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SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Trump tells @TheEconomist he came up with phrase "Priming the pump." Not bad, but still think my own "I ♥ NY" is catchier.

IAN BREMMER, political scientist, 266,000 followers on Twitter. Trump said he "came up with" the expression "priming the pump" "a couple of days ago" and "thought it was good". In fact, the phrase is at least as old as 1932, when Herbert Hoover was President during the Great Depression.

CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

In giant trade Belt, Road to new growth rush

From Sunday, China hosts the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, a meeting aimed at propelling itself into a new growth orbit, taking along 100-plus stakeholders

SIMPLY PUT
BY APURVA
EXPRESS EDITORS INTERPRET

CHINA WILL host the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) over two days starting May 14 in Beijing where high-level delegations, including 29 Heads of State, will gather to discuss President Xi Jinping's ambitious strategy and accelerate the pace of its implementation. China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) strategy envisions an overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to foster trade and enter new markets.

What is the Belt and the Road?
The strategy aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa, particularly the developing East Asia economic circle at one end and developed European economic regions at the other. The Belt refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt which comprises three overland routes: connecting China, Central Asia through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The Road refers to the 21st century Maritime Silk Road designed to push trade from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other.

Why is OBOR so important for China?
While the BRF will host 29 Heads of State and over 100 ministerial-level officials to increase international cooperation, the OBOR policy itself is aimed at boosting domestic growth in China which has slipped in recent years. Experts maintain that OBOR is China's blueprint for economic diplomacy, and its strategy to begin a second phase of 'opening up'. Experts also believe China felt "isolated", considering it is not involved with G7, and is limited to the BRICS countries. They say China needed another window to continue its economic expansion, and OBOR fits the bill.

What changed for China to adopt a new strategy?
This year, China cut its GDP growth target to 6.5%, the lowest in 25 years. With a global slowdown, China needed a new model of development to maintain its spectacular economic success story. OBOR envisions largescale infrastructure creation in China and OBOR linked countries, which the government hopes will keep the economy ticking. There are two versions of OBOR — domestic and international. Experts pin the slowdown on changes in exports, investments and local consumption. A shift in US policy after Donald Trump's victory, and the rise of protectionist tendencies in the west, has resulted in shrinking markets, while investments in China have gradually reduced due to rising labour costs, increased traffic on roads, and air pollution and environment concerns. Experts also believe consumption in China has decreased with slower growth of the middle class. OBOR visualises a shift from developed markets in the west to developing economies in Asia, and a shift in China's development strategy itself — concentrating on provinces in central and western China instead of the developed east coast region.

How will it be implemented?
At its core, OBOR would need the eastern (developed) parts of China to trade with the US and developed countries, while the central and western provinces, which have witnessed minimal growth, will feed Asia's developing countries. However, a major roadblock for OBOR at present is the lack of

BIG NUMBERS

\$ 953.59 bn
Volume of China's import, export along the Belt and Road in 2016

\$ 587.48 bn
Value of exports from China along Belt and Road in 2016

25.7%
Share of China's total foreign trade along the Belt and Road in 2016

\$14.5 bn
China's FDI in Belt and Road affiliated countries

NEIGHBOURS' GAINS

PAKISTAN got more than \$ 46 bn of investments after CPEC launch

SRI LANKA benefited to the tune of \$ 1.5 bn

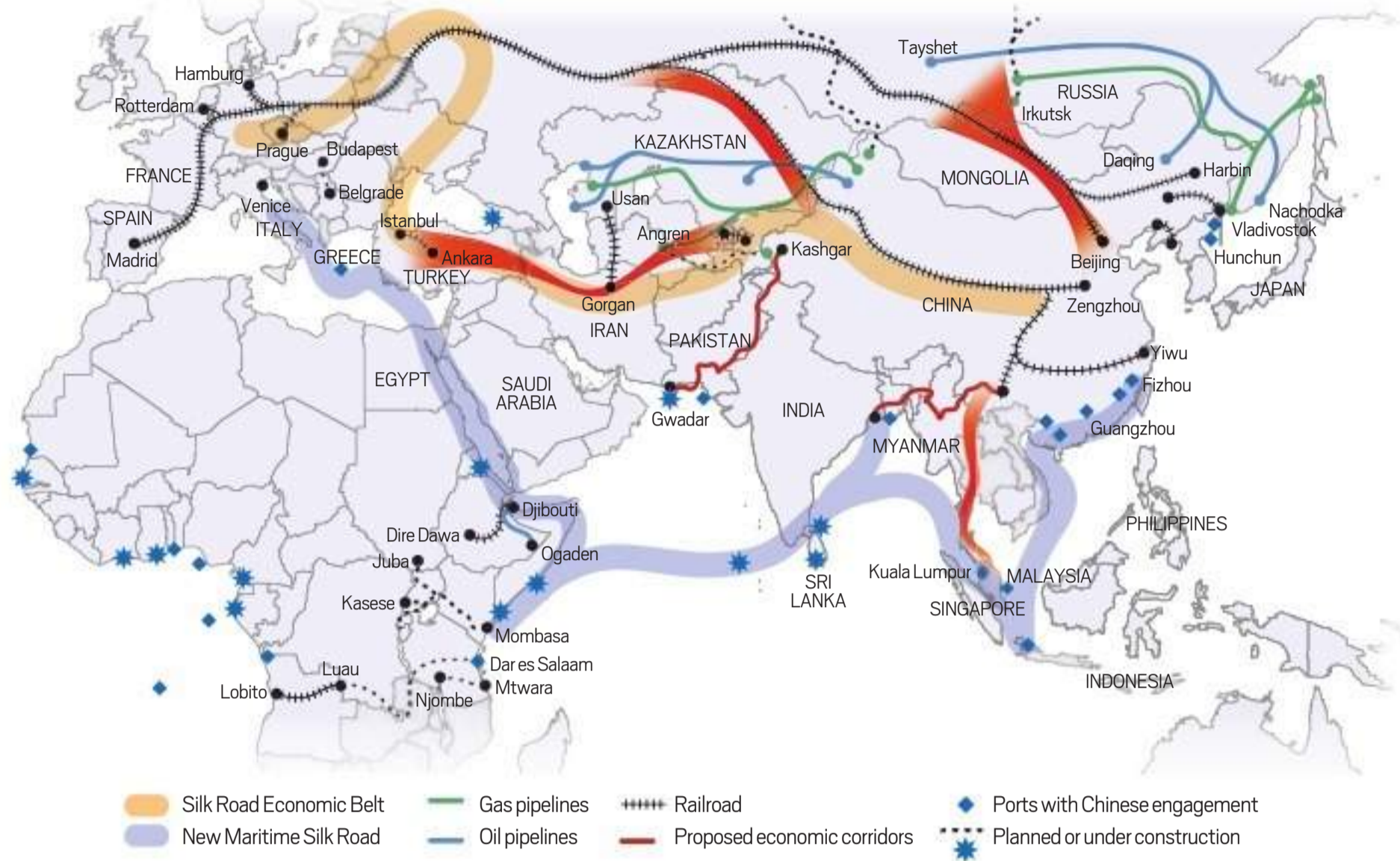
BANGLADESH signed more than 20 agreements totalling about \$ 24 bn

MYANMAR: Chinese development projects include the Letpadaung copper mine, KyaukPhyu port, and oil and gas pipelines

NEPAL decided to sign a framework agreement on Belt and Road this week

MALDIVES infra projects include China-Maldives Friendship Bridge; new airport runway in Male

Project that could change the world's economic map



OBOR projects as of December 2015; Source: Mercator Institute for China Studies/Reuters

CHINA VIEW

Experts in China warn of missed opportunities for India — and of isolation in the region

"If India does not participate in something all her neighbours are positive about, then the neighbours will have cause to complain. This is not constructive for India and will reduce its appeal in the region... The Karakoram highway has been around for so long, why pick it up now?"

HU SHISHENG, DIRECTOR, CHINA INSTITUTES OF CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, BEIJING

"It is natural that India's neighbours want to be part of the initiative. They want China's technological knowledge, and of course they want the money... Boundary questions have been around for years, they can hardly be solved overnight. Why should this be a hurdle?"

WANG DEHUA, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA STUDIES, SHANGHAI

To be in step with China's ambition, South Asian nations walk tightrope

IN FACT
BY JYOTI MALHOTRA
EXPRESS EDITORS INTERPRET

UNTIL A few weeks ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Colombo and Kandy was in jeopardy because Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe was intent on flying to Beijing on Friday — so he could be well in time for the May 14-15 One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Summit in the Chinese capital. As many as 29 Heads of State and 110 countries, including several South Asian nations, are expected to attend.

Wickremasinghe was ultimately persuaded to stay back until Modi had prayed at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and flown back home on Friday evening. Certainly, it would have been terrible optics if the leader of one of India's closest friends in the region was absent when the Prime Minister came visiting.

The diplomatic close shave in Sri Lanka is emblematic of South Asia's dilemma when it comes to pursuing closer ties with China. Pakistan, with its self-avowed and decades-old "special relationship that is higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans", has it the easiest. Its powerful Army cushioned by Chinese assistance, especially in the nuclear and missile arenas, Islamabad can ask Beijing for infrastructure aid without

compunction. That is why, at last count, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which begins at the Karakoram and ends at the Gwadar port on the Indian Ocean, was worth a cool \$ 57 billion.

Nepal's Prime Minister Prachanda aims at balancing India and China — which is why he allowed his country's first military exercise with China a few weeks ago. According to the 1950 Treaty of Friendship between India and Nepal, such an idea would have been anathema as Kathmandu was honour-bound to recognise India's strategic concerns about another country looming at New Delhi's doorstep.

But Prachanda knows that Nepal's population would prefer closer ties with India; besides, New Delhi had backed the Nepalese people's lead in overthrowing the monarchy in 2006, which enabled Prachanda and his fellow Maoists to come to power.

The Bangladesh story is more complicated. In mid-October 2016, China's President Xi Jinping travelled to Bangladesh and cut a cheque of \$ 29 billion, sending a frisson of excitement across the country. India now wants to push infrastructure projects into Bangladesh, alongside \$ 5 billion of credit and \$ 9.24 billion worth agreements, to fund power plants and supply liquefied natural gas.

Meanwhile, the Maldives is happy to accept large Chinese investments in building Male's new airport (which was taken away from India's GMR), as well as a housing estate.

It is important to note that Sri Lanka's Wickremasinghe is not thrilled with the high cost of Chinese loans that Colombo must now begin to repay for the port expansion in the capital and the Hambantota port in the south — all this, as India funds a \$ 350 million refurbishment of an 84-tank oil farm in Trincomalee.

And yet, the alacrity with which Wickremasinghe wanted to fly to Beijing is

reflection of the fact that he — like the other South Asian leaders — will not allow his affection for India to come in the way of his country's need for China.

With over \$ 3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, China is liberally using its spare cash to promote influence. In an article in the *Global Times*, Ding Gang, a senior editor with *People's Daily*, wrote, "...With the wheels of history turning into the 21st century, China has reinstated itself as the global economic centre."

OBOR, or as the Chinese now call it, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is the linchpin of President Xi's strategy to make China the world's richest and most powerful nation again. The monarchs of the Middle Kingdom were used to vassals kowtowing to their superior presence. Xi believes the BRI and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) — just like Marco Polo's ancient Silk Road, but much bigger and better connected — will unfold across the heartland of Central Asia down to the Indian Ocean, as well as across the Mediterranean and onwards into Europe. Trade and investment, which generates wealth, will be followed by influence.

In 2013, while formally naming the project, Xi had allotted a mere \$ 40 billion to it. But as the President's and his country's incredible ambition began to take shape, its scope increased exponentially.

The China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), established in late 2015 as a regional financing mechanism for OBOR, has an initial total capital of \$ 100 billion. As many as 50 Chinese state-owned undertakings are already part of 1,700 projects to develop ports, roads, railway lines and industrial parks. China's manufacturing machine will move both surplus goods and low-paying jobs to less affluent nations, while pulling up its own economy to enter a higher-income bracket such as Europe. Over the next decade,

Ding Gang wrote, the annual trade volume along the BRI route will exceed \$ 2.5 trillion and enrich about 1 billion people, the equivalent of the total population of Europe and the US.

Ding also made a point about the uniqueness of China's growth explosion:

"Different from the globalisation which began in Europe 500 years ago, the BRI is by no means a one-way flow of wealth enabled by the exploitation of the empires. It aims to build an active economic and trade corridor and an interconnectivity network in Asia, Europe and Africa, via stimulating the potential of these regions, creating an unprecedented convergence effect."

Indeed, *Xinhua*, the official Chinese press agency, has declared, "This is the China solution for global economic revival."

Certainly, the BRI is not a done deal — yet. At an ADB meeting in Japan last week, the Deputy Governor of the central bank of the Philippines, Diwa Guinigundo, pointed out that BRI was "still a vision, (and you) have to translate that into some working parts".

India, of course, remains the most put off by the summit in Beijing, not only because the CPEC, a key element of BRI, passes through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, but also probably because the summit is an accurate reflection of the widening chasm between the two Asian powers.

Chinese government officials, who say they have tried to alleviate India's apprehensions, point out that more than 50 MoUs, plans, cooperation letters and projects will be signed during the summit in the transportation, energy and communications sectors — besides a joint consultative document reflecting the "shared consensus" by all parties.

Xinhua invoked Confucius: "He who wants success should enable others to succeed."

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Why a meeting between Nagaland, Manipur CMs broke new ground this week

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP
GUWAHATI, MAY 11

ON TUESDAY, when Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh received his Nagaland counterpart Shurhozelie Liezietsu in Imphal, the two leaders opened a new chapter in the history of their states. Their meeting also underscored the dichotomy of the two states staying so far apart despite sharing borders.

Shurhozelie, 81, spent a little over 4 hours in the Manipur capital, during which he discussed with Biren Singh a range of issues that have been pending for decades; they also announced their resolve to find lasting solutions.

For years, both states have seen street protests against the other, with the mere mention of the "other" state triggering road a blockade or bandh by some or the other group. The 105-km stretch of National Highway 2 (the erstwhile NH39) leading to

Manipur had mostly remained shut or disrupted for more than a decade.

But on Tuesday, as Shurhozelie's chopper landed inside Imphal's Kangla Fort, hundreds of Manipuris held up posters of the Nagaland CM alongside that of Biren Singh, and raised slogans wishing them both a long life.

Before his departure for Kohima, Shurhozelie told reporters, "We are all aware that there were several crises in our two states. But with the change of guard here in Manipur, people have begun to see a ray of hope and a new dawn of peace is being heralded between the two states and the different communities in the region."

It was only on March 20, five days after the first BJP-led government took charge in Manipur, that the most recent road blockade — imposed by the United Naga Council, the apex body of the Nagas of Manipur, and lasting 139 days — was called off.

Shurhozelie's predecessor TR Zeliang —



Chief Ministers N Biren Singh (left) and Shurhozelie Liezietsu Tuesday. @NBirenSingh

who on Tuesday accompanied the CM in his capacity as chairman of the ruling Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) —

had, in fact, visited Manipur more than once in the past two years, his last visit having been to Senapati district in October 2016.

Going by local media reports, however, on both those occasions, his focus had been more on the Nagas and tribals of the Manipur hills rather than the entire people of the state.

Both Singh and Shurhozelie emphasised on learning to live together. Shurhozelie did, however, lament that "certain leaders had in the past manipulated and made use of the circumstances for their own selfish ends". But he also said that "a new era has dawned" now.

"We have to learn to live together in peace and harmony as our ancestors had done for ages. We shall continue to be good neighbours for ages to come," the Nagaland CM said, recognising the fact that the Meitei community were among the most advanced people in the Northeast. "The Meitei people should come forward to play the role of the big brother to other communities in the region. Learned scholars and intelligentsia from the Meitei community should also come forward and create a conducive environment for the

return of lasting peace and harmony," he said.

The CMs underlined the potential win-win situation once they started working together, with the Centre's Act East Policy holding out the promise of bringing economic benefits to the two states that share international boundaries with Myanmar.

Shurhozelie and Singh sharing the dais itself sent out positive signals; although no effort has been made yet to quantify the suffering that years of bitterness has brought to the common Naga and common Meitei, the fact is everyone wants an end to it.

The day after the visit, an Imphal newspaper wrote: "The governments of the two neighbouring states seem to have woken up to the need to foster better ties between them, and it is only right that people on either side reciprocate and see how they can make the new initiative more meaningful. One cannot choose one's neighbour and the right way forward should be to move closer together."

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WORDLY WISE

THE LESSON OF WATERGATE IS AMERICA MUST NEVER ALLOW AN ELITE GUARD OF POLITICAL ADOLESCENTS TO BY-PASS THE PARTY ORGANIZATION. — GERALD FORD

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

OPPOSITION WITHIN

BSP's expulsion of Naseemuddin Siddiqui signals a crisis for the Dalit party — and a syndrome in the non-BJP political space

THE EXPULSION OF Naseemuddin Siddiqui from the BSP on Wednesday is mired in charges and counter-charges from both sides. At least two stories, if not more, will be told about the unceremonious exit of a man who, over nearly three decades in the BSP, emerged a recognisable face in a party that brooks none apart from its supremo. One narrative, however, is already writ large — of a party coming apart in defeat. Siddiqui was at the centre of the BSP's strategy for the 2017 assembly election, in which Mayawati sought to woo Muslim votes, giving out nearly a hundred seats to Muslim candidates, to join them to the party's core base of Dalits. His ejection now follows close on the heels of that strategy's spectacular failure — in this election, the BSP sank to 19 seats, down from 80 in 2012. In fact, though it still posted a vote share of 22 per cent, BSP fortunes have been sinking in successive elections from its peak performance in 2007, when it formed the first single party majority government in UP since 1985, crossing the 25 per cent threshold in terms of vote share and expanding its footprint across the state.

But Siddiqui's ouster from the BSP is a moment notable for more than just the inability of the BSP to hold together in adversity. This is both because the BSP is a unique party and because its current disarray mirrors a larger political crisis. The specialness of the BSP comes from its being and becoming the vehicle for the political assertion of India's most disadvantaged, the Dalits. Mayawati's four tenures as chief minister have not only earned her a reputation as a firm administrator on the law and order front, they have also become a powerful symbol of inclusiveness in a democracy that, despite its several imperfections and unkept promises, makes it possible for a Dalit force to push its way through to becoming a viable alternative in India's politically most important state. When such a party seems unable to hold together — as the Siddiqui episode signals — its undoing, like its rise, has a larger resonance. In its expansion earlier, from Dalit to Bahujan to Sarvajan, and in its apparent shrinking now, more is at stake in the BSP's fortunes than just the BSP.

The BSP's decline also holds up a mirror to the building crisis in the ranks of non-BJP parties. Even as the Narendra Modi-led BJP conquers new political territories, its opposition seems to flounder. One of the main reasons for this appears to be the inability of the one-man, one-woman, or one-family party to weather the political setback. If the AAP seems riven by inner conflict after its underwhelming performance in Punjab and rout in Delhi's local polls, the AIADMK is still convulsed by the death of J. Jayalalitha and the SP faces a split in UP after defeat.

INSTITUTIONS, TRUMPED

US President's disrespect for due process is on spectacular display in the sacking of the FBI director

THE UNCEREMONIOUS DISMISSAL of James B. Comey, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), by US President Donald Trump is an attack on the American legal system which comes from the highest elected office in that country. The official justification for Comey's sacking is his "handling of the conclusion of the investigation of Secretary Clinton's emails". While Comey's conduct during the election is questionable, that excuse carries little weight. Trump praised Comey's decision to inform the US Congress of emails pertinent to the FBI's investigation into Hillary Clinton (later found to be insufficient to bring charges) just weeks before America voted in November. In fact, the insinuations could well have tipped the closely fought polls in Trump's favour. Comey's investigation into the Trump campaign's alleged ties to Russia, however, has the potential to bring down the presidency.

The investigation into team Trump has already implicated former campaign manager Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, a confidante of the US president. Michael Flynn was forced out as National Security Advisor because of his ties to Moscow, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions had to recuse himself from the investigation for failing to disclose his meetings with the Russian ambassador. It is now on Sessions's advice that the administration claims it has dismissed Comey. Most recently, Comey asked for resources to expand the ongoing probe. Against this backdrop, the firing of Comey is being compared to the Watergate scandal. Like in the episode that brought down Richard Nixon, Trump too has sacked an official looking into his own alleged misconduct, and in doing so, has arguably opened himself up to impeachment proceedings on grounds of obstruction of justice.

The spectre of Russian interference, in fact, is reminiscent of the US's interventions in Latin America through the Cold War. The lesson it must learn from its own actions is that democracy needs strong institutions as much as it does elections. Through his campaign, and as president, Trump has made his disdain for the norms and traditions of US politics and foreign policy clear. He has made statements offensive to minorities, women and immigrants. He has praised Russia and Vladimir Putin, and decried alliances that have helped cement the US's place in the world since World War II. He has also dismissed the entire political class, elected to office as he is, and promised to "drain the swamp in Washington". The same disrespect for institutions seems to show up at its worst in the dismissal of Comey.

MOONRISE

While other world leaders shorten their fuses, South Korea's new president stands out as the peacenik

MOON JAE-IN IS willing. While the US, China and North Korea play the most dangerous game, the new president of South Korea is willing to travel to prevent nuclear conflict in his region. He will even travel to Pyongyang if they promise not to strap him to a Nodong missile and light the fuse. But first, he has to manage the controversy over the US THAAD missile defence system, which was operationalised in South Korea earlier this month. Kim Jong-un is not the only person upset about the development. Interest groups in South Korea, which THAAD will protect, are upset because Beijing is volubly upset. American missile radars in the Korean peninsula can snoop on China. Moon must be feeling torn. The US is South Korea's most important strategic ally, while China is its biggest trading partner.

Seoul has got its first liberal president in decades, at precisely the right time, when the region needs the soothing touch. For years, the North Korean missile programme has focused on giving Californians the jitters. And now, the US has a nervy president who, experts have begun to warn, cannot be trusted with the nuclear codes. Washington is likely to be Moon's first destination, and he has also threatened to visit China and Japan, which is covered by the US nuclear umbrella. He hopes to pull together all the threads by which peace in Asia hangs.

The danger zone in Asia has shifted from the western zone to the Far East, the region which the world's only enthusiastically rogue nuclear state can menace most successfully. Moon has taken the path of wisdom, declining to engage with a neighbour in search of a fight. But he may find it hard to restart the tradition of inter-Korean summitry, on which he worked in the last decade.

A Vesak Day wish for Kashmir



NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

Let the land of Buddha's birth not turn its back on his wisdom, even as it preaches it to others in Sri Lanka

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi travels through Sri Lanka for the UN Vesak Day celebrations, he will speak and hear much about the teachings of the world's greatest pacifist, Gautama Buddha. He is also certain to be mindful of Sri Lanka's experience with war, victory, militarism, the challenges of conflict resolution, and getting to peace and reconciliation.

Eight years ago, almost exactly the week, Sri Lanka was engaged in a brutal endgame against the LTTE. After a bloody victory that gave no space even for a civilian body count, the search for a resolution continues, egged on by the international community, including India.

Only two weeks ago, New Delhi expressed the "earnest hope" to the visiting Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, that the United Nations Human Rights Council's "recommendations on reconciliation in Sri Lanka would be completed with the stipulated timeframe of two years."

That New Delhi should be advising reconciliation to a neighbour in a tough post-conflict situation is interesting. In Kashmir, India has ruled out any movement towards reconciliation "until the violence and terrorism end". Right now, it has been made clear, there will be no change in the "muscular approach".

Sri Lanka's Tamil question and the Kashmir issue are not similar, many will say. Yet, the same voices will admiringly point towards how the Sri Lankan military crushed the LTTE with sheer force to "end the terror, once and for all", and ask why India is not following the same path in Kashmir.

But if there are lessons to be drawn, it is not from the take-no-prisoners battles of May 2009 in Mullaitivu, but in the six decades of independent Sri Lanka's history that led up to the bloody climax of the conflict. The lessons are about how a country can sleepwalk into a full-blown war with its own citizens because of a half-century of missed opportunities and many historical mistakes; how a neighbouring power can, with the help of many devices at its disposal, including domestic politics, exploit a population across the border that feels alienated, bitter

and angry; how it will even provide arms and military training to sections of this population, building a monster that eventually bites the hand that fed it; and how despite the temptations, the use of muscle by a country against its own citizens may bring "victory", because the state is always stronger, but it cannot bring peace.

One particular verse from Buddha's teachings comes to mind: Victory breeds hatred; the defeated sleep in sorrow; the peaceful sleep happily, abandoning victory and defeat (Dhammapada Verse 201).

For more than half a century, national leaders from the Sinhalese majority reneged on their promises of federal autonomy to the Tamil minority; the repeated betrayals pushed moderate Tamil politicians towards separatism. Tamil politicians who continued to believe in national democratic institutions faced humiliation on the national stage. Young Tamils decided that their politicians could not deliver, and opted for the gun.

Most Tamil parents wanted their children to study and become civil servants, and even in the worst of times, underwent many difficulties to ensure that their sons and daughters attended school. Wailing Tamil parents sat on dharna outside militant camps where their children had been conscripted. On the other hand, the army, and sections of the majority, treated the entire Tamil people, especially if they were below 35 years old, as terrorists. There were repeated demands from Sinhalese nationalists for altering the demography of Northeast Sri Lanka where the "terrorists" lived, and some areas were "colonised". On both sides, thousands of combatants were killed. Soldiers' widows demanded revenge. Families of disappeared Tamils struggled to cope. Mass graves surfaced. Say what anyone will about the differences, Sri Lanka, from the 1950s through to the first decade of the 21st century, sounds eerily like Kashmir.

Conservative estimates place the number of civilian deaths in Sri Lanka in the war's end stages at 40,000. According to other estimates, it could have been as high as 70,000. There is nothing to admire or emulate here.

Big or small, no nation pays that kind of price and comes out unscathed.

In a public lecture in Colombo in 2010, the Sri Lankan civil servant, diplomat and Buddhist scholar, Ananda W.P. Guruge, spoke eloquently on the Buddha's teachings on reconciliation. He was speaking in the context of Sri Lanka's own post-war struggles at reconciliation, 18 months after the military "victory", at a time when Sinhalese majoritarianism and militarism was at an all-time high.

He spoke in detail about the inscriptions on Ashoka's 12th Rock Edict. This message from the king, who had turned into a devoted Buddhist after presiding over a carnage on the Kalinga battlefield, had four main points.

"Treating and supporting all factions alike without discrimination in the development of 'their inner essence' (for example, their cultural specificity); restraint in speech (vacguti) by not criticising the opponent inappropriately and, even where criticism is justified, by using civil language; Coming to know the point of view of the opponent or, more precisely, putting oneself in the other's shoes; getting together (*samavayo sadhu*) with the opponent for consultation, compromise and consensus." Ashoka may well have written that message for our times.

Guruge also highlighted that in the *aparahaniya-dhamma*, the seven principles laid down by the Buddha for preventing social, political or religious decline and degeneration of any community, the first principle was getting together regularly for deliberations. Pragmatic as the Buddha was, he understood that conflict is inevitable, but there are ways to deal with it.

As Modi seeks to strengthen India's civilisational bonds with Sri Lanka through the common legacy of a wise man who lived more than 2,500 years ago, it is hard not to think in this Vesak week that the land of his birth has turned its back on his wisdom even as it preaches reconciliation in Sri Lanka. It is hard not to think that what Kashmir needs urgently today is a modern day Buddha.

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SHAH ALAM KHAN

AT THE INAUGURATION of a hospital in Surat recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his government's intent to bring in a law whereby doctors will have to prescribe only generic medicines. Any conscientious citizen of the country, doctors included, will applaud this initiative as it intends to provide direct financial relief to the common man and limit the influence of major private companies in the pharmaceutical market. Unfortunately, the outcome of the initiative may turn out to be unhealthy in practice.

As with most policies, the devil is in the detail. In India, the unholy doctor-pharma nexus results in a symbiotic relationship leading to unnecessary, expensive prescriptions. This, of course, is a matter of grave concern. But it is important to realise that besides the doctor, this unholy nexus also has the pharmaceutical company as an equal partner. The intended legal proposal of the government has the means to rein in the doctor to an extent, but the pharmaceutical company goes unscathed. At present, these companies "bribe" doctors into writing drugs of their choice because doctors have the power to prescribe medicines. Once this power is taken away, as intended by the proposed law, the onus of giving the branded generic drug will be with the chemist. It doesn't require rocket science to understand where the pharmaceutical companies will focus then.

There is a chronic shortage of drug inspectors who look after quality control at manufacturing and dispensing sites of medicines.

CURE LIES ELSEWHERE

Generic medicines can't be the first, or only, step to reduce the cost of treatment

In 2010, 55 per cent posts of drug inspectors in Maharashtra were lying vacant. In the absence of stringent controls over dispensing chemists in the country, the move will create havoc. Besides substituting prescribed drugs, chemists could be selling more expensive generic drugs to patients, thereby defeating the very purpose of the law.

Quality is the other major issue with generic drugs. In the last couple of years, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) has initiated action against many Indian pharmaceutical companies for alleged violation of good manufacturing practices and other irregularities at the drug manufacturing facilities. This happened mainly with generic drugs, which were manufactured in India and exported to the US. With such poor-quality controls in manufacturing, the intent of the legislation will be compromised.

It looks as if the government wants to work in reverse direction to cleanse the grimy Indian drug market. A logical step would have been to institute better quality control in the manufacture of generic drugs first, test their bioequivalence with standard branded medicines, build doctor and patient confidence on the product and then, push for a change in prescription behaviour of physicians. In fact, research papers from across the globe show that physicians need to be reassured and educated about the Drug Regulatory Authority approval system of generic medicines regarding their bioequivalence, quality, efficacy and safety to facilitate use.

ence, quality, efficacy and safety to facilitate use.

The policy to implement legislation for the prescription of generic drugs by doctors is a good move, no doubt. But the haste shown by the government in bringing this measure is odd and populist. It is extremely important to reduce the burden of health-related costs on common people, but instead of jumping the gun on generic medicines, alternative methods to reduce costs and improving quality of drugs should be given priority. Bringing in a National Medicine Pricing Policy would be a simple but very effective way in controlling drug prices, without taking away the choice of prescription from doctors. This could be easily done through the government's National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority. Prescription pattern monitoring rules need to be implemented stringently to dent the doctor-pharma nexus. Increasing drug manufacturing units and investing heavily in drug research and development will effectively make India "drug self-sufficient" with a wider and cost-effective "drug reach". Better control of branded generics and patent generics are also measures the government should work on. The government should realise that intent reveals desire, but action reveals commitment. Half-hearted action will only jeopardise future action.

The writer is professor, Department of Orthopaedics, AIIMS, New Delhi



MAY 12, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

TROUBLE IN JANATA

THE UP LEADERS of the Congress for Democracy (CFD) met in Lucknow and decided not to attend the meetings of the Janata Party election committee and to protest to the party president against "the internal dictatorship of one individual". A spokesperson said the CFD and the Socialist Party felt irked about "strong arms methods" and "designs to eliminate them". The crisis in the election committee deepened when the CFD representative, Raj Mangal Pandey, was manhandled. The panel could also not meet because the BLD group replaced three of its four nominees, which triggered a wave of resentment in some sections of the BLD.

JANATA NOW A PARTY

THE ELECTION COMMISSION has recognised the Janata Party as a national party with the reserved symbol of "haldhar within wheel". The recognition has come of the eve of assembly elections and after the completion of merger formalities by the four constituent units of the Congress (O), Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party.

MARUTI ACCOUNTS

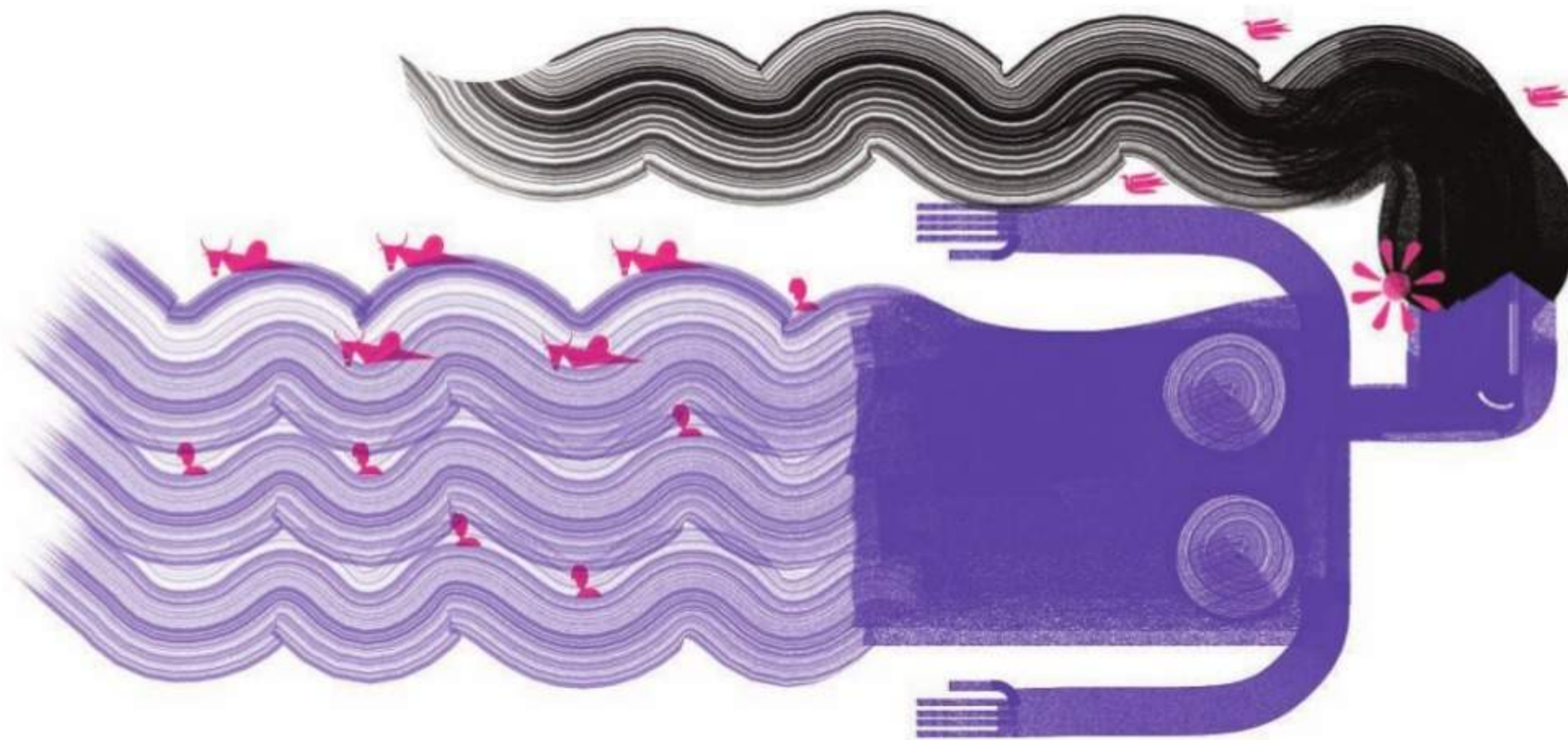
THE BANK ACCOUNTS of Maruti Limited, Sanjay Gandhi's small car project, have been frozen in an attempt to recover the money the Maruti Limited had taken from two na-

tionised banks. Sources said that the frozen accounts had less than Rs 25,000 while the loans advanced to the company amounted to Rs 1.5 crore. The Central Bank of India and Punjab National Bank had given to the small car project loans of Rs 75 lakh each despite objections from the Reserve Bank.

RAY AND CWC

THE FORMER CHIEF Minister of West Bengal Siddhartha Shankar Ray has declined the Congress president's offer for membership of the working committee. Ray sent a letter to K. Brahmananda Reddy also saying he would not stand for the forthcoming Assembly elections in his state.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE



C R Sasikumar

Once upon a river

Ganga and Yamuna are legal persons now. What does this mean for these cesspools of pollutants, still revered by people, but which have lost any connect to their lived experiences?



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

IN THE THIRD week of March, while welcoming the rivers Ganga and Yamuna as legal persons, Justice Rajiv Sharma and Justice Alok Singh of the Uttarakhand High Court observed that they were inspired by lawmakers in New Zealand. Barely a week earlier, the New Zealand Parliament had conferred legal personhood to the country's third longest river, the Whanganui, bringing to an end a more than 140-year old dispute.

In 1840, when the Maori tribes ceded sovereignty to the British colonists, the Treaty of Waitangi promised protection of their natural resources including the Whanganui. But the treaty was observed only in the breach, leading the communities, who profess a deep spiritual connection to the Whanganui, to take the issue of ownership of the river to the courts in the early 1870s. As the protracted dispute drew to a close, Maoris at the gallery in New Zealand's Parliament broke into a song of celebration. Some wept tears of joy.

In India, in contrast, where the Ganga is known to have more than 100 names (some say even 1,000), there was scarcely any rejoicing after the Uttarakhand High Court verdict. Even environmentalists were guarded in their response; some were sceptical. A month later, the Madhya Pradesh government's decision to treat the Narmada as a person passed by virtually unnoticed — except for a few media reports.

Granting legal rights to the Whanganui took eight years of careful negotiation and intense public debate that was not without its moments of fun — New Zealanders joked if the river might now buy a few "hoppy" beers, vote or be penalised for murder if a swimmer drowns. The Uttarakhand verdict, in contrast, was a matter of few days of stolid courtroom deliberation.

Rivers, it seems, have gone out of the lives of large numbers of people in India, in cities surely. They do become part of public discourse, but only as items of disputes between riparian states, or as beneficiaries — or victims — of large projects or when they go into spate and cause havoc, sometimes even when

they run dry. But the river as a part of people's day-to-day experiences is rarely a matter of public conversation.

In an article in the environment fortnightly, *Down To Earth*, the Marathi writer Karuna Futane recalls, "The river was a mother and a bosom pal to women, children, farmers, cattle, birds, insects, animals. A visit to the river meant cleansing and freshening up, inner and outer. You went back from the river rested and healed". But it's unlikely that rivers today will evoke the excitement experienced by the historian Tapan Raychaudhuri, as a child growing up in Barisal in what is now Bangladesh, in the 1930s. In his memoir, *The World in Our Time*, Raychaudhuri recalls, "The river flowing by our bungalow was a source of endless thrills. There was the fear of drowning. And what were those dark things floating too close to one for comfort? Crocodiles or pieces of dry wood? Then there were Kanagats, small river sharks."

The Hindi writer Phanishwar Nath Renu's account of the Patna floods of 1975, in *Rindjal Dhanjal*, has forebodings of the disconnect between urban life and the ways of the river. Amazed at the hordes rushing to watch the rushing waters, one villager remarks, "When Danapur was getting submerged the Pataniya babulog did not even bother to look back. It's your turn now". Futane's lament — in a different context — is more vivid. "When I told my sons I was going to write about my relationship with the rivers, they were surprised. What is there to write? And what rivers? They are just dirty nullahs. The truth of this strikes me when I look at the rivers now. Sewage and plastic bags," she writes.

The Ganga is one such sorry receptacle of garbage. Over the three decades, much money has gone into cleaning this cesspool: More than Rs 1,800 crore under the Ganga Action Plan in its various avatars. The current government intends to spend more than 10 times this amount: Rs 20,000 crore over five years on the Namami Gange Project. But the project that took off last year is an improvement on its predecessor in very few respects. There are programmes to develop interceptor drains, plant trees and improve the composition of river species. There are also plans to develop Ganga Grams — villages where people will be educated in reducing pollution. Other than that, the project is a replica of the Ganga Action Plan in its emphasis on sewage treatment plants.

Such plants can only do so much because a large section of the country's urban pollution lives outside the reach of sewer-

age networks. Under the Ganga Action Plan, for instance, the lag between the sewage generation and treatment never went below 50 per cent. Water cleaned by the treatment plants also needs a final cleansing at the river. Where is the water for that? With more than 40 dams, barrages and weirs — and many more planned — the Ganga is drained of her lifeblood. Many of the 21 tributaries and distributaries of the Ganga are little more than seasonal streams — so are many other rivers in the country.

This state-of-affairs goes against a fundamental axiom of hydrology: A river has to keep flowing. The Ganga was once known to jump over mountains, a characteristic that gave her the name Lila Lamghita Parvata. As the Ramganga in parts of Uttar Pradesh, it changed course frequently, drawing flak in the folk song, "Tu kyun kunwari rah gayee ri Ramganga".

Legalese can only afford a stunted — and drab — expression to such characteristics. The Uttarakhand High Court observes, "The Rivers Ganga and Yamuna, all their tributaries, streams, every natural water flowing with flow continuously or intermittently of these rivers, are declared as juristic/legal persons/living entities having the status of a legal person with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person in order to preserve and conserve river Ganga and Yamuna." Its inspiration, the New Zealand Parliament, asked two members of the Maori community to represent the Whanganui. In India, where the river is venerated and abused at the same time, the Uttarakhand court took an easy way out of the paradox. It named the director of the Namami Gange project, Uttarakhand's chief secretary, and the state's advocate general, as the Ganga's "legal parents".

Divested of her adulthood, the ancient river should expect more of the same after the verdict.

Meanwhile, in Kerala's Alappuzha district, a village panchayat has revived the Kuttemperoor, a channel of the Pamba and Achankovil rivers. The river, which was thick with weeds and had become a cesspool of pollutants in the past 10 years, was revived after 70 days of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Will the feat of 700-odd people in Alappuzha, mostly women, change the discourse on rivers in the country?

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The American people — not to mention the credibility of the world's oldest democracy — require a thorough, impartial investigation into the extent of Russia's meddling with the 2016 presidential election." — THE NEW YORK TIMES

Error of judgement

The selection process that led to Justice Karnan becoming a judge needs revisiting



SIDHARTH LUTHRA

THE SAGA of Justice C.S. Karnan reached its low point on May 9 with the Supreme Court sentencing him to six months for contempt. The merit of initiating *suo motu* contempt proceedings by the Supreme Court and the orders, issuing warrants and directions for medical examination, have been debated enough. But I am more concerned with the fundamental issues that have emerged and require serious thought by every democratic institution.

Justice demands that lawyers, litigants and the general public have utmost confidence and trust in the judges and the courts over which they preside. Courts are the refuge for citizens and individuals for redressal of their rights and to protect them from arbitrary and unlawful actions. Hence, judges are required to adopt a higher standard of rectitude in their behaviour to continue to inspire confidence in seekers of justice — the people at large.

That this episode has caused great damage to the justice delivery system and the higher judiciary is reflected in the media having had a field day reporting the cross-fire of orders. Though the story has really worked itself out, the Supreme Court has, on May 9, forbidden the media from reporting any further "orders" or statements given by Justice Karnan.

My first concern is the need to re-evaluate the selection process that led to the appointment of Justice Karnan. Clearly, the selection process omitted effective consideration of his fitness to act as a judge. This failure is not of the collegium alone that recommended him but it appears that no red flags were raised by the agencies that are tasked with background checks and security clearance.

Normally, judges of high courts are appointed as additional judges, first, and then as a permanent judge. In this case, noting his conduct since 2011, Justice Karnan, whose initial appointment was two years ago, appears to have been unfit even then. Yet, he slipped through the cracks, making it clear that scrutiny was inadequate. In the 2010/2011 proceedings for the removal of Soumitra Sen of the Calcutta High Court, it became apparent that even at the time of Justice Sen's elevation, material facts of his being custodian of funds as a Court Receiver were not disclosed by him and escaped consideration.

The Supreme Court, in *SCAORA v. Union case* (1993), recorded the need for an "independent and impartial judiciary manned by the persons of sterling quality and character, undaunting courage and determination and resolute impartiality and independence who would dispense justice without fear or favour, ill will or affection." The Sixth Conference of the Chief Justices of

Asia and the Pacific adopting the Statement of Principles on Independence of the Judiciary prescribed that "Judges shall uphold the integrity and independence of the Judiciary by avoiding impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all their activities."

Such activities are both inside the court and outside it. Justice Karnan was appointed as an additional judge in 2009. He was confirmed as a permanent judge in 2011. In the same year, in an unprecedented move, addressing a press conference from his chambers he claimed caste-based harassment by his brother judges and wrote to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. From 2014 onwards, his conduct has kept him in the news; this is completely dissonant with the principle that judges should be heard of through their judgments alone.

Article 217 of the Constitution provides due protection for the appointment of high court judges and a stringent procedure for the removal of a high court judge. The procedure to be followed for removal is through inquiry by a Parliament-appointed committee. The Judges Inquiry Act, 1968 regulates the process of removal of judges. Proceedings before the committee appointed under this act are unique in the manner of procedure and safeguards. The mandate of such a committee is to investigate the misbehaviour or incapacity of a judge.

Finding that there needs to be action against judges who do not follow "universally accepted values", the Supreme Court on December 15, 1999 adopted the Report of the Committee on In-House Procedure to take suitable remedial action against erring judges. This procedure was created to deal with allegations against a judge pertaining to the discharge of his judicial functions.

In Justice Karnan's case, this in-house procedure appears not to have been resorted to. The in-house procedure provides for the CJ to advise a judge to resign or seek voluntary retirement. If the judge does not resign or retire, the chief justice (of the high court) can be advised not to allocate any judicial work, and the matter brought to the notice of the president and prime minister.

Whether Justice Karnan's conduct was brought to the notice of the president or prime minister is not in the public domain. But his actions have received extensive media coverage. The power to remove a judge is vested with the Members of Parliament (in view of Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution). They may move a motion for the removal of a judge on grounds of proved misbehaviour and/or incapacity, which remedy was available, but not (yet) exercised.

Justice Karnan is at the end of his tenure and the contempt proceedings against him stand concluded. However, for the future we need serious contemplation from all limbs of our democracy to prevent such a situation and to ensure that only those of "sterling quality, character and courage" occupy the high constitutional office of a judge.

The writer is a senior advocate, visiting professor at Northumbria University and a former Additional Solicitor General of India

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PARTY IN CRISIS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'In EC's parlour' (IE, May 11). The AAP's obsession with EVMs has to end because it is not leading the party anywhere. By holding a demonstration with an EVM-like machine in the Delhi assembly, the party has not shown something great. The Election Commission has said, many times, that the EVMs are fool-proof. Its invitation to various political parties shows the EC's openness to show them that the machine cannot be tampered. The AAP should do better to focus on governance issues and fulfilling the tall promises it made to Delhi's voters. The party is losing gradually losing ground and it will not be long before the voters teaches it another lesson.

Bal Govind, Noida

FACTS DON'T LIE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Look at the facts of demonetisation, not politics' (IE, May 11). It was said that demonetisation will dry out Naxal and terrorist funding but this did not happen. The Naxal recently attacked Sukma in Chattisgarh, where we lost CRPF Jawans. Terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir is also on rise. The author rightly points out that demonetisation will only hurt the poor and unorganised sectors.

Suchak D. Patel, Ahmedabad

WRONG REFERENCE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Remake the

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com 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

marriage contract' (IE, May 11). Article 15 does not explicitly mention allowing discrimination on the basis of race, religion and caste when it comes to use of private wells. To imply that it "permits" such discrimination goes against the spirit of the Constitution and does it a disservice. Moreover, Article 17 prohibits the practice of "untouchability" in any form.

Akshansh Verma, New Delhi

THE Urdu PRESS

CORRUPTION AND AAP

INQUILAB, IN ITS editorial on May 8, writes: "Following the sensational charge of accepting bribes against Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal made by his sacked minister Kapil Mishra, it has become imperative for Kejriwal to come out with his version of the truth without any delay... AAP was the first political party that was neither formed on the basis of any ideology nor did take it the garb of any 'ism'. It was born out of a campaign against corruption that attracted nationwide attention. Those connected with the party would not be able to face the people if the charges of corruption against the very symbol of fight against corruption are proved."

The paper adds: "One needs to know why Kapil Mishra did not reveal the money having been received by Kejriwal, as claimed by him, on the same day. Despite his claim of Kejriwal's confession to him about certain political compulsions, why did he wait to be sacked before levelling charges against the chief minister... Since Mishra's mother, Annapurna Mishra, is a senior BJP leader from Delhi, one has to see if there is someone else behind the mysterious course of allegations."

Rashtriya Sahara, on May 9, writes: "The people have every right to know about the machinations and misdeeds of popularly elected governments. But is it also not necessary that the tendency to go after popularly elected governments under different pretexts or by using some insiders as instruments should be given up and an internal tug-of-war be avoided?"

PUNITIVE DIFFERENCE

THERE HAVE BEEN questions about the inconsistency between verdicts of the Supreme Court and the Bombay High Court in two similar cases of gang rape — in Delhi in December 2012 and of Bilkis Bano (then five months pregnant) during the Gujarat riots in February-March 2002. The daily *Sahafat*, in its editorial on May 8, highlights the statements of some leading legal lights. According to eminent woman lawyer, Rebecca John, "the case of Bilkis Bano was of the same level of barbarity (as the Delhi case), if not more, and yet the Bombay High Court did not award the tyrants death sentences (as has been done in Nirbhaya's case). Since I am opposed to death sentence, I cannot support such a punishment in the Bilkis Bano case. Yet, as an example, I ask why at the time of giving pun-

ishment, the judiciary does not maintain uniformity. It awards death sentence to some, but not to some others. No transparency is seen between the verdicts." A similar view has been expressed by eminent lawyer, Prashant Bhushan, also an opponent of death sentence.

Akhbar-e-Mashriq, in its editorial on May 7, writes: "The intense interest that people took in the Delhi case has not been seen in others. What could be the reason for this? Is the (flawed) mindset, hidden within our conscience, behind this matter too?... Bilkis was five months pregnant and many of her many family members — including her three-year old daughter — were killed. In fact, this crime was graver than that in the Nirbhaya case, but the perpetrators of this heinous crime were given life sentences, not death penalties."

SIMULTANEOUS POLLS?

SIASAT, IN ITS editorial on May 1, writes: "The proposal to have elections to Parliament and state assemblies simultaneously, put forth by Prime Minister Narendra Modi many times, could have far-reaching effects. This issue is connected with the democratic structure of the country. No decision in this regard can be made on the basis of someone's desire

or on considerations of facilities in conducting elections... Any government elected by the will of the people has the right to order elections even before they are due. If the elections to Parliament and state assemblies are tied together, this right would be taken away... If the government actually wants to control the heavy expenditure on elections and prevent malpractices, it should seriously examine the proposals for electoral reforms and implement them."

Jadeed Khabar, in its May 2 editorial, writes: "It has to be kept in view that elections are not conducted merely as an administrative formality based on certain prescribed procedures and principles. They are also dependent on the situations and developments taking place in the various states from time to time... The interest of any political party or convenience in the conduct of these elections should not be given priority in this matter. Removing the flaws in the electoral process and bringing about electoral reforms are the need of the hour. Without such steps, malpractices (including foul use of money) cannot be checked whether elections are held simultaneously or separately."

Compiled by Seema Chishti