



**A thought for today**

*We are really tired of these wars.  
Women and children are suffering*

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

# Terror Hotbed

Washington's indictment of Islamabad reaffirms the latter's status as regional headache

The Trump administration may have stiffed India on H-1B visas, leading to large layoffs by IT companies in India. But on the real reason for deteriorating ties between India and Pakistan the Trump administration has told like it is, stepping away from the hyphenation and waffling that often characterised previous US administrations' approach to the subcontinent. Daniel Coats, the new administration's director of national intelligence, offered testimony to US lawmakers that Islamabad's continued support to terrorists and New Delhi's growing intolerance of this was threatening regional security, which is further undermined by Pakistan's pursuit of tactical nuclear weapons. All of these points validate India's position that Pakistan is the source of instability in South Asia.

For far too long Pakistan has pulled the wool over the world's eyes by claiming that it is a frontline state against terrorism. That the US treasury department announced follow-up sanctions against Pakistani terror groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa, within hours of the new assessment shows growing exasperation at Islamabad's duplicity.

If Pakistan says that it too is a victim of terror attacks—as highlighted by the recent Islamic State-claimed bombing in Balochistan targeting a Pakistani politician that killed at least 25 people—what it shows is that Pakistan's deep state—the ISI-military complex—is losing control over the Frankenstein's monster it has unleashed. And that is because it follows a selective, equivocal policy towards this monster: nurturing the “good” (read anti-India, anti-Afghanistan) terror groups while fighting the “bad” (read anti-Pakistan). That such a strategy is blowing up in its face is evident even in Jammu & Kashmir, where a new breed of separatism as exemplified by militant commander Zakir Bhat, touted as Burhan Wani's successor, is threatening violence even against separatist leaders who act as Pakistan's proxies. Bhat has clearly stated that the goal of Kashmir's armed movement is not political but religious, and by those standards even the Pakistan establishment is too “secular”.

In sum, Pakistan's Janus-faced policies fool neither terror groups nor the world. It must speedily decide which side it is on. It may look to China to ward off international isolation. However, as Beijing pushes its One Belt, One Road initiative—of which the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a showpiece element—it should know that failing to get Islamabad to crack down on terror groups will only leave Chinese infrastructure projects open to extremist attacks.



# Vigilantes Again

It is time for CM Adityanath to decisively end this menace in UP

Cow vigilantes beat up six people for allegedly slaughtering a buffalo in Agra last week. And as is their wont the police appear to have been complicit in this case as well, booking the victims while letting the perpetrators go. Such complicity only ensures that violence by gau rakshaks spreads. And it is part of a larger trend of fringe elements taking the law into their own hands. In another incident, 10 Muslim families fled their village in western UP's Sambhal district after a Muslim man “eloped” with a Hindu woman and Muslim villagers were subsequently attacked by mobs even as police allegedly stood down, again.

These incidents threaten to derail chief minister Adityanath's “tough” image as someone who can uphold the rule of law. Moreover, the law itself needs to be reasonable rather than draconian. The crackdown on cattle slaughter in UP is akin to prohibition in neighbouring Bihar. In both cases governments are determined to implement their agendas without considering their economic fallout or even feasibility. According to experts, it costs almost Rs 60 per day for upkeep of one head of cattle after it stops giving milk. This cost would break the back of the poor farmer, or even of the state exchequer if the latter assumes this cost.

The response of the Allahabad high court—which observed last week that people have a right to adequate means of livelihood and choice of food and asked the government to issue new licences to slaughterhouses—is therefore the only reasonable one. To prevent cruelty to animals, Adityanath should regulate slaughterhouses so that they modernise their techniques and employ painless methods of slaughter. Alongside Adityanath must deal with the menace of cow vigilantism now, before it's too late and religious strife breaks out.



# Prez ganged

The pets and pet hates of US presidents till Trump

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Modern historians rate it the most powerful office in the world, loaded with the most awesome responsibilities. Donald Trump stepped lightly into it, claiming he had answers to all problems, and it would be a cakewalk.

Apparently, it is more quicksand than cakewalk, and therefore more work and more difficult than he anticipated. So now the finger pointing has begun. Everyone else is to blame—from the bureaucracy, to Congress, to his pet hate, the media.

There has not been a US president who has not complained about the media. “If one morning I walked on top of the water across the Potomac River, the headline that afternoon would read: President Can't Swim,” sneered Lyndon Johnson at the “nattering nabobs of negativity”, as former vice-president Spiro Agnew characterised the media. Implicit in Johnson's metaphorical construct was the idea that presidents can walk on water, a boast worthy of Trump.

Self-effacement is a pre-requisite for the Oval Office. Other presidents have come into the White House with a reputation of being lightweight, and have used self-deprecation to disarm critics. Accused of nodding off during meetings, Ronald Reagan joked, “I have left orders to be awakened at any time during national emergency, even if I'm in a cabinet meeting.”

Even the greatest of American presidents forsook vanity and conceit. Accused of double dealing Abraham Lincoln, reputedly among the ugliest of US presidents, drolly replied, “If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?”

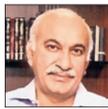
Most presidents run into rough weather only towards the end of their term if they have not delivered the goods, and there's not much they can do about it. “Being president is like being a jackass in a hailstorm. There's nothing to do but to stand there and take it,” warned Johnson. Rocked by multiple crises, including the Iran hostage fiasco, Jimmy Carter dryly observed towards the end of his presidency, “My esteem in this country has gone up substantially. It is very nice now when people wave at me, they use all their fingers.”

In contrast, Trump's troubles began from the get-go when he discovered the reality of office within the 12 square miles of Washington DC (which his purported idol Andrew Jackson thought was 12 square miles bordered by reality). Left with few allies, Trump may well consider Harry Truman's advice that “If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.” After all, he is the first president in 150 years who does not have a pet.

# A Government With Purpose

Modi has transformed the mood from despair to optimism about the future

MJ Akbar



Everyone knows, as the old gag puts it, that half the time in government is wasted, but no one knows which half.

Indian voters, turned cynical by experience, are rarely in a hurry to believe that the political class can be a force for the good. But when they find a national government with purpose, pace, direction, not only is it in a hurry but also confident about horizons, it is logical that the initial electoral chemistry has begun to mature into alchemy.

There was enough reason for cynicism in 2014. A decade of sinking growth and exploding corruption had stripped the electorate of hope, and drained out any illusion. The corrosive by-product of frustration is intense anger. But in a charismatic eight-month election campaign, Narendra Modi transformed the mood from despair to optimism about the future.

The problem was that change cannot come at the speed of magic. Stunned opposition parties, demanding instant delivery, fanned a backlash with a ferocity that, in hindsight, only confirms how anxious they were about their immediate relevance. However, Prime Minister Modi's nerves are dipped in steel. In less than three years, trust has returned to the grassroots; self-belief is back in the air.

That was confirmed in UP. Elections are a natural barometer in democracy. But there is also much to learn from corners where elections are neither in process nor even imminent; where the storm has not yet broken, but fresh winds are beginning to whisper.

Quiz question: Which part of British India did not become independent on 15 August 1947? Answer: Maldah, Bengal. A magistrate from what was then East Pakistan was administrator for two days, till 17 August, before the tricolour was unfurled to end confusion (other disputed territories were either European colonies like Goa, or princely states like Hyderabad; not part of British India).

The reason was demographic.



Maldah is a Muslim-majority district adjoining Bangladesh, watered by a generous Ganga before it splits at Farakka into Hooghly river while the other tributary decants across the eastern border. Maldah has history; perhaps too much of it. It is mentioned in Puranic texts as Gour, capital of ancient Bengal, and remained as the seat of power through the famed Pala dynasty, and then into the era of Sultanate and Mughal nawabs.

Since the 1950 general elections Maldah has been consistently loyal to Congress. I visited Maldah in mid-April for a political foray into a small township called Gazole, a modest cluster of shops and homes serving a large rural hinterland. It would be immodest to call the gathering at our public meeting a crowd. Between the partisan and the curious, the number could not have been more than 2,000.

Bengali voters are the vociferous centre of a noisy democracy, but they take their time over any decision. A good place from where to observe any shift in thinking is the dais at a public meeting. An audience's mind is visible through

## The voter is witnessing something unusual. The era of cosy back-scratching between elites is over

eyes, gestures, a silent nod or loud applause. It was clear to me that another churn has begun, although how far it travels depends on both the predictable and the unforeseen. But if Maldah is in play, you can be certain that any stronghold is no longer very strong.

Objectively speaking, voter stability is a bit baffling, given the stagnant rural economy, disparity and rising aspirations. Sectarian loyalties of course play their role. But if a seven-decade status quo is now wobbling, there is one primary reason: corruption.

Corruption switched from background resentment in Bengal to foreground anger thanks to a sting operation, relayed continuously on television, which showed Trinamool MPs and state ministers taking bribes and stuffing cash into their pockets. Mamata Banerjee, who has

always claimed to live on high moral ground, startled people by publicly justifying this blatant bribery in her usual belligerent manner. This became, for voters, collateral evidence for rumours that her close relatives were on the take in a growing culture of malfeasance. The current talk is that her high-pitched rage against demonetisation was fuelled by loss of stashed currency.

Corruption was a game changer in 2014, but that game now seems to be the semi-final. The finals will be in 2019. Interestingly, opposition leaders with highest profiles are currently stumbling through this swamp. Congress, with its familiar repertoire of in-laws and out-laws, is led by a dynasty that has added financial manipulation and asset transfers in the National Herald to its woes. Lalu Prasad, already convicted, is back under scrutiny while his political heirs are beset with accusations of receiving property through “gifts” and ghost companies.

Mayawati has to worry about allegations of extortion just made by her trusted aide, Naseemuddin Siddiqui. A senior minister in the Delhi government, Kapil Mishra, is ripping apart the façade of virtue around Arvind Kejriwal.

The voter is witnessing something unusual. The era of cosy back-scratching between elites is over. No one lives above the law. Colourful personalities like Vijay Mallya are discovering that money does not buy immunity. The voter welcomed demonetisation because it was part of the same narrative. Best of all, there are no allegations against the present government, in sharp contrast to the Congress decade before 2014.

This systematic and sustained mission segues easily into the larger story of good governance, with rapid elimination of harsh poverty as its central objective. India's poor believe that corruption is theft of public money. Massive investment into social welfare is beginning to change their lives. They believe the PM when he says that the first fruits and largest share of growth must go to those who need it most, the impoverished.

And they know that Narendra Modi has no time to waste.

The writer is Minister of State for External Affairs

# ‘Seniors must ensure safety of jawans ... 50% participation should be from state police in operations against Red terror’

**RR Bhatnagar** recently took over as Director General of Central Reserve Police Force in challenging times. The post was vacant for over two months, a period during which the force had lost 25 of its men in one of the worst Maoist terror attacks in Chhattisgarh. The 1983 batch UP cadre officer, who earlier served as DG of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), leads CRPF's three-lakh personnel and has been visiting three states worst hit by Maoist terror—MP, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. He spoke exclusively to **Subhash Mishra** on the challenges his men face, CRPF's new anti-insurgency strategies and the way ahead.

**■ You have taken over at a most challenging time when jawans are perishing in the battle against the underground Maoists. How are you planning to change the situation in your favour?**

True that we lost lives of 25 jawans, but it is also true that Maoists are on the run and we have been squeezing them out from their hideouts. If you compare the figures, the tally shows the number of jawans being killed has declined over the years and the casualties on the opposite side have doubled. The general trend in the LWEG (left wing extremist groups) theatre is that of decreasing Maoist

influence and consolidation of successful operations by CRPF and state police.

**■ What's your future strategy to take them on?**

We have reviewed and redrawn a completely new strategy while dealing with the LWEGs and first major decision has been the shifting of an ADG-rank officer from Kolkata to Chhattisgarh with instructions that CRPF troops who take to the field in combative operations must be supervised from the headquarters and control rooms and backed with every possible support—technological, logistical and operational with main emphasis on intelligence inputs.

**■ What changes need to be brought in at the field level?**

The combat operations against these groups, most of them underground or hiding with the rural and tribal populations, should not be carried out in isolation by central forces. It has to be joint operations with the state personnel leading from the front. The standard operating procedures (SOP) have to be changed and state and regional factors have to be included as a must. Our boys are unacquainted with the local language and topography. They are strangers in inaccessible forests while the state police is well acquainted with territory held by Maoist groups. This gap has to be

bridged for the successful liquidation of the marauding Maoists and to carry out developmental projects and implement welfare measures.

**■ Is there any special training plan for jawans deployed in Red zones?**

No new training, but there will be more emphasis on infrastructure, technology and intelligence from all quarters.

**■ Will the joint operations also have participation from army and air force?**

No. As of now, the joint operations will have state and central paramilitary forces only.

**■ What are the lessons learnt from recent attacks on security forces?**

We have to ensure 50% participation from the state forces in joint operations. That, you can say, is a major change in strategy after the recent attacks.

**■ Do you think that the Maoists have political backing too?**

I would not comment on that as Centre is looking into

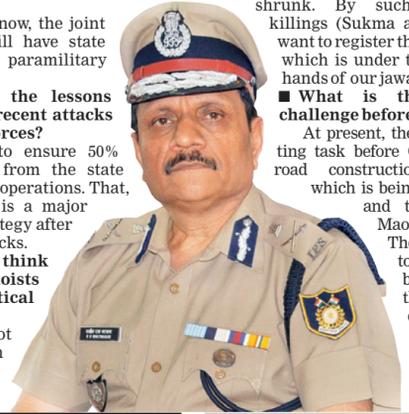
this aspect. What I can say is that no political party or politician would support and celebrate the martyrdom of CRPF jawans.

**■ Why is it that jawans or forces come so often at the receiving end of fire and are then forced to make a retreat?**

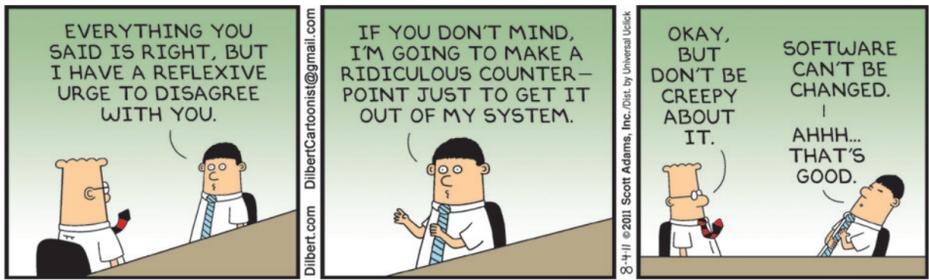
I would say that it's not a right perception. If you compare the areas under Maoists' influence a decade back and today, their territories have shrunk. By such dastardly killings (Sukma attack), they want to register their presence which is under threat at the hands of our jawans.

**■ What is the biggest challenge before you now?**

At present, the most daunting task before CRPF is the road construction security which is being challenged and thwarted by Maoists groups. They don't want to allow us to build roads that will bring development measures and welfare programmes.



# dilbert



# The Wisdom Way Of Overcoming Karma

Swami Lalitnanda Giri

Why is a person born with everything in life, while another struggles to fulfill even his basic needs? A silver spoon for some, and not even a small piece of bread for another? This is hard to digest and understand. Who decides it anyway? Do we just follow a course as per algorithms set by a fate-maker?

Adi Shankaracharya pondered “Who am I?” and Buddha was intrigued seeing a child, an old man, and a corpse; the answers eventually led him to salvation.

Karma is a mystical word in Indic texts; it has also been adapted in the English language, and refers to our actions and their outcomes, which are akin to the cause and effect principle.

Bhishma, at the battlefield (Mahabharata), lying on a bed of arrows that pierced every inch of his

body, wondered in agony as to what actions of his past had led him to this excruciating pain and humiliation. He asked Krishna, “I have scanned my 72 previous lives, but could not find a single action which could have resulted in me lying here, on this bed of arrows.”

Then Krishna explained to him that in his 73rd life Bhishma, as a child, had playfully pierced a sharp thorn into an insect. That action resulted in his current suffering.

Paramahansa Yogananda said, “Before you act, you have freedom, but after you act, the effect of that action will follow you whether you want it to or not. That is the law of karma. You are a free agent, but when you perform a certain act, you will reap the results of that act.”

As a shot arrow cannot be recalled, so too your action, which automatically

results in karma; good or bad, however, it may be.

But there are many ways and means to mitigate, lessen, or eradicate our karmas from fruition. Start thinking positively, which will help in reducing the effects of past actions, rather than accepting failure with an excuse that, “It must be my karma... I can't seem to succeed in anything,” and so on, and make a greater effort.

Wisdom helps us to make the right choices in life so that we are not influenced by our samskaras. It also inspires us to resist our bad habits. Wisdom and discrimination help us to understand the nature of people with whom we associate and this, in turn, helps

us choose who we associate with. Wisdom enables us to know which desires we should try to fulfill and which we should drop.

# Sacredspace

Gather Love

*A tree is known by its fruit;  
a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.*

St Basil



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