

**The Indian EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## TREAD CAREFULLY

Escalation in India-Pak tensions comes at a fraught moment — in the Valley, on the LoC and beyond

**T**HE BEHEADING OF Paramjit Singh of the Indian Army and Prem Sagar of the Border Security Force by the Pakistani Border Action Team, is a barbaric act. The mutilation of bodies on the battlefield has been universally recognised as a war crime since the middle of the last century, and is prohibited under the 1949 Geneva Conventions. It is punishable under international law. The revulsion provoked by such cruelty stems from the respect professional soldiers have for each other, even if they are on opposing sides, their understanding of military necessity, and the rules of engagement. The Pakistan Army has denied that its soldiers have committed the atrocity, but there is little scope at the LoC for a whodunnit. Nor is it the first time an Indian soldier has been beheaded at the LoC. Defence Minister Arun Jaitley has said India will give an “appropriate response”, but there is no denying that the incident comes at an extremely fraught moment for India.

The unrest in Kashmir, which erupted last July, has shown every sign of worsening. The NDA government’s message, that there will be no softening in the Centre’s approach until the terrorism and violence stop, has not led to a decrease in the number of incidents. New Delhi’s diplomacy with Pakistan is also at a dead end, a victim of red lines drawn by the government here, and in Pakistan, by the Pakistan Army around the Nawaz Sharif government. Indeed, the Sharif government is probably at its weakest in this moment, with the Pakistan Supreme Court order for an investigation into the Prime Minister’s family fortunes. For Sharif, who is on the defensive, bettering India-Pakistan ties is not the top priority.

As it deliberates on how to respond to the treatment meted out to the Indian security personnel by the Pakistan Army, there is a clamour that the government match its post-Uri response. But if India’s publicly declared “surgical strike” in PoK soon after the September 2016 attack was meant to tell the country that it could “teach Pakistan a lesson” as compared to the previous UPA government, the limitations of such a tactic have become evident over the months. The surgical strike did not secure the LoC. In 2016, the Army lost 60 soldiers until December 15 — twice the number in 2014 and 2015 — to terrorist attacks, Pakistan BAT operations, ceasefire violations and anti-terror operations in Kashmir, many of them after September. The casualties have continued in 2017. At the same time, public expectations of a tough reaction have gone up. India’s response must acknowledge that there are competing interests and that the stakes are high.

## TROUBLE IN COURT

Current face-off between the executive and the judiciary in Nepal will further erode the credibility of both institutions

**T**HE MOVE TO impeach Sushila Karki, the chief justice of Nepal’s Supreme Court, has triggered a new political crisis in Kathmandu. Deputy prime minister and Nepali Congress leader Bimalendra Nidhi resigned from the government on Sunday after the impeachment motion signed by 249 members of the CPN (Maoist-Centre) and Nepali Congress, was moved. On Monday, the third largest constituent in the ruling coalition, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), withdrew its ministers. Though the RPP has not withdrawn support to the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government, the events have weakened the coalition government. Its resolve will be tested when the local bodies elections are held in mid-May.

At the root of the crisis is the politicisation of the judiciary, to which both the political parties and the judges have contributed. The impeachment motion accuses Karki, who has only a few months to retire, of interfering with the executive and issuing “prejudicial” verdicts. However, the issue did not begin with Karki, who took office as Nepal’s first woman CJ in August last year, and is unlikely to end with her exit. The independence of the judiciary was compromised soon after the 2006 Constitution came into being and political parties started to influence appointments to the bench. The wise principle that there must be separation of powers of the executive and the judiciary was ignored by both institutions. In 2012, the then-CJ, Khil Raj Regmi, became prime minister of a government that included ministers from political parties. In turn, the judiciary turned a blind eye to political activists, including legislators, seeking nomination as judges. CJ Karki herself was not averse to appointing persons with political affiliations despite opposition from the bar. Earlier this year, the stand-off between the bar and the executive and judiciary had reached a flashpoint when over 300 lawyers, including senior office-bearers of the Nepal Bar Association, resigned to protest the appointment of 80 high court judges by the Judicial Council headed by CJ Karki. These appointees allegedly were nominees of the ruling parties, namely the CPN (Maoist-C) and the Nepali Congress.

The current face-off between the executive and the CJ will further erode the credibility of both institutions. Nepal’s transition from a monarchy to a republic has been chaotic. The past decade has seen various stakeholders working at cross purposes in a bid to grab power at all costs, which has exposed the country’s ethnic and regional fault-lines. The failures of the political mainstream in nation-building could test the people’s faith in democracy itself.

## LITTLE BIG CLUB

The triumph of Aizawl FC underlines the need to celebrate and to nurture the small player on the football field

**A**IZAWL FC, FROM India’s proud outpost of Mizoram, made history, winning India’s traditional football competition — the I League on Sunday. A new club run on a thrifty budget, made up of little known names, staving off the challenge of one of the oldest institutions, Mohun Bagan, and racing to the top of the title quest, was the most refreshing tale of this season. But a dread lurks the morning after the Aizawl faithful toasted a famous victory. The winds of change blowing over Indian football bring to life the saying: One swallow does not a summer make. Aizawl FC, not the richest of entities, stand to be rendered redundant should the footballing authorities go ahead and merge the emotionally uplifting but commercially stagnant I League with the glitzy contrivance of ISL, a tournament with deep pockets and celebrity owners.

Not that the ISL didn’t tap India’s football-rich field on its easternmost corner. But in rounding up the whole region’s footballers and boxing them as North East United — an ISL franchise owned by Bollywood star John Abraham — the ISL seemed to care very little about the tiny, diverse identities that make up the Northeast. It was this difference — not something to be waved away — that added a tinge of excitement to the final Hills derby on Sunday between Lajong Shillong and Aizawl.

Like Bengaluru FC last year — a club that has done everything right in organically developing a football culture in the southern capital — Aizawl too is a success story that needs to be celebrated, before it gets gobbled up by the ISL behemoth. In being truly local, it has ticked the biggest pre-requisite for being global: The football is swell, when fans sing in unison.

# Quota is the wrong answer



Marathas in Maharashtra experience a sense of relative deprivation. Reservation is not the solution

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND KALAIYARAN A.

THE UNION CABINET has decided to replace the existing National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) with a National Commission for the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC). This transformation has been endorsed by the Lok Sabha on April 10, but the Rajya Sabha has referred the bill to a select committee whose report will be tabled in the Upper House during the Monsoon Session.

The new legislation will transfer the power of amending the list of the OBCs from government to Parliament and will also shift the responsibility of determining the list of their OBCs from the states to this new body. Some observers, including Satish Deshpande in a recent oped (‘Misreading caste’, IE, April 12), did not rule out an attempt by the government to extend reservations to not only dominant castes like Jats, Marathas or Patidars, but also “economically backward” upper castes.

While we have reviewed the case of the Patels and Jats in previous opeds, the situation of the Marathas deserves more attention, because it is more complex. First, the Marathas have not only asked for quotas, but also for the revision (abolition?) of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Second, they have mobilised in a very peculiar manner. Their agitation started exactly one year ago, in April 2016, after a Maratha girl was allegedly raped by a Dalit. In contrast to the Jats, the Marathas opted for a non-violent — and even silent — modus operandi. Rallies were organised at the district level in August-October 2016, mobilising more than 1.2 million people. Third, Marathas form a huge caste cluster, representing more than 30 per cent of the population of Maharashtra, a record number in India.

The reasons why Marathas are asking for quotas are very similar to those of the Jats and the Patels: While their elite group is doing fine economically, a large fraction is lagging behind. Certainly, the Marathas have dominated Maharashtra’s politics for decades (with a record number of MLAs, 36 to 40 per cent of the total since 1967) and are second only to the Brahmins in terms of per capita income, Rs 36,548 against Rs. 47,427 — according to the 2011-12 round of the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS) by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in collaboration with the University of Maryland. The other forward

castes get only Rs 34,546 and the OBCs, Rs 28,580.

But the Marathas are highly differentiated in socio-economic terms. The highest quintile (20 per cent of the caste group) gets 48 per cent of the total income of the Marathas with a mean per capita income of Rs 86,750. The lowest quintile of the Marathas earns ten times less (Rs 7,198) and the quintile just above, only Rs 16,285. Which means that the 40 per cent poorest get less than 13 per cent of the total income of the caste — and are lagging behind the Scheduled Caste elite.

In fact, the mean incomes of the highest Dalit quintile, Rs 63,030 and that of the second highest, Rs 28,897, are above those of the three lowest quintiles of the Marathas.

This reflects the rural character of the Marathas in the context of an increasingly pronounced rural/urban divide. Cultivation is the main source of income for 43 per cent of the Marathas — against only 32 per cent for the OBCs and 10 per cent of the SCs — who find alternative sources of income thanks to reservations: Respectively 22.5 per cent of the OBCs and 28 per cent of the SCs belong to the salariat, against 31 per cent of the Marathas.

Not only do Marathas resent the rise of the OBCs and the Dalits because of reservations, but they cannot compete with the upper castes because of their low level of education: Only 7.6 per cent of them are graduates (not more than in the case of the OBCs), against 24 per cent of Brahmins. As a result, Marathas have not benefited as much as upper castes from the rise of the services, including in the IT sector, in post-1991 liberalised India. And only the richest among them could profit by the policy of Sharad Pawar, when he was chief minister in the late 1980s-early 1990s, which consisted of promoting export-oriented agriculturists.

To sum up: Poor Marathas have more and more lagged behind the rich peasants as well as the urban upper caste professionals and have been surpassed by some OBCs as well as Dalits who got quotas.

But is granting reservations to the Marathas a good solution? The condition of the Kunbis, 10 per cent of the state population, suggests otherwise. Traditionally, Kunbis have also been cultivators (with greater numbers in Vidarbha and Konkan), but with a more modest status than the Marathas, especially after Shivaji claimed the title of Kshatriya for his caste. However, during the

non-Brahmin movement, which started with Jyotirao Phule in the 1870s, and peaked in the 1920s, the distinction between the Kunbis and the Marathas became unimportant. But the Kunbis have suffered from such socio-economic disadvantages that they’ve been included in the list of OBCs by the Mandal Commission.

About 25 years later, the impact of reservation is hardly perceptible. In fact, the Kunbis are worse off than every caste group, including the SCs. Their mean income, Rs 23,541, is below that of the other OBCs and Dalits. This is largely due to the fact that they rely on cultivation more than any other group. It is the main source of income for 63 per cent of them. Only 3.6 per cent of Kunbis are graduates and less than 10 per cent of them belong to the salariat.

Why have reservations made such little difference? Because other caste groups have cornered the quotas. Malis are a case in point. With 8 per cent of them being graduates, Malis are ahead of the Marathas (7.6 per cent) and of course, the Kunbis (3.6 per cent). As a result, they joined the salariat in larger numbers: This is the main source of income for 16 per cent of them (against 10 per cent for the Kunbis) and their annual per capita mean income (Rs 30,823) is above the state average (Rs 29,823).

The case of Maharashtra, therefore, shows that the inclusion of Marathas in the OBC list may not be a solution, simply because it will make upward social mobility even more difficult for those who are already at the receiving end of socio-economic transformations, the Kunbis. It also shows that the creamy layer mechanism has not been effective enough since the Malis have continued to corner reservations at the expense of the Kunbis.

Whether the new Socially and Educationally Backward Classes will be in a position to correct these defects remains to be seen. In any case, to look at reservations as an employment scheme is self-defeating in a state where government jobs represent only 3.7 per cent of the employed workers in 2012, according to the Labour Bureau.

*Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, professor of Indian politics and sociology at King’s India Institute, London. Kalaiyaran is faculty at the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi*

## THE LOP EXCUSE

In the Lokpal delay, absence of a leader of opposition is a red herring



P.D.T ACHARY

THE SUPREME COURT has asked the Union government to appoint the Lokpal without the Leader of Opposition being a part of the selection panel. There is no Leader of Opposition recognised as such by the Speaker in the present Lok Sabha. This is often cited as the reason for not appointing the Lokpal. It is surprising that the SC did not ask the government why the position is vacant in the first place.

There is a lot of disinformation surrounding the Leader of Opposition. It is a statutory office provided for in the Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in the Parliament Act, 1977. Section 2 of this act states: “Leader of the Opposition”, in relation to either House of Parliament, means that [a] member of the Council of States or the House of the People... who is, for the time being, the Leader in that House of the party in opposition to the Government having the greatest numerical strength and recognised as such by the Chairman of the Council of States or the Speaker of the House of the People...”

Two things are made clear by the act: One, the leader of the party in opposition to the government which has the greatest number becomes the Leader of Opposition. Two, the Speaker needs to recognise him/her as the Leader of Opposition. The law is clear that the

Speaker is required to recognise the leader of the numerically largest party in opposition as the leader of opposition. The option of not recognising him/her is just not available.

Since it is a statutory position, why is there no Leader of Opposition when the numerically largest party has 44 members? Under the law, even if the party in opposition has a single member, he/she is entitled to be recognised. In the Delhi assembly where there is a similar law in force, the BJP — which had only three members in a House of 70 (now four) — proposed one of its members as the Leader of Opposition. The Speaker recognised him as such. By doing so, the Speaker was not obliging the BJP, he was performing a duty imposed by the statute.

A mysterious rule is often quoted by some self-styled experts, which requires a party to have at least 10 per cent of the members of the House for the Speaker to recognise someone as the Leader of Opposition. There is no such rule. Yes, there is direction 121 issued by the Speaker for recognising a party or group for the purpose of providing certain facilities in the House. Under this direction, issued by Speaker G.V. Mavalankar, to be recognised as a legislature party, a party should have at least one-tenth of the strength of the House. This direction relates to the

recognition of a party, not the Leader of Opposition. It has become redundant after the enactment of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution under which even a one-member party is recognised as a legislature party. According to *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* by M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakhder, “From 11th Lok Sabha onwards while legislature parties continue to enjoy certain functional facilities on the basis of their numerical strength... the practice of according recognition by the Speaker in terms of directions 120 and 121 was done away with.”

So, when the SC asked the government to select the Lokpal, even in the absence of the Leader of Opposition, it should also have asked why the statutory provision was ignored. The statute implies that there shall always be a Leader of Opposition, so long as there is an opposition in the House. Recognising the Leader of Opposition is not a proceeding of the House within the meaning of Article 122 of the Constitution, which keeps the judiciary out of House matters. It is a statutory duty of the Speaker and the court can thus ask why action hasn’t been taken, resulting in the delay in appointing a Lokpal.

*The writer is former secretary general, Lok Sabha*

## MAY 3, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

### ARTICLE 144-A

A SEVEN-JUDGE CONSTITUTION bench of the Supreme Court hoped that Article 144-A introduced by the Constitution 42nd Amendment Act would engage the “prompt attention” of Parliament, so that it may be amended “by general consensus” as to leave it to the court the duty of deciding how large a bench should decide a particular case. The highest court found Article 144-A (enacted by the previous government through the 42nd amendment to the Constitution) to be a source of inconvenience.

### NOTICE TO INDIRA

THE ALLAHABAD HIGH Court issued a no-

tice to former prime minister Indira Gandhi to show cause as to why she should not be punished for alleged contempt of the High Court by speaking words which scandalised and lowered the authority of the court.

### CHINA REBUFFED

THE DALI LAMA has virtually turned down the Chinese “offer” that he could return to Tibet if he “sincerely returned to the embrace of the motherland and stood on the side of the people”. A statement released by the Dali Lama’s bureau responded by reiterating the old charges against the Peking authorities and demanding an end to the “unnecessary suffering and misunderstanding between

the Chinese and the Tibetan people”. It also spoke about the “suppression and total violation of fundamental rights” in Tibet.

### PROBE AGAINST SANJAY

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL of Civil Aviation ordered an inquiry into the incident in which Sanjay Gandhi piloted a chartered Indian Airlines flight between Hyderabad and Tirupati on December 25 last year. Gandhi is reported to have been at the controls during take-off from Hyderabad and landing at Tirupati. The inquiry will determine reasons for the “failure on the part of Indian Airlines, its pilots and the aerodrome personnel to report the matter to the DC”.



# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India has fought long and hard against any internationalisation of the [Kashmir] issue, but is increasingly on the wrong side of history." —THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE

## When superpower plays victim

BCCI threat to boycott ICC over revenue-sharing is based on alternative facts



SANDEEP DWIVEDI

THE ICC HAS conspired to deny the BCCI a lion's share of the global revenue it rightly deserves and, with this sly manipulation, undermined India's global clout, crippled it financially and forced the richest board to isolate itself from world cricket.

Even if this lament gets shouted out from the rooftops in seething anger, with the intention of awakening the inner Sunny Deol of a cricket fan, it will remain an alternative fact.

That's because the figures that get tossed around during the ICC vs BCCI revenue-sharing debates need to be taken with a pinch of salt. When arguments are laced with the angst of a fan and the anger of ultra-nationalists, numbers often get overlooked and thus go unchecked. Remember these are times when truth and reality aren't the twins they once were. Truth, of late, looks and sounds different, it is whatever the powerful — in this case, a few in the BCCI — choose to believe. Reality, meanwhile, remains hidden, sometimes for so long that it becomes inconsequential.

So, before it's too late, here's fact-checking the victim's statement after the ICC's alleged daylight robbery. The BCCI wanted \$570 million from the ICC, but all it got was \$293 million. That's a potential loss of \$277 million — roughly, Rs 1,800 crore.

Now, listen to the lesser-heard other side. Those at the ICC say that the \$570 million the BCCI keeps quoting is its gross share. The net share from the "rich get richer" Big 3 model, after the deduction of the ICC's administrative and other costs, is close to \$445 million. Besides, the ICC, after the BCCI's sulk, offered them an additional \$100 million, swelling the Indian board's kitty to \$393 million. So, the new figures, much closer to each other, happen to be \$455 million and \$393 million. The potential loss now is \$62 million or Rs 412 crore.

The loss suddenly shrinks to one-fourth — Rs 1,800 crore to Rs 412 crore — of what the alarmists have been shouting about.

There's more that's lost in this disturbing "give me more" breast-beating. The revenue-sharing figures aren't annual projections but money that the ICC would route to India over the next eight years. So, effectively, the \$61 million (Rs 412 crore) loss over eight years dips to a Rs 51.5 crore loss every year. Even if we play along and do the math on the gross income — the potential annual loss comes to Rs 148 crore. Will this drop in revenue leave the BCCI bankrupt and force Indian cricketers to take a pay cut and the BCCI to start selling its silverware?

More of the fine print needs to be magnified.

The income from the ICC isn't the only spark that makes the BCCI's balance sheet glitter. Last year, they made a tidy Rs 1,800 crore from a bilateral series at home and the Indian Premier League. This is a robust body

that has roughly Rs 5,000 crore in fixed deposits.

So, what do figures like Rs 51.6 crore or even, Rs 148 crore — the two projected loss estimates from the new ICC revenue sharing model — mean for the cash-rich BCCI? A few more numbers: BCCI makes around Rs 60-65 crore from every home international, be it Tests, ODIs or T20s. A few T20 evening outings with friendly neighbours will be enough to tide over the perceived shortfall.

In this context, the ICC's new revenue model shouldn't have triggered an apocalyptic reaction. And that's why the threat to cut ties with the ICC seems like an over-reaction. It's also mildly juvenile since the new model was put to vote at the ICC where the BCCI was the lone voice of dissent. When the game's superpower has a separatist's mindset, the sport is sure to suffer.

All the BCCI needs to understand is the importance of diversity and the need to be inclusive. They should have known that the Border-Gavaskar Trophy gets eyeballs because India is pitted against the ultra-competitive and immensely skillful cricketers from Australia.

Replay any IPL auction to understand the value of foreign players. Cricket's biggest money-spinner wouldn't be the brand it is without McCullum, Warne, Gayle or Stokes. If isolated from the world, IPL will be just another Syed Mushtaq T20 Trophy, with cheer leaders. India needs to look at Ireland and Afghanistan like FIFA views India. A long-term junior programme, academies, turfs and the under-17 World Cup have come to India because FIFA, for all its ills, believes in sharing. It's understandable that it is the ICC's job to take care of world cricket, but the BCCI can help by being less difficult and more accommodative.

If ever cricket needed a sensitive father figure, it is now. West Indies and Zimbabwe are sinking, Pakistan is barely keeping afloat, while South Africa is fighting a mass exodus of players to England. By providing a helping hand to these nations in need, India can save cricket.

Maybe the BCCI wants to flex its muscle and doesn't feel obliged to groom or help the game grow. That's the American way of looking at sports. They have thrived in their isolation and have the audacity to call their inter-city sporting contests a World Series. The NBA and NFL are the most successful basketball and football leagues and the competition isn't between nations. It is a zoo out there as Bulls, Sharks, Raptors, Bucks, Hawks, Eagles play with unquestionable intensity in front of fiercely loyal fans.

Maybe, by Americanising the very English sport, the BCCI plans to avenge the Lords who had an undemocratic hold on cricket for ages. There might be a day when mixed teams representing cities might not just play T20 games but Tests too. The India Blue wouldn't be in a merchandise shop but in the closet of memorabilia collectors. If that's the case, the BCCI needs to be unapologetic about its intentions. It can be an unabashed cricket corporate. Greed is great, Gordon Gekko said, but please ask that guy on the roof to stop waving the tricolour. He isn't the voice of the stadium terraces.

sandeep.dwivedi@expressindia.com



CR Sasikumar

# Twelve reasons why

The current outrage over the proposal to tax agricultural income misses the point — often deliberately



BIBEK DEBROY

wonders, it taxed agricultural income till 1886. What changed in 1886, or between 1860 and 1886? The answer had more to do with general resentment against colonial rule, and less to do with agricultural income taxation directly. Sixth, in 1932, there was the Federal Finance Committee of the Round Table Conference and its report. If we have the present constitutional structure, that's because of this report and the Government of India Act (1935).

Seventh, we have had Agricultural Income Tax Acts in Bihar (1938), Assam (1939), Bengal (1944), Orissa (1948), Uttar Pradesh (1948), Hyderabad (1950), Travancore and Cochin (1951) and Madras and Old Mysore State (1955). Eighth, this isn't entirely history — we still have the Assam Agricultural Income Tax Act (1939), the Bihar Agricultural Income Tax (1939), the Kerala Agricultural Income Tax Act (1991), the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Income Tax Act (1955), the Orissa Agricultural Income Tax Act (1947), the Maharashtra Agricultural Income Tax (1962) and the Bengal Agricultural Income Tax Act (1944), or so I think.

Unlike the Karnataka Agricultural Income Tax Act (1957), repealed in 2016, I am not aware of these statutes having been repealed. Therefore, it isn't true that states don't tax agricultural income, though it's true that they tax some kinds of agricultural income, such as plantations.

Ninth, it isn't as if this issue was discovered yesterday. The issue of taxing agricultural income (and wealth) goes back to the 1960s. There must be a unified system of taxation across states. Agricultural income taxation must be integrated with non-agricultural income taxation. Land revenue tax hasn't quite worked and must be replaced.

There is a considerable amount of literature from the 1960s and 1970s, based on such principles. To those who wonder about how an agricultural income tax will be implemented, may I suggest reading the 1972 Raj Committee Report on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income. You don't have to agree with the committee's agricultural holding tax idea, but it isn't as if no one has thought about implementation. May I also suggest the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) docu-

ment and the report of the Fifth Finance Commission (1969) as well? Indeed, if one looks for strong arguments in favour of agricultural income taxation, one will find them in the report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54).

Tenth, there can be problems with generalisations. I guess, in logic, this would be called a fallacy of composition: Epimenides is poor; Epimenides is Cretan. Therefore, all Cretans are poor. Now, read "farmer" instead of Epimenides.

Not realising there are thresholds, irrespective of whether in agriculture or non-agriculture, is a deliberate attempt at obfuscation. Eleventh, in 2002, there was the report of the Vijay Kelkar Task Force on direct taxes. This made the point that not taxing agricultural income violates horizontal and vertical equity and it "encourages laundering of non-agricultural income as agricultural income, that is, it has become a conduit for tax evasion. Both the arguments are empirically verifiable."

This empirical validation was done on the basis of tax returns in Mumbai. This report proposed, "A tax rental arrangement should be designed whereby states should pass a resolution under Article 252 of the Constitution authorising the Central government to impose income tax on agricultural income. The taxes collected by the Centre would however be assigned to the states. Most agricultural farmers would continue to remain out of the tax net." At that time, estimates were that 95 per cent of farmers would be below the threshold.

And twelfth: Consider some figures from an RTI application filed by Vijay Sharma last year. In 2012, 8,12,426 individual tax payers disclosed agricultural income. The average income per assessee was Rs 83 crore. Do the multiplication and the mind boggles. In 2015-16, 307 individuals reported an agricultural income of more than one crore rupees a year. In 2014-15, a company made profits of Rs 215 crores; but, claiming agricultural income exemption, it paid no tax.

There can be problems with generalisations; in logic, this would be a fallacy of composition: Epimenides is poor; Epimenides is Cretan. Therefore, all Cretans are poor. Now, read 'farmer' instead of Epimenides.

The writer is member, Niti Aayog. Views are personal

Consider some figures from an RTI application filed last year: In 2012, 8,12,426 individual tax payers disclosed agricultural income. The average income per assessee was Rs 83 crore. Do the multiplication and the mind boggles. In 2015-16, 307 individuals reported an agricultural income of more than one crore rupees a year. In 2014-15, a company made profits of Rs 215 crores; but, claiming agricultural income exemption, it paid no tax. There can be problems with generalisations; in logic, this would be a fallacy of composition: Epimenides is poor; Epimenides is Cretan. Therefore, all Cretans are poor. Now, read 'farmer' instead of Epimenides.

action against them is immediately retorted to by the allegations of human rights violations". The editorial claims that "no one is there to talk about the human rights of tribals who do not want to side with Red Terror", as "even the police machinery" is "under the pressure of so-called human rights activists and organisations".

These activists are "funded heavily by international networks", the editorial alleges, urging the "government and people who are concerned with national integration" to come together to "defeat these draconian rights and wrongs in Bastar".

### FAKE FARMERS

TAKING NOTE OF the poor condition of farmers in the country, an article in *Panchjanya* comments on a recent demonstration of farmers from Tamil Nadu in Delhi. It questions their methods of demonstration when they "offered their blood" to the "effigy of Modi" and wore a garland of human skulls. "From where did they get those skulls? A body is cremated in the Hindu tradition and ashes are immersed in rivers," it says, asking

also, "from where did they get white rats to keep in the mouth as such rats are not seen normally". "Can any farmer issue a warning of consuming his urine and excreta?" it asks, wondering who "nourished such thoughts?"

This movement, the article argues, was not led by the "Indian farmer", but was "motivated by politics". This movement was the result "of a major conspiracy against the government". It was "exposed on social media" as "evidence" was presented about the "suspicious sources of their funding", the article claimed. People also questioned the Tamilian leader of this movement as "no Tamilian farmer can eat rat and snake". "These fake farmers of Tamil Nadu held their movement in Delhi for 41 days," it says, asking if "the media can tell about their sponsors?"

### MORE SURVEILLANCE

THE COVER STORY in *Organiser*, 'Urban Voices of Maoists', underlines the "need to identify actors who have illicit connections" with the insurgents. "We have been told" that "a huge militia which aspires to overthrow the Indian state with armed rebellion is 'Gandhi, but with Guns'". It slams author

Arundhati Roy, who "perverted... the whole narrative of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)... to represent the Maoist guerrillas as Robin Hoods of Indian forests".

"The last surviving hero of the Naxalbari uprising, Kanu Sanyal, was disillusioned with the course of the movement," it says, underlining that he "committed suicide" "by hanging himself at his residence". Claiming that the Maoist movement has taken a criminal turn, the report argues that "an imported ideology from China" "cannot deliver justice to anyone". It identifies "the urban segment that persistently legitimises, sympathises with, and patronises Maoist violence" as a "huge threat" to the country. "These ideologues can be found everywhere in civil society, right from the media, university campuses, lawyers, human right activists, NGOs, etc."

Maoist ideology is being groomed by respectable members of civil society in the urban sphere, the article thus argues, emphasising that the Indian state must now ensure proper "surveillance in the urban sphere as well".

Compiled by Ashutosh Bhardwaj

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### LISTEN TO ERDOGAN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Look who's talking' (IE, May 2). The concern of Turkish President Erdogan about the Kashmir issue is genuine. Bilateral talks between the two nuclear nations have not yielded solutions. Instead, there has only been an escalation in enmity. India should shun its "bilateral" rhetoric and let the world help solve this issue.

R.K. Kapoor, Chandigarh

### DOUBLE STANDARDS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Romancing the Maoists' (IE, May 1). It is baffling that so-called human rights activists are silent after the barbaric attack on our CRPF personnel. Their silence exposes their double standards. I agree that a two-pronged strategy is really the need of the hour. Not only should development schemes reach the grassroot levels, but the security forces should also be equipped with modern equipment to take on any violent attack.

Bal Govind, Noida

### TRUMP VS YOGI

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, '100 alternative days' (IE, April 29). Donald Trump's 100 days in office should be compared with Yogi Adityanath's 30 days as UP CM. Trump has failed miserably in all his initiatives and his tenure could even be suicidal for world peace. Adityanath, in contrast, has provided relief to farmers and also increased UP's general sense of security.

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

### ACT ON LOKPAL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Opposition needed' (IE, April 29). The selection of a Lokpal without Opposition representation on the panel is improper and undesirable. However, the delay in filling up the office reflects poorly on PM Modi's resolve of curbing corruption in the highest places. The government should expedite the entire process of selection now.

M.C. Joshi, Lucknow

## VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

### BATTLING THE MAOISTS

COMMENTING ON THE Maoist issue in the aftermath of the "horrendous killing of 25 CRPF soldiers in Sukma", the editorial in *Organiser* notes that "the real challenge is how to fight the ideological and perception war that is going on in Delhi media and academic campuses", where the "slogans of 'Kashmir Mange Azadi' are proudly coupled with 'Bastar Mange Azadi'". The Maoists "do not want development, peace and prosperity for the common people", it says, noting that "almost all the attacks on the security forces took place around the areas where development work is going on in full speed".

"The brutalities of Maoists are unbelievable, still they take the limelight of being liberationists," it notes, underlining that "any