

12 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

FORCE IS ALL CONQUERING, BUT IT'S VICTORIES ARE SHORT LIVED.
— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Led by the people

Indian Muslims are protesting not because their religion is in danger, but for the imperilled Constitution



JAVED ANAND

NEW CHIEF, NEW TASK

JP Nadda will be watched as he takes charge of a BJP entering a new phase on a new arc

THE BJP, UNDER the leadership of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, has been extensively re-made. The large mandates that swept it to power in 2014, and again in 2019, flag its transformation into a party that looks both more determined to win, and more winnable. Between 2014 and 2019, it steadily expanded its electoral footprint to areas where it was not a major player, and entrenched its domination where it was already strong. Since 2019, the script has been turning. Electorally, it is beginning to appear that its strength at the Centre is not matched by its appeal in the states. Most recently, it lost its governments in two of the three states that went to the polls — posting an underwhelming performance in Maharashtra where it also lost its oldest ally, barely managing to remain in the saddle with a post-poll coalition in Haryana, and being overtaken by an alliance of its political opponents in Jharkhand. At the same time, ideologically, the BJP is acquiring a new, or renewed thrust — the Modi government has criminalised triple talaq, toughened the UAPA and stripped J&K of its special status. It enacted the Citizenship Amendment Act, which, for the first time, makes religion a criterion of citizenship, and in tandem with a possible nation-wide NRC, sharpens the insecurities and anxieties of the Muslim community.

JP Nadda becomes BJP president amid protests against the CAA which have seen students and the young, Muslims and women, take the lead in campuses and cities. The ruling party has labelled the protests as the backlash of losers, or it has dismissed them as purely Muslim-driven, lacking a wider social base. Yet, Nadda's party will not be able to take its eye off the push-back — it has already made the Modi government backpedal on the NRC and compelled the BJP to launch mass contact programmes on the CAA. Neither can it afford to overlook the setting — with the economy sputtering, inflation returning and investment drying up, India's growth and its famed demographic dividend seem imperilled. Meanwhile, the Opposition, as overtaken by the so-far leaderless eruptions as the government, is sensing an opening.

Of course, the BJP's challenge may not all be Nadda's to address. It is no secret that his elevation is unlikely to change the reality that the BJP is now Amit Shah's party. It could even be said that Nadda is being elevated to the post precisely because he ticks the boxes without posing a threat of another power centre. In a long career that began in student politics in the ABVP followed by the BJYM, through elections to the Himachal state assembly, ministership in the state and Union governments and membership of the Rajya Sabha, while discharging key organisational responsibilities, as in UP for the 2019 polls, Nadda has remained low key and uncontroversial. Yet, as he takes charge as BJP president, he will be watched for the impression he makes on the polity and the party in what are testing times for both.

UNTIL A MONTH ago, the words secularism, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity seemed to be just that: Words, devoid of much meaning, locked up in the pages of a book few had read. Today, these words have come to life, are chanted daily on the streets and maidans of cities, towns and villages by millions of Indians. "We the People of India", cutting across caste, community, gender and language, are collectively reading the Preamble, reiterating the pledge of our freedom fighters. The Constitution of India is now a Book of the People.

Between them, three sharply contrasting images from three different moments in India, post-Independence, encapsulate a promising trajectory of Indian Muslims.

Image one (1985): Initiated and led by the ulema, lakhs of people — only Muslims, all male — flood the streets of India. All fire and fury, they are protesting against the unanimous verdict of the Supreme Court upholding an order of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh granting a monthly maintenance amount of Rs 179.20 (only) to an aged, divorced Muslim woman — Shah Bano. "Islam in danger" is the war cry of the agitators who insist that their faith is above the law of the land. The then Congress government led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi duly complies with the passage of the religion-specific Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.

Image two (2018): Also conceived and organised by the ulema, tens of thousands — only Muslims, all burqa-clad women — march the streets all over India protesting against the Narendra Modi-led NDA government's Bill to criminalise triple talaq. It's a silent march everywhere because women, say the ulema, must neither be seen nor heard in public. The posters spell out the demands: "Triple talaq Bill *wapas lo*, Shariat *hamari jaan se pyari*" (Withdraw the triple talaq Bill, Shariah is more precious to us than our lives). As to the irony of women defending the supposed Islamic right of men to divorce them at will and instantly, who cares?

Image three (2019-20): Millions of Muslims — men and women — are out on the streets alongside fellow Indians of other faiths

and no faith, shouting, "No CAA, no NPR, no NRC, no detention camps".

The difference between then and now is striking in more ways than one. One, in 1985 and in 2018, the rallies were launched from above. But this time, the Muslim masses are out in the public space in defiance of the dictates of their big-shot ulema. Following an apparent prompt from the mighty ruling duo, Ahmad Bukhari (Imam, Delhi's Shahi Jama Masjid), Maulana Mahmood Madani (general secretary, Jamiat-ul-ulema Hind), Sayed Zainul Hussain Chisti (dewan, Ajmer dargah), Kalbe Jawad (Shia leader) and their ilk ask Muslims to stay at home, telling them they had nothing to fear from the CAA-NPR-NRC process. But no one is listening. As yesterday's led take over today's leadership, the ulema are forced to make a quick U-turn, fall in line behind the Muslim masses.

Two, the protest this time is not faith-based, there is no gender segregation. Muslim men and women are out there alongside all others. Yes, there are Muslim women in burqas and hijabs. But also there in large numbers are women who "don't look like Muslims".

Three, the icons of the ongoing insurrection are mostly women. Examples are the three young students standing rock-like, fingers wagging, between the baton-wielding police, and a male fellow student close to the Jamia Millia Islamia campus. And the aged "dabang dadi ammas", along with a young Muslim woman, her 20-day-old infant in her arms, occupying Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi.

Last, and most significantly, unlike the earlier two occasions, there's no "Islam/Shariah in danger" call. It's all about "citizenship in danger". There is no question of any conflict here between *deen* (Faith) and *dastoor* (Constitution). The aam Muslim is well aware that in the dastoor lies the guarantee of their right to citizenship, which is the key to all other rights. That is why both She and He are wholeheartedly part of the campaign to "Save the Constitution".

Many in recent years had bemoaned the fact that the word secularism stands drained of any emotive appeal. Rejoice now in this moment of secular awakening. But Muslims

and their well-wishers must also beware of the dissonant Islamist undercurrent that sees in this moment of churning a great opportunity for cadre recruitment. Among the protesters are also Islamists who have no faith in any "ungodly" secular-democratic dispensation. If the Sangh Parivar is bent on turning secular India into a Hindu Rashtra, the Islamists continue to harbour the fantasy of a Shariah-based Islamic Caliphate in India and across the globe.

In August 2014, the online portal New Age Islam (NAI) published a translation of two editorials dated August 22 and August 25 published in the Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind (JEI's Urdu mouthpiece, *Dawat*). Among other things, one of the editorials stated: "It is very necessary to welcome the announcement of the establishment of Islamic Caliphate by the ISIS because Islamic Caliphate is the aspiration of every Muslim and there has never been a disagreement on the issue among the Muslims in any period of history." The JEI, incidentally, was not the only Muslim body in India to have expressed similar sentiments until the sheer barbarism of the ISIS stunned them into silence.

Even today, you could go talk to any member of the JEI, the Welfare Party (JEF's electoral wing), or the Students Islamic Organisation (JEI's student wing). Better still, do a Google search and read the constitution of the JEI online. Further to the right of the JEI, there is the Popular Front of India (PFI) or its electoral wing, the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI).

No one can, or should, deny the democratic right of non-jihadi Islamist organisations to protest against the CAA-NPR-NRC process. But liberals and leftists who should, and do, defend the rights of the targeted Muslim minority must beware, lest they end up providing credibility and strength to the Muslim Right. Especially so when the Muslim masses are learning in real time that, contrary to what the Islamists claim, Islam and secularism can happily co-exist.

The writer is convener, Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy and co-editor, Sabrang India online

AFTER RAISINA

India needs to deepen its forum diplomacy to realise full potential of global engagement

AS THE ANNUAL Raisina Dialogue, run by the Observer Research Foundation with the support of the Foreign Office, concluded its fifth iteration last week, there was no doubt that it has emerged as an important global forum on geopolitics. Many serving ministers and senior officials from around the world as well as former heads of state and government joined in to make the three-day event a stimulating one. Raisina has been successful in drawing participants from countries that are at odds with each other — US, China, Russia, Iran and the Gulf Arabs. This year's Dialogue saw the participation of a large number of ministers from Europe, an area that has long been neglected in Indian diplomacy. Beyond political leaders and government officials, it also drew technology leaders, media personalities and policy wonks from around the world, providing Delhi an opportunity to lay out its position on controversial moves in Kashmir and on citizenship. More broadly, Raisina is facilitating the development of sustainable intellectual networks between the Indian strategic community and its counterparts in the world.

Part of the reason for Raisina's success is the growing international interest in India amidst its rapid economic growth in the new millennium and the recognition of its salience in shaping the future of international order. It is also due to the fact that it is based on collaboration between the government and a private think tank. This collaboration has helped shed the dull rigidity that has marked the government's past engagement with the global strategic community. Raisina emerged out of a recognition five years ago that Delhi did not have effective international platforms of its own despite the globalisation of India's economy — trade now contributes nearly 40 per cent of India's GDP. India is at once more influential in world affairs as well as more susceptible to external developments. But its policy discourse appeared stuck in the past. Raisina was part of the strategy to recalibrate that discourse and discard the traditional bureaucratic pretence that the government knows best.

Along with the Raisina Dialogue, the MEA had helped launch two other international forums — one on technology policy in Bengaluru and another on business in Mumbai. Delhi needs to strengthen those two forums. It also needs a separate forum focused on India's immediate neighbourhood. Delhi needs to devote a lot more attention to engaging the strategic and economic elites in the Subcontinent to make a success of its declared policy that puts the "neighbourhood first". While government-supported forums like Raisina are welcome, Delhi needs to make it easier for the civil society groups to develop trans-border and international conversations. Successive governments in recent decades have tightened the visa restrictions for conferences and made it harder to obtain official clearances to host such events. Only a genuine liberalisation of these rules will help India realise the full potential of its global engagement.

STUDENTS AS PROTESTERS

We are protesting because of our education, not despite it



NOUMAAN ANWER

IN THE MIDST of growing protests against the CAA, NRC, and the unleashing of violence against university students, protests on campuses like IIT Kharagpur, IIM Ahmedabad, IISc Bangalore, and St Stephen's College, Delhi have surprised many, given they are considered predominantly apolitical spaces.

Media coverage surrounding the protest and class boycott at my college, St Stephen's, on January 8 has largely focused on the college's non-participation in Delhi University Student Union elections, and its reputation as an institution that focuses on academic achievement. The career-oriented "high achievers" enrolled in such "institutions of excellence" are presumed to be "above" the fractious politics of campuses such as JNU.

This conception is a formidable element of the government's response to the recent agitation. Police violence at AMU and Jamia Millia Islamia and mob attack on students at JNU triggered the protests. Therefore, the government has sought to characterise such institutions as recurring centres of political dispute — their students, distracted by activism and ideology, academically incomparable with those at IITs, IIMs, and St Stephen's. A binary has been created between the "good" student, focused on academics, and the "bad" student who protests needlessly, based on which university they attend.

"Good" students have voiced their dissent on many occasions, including against the abrogation of Article 370, the Transgender Bill and the NRC in Assam.



It is extremely important that the larger populace understand the fundamental linkage between the classroom and the protest. The student protest slogan 'lado padhai karne ko, padho samaj badalne ko' demonstrates that this demand has long been a component of what higher academics ought to look like.

While there is no denying that protests of the scale and significance of the recent one at St Stephen's rarely happen on such campuses, the idea that it represents a moment of awakening among overachievers generally engrossed in academics is a dangerous mischaracterisation. It allows the casting of campuses that are centres of robust opposition as ideologically-motivated "anti-national" spaces. In the government's opinion, the long-present culture of protest at institutions such as JNU and JMI represents the dangerous degradation of these universities. This argument is confirmed by repeatedly stressing that the duty of a student is to study and succeed professionally.

Through this logic, the government seeks to divide students, especially when its platform and policies are being so widely questioned. That students at institutions such as St Stephen's are participating in and organising protests is worrying — the "good" student is now out on the streets, using the mechanism of the protest, alongside the answer script, to express her opinions on the nation's politics.

Challenging this narrative is crucial for the continuing unity of students in the face of an increasingly repressive government. I believe that meeting this challenge must also involve changing the way in which many Indians think about higher education. Universities cannot simply be seen as imparters of formal knowledge. Education shapes one's worldview, and therefore, plays a fundamental role in constructing a student's perspectives, in-

cluding on politics. Those committed to understanding Indian business, economy, and history must channelise what they learn in classrooms into their views on the nation and its current state of affairs. That students are on the streets, leading fellow citizens against divisive, fearmongering forces is majorly because their education has imbibed in them an unbreachable sense of justice, of equality, of morality, and of the right to dissent.

It is extremely important that the larger populace understand the fundamental link between the classroom and the protest. The student protest slogan "lado padhai karne ko, padho samaj badalne ko" demonstrates that this demand has long been a component of what higher education ought to be. That eminent institutions are protesting should not be an anomaly that arises only when circumstances are extremely dire — it should be seen as an inalienable consequence of young citizens' advanced understanding of their political environments.

The concern that the country is being divided has been voiced most strongly by young people. No concerned observer ought to weaken their voice. Be they from JNU or IIT, Jamia or St Stephen's, students should be seen as equals leading the long march against discrimination, disunity, and repression as a consequence of their education.

The writer, 20, is third-year undergraduate student of history at St Stephen's College, New Delhi

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



JANUARY 20, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

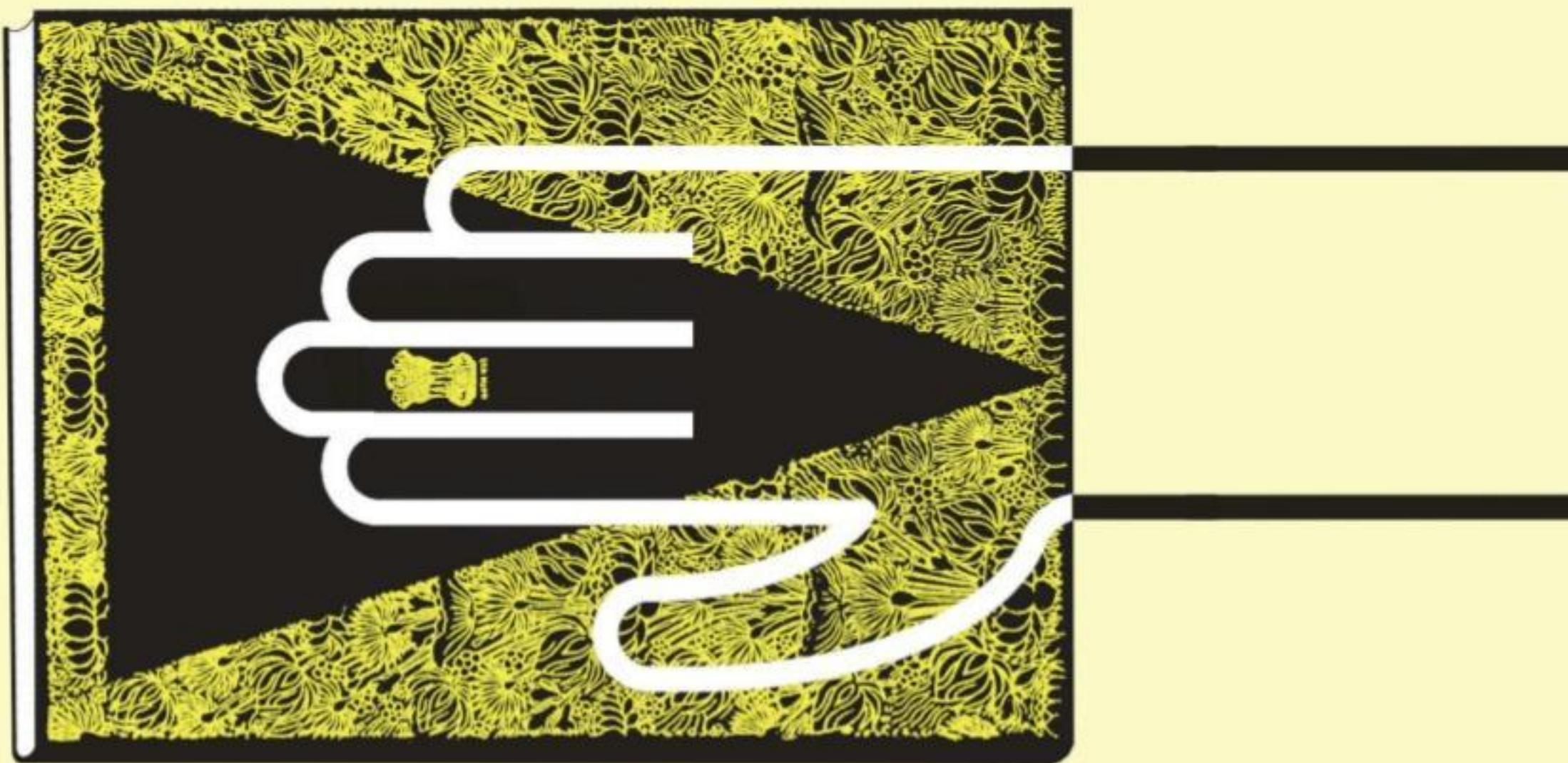
PATWA IS CM
SUNDERLAL PATWA, WHO was elected leader of the Janata Legislature Party in Bhopal, has been invited by the governor to form a new government in Madhya Pradesh. He is likely to be sworn in as chief minister on January 20. The out-going CM, V K Sakhlecha, who formally submitted his resignation to soon after the JLP meeting, has been asked to continue in office till Patwa is sworn in. Sakhlecha had resigned from his post on Monday last owning "moral responsibility" for the debacle of the ruling Janata Party in the Lok Sabha poll. Dissidents in the party, including Patwa, had also stepped up their campaign for the ouster of Sakhlecha

last week.
DANGE SEEKS MOSCOW
A BIG TUSSELE is developing in the CPI over the question of support to Indira Gandhi. According to CPI circles in Calcutta, SA Dange has sent an emissary to Moscow to seek the Soviet Communist Party's intervention in his fight with the majority of the party national council who are at present opposed to Mrs Gandhi. Reports say that the emissary is Mohit Sen, who flew to Moscow a couple of days after the election results. Biswanath Mukherjee, state CPI secretary, met the CPM state secretary Promode Das Gupta in connection with the left front-CPI victory rally

in Calcutta. Mukherjee is believed to have acquainted the CPM leader with his assessment of the situation within the CPI.

NO US-PAK TREATY
THE US STATE Department has politely but firmly rejected Pakistan President Zia ul Haq's demand to turn the 1959 bilateral agreement into a treaty, his plea for aid for a duration longer than two years and for a greater volume of aid. It appears that Washington wants to see if the Soviet Union withdraws its forces from Afghanistan in the given time period. The US also does not want to deny the opportunity of putting pressure on Pakistan on the issue of nuclear weapons.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE



C R Sasikumar

States have an obligation

It is the declaration by some Opposition-ruled states that they will not implement CAA, not the law itself, that is unconstitutional



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

THE HISTORIC CITIZENSHIP Amendment Bill was passed in Parliament's winter session and has received the President's assent. This move by the Centre will give long overdue relief to the religiously persecuted minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. While these minorities have welcomed the Act, it is surprising that the Congress and several other Opposition parties are spreading rumours, which have led to violence in some parts of the country. Such attempts to spread rumours, create confusion and engage in vote bank politics have, of course, been the hallmark of the Congress party. It, therefore, becomes imperative to revisit the developments which led to the enactment of the Act.

The Congress and a few other Opposition parties have been describing the CAA as an assault on secular values; they have fomented unrest across the country in the name of saving the Constitution. In its present form, the Act doesn't violate Article 14 of the Constitution. In 2003, the NDA government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the first step towards the legal formalisation of a policy to grant citizenship to religiously persecuted minorities of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Manmohan Singh, then an Opposition leader, had advocated a more liberal approach for granting Indian citizenship to minorities in Bangladesh. The Citizenship Amendment Rules 2004 were notified by the Ministry of Home Affairs on February 28, 2004 and published in the Extraordinary Gazette of India on March 1, 2004. The district collectors of Rajasthan and Gujarat were granted special powers to confer Indian citizenship to "Pakistani Nationals of Minority Hindu community displaced consequent to wars be-

tween India and Pakistan in the years 1965 and 1971" for one year from the operationalisation of the rules.

The period of applicability of these rules was extended by the Manmohan Singh-led UPA by gazette notifications in 2004 and 2005 — first by two years and then by three years. The Modi government has taken the cue from the UPA government: CAA, 2019 further eases the procedure for conferring citizenship to not only Hindu but also Sikh, Jain, Christian, Buddhist and Parsi communities from the three neighbouring countries. The question that inevitably arises is: When the Congress government was bringing a series of amendments in the citizenship rules to favour the Hindu minorities, where were these voices who are now terming the CAA as an assault on secularism in India and against Article 14 of the Constitution?

In its 159th report on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Parliamentary Standing Committee On Home Affairs under the chairmanship of M Venkaiah Naidu highlighted the failure of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to live up to the assurance of granting citizenship to the West Pakistani Hindu migrants to India. On August 10, 1949, in a Constituent Assembly discussion on citizenship, B R Ambedkar pointed out: "It is not possible to cover every kind of case for a limited purpose, namely, the purpose of conferring citizenship on the date of commencement of the Constitution. If there is any category of people who are left out by the provisions contained in this amendment, we have given the power to Parliament subsequently to make provision for them."

In India's federal structure, states have a constitutional obligation to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 as passed by Parliament. As per Article 246 of the Constitution, the 17th entry under the Union List of the Seventh Schedule provides exclusive powers to Parliament to legislate on matters related to 'citizenship, naturalisation and aliens'. It is tragic to note, therefore, that the chief ministers belonging to Opposition parties, despite taking the oath for bearing true faith and allegiance to the Constitution, are making a mockery of it by publicly expressing their ill-will and expressing their reluctance to implement the CAA

As per Article 246 of the Constitution, the 17th entry under Union List of the Seventh Schedule provides exclusive powers to Parliament to legislate on matters related to 'citizenship, naturalisation and aliens'. It is tragic to note, therefore, that the chief ministers belonging to Opposition parties, despite taking the oath for bearing true faith and allegiance to the Constitution are making a mockery of it by publicly expressing their ill-will and expressing their reluctance to implement CAA — this is nothing but petty votebank politics.

— this is nothing but petty votebank politics. Articles 245 and 256 of the Constitution also oblige states to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament. The declaration by the governments of Kerala, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra that these states will not implement the CAA is, therefore, unconstitutional. Even then, while framing the CAA's rules, the government is considering experts' suggestions to make the Act operational.

Item No 27 (Entry 34) of the Congress party's manifesto for the Rajasthan Assembly election 2018 clearly promises citizenship and rehabilitation for refugees from Pakistan. The Congress and other parties have advocated the cause of religiously-persecuted minorities from time to time for vote bank politics. However, once the BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken up this cause, these parties have done a volte-face.

The Opposition and extremist organisations like the Popular Front of India (PFI) have created the illusion that citizenship won't be granted to Muslims, but that is far from the truth. Muslims will continue to get citizenship under the Citizenship Act. It is pertinent to note that over the last five years more than 3,000 refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh got Indian citizenship, 566 of them were Muslims. It is also pertinent to point out that whenever the Opposition has had to contend with the popularity of PM Narendra Modi, the nation has witnessed attempts — unsuccessful ones — to mislead the people. These include the brouhaha over the "Rafale deal", "Award Wapsi", "intolerance" and the historic CAA.

My appeal to all countrymen is to understand the CAA — it is a humanitarian legislation. In a vibrant democracy like India, it is never easy to mislead the citizenry. The millions of BJP karyakartas are reaching out to every household to bust the myths created by the Opposition. It is important for every individual to participate in this endeavour so that the country's democracy is strengthened.

The writer is Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Stepping back from the top jobs might suit him (Vladimir Putin). He prefers grand military and global affairs to the grind of domestic politics."

— THE GUARDIAN

A farm wish list for the budget

Move to cash transfers for beneficiaries of food and fertiliser subsidy will lead to savings, put agriculture on sustainable growth path



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH BY ASHOK GULATI

ALTHOUGH THE Union budget is basically an accounting exercise of revenues and expenditures for the coming year, economy-watchers anxiously wait for the finance minister to announce major economic reforms. In that sense, the budget of 1991 remains a historic one that changed the course of Indian economy from being largely a socialist, state-controlled to a somewhat more liberal and market oriented economy. The results of exchange rate correction, trade policy changes, and delicensing of industry are there for everyone to see.

Foreign exchange reserves have shot up from \$ 1.4 billion in July 1991 to more than \$ 450 billion today. The biggest achievement of the 1991 budget is that has provided the economy with ample resilience against external shocks. On the economic growth front, expectations have been lifted from the famous "Hindu rate of growth" of 3.5 per cent per annum — a term coined by the late agri-economist Raj Krishna — to about 7-8 per cent. Any government that fails to deliver at least 7 per cent growth on a sustained basis for the next 10 years would be considered as failing on the economic front. The economic credibility of the Narendra Modi 2.0 government is at stake on this account. Can the budget unleash animal spirits and lift growth to 7 per cent? Here we focus on agri-food policies.

On top of the list would be the food subsidy. In the last budget, a provision of Rs 1.84 lakh crore was made for it. But the Food Corporation of India (FCI) had uncleared dues to the tune of Rs 1.86 lakh crore. This is simply "cheating" as we say in exams with regard to transparency in the Union budget. My first submission to the FM would be to ensure transparency and to fully account for the food subsidy. And if she, and the Prime Minister, as the buck stops with him for any major reforms, have the courage to reform this, the country can gain enormously.

I had explained in detail on what needs to be done in this regard in my last article ('Lifting growth, containing inflation', IE, January 6). Suffice it to say, the situation is getting worse by the day. Look at the picture at the beginning of the year: Against a buffer stock norm of 21.4 million tonnes (mt), the actual stocks of grains with the central pool stood at 75.5 mt, which is 3.5 times what the government needs to hold. At its economic cost, the value of the excess stocks with the government stands at Rs 1.6 lakh crore. This high level of "dead stocks" speaks of the sheer reluctance of the government to reform. There is no better place to find revenue for the FM than to liquidate these stocks. But actually, it's a call for the PM to take. Unless he focuses on reforms, the inefficiency of the grain management system will keep on increasing

and the nation will suffer.

It is also the time to revise the central issue of price and link it to the procurement price — say at half the procurement price. And if he can limit this highly subsidised food of Rs 3/kg for rice and Rs 2/kg of wheat to say 40 per cent of the population, he can certainly rationalise the food subsidy to a large extent. The real fundamental reform for Modi 2.0, however, would be if he moves towards direct cash transfers for the intended beneficiaries of food subsidy.

The next big ticket item is the fertiliser subsidy. This is again a sector that has been crying out for reforms for a long time. While the fertiliser subsidy in the last budget was provisioned at around Rs 80,000 crore, there were pending bills of the fertiliser industry to the tune of Rs 39,000 crore. The fertiliser industry today is demoralised and even the best of the private sector players (like the Tatas), with the most technically efficient plants, have quit this sector. For new plants, no new private sector player is enthused. Further, the government has also forced its public sector units to invest in five new urea plants whose costs remain murky and certainly higher than the average cost of the existing units.

The real problem of this sector is the imbalance in the policy of fertiliser subsidisation: While urea (N) is subsidised to the extent of 75 per cent of its cost, phosphatic (P) and potassic (K) fertilisers are subsidised only to the tune of about 25 per cent of their cost. The result is the highly imbalanced use of N, P and K on farmers' fields, giving a very low fertiliser-to-grain response ratio, and degrading the soil, underground water, and even the environment with excessive nitrogen use. All this is nothing short of cruelty to our natural resources, and farmers, especially those who want to pursue natural farming as they don't get subsidy anywhere near the amount chemical-based fertilisers do. The solution to this is either bring nitrogenous fertilisers also under Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme or better, to move towards direct cash transfers for fertilisers on a per hectare basis, with some adjustment for irrigated tracts (for instance, irrigated land could get 1.5 times the subsidy amount for unirrigated land due to the higher cropping intensity on the former).

If Modi 2.0 can usher in these two fundamental reforms in food and fertiliser subsidy, that is move towards direct cash transfers to the intended beneficiaries, he will go down in history for setting this sector on a sustainable growth path with minimum saving of Rs 50,000 crore annually. These savings can then be invested in better water management, especially drip irrigation ("more crop per drop"); for better infrastructure for agri-markets, which along with reforming the APMC laws will help farmers get better prices for their produce; in putting "solar trees" to harvest solar power on farmers' fields with buy back arrangements for surplus power.

All such investments will go a long way to augment farmers' incomes in a sustainable manner. Else, I am afraid, much of the talk in the Union budget for agri-reforms will remain mere rhetoric

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MATTER OF NURTURE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Not ready for school', (IE, January 15). A child's exposure to a pre-schooling has a progressive impact on her psychology. This in turn reflects on her learning outcome in the early years of school. The anganwadi facilities are invested with multiple responsibilities along with taking care of a child's learning needs. A volunteer-based model designed with anganwadis as the pivots could be worked out to address this deficiency.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

REVIVE GROWTH

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A rough patch' (IE, January 15). The continuous rise in inflation (now 7.35 per cent) is breaking the back of the common man. Food prices have risen by 14.12 per cent, forcing the poor to go without even bare minimum vegetables. The government should take immediate corrective measures to arrest the economic downfall and restore the faith of people in our financial institutions.

R P Singh, Ambala

EMPTY GESTURE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Ministers in Valley' (IE, January 17). The ceremonial visit of host of ministers to J&K does not make any sense when people in the valley are gripped by a crisis of confi-

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.

dence. For any communication to be effective, the basic requirement is trust between parties concerned. The government ought to restore fundamental rights in the Valley.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

GREAT SHAME

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Crime and impunity' (IE, January 17). We expect our sportspersons to bring laurels to the country. But we subject young women athletes to humiliation. A penalty of Rs 910 per month for sexual harassment is a bad joke. The SAI and sports ministry must share the blame.

Bal Govind, Noida

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

JINGOISM AND TALKS

Patience, it appears, has its limits. In its January 18 editorial, Dawn appears almost annoyed at the invitation by India to Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, to be held later this year. In deference to consistency perhaps — the newspaper has always favoured talks as the only solution to the issues between India and Pakistan — the editorial does pay lip-service to the fact that the invitation is a departure from New Delhi's overall reticence and jingoism. Given that the sidelines of multilateral events can help informal talks "the prospect of Pakistan's participation in the SCO summit, has brought up the possibility of forward movement where the currently frozen bilateral ties between the two countries are concerned".

But after this drab note of optimism, the editorial issues a caution: "There should be no illusions; unless the core issues affecting the Pakistan-India relationship are addressed, a mere photo op between the two leaders will be of little use." At the centre of these "core issues" are New Delhi's actions on the constitutional status of Kashmir as

well as the clampdown on communications, politics and alleged human rights violations in the state. In addition, there are now "Islamophobic" laws against Muslims in India and "the recent bellicose, anti-Pakistan statements by Indian generals have further poisoned the atmosphere".

"If there is to be peace," says the editorial, "such jingoism must be reined in". The editorial does reiterate that dialogue is the only way forward for the Subcontinent. "Pakistan has over the past few years taken several steps for peace, yet the response from the other side has been less than enthusiastic. The SCO summit can prove to be a chance to change things for the better."

A NEW CULTURE?

"President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (GR)," says the editorial on January 16 in *The Island*, "has decided to put an end to the practice of arrests being made even in situations where they are not called for." Instructions to this end have reportedly been given to Sri Lanka's police chief. The newspaper welcomes the development, understandably so.

The "selective" efficiency of the Sri Lankan

police in certain matters has been a cause for concern in that country for some time. With nearly every political change of guard in Colombo, there has been some targeting of political workers. In addition, given the state of most prisons and judicial delays, the fact of an arrest is dire punishment in itself.

The very top of the political class, though, has been immune to this in Sri Lanka: "Some of them have the remarkable ability to fall sick at will. This, they do when they are about to be arrested and get themselves admitted to hospital; they recover upon being bailed out. But neither politicians nor other people should be arrested and remanded unless there is irrefutable evidence to prove that they are bent on perverting the course of justice." GR's call to end this culture, whether for politicians or ordinary people, "is welcome".

MOBS AND JUSTICE

Unfortunately, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India share more than just a rich history, culture and many other affinities. In all three countries, the lynching mob has made what the editorial in *Dhaka Tribune* calls a "mockery of justice". In 2019, from students to or-

dinary people, Bangladesh has been witness to the mob and its variety so-called justice — much like in India and Pakistan.

While the end of the year saw a decline in the number of attacks, the sheer fact of this phenomenon is something to bemoan: "No one can take the law into their own hand. Last year, Bangladesh witnessed a series of mob lynchings that shook the nation to the core. While the trend died down near the end of 2019, it is sad to see this most heinous of acts resurface, with four people having lost their lives in separate incidences throughout the country. In Jessore, three men were lynched as they were suspected to be cattle thieves; in Savar a 40-year-old was beaten to death, while a 14-year-old was brutally tortured by a group of people in Gaibandha."

But the editorial, somewhat disturbingly, also qualifies its condemnation: "The fact that the public is forcing its way into the position of judge, jury, and executioner indicates that they are wary of the police. To simply punish those who are carrying out these lynchings, then, would be a half measure, as it does nothing to strike at the heart of why people feel the need to take the law into their own hands in the first place."

TELLING NUMBERS

India-Pak trade: already low volumes collapsed in 2019

TENSIONS BETWEEN India and Pakistan in 2019 have reduced the already low volumes of trade between the two countries to near zero. Following the terrorist attack on the CRPF convoy in Pulwama in February, India withdrew Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status for Pakistan and raised customs duty on Pakistani imports to 200% and, in April, suspended cross-LoC trade to stop the misuse of this route by Pakistan-based elements. Pakistan on its part, closed its airspace to India for a prolonged period.

The decisions by both countries, while targeted at hurting the neighbour, have severely impacted livelihoods of individuals and families involved in cross-border trading activities, says a report, *Unilateral Decisions Bilateral Losses: Assessing the Impact of the Face-off between India and Pakistan in 2019*, on *Border Economies*, released in New Delhi on January 16.

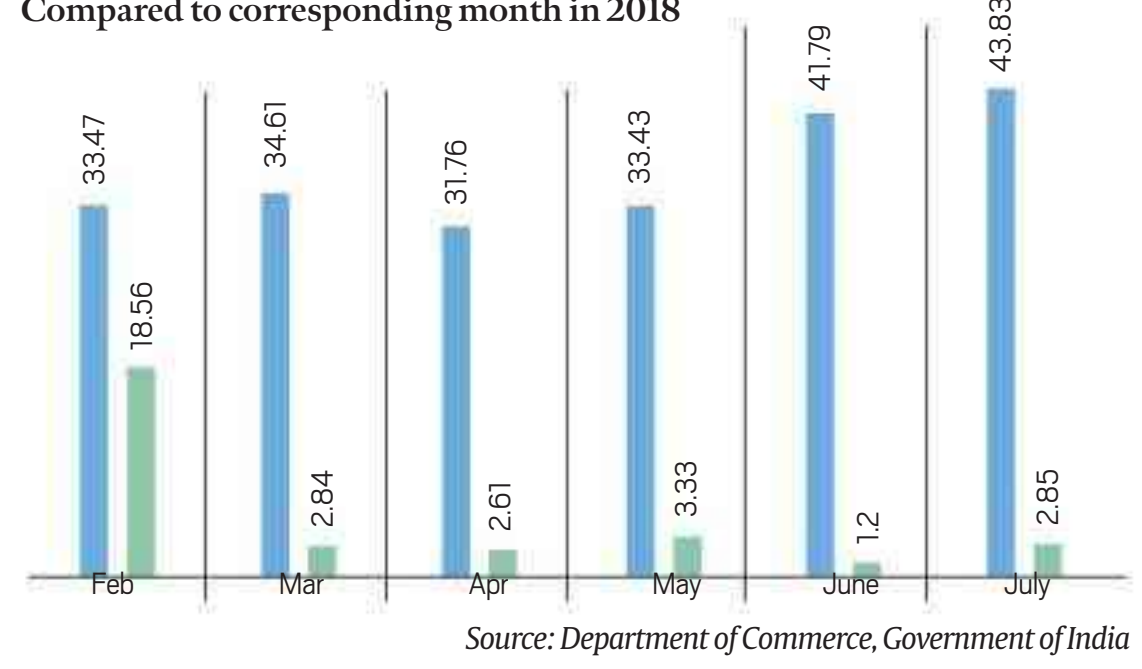
The report, by Afaq Hussain and Nikita Singla of the thinktank Bureau of Research on Industry and Economic Fundamentals (BRIEF), has used field research in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir to assess the "micro level impact" of the decisions by the two governments. Snapshots from the report: India remained Pakistan's largest trading partner until 1955-56. Between 1947 and 1965, the countries signed 14 bilateral agreements on trade, covering avoidance of double taxation, air services, and banking, etc. In 1965, nine branches of six Indian banks were operating in Pakistan.

INDIA-PAKISTAN TRADE, IN THE BEGINNING

IN 1948-49, about 56% of Pakistan's exports were to India, and 32% of its imports came from India. From 1948-65, India and Pakistan used a number of land routes for bilateral trade; there were eight customs stations in Pakistan's Punjab province and three customs checkposts in Sindh.

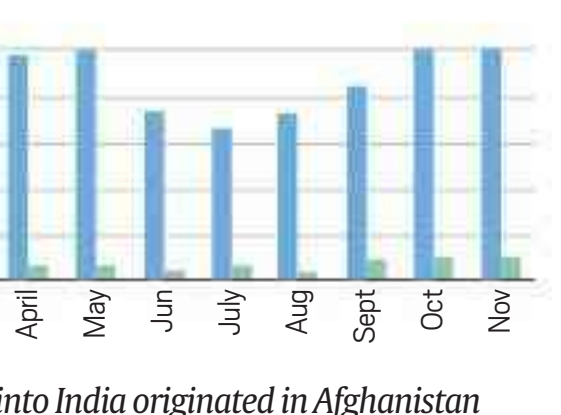
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PAK EXPORTS TO INDIA AFTER PULWAMA ATTACK (in \$ mn)



TRUCKS AT WAGAH-ATTARI

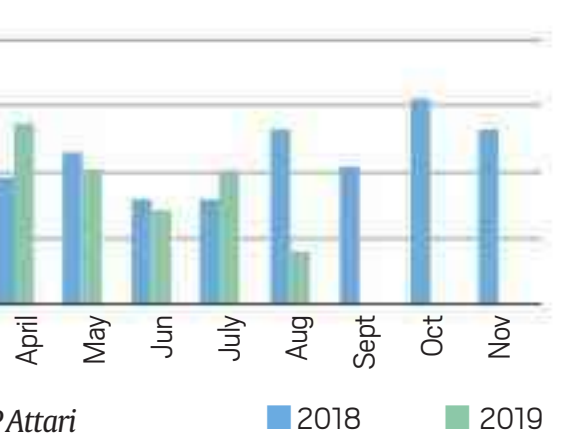
TRUCKS CARRYING IMPORTS FROM PAKISTAN
Monthly average of trucks crossing from Wagah to Attari (representative image above) fell from 4,381 in April-November 2018 to 348 in the same period in 2019.



After Aug 2019, trucks crossing from Pak into India originated in Afghanistan

TRUCKS CARRYING EXPORTS FROM INDIA

Monthly average of trucks crossing from Attari to Wagah fell from 223 in April-November 2018 to 113 during the same period in 2019. It stopped altogether from September onward.



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Understanding the Bru settlement

Centre, Tripura, and Mizoram have signed an agreement with the Bru/Reang community that promises to end their 23-year-old internal displacement crisis. How did the deal come about, and what happens now?

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JANUARY 19

TWENTY-THREE years after ethnic clashes in Mizoram forced 37,000 people of the Bru (or Reang) community to flee their homes to neighbouring Tripura, an agreement has been signed to allow them to remain permanently in the latter state.

The agreement among the Bru leaders and the governments of India, Tripura, and Mizoram, signed in New Delhi on January 16, gives the Bru the choice of living in either state. In several ways, the agreement has re-defined the way in which internal displacement is treated in India.

What is in the agreement?
All Bru currently living in temporary relief camps in Tripura will be settled in the state, if they want to stay on. The Bru who returned to Mizoram in the eight phases of repatriation since 2009, cannot, however, come back to Tripura.

To ascertain the numbers of those who will be settled, a fresh survey and physical verification of Bru families living in relief camps will be carried out. The Centre will implement a special development project for the resettled Bru; this will be in addition to the Rs 600 crore fund announced for the process, including benefits for the migrants.

Each resettled family will get 0.03 acre (1.5 *ganda*) of land for building a home, Rs 1.5 lakh as housing assistance, and Rs 4 lakh as a one-time cash benefit for sustenance. They will also receive a monthly allowance of Rs 5,000, and free rations for two years from the date of resettlement.

All cash assistance will be through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and the state government will expedite the opening of bank accounts and the issuance of Aadhaar, permanent residence certificates, ST certificates, and voter identity cards to the beneficiaries.

When will the resettlement take place?
Physical verification to identify beneficiaries will be carried out within 15 days of the signing of the deal. The land for resettlement will be identified within 60 days, and the land for allotment will be identified within 150 days.

The beneficiaries will get housing assistance, but the state government will build their homes and hand over possession. They will be moved to resettlement locations in four clusters, paving the way for the closure of the temporary camps within 180 days of the signing of the agreement. All dwelling houses will be constructed and payments completed within 270 days. Tripura Chief Minister Biplab



Kumar Deb has said he hopes to wrap up the process even sooner — in six months.

Where will the Bru be resettled?

Revenue experts reckon 162 acres will be required. Chief Minister Deb has said that the effort will be to choose *khash* or government land, but since Tripura is a small state (only 10,491 sq km), his government would explore the possibility of diverting forest lands, even reserve forest areas if necessary, to grant the new entitlements.

Diverting forest land for human settlements will, however, need clearance from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), which is likely to take at least three months. Deb has said that the central government has promised to provide funds, if needed, to acquire forest land or government land.

In what condition are the migrants now?

The Bru or Reang are a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram, and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). Over two decades ago, they were targeted by the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Zirlwai Pawl (MZP), and a few ethnic social organisations of Mizoram who demanded that the Bru be excluded from electoral rolls in the state. In October 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Bru fled Mizoram's Mamit, Kolasib, and Lunglei districts to Tripura, where they were sheltered in relief camps. Since then, over 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in nine phases of repatriation,

while 32,000 people from 5,400 families still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.

Under a relief package announced by the Centre, a daily ration of 600 g rice was provided to every adult Bru migrant and 300 g to every minor. Some salt too, was given to each family. Every adult received a daily cash dole of Rs 5; every minor Rs 2.50. Meagre allocations were made from time to time for essentials such as soap, slippers, and mosquito nets.

Most migrants sold a part of their rice and used the money to buy supplies, including medicines. They depended on the wild for vegetables, and some of them have been practising slash-and-burn (*jhum*) cultivation in the forests.

They live in makeshift bamboo thatched huts, without permanent power supply and safe drinking water, with no access to proper healthcare services or schools.

How did the agreement come about?

In June 2018, Bru leaders signed an agreement in Delhi with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation to Mizoram. Most residents of the camps, however, rejected the "insufficient" terms of the agreement. Only 328 families returned to Mizoram, rendering the process redundant. The camp residents said the package did not guarantee their safety in Mizoram, and that they feared a repeat of the violence that had forced them to flee.

On November 16, 2019, Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, scion of Tripura's erstwhile royal family, wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah



The Naisingpara Bru Relief Camp in North Tripura (left); a Bru woman in traditional attire at a protest by the community last year. Debraj Deb

seeking the resettlement of the Bru in the state. The Bru were originally from Tripura, and had migrated to Mizoram after their homes were flooded due to the commissioning of the Dumboor hydroelectric power project in South Tripura in 1976, he claimed. The very next day, Chief Minister Deb too, asked the Centre for permanent settlement of the Bru in Tripura.

How is this agreement different from the earlier initiatives taken for the Bru?

Successive state and central governments had thus far stressed only on peacefully repatriating the Bru, even though the enduring fear of ethnic violence remained a fundamental roadblock. The two other "durable solutions" for refugees and displaced persons suggested by the UN Refugee Agency — local integration or assimilation, and resettlement — were never explored.

Apart from their own Kaurbru tongue, the Bru speak both Kokborok and Bangla, the two most widely spoken languages of the tribal and non-tribal communities of Tripura, and have an easy connection with the state. Their long stay in Tripura, albeit in exile and in terrible conditions, has also acquainted them very well with the state's socio-political ecology.

Home Minister Shah, who presided over the signing of the agreement, hailed the "historic" resolution of the Bru issue. He thanked the Chief Ministers of Tripura and Mizoram, Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, and some social organisations for creating the conditions for the agreement.

How IVF is reversing an imminent extinction

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

RESEARCHERS SAID last week that they had created another embryo — the third — of the nearly extinct northern white rhino, a remarkable success in an ongoing global mission to keep the species from going extinct.

"It's amazing to see that we will be able to reverse the tragic loss of this subspecies through science," a report by The Associated Press quoted Kenya's wildlife minister, Najib Balala, as saying in a statement issued by the Kenya Wildlife Service and conservationists from Kenya, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy.

FUNCTIONALLY EXTINCT SINCE 2018:

The Kenyan conservancy looking after the last male northern white rhino was forced to euthanise it in March 2018. The 45-year-old rhino, Sudan, was suffering from age-related complications that had eaten at his bones and given him skin wounds.

The death of Sudan, who was earlier at the Dvur Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic,



Female northern white rhinos Fatu right, and Najin, 30, in August 2019. AP

left the world with only two northern white rhinos, Najin, 30, and Fatu, 19 — both female. Sudan had steadfastly refused to mate with either, and conservationists had even tried to raise \$9 million for a fertility treatment by putting him on Tinder with a profile that read: "I don't mean to be too forward, but the fate of the species literally depends on me," and "I perform well under pressure."

Najin and Fatu, mother-daughter pair in

a species that in the 1960s numbered some 2,000 individuals, live at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy near Mount Kenya, where Sudan too, lived. The northern white is one of the two subspecies of the white (or square-lipped) rhinoceros, which once roamed several African countries south of the Sahara. The other subspecies, the southern white is, by contrast, the most numerous subspecies of rhino, and is found primarily in South Africa. There is also the black (or hook-lipped) rhinoceros in Africa, which too, is fighting for survival, and at least three of whose subspecies are already extinct.

The Indian rhinoceros is different from its African cousins, most prominently in that it has only one horn. There is also a Javan rhino, which too, has one horn, and a Sumatran rhino which, like the African rhinos, has two horns.

REVERSING THE EXTINCTION:

In July 2018, scientists reported a major breakthrough — IVF for rhinos. They created a test-tube embryo by fertilising the egg of a southern white female with the frozen sperm of a northern white male. Immediately, there

was hope for the northern white subspecies — if eggs from Najin and Fatu could be fertilised by the available frozen sperm from four (now dead) northern white males.

The task of collecting oocytes from Najin and Fatu was difficult and delicate, but in September 2019, researchers announced they had created two embryos, the decisive turning point in the effort to save the northern white. The success announced last week was the third. Four eggs were collected from Najin and six from Fatu; all three viable embryos were, however, created using Fatu's eggs.

The embryos have been preserved in liquid nitrogen, and will be transferred to a southern white surrogate. Neither of the two living northern white females can carry a pregnancy. Since the gestation period for a rhino could be 18 months, the first northern white calf is expected to arrive in the world in 2022. The ultimate goal, scientists say, is to create a herd of perhaps five northern white rhinos that could be returned to the wild. That, however, could take several decades, given that the task of collecting eggs from Najin and Fatu will likely become increasingly more complex and risky as they grow older.

Starr turn in impeachment drama: Why Trump's case recalls Clinton's

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

TWO DAYS after the House of Representatives sent two articles of impeachment to the Senate, President Donald Trump expanded his legal team for the trial that begins on Tuesday — hiring the man who was the star actor in the drama the last time a US President was impeached.

Ken Starr, former independent counsel who will now defend Trump, carried out the investigation against Bill Clinton. Along with Starr on Trump's team is his successor as independent counsel, Robert Ray, who had wanted to indict Clinton on charges related to his affair with Monica Lewinsky, but ultimately agreed to the then outgoing President surrendering his licence to prac-

tise law and coughing up a fine of \$25,000. American media reports described the appointment of Starr as "headspinning", and Lewinsky posted on Twitter that "This is definitely an 'are you f***ing kidding me?' kinda day". Experts were divided on whether Starr would aid Trump's defence, or prove to be a handicap as he seeks to make arguments that could be exactly opposite of what he said back in 1998.

Starr's investigation of Clinton

Starr, now 73, was appointed independent counsel (an office created by Congress to provide reports to it) in 1994 to investigate the Whitewater scandal involving Bill and Hillary Clinton (dating to a time before he became President), and was subsequently asked to look into Clinton's conduct in a sexual harassment lawsuit brought against him



Ken Starr in 2014. AP file

by a former Arkansas state employee named Paula Jones. In the course of his investigations, Starr was given secretly taped conversations that brought out Clinton's affair with White House intern Lewinsky. Starr's lengthy, aggressive investigation

established that Clinton had lied under oath, and in September 1998, the independent counsel submitted the so-called Starr Report to the House of Representatives. In December 1998, on the basis of Starr's findings, the Republican-controlled House impeached the President. In February 1999, Clinton was acquitted by the Senate which found that his conduct did not warrant removal from office. Starr, who had testified in the House, was not involved in the Senate trial.

The Starr Report contained sexually explicit language, and Starr was pilloried as an ideologically driven, judgmental figure who was obsessed with sex. His admirers, on the other hand, saw him as the uncompromising nemesis of a morally corrupt President.

Starr, who had been a federal judge and had been appointed US Solicitor General by President George Bush Sr, was at one time

believed to have had a chance of being elevated to the Supreme Court. His role as independent counsel, however, made him an untouchable among the American political class. He became president of Baylor University in Texas in 2010, but was sacked from the post in 2016 for ignoring sexual assault complaints on campus.

Starr and Trump's impeachment

After the House impeached Trump, Starr described the action as "very vicious" and "unprincipled", and an "abuse of power". Earlier in the impeachment process, however, he had described a top witness's testimony against Trump as a "bombshell" that Democrats would use as proof that "the President, in fact, committed the crime of bribery", and one that could result in Republican senators deciding to ask Trump to resign.

The *New York Times* quoted law professor Ken Gormley, the author of *The Death of American Virtue: Clinton vs Starr*, as pointing out that Starr brings for Trump abundant expertise; he knows many of the senators who will be sitting as jurors; and he has worked with Chief Justice John G Roberts, who will be presiding over the trial.

Another expert quoted in the same report, Robert J Bittman, said Starr had "extensively studied and experienced the precedents and nuances of the impeachment process".

However, law professor Paul Rosenzweig, who had been a part of Starr's Clinton investigation, said: "Throughout the Clinton impeachment, Starr opposed the invocation of executive privilege and called for all the witnesses to come forward. Trump will have a hard time squaring that historical record with his current conduct."

15 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

PUBLIC GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

Odisha's telephone feedback system reaches out to citizens, allays concerns

The Mo Sarkar or My Government initiative allows the Chief Minister's Office to follow up with citizens

SAMPAD PATNAIK
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 19

A SMALL conference room, right opposite Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's office on the third floor of Bhubaneswar's Lok Seva Bhawan, lights up every day as a giant wall-mounted LED screen starts to brighten.

On the screen is displayed a picture of Patnaik. Next to him is the text "Mo Sarkar" (My Government) written in Odia. The dashboard prompts the user for an id and password, which when entered brings up a home screen that displays the number of calls made to citizens so far. The rest of the giant screen displays a selection menu displaying a gamut of options categorised as Home, H&FW (Health and Family Welfare), Industries, A&FE (Agriculture and Farmers Welfare) etc. The other selection categories, designed as a drop-down menu, are date, district, gender and age group.

Senior bureaucrats working in the Chief Minister's Office choose names and numbers by applying the various selection criteria. Phone calls are made every single day to collect, record and document conversations with these chosen citizens regarding their feedback on government services and departments.

Launched on October 2, on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, Mo Sarkar is the Odisha government's citizen-centric project that takes feedback from ordinary people regarding their experience at the government-run facilities in the state. The project places special emphasis on citizens visiting police stations and government-run hospitals, which as per CMO officials, are "two critical places where usually a distressed citizen visits for relief".

"One goes to a police station or a hospital mostly during a crisis. The CM has instructed that visitors to these places be treated professionally and courteously by government officials. CMO, along with all heads of departments, make thousands of phone calls per day to randomly sample feedback from citizens," says an officer who is part of Mo Sarkar's back-end operations at the CMO. "When people visit these places, their name and number are recorded and uploaded to the Mo Sarkar portal so a feedback call can be made within few days", he says. Mo Sarkar employs quantitative evaluation criteria with 1 being least satisfied and 5 being most satisfied.



Mo Sarkar portal on the Urban Development Department website Odisha govt

MO SARKAR: A SNAPSHOT

- Mo Sarkar was launched on Gandhi Jayanti (October 2) last year
- It is driven by CM Naveen Patnaik's vision of 5Ts: Technology, Teamwork, Transparency, Time-bound, Transformation
- It places special emphasis on feedback about the state government's functioning from citizens, especially those visiting 'critical areas' such as police stations and hospitals
- It uses a dedicated call centre to ask, record and rate citizen experience of government services, and shares it with the top officials of the state
- Eight key departments have already joined the initiative

Salhary Basky, 24, works as a crisis coordinator with a private telephone network company. He had approached the police on behalf of his company, which was regularly facing problems as local miscreants destroyed the optical fibre cable in Odisha's Boudh district. "I have had to register complaints in other districts before Mo Sarkar was launched but did not get police help we needed. However, when I did so in December, after Mo Sarkar was underway, police were prompt to act," said Basky.

Calling the telephone feedback "tech-enabled resurrection of the old durbar system", the CMO official adds, "Poor people in far-flung areas cannot always bring their grievances up to the CM or his office in Bhubaneswar. But a simple phone call from the CMO can tell us a lot about what is going on in a police station in any part of the state".

There are others like Moharana, a carpenter, who also visited Saheed Nagar police station earlier this month, who register their anger and disappointment as well. "I had gone to file an FIR against some family members who are harassing me and wife over money. The inspector did not register it... In

EXPLAINED

E Importance of Mo Sarkar move

AT THE heart of the Mo Sarkar initiative is the desire of the chief minister to bridge the gap between the highest political decision maker in the state and the most far-flung citizen. By systematically following up on citizens who have complained or reached to the government for any kind of help, the Odisha CM's office is ensuring that it can fix the governance gaps in the state machinery.

my feedback call, I gave my experience with police a zero on five," Moharana said.

According to CMO officials, the first negative feedback regarding a police station or personnel will spark a number of calls to other people, who have visited the same place. Multiple reports of negative feedback will lead to demanding an explanation from the police officer, which if inadequate can result in action or adversely affect the officer's promotion.

But requesting feedback over the phone can face technical snags such as respondents being "out of coverage area" etc. Similarly, women complainants from lower-income households provide phone numbers that belong to their husbands or other male members of the family and as such, they cannot be reached.

Some high-ranking police officers find the project having "privacy" concerns as well. "People should not be discussing their police complaints over the phone. What if the rival party of a person in a dispute calls posing as someone from the CMO?" said an IPS serving as a district SP requesting anonymity.

'Punjab already leads in logistics, and govt is plugging other gaps to attract industries'

IN HIS speech during the Progressive Punjab Investors summit last month, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh said he considered Mohali to be the capital of Punjab. Mohali is emerging as a major investment destination in the Information Technology sector, the knowledge industry and the start-ups. VINI MAHAJAN, Additional Chief Secretary (Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion), in an interview to NAVJEEVAN GOPAL, tells how the government is on a mission mode to focus on industrial growth.



THE POLICY INTERVIEW
VINI MAHAJAN
Additional Chief Secretary
(Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion)

Punjab is an agrarian economy. Why focus on industries?

The rate of growth of agriculture can never keep pace with the rate of growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors. So although we saw in Punjab particularly very high growth rates during the Green Revolution and later. But those growth rates tend to peter out. These cannot be maintained at those same levels and our young people now need other employment avenues and our state's economy needs other engines of growth. So that is why industry.

What is the new thing that this government is offering?

Punjab in the recent past has been trying to bring about a proper environment to attract investment. One thing, for example, which has been done is the six years old effort — the Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion, popularly called Invest Punjab. Its mandate is to provide the necessary support to prospective investors.

To make Invest Punjab stronger and more effective we have augmented its human resource. Apart from a strong team, which was already in place, we went to the top business schools in the country. The IIMs at Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Kolkata and the ISB and we did campus recruitment there.

I am very happy that nine out of 10 freshly graduated MBA students accepted our job offers and are working with us as consultants and senior consultants.

Another effort was to identify specific pain points for the industry. We found that the state's own MSME industry found it difficult to reach out to the state headquarters. So the kind of system that has been put in place in Invest Punjab at state headquarters has now been provided in every district and now in every district, the MSME industry can get the same kind of support and regulatory clearances.

One more effort is the recent decision to come up with a law which allows new industries to be set up without seeking regulatory approvals for a period of three-and-a-half years. Anyone sitting anywhere in the world who, for example, wants to set up a backend office here can apply online, get regulatory clear-

ances and work conveniently. We have also streamlined the inspection system for the existing industry. There is a central inspection system where officials of different concerned departments carry out joint inspection, chosen randomly by a computer, and reports are to be put online in 48 hours to minimise any chance of harassment.

Is it the case that incentives sometimes backfire as investors put off investments waiting for a better deal from another state?

We agree that the ease of doing business is more important. We would like to offer very high-quality infrastructure and assure investors of government support and no harassment. Having said this there is competition among states for attracting investment and hence the incentives. In Punjab, investors say the distance from ports is a disadvantage.

However we have excellent national highway network and excellent railway network and now with dedicated freight corridors coming up, the Eastern corridor will connect Amritsar with Kolkata and with the Western corridor Punjab will also come on feeder line. We have a lot of airports, but still, ports are a disadvantage. So to that extent, some incentives help reduce competitive disadvantage.

For the record, Punjab is the second-best state in the country in terms of the ease of logistics for the last two years running. There is high-quality power with very low transmission and distribution losses and it is supplied to the industry at Rs 5 per unit. Truck unions were another pain point which we have abolished. We have tried to remove every impediment that came in the way of industry.

One state, one ration card: MP reforms its Aadhaar-enabled PDS, helps migrant workers

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, JANUARY 19

IT'S NOT uncommon for beneficiaries of the public distribution system (PDS) to miss out on their quota of monthly food grains for reasons ranging from disability to old age to failure of the biometric verification system.

But the Madhya Pradesh government has now found a solution. Under the Aadhaar-enabled PDS, the respective grain quota is given to the nominee after verification of his biometric details.

Joint Director in Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department H S Parmar said that as many as 18,000 families in the state are getting their grain quota through nominees. Some other states, too, have started the nominee policy but the number in MP is the largest. He said the nominee policy is also useful for daily wagers



Increasing ease of access in PDS Express

whose fingerprints can't be verified despite having valid Aadhaar numbers.

MP also has the distinction of implementing the "one state-one ration card" policy within the state since October. The policy allows, for example, a labourer who migrates for work within the state to get his

monthly quota at the new place.

It's not that the portability scheme is fool-proof because many a time the entire family does not migrate to the new place. Yet, it's still an improvement because earlier such a family had no option but to forego the entire quota. In December alone, as many as 2.18 lakh families across the state benefited from the scheme.

According to Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Pradyumna Singh Tomar, under the Aadhaar-enabled system, MP now provides ration to 83 lakh families. Previously, the state used to supply ration to only 18 lakh families.

The minister said fair price shops have been opened in almost every gram panchayat. When new shops were being opened it was ensured that one-third shops were given to women. The minister said a system of grading has been introduced for fair price shops. Shops will be graded on parameters like the number of days they open etc.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

How poultry farming is alleviating farm distress in Kerala

SHAJU PHILIP
SULTHAN BATHERY, JANUARY 19

WITH MEAGRE farm income from two acres of land, P R Babukuttan, a native of Sulthan Batherly in the Wayanad district of Kerala, had been struggling to run his family. A year ago, he started a poultry farm under the aegis of Brahmagiri Development Society (BDS), a government-supported co-operative venture of farmers and farmworkers in Wayanad. Over the year, he has reared 17,500 birds in seven batches, under the society's buyback scheme, and now earns at least Rs 30,000 in a month. He is one of the 80-odd farmers who have become poultry entrepreneurs under BDS, which has a slew of interventions to shore up the fortunes of crisis-stricken farmers like Babukuttan.

BDS chairman and CPI (M) leader P Krishna Prasad said that for the first time in



A Wayanad farmer at his poultry farm under the BDS initiative. Express

the country BDS has put forward a co-operative farming model to help the farmers and workers. "The society has now an alternative model which can make farmers entrepreneurs and make them shareholders of the market, avoiding middlemen. The income of farmers and workers have increased in such manner to help them tide over the farm sector crisis," said Krishna Prasad.

Records show that meat production was 4.69 lakh metric ton in 2017-18. Kerala is the 8th largest meat-producing state in the country, contributing 6.1 per cent of the meat produced in India. Out of the total, 38.8 per cent is poultry meat, 33.95 per cent from cattle and 20.99 per cent from buffalo.

Despite having a robust non-vegetarian food market, the processed meat market is negligible in Kerala. BDS, started in 1999 for implementing a dairy project in Wayanad, ventured into meat processing in 2013 and poultry in December 2018, thus opening new

avenues for farmers.

Poultry processing has a huge market potential in Kerala considering that 9 lakh birds are required for daily consumption in the state. At present, the market is controlled mainly by Tamil Nadu-based private agencies, who either supply market-ready birds in retail outlets or supply chicks for farmers. Private agencies give only Rs 4 to Rs 6 as rearing charge for per kg of a live bird, which becomes ripe for the market in 45 days. But, BDS, which owns breeder farm and hatchery in Tamil Nadu, gives Rs 8 to Rs 11 as rearing charge as there is no middleman.

"When prices of poultry plummet in the market, the private agencies jettison the farmer, who suffer huge losses, forcing many to quit the sector. Whereas, BDS can manage such price fluctuations and cushion its impact on farmers as the society has a processing unit where the produce could be stocked in cold storages," said Vjesh ER, a manager with BDS.

