



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

It's deeply satisfying to see Yates smack down that oleaginous carbuncle of a moral homunculus. JOSH MARSHALL, American journalist and blogger, 199,000 followers. Sally Q Yates, the acting attorney general fired by President Donald Trump, told a Senate subcommittee that she had informed the White House about National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's Russian contacts long before he was ultimately fired.

Joint operations vs integrated command: Understanding a new way to fight wars

A committee appointed by the Defence Ministry has recommended creating 3 integrated theatre commands of the Indian armed forces — northern, western and southern — instead of the 17 in place currently. SUSHANT SINGH explains how this may work.



MOON & KIM, TRUMP & XI

In S Korean election, key questions of geopolitics

ON TUESDAY evening, South Koreans appeared to have chosen 64-year-old human rights lawyer Moon Jae-in to succeed the jailed former President Park Geun-hye, who was forced from office in March following a corruption scandal. Exit polls showed Moon on course for a landslide, and the conservative Hong Joon-pyo and centrist Ahn Cheol-soo had both 'accepted' the outcome of the vote. An announcement by the National Election Commission was expected later in the night.

The election saw a turnout of 77.2%, the highest in 2 decades for a presidential poll, and capped a remarkable national drama of scandal, mass protests and impeachment of a President. Moon's election will have repercussions outside South Korea too, potentially affecting geopolitics in one of the world's most dangerous regions, where both the US and China have enormous stakes. Here's how.

North Korea Moon's parents were among the tens of thousands evacuated from the North Korean port of Hungnam by US Navy vessels in 1950. The refugees from communist rule were resettled in a camp on an island off South Korea, where Moon was born in January 1953 — the son of a handyman, and a peddler of eggs, coal briquettes and black-market American relief goods. Moon favours dialogue with North Korea, argues that the US line of sanctions and 'maximum pressure' has failed, and engagement needs another chance.

US and China Moon's line scrambles the geopolitics of the standoff over North Korea's nuclear arsenal. The US suddenly faces the prospect of a key ally breaking ranks and adopting a more conciliatory approach that is favoured by China. Experts see the possibility of serious policy differences arising between the US and South Korean Presidents, which could lead to increased popular dissatisfaction with the US in South Korea. China, on the other hand, is likely to welcome Moon's election, which may make it easier for it to deflect pressure from the US to get tough on North Korea, and strengthen its argument that Washington must address the North's concerns about security.

Moon has called for a review of the Pentagon's deployment of an antimissile defence system in South Korea known as Terminal High Altitude Area Defence, or Thaad, which went into operation last week. Moon has complained bitterly about it, but he cannot attempt to undo it without running the risk of straining the alliance with Washington while leaving the impression of bowing to pressure from China, which has denounced the step by the US. South Korea-US ties run deep; Seoul is a staunch American ally, and the countries have had a mutual defence treaty since 1953, which forms the bedrock of their alliance. Some 28,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea. NYT

What is an integrated theatre command?

An integrated theatre command envisages a unified command of the three Services, under a single commander, for geographical theatres that are of security concern. The commander of such a force will be able to bring to bear all resources at his disposal — from the IAF, the Army and the Navy — with seamless efficacy. The integrated theatre commander will not be answerable to individual Services, and will be free to train, equip and exercise his command to make it a cohesive fighting force capable of achieving designated goals. The logistical resources required to support his operations will also be placed at the disposal of the theatre commander so that he does not have to look for anything when operations are ongoing.

SIMPLY PUT

This is in contrast to the model of service-specific commands which India currently has, wherein the Army, Air Force and Navy all have their own commands all over the country. In case of war, each Service Chief is expected to control the operations of his Service through individual commands, while they operate jointly.

But how is 'jointness' among services different from integrated commands?

Jointness means that while the 3 Services progress and develop in their respective spheres, maintaining their independent identity, they function together — and so coordinate their operations in war as to achieve the best results. Integrated commands, on the other hand, seek to merge individual Service identities to achieve a composite and cohesive whole. It implies enmeshing the three Services together at different levels and placing them under one commander for ex-

ecution of operational plans.

Okay, but why are we talking about integrated theatre commands now?

An expert committee appointed by the Defence Ministry to recommend steps to enhance the combat potential of the armed forces and to re-balance defence expenditure, submitted its report in January. The committee, which was headed by Lt General DB Shekatkar (retd) has recommended the creation of 3 integrated theatre commands — northern for the China border, western for the Pakistan border and southern for the maritime role. The Ministry has sent this proposal to the HQ, Integrated Defence Staff for the views of the 3 Services, to be given by the end of this month.

How many commands does India have currently?

The Indian armed forces currently have 17 commands. There are 7 commands each of the Army [Northern, Eastern, Southern, Western, Central, Southwestern and Army Training Command (ARTRAC)] and the Air Force [Western, Eastern, Southern, Southwestern, Central, Training and Maintenance]; the Navy has 3 commands [Western, Eastern and Southern]. Each command is headed by a 4-star rank military officer. Interestingly, none of these 17 commands is co-located at the same station, nor are their areas of operational responsibility contiguous. In addition, there are 2 tri-service commands [Strategic Forces Command (SFC)] and Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), which is headed by rotation by officers from the 3 Services.

How are these 17 commands supposed to



(From left) General Bipin Rawat, Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoo, and Admiral Sunil Lanba. Express Archive

coordinate their actions in time of war?

Coordination of operations is expected to be carried out at the level of Service Headquarters through the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), which is headed by the seniormost Service Chief who is designated as Chairman, COSC. He is expected to simultaneously perform both the roles of Chief of his Service as well as the Chairman, COSC. The COSC generally functions on the principle of consensus, and this makes decision-making on jointness very difficult.

Does India have an integrated theatre command anywhere in its area?

Only one, which is the ANC. It was formed in 2001, following the Group of Ministers' report on national security, after the Kargil War. It is a very small command, with limited resources, and there has been a demand to revert the control of command permanently to the Navy.

The other tri-service command, the SFC, looks after the delivery and operational control of the country's nuclear assets. It was created in 2003, but because it has no specific geographic responsibility and a designated role, it is not an integrated theatre command but an integrated functional command. There has been a demand for other integrated functional commands, such as the cyber, aerospace and Special Operations commands, but the government is yet to approve any.

Why is there a difference of opinion among the 3 wings of the Armed Forces on having integrated commands?

The Army believes, in the words of the former Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor (retd), that the armed forces need to move away from a 'service specific approach to operations towards a system which avoids duplication, ensures optimum utilisation of available resources, brings in greater jointness,

leads to timely and mature decisions to developing situations and ensures flawless execution of orders to achieve success in battle".

The IAF feels that it doesn't have enough resources — fighter squadrons, mid-air refuellers and AWACS — to allocate them dedicatedly to different theatre commanders. It believes that India is not geographically large enough to be divided into different theatres, as resources from one theatre can easily be moved to another theatre.

The Navy considers the current model of control by the Navy Headquarters ideally suited for its strategic role.

There are also underlying fears about the smaller Services losing their autonomy and importance. The Services are aware that 4-star ranks will be reduced if the current system is to be replaced by 3 commands.

So, what is the way forward?

The Defence Ministry is yet to form a view on the subject. But experience from the US, Russia and China shows that the decision to create integrated theatre commands will have to be a political one, which will then be executed by the defence services. With the defence secretary set to retire this month and no full-time minister in charge, such a push looks unlikely in the immediate future.

A precursor to the creation of integrated theatre commands has to be the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff or Permanent Chairman, COSC. This was first proposed by the GoM in 2001, but hasn't been implemented so far. Even the last Combined Commanders Conference at Dehradun in February, chaired by the Prime Minister, was inconclusive on the subject, with a consensus on taking the proposal forward.

No stopping regional press as print soars

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 9

THE AVERAGE number of copies of print media publications in India went up by 2.37 crore between 2006 and 2016, Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), a nonprofit organisation that has been certifying circulation figures of member publications since 1948, has said. This, ABC reported in a release on Monday, translates into a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.87% over this 10-year period. The ABC's analysis of the print media industry's growth over the last decade shows average copies per day rose from 3.91 crore in 2006 to 6.28 crore in 2016, with North Zone showing the biggest CAGR spike of 7.83%. ABC said in a statement that the print medium in India "is thriving, growing and expanding" in spite of "stiff competition" from television, radio and digital industries.

The growth in print has been powered by Indian languages, the ABC figures show. Hindi grew the fastest (CAGR 8.76%) during the 2006-16 decade, a finding that ties in with the fastest circulation growth in the North Zone. Telugu (8.28%), Kannada (6.40%), Tamil (5.51%) and Malayalam (4.11%) followed Hindi. English publications saw a below average growth over the decade, at a mere 2.87%.

"In India, largely regional language newspapers have contributed to the growth," ABC said in its report. "Newspapers are thinking along the lines of greater local news coverage in order to cater to every segment of consumers as well as readers," it said in the release.

Comparing the Indian industry to the print medium internationally, the ABC figures show that while the circulation figures for print publications is on the decline in most developed markets, India shows an unusual

spike. Circulation rose by 14% and 18% in 2013 and 2014 compared to previous years, slowing to a 12% growth in 2015. During the same years, the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany and Japan saw the circulations fall by between 4% and 12%. Only Australia saw a positive growth in circulation numbers for one year in 2014, with 12% more circulations over 2013.

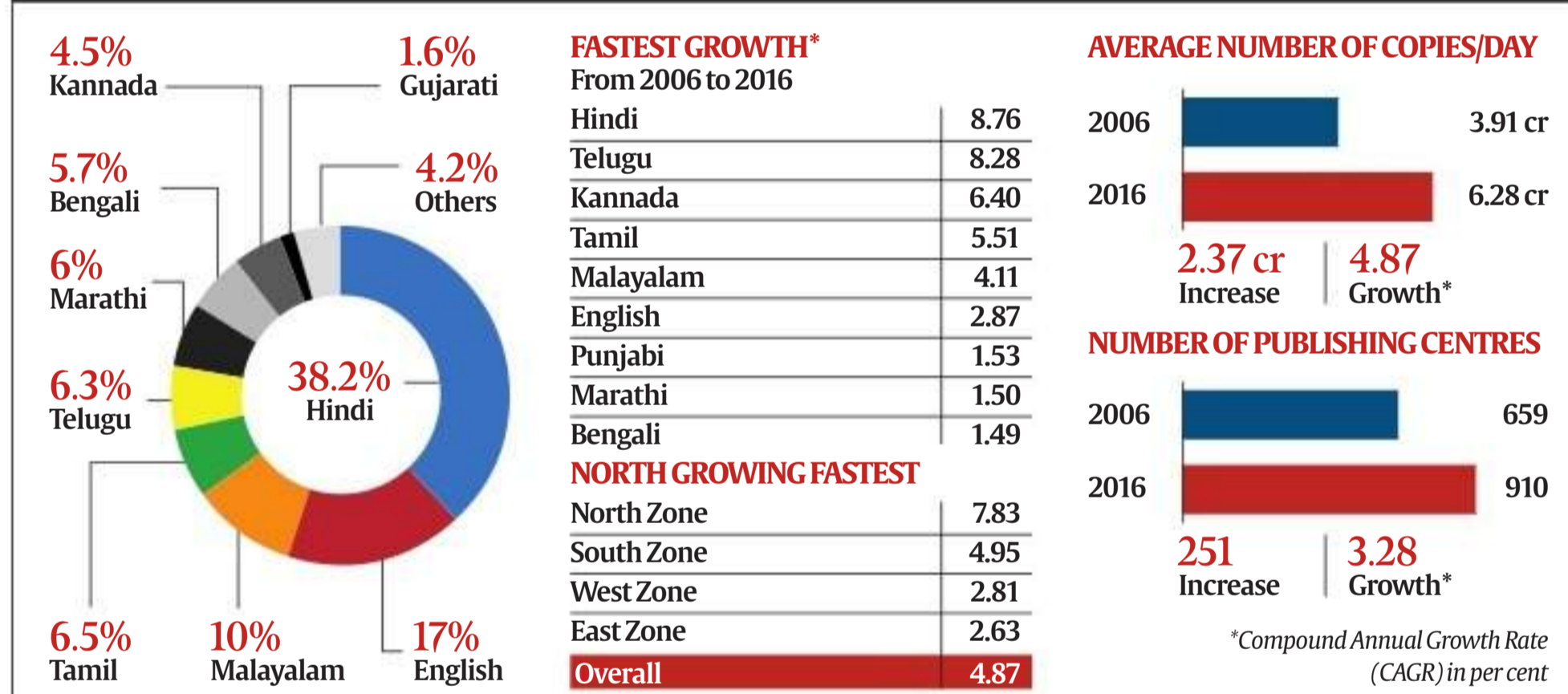
Publishers enroll with ABC as members and voluntarily provide their circulation figures. ABC certifies these figures after conducting a rigorous audit process through over 90 chartered accountants and audit firms empanelled with it. It also carries out surprise visits to the publication's presses and the markets where it is sold.

ABC certifies circulation figures of its members every 6 months — for the periods January to June, and July to December. It has 967 publications as its members, which includes 910 daily and weekly newspapers, and 57 magazines and annuals across the country.

Apart from the publications, ABC also has media agencies, ad agencies, government organisations, advertisers for print and Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity of the government as its members. These agencies use ABC figures to plan their advertising spends and marketing plans, as the figures are also available at the granular level of towns and cities in all the states where it has member-publications.

The ABC is a founding member of the International Federation of Audit Bureau of Circulation established in 1963. In collaboration with Media Users Research Council, the ABC has set up the Readership Studies Council of India to bring out the annual Indian Readership Survey, the primary survey of print media consumer demographics and the product consumption habits in the country.

HINDI LEADS THE PACK; OVERALL DAILY CIRCULATION UP BY OVER 2 CRORE IN LAST 10 YEARS



INDIA AND THE REST

Table comparing circulation and titles for various countries from 2013 to 2015, including Australia, France, Germany, India, Japan, UK, and USA.

New way to lose weight: eat more salt, suggests research



PAPER CLIP

FLAGGING INTERESTING RESEARCH

HEALTH & NUTRITION DIET

Papers published in The Journal of Clinical Investigation on April 17, 2017

AUTHORS: Jens Titze, Natalia Rakova and Others ('Increased salt consumption induces body water conservation and decreases fluid intake'); Jens Titze, Kento Kitada and Others ('High salt intake reprioritizes osmolyte and energy metabolism for body fluid conservation')

THE SALT equation taught to doctors for more than 200 years is this: the body relies on this essential mineral for a variety of functions, including maintaining blood pressure and the transmission of nerve impulses. Eating a lot of salt — sodium chloride — makes you thirsty and, as you drink water, your blood is diluted enough to maintain the proper concentration of sodium. Ultimately you excrete much of the excess salt and water in urine.

The theory is intuitive and simple. And it may be completely wrong.

New studies of Russian cosmonauts, held in isolation to simulate space travel, show that eating more salt made them less thirsty but somehow hungrier. Subsequent experiments found that mice burned more calories when they got more salt, eating 25% more just to maintain their weight.

The new research, published in 2 studies last month, contradicts much of the conventional wisdom about how the body handles salt, and suggests that high levels may play a role in weight loss. The studies are the culmination of a decades-long quest by Dr Jens Titze, now a kidney specialist at Vanderbilt

University Medical Centre and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Clinical Research in Erlangen, Germany.

In 1991, when Titze was a medical student in Berlin, he noticed, while studying data from crew on a simulated 28-day space mission, an odd up-and-down in a 7-day cycle in the crew's urine volumes. This was strange because there should be no such temporal cycle.

In 1994, when the Russian space programme did a 135-day simulation of life on the Mir space station, Dr Titze went to Russia to study urine patterns among crew members, and how these were affected by salt in the diet. He detected a 28-day rhythm in the amount of sodium the cosmonauts' bodies retained; this was not linked to the amount of urine they produced. And the sodium rhythms were much more pronounced than the urine patterns.

The sodium levels should have been rising and falling with the volume of urine, and Dr Titze was convinced something other than fluid intake was influencing sodium stores in the crew's bodies.

In 2006, the Russian space programme



Russian cosmonauts who were part of the simulation study, at an isolation facility in Moscow. European Space Agency

announced two more simulation studies — of 105 days and 520 days. In the shorter simulation, the cosmonauts ate a diet containing 12 g of salt daily, followed by 9 g daily, and then 6 g, each for 28 days. In the longer mission, they also ate an additional cycle of 12 g of salt daily.

When Dr Titze measured the amount of sodium excreted in the crew's urine, the vol-

ume of their urine, and the amount of sodium in their blood, some very surprising results emerged.

When the crew ate more salt, they excreted more salt; the amount of sodium in their blood remained constant, and their urine volume increased. But in the long run, the crew were drinking less water when getting more salt. So where was the excreted water coming from?

"There was only one way to explain this phenomenon," Dr Titze said. "The body most likely had generated or produced water when salt intake was high."

The crew also complained they were always hungry on the high-salt diet. Dr Titze assured them that they were getting exactly enough food to maintain their weights, and were eating the same amount on the lower-salt diets, when hunger did not seem to be a problem.

But urine tests suggested another explanation. The crew members were increasing production of glucocorticoid hormones, which influence both metabolism and immune function.

To get further insight, Dr Titze began a

study of mice in the laboratory. Sure enough, the more salt he added to the animals' diet, the less water they drank. And he saw why.

The animals were getting water — but not by drinking it. The increased levels of glucocorticoid hormones broke down fat and muscle in their own bodies. This freed up water for the body to use.

But that process requires energy. Dr Titze also found, which is why the mice ate 25% more food on a high-salt diet. The hormones also may be a cause of the strange long-term fluctuations in urine volume.

Scientists knew that a starving body will burn its own fat and muscle for sustenance. But the realisation that something similar happens on a salty diet has come as a revelation.

One of the many implications of this finding is that salt may be involved in weight loss. Generally, scientists have assumed that a high-salt diet encourages a greater intake of fluids, which increases weight.

But if balancing a higher salt intake requires the body to break down tissue, it may also increase energy expenditure.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

OVER-REACTION

Does the apex court need to lock up an errant judge and gag the press to protect its dignity?

WHEN THE PRESS is prevented from reporting something, it's almost always a red flag. It immediately lets everyone know that a mess has been created, that it has been mismanaged and the powers that be would like to mop up in peace and spare themselves embarrassment. Usually, it's been the government trying to spin a narrative or hinder free and fair reporting and it's been the Supreme Court which has stepped in to protect — and often expand — the contours of free speech. But now, in an unusual departure, it's the highest court which has banned the press from reporting on the orders of Justice C.S. Karnan, the Calcutta High Court judge who has been controversial since January, when he shot off an open letter to the prime minister, providing an "initial list" accusing 20 sitting and retired judges of the higher judiciary of corruption. This is most unexpected and disappointing.

When Justice Karnan broke ranks, the situation could have been handled with greater circumspection. Here was an angry judge, headline hunting, clearly displaying a temper and temperament not quite in tune with the dignity of his office. The Supreme Court, its shoulders broad enough to shrug off such criticism, reacted as if one judge's rants threatened to undermine the edifice of the higher judiciary. It seemed to dispense with the dispassionate distance which is its essence. So this week, when the running battle erupted into a shooting war, the apex court and the maverick judge hurled sentences at each other. In absentia, and from a makeshift court in his residence in a Kolkata suburb, Justice Karnan, in a bizarre order, sentenced top Supreme Court judges, including the chief justice of India, to five years rigorous imprisonment under the law penalising discriminatory action against the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. This was in response to the apex court's directive requiring him, to put it plainly, to have his head examined. What has followed was only to be expected and yet it is regrettable. A seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court has made an example of Justice Karnan, sentencing him to six months behind bars for contempt. He is the first judge in the history of the judiciary to receive such a sentence.

The court is justifiably outraged — Justice Karnan's wild and sweeping allegations have little factual basis. But the circumstances of his tantrums also tell a story that dates back to 2011 when he first alleged, as a Madras High Court judge, that he was being discriminated against because he was Dalit. Since then, the fracas has played out in public, which is precisely what was undesirable. To see a seven-judge bench sending a brother judge to jail for stepping out of line is not edifying. Banning the press from reporting one side of the story only strengthens the conviction that the Justice Karnan affair was poorly handled. If the judge's head needs to be examined, as the Supreme Court suggests, then why take his rant so seriously?

DEBT SERIOUS

Government, RBI move to a time-bound resolution framework for recovery of bad loans is timely

INDIA'S BAD LOAN problem has both a "stock" and a "flow" dimension. The stock problem is a legacy issue of loans extended in the past, particularly by the UPA government during the growth and investment boom period. Much of these were made with the most optimistic projections of the underlying projects, coupled, of course, with prodding by the powers that be. At around Rs 10 lakh crore, the total stressed assets of the country's banking system is arguably the single biggest impediment to economic recovery. The above stock problem is what the government is seeking to address through the ordinance empowering the RBI to direct banks to "resolve" their bad debts. It would mean getting them to launch insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings to recover outstanding dues, including through sale of assets financed with these loans.

That would require taking "haircuts" or not recovering entire amounts due. State-owned banks have not been able to take recourse to this route because of the backlash it could invite from puritan audit and vigilance authorities. The latest ordinance seeks to ring-fence bankers from going ahead with resolution — which the economy definitely requires today — by getting such decisions ratified by oversight committees appointed by the RBI. The details of these arrangements and how the proposed committees would be able to function independent of scrutiny by the CAG, CVC and CBI remains to be seen.

Either way, the new ordinance marks a significant step in the government and the RBI moving to a time-bound resolution framework for the stock problem of past bad loans. One wishes this action was forthcoming earlier, which only shows how long this government took to understand the magnitude of the problem and the implications for growth and investment. Now remains addressing the "flow" problem, which would mean revamping the current governance structures in state-owned banks and ensuring that they are board-driven and professionally run. It cannot be that after this mess is cleaned up, we are back to pumping tax payer-funded capital again in the next downturn. Also, central banks globally do not directly engage with banks with regard to individual loan resolutions. In this case, the exceptional circumstances is what has made the government ask the RBI to intervene in decisions that should be left to bank managements. It is important to ensure that any reputational risk to the RBI is mitigated.

FEELS NO GOOD, MAN

Appropriated by the alt-right, Pepe the Frog had to die

YOU MIGHT THINK there is no fate worse than death. But there is. Just ask cartoon character Pepe the Frog, or rather, his hapless creator, Matt Furie. Pepe was originally created as a good-natured, cucumber-green, bumbling amphibian who just liked to chill, his fun moments in memes accompanied by a drawling, "Feels good, man". Appearing in Furie's MySpace "Boy's Club" series in 2005, the wide-eyed Pepe grew in popularity. Singer Katy Perry tweeted a picture of Pepe not feeling good, man, to explain jet lag, while Niki Minaj chose Pepe to represent her croaking, sorry, twerking online. Even the New Zealand government, pondering over a new flag, reportedly received a design sporting Pepe.

But Pepe's toady appeal grew evident in the 2016 US presidential election, when Donald Trump, while referring to draining the political swamp, posted a Pepe-like cartoon. American alt-right fans began using Pepe to depict Hitler or racist figures "feeling good, man" while attacking liberal "snowflakes". Hillary Clinton's phrase for Trump supporters — such "deplorables" included Pepe nestled amidst far-right figures. Hillary didn't laugh out loud. Her campaign instead described Pepe memes as a symbol of white supremacy; as Furie faced liberal furies, the Anti-Defamation League declared Pepe a hate symbol. Pepe's many fans didn't help; white supremacist leader Richard B. Spencer was actually sporting a Pepe pin when he was violently attacked. Suddenly, Pepe was associated with everything a nice frog should abhor — hate, spite, even gore.

Bemoaning Pepe's multiple avatars, Furie lamented how his own creation had gone rogue on the internet, where any artistic entity could be poached, turning it into its opposite. Little wonder that Furie has now, in a public comic, killed Pepe. There is a fate worse than death. It's a life where you can even be depicted as "Pepe Le Pen". It's enough to make a frog croak in disgust.



AYESHA SIDDIQA

IT WAS A cool winter morning in late December 2001 when India decided to mobilise its forces on its border with Pakistan, in retaliation to the terror attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13 that year. The reaction, which was meant to pressure the seemingly recalcitrant neighbour, was the biggest troops deployment since the war in 1971. However, no lines were crossed due to foreign intervention and a realisation around the world that a conflict between the two South Asian neighbours who had gone overtly nuclear in 1998 might result in something very ugly. It was in the backdrop of this standoff or the earlier Kargil crisis that red-lines were drawn informally.

Sixteen years later, the region stands on the brink of an impending conflict with little clarity regarding the threshold and even less lucidity regarding which international player will intervene. Unlike in the past, the US may not be in a position to give its advice due to its own internal chaos, lesser interest in South Asia and an inability to develop a relationship with anyone in Islamabad. Although deterrence and an understanding of each other's thresholds worked for almost a decade after 2002, both sides worked towards finding means to challenge the status-quo. So, India's "cold start" doctrine was meant for Delhi to circumvent the four red-lines highlighted by the head of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division (SPD), Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai. Pakistan reacted to India's plan by developing a range of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons.

Since 2013-2014, all lines have become muddled and the military-strategic visibility has become poorer as both sides enjoy a certain level of confidence that any initiative will be to their advantage, not to the adversary's. While Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party's political gains are unquestionable, the military in Pakistan has managed to cobble together a popular opinion regarding its role as the defender of the

Bilateral silence

Hype around war gets a new life in India, Pakistan, increasing public support for the armed forces

territorial and ideological integrity of the state. Voices that question the narrative no longer hold centre stage in public discourse — not to forget the tremendous confidence gained by Islamabad through finding space in the evolving regional political map as China's partner.

This description of similar levels of confidence enjoyed by the two states tends to point towards an increased threat of war and conflict. Historically, every time both India and Pakistan attained higher degrees of self-confidence, the results were not good. These are indeed interesting times when military thresholds are being re-checked in a nuclear environment. Given the absence of direct conversation, there is also little clarity as to how far the two sides will go. The Pakistan Army has stated that it is not involved in mutilating bodies of Indian soldiers. But even if it is random militants, or someone else to blame, the question is finding a possibility to talk before things go too far out of hand.

Another interesting development in the past decade or more pertains to war and conflict becoming matters in which popular opinion weigh in. While this may be a deliberate formula of the states, the issue is that the media hype around war and peace has acquired a life of its own. But this means that any escalation will result in greater public support to their respective armed forces.

The recipe is dangerous especially if India tries to go beyond its claims of a surgical strike in September 2016. The fact that Pakistan did not react or admit to such strikes having happened kept things from boiling over. However, if India intended to make its response more visible, it could result in serious repercussions for the entire region. Strategic analysts have often talked about the rationality of Pakistan's armed forces that, it is believed, may force it to not up the ante and cap it at a lower level. The question is, what if it does not follow this script?

It is beyond doubt that this is one time

when the two states need to engage in a dialogue through reliable interlocutors. Understandably, Pakistan must solve its internal confusion of civil-military being on separate pages as far as a policy on India is concerned. In fact, the business tycoon Sajjan Jindal's visit to see Nawaz Sharif did not benefit the prime minister. If anything, the narrative popularised through the media presented him as suspicious and unreliable. From a common sense perspective, this is not the best of conditions a country ought to find itself in, especially when confronted with a grave situation.

However, the military believes it can protect the territory and the core strategic understanding is that there can be no peace with the bigger neighbour unless outstanding disputes are resolved. It would certainly not allow a political leadership to conspire a solution without taking key stakeholders on board. The civil-military squabble tends to hide the difference of opinion that exists within the military regarding how far negotiations between Islamabad and New Delhi should go. While some may support the idea of negotiations, there are those who would like to go the whole hog in de-Indianising their society and culture.

Unfortunately, for South Asia, peace and camaraderie amongst the people is the biggest collateral damage of the present environment. The talk of action-reaction and hostility is increasingly de-sensitising people towards the idea of peaceful co-existence or building upon a shared culture of the soil. Any further increase in hostility is likely to make common people even wearier of each other. While it is understandable to see the militaries brace themselves for greater conflict, the leadership ought to find ways to talk. It is important to realise that talking is imperative.

The writer is a Pakistani military scientist, political commentator and an author



AAKASH JOSHI

IN MAINSTREAM CINEMA, a film can be path-breaking in two ways. It can have a genuinely moving, provoking narrative, or a kind of humour and insight that is, if not unprecedented, certainly rare. Such a film has to be superbly written, directed and acted and the chord it strikes with its audience stays with them long after the film is over. The sound, camera and editing come together to bring out a story in novel ways. Its themes will stay relevant after its context seems dated and its plot points become archetypes for generations of filmmakers and aficionados.

But there is another kind of greatness as well. When the craft of cinema is, for its time and place, elevated to an art. S.S. Rajumouli's two-part epic comes close to films in this category. There is a breadth of vision, technical finesse and sheer grandeur to *Baahubali: The Beginning* and *Baahubali: The Conclusion* that is unprecedented in recent Indian cinema. It reflects the confidence of the film-maker: His audience is going to watch the film on a big screen. The actors, while well-known, were not famous enough to guarantee the kind of revenues it has generated worldwide. Most of all, the film is able to transcend substantially the context of the language it was shot in.

There is, however, a problematic aspect to the film; in the vehicle for the special effects extravaganza — the actual plot.

Like James Cameron's *Avatar*, the *Baahubali* films have a cliché story, one which is easy to relate to and lets the audience enjoy the images on screen while being led gently along a path that is as familiar and comfortable as the ratty T-shirt you've had since col-

THE WEAKNESS OF BAAHUBALI

Its technical finesse is a vehicle for regressive socio-political values

'Baahubali' takes place in and upholds a socio-religious order that serves a particular politics. While somewhat critical, if tangentially, of the indentured servitude of Katappa, one of the films' main characters, it does nothing to actually free him. Strong, independent women become 'pativrata' for life once they realise our hero is strong enough to protect them. There is the worrying, almost offensive depiction of the tribal villains in 'Baahubali: The Beginning'.

lege. Also like Cameron's masterpiece, they have an unmistakable social and political context. *Avatar* rehashed the *Pocahontas* (Disney version) story — a white man among the natives finds love and wisdom and turns against the tyranny of his own people. In the context of colonialism, discourses on global warming, ecology and land rights, the film had a progressive undertone. In his choice of cliché, Rajumouli went the other way.

Like so many other epics in the Subcontinent, and beyond, *Baahubali* takes place in and upholds a socio-religious order that serves a particular politics. While somewhat critical, if tangentially, of the indentured servitude of Katappa, one of the films' main characters, it does nothing to actually free him. Even the genie in Disney's *Aladdin* was liberated by the eponymous hero, but no such luck for (the elder) *Baahubali*'s self-proclaimed "mama". In both films, the depiction of the "love interest" is also questionable: Strong, independent women become *pativrata* for life once they realise our hero is strong enough to protect them. There is the worrying, almost offensive depiction of the tribal villains — the Kalakeya — in *Baahubali: The Beginning* and the hero's almost sadistic brutality masquerading as brilliant battle strategy, while those of his opponents is depicted as savagery.

The complex (especially to a north Indian viewer like this author) but blatantly "Hindu" and upper caste motif of the films, evolves in interesting ways. The main conflict in the sequel appears to be about "Kshatriya" values, which plays out in what can only be described as "vachan clash". Protagonists are always driven by duty and honour — determined by

their *varnashramdharma* — and competing promises, equally valid, separate right actions from wrong ones. Then there is the fact that the film clearly promotes the cult of a great leader, infallible and just, set in the (lost) grandeur of a Hindu empire — complete with a giant Ganesha and porcelain Krishna.

It is, of course, likely that film-makers, in setting up a fictional universe, had no socio-political intentions whatsoever. But given the influence of cinema, particularly films as wildly successful as the *Baahubali* franchise, it is important to locate them in the larger discourse of our times. Not even the most cursory analysis of mainstream Hindi cinema can ignore the relationship between Raj Kapoor's work and the Nehruvian enterprise in the first decades after Independence. *Amar Akbar Anthony* and the unity in diversity motif or even the *karva chauth* modernity of Karan Johar and post-liberalisation India. At a theatre in a south Delhi mall, *Baahubali: The Conclusion* was met with the standing ovation it deserves. But the film was also greeted with chants of "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram".

A Ram-like Hindu king, amid massive structures and temples has an obvious symbolism. In fact, Minister for Information and Broadcasting M. Venkaiah Naidu has called *Baahubali: The Conclusion* a "shining example of Make in India" and, in a lighter moment, said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "the real Baahubali". As we praise, and rightly so, the film's masterful visual effect, there is some merit to looking at the effects of its story as well.

aakash.joshi@expressindia.com



MAY 10, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

CARTER TO DESAI
US PRESIDENT JIMMY Carter has written to Prime Minister Morarji Desai, suggesting a dialogue between America and India. The initiative comes in the wake of several official and unofficial messages from America for a closer relationship between the two biggest democracies in the world. Carter praised Desai's speech at the co-ordinating bureau of non-aligned countries. Desai had said "India will remain non-aligned in the real sense of the term" and that "non-aligned members should so conduct themselves as not to give the impression that they were a bloc like any other bloc". Desai had also said: "The struggle for true independence of the

human spirit must go on until the right to liberty in a new world order becomes a universal phenomenon." India's relationship with the US had deteriorated in the wake of Washington's tilt towards Pakistan during the Bangladesh war.

OIL IN KAVERI BASIN
THE CANADIAN ASAMERA group has spudded its first offshore oil well in the Kaveri basin, off the Tuticorin coast. The Asamera group had been offered the continental shelf block covering the Kaveri basin for offshore oil exploration. The group has a 35 per cent partnership with the Asamera company in the venture.

CFD IN JANATA PANEL
JAGJIVAN RAM AND H.N. Bahuguna, leaders of the Congress for Democracy (CFD), were appointed members of the Janata Party working committee. Janata president Chandra Shekhar also appointed Rama Krishna Hegde the fifth general secretary of the party. The others are: Nanaji Deshmukh, Madhu Limaye, Rabi Ray and Singh Nahar.

JAITLEY QUITS
ARUN JAITLEY, STUDENT leader, resigned from the working committee of the Janata Party. He expressed gratitude to Chandra Shekhar but requested to be relieved as he desires to work in the Vidyarthi Parishad.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Macron’s triumph strengthens France’s place as one of the central pillars of the European Union, and bodes well for the free flow of people and cooperation.”

—CHINA DAILY

Our own Animal Farm

Cow vigilantism is a tragedy in many parts — a rousing, a lynching, a reflection of change



PAMELA PHILOPOSE

THE CONCEPT BEHIND ‘New India’ is that EPI should replace VIP. EPI means Every Person is Important. We should accept the importance of 125 crore Indians.” Thus spoke Prime Minister Narendra Modi. EPI is a compelling formulation and because it sounds like a statement of conviction, not just intent, it needs to be used as an index to measure the importance of every Indian as they go about their normal lives, plying a trade, commuting, cooking, eating.

How important, if we are to go by this index, was Pehlu Khan, pulverised to death on the Alwar road a month ago for transporting legitimately acquired cattle; or Abu Hanifa and Riyazuddin Ali, lynched in a Jorhat village of Assam the other day, on suspicion of being cow thieves? When Ramesh, Ashok, Vashram, Bechar and three others were publicly flogged for skinning dead cattle in Gujarat’s Una block last July, were they important? Should we consider as EPIs cattle trader Mohammed Mazlum Ansari and his 14-year-old nephew, Mohammed Imteyaz Khan, found hanging on a tree in Jharkhand’s Balumath block last July? Or Rizwan and Mukhtiar, forced to eat cow dung cake for “transporting cattle” a few weeks earlier on a Haryana highway?

What of Mohammed Akhlaq of Uttar Pradesh’s Dadri, who was killed in September 2015 after being attacked by bricks and staffs because of the meat in his fridge? Or Salma, whose was brutally thrashed for her bag of buffalo meat at Mandsaur railway station in Madhya Pradesh last year? How important is Manish Mandal, beaten so badly that he could lose an eye for daring to honk loudly to clear cattle on a Bihar road?

Names are important in these stories from the primeval wilderness of the religious-political landscape, although there may be thousands of unnamed people who suffered similarly but haven’t figured in a journalist’s report or a police FIR. A timeline of these incidents indicate how closely they follow shifts in political power. Incidents of cow vigilantism in coastal Karnataka, linked directly to local Sangh affiliates, began to get reported shortly after the NDA assumed power in 2014. The years 2015 and 2016 witnessed an escalation of these attacks in number, scale and intensity, but it is in the brief period right after the appointment of Yogi Adityanath as Uttar Pradesh chief

minister this March that there seems to have been a conspicuous spurt.

The newly appointed police chief of the state, in his first public statement, had vowed to crack down on “gau rakshaks”. But his words do not matter when his chief minister expresses impatience, not at the deliberately slow pace of the criminal justice machinery in stymieing such random brutality, but at the lethargy of cow protectors. The yogi has just warned: Mouthy slogans is not enough, “honest efforts” are needed for cow protection. What does this statement mean: More honest bludgeons, more honestly plied?

His words indicate why cow protection has emerged as such a profitable enterprise, with the yogi projecting himself as the first gau rakshak of his state through strategic photo-ops. In all the states where the BJP is now in power, there is a smoothly functioning patronage system for cow protection, not just in terms of large outlays for cow shelters and the like, but through a lower bureaucracy and police that extend all possible assistance for such activities, from issuing licences to cow protectees to ensuring that criminal action is largely reserved for the alleged “cow smugglers/thieves” rather than their murderous, extortionist assaulters.

The monetisation of cow protection encourages the emergence of criminalised gau raksha gangs, but it is the spiritual and moral affirmation bringing them together that allows them to perpetrate brutalities that ordinary people would find repugnant. The ensuing bonding that takes place, at least for the duration of the assault, creates a common purpose, an instant imagined community, as it were. This is also probably why there is a performative dimension to such acts. Young gau rakshas delight in uploading videos of their assaults as trophies on their Facebook page, unimindful of the trail they thus leave behind, or perhaps so overwhelmed by a sense of impunity because of their new connectedness with institutions of power and political benefactors.

Many of those who participate in such actions may be members of politically powerful outfits, but they are also, for the most part, youth — mostly male — with no real future. A cohort that Craig Jeffrey describes well in his book *Timepass* as young men left in a void, waiting interminably for the non-existent “decent job” to come their way. Feted momentarily as “Bhagat Singh” by their political handlers, a few ride the blood-speckled tide and assume leadership roles in their respective mafia. For the majority, however, it is oblivion that awaits them, if not terms in jail.

This then is a tragedy in many parts.

The writer is a senior journalist



C R Sasikumar

Unity of the services

History stands testimony that the army, navy and air force always cooperate during wars. The demand for integrating the three forces through a theatre command is misplaced



VINOD PATNEY

THE NEW BUZZWORD doing the rounds of the military establishment is “integration” which has been manifested in the form of theatre commands. A theatre command is an organisational structure designed to control all military assets in a theatre of war to achieve military effects. The proponents of this concept liberally quote the US Gold Water Nichols Act and similar pieces of legislation in the UK and Australia. Concepts such as synergy, holistic integration of logistics, and increased systemic effectiveness are often quoted in such arguments.

However, interestingly, no one can quote actual instances from any of the wars fought by our defence forces after 1965, on our own territory or on foreign land, to show how the present system was found lacking.

It is uncanny how so many consider theatre commands as an inescapable necessity during peacetime, but can quote no incident from a war, fought by independent India, where the absence of such an organisation came in the way of the effectiveness of the forces. There has been no occasion, during actual warfare, when the three services have not operated with commendable cooperation. It is another matter that as soon as the war is over and peace obtains, the clamour for organisational changes starts again.

The one occasion when we flirted with the idea of a theatre commander was in the initial stage of the operations in Sri Lanka by the Indian Peace Keeping Force. In the early days of the operation, helicopters were tasked without proper air force advice leading to avoidable damage to the machines and

an unnecessary loss of lives. Almost immediately thereafter, an air component commander and a naval counterpart were positioned to take charge of air and naval assets. Aircraft continued to support operations but henceforth, the control and tasking was under the air commander. Professionalism trumped ad hocism. That will always be the case.

The questions we must ask ourselves is why we need a theatre command system now when no real need has been felt in war? What is the type of warfare we envisage we may be involved in? Would it be vastly different from previous occasions? What has changed? More importantly, what benefits, if any, will accrue and what are the disadvantages that we will have to overcome? Emotions should not cloud our judgement.

We are unlikely to fight a war in faraway lands. Nor are we likely to be involved in a medium to high-intensity conflict for long durations. Resources available to the armed forces will always be scarce; this is particularly true in the case of air power assets. Unity of control is a byword in the employment of air power as, inter alia, the limited resources may have to be concentrated for the desired effect. Division of resources in different theatres will imply that finite and avoidable time will be required for the needed concentration of air assets.

It is now a well accepted fact that air power will be in the vanguard of military actions in most scenarios where a sizeable force is to be used. More importantly, it is air power that can go to war almost immediately. That requires training together of air force elements to foster understanding amongst pilots and support systems, so that the missions in war are but an extension of the training schedules. We also need an organisation that can concentrate forces at the earliest. Theatre commands will increase the crucial time element and joint training issues may also hamper operational efficiency.

It is true that conventional wars, even of short durations, are unlikely and we will have

to increasingly deal with low-intensity and sub-conventional warfare. To prosecute such operations, do we really need a mammoth organisation like a theatre command? Will not the present system suffice, as it has stood by us in the past and continues to do so? We certainly do not need a theatre command to prosecute such low-key operations.

It is often argued that theatre commands will come into their own in case of a major conflagration. The issue requires examination: The starting point must be an assessment of the type of wars that could be imposed on us and the type of wars that we are capable of prosecuting. The second aspect is more challenging and more significant. Our military capabilities must be examined in some detail, with each service bringing to the table, de novo, what the service is capable of in war, either individually or in consonance with the other service(s). Does such an analysis require a theatre command? It does not, and an honest approach is essential.

Thereafter, planning for the type of operations we can undertake can be determined and joint plan(s) arrived at. The type of organisation that will best meet the requirements will then automatically suggest itself. The great advantage will be that all three services will be on board and there will be no need to impose any new organisation. Communication systems have improved considerably over the years and now, communication of thoughts amongst military practitioners must also rise above parochial interests. The more that the services carry out joint planning, the better will be mutual understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses. That will lead us to the type of organisation that is best suited to meet the need for optimising military capabilities. Strengthening our time-tested joint institutions is the way ahead to build a modern defence organisation.

The writer, a former vice chief of Air Staff, is currently director general, Centre for Air Power Studies

It is often argued that theatre commands will come into their own in case of a major conflagration. The issue requires examination: The starting point must be an assessment of the type of wars that could be imposed on us and the type of wars that we are capable of prosecuting. Our military capabilities must be examined in detail with each service bringing to the table what the service is capable of in war, either individually or in consonance with the other service(s). Does such an analysis require a theatre command? It does not. An honest approach is essential.

“destruction of this economic empire is the best way to weaken Pakistan”. “India, along with private players, neighbouring countries and wherever possible with big powers, should work out a strategy to break this long tangled network,” it concludes.

MCD POLL LESSONS

COMMENTING ON THE “significance” of the recent MCD elections, the editorial in *Panchjanya* lists several pointers it offered to political parties. First, it says, “lollypop politics would not work”. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had promised to exempt house tax if his party came to power. His defeat has confirmed that people would rather pay taxes, than go for electoral “stunts”. Second lesson is “given by the BJP to its members”. “Work is permanent, not the chair,” it says, underlining that politics does not merely reflect power, but leaders must also undertake silent work for the party. Third, it confirms that those who try to gain benefits by securing proximity to leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal also get smeared by scandals involving them. The fourth and most significant lesson of this

election is for the party that wanted to show a mirror to others, but became “so arrogant” that its “fall is now certain”. Kejriwal lost his image by making “cheap allegations” against PM Modi and the LG. The result of these municipal elections has come as a slap to those who indulge in “negative politics”. People are now pushing ahead those who work for “national interest”, the editorial claims.

THE NEW INDIAN EPIC

THE COVER STORY in *Panchjanya* says that “*Baahubali-2* is an epic carrying Indian traditional values and religious-spiritual teachings”. “The Mahishmati kingdom depicted in the movie might be imaginary but its characters and incidents are completely real,” it says, underlining that this movie “makes the first powerful entry of India in the international market”. The global response to the movie confirms that the “entire world is attracted to Indian heritage”. “It’s rare to find such a package of religion, culture, lifestyle, relations, love, art and entertainment,” it adds.

Noting that several characters are inspired by the Ramayana and the

Mahabharata, the scriptwriter says that Amarendra Baahubali carries traits of Rama and Krishna, Bhallaladeva reflects Duryodhana, Bijjaladeva is the mirror image of Shakuni, while Kattapa is modeled on Hanuman. “*Baahubali-2* is the pride of India,” it says, emphasising that “it introduces real Indian civilisation, culture and philosophy to the world”.

THE WEST ASIA BATTLE

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* notes that Christianity was born in West Asia, but Christians are forced to leave due to Islamic jihadis. Most Christians in these countries have been killed, or forcibly converted to Islam, the article claims. ISIS has threatened to eliminate Christians from Egypt. The Islamic militant group has killed many Christians in Egypt. The article notes relations between Islam and Christianity have been “extremely explosive”. Both religions have never made peace with each other as both are “intolerant and expansionist”, hence, a “clash is written in their horoscopes”.

Compiled by Ashutosh Bhardwaj

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CHINESE INTENTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Network is the key’ (IE, May 9). The trans-continental connectivity project that Beijing is working on is not just an economic venture but also, a political and diplomatic endeavour. A number of countries, flattered by the “Chinese promise”, have readily agreed to board the ship, putting pressure on other countries to follow suit. New Delhi can neither risk antagonising its Central Asian partners, including those in and around the heart of Asia, nor can it let Beijing win the game of “dominant power” in Asia Pacific. New Delhi must now build coalitions of economic significance. It must reach out to regional partners such as Japan, Australia and the Southeast Asian nations. The smaller countries must be persuaded that Chinese altruism comes with a hefty non-negotiable price tag.

Bibhuti Das, New Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Network is the key’ (IE, May 9). To bracket China in the same league as the British Raj is a bit too ambitious. England had a constitutional monarchy backed by empowered citizens, whereas the world has barely heard of Chinese “citizens” Investing in transnational connectivity is an old concept. The Chinese propaganda on OBOR is however new. The project traverses the most politically volatile region of the world — Central and West Asia. CPEC has come at the cost of the Chinese having informal ties with the Taliban.

Sayantana Ghosh, Kolkata

FACTS AND BELIEFS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Love in the time of the Holy Shiver’ (IE, May 9). Belief is sometimes above facts, rationalism and humanity. For example if gau rakshaks are told that the Vedic people slaughtered cows — as the historian D.N. Jha has shown — they will not

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

listen to that. The point is not to shake their beliefs but to make them understand that humanity is more important than what they are practicing in the name of religion. No religion is above humanity and if it is, then either it is not a religion or it is one whose basic precepts are being misinterpreted.

Nishant Parashar, Chandigarh

FRANCE DECIDES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial ‘Macron Moment’ (IE, May 9). Emmanuel Macron’s win against Marine Len Pen was never in doubt. The French demonstrated that liberalism lives. Macron’s win brought relief to the liberal world since he has a progressive position on immigration, etc. However, daunting tasks lie ahead. He needs to take tough decisions to fix the French economy.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

SHARIF’S SURVIVAL PLAN

THE EDITORIAL in *Organiser* comments on the “mutilation of Indian soldiers on the LoC” and says that Pakistan’s Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif “is fuelling the so-called ‘Kashmir cause’ to save himself from corruption charges and protect himself from the wrath of military and mullahdom”. “The brutality of Pak military against their own people is well-known, whether in Baluchistan or in Sindh,” it says, noting that “nobody has ever questioned their track record on human rights protection”.

Pointing at the corruption in the Pakistani army through business deals, it says, “this military-business complex feed on each other”. “Pakistan armed forces promote counter-terrorist outfits as per their business interests,” it notes, contending that the