

**TELLING NUMBERS**

**The gulf between rich and poor, men and women, globally**

A REPORT published on Monday by Oxfam, the international nonprofit focussed on the alleviation of global poverty, underlined what has been said repeatedly by governments, research organisations and a range of multilateral bodies over the past decade or more — that economic inequality, as the report said, “is out of control”, with extremes of wealth existing alongside great poverty. “This great divide”, the Oxfam report said, “is based on a flawed and sexist economic system” which has “accumulated vast wealth and power

into the hands of a rich few, in part by exploiting the labour of women and girls, and systematically violating their rights”.

The report, titled *Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis*, released ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) beginning in Davos on Tuesday, also said that India’s richest 1% hold more than four times the wealth held by the 953 million who make up for the bottom 70% of the country’s population. Some snapshots from the report:

**HOW WIDE IS THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICHEST AND THE REST?**



**2,153** individuals, the number of billionnaires in the world in 2019, have more wealth among them than 4.6 billion people.

**22** of the world’s richest men have a combined wealth that is more than the wealth of all the women of Africa.

The world’s richest 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people.

If everyone sat on their wealth piled up in \$ 100 notes, most

people would be sitting on the floor; a middle-class person in a rich country would be at the height of a chair; and the world’s two richest men would be sitting in outer space.

If you saved \$ 10,000 (about Rs 7.1 lakh) every day since the building of the pyramids in Egypt (about 4,500 years ago) you would have one-fifth the average fortune of the 5 richest billionnaires.

An additional 0.5% tax on the wealth of the richest 1% over the next 10 years can create 117 million jobs in education, health and elderly care, etc.

From 2011 to 2017, average wages in G7 countries grew 3%, while dividends to wealthy shareholders increased by 31%.

**HOW BADLY OFF ARE GIRLS & WOMEN AS COMPARED TO MEN?**



Globally, extreme poverty rates are 4% higher for women than men; this gap rises to 22% during women’s peak productive and reproductive ages; that is, 122 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men of the same age group live in extremely poor households, largely due to childcare responsibilities.

\$10.8 trillion is the estimated minimum annual monetary value of the unpaid care work by women aged 15 and above globally — this is three times the size of the world’s tech industry.

Women do 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, equivalent to 1.5 billion people working 8 hours a day with no remuneration.

Globally, 42% of working age women are outside the paid labour force, compared with 6% of men, due to unpaid care responsibilities.

80% of the estimated 67 million domestic workers worldwide are women. An estimated 90% of domestic workers have no access to social security such as maternity protection and benefits.

Worldwide, girls aged 5-9 and 10-14 spend on average 30% and 50% more of their time respectively on unpaid care work than boys of similar ages.

**SIMPLY PUT**

**Contesting claims over Sai Baba**

A proposed Rs 100 cr grant for Baba’s ‘birthplace’ Pathri has triggered anger in Shirdi, the town synonymous with the saint. What is the basis of Pathri’s claim? Is the quarrel rooted in faith or insecurity?

**ATIKH RASHID**  
PUNE, JANUARY 20

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday met representatives from the temple town of Shirdi, who have been upset over the government’s decision to develop Pathri in Parbhani district as the birthplace of Sai Baba. Shirdi MLA Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil said the meeting was “positive”, and the agitation would be withdrawn.

On January 9, Thackeray announced in Aurangabad that his government would grant Rs 100 crore for the development of Pathri as a centre of religious tourism and “the birthplace of Sai Baba”. The plan was originally mooted over three years ago when Devendra Fadnavis was CM, after President Ram Nath Kovind, who was then the Governor of Bihar, visited Pathri in January 2016 and promised local leaders that he would take up the issue of infrastructure in the town with the state government.

Thackeray’s announcement triggered joy and hope in Pathri, a town of 40,000 people about 180 km to the southeast of Aurangabad. In Shirdi, located about 125 km to the west, however, there was anger — and residents of the town that has become synonymous with Sai Baba announced an indefinite *bandh* in protest.

**Pathri: What records say**

In 1975, V B Kher, a Sai devotee and former trustee of the temple trust in Shirdi, announced that it was “probable” that the 19th century saint was born in a Yajurvedi Deshastha Brahmin family in Pathri as one of the five sons of one Parshuram Bhusari. In 1978, a trust, the Shri Sai Smarak Samiti, was established to build a temple to Sai Baba at the site where some believed he was born.

In fact, several authoritative, popular works on Baba either directly mention Pathri as his possible birthplace, or speculate that he may have been from that area. Some of these works were either written by, or quoted those who knew Baba personally. Baba is said to have come to Shirdi in 1872, where he lived until he took *mahasamadhi* (passed away) on October 15, 1918.

The introduction — written by Hari Sitaram Dikshit alias Kakasaheb — to the *Shri Sai Satcharita* mentions Pathri. The *Shri Sai Satcharita*, written in Marathi verse by Govind Raghunath Dabholkar alias Hemadpant, was the first biography of the saint, and was serialised in the *Sai Leela* magazine. Both Dikshit and Dabholkar were close aides and devotees of Baba.

Dikshit, who gave up his law practice and political activities as a Congress member of



Express Archive



Haseeb Shaikh

The Sai Baba temple in Shirdi (left), and Pathri. Baba’s birthplace is shrouded in mystery; some believe he was born in Pathri.



the Bombay Legislative Council to serve Baba, is credited with establishing and running the Shirdi Saibaba Sansthan in its initial days. His introduction to the *Shri Sai Satcharita*, which reportedly appeared in 1923, said: “Sri Sainath Maharaj came to Shirdi about 50 years ago... There’s no reliable information on his place of origin and his parentage... Once a visitor from Pathri came to Shirdi for Sai Baba’s *darshan*. Sai Baba enquired about several prominent persons by naming them. This leads one to believe that he had special knowledge of Pathri. However, it can’t be stated with surety that he was born there.”

Baba’s “great apostle” BV Narsimhaswami wrote in his book that the saint discouraged questions on his parentage, and when pressed, gave mystifying answers. However, the book quotes Mhalsapathy, a Shirdi goldsmith who was among Baba’s earliest devotees, as saying that on a “momentous occasion” very late in Baba’s life, the saint had told him (Mhalsapathy) that his parents were “Brahmins in Patri in Nizam’s state”.

In a chapter titled ‘Baba’s Earliest Period’ in Vol I of his four-volume tome written in the late 1950s, Narsimhaswami said: “Patri is part of Parvati taluk, and near Manwath. Sai Baba added (in explanation of the fact that he was living in a mosque) that while still a tender child his Brahmin parents handed him over to the care of a *fakir* who brought

him up... Sai Baba occasionally showed interest in Patri and Parvati when people from those parts came to him, (but)... this is practically all that we have about the birth and parentage of Sri Sai Baba.”

Kher, the first person who claimed to have somewhat resolved the mystery and zeroed in on a family in Pathri to which, he believed, Sai Baba “probably” belonged, started his probe from where those before him had left.

In June 1975, Kher arrived in Pathri and interviewed locals who told him anecdotes about Baba being born in a Brahmin family, and that he was taken away by a Muslim *wali* when he was a child. Elders of the local Brahmin community told Kher that they believed Baba was born in the Bhusari family house in Vaishnav Galli.

Kher found the house empty and in ruins, but managed to contact a member of the family, Raghunath Bhusari, who had retired as a professor of Marathi in Hyderabad’s Osmania University. Prof Bhusari helped Kher chalk out a family tree going back three generations to the individual who could have been Baba’s father. Bhusari told Kher that he had heard from his grandmother that of the five sons of his great grandfather Parshuram, three had left home very young. One of them, “Haribhau”, had left in search of God.

“Could it not be that Haribhau Bhusari was Sai Baba? I wonder. The theory advanced above is probable. I discussed it jointly with an experienced lawyer and a reputed historian, and both of them agreed that it could be so. I do not wish to add anything further, I leave the matter to the readers to judge for themselves,” Kher wrote.

Later, Kher and Pathri resident Dinkar Chaudhari bought the Bhusari family house and established the Shri Sai Smarak Samiti. The trust built a temple at the site, which was

inaugurated in 1999.

**Devotee vs devotee**

Abdullah Khan Durrani, a senior NCP leader who has controlled Pathri Municipal Council for over three decades and has been a member of the Shri Sai Smarak Samiti Trust since 1978, said local people had met President Kovind four years ago.

“He was Bihar Governor when he visited the temple. We apprised him of the inconvenience that devotees faced because the temple has a very narrow approach road, and there are no proper places for devotees to stay. Kovindji had called (then CM) Devendra Fadnavis and requested him to do something to improve the situation. We met Fadnavisji in Mumbai, and he told us to prepare a development plan, and that he would grant Rs 100 crore. The Pathri Municipal Council prepared the plan, but it was not sanctioned due to opposition from the people of Shirdi. Now, Uddhavji has made the announcement and we are sure the plan will go ahead.”

Durrani, who is a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, said the people of Shirdi had no reason to feel insecure. “Shirdi is Baba’s *Karmabhoomi*. Pathri is his *Janmabhoomi*. Even now about 1,500-2,000 devotees visit the temple in Pathri every day; it does not mean that they don’t want to go to Shirdi,” he said.

But the residents of Shirdi argue that if Baba wanted his roots to be known, he would have announced it himself.

“There is no point in looking for his birthplace. There will be many claimants. We don’t mind if Pathri is given Rs 100 crore or even Rs 1,000 crore. What we are objecting to is the claim that Baba was born in Pathri. It appears to be a conspiracy to spread a wrong message among Baba’s devotees,” Sachin Tambe, a former trustee of Saibaba Sansthan Shirdi, said.

**THIS WORD MEANS | XENOBOT**

**The world’s first living machines, built with frogs**

SCIENTISTS IN the United States have created the world’s first “living machines” — tiny robots built from the cells of the African clawed frog, that can move around on their own.

They have named the millimetre-wide robots “xenobots” — after the species of aquatic frog found across sub-Saharan Africa from Nigeria and Sudan to South Africa, *Xenopus laevis* (right).

“Scientists have repurposed living cells scraped from frog embryos and assembled them into entirely new life-forms,” the University of Vermont said in a press release last week. The xenobots “can move toward a target, perhaps pick up a payload (like a

medicine that needs to be carried to a specific place inside a patient) — and heal themselves after being cut”, it said.

Joshua Bongard, a computer scientist and robotics expert at the university who co-led the new research said the “novel living machines” were “neither a traditional robot nor a known species of animal”, but “a new class of artifact: a living, programmable organism”.

The new creatures were designed on a supercomputer at the university, and then assembled and tested by biologists at Tufts University. “We can imagine many useful applications of these living robots that other



machines can’t do,” research co-leader Michael Levin of the Center for Regenerative and Developmental Biology at Tufts, was quoted as saying in the release. “Like searching out nasty compounds or radioactive con-

tamination, gathering microplastic in the oceans, travelling in arteries to scrape out plaque,” Levin said.

The results of the new research were published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. (“A scalable pipeline for designing reconfigurable organisms”). While humans have been manipulating organisms for their benefit since at least the dawn of agriculture, and genetic editing has created a few artificial organisms in recent years, the latest research is a breakthrough because it designs, for the first time ever, “completely biological machines from the ground up”, the researchers wrote in their paper.

**Personal privacy vs public safety: How Apple vs FBI frames a big tech debate**

**SHRUTI DHAPOLA**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 20

US ATTORNEY General William Barr last week asked Apple to provide access to two iPhones used by Saudi Air Force officer Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani who shot and killed three people at a naval base in Pensacola, Florida, in December. Barr accused Apple of providing no “substantive assistance” to investigators trying to break into the phones. Apple says it has already handed over all the data in its possession to the FBI. But the FBI also wants data on the phone that might not be on the cloud. Two days after Barr’s demand, President Donald Trump tweeted his frustration with the company: “We are helping Apple all of the time on TRADE and so many other issues, and yet they refuse to unlock phones used by killers, drug dealers and other violent criminal elements. They will have to step up to the plate and help our great Country, NOW!”

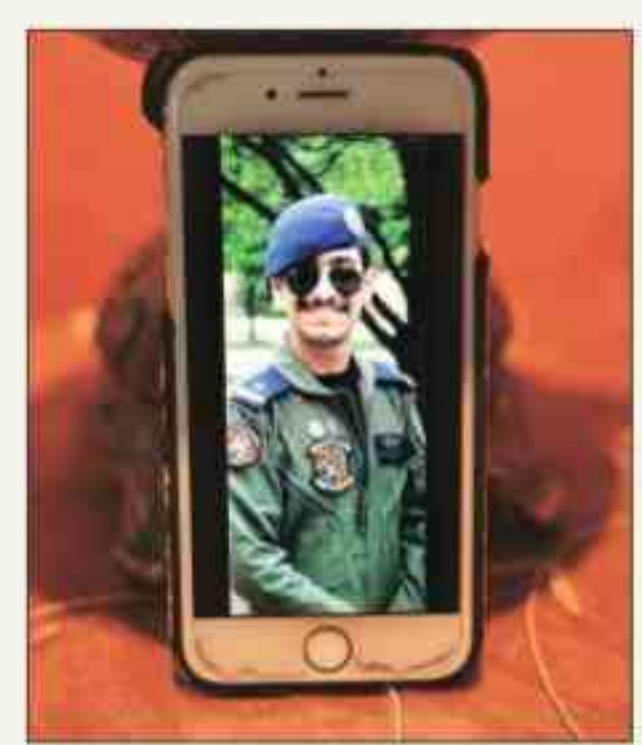
This is the second time in four years that Apple is at the centre of a battle that pits personal privacy against public safety. In 2015, the FBI went to court to force Apple to help them unlock an iPhone 5c that be-

longed to Syed Rizwan Farook who, along with his wife Tashfeen Malik, killed 14 people and injured 22 others in a terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California.

**What does the FBI want this time?**  
FBI wants Apple’s help to unlock an iPhone 5 and an iPhone 7 that belonged to Alshamrani. It appears the phones were damaged, but the FBI got them working again — but is unable to unlock them due to Apple’s encryption and enhanced security tools. As in 2015, this would require a “backdoor entry” to the phones, bypassing encryption.

Apple insists it does not create back doors for anyone, including law enforcers and its own employees, because these can be exploited easily, and would compromise the security of all iPhone users. At the recent CES 2020 show in Las Vegas, Apple’s Senior Director of Global Privacy Jane Horvath defended the company’s position on encryption, saying iPhones contain a lot of personal data on health and financial matters, etc. that need to be protected in case a device is stolen.

**Can an iPhone be unlocked without Apple’s help?**  
As has been demonstrated earlier, it is



A photo of Alshamrani is displayed on the phone of one of his sisters at their home in Saudi Arabia last month. *Iman Al-Dabbagh/The New York Times*

not impossible to break the encryption. Alshamrani had models that were relatively old, and it is argued that they can be opened by specialised cyber-security firms that of-

fer their services to law enforcement agencies. The FBI had ultimately got into the San Bernardino terrorist’s iPhone 5c with help from a third-party vendor that supplied the software, reportedly for \$900,000.

It is being said that on this occasion too, the FBI might not need Apple’s help, especially if Alshamrani’s phones run an older (and therefore less secure) version of iOS. But the FBI has said in a statement that it has turned to Apple only after exhausting all options. Since the 2015 showdown, Apple has fixed security vulnerabilities or “bugs” in its software, thus making it harder to “hack” into a device.

However, software such as Cellebrite and GrayKey can break into iPhones. GraftShift, the company behind GrayKey, is focused exclusively on iPhones, and is believed to have been used by the FBI in the past.

**How did Apple react on the earlier occasion (2015)?**

After Apple refused the help that FBI wanted, the agency got an order from a judge who directed the company to provide “reasonable technical assistance” to the investigators. Apple was required to load a specific iOS recovery file onto the device so

the FBI could recover the password.

Apple CEO Tim Cook wrote a letter to all customers during the crisis, which was posted on the company’s website. Cook underlined in the letter that the order would have an impact far beyond the case at hand — and pointed out that basically, engineers who had worked to secure the device were now being told to undo those same protections. This would be opening the Pandora’s box, Cook said, because it would put consumers’ data at risk from cyber criminals.

Apple did not have to ultimately comply, which it had seemed unlikely to anyway. The FBI managed to open the iPhone 5c, and the government moved to have the order vacated, arguing it was no longer needed.

**But why do tech companies not want to allow access to phones?**

The issue is not just about a terrorist’s or a criminal’s phone, as Trump said on Twitter. For the tech companies, this is a much wider issue of privacy. Smartphones are today the most important device for many people, who store personal information, including financial information, on their devices. For tech companies, be it Apple with its iOS devices or Google and its Android ecosystem,

it is critical to secure devices against any kind of vulnerability. That is why companies push out monthly updates to the software — or sometimes a quick security update when they discover serious a flaw.

No “back door” can be restricted only to law enforcement; it can be exploited by anyone, including hackers. If a key to open a device without a passcode is created, it can be easily replicated in the digital world by someone for whom the key was not originally intended.

The knowledge that their devices could be accessed by someone else will result in a major loss of consumer trust — not something tech companies want. Across the world, there is deepening concern over unauthorised surveillance of devices by state agencies.

The privacy vs encryption debate is playing out in India too. In several cases, law enforcement authorities have demanded that tech companies hand over consumers’ data. However, in end-to-end encrypted apps such as WhatsApp, data such as messages are with the user, and are not backed up to the company’s servers. Companies are saying they don’t have the data that the agencies are seeking. And as the Apple case shows, this tussle is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon.





## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### IN PLAIN BANGLA

It may be diplomatically imprudent to alienate a friendly neighbour with CAA premise — persecution within

WHEN SHEIKH HASINA won a decisive election in 2008, her victory came with the promise that the close ties with India forged by her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, at the time of the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, with military help from India, would be resurrected. Ties had suffered occasionally in the years of military rule and the resurgence of the right that followed Mujib's assassination, the lowest point being in the period following 2001, when Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party had allowed its soil to be used as a springboard for insurgency in the Northeast. The legacy of the Awami League seemed to return with Hasina, and despite rough patches like the Teesta waters pact, relations between the two nations have been positive and constructive. Initiatives that had long hung fire were resolved, the most striking being the swap of chhitmahals or enclaves in each other's territory, a rationalisation of borders which had been pending since Independence.

But now, with the uproar over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed countrywide application of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the India-Bangladesh relationship threatens to become less frictionless. Hasina and Modi had met bilaterally on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and in October 2019, when she visited Delhi for the India Economic Summit of the World Economic Forum, she had said that she was satisfied with Modi's assurance that the NRC in Assam would not affect Bangladesh. Now, however, in an interview to Gulf News in Abu Dhabi, Hasina has described the CAA as "not necessary", and as a step whose purpose mystifies her. In response to the ongoing domestic agitation against the Act, the government has repeatedly explained that the specific purpose is to confer citizenship on minorities (read Hindus) fleeing persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It is founded on the implicit premise that India's neighbours, including Bangladesh, are engaged in the persecution of minorities, and a reaction from the neighbourhood was inevitable.

Hasina has phrased her criticism diplomatically, addressing the Indian state rather than the government or its chief executive, and terming the citizenship issue as its internal affair. But Bangladesh has officially denied any out-migration to India due to religious persecution, and Hasina herself has clarified that there is no movement in the reverse direction either. India had to hasten to clarify that persecution had happened before her term, yet the damage seems to have been done. At a time when regional geopolitics is changing rapidly, India cannot afford to alienate neighbours for the compulsions of domestic politics, or cause strain in a strong and necessary relationship.

### DEVELOP DELHI PARTY

AAP's '10 guarantees' indicate its evolving strategy — its record in government has become its politics

THE AAMMI Party's list of 10 "guarantees", released by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday, is an indicator of how the party has styled — and shifted — its political idiom and practice since 2015. The promises made on Sunday — mohalla marshals, quality public education and healthcare, amenities like water and electricity, women's safety — steer clear of the politically sensitive issues at a time when a polarising battle of grand narratives is underway in India, sparked by the CAA, the proposed NRC and NPR, and Delhi is at the centre of that churning.

For some time since its formation, emerging as it did from the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement, the AAP had a definite if simplistic political plank — against the entrenched, systemic corruption that was widely seen to have marred Indian politics and by extension, the political class as a whole. This anti-politics of the AAP was also marked by tactical audaciousness on the ground — Kejriwal contested against Narendra Modi in Varanasi in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and the then-fledgling party fielded 434 candidates nationally. Even as a party of government, AAP remained at loggerheads with the BJP and the Centre, demanding for Delhi the same powers and status as that of other states. Over the last few years, however, that strategy and tactic has undergone a perceptible change — its record in government appears to have become its politics.

The AAP's "10 guarantees" strategy appears to be to highlight its successes in education and healthcare in Delhi. Its long battles with the Centre over the powers of the Lieutenant Governor and control of the Delhi Police yielded little by way of political dividends. And its earlier "all politicians are corrupt" charge appears neither to have dented the image of the prime minister nor hurt the BJP's prospects in Delhi — the party won all seven Lok Sabha seats in the city in 2019. Rather than wage the political battle on ideological terms, the AAP's attempt appears to be to shift the discourse towards a solutions-oriented politics. On the abrogation of Article 370, Kejriwal supported the Centre and even on the CAA and NRC, the party's response has been relatively muted. On the streets in Delhi, it has been careful not to be seen as organising or spearheading the protests. The politics of solutions to issues like *bijli*, *paani* and *chikitsa* is, at least partially, a novel approach, not least because the idea of the city and its needs has seldom occupied centre-stage in the national conversation.

### SHADOW PLAY

The pressures of modern-day cricket, the toll they can take on players, need to be acknowledged and talked about

FORMER INDIAN CRICKETER Praveen Kumar has opened up about the time he found himself on the cusp of losing the battle with depression. This newspaper reported how Kumar, revolver in hand and the baggage of eight years of non-selection to the Indian team weighing him down, recovered at the very last second as he thought of his family. Two months ago, Abhinav Mukund spoke about a crippling inability to deal with pressures of the sport. From Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Andrew Flintoff, to those yet to attain major international acclaim — Australians Nic Maddinson and Will Pucovski — several cricketers have spoken about their personal battles.

Cricketers are seen to be modern-day superheroes. Much less discussed is the grim toll that the pressures of the game may take. More than a century ago, A.E. Stoddart, who captained England in the first Ashes series of 1894-95, committed suicide — he reportedly succumbed to loneliness. His story forms an important section in former editor of Wisden Cricket Monthly, David Frith's 2011 book on 100 cricketing suicides over the last century, *Silence of the Heart*. He concluded that the suicide rate among English Test players and a dozen other competing countries was significantly higher than that for all other sports.

Most sports struggle with reconciling the "strong" physicality of the game with what is essentially seen as "weakness" to cope with pressure: Masculinity associated with a sport, in the popular narrative, cannot coexist with something as "feminine" as mental health. Gendered notions about sport and skewed ideas about dressing room machismo have foisted even more performative baggage on players. In an interview to *The Guardian* in 2001, Frith said, "Cricket has this dreadful, hidden burden. It must now answer the very serious question of whether it gradually transforms unwary cricket-loving boys into brooding, insecure and ultimately self-destructive men." The sporting community must acknowledge the seriousness of this question.



HARISH DAMODARAN

# Where Goyal is right

Business model of traditional grocery store, essentially efficient, can be upended by unfair competition

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY Minister Piyush Goyal courted criticism last week for his comment that Amazon wasn't "doing a great favour" by promising to invest an additional \$1 billion in the country. Both the statement (indiscreet, bordering on arrogance) and timing (when the \$232.9-billion American e-commerce giant's founder was visiting India) have certainly done no favour to an economy facing its worst growth, investment and jobs crisis in at least two decades.

Yet, Goyal has a point when he makes a distinction between investments by Amazon in warehousing and logistics infrastructure ("which is welcome") and money brought in "largely to finance losses" (which "raises questions"). The latter part he elaborates by claiming that the Seattle-based retailer is losing \$1-1.5 billion in India on a turnover of \$10 billion (presumably the gross merchandise value of products sold through its online marketplace) due to "indulging in predatory pricing or some unfair trade practices".

It's possible that the minister's harangue against Amazon was aimed more at small shopkeepers and traders, the ruling BJP's original support base, ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections. But the basic concern — that the price points on many products offered on Amazon's or Flipkart's platforms are below even the cost price for ordinary brick-and-mortar retailers — is a valid one. If much of the new investments are only funding the losses from such deep discount sales, which are simultaneously undermining the operations of traditional kirana stores, it is a serious allegation.

The viability of mom-and-pop outlets — the country has an estimated 12 million of them — has primarily rested on three things. The first is low overheads: Kiranas are predominantly family-run enterprises employing one or two hands ("chhotus"), not paying rent on their own little shopping premises, and avoiding taxes by dealing in cash. The second is maximum space utilisation: The small retailer's focus isn't his store's layout or appeal as much as ensuring the highest possible sales per square foot. That would mean pack-

ing, say, 200 items or SKUs (stock keeping units) within a 200 sq ft area.

But it is the third USP — high inventory turnover and working capital rotation — that is least appreciated. The real business of mom-and-pop stores comes from very fast-moving SKUs such as milk, curd, eggs, bread and vegetables. Take milk, where the neighbourhood grocer sells 100 litres daily. At an average maximum retail price (MRP) of Rs 50/litre and a margin of Rs 1.5/litre, his return on an investment of Rs 5,000 would be Rs 150. While that might seem small, our kirana-wala is, however, getting back his Rs 5,000 (plus Rs 150) the same day for re-investing to buy and sell 100 litres the very next day. His cumulative return on a daily rotating capital of Rs 5,000 is, then, Rs 4,500 at the end of 30 days or Rs 54,750 over 365 days. A 3 per cent margin translates into an annual return that is nearly 11 times his capital investment.

The provision store-owner may, apart from the 100 litres milk, also sell about 25 litres of curd and butter milk/chaachh (Rs 2-4 margin on MRPs of Rs 55-60 and Rs 20-25 per litre, respectively), five crates of eggs (Rs 15 margin on each 30-piece crate retailing at Rs 180) and 20 packs of bread (Rs 3 margin on an MRP of Rs 30). These articles of daily consumption are what keep our mom-and-pop stores going. By allowing rotation of capital almost 365 times a year, they generate good returns even on small margins, while making it possible for the kirana to also stock other less fast-moving items — both food (sugar, edible oils, dal, rice, biscuits, beverages, snacks) and non-food (toothpaste, soap, shaving cream, sanitary pads, washing powder, light bulb, stationary, broom).

The above business model of the traditional Indian grocery store, which is fundamentally efficient like our family-owned and managed farms, can be upended if subjected to unfair competition. The pioneering role of Amul, in procuring of milk directly from millions of farmers for processing and marketing to urban consumers, is well acknowledged. For the Rs 55/litre price of full-cream six per cent-fat milk that the consumer in

Delhi pays, the farmer at Banaskantha in Gujarat today gets roughly Rs 43.9 (at a procurement price of Rs 710 per kg of fat) or close to 80 per cent. The rest is accounted for by the cost of chilling at the village collection centre (Rs 0.40), taking to dairy plant (Rs 0.50), processing (Rs 1.50), packaging (Rs 0.70), transportation from Banaskantha to Delhi (Rs 2.50), local distribution and marketing (Rs 2.50), advertising and other assorted expenses. This is a remarkably equitable and efficient system made in India, benefiting producers as well as consumers.

Not as well highlighted, though, is the part played by organised dairies, both cooperative and private, in providing livelihoods to mom-and-pop enterprises. Amul alone, for instance, has a network of a million retailers, in addition to its 3 million-odd farmers. Whether it is dairies, sugar mills or other food processing industries, the entire livelihood chain they support — farmers on one side and small grocers on the other — needs to be factored in. Retail is ultimately about margin, stock turnover and sales per sq ft — key metrics in which our kirana outlets, perhaps, fare as well or even better than an Amazon, Walmart or Reliance. Walmart's average "days inventory outstanding" — a measure of how quickly stocks in its shelves turn into cash — is about 43, whereas the same would not exceed five days across all SKUs for the traditional stores. Where the kirana sector cannot compete is in scale and deep pockets.

India's small retailers were badly bruised by demonetisation and the goods and services tax, while the ones in the mobiles and electronics business have simply been unable to take on Amazon or Flipkart. The Narendra Modi government is now seemingly trying to make amends. Goyal's sanctimonious pronouncements are basically an outreach exercise to the BJP's oldest constituency. By drawing a distinction between so-called genuine investment and investments to fund losses from heavily discounted sales, his government has put the big global e-retailers on notice.

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JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES

## ACTING IN CONCERT

India and EU have accomplished much. There is more to be done

OUR WORLD IS so closely interconnected that a rules-based global order based on partnerships and multilateralism is the only way to ensure stability and prosperity for our citizens. The decisions of one country can have a global impact. Regional events can trigger incidents in a different part of the world. Think of climate change, migration or trade. This is why cooperation between India and the European Union is more important than ever before.

The EU-India Strategic Partnership has come a long way in recent years. Our relationship is based on long-standing shared values and interests. We are the world's largest democracies and are both staunch supporters of a rules-based international order with the United Nations at its core. We closely work together to promote peace, prosperity and enhance sustainable development.

Today, however, we are experiencing a rise of great power politics, the weaponisation of economic tools and an overall erosion of trust between international partners. This is not the world that the EU and India seek. That requires us to join forces in defence of our interests and values. Only by acting together will we be able to prevent a logic of power politics taking precedence over a global multilateral, rules-based system. We must have the ambition and determination to scale up our partnership. There are numerous opportunities to unleash the full potential of EU-India cooperation.

Take the climate crisis. The icecaps are melting and Australia is burning. We literally

have no time to lose. The EU has committed to become carbon neutral by 2050. But EU member states together only account for 9 per cent of global emissions. We cannot solve this problem unless we engage with the rest of the world to address it. India's commitment, as one of the biggest democracies in the world, is a key part of the solution. The mixed outcome of the COP25 Climate Conference shows how much more remains to be done.

Work between the EU and India has started: In 2016 Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European leaders agreed on an EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership (CECP). In 2018, the EU joined efforts with the International Solar Alliance, headquartered in India. Let's build on this to ensure the full implementation of the Paris Agreement worldwide and together promote the use of renewable energy.

Then there is trade. We both agree on the vital role of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the need to overcome the crisis of the dispute settlement system. The launch of a regular ministerial dialogue on economic, trade and investment issues could give additional impetus to our relations.

The EU has a strong record on liberalising trade. We have concluded ambitious free trade agreements with countries such as Japan, Singapore and Vietnam. We remain interested in balanced, ambitious and mutually-beneficial trade and investment agreements with India. This requires further efforts to bring our respective levels of ambition closer.

In the field of security, our cooperation is increasing, to bring further stability to regions of common interest for the EU and India, notably the Indian Ocean. Indian Navy vessels are now escorting World Food Programme ships in the framework of the EU Atalanta operation against piracy off the coast of Somalia. More such activities can be organised.

India and the EU are both highly exposed to the terrorist threat. We have already brought together counter-terrorism experts from Europe and India to exchange experiences and best practices. As a result, an enhanced working relationship between our police officers is taking shape.

Finally, there is the field of digital economy and cyber: EU and India should deepen cooperation to protect fundamental freedoms in cyber space and the free flow of data — and counter the drift towards high-tech "de-coupling". We do not want a split in cyber space, forcing us to "choose sides" between competing systems and standards. We both believe in fair competition, based on global standards, for 5G, AI, big data and the internet of things.

In short, there is much that the EU and India have accomplished in recent years. But there is even more to be done to further strengthen our dynamic dialogue and cooperation in all areas of mutual interest and as players on the world stage.

The writer is high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy and vice-president of the European Commission



## JANUARY 21, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM ON AFGHANISTAN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that India's sole concern was that situation in Afghanistan did not escalate from a cold war between big powers into a hot war and that "it does not engulf India". Addressing the leaders of the Opposition in Parliament on the eve of the first session of the newly elected Lok Sabha, the PM said that "we are neither pro-Russia, nor pro-America. We are only pro-India".

ASSAM UNREST IN NEW DELHI, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said that "some sort of secessionist movement is being sought to be encouraged in

Assam and that some anti-India posters are also being brought out there". Addressing an eve-of-the-session meeting of the Congress (I) parliamentary party, she said that part of the problem was that the movement in Assam, initially started by students, seemed to be getting out of their hands: "The previous government could not handle the situation promptly and this has aggravated the situation. It may have serious repercussions in other parts of the country also."

MOSCOW GAMES US PRESIDENT JIMMY Carter asked the US Olympic committee to boycott the Moscow Olympics, or move the games to some other

city, unless Soviet troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan within a month. Carter said it was "important that the world realise the seriousness" of the Soviet move into Afghanistan.

GAVASKAR QUILTS SUNIL GAVASKAR ANNOUNCED his decision to relinquish the captaincy of the Indian cricket team. Gavaskar told journalists after the Madras Test that while he would play in both the final Test against Pakistan at Calcutta and the golden jubilee Test against England at Bombay, he would not be available to lead the side. Gavaskar also announced that he was "not available" for the West Indian tour.



# The deficit bogey

The budget should increase spending in rural areas, cut taxes, incentivise household savings and bring back trust in the financial system



SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH

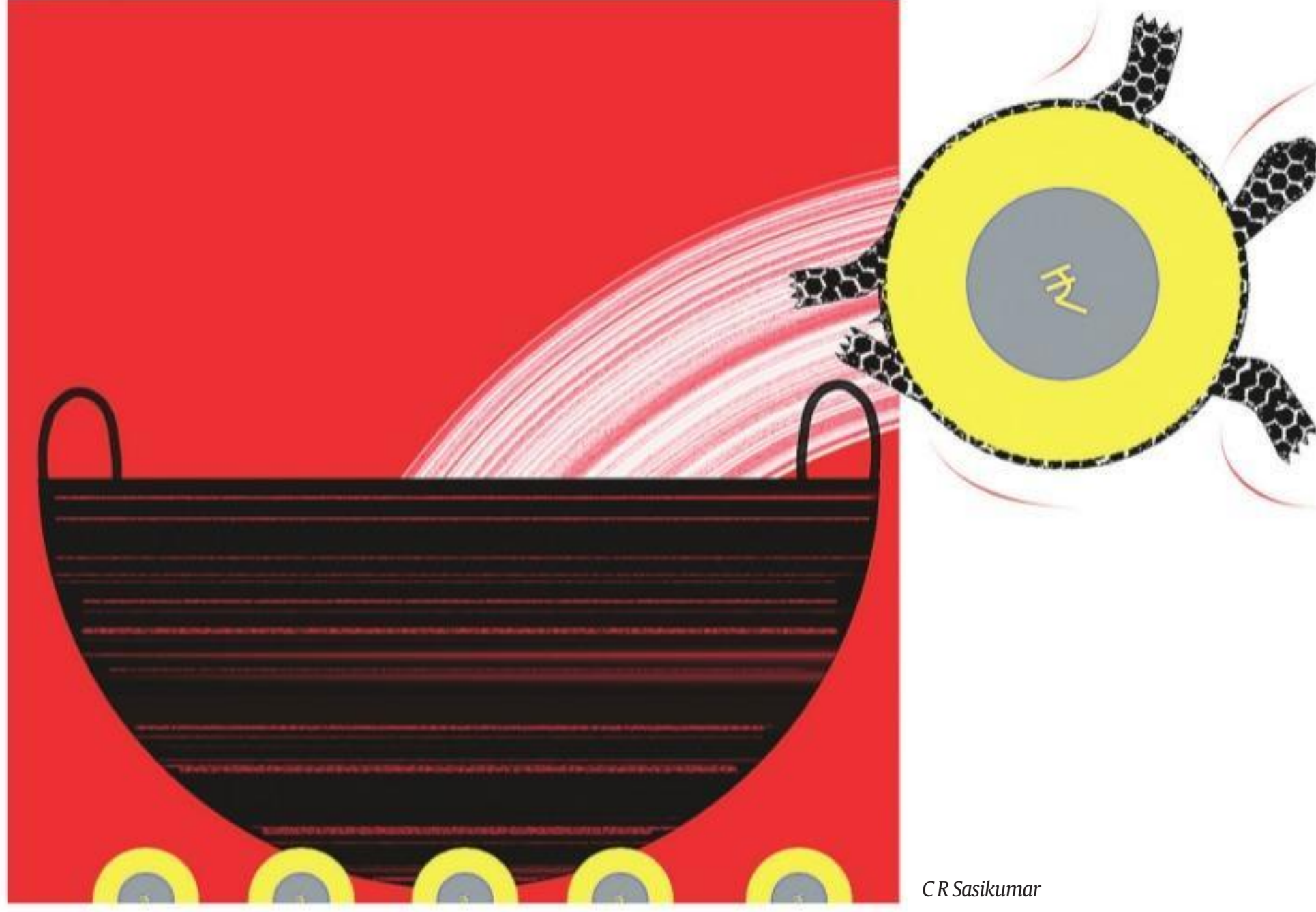
THE UNION BUDGET will be presented in the context of an entrenched slowdown that is becoming increasingly difficult to overcome. Coupled with this, the recent increase in inflation (notwithstanding the current methodology) has complicated the budget-making exercise. We believe that this budget could make a substantial difference by challenging the conventional wisdom that does not stand the test of scrutiny.

The primary purpose of the budget is to lay out a receipt-expenditure statement and thereby the fiscal deficit estimates. This year is, perhaps, different as the slowdown has derailed the fiscal arithmetic. Our estimates show that the shortfall might be anywhere between 0.5-0.7 per cent of the GDP in the current fiscal after adjusting for revenue shortfall and expenditure rationalisation.

Given that the government is now facing such a huge mismatch, the fiscal deficit glide path is likely to be recalibrated. But, here lies strong resistance from the votaries of fiscal consolidation, which is echoed in government circles too with independent reports pegging the fiscal deficit estimate at 3.5 per cent for 2020-21. We believe the government must not target a number in FY21 that is not credible and achievable. The growth dynamics suggest that with a nominal GDP growth that could be at 10 per cent, a 3.5 per cent target will result in the absolute fiscal deficit in FY21 being lower than in FY20, and that again will be unachievable.

In this context, the fiasco in FY12 bears mentioning. The government wanted to reduce the fiscal deficit from 4.8 per cent of the GDP to 4.6 per cent. But, in absolute terms, the difference between the fiscal deficit in FY11 and FY12 jumped four times as the 3.3 percentage point collapse in growth was not factored in. Thus, the temptation of having a 3.5 per cent deficit target in the budget must be avoided at any cost as we face a similar growth slowdown. Instead, the fiscal deficit must be kept only at a marginally lower level or the same level in FY21 (vis-à-vis FY20). We must focus on growth. A large fiscal compression in the budget, through a reported expenditure curtailment of Rs 2 lakh crore, could be an unmitigated disaster for growth and will definitely raise the possibility of lack of transparency in the fiscal numbers of FY21 in the eyes of the market.

So, what are the options before the government? First, is the apparent trade-off between tax concessions and stimulating the economy by giving a fillip to the rural economy. There is now an apparent consensus that with only 4 per cent of people paying income tax, a tax concession might be a wrong approach to stimulate demand. There are, however, two fallacies with this argument. First, even when 2 per cent of the people paid income tax during 2004-08, the Indian economy expanded by close to 8 per cent on average. Second, the 4 per cent population accounted for a significant part of overall consumption, and in FY19, the overall gross taxable income of this population was Rs 46 lakh crore, which is 40.8 per cent of the overall private final consumption expenditure. Hence, it is possible to tweak both the slabs



CR Sasikumar

and the tax rates to increase consumption, which is key to growth. The only issue with such tax changes that could make the government wary is the revenue foregone. Our estimates suggest that a 5 per cent cut in taxes across income buckets can result in a revenue shortfall of only 0.5 per cent of GDP.

Second, the idea of a rural push through PM-KISAN scheme is understandable, but efforts must first be made to cover all the farmers under the scheme. It is quite puzzling that despite 92 per cent of the land records being digitised, PM-KISAN still covers only half of the eligible beneficiaries. As was promised in the 2018 budget, a tenancy certificate must be issued to every tenant farmer — 70 per cent of farmland is cultivated by tenant farmers, who are not entitled to any benefit because they do not own land. Third, the government should think about increasing the Rs 6,000 yearly amount in a calibrated manner (say Rs 500 per year over the next four years) as the incremental cost will be negligible. As this will create a feel-good factor across the farming community, why not start from this year itself?

Third, the government must think about the trade-off between tax adjustment and incentivising savings. When the government notified an increase in the public provident fund (PPF) limit by Rs 50,000 to Rs 1,50,000 in August 2014, its impact on household savings was enormous. For example, an increase in the 80C limit by Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh for individual households will lead to additional savings of more than Rs 2 lakh crore as compared to a revenue and interest foregone amount of Rs 40,000 crore. The question is thus of incentivising consumption, or savings or both?

In this context, let me also comment on the repeated fallacies of commentators who advocate in favour of fiscal conservatism on the ground that entire household financial savings are being used to finance government borrowings. The numbers suggest otherwise. Of the Rs 11.2 lakh crore of net financial savings in FY18, total claims on government were around Rs 70,000 crore, while Rs 7.74 lakh crore were claims on in-

Apart from such fiscal measures, the budget must announce its intention to bring back trust in the financial system. To this end, a simultaneous recognition of stressed assets of NBFCs and thereafter immediately initiating measures to help them to raise capital by initiating takeovers/mergers if required and giving the rest a clean chit thereby, increasing the confidence to lend, is required.

insurance, pension and provident funds (assuming FY17 ratios). Household claims on pension, insurance and provident funds are purely savings for the households' retirement corpus and it is completely naive to equate such claims as financing government borrowings. The decision of such retirement funds on where to invest their corpus is a purely portfolio-decision, just as is the household decision to investment in small savings.

Apart from such fiscal measures, the budget must announce its intent to bring back trust in the financial system. To this end, a simultaneous recognition of stressed assets of NBFCs and thereafter immediately initiating measures to help them to raise capital by initiating takeovers/mergers if required and giving the rest a clean chit, thereby, increasing the confidence to lend, is required. We must not repeat the mistake we made with banks when we first initiated recognition of bad loans through the asset quality review in 2015, then brought resolution through the IBC law in 2016, and then resorted to recapitalisation in October 2017. The sequence should have been resolution first, and recognition and recapitalisation simultaneously thereafter.

We can also think of forbearance for large NBFCs by deferment of principal repayments by systemically important NBFCs and HFCs. These NBFCs and HFCs can allow similar deferments to their clients. Since interest would be paid during this period, lenders would not make a loss. This should be adequate to get the cash flows from stuck projects going and to ensure the fulfillment of the prime minister's vision of Housing for All by 2022.

Interestingly, as we write on the budget priorities, the Supreme Court judgment on telcos' adjusted gross revenues could just about tilt the budget arithmetic in the government's favour. On the flip side though, this order could lead to significant market disruptions and possibly impact consumption as well.

The writer is group chief economic advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Though no miracles should be expected (the moribund status of Saarc is before us), were the prime minister to participate [in the SCO summit] and interact with his Indian counterpart, perhaps the ice between Islamabad and New Delhi could be broken." — DAWN

# Delhi-Davos disconnect

India must find ways to take advantage of new opportunities arising from the rearrangement of the global economic system



RAJA MANDALA  
BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS THE WORLD'S business elite, political leaders and the chatterati show up at the annual Davos conclave in the Swiss Alps this week, the talk is about "stakeholder capitalism". Klaus Schwab, who founded the World Economic Forum 50 years ago, wants capitalists to look beyond their shareholders and consider the interests of all the stakeholders. Some hope that the debate on stakeholder capitalism is a long overdue recognition of the capitalist excesses of recent decades. Last August, the Business Roundtable in the US, which brings together some of the top American corporates, said American companies must now generate value for customers, invest in their employees, deal fairly with suppliers and support the communities in which they operate even as they service their shareholders.

Sceptics, however, dismiss this as a gimmick. "Stakeholder capitalism," they say, is a nice way of saying the right things, repackaging old ideas on corporate social responsibility and creating illusions about reforming capitalism. Cynics insist that it will be business as usual for the world's capitalists.

Beyond this divide between optimists and pessimists, there is no question that the discourse on "stakeholder capitalism" is a reflection of the deeper crisis afflicting the global economy today. In its annual survey on global risks, the WEF has identified many challenges. Three of them stand out and relate to polarised politics in major industrial societies, trade wars and technological change.

US president Donald Trump, who is joining Davos this year, is at the heart of the wrenching debates on all the three issues. Trump's politics have been defined by his trenchant opposition to "globalism" — exemplified by the Davos gathering. As he brushes off the impeachment trial in the US Senate and begins his campaign for a second-term in the White House, which many fear could well be successful, there is great interest on what he has to say on key global issues.

On political polarisation in America, Trump is unlikely to be defensive. While the dominant sentiment at Davos sees Trump as the very embodiment of nationalism and populism that are polarising politics around the world, others point to the structural conditions that have bred these forces. They suggest Trump has merely mobilised these popular resentments. As Robert Reich, who served as Secretary of Labour in the Bill Clinton Administration put it recently, "Trump's support comes largely from America's working class whose wages haven't risen in decades, whose jobs are less secure than ever and whose political voice has been drowned out by big money".

As the Democratic Party abandoned its traditional working class supporters, Trump drew them towards the Republican Party —

long seen as the party of the rich. His political genius lies in simultaneously appealing to both capital and labour — massive tax cuts to the former and the promise to the latter of bringing jobs back to America that were lost through globalisation and immigration.

Much the same happened in the British elections last year, where the Tory leader Boris Johnson won a sweeping mandate by breaking into the working class strongholds of the Labour Party. Trump's success in mobilising the working people was tied to challenging the logic of globalisation that was taken for granted by the Democratic Party, large swathes of American capital and the policy wonks.

Long before the 2016 election, Trump had a long record of denouncing free trade. His attack on globalism was mistaken by many as an electoral ploy rather than a considered strategy. Many had hoped that Trump will moderate his anti-globalist rhetoric once in office. Instead Trump has taken a pickaxe to the core principles of the globalised economic order — free trade, open borders and multilateralism.

Anti-globalisation protests have become common over the years at the annual gatherings of Davos as well as the G-7 and G-20 summits. But few had anticipated that the president of a country, long the champion of globalism, would be at the forefront of dismantling it. Many had also hoped that Trump's war against global trading regime would come a cropper, for it was assumed that the cost of uncoupling with the global economic order would be too costly.

But Trump, who is scheduled to speak on Tuesday at Davos, could well boast about his successes on the trade front. He has renegotiated a 25-year old trade agreement with America's neighbours, Canada and Mexico. Trump's threat of an all-out trade war with China over the last couple of years has led to an interim agreement that commits Beijing to reduce its trade surplus with the US by importing more.

At Davos, Trump is also expected to turn his ire on the EU, which has a near \$200 billion trade surplus with the US. Trump has often said the EU treats America "worse than China".

The trade wars among the world's major capitalist centres is accentuated by the technological revolution, especially in the digital domain. The Davos report on global risks argues that the realisation of the full potential of new technologies depends on unprecedented coordination among all stakeholders. What is emerging instead is "digital fragmentation" marked by the extension of geopolitical and geo-economic rivalries into the new domain. Digital issues have come to the front and center of American arguments with both Europe.

Given its growing stakes in the global economic order, Delhi ought to be at the leading edge of the current debate on the future of capitalism. India, though, seems too preoccupied sorting out the persistent legacies of feudalism. But sooner than later, India must find ways to take advantage of the new opportunities from the unfolding rearrangement of the global capitalist system.

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



ABDUL KHALIQ

# The republic's defenders

The ruling elite is smug, the young are standing up for India's soul

WHEN THE CITIZENSHIP Amendment Bill became law, a distressed friend moaned: "As we clearly don't need our Constitution, why not give it to the rebel Naga NSCN who have been demanding a separate flag and Constitution for Nagaland?" In one fell blow, the CAA has struck at the heart of India's secular, democratic Constitution. By sanctifying a faith-based division of people into law, the Act has paved the way for the Hindu Rashtra conceived by V D Savarkar, who first formulated the two-nation theory. Judging from the social turmoil in its wake, with Muslims no longer shrinking back in the shadows, the CAA has also resurrected the ghosts of Partition. Yes, dear PM, in the truly eclectic anti-CAA protests, many can be recognised by their skull caps and hijabs.

The CAA is a critical component of the Hindutva project that has been gathering pace in the last few years. The lynchings, ghar wapsi and love jihad campaigns, cow vigilantism and the recent abrogation of Article 370 are all part of a sinister design to consign Muslims to second-class citizen status. Now with the CAA — and the ominous NRC and its blood brother, the NPR — looming on the horizon, M S Golwalkar's exhortation that Muslims "may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizen's rights" is perilously close to becoming a reality.

A large section of the country is outraged at the sheer injustice of it all. Even allies of the BJP who had supported the CAB in Parliament have now balked at the implementation of the NRC, but only after witnessing the outburst of anger against this patently discriminatory legislation. Their craven, opportunistic backing of an unconstitutional, unjust law that threatens to tear the country apart will not be easily forgotten or forgiven.

The implicit message of the CAA is that Muslims do not "belong" in the new idea of India crafted by the ruling dispensation. In fact, even before the public discourse on the CAA, a clear distinction had been drawn between Hindus and Muslims. When the final list of the Assam NRC left out lakhs of Hindus, contrary to the common perception that it would weed out an overwhelming number of Muslim "terminals", a tendentious central government announced a fresh NRC for Assam. Amit Shah then repeatedly insisted that no Hindu would ever be deported. The hastily enacted CAA is the direct consequence of that inconvenient outcome. Contrast this with what Shah said about the exclusion of Muslims in the CAA. His condescending concession to them was that "Indian Muslims have nothing to fear", making it sound like he was doing them a huge favour. Far from assuaging their fears, the home minister's assurance has filled them with dread. They have not forgotten how the

Kashmiris were lulled before the great betrayal of abrogating Article 370.

The CAA is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions that expose its real intent. The rationale of considering illegal migrants only from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh defies logic. Afghanistan was neither a part of British India nor shares a common boundary with this country and hence was immune from the trauma of Partition, which is touted as the genesis of the migrant problem. Furthermore, if religious persecution of minorities was the criterion, the omission of Myanmar and Sri Lanka is unconscionable. The Rohingya Muslims, in particular, are the most persecuted religious minorities in the Subcontinent. Also, how do the apologists for the Bill explain the omission of Ahmadiyas who suffer greater persecution than even Christians and Hindus in Pakistan?

What terrifies Muslims the most is not what is incorporated in the CAA but the predictable repercussions of its implementation. Given the institutionalised bias against this beleaguered community, lakhs of poor Indian Muslims face certain disenfranchisement for want of documentation to prove date and place of birth.

In a vibrant democracy, there is infinite belief that the courts are the last resort against injustice. However, the relaxed pace at which the Supreme Court has dealt with the anguished

petitions against the CAA inspires little hope. That's how the SC has also responded to the cries for justice by Kashmiris after abrogation of Article 370. Today's Supreme Court is suspect in the eyes of Muslims — more so after its shocking Ayodhya judgment, a barefaced concession to majoritarian sentiment.

Howard Zinn referred to civil society as the "ultimate power" and "the locomotive that drives the train of government in the direction of equality and justice". It is gratifying that the ordinary citizens have crashed through the sound barrier of complicit silence to register their opposition to the CAA and NRC.

The oasis of hope are our universities. In striking contrast to the smugness and social apathy of the ruling elite, the young have emerged as the standard bearers of a more caring and inclusive society. The country-wide protests spearheaded by university students are essentially about upholding the foundational ideals of our Republic — democracy, freedom, equality and brotherhood — which have frayed badly in the last few years. They are fighting for India's soul.

It would be an exaggeration to call the current upheaval India's "Tahrir moment", but the unrest is an encouraging sign of growing resistance to injustice.

The writer is secretary general of the Lok Janashakti Party. Views are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FUTURE IS THEIRS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Students as protesters' (IE, January 20). Education is not about literacy but about creating individuals who have the bandwidth to understand multiple issues, including those pertaining to politics. A "good" student should be able to channelise all that she learns in the classroom.

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

### SOFT FACE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'New chief, new Task' (IE, January 20). Students and the general public are in the vanguard of the protests against the CAA/NRC. JP Nadda seems to have been asked to don the mantle of BJP's president because the party needed a soft face to get out of this volatile situation.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

### WHY THE HURRY?

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'CAA rules not in but UP sends out form to identify migrants, list persecution' (IE, January 18). It is often stated that those who have come to India without valid documents are illegal immigrants. However, for more than five years, no efforts were made to count them. CAA seems to have hurried the process of identification. It is reported that of the 95,000 refugees, around 58,000 have obtained citizenship (even without CAA). The

### 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.

fundamental question is: Why are then millions of Indians being subjected to the pain of CAA?

LR Murmu, Delhi

### MAKE IT CLEAR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'States have an obligation', (IE, January 20). If the Opposition is spreading rumours, the government should come forward and hold a charcha, just like Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Pariksha pe Charcha". The people of India should have clear picture about the new law, especially because it pertains to their citizenship.

Zainab Gausiya, Chandigarh