has received nationally also indicates public acceptance of its ideological project. The pushback from the states is, however, a reflection of the discomfort that significant sections of the population have about the party's aggressive push towards all-round homogenisation. The BJP has been losing assembly elections, and even allies, as it privileges its unitary impulses and ignores regional concerns. Regionalism, like subnationalism, is a persistent presence in Indian politics, which the Centre needs to engage with — it resonates in regions as diverse as Kashmir, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Attempts to impose the Centre's will at the cost of regional sentiments have provoked extreme anxieties in the past.

The onus is on the Centre to ensure that its relations with the states are not frayed. The CAA-NRC debate has threatened to reopen communal faultlines, and the states seem acutely conscious of this. Instead of reading the letter of the Constitution to states to emphasise the supremacy of Parliament in legislation, the Union government needs to also abide by the Constitution's spirit, and respond sensitively to the federal pushback.

## THE KOHLI ERA

Unpredictable and self-aware, Virat continues to push the envelope

THERE IS NO doubt that Indian cricket is in the Kohli era. His batting is praised by Viv Richards, and he has won a historic Test series in Australia, something no Indian captain has done before. His fitness is aped by newcomers, he is respected by peers and old-timers. He has been named in the Wisden T20 team of the decade. And Virat Kohli is a star even on the social media scene.

The English conditions, and in particular James Anderson, were supposed to be his Achilles heel, but he overcame it not with bossiness but with a calculated caution. Not a shot was played in anger against an ageing Anderson even after he was well settled. Barring the mindboggling swat-flick, with which he drags balls to the midwicket boundary, his shots are steeped in cricketing tradition. He takes risks to cut out risks — he would show the daring and the skill needed to take risks before facing a ball, but would turn into a conservative once the ball is delivered. He stands way outside the crease on bouncy tracks in Australia, shuffles to the off-stump guard in England and South Africa — out-of-the-box thinking that batsmen talk about but seldom have the confidence to try out in the middle.

He is the aggressive face of the opposition on field but at times his reactions are unexpected. Like when Kagiso Rabada needed him before the 50-over World Cup, his response was respectful. When an Indian crowd booed Steve Smith because of the controversy over ball tampering, he urged them to applaud the Australian. He supported Glenn Maxwell for putting his health before the game. He won't comment on whether the pink ball or four-day Tests are the game's future but offers his take on demonetisation. Unpredictable he may be, but he is extremely self-aware — a player who knows what he is capable of and is intent on pushing the envelope.

## ART OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

Strategic S&T ties between countries are the only way to address climate change



ARABINDA MITRA

SOME OF the most pressing issues and developmental challenges facing nations in contemporary times have a scientific and technological dimension. Science and Technology (S&T)-led innovation offers an opportunity to address these multifaceted challenges, which are now global in nature.

For a diverse country such as India, S&T is expected to empower the common citizen, making his/her life easier. S&T interventions have to be able to address both national needs and aspirations — by being inclusive — and, at the same time, they have to meet the international obligations of a responsible country. Science diplomacy, thus, is a crucial policy dimension.

The importance of S&T innovations in achieving the 2030 Agenda for UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — to which most nations, including India, are committed — points towards a new opportunities for cross-border collaboration in scientific research and development.

The Global Innovation and Technology Alliance (GITA) was launched by India a few years ago and has provided an enabling platform for frontline techno-economic alliances. Enterprises from India are tying up with their counterparts from partnering countries including Canada, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Spain, and the UK. This industry-led collaboration, with the government as an equal partner, is aimed at supporting the last phase of technology-based high-end, affordable product development — which can connect to both global and domestic markets.

opment — which can connect to both global and domestic markets.

The India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA), with more than 79 sunshine countries as signatories and nearly 121 prospective countries as partners, is another excellent example of modern-day science diplomacy. The vision and mission of the ISA is to provide a dedicated platform for cooperation among solar resource-rich countries. Such a platform can make a positive contribution towards achieving the common goals of increasing the use of solar energy in meeting the energy needs of member countries in a safe, affordable, equitable and sustainable manner.

The global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) was recently announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. The CDRI is yet another example of international partnership piloted by India in consultation with 35 countries that will support developed and developing nations in their efforts to build climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure, required to face the vagaries of climate change.

The CDRI will provide member countries technical support and capacity development, research and knowledge management, and advocacy and partnerships. It is aimed at risk identification and assessment, urban risk and planning, and disaster risk management. Within two-three years, the coalition aims to have a positive three-fold

impact — in the member countries' policy frameworks, future infrastructure investments and endeavours towards a reduction of economic losses from climate-related events and natural disasters across sectors. Through this international coalition, we can mitigate the fallout of earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and storm by ensuring that affordable housing, schools, health facilities and public utilities are built in line with the robust standards required to survive natural or man-made hazards.

It is evident that international collaborations in S&T innovation is not merely cosmetic. Today, it is a necessity. No nation alone has the capacity, infrastructure and human resources to address the massive challenges that the earth and mankind faces, threatening our very existence. It is inevitable, therefore, that science, technology and innovation should increasingly become an intrinsic diplomatic tool for India.

This will require proactive engagement of the scientific and technological community with stakeholders — including the polity, the diplomatic corps and the knowledge enterprises — in order to design and develop effective tools for international engagement through S&T. After all, these will be required to meet the national aspirations and global challenges that we face in a connected and yet shrinking world.

The writer is principal scientific adviser to the Government of India

## JANUARY 2, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO



### LOK SABHA RESULTS

THE CONGRESS (I) looks to be emerging as the single-largest party but nowhere near attaining an absolute majority in the next Lok Sabha which, without Assam and some other seats, will have 524 members. The Janata may be second and the Lok Dal a poor third — the latter is relatively strong in Bihar only. The left front will have an overwhelming majority in West Bengal and Kerala. Mrs Gandhi may attain majority in UP, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. According to our correspondents, the Janata has gained in certain states since the nomination by the Congress-I of Sanjay Gandhi and some familiar Emergency faces for the forthcoming elections.

### UN ACTION SOUGHT

THE UNITED STATES and its five major allies (Britain, West Germany, France, Italy and Canada) agreed in London to seek UN action as soon as possible on the Soviet Union's "naked aggression" against Afghanistan. According to the *Washington Post*, the six allies also agreed to review their whole range of relations with the Soviet Union and Afghanistan to find other ways to apply diplomatic pressure. They will also look for ways to aid other countries near Afghanistan, particularly Pakistan, "to ensure they maintain their independence". The *Post* said diplomatic sources would not reveal whether any of the other allies would join the US in try-

ing to provide emergency military aid to Pakistan nor would they say whether the allies discussed the possibility of Afghan rebels, "many of whom are based just across the border in Pakistan".

### ARMS TO PAK

HAVING APPROVED \$150 million worth of military sales to Pakistan ordered earlier, US President Jimmy Carter has called for a review of recent requests from Pakistan for the purchase of US military equipment "with an eye towards stepping up arms sales to the Government of Zia-ul-Haq". According to sources, the Pakistani arms list includes modernisation of Pakistan's air force.

# 13 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The internet is still unpredictable; companies rise and fall, and if Facebook, Twitter and YouTube do not offer their users the freedom they seek, they will go elsewhere." — DAWN

# The ABCDEF of implementation

Swachh Bharat Mission has thrown up six guiding principles, which can be applied to any large transformation scheme



PARAMESWARAN IYER

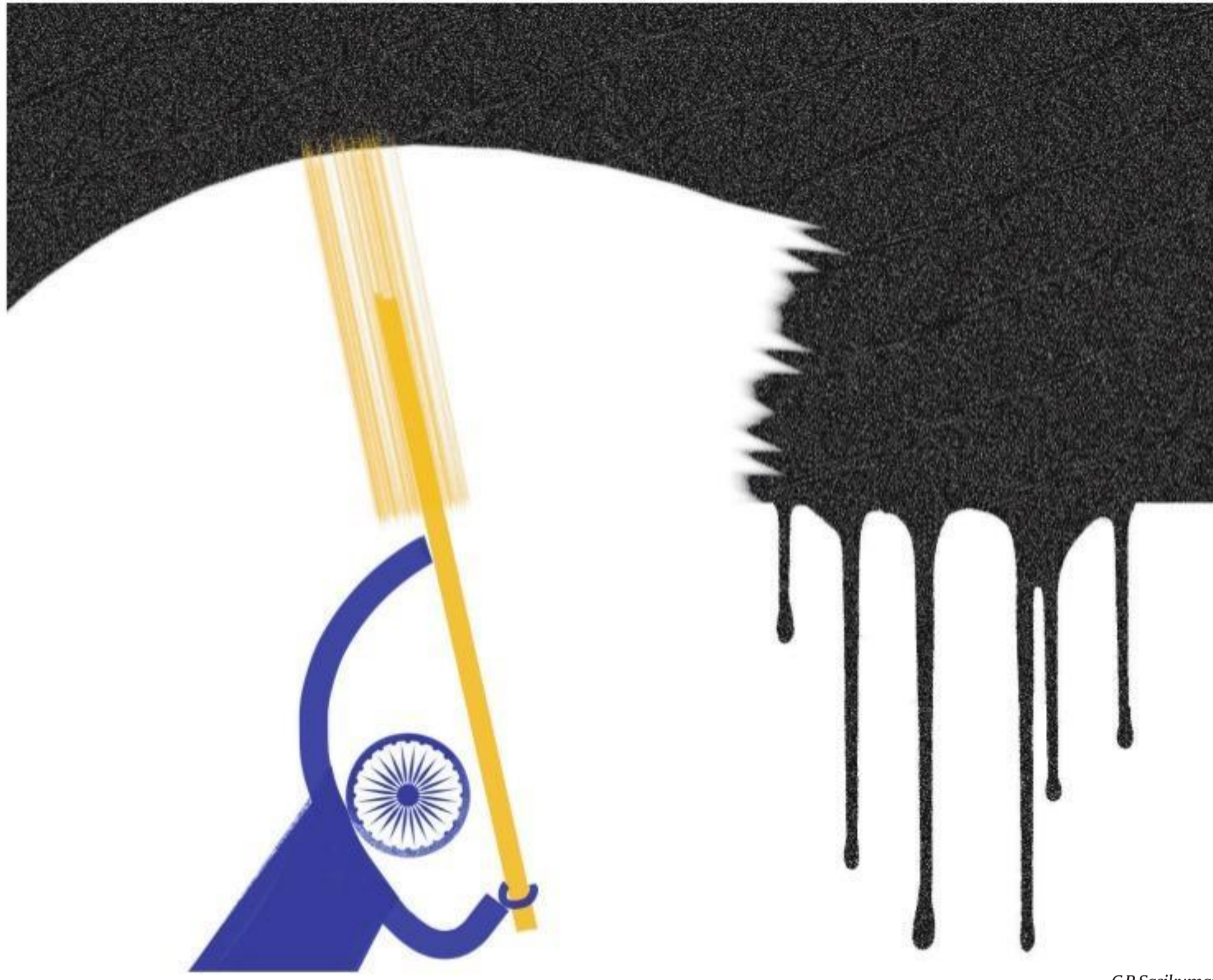
THE PROVERB "THE proof of the pudding is in the eating" perfectly summarises this government's delivery first approach to governance — the policy of implementation. Governments have always focused on designing the right policies and development schemes. However, over the years, many such well-designed schemes failed to make a significant dent on the lack of access to basic services that a large proportion of our population faced. While the focus on design and policy architecture may have been well meaning, there may not have been a strong enough focus on ensuring that these policies translate to effective implementation on the ground.

A prime minister in the 1980s had famously said that of every rupee spent by the government, only 15 paise reached the intended beneficiaries. This statement symbolised the skew in emphasis on "policy" in favour of "implementation".

This government has attempted to change things. There has been a relentless emphasis on taking all schemes to fruition on the ground, with the final delivery being the only metric of success. In the past five years, rural India has seen a massive transformation in access to basic services like electricity, cooking fuel, toilets, houses and bank accounts. These transformations have been at unprecedented scale and speed. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), in particular, has achieved what no one gave it a chance of achieving when it was audaciously announced by the prime minister during his first Independence Day address from the Red Fort. The journey has thrown up six important guiding principles which can be applied to any large transformation scheme — the ABCDEF of implementation.

**A — Align:** Different people at different positions may have competing priorities. A goal congruence has to be achieved across the administrative ecosystem. After the PM announced the SBM, the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation had to ensure that the same message percolated down to the chief ministers, 700 district collectors and 2,50,000 sarpanches. This was achieved through a continuous engagement with the states. Team SBM-Grameen visited each state multiple times and also engaged directly with district collectors through learning workshops, informal gatherings and WhatsApp groups, ensuring that sanitation remained on top of everyone's agenda. The three layers of the PM-CM-DM model working in cohesion is the first and most important step towards policy translating into real delivery.

**B — Believe:** Often when faced with a seemingly unattainable goal, teams that don't genuinely believe that the goal can be achieved find themselves not motivated enough, and hence not trying hard enough and not achieving results — a self-fulfilling prophecy. The next important step was building a team of people who believed that the goal is achievable. Younger people with fresh perspective and lesser administrative baggage believe more easily and focus on finding creative solutions. The SBM brought in a unique blend of young professionals and experienced but driven bureaucrats, at the centre and in the states, and each person quickly



CR Sasikumar

became a believer.

**C — Communicate:** At its core, the SBM is a behaviour change programme. Communication at all levels, above and below the line, mass and inter-personal, was fundamental to the SBM. An army of trained grassroots volunteers called Swachagrahis were created, who went from door to door to communicate the message of swachhata. And then the SBM attempted to make sanitation glamorous by engaging extensively with the media, leveraging popular culture, and associating Bollywood stars, sports persons and other influencers to promote the message of sanitation. And lastly, the Mission kept the buzz alive throughout its life-cycle through regular, large-scale events with the PM at important milestones, helping sanitation stay on top of public recall. A recent study by Dalberg estimated that each rural Indian was reached by SBM messaging about 3,000 times over the past five years. Such was the effectiveness of SBM's communication. Of course, we had a big advantage — the PM was our Communicator-in-Chief!

**D — Democratise:** As the prime minister has said on many occasions, the SBM became a Jan Andolan. It nudged people to realise that sanitation is not an individual good, but a community good, as its full benefits accrue only when it is universal. Over the years, everyone became a stakeholder and sanitation became everyone's business. People constructed their own toilets and motivated others, communities planned activities and monitored progress, villages declared themselves open defecation free (ODF). Even corporates, NGOs, civil society organisations and other government ministries and departments played a role in mainstreaming sanitation.

**E — Evaluate:** The SBM was operating at a massive scale in a largely decentralised manner. As progress started surpassing expectations, many people questioned the veracity of official administrative progress figures. And

hence, it became even more important to encourage third-party monitoring of progress and evaluate outputs, outcomes and impacts to reinforce the credibility and keep the implementers motivated. At the same time, pockets of excellence emerged which deserved to be studied and shared with others to replicate. Organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and WHO conducted various assessments of sanitation coverage and usage, successes and areas of improvement, as well as the health, economic and social impacts of the SBM. India became the global laboratory for sanitation. Lessons from these studies were incorporated into the programme in real-time.

**F — Follow-through:** The PM said on October 2 while commemorating the ODF declaration by all states that this is but a milestone and not the finish line. There is a strong focus on not declaring "mission accomplished", and continuing to work towards sustaining the ODF behaviour and ensuring that no one is left behind. We recently released a forward-looking 10-year sanitation strategy, articulating the goal of moving from ODF to ODF Plus. This post-delivery follow through is a critical to ensure that the change becomes the norm and that things don't reset to what they used to be in the past. Only then will the delivery be truly complete.

Learning from these guiding principles, the government is continuing in its quest to deliver basic services to the people of India. In his first Independence Day speech of his second term, the prime minister announced an even more ambitious goal — of providing piped water supply to all households by 2024. And aligning with this goal, the Jal Jeevan Mission is being designed to deliver, based on the ABCDEF of implementation.

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The writer is secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti. Views are personal

# Azaadi is a dangerous word

Our language is tainted and crippled by being pressed into the service of inhumanity



ALOK RAI

IT IS not an edifying spectacle, seeing the great and the good floundering like this, falling over themselves, then over each other, lying desperately to try and salvage something from the train wreck of the Citizenship Amendment Act-National Register of Citizens.

In a sense, the RSS has been perfecting its techniques of lie and rumour, innuendo and doublespeak, for a whole century. So, Mohan Bhagwat now assures us, all 130 crore of us, including the lynched and the lynchable, are Hindus, provided we match Mr Bhagwat's standard of being "true sons of India" — thanks, I say, but no thanks! And, for all one knows, underlying the dogged and insidious pursuit of "Hindu Rashtra", there is the millennia-old Brahminical tradition of the Hindu-savama maintaining their social tyranny through a combination of violence and lies and, crucially, hypocrisy.

It is appropriate, therefore, that though there have been protests and demonstrations across the country, the greatest amount of police brutality and violence has been concentrated in UP — not only because the head of the state government is a saffron-clad "yogi", but also because it is here that there is the highest concentration of the Hindu upper-castes. It is here that one can expect them to make their last stand. All the institutions of the state stand infiltrated, and the India imagined in the Constitution — of equality and social justice, of rights and the rule of law — might as well be on another planet.

We have all seen the heartbreaking visuals of the police brutality from Jamia and Aligarh, from Muzaffarnagar and Kanpur and Meerut, 20 dead and still counting. (More killed, incidentally, than in the entire Hong Kong agitation.) But tragic as this is, it is not surprising. It is a direct consequence of the fact that now, finally, even in the eyes of young who might once have been deluded by the dreams of development, the common stand exposed. The young now realise that far from waking into some shining "New India", they are being led into a guaranteed disaster, comparable to that which was brought upon Germany by the Nazi pursuit of an exclusivist "Aryan" nationalism. After all, it is the young who will inherit that poisoned and devastated country, and not ageing "urban Naxals". But I see no reason to dawdle here, amid helmeted policemen armed with sticks and guns, beating helpless people, amid the haunting sound of mothers and fathers grieving over the broken bodies of their children. Except, en passant, to ask: Where, and how, do they produce such monsters? I suggest that the daily inoculation with lies and violence has, over a period of years, produced a race of android "New Indians" who are immunised against empathy and imagination.

But beyond this matter of lies and vio-

lence, I wish to explore the connection between violence and language. The horrors of the 20th century prompted much reflection on this matter. The classic text is George Steiner's exploration of what the violence of the Nazi experience had meant for the German language — Language and Silence: "Everything forgets. But not language. When it has been injected with falsehood, only the most drastic truth can cleanse it... Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life." One last quotation must suffice before I turn to our own experience of atrocity and language: "Languages have great reserves of life. They can absorb masses of hysteria, illiteracy and cheapness... But there comes a breaking point. Use a language to conceive, organise and justify Belsen, use it to dehumanise man... Something will happen to it. Something of the lies and the sadism will settle in the marrow of the language. Imperceptibly at first, like the poisons of radiation sifting silently into the bone. But the cancer will begin, and the deep-set destruction..." The lynch mobs forced Tabrez Ansari to utter "Jai Shri Ram" even as they were beating him to death. Ironically, now and forever, "Jai Shri Ram" will remain linked with the battered corpse of what was once a man. Our language is tainted and crippled by being pressed into the service of inhumanity.

Confronted with the vapid chatter around the pain and suffering that is on offer nightly, the garrulous inadequacy of TV panelists in the presence of everyday horror, one is tempted to repeat Wittgenstein's stern aphorism: Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent. But there is another thought that arises in the current context of the explosion of protest, the nationwide affirmation by the young that they will not accept the bitter and divided nation that is the outcome of the CAA-NRC process. Rejecting Wittgenstein's philosophical modesty, in the face of that about which we are commanded not to speak, we must shout and sing, we must mock and ridicule, lavish the authors of the violence and the repression with contempt.

And it is truly a miracle that in response to official brutality, there has been an explosion of wit and poetry, of humour and creativity, all the way from posters to YouTube videos. Pitted against louts chanting "goli maaro saalon ko", they are making jokes — "Hindu-Muslim raazi, to kya karega Naazi". They are singing songs, mocking pomposity with poetry, flooding the internet with sass and style that is beyond the reach of semi-literate Sanghis. Kumar Sundaram's mocking "Naxal" poem — "aage Naxal, peeche Naxal" — could have put an end to the fatuous label "urban Naxal", provided they were fully literate. Hussain Hydari's bitter poem, with the refrain "bus mat jalaiye" holds a mocking mirror to P.M. 2.0 — "more dangerous than P.M. 2.5", one poster jokes, alluding to a relatively benign form of pollution. Another proclaims that his papers got burnt in Gujarat in 2002.

Perhaps it's time for another "free and frank" interview with Akshay Kumar?

The writer taught at the department of English, Delhi University

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SAVE THE 'WE'

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let's learn to listen' (IE, January 1). The writer has correctly sought to bring in focus the need to discover the concept of "We". We may do well to remember Bhakti saints like Kabir or several Sufi saints who transcended the narrow divisions of the day. Their teachings have to be incorporated into classroom discussions, and their discourses — which give us more reason to unite than divide — must be given prominence. It's time we reflect on our pluralist legacy, and the promise "We" made to ourselves with the birth of our Constitution.

Sarthak Sonwalkar, via email

### AN IMAGE DENTED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Challenge lies within' (IE, December 31). India's phenomenal endurance in the face of the 2009 financial crises, and thereafter its astounding growth story in the last decade, generated much enthusiasm — to a point that India was considered one of the undisputed emerging superpowers of the world. The diplomatic effort to further rebrand India's global image as a land of possibilities for investors has also drawn a lot of global attention. Now, the domestic developments in India are being observed by a world audience, and hence, this recent series of protests across the country is sure to impact its international profile.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

### 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.

### IIM QUOTAS

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Exempt us from faculty quotas, IIMs tell govt" (IE, January 1). The IIMs are absolutely right in their request to the government to not force them into recruiting for faculty positions as per the quota system. These institutions are world-class and there should not be any compulsion on the IIMs to have reservations in their recruitment process: They cannot compromise on the quality of the education offered. Whether it's a candidate from the general category or SC/ST, it should be a call purely on the basis of skills, and nothing else.

Bal Govind, Noida



KEKI DARUWALLA

# We were better off

Debates used to be about ideas, ideologies. It's a tawdry discussion now

LISTENING TO a lecture on Gandhi a week back, I thought we were much better off than the youngsters today. Philosophies were fighting it out in the open, it was doctrine versus doctrine. In India, even Gandhi's ideas, on the economic front, were hotly debated and often opposed. People accused him of being naïve, and his rural-centric ideas as unfit for a country wanting to industrialise. Nehru balanced Gandhi's doctrines, the youngsters in coffee houses, declaimed. The others said that the state was a force and the imperial state, a greater and more vicious force. Gandhi pitched soul-force against the imperial state as a counter force, and the state had quit. One was reminded of the symbols Gandhi held aloft, the salt of Dandi and the home-spun khadi. Apart from his sainthood, could there have been a more savvy politician?

In Europe the ideological war was not so non-violent. The KGB were investigating intelligence officers from the other side — remember Kim Philby, Guy Burgess and Maclean? The West had never witnessed such a battle since Protestants and Catholics went for each others' blood, and Martin Luther nailed his 98 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, and since Bloody Mary had burnt on the stake Archbishop Thomas

Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley on St Giles Road in Oxford, where I lived for a year. Of course, there were no holds barred. Capitalism, with its bloated money power, and the CIA (both as backbone and instigator) were fighting against communism. Fidel and Che were heroes to the young while the Cuban crisis had the world wetting its pants. How did Fidel Castro fiddle with the imagination of the leftists for decades?

As youngsters in the early Fifties, we looked at propaganda suspiciously. Were the Soviets so bad? Did Stalin really get Borodin and Bukharin and the whole lot shot, after fake confessions? Did he get Trotsky, hiding in Mexico, clobbered to death with an ice axe? Then Stalin himself died, to be followed by Beria, the head of the dreaded KGB. There were wild rumours about what exactly happened. Things will improve, we thought. Nothing doing. Stalin's murders were replaced by the murders of countries, there is no name for this kind of "national homicide". We had seen nationalities done away with — Armenians by the Turks and Zoroastrians by the Arabs. But then we saw Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1958) crushed by Russian tanks.

The scaffoldings of ideologies, all

spawned by and in the west, had not fallen as yet. The propaganda skirmishes were fought on pavements in Connaught Place and Chandni Chowk, where you could get a book by Turgenev or Tolstoy for about 10 bucks, though the Russians would still not touch Dostoevsky, a bit of a mystery.

Stalin was a part of the disease, not just a vicious isolated virus. (Did he inherit the DNA from Lenin? After all Lenin could also be ruthless — he was privy to the massacre of the Czar Nicholas and his innocent family.) The Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the eventual assassination/execution of the brave prime minister, Imre Nagy, jolted us in 1956. Then followed the terrible happenings in Prague two years later. Yet we, suspicious as ever, were convinced that the CIA was a part of the propaganda — poor communists, lovers of egalitarianism being painted black with a tar brush. In the end, the wretched capitalists, spawn of Wall Street and Langley, were proved right. They always said that communism would crumble and the east Europe regimes did, and how. Romania was a worst-case scenario, with Ceausescu and his wife being shot by a firing squad.

What is going on these days seems tawdry in comparison. Will the Brexit debate be re-

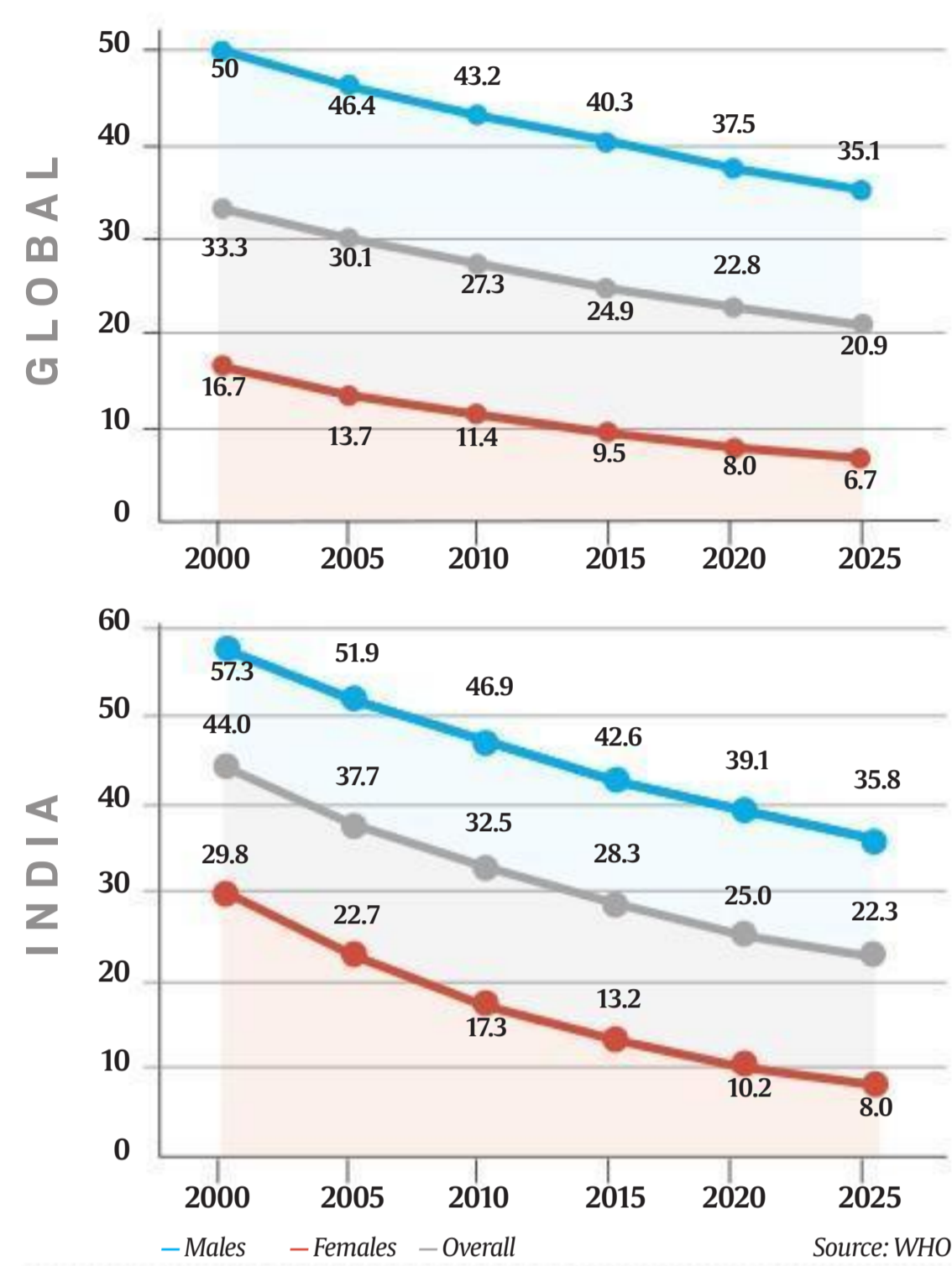
membered 10 years hence when people discuss democracy? Or the impeachment of President Trump? And what about our own numerous enumerations, our inclusions and exclusions, national registers and citizenship bills, desi and immigrant? Father's name, mother's name, grandmother's maiden name. What about campaigns chalked out in the evening against Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, only to find at dawn next day that more Hindus had come in? Can all this make one cry? Where will all these documents be stored? Why not build another tower in Delhi and ask Mr Patel, who did the work in Varanasi, to build it? He is getting all the goodies, isn't it? CAA, NPR, NCR — we should call our current phase "The Republic of Records". But if you focus on the numerous election-time speeches by the PM, and the Mann ki Baat thrown in, we could call our age the "Republic of Sound". But what about the quiet that followed the killings of Pehlu Khan and Mohammad Akhlaq, and his silence on so many things — police excesses in Jammu and the hiding they administered in the library? Then do we call it the Republic of Silence?

Daruwalla, a poet and short story writer, was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984

TELLING NUMBERS

Projected drop in male tobacco use underlines shifting trends

TOBACCO USE PREVALENCE (%)



A RECENT report released by the World Health Organization projected what it calls "a powerful shift in the global tobacco epidemic". While male tobacco use rose by around 40 million, from 1.050 billion in 2000 to 1.093 billion in 2018, the report projected a decline in the number of males using tobacco. The number has stopped growing and is projected to decline by more than 1 million male users come 2020 (or 1.091 billion) compared to 2018 levels, and 5 million less by 2025 (1.087 billion).

Overall global tobacco use fell from 1.397 billion in 2000 to 1.337 billion in 2018 (around 60 million people). The fall was largely driven by reductions in the number of females using tobacco products — with their numbers shrinking from 346 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2018, or more than 100 million users.

"By 2020, WHO projects there will be 10 million fewer tobacco users, male and female, compared to 2018, and another 27 million less by 2025, amounting to 1.299 billion. Some 60 per cent of countries have been experiencing a decline in tobacco use since 2010," the WHO said.

In India, which had a 44% prevalence of tobacco use (male and female combined) in 2000, this is expected to reduce almost by half to 22.3% by 2025. Globally, the prevalence was at 33.3% in 2000, and is projected to reach 20.9% in 2025.

**2018 PREVALENCE TOBACCO USE (%)**

	Overall	Male	Female
Global	23.6	38.6	8.5
India	27.0	42.0	12.1

**TOBACCO SMOKING (%)**

	Overall	Male	Female
Global	18.9	32.4	5.5
India	11.8	22.2	1.4

Current tobacco use rates in India in 2018 for people aged 15 years and older were higher than global rates among both males and females. However, the rates of tobacco smoking were lower than global rates.

Among other key findings, the report found that approximately 43 million children (aged 13-15) over the world used tobacco in 2018 (14 million girls and 29 million boys). "... More and more countries are implementing effective tobacco control measures, which are having the desired effect of reducing tobacco use. Tobacco taxes not only help reduce tobacco consumption and health-care costs, but also represent a revenue stream for financing for development in many countries," WHO said.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What are role, powers of CDS?

With General Bipin Rawat taking over as India's first Chief of Defence Staff, a look at the structure of the Defence Ministry, and the relationship the CDS will have with the ministry and the armed forces

SUSHANT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

WITH GENERAL Bipin Rawat taking over as the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on New Year's Day, a new structure is being created in the Defence Ministry. What will be the nature of the relationship between the new four-star general and the ministry?

It is said that the CDS is a 'dual-hatted role'. What does that mean?

The dual-hatted role refers to the two hats the CDS wears: one of the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee which has the three service chiefs as members, and the other of the head of the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the ministry. The former is a military role while the latter is a role in the government; it is as the head of DMA that his major responsibilities within the ministry will be discharged.

How many other departments does the Defence Ministry have, and who so far was looking after what will now be the charter of DMA?

The ministry already had four departments: Department of Defence; Department of Defence Production; Department of Defence Research and Development; and Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare. Each of them is headed by a Secretary, with the Department of Defence being the nerve centre of the ministry, looking after all issues pertaining to the armed forces, defence policy and procurement.

The charter of duties of the DMA was so far looked after by the Department of Defence, which is headed by the Defence Secretary who is also the secretary in-charge of the Defence Ministry. Work exclusively pertaining to military matters will fall within the purview of the DMA while the Department of Defence will deal with larger issues pertaining to defence of the country. To give an illustrative example, this means that while tri-service military training institutions will fall under the DMA, organisations like IDSA and NDC whose remit is broader than military matters will fall under the Department of Defence.

Are the armed forces — the Army, the Navy and the Air Force — not departments of the ministry?

No, the service headquarters, and thereby the armed forces, are attached offices in the



Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat in New Delhi Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE: WHO, WHAT

- Department of Defence**  
Headed by Defence Secretary
- Department of Military Affairs**  
Headed by the CDS
- Department of Defence Production**  
Headed by Secretary Defence Production
- Department of Defence Research and Development**  
Headed by DRDO chief
- Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare**  
Headed by Secretary ESW

DUAL-HATTED ROLE OF CDS

- Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
- Head of Department of Military Affairs in Defence Ministry

ministry. They used to come under the Department of Defence so far, but will now fall under the ambit of DMA, and will have an appropriate mix of civilian and military

officers at every level.

Attached offices are generally responsible for providing executive direction required in implementation of policies laid down by the department to which they are attached, in this case now the DMA. They also serve as a repository of technical information and advise the department on technical aspects of questions they deal with. In essence, they are executive agencies carrying out directions of the Defence Ministry whose task is to draft them, obtain approval from the government and communicate them for implementation to the defence services.

But won't the CDS command the three service chiefs, and be the single-point military adviser to the government?

No, neither. He will act as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters. In fact, the three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister, as done so far, on matters exclusively concerning their respective services. The government has also made it explicitly clear that the CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs. But the service chiefs will be members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which will be headed by the CDS. And the DMA, headed by the CDS, will also have the armed forces under its ambit — if promotions, postings and disciplinary matters of three services fall under the DMA, it will give

the CDS extensive influence over the three service chiefs.

Have the service chiefs lost any of their major powers or tasks to the CDS?

Not really. None of the powers of the service chiefs, including of advising the government, has been curtailed and transferred to the CDS. The only thing is the role of Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which used to be headed by the senior-most chief by rotation. That has been shelved with the CDS being the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, where he will be supported by the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff.

However, the CDS has been given a time-bound task, to be done within three years, to bring about jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, and repairs and maintenance of the three services, which will eventually lead to shedding of responsibilities by the service headquarters. As the head of the DMA, the CDS has to also facilitate restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/ theatre commands. This is again a far-reaching move, which will potentially impinge on the remit of the service chiefs.

The CDS has the status of a Cabinet Secretary, but functionally will head a department headed by a Secretary. Also, he will be under a ministry where the Defence Secretary is in charge of the ministry. Isn't this a bit complicated?

Yes, it is. But that is the nature of government functioning and his dual-hatted role will decide the different kind of powers, access and relationships that will be forged by the CDS. Norms of functioning and political guidance, more than hard-coded bureaucratic rules, will determine the functional efficiency and effectiveness of the CDS and it will be upon General Rawat to establish this as the first incumbent of the new office.

Finally, will the CDS be responsible for the defence of the country?

No, as per the gazette notification issued by the government on December 30, the Department of Defence — headed by the Defence Secretary — will be responsible for the "defence of India and every part thereof, including defence policy and preparation for defence and all such acts as may be conducive in times of war to its prosecution and after its termination to effective demobilisation".

What were the 2 holidays scrapped in J&K?

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

THE GOVERNMENT in Jammu and Kashmir has cancelled two existing public holidays and introduced a new one. The Muslim majority in Jammu and Kashmir see this as a reflection of the Centre's assertion, and as a move against their own assertion of their Muslim identity.

The three holidays

The government order has cancelled public holidays on December 5 and July 13. December 5 is commemorated as the birth anniversary of Sheikh Mohd Abdullah, National Conference founder, former J&K Prime Minister, and former Chief Minister.

July 13 is observed as Martyrs' Day in Jammu and Kashmir. On that date in 1931, 22 Kashmiris were killed outside the Srinagar

Central Jail, where they had assembled to protest against autocratic Dogra rulers.

The new holiday is on October 26, the date in 1947 when the former state of Jammu and Kashmir acceded to the Dominion of India. A day later, Indian troops reached Srinagar to drive out tribal raiders. October 27 is observed as a Black Day in Kashmir, marked with a shutdown.

History & significance

In 1846, under the Treaty of Amritsar, the British sold Jammu and Kashmir state to the Dogra king Maharaja Gulab Singh. The Dogras hailed from Jammu and their rule lasted for over a century. In 1931, Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir rose against the autocracy of Dogra rule. The uprising, which led to the killing of 22 Muslims, is seen as the first assertion of Muslim identity in Jammu and Kashmir.

Since the BJP formed a coalition govern-

ment with the PDP, its leaders and ministers had started to demand a holiday on the birth anniversary of Maharaja Hari Singh, the Dogra king who ruled Kashmir when the 1931 killings took place. The BJP leaders, most of whom hailed from Jammu, also stayed away from government functions organised to commemorate those killed in 1931.

December 5, meanwhile, is significant because of the efforts of Sheikh Mohd Abdullah to integrate Jammu and Kashmir with India. It was Abdullah, a close friend and political ally of Jawaharlal Nehru, who converted the Muslim Conference into the secular National Conference in 1939. Unlike the Muslim Conference, the NC advocated a future with secular India rather than with Pakistan. Once the tallest leader of Kashmir, Abdullah saw his popularity dwindle over the years, but his party continued to advocate Kashmir's future with India.

The signals

The move is seen as a departure from the politics of Jammu and Kashmir since 1939. Many people see this as an effort to erase the role of Sheikh Abdullah, and J&K's Muslim assertion. They see it also as a refusal to recognise Kashmir's popular Muslim leaders who sided with India in 1947, and leaders who continue to identify with India.

It also raises a question mark over the revival of a political process in Jammu and Kashmir. After the abrogation of Jammu & Kashmir's special status and division of the state into two Union Territories, the government has cracked down even on mainstream political parties, jailed their leaders and workers including three former Chief Ministers, and stayed away from any political engagement. The move comes when normalcy is yet to return even five months after the abrogation.

In Baghdad US embassy storming, echoes of a seige in Tehran 40 yrs ago

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

ON TUESDAY evening (India time), as several dozen protesters stormed the United States embassy compound in Baghdad, smashing windows and lighting fires, and a crowd of thousands thronged the streets outside chanting "Death to America", John R Bolton, who was the US National Security Adviser until September 2019, posted on Twitter: "The attack on the US embassy in Baghdad is straight from Iran's playbook in 1979..."

Several hours later, President Donald Trump tweeted that "The US Embassy in Iraq is, & has been for hours, SAFE!", with "great Warfighters, together with the most lethal military equipment in the world", present at the site. He threatened the regime in Tehran directly: "Iran will be held fully responsible for lives lost, or damage incurred, at any of our facilities. They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat."

The US believes the attack on the em-

bassy compound was directed from Tehran, and led by the Kata'ib Hezbollah militia, which is different from Hezbollah in Lebanon but, like the latter, is closely aligned with the Quds Force, the overseas operations wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). The Hezbollah, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and Revolutionary Guards have been designated international terrorist organisations by the US.

What happened in 1979, and why does the US blame Iran for Tuesday's attack on its embassy compound in Iraq?

Tehran embassy seige

On November 4, 1979, youth followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calling themselves Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line smashed through the gates of the US embassy in Tehran and seized the compound and the 63 American citizens present on the premises. (Another three American diplomats were seized at the Foreign Ministry.) The crisis lasted a full 444 days — until January 20, 1981, when the last batch of the 52 Americans who were taken hostage were released.

The incident — the most consequential of its kind in recent decades (along with the 2012 assault on the US embassy in Benghazi, Libya, in which the American ambassador and a foreign service officer was killed) — put the relationship between the US and Iran in a fundamentally hostile cast, the echoes of which continue to reverberate more than 40 years on. The embassy seige, a seminal event of the Islamic Revolution, cemented the perception of the ayatollahs' regime as being intractably fundamentalist and anti-West, and has ever since been at the heart of the US narrative of Iran as a rogue outlier that has no respect for internationally accepted principles law, morality, or human rights.

The context in Iran

The last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who had been installed and kept in power by Western powers led by the US and the UK, had been a close American ally for decades. Under him, Iran was the West's bulwark against the Soviet Union, and the autocratic Shah energetically pursued Western style modernisation in the country,



Hostage takers burn American flag at the embassy in Tehran in 1979.

including the suppression of religious groups. As public anger against the Shah peaked, the sprawling US embassy compound became, from the last months of 1978 onward, the scene of large protests by

Iranians who perceived the US as his primary benefactor.

On January 16, 1979, the Shah fled Iran for Egypt, and on February 1, Khomeini made a triumphant return to his country after 15 years in exile. On October 22, the deposed Shah arrived in the US for medical treatment, triggering an eruption of anger on the Iranian street, which ultimately resulted in the storming of the embassy on November 4.

The unfolding crisis

Initial negotiations by representatives of President Jimmy Carter and diplomats of other countries in Iran made no headway. The country's mood was virulently anti-American, and the fate of the hostages was also caught in a tussle between rival revolutionary factions. Mehdi Bazargan, who had been appointed Prime Minister by Khomeini, resigned on November 6. The US refused to accept the hostage takers' key demand for the return of the Shah — and instead stopped buying Iranian oil, froze Iranian assets in America, lobbied with other countries and in the United Nations,

and took Iran to the International Court of Justice (where it ultimately won).

Meanwhile, on November 17, 13 women and African American hostages were released. On July 11, 1980, another hostage who had fallen very ill, was let go. Separately, on January 28, 1980, six American diplomats who had escaped being taken hostage and had been sheltered by the senior Canadian diplomat John Sheardown, made a dramatic escape along with two CIA operatives on board a Swissair flight to Zurich. (Their story was fictionalised in *Escape from Iran: The Canadian Caper* (1981) and the Oscar-winning *Argo* (2012).)

On April 24, 1980, a dangerous military attempt to fly the hostages out of Tehran failed tragically after three of the eight helicopters on the mission malfunctioned, and a fourth was involved in an accident as the US forces sought to withdraw hastily. Eight American soldiers were killed, and Iran showed their bodies on TV, to the Carter administration's humiliation. Thereafter all diplomatic efforts ceased, and Iran tightened security around the hostages.