



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

A fun, nearly daily game: is the Press Secretary breathtakingly uninformed about history, or is he nodding to Holocaust deniers, or both?!

CHLOE ANGYAL, Editor at Huffington Post; 24,200 TWITTER followers. Posting after White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters that even Hitler didn't use chemical weapons, while attempting to defend the missile strike in Syria. Spicer subsequently apologised.

Importance of being Tawang

The Dalai Lama's visit has turned the spotlight on a region beset by the lack of basic amenities.

VARINDER BHATIA explains the gaps in infrastructure, from poor connectivity, shoddy healthcare to power woes, and the way ahead

TAWANG, APRIL 13

IT TOOK the Dalai Lama four days on a treacherous 500-km road, after his helicopter couldn't take off due to bad weather, to get to Tawang. He was in the hill town for four days (April 7-10). As the dust settles on his trip, Tawang, a district on the edge of India's eastern border, will again slip back into off-the-radar, genteel negligence, to be stirred back into life only when India and China joust.

Most of that tussle rests on conflicting bids to bring the world to Tawang, located at 10,000 ft above sea level. China has launched a big infrastructure push: the government last year announced that it will build a second railway line to Tibet linking capital Lhasa with the south-western city of Chengdu.

In November 2013, China opened an all-weather road linking Medog County in the Tibet-Autonomous-Region (TAR), close to the border in Arunachal Pradesh, with the rest of its counties.

With this, every TAR county is connected to a highway network in China. In July 2013, the Chinese government announced that it would spend about 200 billion Yuan (approximately 32.3 billion US dollars) to build a road network centered around Lhasa and extend the combined length of the TAR's highways to over 1,10,000 kilometres.

India, with its modest, laggardly pace, is far behind. A report of the Indian Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence, released in 2013-2014, terms the Indian infrastructure along the Sino-Indian border to be in a poor state. Of the 73 all-weather roads along the Sino-Indian border that India had identified for construction in 2006, just 18 have been completed. Of the 27 roads that were to be constructed by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, only one is complete and at least 11 roads are behind schedule.

Roads

The Narendra Modi government has allocated approximately Rs 5,850 crore in road contracts for the year 2016-17 for upgradation of nearly 610 kms of road network and basic infrastructure, by 2020, especially along the border in Arunachal Pradesh — a five-fold jump from the two preceding years.

A 52-km road stretch is being built in Taksing village, around 550 km from Tawang, to enable the Army to quickly move supplies and troops to the India-China border in case of a conflict. Similarly, there is a push between Tawang and Bumla pass to finish most of the 33-km road stretch that is uncarpeted.

U-turn after U-turn

The president reverses his positions on NATO, China, Russia and more

JILL COLVIN & KEN THOMAS

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump hasn't been in the White House for 100 days, yet he's already reversed himself on many of his key campaign promises. In several interviews this week, the president has forged new positions on topics ranging from NATO to the Chinese currency manipulation. They come as other campaign promises lag, including Trump's vow to build a concrete wall along the length of the southern border and have Mexico pay for it.

Here are some of the areas where a president who prides himself on his flexibility has been willing to dispense with past positions:

NATO

Trump cemented his shift in posture toward the 28-nation military alliance as he stood alongside its leader at the White House on Wednesday. As a candidate, Trump had dismissed NATO as "obsolete," saying the post-World War II organisation wasn't focused on combating the growing threat from terrorism and complaining that too many members weren't paying their fair share to

"Last year, we could not complete this stretch due to lack of funds. But we hope to receive the funds and will complete the remaining road stretch soon," said Rajiv Kumar, assistant executive engineer.

But it is a long haul to Tawang. The last railway stop is Bhalukpong, 330 km away, while only helicopters can land in the hill town. There are five chopper flights per week from Guwahati, but these are entirely dependent on the weather. On an average, barely one-two flights land in Tawang per week. During rains and winters, the choppers remain grounded for weeks on end.

That leaves Tawang's 49,000-plus population, like it did the Dalai Lama last week, at the mercy of the road network.

There are two national highways connecting Tawang to Guwahati via Tezpur in Assam, but the road most used on this stretch is National Highway-27. It is a 19-hour ride, climbing up to nearly 13,700 feet above sea level, traversing snowy passes and past hair-splitting bends.

The closest big town is Tezpur, in Assam, 360 km away. Along this route, the 180-km stretch from Bomdila to Tawang is a landslide-prone road. Road-carpeting and widening has been under way at various places for the last two years. "We are also coming up with a bypass on the

Jhang-Tawang stretch. Once completed, this would cut travel time by at least two hours from Tezpur to Tawang," says Rajiv Kumar.

As for public transport, one bus leaves Guwahati for Tawang at 6 am and reaches Bomdila in the evening. Passengers halt in Bomdila and the journey is resumed the next morning. It takes another 12 hours to complete this 180-km stretch.

Most people prefer private or shared taxis, with Tata Sumos the choice on the Tezpur-Tawang stretch. A convoy of Sumos carrying 10 passengers each depart from Tezpur early morning between 4-5 am. They reach Tawang in the evening by 6-7 pm. Each passenger is charged Rs 750 for the one-way journey. "Because of the landslide prone stretch on the highway between Bhalukpong and Tenga valley, there are army pickets located at regular intervals. Army keeps patrolling the area to help the tourists in case they get stranded," says Sanjib Shah, a taxi operator in Tawang.

Trains

The 52-km broad gauge train stretch between Dekargaon in Assam and Bhalukpong in Arunachal Pradesh had taken five years to lay, and was inaugurated by Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu in August 2015.

ward defence. He struck an entirely different tone Wednesday, one he had been warming up to during frequent telephone conversations with his world counterparts. "I said it was obsolete. It's no longer obsolete," Trump said of NATO at a news conference with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg after they met in the Oval Office.

Trump still insists that NATO members meet a 2014 agreement to boost defence spending to 2 per cent of gross domestic product within a decade. He has backup on this point from an important ally: Stoltenberg. Currently, just the US and a handful of other countries are meeting the 2 per cent target.

China a currency manipulator

During his campaign, Trump insisted that one of his first acts as president would be to direct his treasury secretary to label China a currency manipulator. It was part of a "contract" with American voters that he pledged to fulfill. Only days ago, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, Trump reiterated that campaign pledge.

"You know when you talk about, when



(From top) Located at 10,000 ft above sea level, Tawang is on the edge of India's eastern border; the stretch of road from Tawang to Sela Pass; and the road from the pass to Sela lake, 80 km from Tawang town. Varinder Bhatia

Says Dr Narinda Namshum, medical superintendent, Tawang district hospital, "We have no surgeons. In case of a surgery, a patient from Tawang is required to go to either Itanagar or Guwahati, both over 510 km away — a journey that takes 18-20 hours if done without a break." She adds that at least 60-70 patients every month are referred to hospitals in Tezpur, Guwahati or Itanagar.

Power

Not yet connected to the central electricity grid, Tawang depends on domestic power generation to meet its 14 MW demand. Most days, there is either no power or extremely poor voltage electricity, forcing most consumers, including government buildings, to run on generators.

In April 2016, the National Green Tribunal suspended the environmental clearance given to the proposed 780 MW hydropower project in Tawang. The NGT's order also indicated that other hydropower projects in the sensitive border region — part of the transboundary Brahmaputra river basin that straddles China, India and Bangladesh — might have to carry out cumulative impact assessment studies.

"Against its requirement of at least 14 MW, Tawang barely generates 2.5-3 MW during winter and around 7-8 MW during summer," said a senior official of the Electricity Department on condition of anonymity. "We are dependent primarily on three hydropower projects set up on river tributaries. In winters, when the water freezes, generation is minimal. During summers, when the water flow increases in tributaries, our equipment gets damaged," the official added.

Tawang has two main rivers, Tawang Chhu and Naymjang Chhu, both of which have around 10 tributaries each. Tawang MLA Tsering Tashi, an Independent, says "at least 80 per cent" of the 380 hamlets and villages in Tawang do not have electricity. "The district has a total of 31 mini- and micro-hydropower projects. Most of them are either dysfunctional or not running to their adequate capacity," he added.

He said the government has taken up the matter with the Centre. "Hopefully, within this year, we will be connected with the central grid through neighbouring Assam." At least 13 hydropower projects, with a total capacity of 2,900 MW, have been proposed for

In 2015, the Railway Board also cleared a proposal for the final location survey of a proposed 378-km track from central Assam's Sonitpur district to Tawang, of which Dekargaon-Bhalukpong would be a part.

P T Khanna, a block education officer posted in Tawang, says, "The construction of roads in bits and parts in border areas will not serve any purpose unless the government comes out with a concerted and consistent plan to develop this part of the country. We wonder if the Indian government is actually serious about Tawang or for that matter any other border district in Arunachal Pradesh."

Health

In February 2017, the district hospital of Tawang was the recipient of the Union government's Kayakalp award for cleanliness, and received a cash prize of Rs 50 lakh. The money is being used for upgradation of fa-

cilities at the hospital.

There is one district hospital, two community health centres and six primary health centres across the district. The hospital located in Tawang town has one ophthalmologist, two gynaecologists and one doctor of medicine. To deal with an inflow of around 180-200 daily OPD patients, there are six general duty medical officers. There are no private clinics or ambulance services across the district.

An existing 50-bed government hospital was dismantled a few months ago and a 101-bed hospital is being constructed in its place. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. Currently, an 18-bed temporary structure is functional as the hospital's indoor patient facility.

The hospital provides X-ray facility and ultrasounds, but for MRIs and CT scans, one has to travel at least 360 km to Tezpur. The hospital doesn't have an anaesthetist either.



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charter to expire in 2015, then eventually revived it over the objections of some conservatives. But it still isn't able to conduct major business due to vacancies on its board, hurting top exporters like Boeing and General Electric.

Trump told the newspaper he plans to fill two vacancies on the board, adding, "It turns out that, first of all, lots of small companies are really helped, the vendor companies."

Russian President Putin

As the US relationship with Russia careers from cozy to frosty, Trump is keeping his distance from Russian President Vladimir Putin. "I don't know Putin," Trump said Wednesday at the joint press conference with Stoltenberg. Trump has made conflicting statements about his ties to the Russian leader in the past. At a press conference last July, he said: "I never met Putin, I

the district.

The 780 MW Naymjang Chhu project had run into problems as its barrage was proposed to come up near Zemithang village in Pangchen valley, near the international border with Bhutan and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and on the nesting site of the endangered black-necked cranes.

Tawang residents led by Lobsang Lama (popularly known as Anna Lama since he had shared stage with Anna Hazare in Delhi in 2011 during latter's anti-corruption movement) had moved the NGT and pleaded that the project would have an adverse impact on the habitat of the endangered species.

Earlier too, in 2007, when the state government led by Dorjee Khandu signed number of agreements with private companies for hydropower projects, villagers had formed associations and lodged a strong protest.

Education

There are no educational facilities in Tawang after Class XII, and the nearest college is at Bomdila, 180 km away. The closest university, Rajiv Gandhi University, is in capital Itanagar.

There are 117 government and 16 private schools functioning in Tawang. The state government runs higher secondary schools, while there is one Kendriya Vidyalaya and another under the Jawaharlal Nehru Scheme. The schools are affiliated to CBSE.

While the pass percentage for Class X is around 88 per cent, by Class XII, it drops to near the half-way mark, around 53 per cent. "We hope to have a degree college in Tawang this session," says Apel Tayeng, Deputy Director School Education (DDSE), Tawang. However, admissions and the faculty recruitment are yet to begin for the college.

Tayang admits to acute lack of teachers with specific subject skills. "Though we have sufficient number of teachers for social studies, we lack teachers for mathematics and science. It affects our results. We have raised this issue several times, but the recruitment is still in process."

It was only in August last year that Tawang schools got three subject teachers for the entire district. Block education officer Khanna says they are also worried about poor attendance record of teachers. But in the absence of power to run biometrics, there is not much they can do about it. "We bank on surprise checks," he says.

don't know who Putin is. He said one nice thing about me. He said I'm a genius." But during the Republican primary he boasted of their ties. He said at a November 2015 primary debate, "I got to know him very well because we were both on '60 Minutes,' we were stablemates, and we did very well that night." The two appeared on the same programme, but their segments were taped in different countries. For Trump, dealing with investigations into possible contacts between his campaign associates and the Russian officials, keeping Putin at arm's length may be the best political play.

US military prowess

The man who once slammed the U.S. military as a "disaster" is singing its praises now that he's in charge. In an interview with Fox Business Network's Maria Bartiromo that aired Wednesday morning, Trump talked up U.S. military strength, sounding almost in awe of its prowess. "It's so incredible. It's brilliant. It's genius. Our technology, our equipment, is better than anybody by a factor of five," he said. "I mean look, we have, in terms of technology, nobody can even come close to competing." Just a couple of months ago, the president was bemoaning the military's state at rallies across the country. "We're going to rebuild our military. Our military is in shambles," he said at a rally in Delaware last April. "We're going to make it so big, so strong, so powerful that nobody, nobody, nobody is gonna mess with us, folks." AP

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AAM AADMI REPLY

It's just one seat but its defeat is a resounding message from voters to AAP: Don't take us for granted

TWO YEARS AFTER sweeping the Assembly elections in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) finished third in the bypoll for Rajouri Garden, a seat the party had won in 2015. The votes polled by the AAP candidate were almost the same as that of his party candidate's victory margin in the last election. Ironically, the BJP nominee could win the seat despite polling fewer votes than he did in the previous election: the polling percentage had fallen from 72 per cent in 2015 to 47 per cent this time. With 66 seats in the Assembly, the loss of one may not matter much — but matter it does. For, ahead of municipal polls in the capital, voters in Rajouri Garden have sent a clear message: their stary-eyed admiration for AAP is fading.

How AAP reads this mandate could very well define its remaining term in office. First, the party ought to ask itself how it managed to lose so many voters — and goodwill, considering that voters seem to have preferred to stay away rather than vote for the AAP's opponents — in such a short time. Of course, AAP can, and it's adept at this, find scapegoats. It can pin the defeat on local factors — it got the incumbent MLA to resign and contest Punjab elections and this left a vacuum. It may accuse the Delhi Lieutenant Governor's office of stalling the government's work. It may even blame EVMs — it has not done so in this case, though. The party can avoid self-reflection and remain immersed in the daily, noisy battle it has been waging with the Centre. By doing so, however, it may end up digging itself into a hole and turn deaf to voices that speak to it. The 2015 verdict was a vote for change, a vote to govern. In 2013, the AAP had promised a new paradigm of politics and sought the mandate. The voters weren't persuaded enough to give the party a clear majority, though it emerged the single largest party in the Assembly. The brief tenure in office turned to be more street theatre than any attempt to run a government. To its credit, the party learned from its mistakes and reinvented itself with a governance agenda that appealed to the people. The AAP's remarkable victory in 2015 was an endorsement of the policies it promised to implement.

The AAP in government, however, has been behaving like a party under siege. It has singlemindedly pursued a path of confrontation with the Centre and its representatives. The frequent run-ins with the LG and the party's inability to build a working relationship with the Centre has had a negative impact on governance. The government's concerted effort to improve public health facilities and school education are laudable but these have been overshadowed by the party's constant chatter of victimisation by the Centre. The bypoll result indicates that the voters want the AAP to behave more like a party at work than one that's constantly blaming everyone else. And to realise that they can't take people's support for granted.

A GOOD, FIRST STEP

The move to let retailers revise fuel prices on a daily basis is a beginning. But more needs to be done

THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION to allow fuel-retailers to change petrol and diesel prices everyday, in sync with global prices, is a progressive step. It will bring oil pricing in the country closer to the best practices in the international market. To begin with, state-owned oil firms will implement this policy in five cities — Puducherry, Visakhapatnam, Udaipur, Jamshedpur and Chandigarh — from May 1. The government aims to have daily market-linked prices at all petrol pumps in the country, but has not specified a date by which it intends to have such a practice in place. Currently fuel retailers revise prices every 15 days based on the average prices in the preceding fortnight and the currency exchange rate. In the new pricing regime, petrol pump rates will reflect daily movement in international prices and rupee-dollar fluctuations. This means that the Indian retail market will be more closely aligned to global oil market dynamics and the consumer will be cushioned against sharp surges in prices — often the case with the 15-day pricing cycle.

The benefits of a competitive market will, however, still elude the consumer. Since May 2014 when the current government assumed office, global crude prices have fallen from \$ 108 to \$ 55 per barrel. In comparison, petrol prices in the country have fallen marginally — in Delhi, only by about Rs 5 a litre, from Rs 71.41 to Rs 66.29. The gains from the falling prices have largely been pocketed by the government through increased excise duty. The country's import pricing parity means that the state-run PSUs, and a few private outfits, sell oil at the same price. Unlike in mature markets, oil prices within an Indian city do not vary from one petrol pump to another and the consumer does not have much of a choice with respect to oil prices.

Only state-owned firms, the exploration and production outfit, ONGC, and private refineries can import petrol and diesel in India. The country does not have a policy for independent fuel retailers. Compare that to the US where the likes of ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell or Conoco-Phillips own barely 5 per cent of the fuel outlets. The rest of the retail business is run by independent players, who are in no obligation to ensure business to a captive refinery. In contrast in India, an IOC fuel outlet, for example, buys petrol or diesel from a refinery run by the same PSU outfit. Such elimination of competition means that decontrolling retail prices will give the consumer only a modicum of the benefits of the market. A policy on independent oil retailers should be the next move on the government's agenda.

NO SMOKE? FIRED!

Jelil Matniyaz is probably a unique individual, the only person ever to be penalised for not smoking

WHILE SMOKING HAS become a furtive, clandestine act in the Western democracies, China is the world's biggest tobacco consumer, and 68 per cent of Chinese men smoke. With such an overwhelming majority, not smoking may well look like stepping out of line. And not smoking in deference to local custom in an area under a crackdown, while being a Communist Party official and a smoker, may look like an act of rebellion.

Respecting tradition in Xinjiang, Jelil Matniyaz did not smoke in the presence of clerics, and was reduced to the ranks in the hierarchy of the apparat. A naming and shaming notice demoted the party chief of a village in Hotan from "senior staff member" to "staff member". While the rest of the named and shamed stood accused of muscular misdemeanours like bribery, Matniyaz was punished for "infirm political stands", one of which was his inability to reach for the cancer sticks in the presence of religious figures.

While the action looks like a throwback to old-style communism, when people were denounced for weird crimes like being "running dogs", it is actually part of the ongoing crackdown on Uighur citizens, who have been restive over the settling of Han Chinese in their territory, where terrorist attacks are commonplace. It's like Tibet all over again. Recently, the party issued a diktat against "abnormal" beards, in a bid to force traditional Muslims of Xinjiang to trim down. Clearly, showing respect to local clerics the local way, by not smoking, was a no-no. In fact, the demoted official was probably expected to blow blue smoke rings in their faces. In its notice, the party has said that smoking must be respected for it reflects individual choice. How strange it is to see China's rulers supporting individualism, the Holy Grail of the West.

Developmental Hindutva



SANJAYA BARU

Is the term an oxymoron? Is it possible to balance the two in a way that is reassuring to a majority of people?

SHOJI ITO WAS an Indophile like no other Japanese economist I have known. During the 1990s, he would frequently visit India to keep pace with the changes in the economy. We would always meet and have long conversations about India, Japan and the world. Unfortunately Ito-san died early. Our last meeting, in the late 1990s, was at a conference in Japan on globalisation in Asia. Speakers from the United States and China spoke eloquently in the first session on the benefits of economic globalisation. Ito-san and I were scheduled to speak in the second session.

During a coffee break, Ito-san walked up to me and said, "I hope you will not be like the American and the Chinese. Being Indian you should also speak about culture. Not just economics." Globalisation is not just about investment and trade, Ito-san argued. It is also about values, ideas, culture. "India has been globalised for centuries. You are the home of so many great religions of the world, and have been open to so many others." Ito-san implored me to widen the conversation on globalisation beyond economics.

But then, generations of Indian intellectuals and political leaders have done precisely that, arguing that India brings something more to the global table than just a billion, and more potential, consumers; that the rise of India is also about the validation of an idea — the idea of the political, social and economic empowerment of a long suppressed people through the institutions of a plural democracy. India may be a young nation, it has often been said, but an ancient civilisation that has believed in the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — the whole world is one family.

This much many across the political spectrum are willing to say. Ideological differences arise on defining the idea of an Indian "civilisation". The Indian National Congress went along with Jawaharlal Nehru's concept of "composite culture" that many viewed as a clever cop-out, which avoided a direct link between India's civilisational attributes and its ancient, dominant and in many ways defining religion, namely, Hinduism. The BJP

rejects what it views as an unfair glossing over of history. The idea of "Hindutva" was proffered as an explanatory civilisational construct. The BJP insists that Hindutva is an inclusive term since Indians of all faiths, including the Semitic ones, have, over centuries, acquired an Indian personality that has come to define the Nehruvian "composite culture".

With the BJP emerging as an almost pan-Indian political formation and a natural party of government, it has become necessary for it to articulate its political vision more clearly so that the nation and the world feel not just reassured but enthused by India's rise. In this context, it has often been asked: What does the BJP seek from political power and whether its priority is "development" or "Hindutva"?

Many have recently argued that while Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 on a development rather than a Hindutva plank, Yogi Adityanath rose to power in Uttar Pradesh on a Hindutva rather than a development plank. Is this an artificial and false dichotomy or one that requires further analysis? The fact is that both Modi and Yogi emphasise the importance of development for all (*sab ka saath, sab ka vikas*) while remaining true to their Hindutva ideology.

Is it then possible for the BJP to articulate a vision of "Developmental Hindutva" in a way which shows that the term is not an oxymoron? What does striking a balance between the two mean? If development is defined in social and economic terms, while Hindutva is defined in cultural terms, it should be possible for the BJP to construct a political platform that is reassuring to a large majority of Indians and is respectful to the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

Just as the policies and programmes for development have to adhere to the law of the land — respecting the basic principles underlying the Constitution — so too must the idea of Hindutva. Thus, for example, few can object to the teaching of yoga or even the singing of 'Vande Mataram' — aspects of Hindutva that non-Hindus can easily live with. But many non-Hindus may be dismayed by the ban on the consumption of beef. A republic that is understanding of such nuances would truly hold up a lamp to the dark world of religious extremism, bigotry and violence.

mayed by the ban on the consumption of beef. A republic that is understanding of such nuances would truly hold up a lamp to the dark world of religious extremism, bigotry and violence.

In December 2007, as India celebrated four years of uninterrupted annual economic growth of 9 per cent, Singapore's founder-leader Lee Kuan Yew famously asked: Why has China's rise created so much apprehension around the world while India's has not? His answer was that India was a transparent, plural democracy and the global community felt reassured by that fact. The rise to power of the BJP and the decline of the Congress in this past decade has not altered that basic fact. India remains a plural democracy and so the world will continue to welcome its economic rise. However, some have expressed concern about the growing assertion of religious extremism and wondered if this will alter, in any way, the basic character of the Indian Republic. In what manner is the idea of India as a civilisational entity getting altered? Will India's economic rise be thwarted by the political assertion of ideologies that might weaken the republic? It is in this context that the clarification of the idea of "Developmental Hindutva" would be useful.

Combining the vigorous pursuit of equitable growth, within the framework of a liberal economy and polity, with the reinforcement of civilisational attributes that define the Indian personality can easily be a non-divisive political programme. Of course, there will always be extremist elements on all sides that will never appreciate the idea of building the widest possible consensus on such a programme of Developmental Hindutva. The challenge of leadership in a plural democracy is to construct policies that ensure political stability, social equity and economic progress on the basis of a widely shared ethical and cultural foundation.

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LESSONS FROM AMBEDKAR

A fitting tribute to him would be forging unity of progressive forces against Hindutva



D. RAJA

B.R. AMBEDKAR'S vision of the India was that of a welfare state which would secure to all its citizens justice — social, economic and political — liberty, equality and fraternity. It was to be a state which would direct its policy towards securing its citizens, men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

But over the years, the Indian state has been transforming into a neoliberal one. The BJP's accession to power in 2014 is not just a succession of one government by another. It is a catastrophic combination of neoliberalism and Hindutva which is giving birth to a frightening fascism. Fascism assumes different forms according to historical, social and economic conditions and national peculiarities. The fascism in India, under the garb of nationalism, has been causing havoc to the Constitution and constitutional morality which Ambedkar wanted the Indians to cultivate to safeguard the rule of law and the country's unity.

The Indian freedom struggle was anchored in a creative, inclusive and constructive nationalism. It is tragic that those forces which never participated in the freedom struggle and opposed it to create the so-called Hindu Rashtra are now clamouring for nationalism. This fascism can be best described as manuvad fascism masquerading as nationalism.

The BJP and sangh parivar's leaders claim that they have won the ideological battle on nationalism. But ideological debates are never fought, least of all won, by deploying police and paramilitary forces, lynching by lumpen gangs and hurling sedition charges

against those who do not agree with the government. The waging of ideological debates on the strength of weapons and police forces was encouraged by Hitler and became the guiding principle behind Nazism. The same disturbing trends are emerging in India.

In *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability*, Ambedkar anticipated the rise of such forces and wrote with anguish that "militant Hinduism is masquerading as Indian nationalism". We need to be wary of the diabolical form of nationalism the Hindutva forces are trying to impose. It is instructive to note that whenever suppressed sections of society and working classes raise their voices and employ legitimate methods for safeguarding their freedom, those in power suppress them by stating that such upsurges endanger nationalism. In fact, Ambedkar had written that those who understood nationalism only in terms of freedom from British rule used it as a plank against the struggling humanity within the country and thereby created fertile conditions for majoritarian communalism. What he wrote before Independence has become a grim reality.

Across India, there is now a rise of organisations that enforce manuvad fascism in the name of Hindutva. Such outfits are championing a narrow and concocted nationalism, spreading fear and anxiety among people. The cultural nationalism they propagate spreads terror among Dalits, minorities and all Indians who are wedded to composite culture and constitutional values. Such outfits, encouraged and emboldened by the

Centre, dub anybody who opposes them as anti-national.

Attacks on affirmative action in favour of Dalits, tribals and other backward sections and articulations by manuvad fascists that women should be confined to home are ominous: Manuvad fascists believe in graded social inequality and the caste system.

In this context, it is imperative to have enlightened statesmanship to uphold our Constitution. What happened in Una on August 15, 2016 — when thousands of Dalits gathered and demanded five acres of land for each Dalit family and access to education — remain central to nationalism. Instead of talking about these substantive aspects, the manuvad fascists are creating a situation where they try to dominate others by misusing the state apparatus.

Years ago, Ambedkar had predicted that a time would come when the downtrodden and suppressed classes and castes would launch their own movements. Manuvad fascism, which spells anarchy across the country and endangers our social fabric, has to be countered by education, organisation and agitation as advocated by Babasaheb Ambedkar. The imminent danger to our country posed by manuvad fascism has to be met with redoubled force by upholding the Constitution and our pluralistic values. It has to be fought by forging the broadest possible unity of the working people and secular, democratic forces. This would the appropriate tribute to Ambedkar.

The writer is National Secretary, CPI and a Rajya Sabha MP

APRIL 14, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

JP'S BROADCAST

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN REITERATED his view that the people have the right to demand resignation of their representatives if they "fail in their duty and become corrupt, oppressive and inefficient". It is true that the right to recall had no place in the Indian Constitution. But in a democracy, the people had an "unwritten right, which the people can exercise if and when necessary". In a message broadcast to the nation, JP said except for the Centre, Congress governments still continued to function in the states. It was necessary to give a chance to the people to elect fresh representatives, committed to the people's charter and their election mani-

festos. JP said he expected the Janata government to create, at the Centre and the states, an autonomous institution with legal authority, like the high courts and the Supreme Court, to deal with corruption.

NEW CONGRESS CHIEF

D.K. BAROOAH RESIGNED from Congress presidency to make way for the restructuring of the party. It is expected that Swaran Singh will be elected provisional president at the Congress Working Committee meeting. Several Congress leaders have been holding consultations on who should be the next president. Several names were considered, including Y.B. Chavan, Syed Mir Qasim, K.

Brahmananda Reddy and Swaran Singh. Chavan and Qasim were unwilling. Reddy faced opposition from Andhra Pradesh CM Vengal Rao and K. Raghuramaiah.

LANKA INSURGENCY

THE SRI LANKA Freedom Party government has been alerted to a fast-developing insurgency. PM Sirimavo Bandaranaike alerted the Leader of Opposition, J.R. Jayawardene of the situation and warned him of imminent disaster. The Jathika Vimukti Peramuna, which masterminded the 1971 insurrection in which hundreds lost their lives, is now advocating a "peaceful 1 revolution". Its leader, Rohana Wijayaweera, is still in prison.



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Soft power, harder choices

To extend its global appeal, China is accommodating religion today. India, which invested early in diverse freedoms, should highlight inclusion now



ECONOMIC GRAFFITI

BY KAUSHIK BASU

NEVER BEFORE IN China have I seen as much interest in India as I did last month, when I attended the China Development Forum in Beijing. The Forum, founded in 2000, is now recognised as one of the most important international meetings on global economics. The conference was held in the Diaoyutai State Guest House, built in 1959 to celebrate ten years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, with Mao Zedong's famous proclamation atop Tiananmen Square. With its gardens, lakes and ornate buildings, the place is a cultural icon of China and served as headquarters for the Central Cultural Revolution Group.

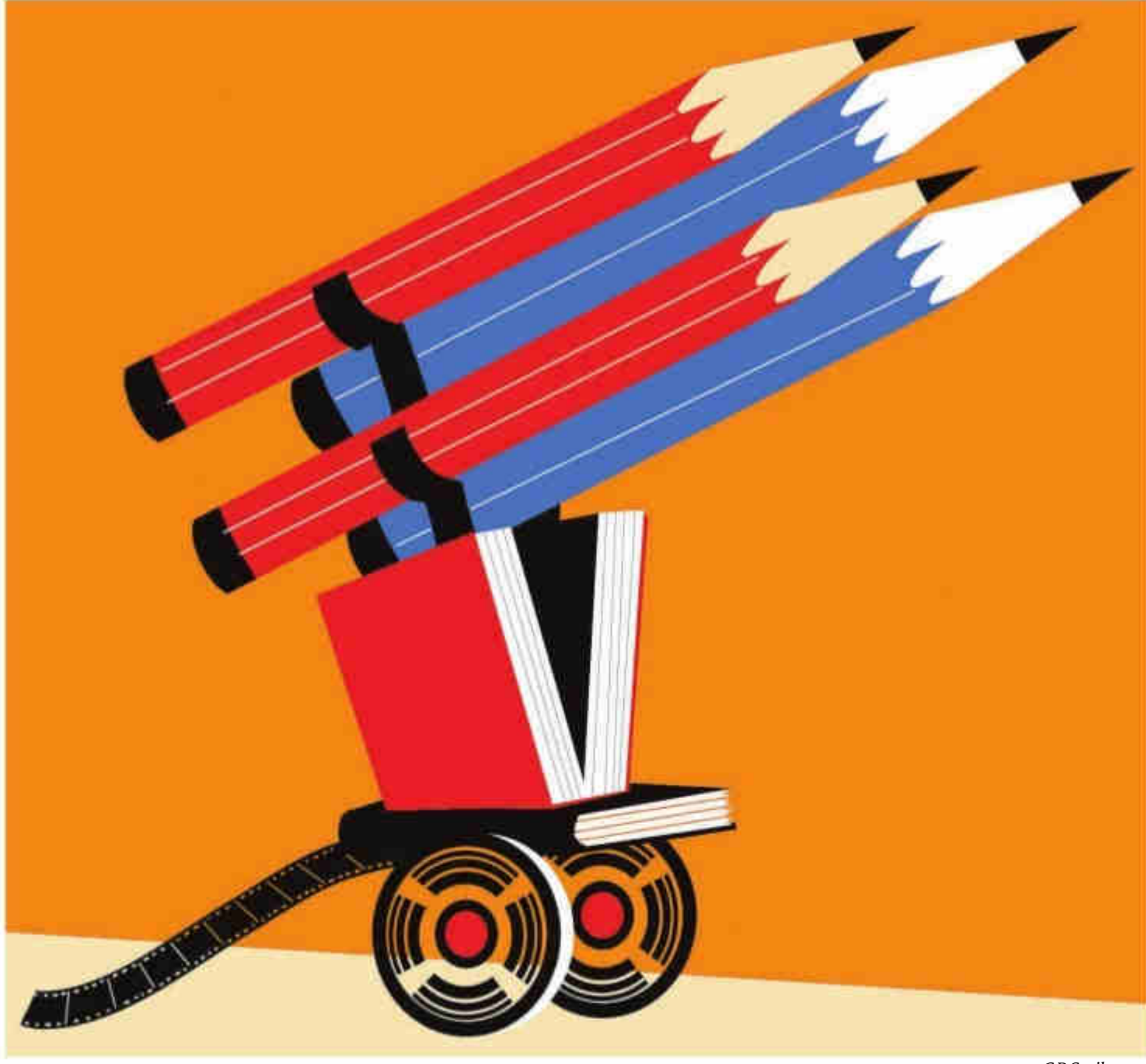
With China eager to step into the caveat being created by the rise in protectionism in the United States, this was a special year for the Forum: There were hints of China's soft power ambition everywhere, from the décor, the fluent English conversation with the students chaperoning us, to the topics chosen for the various panels and lectures. China's Premier Li Keqiang gave an eloquent speech in Chinese, talking about his country's role in today's troubled world, occasionally pausing to correct the translator's English; at one point, when the translator said "passions", he turned to her and she quickly corrected herself, "emotions." There were lectures by global corporate leaders and prominent economists. Amartya Sen had a special "Nobel conversation" with a charming Chinese journalist.

A sign of China's effort to project soft power is its changing attitude to religion. Under attack during the Cultural Revolution, Buddhism is no longer anathema. China now has nearly 250 million Buddhists, constituting 18 per cent of China's population — and 50 per cent of the world's Buddhists. During a coffee break, a Chinese student accosted me to chat about Sadhguru, from whom he derived "spiritual inspiration", quite unthinkable a few years ago. He assumed that, as an Indian, I would know all about Sadhguru. I did not want to disappoint him and so, deciding not to be too fussy about facts, managed a decent conversation about Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's life and teachings.

I spoke in two India-specific sessions, one with the former Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei on "The Future of India and China in the New Stage of the World Economy" and the other, organised by China Finance 40 Forum, at a beautiful, quaint restaurant in Fuchengmen Inner Street. The group's stylish title derives from the fact that it was formed by 40 finance and economics experts, all roughly 40 years old.

It is an open, argumentative forum, the kind one encounters in America and India. I told them what I believe, that the two countries in the world best poised to grow and become global leaders are China and India. China is ahead of India, having invested in health and education early, and having grown rapidly, between 9 and 11 per cent, since 1980. India's growth picked up later, in 1994, and breached the 9 per cent mark only in 2005.

There are risks for both nations. China is trying to transition to what was known to be India's strength — soft power — to connect to



CR Sasikumar

the world through the arts, films, literature and science. In the long-run, soft power is more resilient than hard power. That is why Athens, and not Sparta, a more formidable military state, is known as the cradle of western civilisation. That is why the US nurtured its universities to become global centres of learning and outreach. It is encouraging to see China recognise this: But such a switch will not be easy. With its powerful government, totalitarian control and lack of civic freedom, China will have to negotiate some risky turns to get there.

It is for this reason that, I believe, in the long-run, India is the safer bet. India made the difficult investments — in democracy, secularism, freedom of speech, higher education — early. The recent demonetisation was a big mistake. Without it, India would have been growing at over 8 per cent by now. Luckily, the country made decisions that were good, such as the adoption of the GST and the effort to cut down bureaucratic costs.

But India also has risks — they come from the resurgence of the country's nationalistic right wing, which suffers from a sense of shame about India and an envy of other militaristic countries and chauvinistic cultures. There have been sporadic actions by this group across the country that can destroy the investment India made in soft power, which, once undone, can do immense long-run damage. I hope that the leaders interested in India's welfare will act to stall these regressive elements.

What needs to be appreciated is that, while economic policy is important, and profits and finance undoubtedly matter, a country's long-run strength depends disproportionately on culture, social norms, the level of trust among people, the sense of in-

China is trying to transition to what was known to be India's strength — soft power — to connect to the world through the arts, films, literature and science. Soft power is more resilient than hard power: It is encouraging to see China recognise this. But such a switch will not be easy. With its totalitarian control, China will have to negotiate risky turns to get there. In the long-run, India is the safer bet: India made difficult investments — in democracy, secularism, freedom of speech — early. But India also has risks, from the resurgence of its nationalistic right wing.

clusion and pride people have in their society. (And it is worth adding, pride cannot be built by beating up people who do not have it). For this reason, the first World Development Report that I initiated after joining the World Bank in 2012 was called *Mind, Society, and Behavior*. The Report is a trove of how the mind-set matters — if you repeatedly tell certain groups that they are backward and less intelligent, they begin to perform worse, even when there are no innate differences.

Some of the most compelling studies on this are from India involving caste. How you present the option to get educated can make a big difference in people choosing to get educated. Different cultural backgrounds lead to different choices. And so on.

There are serious examples enough in the Report. So, let me close by recounting a facetious tale from my college days, summing up the role of mind-sets. The Catholic Church announced a contest in which people had to name the most important person who ever trod the earth. The winner would get \$20.

A Muslim man raised his hand and said, "Mohammad". "Good try", was the response of the jury. A Jewish lady offered, "Moses". No. And this went on. Then an Indian, a Hindu, stood up and said, "Jesus." The jury broke into a clap, while there was a gasp of anguish from the Hindus in the audience, who rushed to ask why he felt that way.

Tucking the 20-dollar bill into his pocket, the man answered, "Business is business, and must not be mixed with religion."

The writer, former chief economist of the World Bank, is Professor of Economics and C. Marks Professor at Cornell University

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The recent disappearance of a retired Pakistani military officer in Nepal in murky circumstances suggests that the spy wars between India and Pakistan are spiralling."

—DAWN

Crisis of Hinduism

By siding with a politics which marginalises minorities and seeks to subjugate them, Hindus are losing the essence of their religion



APOORVANAND

WILL THE SHIP of India be able to come out intact from the stormy waters it is caught in? This is a question all those who love India are asking and they are not all necessarily Indians. For them, India has been an experiment to find an idiom of sharing for a diverse people. The existence of numerous religions, sects, languages and customs was welcomed as a resource to build this commonality and never resented as a problem by the makers of the nation. They resisted the temptation of erasing differences to create oneness.

Indian secularism was not a mundane principle of statecraft. It was a bold attempt to negotiate the labyrinth of nationalism by rejecting the straight path of uniformity. The easiest thing for India's founding fathers, all of whom were Hindus for Jinnah, would have been to say that Hindus were to be the benevolent patrons of Muslims and Christians. And Hindus they were, most of them at least — even Nehru called himself a Hindu.

Indian leaders saw the country as a message for the world. This is what Gandhi had in mind when he was invited by Sardar Patel to douse the fire of anger and hatred devouring Delhi, and told a friend that he could not give up on Delhi, for if Delhi goes, then India goes, and then there remains no hope for the world.

The idea was not to integrate the small into the big but to create equal relationships. The scope and sweep of the imagination of India was broad, not just geographically but psychologically too. It was to be an open space. In its beginning, it was inadequate. It had yet to develop the ability to hear the long-repressed voices of the Dalits and understand the Adivasis. There were also quarrels along the way but it started off as an interesting hypothesis.

The biggest achievement of the Indian nation was its promise to the identities, smaller in many ways to the Hindu identity: They are not expected to follow Hinduism or be its vassals. Hinduism, be it a religion or a way of life — was not to be the defining feature of India. It was this solemn promise which convinced millions of Muslims that despite Pakistan — created in their name — they could find peace in India.

Why did this promise convince the Muslims, under suspicion and attack in those days? Because they witnessed the sublime act of the leaders of the nation — followers of Gandhi — defending this promise, body and soul. It was this conviction which made Gandhi reject the proposal by Rajendra Prasad that cow slaughter should be prohibited in India. Gandhi was unambiguous in his resolve not to let such a law be passed as it would mean imposition of a particular way of life and priv-

ileging it over other lifestyles. Gandhi, a *sanatani*, a vegetarian devotee of the cow, warned Hindus against falling in this trap.

Today, when the chief minister of the state he was born in declares his intention to make Gujarat vegetarian, the promise that India was to those who live differently from vegetarian Hindus stands broken. When mutton shops are forcibly closed in Gurgaon under the watch of the police, the constitutional principle of freedom is violated.

We do not have a Gandhi or Nehru or Patel now to chide communal Hindus and make them see their folly. The state itself has turned into a bully. What, then, is to act as the safeguard? It was thought that the institutions created by the constitution's mandate would act as bulwark against any attack on this fundamental idea of India. We see them sadly inadequate to the challenge facing them.

That Hindus take pleasure in the humiliation of Muslims and also relish the deception and duplicity with which all this is done — in the name of hygiene, legality, economy, etc. — reflects poorly on them. India is definitely in crisis, but Hinduism is facing a greater crisis.

Indian Muslims have often been lauded patronisingly for having rejected the call of the Islamic State. They have invested heavily in the idea of secular India and stood by it. Can the same be said about Hindus in 2017? By siding with a politics which marginalises minorities and seeks to subjugate them, they are losing their soul.

Gandhi had warned Hindus in his last days that if destroyed in India or Pakistan, Islam has other lands to realise its spiritual potential but if Hinduism is destroyed in India, it has no hope. By destroying others, it first destroys itself. It can grow, not by competing with others, but with itself. Gandhi was silenced not only because he favoured Pakistan or Muslims but also because he was constantly challenging Hindus. He considered it a weakness and sin for religion to align with the state — this was a lazy path, outwardly strong but hollow of spiritual content.

After Gandhi, this critical tradition in Hinduism stopped. Hinduism is not a source of creativity for literature and the arts in India any more. The references to religion we find in music and dance also demonstrate that there is no new imagination of Hinduism, it is largely nostalgia for an imagined past. We do see modern philosophers using Islamic or Christian resources to address the dilemmas of our times. Hinduism has only poor philosophers giving sermons and churning out popular literature who ultimately build large statues of gods or turn propagandists for political Hindutva. It is exclusionary, inward-looking and fears to engage with others.

The rise of the Hindu state of India is thus also the decline and impoverishment of the promise of Hinduism. The corrosion of the state's institutional structure would affect our worldly life but this unchallenged take-over by Hindutva would turn Hinduism soulless. The task of recovering the Hindu self will not be easy then.

The writer teaches at Delhi University

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

UNFAIR CHARGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Blaming the people' (IE, April 13). Narratives on population dynamics in Assam are too controversial and it is difficult to formulate a population policy that is irrefragable. The editorial excoriates the recently announced draft population policy but shies away from taking into account the social, political and economic repercussions that surround Assam's unabated population growth. How the riverine porous borders affect the lifestyle of indigenous communities need not be reiterated. To accuse the government that it has failed to implement south Indian standards of population control is partly true, but the fact that the demographic momentum poses a serious risk to social stability cannot be ignored. The government does not intend to "blame the people", it intends to build a secure and resilient future for a mosaic-like Assam.

Bibhuti Das, New Delhi

CONGRESS AND RSS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'BJP, not Congress-mukt' (IE, April 13). Christophe Jaffrelot's reference to the Congress as "the only party that dared to ban RSS" is dubious. The Congress's capricious attempt to ban the RSS in 1948 was followed by unconditional revocation. So much so that after enlisting the RSS's support in the 1962 war-effort, Nehru invited the RSS to participate in 1963's Republic Day parade. The ban during Emergency was audacious and the RSS was not the only organisation to be banned since Indira Gandhi muzzled all voices of dissent.

Ajay Tyagi, Guwahati

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. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

NOT SEDITION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The sedition stain' (IE, April 13). It is shockingly funny to learn that the Chandigarh police booked the students protesting against fee rise for "sedition". Did these students indulge in anti-national activities? Is protesting against a fee hike sedition? If the expression of free speech in the world's largest democracy can be called sedition, then that needs to be condemned in the harshest possible tones.

R.K. Kapoor, Chandigarh

The writer is Professor, Department of History, Delhi University



SEEMA ALAVI

The hollowing of ideals

A corruption of Mandal and of secularism defeated Congress, SP, BSP

THE DEAFENING SILENCE of the Congress, SP and BSP after their humiliating defeat in the UP elections finally lifted when Akhilesh Yadav appeared on prime time news, only to ask his successor, Yogi Adityanath, to look after his peacocks at Kalidas Marg. He also urged the new chief minister to ensure that his lions, in the Etawah safari, got their share of meat.

That this request came at a time when the anti-slaughterhouse politics threatened the livelihood and lives of hundreds of Muslims, Dalits and other castes involved in the meat trade exemplifies his priorities. It best illustrates that the corruption of the politics of secularism and Mandal is responsible for his political debacle. Muslims and the larger Mandal constituency feel let down not just by the SP but also the BSP. They feel that, like the Congress, these parties too have made hollow the idea of secularism. Additionally, they have corrupted the vision of the Mandal reforms.

By the late 1980s, successive Congress regimes in the state had successfully reduced secularism to lip-service to the minorities. Indeed, it is to the credit of the Congress that

its persistent empty promises to Muslims in the name of upholding secularism made this concept appear to be "Muslim appeasement". The beleaguered Muslim community, shattered by the long history of Congress-overshadowed riots in Meerut and Moradabad, among others, looked towards new political configurations that offered hope.

Mandal — the very welcome reform by Prime Minister V.P. Singh that saw the empowerment of the Dalit and Backward castes — looked promising to Muslims. It saw the thundering rise of the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party as UP's new political players. These parties attracted the Muslims as well. The SP and BSP offered fresh possibilities as they forged unity across minorities and the large neglected sections of the Dalits and other backward castes. They combined Mandal politics with secularism, albeit in its Congress-style hollow form. But so formidable was this new combo, it survived the vicious communal polarisation following the Babri Masjid's destruction. It created an illusion of security in the minorities.

But this was not to last. Just as the Congress corrupted secularism, the SP and

BSP reduced Mandal to the welfare of the Yadav parivar and the Jatav caste respectively. The SP government's unabashed favours to the Yadav caste raised the eyebrows of even their most ardent supporters: Not only were the lower ranks of the police and constabulary filled with Yadavs, but every important district-level officer was invariably of this caste. Akhilesh Yadav was popularly perceived amongst non-Brahmins as having used state machinery to corner all the benefits of Mandal for Yadavs alone.

The same murmurs did the rounds over Mayawati's overt preference for her Jatav constituency. The wider Mandal constituency made its resentment clear in 2014 by voting for the BJP and ensuring its almost clean sweep in the Parliamentary elections. But both Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati learnt no lessons. In 2017, the BJP tapped this disillusioned Mandal constituency and won almost all the 100-plus seats it distributed to them.

Again, both the SP and BSP continued with aplomb with the concept of secularism long corrupted by the Congress. In true Congress style, "secularism" for them too

remained that unique word that was relevant to Muslims alone. If all these years the Congress had used it to keep the Muslims on its leash, now the Yadav and Jatav power-brokers invoked it at will to instill the fear of the BJP in them. Its most classic use was by Mayawati when she distributed more than 100 assembly tickets to Muslims, setting the stage for an unprecedented polarisation and Hindu consolidation. Indeed, Muslims became the unsuspecting victims — their everyday lives at variance with the sops supposedly offered to them. As the SP and BSP competed to be champions of secularism, they polarised elections with complete apathy to the long-term social and political implications of this shortcut to political power. The shrill polarising election campaign of the BJP witnessed in Benares was only the cherry on the cake.

It was not the allegedly faulty EVMs but the corruption of Mandal and secularism that became the undoing of the Congress, the SP and BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

The writer is Professor, Department of History, Delhi University