

9 EXPLAINED



PAPER CLIP

FLAGGING INTERESTING RESEARCH

SKIN RESEARCH SUNLESS TANS

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The beach may longer be needed for a tan, say researchers. Reuters

For perfect tan, cancer prevention, darken skin pigmentation

SUN WORSHIPPERS might someday be able to get a tan without exposing their skin to the harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation that's responsible for skin cancers, a new study suggests.

The goal of the research is to prevent skin cancers by darkening the pigmentation of people's skin, senior author Dr David Fisher told Reuters.

"Very light skin and a very poor ability to tan correlates with a very high probability of developing cancer," said Fisher, who is chief of the dermatology service at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Darker skin may block harmful UV radiation, Fisher said. So it's possible that darkening the skin's pigmentation might help neutralise the risk associated with genes for light-coloured hair and fair skin.

A decade ago, Fisher's team found a way to change the pigmentation of skin cells in mice from very fair to dark, which protected their cells from the type of UV damage that can lead to skin cancer.

Unfortunately, the topical agent that worked to darken the skin of mice didn't work as effectively on thicker human skin.

Since then, the researchers have been trying to find alternative ways to achieve the same goal in humans, Fisher said.

Eventually, they identified enzymes - called small-molecule salt-inducible kinases - that help control pigmentation in a cell.

When the researchers applied the enzymes onto mice and samples of human skin in a lab, both the mice and the human skin turned increasingly dark as more enzymes were applied, according to the study published in *Cell Reports*.

Fisher said the darkened skin responded like a normal tan, but without the damage seen with UV radiation.

The darker pigment - melanin - "won't go away until the cells mature, die and fall of the surface," he said. The enzyme solution used in the study is far from being available at local pharmacies, however.

"As in anything that's a new strategy, this needs toxicity testing to know it's safe before going into man and all sorts of clinical trials," said Fisher.

REUTERS

MID RANGE PASSENGER AIRCRAFT

Is it a Boeing? Is it an Airbus? It's an MC-21

On May 28, Russia carried out a test flight of the MC-21 — or MS-21 as it is referred to in the western media — a medium-range commercial passenger aircraft that's Russia's first since the collapse of the Soviet empire. The MC-21 is Russia's attempt at regaining the ground the country lost to the West in aerospace engineering over the past three decades — it hopes the plane will take on aviation giants like the France-based Airbus and the American Boeing.



The test comes less than a month after the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (Comac) successfully tested a similar class airliner, the C919. The new entrants will compete in the short- to medium-range, narrow-body, twin-engine, single aisle airline class. This class of commercial airline constitutes the single largest segment in the world's aviation market and is currently dominated by the Boeing 737 and the Airbus A320.

THE PLANE

The first deliveries for the MC-21, developed by Irkut Division of the Russian government-owned United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), are expected in late 2018, or early 2019

RANGE

6,000 km

CAPACITY: In a double-class layout, the MC-21 will have a capacity of 163 seats (16 business and 147 economy), while in a single-class layout it will be able to seat 211 economy-class passengers

■ With the widest fuselage in its class, Irkut claims the width will give passengers significantly more space
■ Around 3 tonnes lighter than the Boeing 737, claim manufacturers. Russian designers have used carbon fibre composite materials for more than 30% of the aircraft, which, they claim, contributes to enhancing the MC-21's flight-technical characteristics and makes it lighter

12-15%

lower operational costs than its western counterparts, claim manufacturers

THE NEED

Over the past three years, Russia has been pushed into a corner by economic sanctions imposed on it by the West due to its role in the Ukraine crisis. It has been desperately trying to regain economic stability in the light of these sanctions and President Vladimir Putin has stressed that he sees rejuvenation of domestic production as the main strategy to reduce the country's dependence on foreign firms. The state-owned UAC has been tasked by Putin to restore the country's aerospace industry to the "former glory days" of the Soviet era. The success of the aircraft will depend on the Russia's ability to strike deals with friendly nations to buy into massive projects like the MC-21

HOW IT STACKS UP

American aviation consulting firm AirInsight wrote that "if the MC-21 meets its specifications, then UAC has a fine product on its hands that may further disrupt the duopoly" of Airbus and Boeing. On paper, the MC-21 seems perfectly capable of taking on the latest models of the A320 and the 737.

AIRCRAFT	MC-21
Designer	Irkut Corporation
Manufacturer	United Aircraft Corporation (Russia)
Programme Cost	\$4.6 billion
Unit Cost	\$91 million
Two-class layout capacity	163 seats
Dense layout capacity	211 seats
Maximum flight range	6,000 km
Length	42.2 m
Wing span	35.9 m
Height	11.5 m

AIRCRAFT	C919
Designer	Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (Comac)
Manufacturer	Comac
Programme Cost	\$9.5 billion
Unit Cost	\$90 million
Two-class layout capacity	158 seats
Dense layout capacity	168 seats
Maximum flight range	4,000 km
Length	38.9 m
Wing span	35.8 m
Height	11.9 m

AIRCRAFT	A320neo
Designer	Airbus
Manufacturer	Airbus
Programme Cost	\$1.3 billion*
Unit Cost	\$108.4 million
Two-class layout capacity	165 seats
Dense layout capacity	195 seats
Maximum flight range	6,500 km
Length	37.5 m
Wing span	35.8 m
Height	11.8 m

AIRCRAFT	737-8 MAX
Designer	Boeing
Manufacturer	Boeing
Programme Cost	\$1.3 billion*
Unit Cost	\$110 million
Two-class layout capacity	162 seats
Dense layout capacity	200 seats
Maximum flight range	6,510 km
Length	35.6 m
Wing span	35.9 m
Height	12.3 m

* Improvement cost over previous models

THE BUYERS

Irkut says the company has 285 orders so far, with "firm orders (pre-paid contracts)" for 185 planes. Last week, UAC president Yuri Slyusar said India, Bangladesh and Hungary "have shown interest" in the aircraft since the completion of the tests.

TEXT BY JAMIE MULLICK

Data source: Irkut Crop, Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, Airbus SAS and Boeing



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Guns, man. When are we going to look this issue in the eye and do something about it?

STEPHEN KING

Author: 3.35M TWITTER followers

A new law, body to handle failed financial firms



IN FACT

BY SHAJI VIKRAMAN

EXPRESS EDITORS INTERPRET

THE GLOBAL financial crisis of 2008 prompted many countries and regulators to review their financial architecture and come up with a new set of arrangements. These were designed to try and prevent similar failure of financial firms, prevent disruption of the broader economy if large banks and institutions failed, reduce the use of public funds for bailouts of private firms and to promote greater financial stability.

Indian policy makers had to counter liquidity pressures but not tackle the kind of bank failures in the West — especially in the US and UK, where the governments had to use tax-payer funds to protect the interests of depositors, keeping in mind the stability and confidence in the financial sector.

In India, after a regulatory squabble in 2009-10, the government decided to recast some of the laws relating to the financial sector, with the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC) coming up with a comprehensive Indian Financial Code, which envisaged an overarching umbrella law for the financial sector across regulatory jurisdictions and a reshaping of the role of the regulators.

While the recommendations were first submitted in 2013, at the age of UPA term, key suggestions have been cherry picked by the NDA regime. These include an independent Monetary Policy Committee to the latest Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017, which seeks to put in place a resolution framework, to handle bankruptcy or insolvency of financial firms, including banks. The broad aim is to ensure early recognition of a financial firm, regulated by RBI, Sebi, IRDA or PFRDA, which could potentially be in trouble so as to lower the impact on the economy.

India already has a mechanism which is now being put to test for resolving bankruptcies of non-financial firms or companies in the manufacturing sector. The proposed new law for financial firms will complete the resolution process across sectors. What this means is that unlike in the case of the Indian Insolvency Code, which deals with bankruptcies of non-financial firms, the government will have a larger role, with the statutory entity mandated to handle the resolution, which is expected to be the Deposit and Credit Guarantee Corporation, now an arm of the Reserve Bank of India answerable to the sovereign.

Interestingly, unlike the US where there have been a string of bank failures starting from the 1920s leading to the formation of the Federal Insurance Deposit Corporation, the only payout by the DICGC in India was after the Madhepura Co-operative Bank went bust well over a decade ago.

The deposit premiums collected by the Corporation have swelled over the years as the Indian central bank and successive governments have chosen to amalgamate a failed bank with a healthier one given the risks of contagion or of depositors making a run for their money.

In theory, the proposed new law appears to be a bold experiment. But the challenge could be when it is put into practice as we are now seeing with inflation targeting through the Monetary Policy Committee. It also sig-

What is the financial resolution Bill all about?

When a bank, an insurance company or a NBFC is in trouble, with little hope of being revived, the current framework makes it extremely difficult to close it down. Take the case of a bank. Even when there is a substantial erosion of capital of a lender, more and more capital is infused into such an entity, rather than assessing whether it needs to be closed down. That's because of the worry of a systemic risk — the impact on other banks when reports emerge of a bank being shuttered. The proposed law aims to identify such financial firms early on and, through a Resolution Corporation, work on a quicker way of resolving it — either through a merger, sell off or winding it up.

How will this work?

The government will first form a Resolution Corporation, which is expected to cover all firms regulated by the RBI, Sebi, IRDA and PFRDA. This Corporation will take swift action for winding up or dissolving a firm. Once that happens, the Corporation will act like a receiver — ensure quick payments to depositors up to a certain limit to which their deposits have been insured and settle the claims of debtors and equity holders. It will have a corpus or fund built on premiums by firms which are covered under the new law, besides contributions from the government.

nals in some ways a departure from some jurisdictions — like in the UK, where after the 2008 crisis and the resultant review, the Bank of England is the resolution authority. The Indian government's latest move will also signal the gradual transformation of the Indian central bank from a full service bank — handling regulation to monetary policy and other areas — to an inflation fighting one.

Can a resolution for financial firms work without a separation of regulation or should regulation of financial firms and resolution of insolvencies or bankruptcies of such firms be handled by the same authority?

Should banks be treated on the same footing as other financial firms when it comes to resolution, considering that they are in many ways special given that they can leverage based on depositor funds and function in ways different to other financial intermediaries.

From the government's perspective, this mechanism could well help in terms of lower infusion of funds or capital each time a bank totters or is on the brink. It comes at a time when half a dozen banks have been put under Prompt Corrective Action by the RBI.

Critical to the success of this initiative later will be the speed at which the Corporation, the regulator and the government move to act. That would mean in case of a failed bank at the last stage, moving in on a weekend and ensuring that depositors get their cheques as soon as banking business kicks off on the next working day, without any disruption. That will call for a great deal of secrecy and efficiency. More than that, it will be a test of India's political economy — of whether the government can stand firm on pressures when it comes to deciding on which bank or institution to let go.

As Andrew Haldane, the Bank of England's Chief Economist, said in a speech well after the financial crisis: "To ask today's regulator to save us from tomorrow's crisis using yesterday's toolbox is like to ask a Border Collie to catch a frill-bee by first applying Newton's law of gravity!"

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Why China's growing footprint in Nepal is a concern for India



BEYOND THE NEWS

BY JYOTI MALHOTRA

EXPRESS EDITORS INTERPRET

SHER BAHADUR Deuba has been elected Prime Minister of Nepal at an especially fragile time in the life of the 11-year-old Himalayan republic. Two years after the majority Madhesi population in the Terai blocked several trading points along the southern border with India, there remains deep-seated resentment in large parts of Nepal against the Kathmandu elite.

Deuba inherits a divided Nepal, divided between the "dark-skinned" Madhesi and the "fair-skinned, upper caste Bahun-

Chettris" of Kathmandu Valley, with whom New Delhi has been doing business since it bailed out King Tribhuvan in 1950.

But what is interesting in today's Nepal is that India, which had supported the 2006 'jan andolan' against the monarchy — which forced King Gyanendra to hand over power to the people — has all but abandoned the Madhes agitation which was demanding exactly the same democratic rights. Which is, the right to be represented in Parliament and other state organs on the basis of population, or the one-man-one-vote principle.

Some would say that states must pursue power, and that in Nepal, power has always rested in Kathmandu Valley, not the Terai. And therefore, they would say, India cannot afford to take the high moral ground and continue to interminably support the Madhesi. No matter that Madhesi are 19.3 per cent of Nepal's 28.5 million population or that half of them live in the Terai.

These people would argue that the Indian support of the rights of the Madhesi, and consequently the 135-day blockade they mounted from October 2015 to February 2016 to demand those rights, has run its course and that it's time to turn the page.

Forty five people were killed in the agitation, including one Indian national, and all of Nepal, especially the Terai, suffered terrible hardships as essential supplies grew scarce.

As the Kathmandu elite, then led by UML prime minister K P Oli, cosied up to the Chinese during the blockade, India watched uncomfortably. Certainly, it is this fear of the Chinese dragon expanding its cash-healthy presence across Nepal — including in the Terai plains which neighbour Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and West Bengal — that has forced India today to postpone the big fight on behalf of the Madhesi.

K P Oli began to openly woo both the Chinese as well as King Gyanendra when he suspected that the Madhesi may actually come into their own with the help of his former benefactor, India. Perhaps he forgot that Nepali Congress leader and former prime minister G P Koirala, with then Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Mukherjee as witness in 2008, had promised that Nepal's Constitution would guarantee the Madhesi, Tharus, the indigenous tribes or Janjatis and others the same rights as the people of the "hills", who have traditionally exercised power. But with the passage of the Constitution in September

2015, Oli and his fellow Kathmandu elite ducked. India watched with growing apprehension as Oli and his foreign minister, the pro-royal Kamal Thapa, promised the Chinese in March 2016 that they would allow them to open another consulate in the picturesque hill town of Pokhara. Beijing had already tempted Oli by offering him Nepali consulates in Lhasa and Guangzhou.

In addition, Oli agreed that the People's Bank of China could open two more branches in the Terai, apart from the one it already had in Lumbini, where the Chinese are helping revamp the birthplace of the Buddha. The Chinese Northwest Civil Aviation Airport Construction Group is building the Gautam Buddha international airport in nearby Bhairahawa. Then Deuba's predecessor, Pushpa Kamal Dahal or "Prachanda" — who knows India well since 2005 when he lived underground in the neighbourhoods of Delhi and Noida to escape the wrath of King Gyanendra — did something interesting. He put the Chinese bank projects on hold.

India, which had ironically played a key role in Prachanda's dismissal in 2008-9 and helped Oli become prime minister, once again came out in support of the Maoist

leader. It is no secret that Delhi, upset with Oli's betrayal of Madhesi aspirations as well as his solicitations of the Chinese, persuaded its old ally, the Nepali Congress, as well as Madhesi parties to unseat Oli; soon it had brokered a rotating prime ministership between Prachanda and Deuba.

Deuba's ascension to the PM's chair last week, for the fourth time in his political life, is part of this Delhi-brokered agreement. But sometime midway during Prachanda's tenure, Delhi lost its nerve on the Madhes issue, fearful that the Chinese were expanding their presence in India's traditional sphere of influence.

The Chinese were pouring money into Nepal, announcing projects everywhere, including in the Terai. Prachanda's deputy prime minister, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, flew to Beijing to sign on the Belt and Road Initiative. For the first time, Nepal agreed that its defence forces would participate in exercises with the Chinese.

Meanwhile, after the Madhesi andolan ended on an indistinct note in February 2016, several Madhesi leaders went their own ways. Bijay Gacchedar and Upendra Yadav floated their own parties and fell in line with Kathmandu. Others, like Rajendra Mahato

and Mahant Thakur, were persuaded by Delhi to form a coalition, the Rashtriya Janata Party of Nepal (RJPN), along with the smaller Madhesi parties. The argument being that strength lay in togetherness. But the truth is that the Madhesi street — in towns like Birgunj and Janakpur and Biratnagar — is furious that India has abandoned the its cause.

Barely two years ago, Delhi had shown the Madhes — and even at the time it was the people, rather than the political parties — a vision of democracy, however messy and chaotic. Travelling across the Terai during the blockade, this reporter was frequently told that "India's democracy is our goal, where all people of all faiths and ethnic groups live together, equally. We want to be equal citizens of Nepal, as well," they had said.

The fear of China, however, means that India has blinked on the egalitarian principle. Delhi hopes that Deuba, an able Nepali Congress leader, will amend the Constitution on the provincial boundary question as the Madhesi have long demanded; after all, the RJPN and others supported Deuba's election on June 6.

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WORDLY WISE

A LANGUAGE IS INFINITELY GREATER THAN GRAMMAR.
IT IS POETIC TESTAMENT OF THE GENIUS OF A CULTURE.

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Why India stands to gain

Driven by domestic consumption, the Indian economy is poised to do better than most others



ADITYA PURI

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY has been recovering from the recession of 2009 at a tepid rate (at approximately 2.5 per cent per annum). This rebound has been much slower than that after World War II. The question worth asking is whether the factors responsible for this slow growth are temporary, or if they are the new normal. The fact is that, but for the baby boom and the massive rebuilding of economies after World War II, global growth never topped 3 per cent. Since the causes for the 4 per cent global growth after World War II are unlikely to re-occur soon, it would be reasonable to presume it was an exception.

The main causes of the current slow global growth are declining populations, protectionism, de-leveraging and no major productivity-enhancing revolution. The period between World War II and the financial crisis was characterised by population growth, major investment, productivity gains, increases in global trade and cross-border flows of people — a debt boom. Today, in most countries, these trends are decelerating. However, to recognise the reality of slow global growth is political *hara kiri*. So, there is a decoupling of political needs and economic reality. Most governments are coming up with radical policy experiments for growth.

While for a majority of countries, a high or higher growth rate would be elusive, India has a great opportunity before it. Analysis of the causes of the slowdown in the Indian context would be enlightening. For most countries, a declining population was already on the way prior to the financial crisis. Population growth boosts economic growth through an increase in the workforce, aided by an increase in productivity. India is in the throes of a demographic dividend which would be an impetus to growth, if the new entrants to the work force are productively employed.

The government has recognised the need for jobs and embarked on a multi-pronged strategy. This strategy encompasses corporate governance reform, pro-growth tax reform, agricultural reform, government administration reform, the expansion of public-private partnerships, increasing jobs through targeted manufacturing/service investment — tourism, health, education,

micro and small enterprises, agribusiness — and massive drives in all the areas; these include Make in India, Skill India, productivity-based infrastructure development and initiatives related to the ease of doing business.

These strategies have begun to make a difference and should, over a reasonable period of time, create the jobs we need. The rationalisation of subsidies and direct cash transfers will plug leakages associated with the previous subsidy regime and make money available for merit subsidies — health, education, etc. — that can help us exploit our population dividend.

During the golden age of growth, the increase in productivity was largely the consequence of technological advances. However, as productivity-based growth slowed, easy money took its place. The reduction in inflation led to a reduction in interest rates by the Central Bank. Prior to this lowering of borrowing costs, economic growth and borrowing moved in tandem — as this should. Reductions in the cost of borrowing to near-zero and easy money led to global debt surging from 100 per cent of GDP in the 1980s to 300 per cent by 2008, which led to the financial crisis.

Unfortunately, the tech-based productivity revolution largely passed India by, so did — fortunately — the money revolution. India's debt to GDP ratio is 68 per cent. We are now poised to leapfrog directly into the digital world and reap the productivity gains. The priorities are the ease of doing business, infrastructure improvement, fiscal reforms — such as GST — agriculture reforms, administrative reforms, conservation, labour reforms and the digital revolution. We are moving towards increasing manufacturing's share in furthering jobs. This, combined with the increase in consumption through workforce increase, should impact both consumption and investment, leading to the delta required to take our GDP past 8 per cent.

The global financial crisis largely passed India by; so, our need for quantitative easing was limited. But we have created our own crisis — non-performing assets (NPA). The government is working to resolve the issue. It is worth mentioning that the banking system has a provisioning coverage of 50 per cent plus on NPAs.

With growing political uncertainty in the US, the emergence of protectionist policies and amidst slowdown concerns related to China, countries whose GDP is dependent on exports could find themselves with increased instability. The most affected are those with exports accounting for a high percentage of their GDP and with low domestic demand support. India appears to be less vulnerable on these fronts.

Despite the US's importance as a market for India and Japan, the larger and more diverse nature of these economies provides them with some cushioning from protectionist trade policies, with shipments to the US making up only 2 per cent and 3 per cent of their respective GDPs.

Furthermore, an ADB report suggests that a growth slowdown of 1.6 percentage points in China would bring about a growth deceleration of 0.26 percentage points in developing Asia as a whole. In Southeast Asia, the Philippines and Malaysia would be hardest hit, with GDP growth slowing down by more than 0.40 percentage points. The adverse growth effects on other ASEAN countries are generally less — ranging from 0.27 to 0.35 percentage points.

Meanwhile, India is most insulated from China's slowdown: Its annual GDP growth could be lower by a slight 0.14 percentage points.

With roughly 59 per cent share in India's GDP, household consumption spending has been the major driver of economic growth and has, on many occasions, acted as a protective shield to global demand shocks. India also has low reliance on external savings to fund its growth. As per S&P Ratings, the banks are mainly deposit-funded and don't rely on wholesale funding to grow their loan books.

As is the rule, there will be winners and losers in a changing world. The winners are likely to be countries less reliant on global trade, domestic consumption-driven, with an increasing population, a scope for productivity improvement and a low per capita base. It would be fair to conclude that India's GDP growth rate of 7.5 per cent is good and sustainable: So is also the potential target of 8 per cent plus.

The writer is managing director, HDFC Bank

MAKING THE CHOICE

Government has reached out to Opposition on presidential poll, but it could be too late to be of value

IN A RARE departure from its norm, the government has reached out to the Opposition on a significant issue, the presidential election. It is a commendable gesture, but perhaps it was taken too late in the day. The election is only a month away and names of the candidates are yet unknown. The ruling alliance is expected to announce its candidate and file nomination papers on June 23. And the consultative process which it has initiated with Opposition parties may actually delay the selection of their candidate. The name of Gopalkrishna Gandhi has been informally floated, and it was assumed that the Opposition knew its mind, but the opening of consultations invites a change of mind.

In the meantime, the lack of clarity on candidates is unsettling and the floating of candidates by dint of individual enterprise confuses the issue. Given that the NDA is in a position to have its way in the selection of the president, the reluctance to be transparent about its choice of candidate is unsettling. The president intervenes at crucial times to influence the political tenor of the day — consider how sharply the presidencies of Zail Singh and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam may be contrasted — and there is public interest in the person who may inherit the office from Pranab Mukherjee. Announcing candidacies early would allow the electoral college to get a sense of the people, so to speak, enabling its constituents to make better voting choices. But the Congress, the left and other Opposition groups were contacted just hours before their second meeting on the question of the presidency. Unfortunately, the NDA seems to be following in the footsteps of the UPA, which had sprung Pratibha Patil, then a regional Congress leader, upon the electoral college at the last minute. The opaque decision-making prevented any broad debate over the choice and made her selection a fait accompli.

The change of guard at Rashtrapati Bhavan is happening at a time when relations with Pakistan are at a low, the US has an identity crisis and the geopolitical situation in Asia is evolving rapidly. The armed forces come into prominence in times of uncertainty and the role of their supreme commander assumes salience. In addition, a polarised polity where unrests and anxieties have become everyday realities, and where institutions are perceived to be under attack, requires the attentions of a statesman who stands taller than the political system. As India stands at a juncture, politically and geopolitically, it is important to choose the right president. But it is equally important to make that choice transparently, so that the new incumbent enjoys widespread confidence.

FIRE IN THE HILLS

West Bengal government must engage with the Gorkhaland demand

THE PROTESTS AGAINST the imposition of Bengali in the Darjeeling hills have now turned into a demand for a separate state. The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's revival of the demand for a Gorkhaland state, interestingly, has found resonance in the region across party lines. Darjeeling MP and Union minister S.S. Ahluwalia has asked the Union Home Ministry to appoint an expert panel to study the demand. Local units of the parties, including the Congress and the CPM, also admit to increasing disquiet among cadres over the issue. It is a sentiment the state government will need to engage with.

Language has been a defining sentiment of regional politics in India. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seems to have ignored this basic political lesson when she thoughtlessly announced that Bengali will be made a compulsory language across the state. She later clarified that the Darjeeling hills will be exempt from the policy. However, the announcement already touched a raw nerve in the hills, where Nepali-speakers harbour fears of Bengali domination and ethnic subjugation. These are old faultlines that spurred a violent agitation in the hills for over a decade and culminated in the creation of the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. The present protests threaten to end the tenuous consensus between the Bengal plains and the hills and revive the demand for a separate state. Political opinion in the Bengal plains has always sought to frame the statehood demand as another partition of the state. Successive governments in Kolkata have used this framework to ignore or suppress people's movements that have upheld ethnic and linguistic identity and raised questions about regional disparities. The Mamata government too has refused to engage with the issues raised by protestors in Darjeeling and has sought to use the state machinery to clamp down. This is unacceptable.

Linguistic identity has been central to state formation in India. West Bengal, unfortunately, has sought to subsume its linguistic and ethnic diversity, under the rubric of a Bengali identity. Nepali-speakers, Rajbanshis and other smaller groups perceive it as a process of subjugation and have protested against this. The Gorkhaland demand in the past was centered on ethnicity and influenced by geography. In the current phase, the movement has taken up the Nepali language to unify the numerous hill tribes and build solidarity. It is a path linguistic communities elsewhere in India have taken in the past to successfully press their demand for statehood. It is appropriate that the government gives the Gorkhaland demand due consideration.

IT AIN'T ME, BABE...

...It's the art, argues Bob Dylan, accused of plagiarism in his Nobel acceptance speech

THE ANSWER, MY friend, is blowing in the wind, sang Bob Dylan — (and is thereby ripe for anyone to pick, we add). His ballads won Dylan the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016, an announcement greeted with consternation and applause. Dylan himself seemed taken aback, reportedly musing that even he didn't think of his work as literature. But after an awkward pause, Dylan finally accepted the prize.

However, with each passing month, despite the committee's entreaties, the bard showed no desire to attend a Nobel ceremony. Finally, a somewhat petulant committee announced that Dylan would forfeit the prize amount of \$9,00,000 if he didn't deliver a Nobel lecture. The bard appeared in Stockholm, but Dylan's acceptance speech, in a private event, was a poem he recited, as he teased a piano's keys. What made Dylan's speech even more unconventional were the accusations of plagiarism that followed, with striking similarities drawn between his description of *Moby Dick*, a book that influenced him, and that found on the website Sparknotes. Further accusations have since tumbled out, with critics finding some of Dylan's numbers to be reworked versions of other songs, a British photographer even finding a parallel between Dylan's painting and his own shots.

But Dylan himself brushes off the charges with the airiness of his songs — charmingly, he accepts that he may well have been, as we put in India, "inspired by" several different sources. Folk, as Dylan describes it, is not an original work of art but rather, a rich melting pot where numerous strains of human life — from great literature to flimsy comics, Biblical verse to trivial jokes, classical paintings to film scenes, harvest chants to the sounds of big, bad cities, the little tragedies of personal love to the grand hopes for a nation — all mingle into a whole. This isn't plagiarism, argues Dylan, it is the creative form itself. Indeed, to add to another of his songs: *It Ain't Me, Babe* — it's the art.



RAJESH KOCHHAR

THE SUPREME COURT has concluded the arguments on triple talaq. When can a religious practice be considered integral to a religion is a question that has engaged jurists the world over. The Supreme Court is conscious of the complexity of the issue and is treading cautiously. It appears likely that the Court would skirt the issue and be content with an anti-instant divorce advisory from the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

The majoritarianists, however, have made Muslim personal law a part of their political agenda. An advocate, Ashwini Upadhyay, ominously told the Court that, "tomorrow there would be a Hindu Personal Law Board to take a rigid stand on Hindu practices". The learned advocate should have known that no such board can come into existence because Hindu personal law as an enforceable entity has never existed.

Speaking at public meetings, central minister M. Venkaiah Naidu claimed that the Hindus abolished sati. Similarly, he'd like Muslims to end triple talaq. Naidu's assertion on sati seems to be a matter of convenience; it is not borne out by facts on record. Sati was banned in December 1832, not on the demand of the Hindus, but as a personal initiative of the governor general, William Bentinck. Sustained campaigns against sati came from Christian missionaries rather than Hindus.

The British recognised sati as a barbarian

REFORM, DESPITE NAY-SAYERS

The history of the abolition of sati is instructive for the triple talaq debate

practice, but were aware that it had been in vogue since ancient times and enjoyed scriptural support. Was it to be treated as a criminal act and banned, or was it to be condoned on the stated principle of non-interference in religious matters? The colonial administration took 40 years to make up its mind. As early as 1789, it instructed its officials in the mofussil not to use official power to prevent sati on the grounds that it was "authorised by the tenets of the religion of the Hindus". In 1813, guided by court pandits, the government decided to regulate the practice, thus unwittingly encouraging it.

In 1817, the universally respected chief pandit at the supreme court, Mrityunjaya Vidyalankar Chattopadhyaya, was officially asked to give a *vyavastha* (ruling) on sati. After consulting some 30 texts belonging to various schools, he concluded that though burning was termed optional, it was still not to be recommended. Vidyalankar's tract became the unacknowledged starting point for Ram Mohan Roy in his anti-sati campaign. To build his case, Roy had to selectively enlist the support of ancient rishis like Manu and Yajnavalkya, while condemning authorities such as Gotama. Till this time, the anti-sati campaign was exclusively all-European involving missionaries, government and British public opinion. With Roy, sati became a topic of debate among Hindus. Had Bengal's Hindu leadership rallied behind Roy,

the colonial administration would have had no difficulty in banning sati immediately. But it was not Hindus versus sati, but conservative Hindus versus Roy and his supporters, backed by Christian missionaries.

Even though Roy advised Bentinck against any direct action, once the enactment was made, he marshalled all resources in its support. The matter finally came to a close in 1832 with the Privy Council upholding the ban. While now, we take pride in the abolition of sati, in its time, the court of directors had to defend their action in front of their King, facing objections from the Hindus.

A generation later, when in 1855, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar campaigned against widow remarriage, his opponents far outnumbered supporters. The government did not go by head-count, but by Vidyasagar's assertion that, "this custom is not in accordance with the Shastras, or with true Hindu law".

Hindu social reforms thus came about not because the community at large asked for them, but because a dedicated band of campaigners convinced the colonialists that they enjoyed scriptural support. The moral is clear. Scriptures are not a monolith. Be it a defensive minority or an aggressive majority, the agenda should be modern, and the scriptures interpreted accordingly.

Kochhar is author of *The Vedic People: Their History and Geography*



JUNE 16, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

JANATA GETS SIX/10

OF THE 10 STATES which went to the polls, the Janata Party is certain to form governments in six on its own and with the Akali Dal in Punjab. The party rounded off a day of many triumphs by securing an absolute majority in Uttar Pradesh. It was also comfortably placed in Bihar where it gained 70 seats against 23 of the Congress out of 106 results declared. While the All India Anna-DMK secured a majority in Tamil Nadu, the CPM-led Left Front was on top in West Bengal. The six states which returned the Janata Party are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Orissa. The party bagged two-thirds or more of the seats

in the assemblies there. The performance has been similar in elections to the Delhi Metropolitan Council and the Municipal Corporation. The Janata sweep will also change the complexion of the Rajya Sabha — now dominated by the Congress.

CPM TAKES BENGAL

JYOTI BASU, THE prospective Chief Minister of West Bengal, was elected from Satgachia by defeating his nearest rival by 38,000 votes. The CPM-Left Front has won 108 of the 146 seats where results have been declared. The Janata Party won 23 while the ruling Congress has so far got just four seats. West Bengal's assembly has a total of 294 seats.

IT'S MGR'S WIN

THE FIVE-YEAR-OLD AIADMK, an offshoot of the DMK, secured an absolute majority in the Tamil Nadu assembly. AIADMK leader and matinee idol, M.G. Ramachandran, single-handedly took the party to power.

BADAL TO LEAD PUNJAB

AN AKALI DAL-JANATA Party ministry in Punjab is expected to take office on June 18. The Union Agriculture Minister Parkash Singh Badal, who has been returned to the Assembly from the Gidderbaha constituency in Faridkot district, was unanimously elected leader of the Akali Dal Legislature Party at a meeting at Amritsar.

THE IDEAS PAGE

New President for new India

Opposition and its intellectuals are losing gravity. So the contest for Rashtrapati Bhavan is a battle of ideologies, it should be won by a person who embraces the task of decolonising the Indian mind



RAKESH SINHA

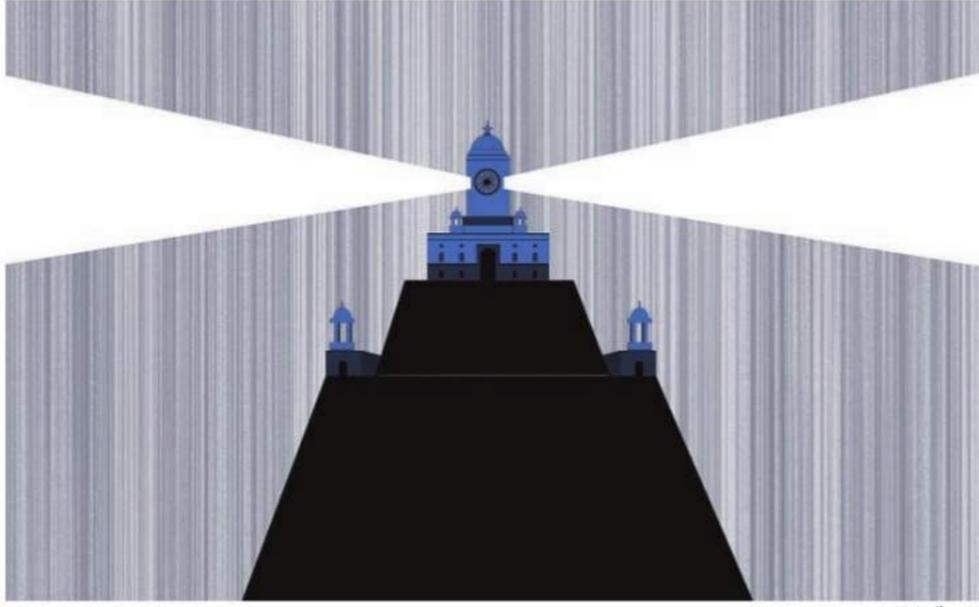
THE BJP HAS formed a three-member committee — consisting of senior cabinet ministers, Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley and M. Venkaiah Naidu — to examine the possibility of a consensus candidate for the President of India. This marks a moral victory for the ruling party against forces in the Opposition, which include political parties and the predominantly “left-liberal” intelligentsia. Their quest for a presidential nominee is not based on the moral significance of this august office, but rather, on vendetta politics. It is no secret that they see the presidential election as an opportunity to “fix” both Narendra Modi and Hindutva politics.

No one knows who the next President will be, but the likelihood of a contest based on entrenched positions certainly undermines the prestige of Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is a truism that no presidential election has been without contest. But political binaries have led to the devaluation of the office. The 1969 election between Neelam Sanjiva Reddy and V.V. Giri was not merely a face-off between two individuals, but between two ideologies on the one hand, and the claim to be genuine heirs of the Indian National Congress, on the other. The election witnessed fierce public debate and unprecedented polarisation in the media. Giri's victory vindicated Indira Gandhi and her ideology. But it did not add value to the presidency. Rather, it heralded the notion of a rubber stamp president. Since then, the choice of a candidate became a matter of political permutations and combinations, and the election, a game of dice.

This goes against the vision of the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, who espoused that the President should not be a symbol of partisan politics. The first President of India, Rajendra Prasad, reaffirmed that the office ought not to be a reason for instability in our parliamentary democracy. During the political confrontations between the communist government in Kerala and the Congress party, Prasad made it clear in his letter to Gyanvati Darbar on July 10, 1959, that there had been a “certain misunderstanding regarding the position of the President. Probably, many people feel that the President can intervene and exert influence on one side or the other. That is an incorrect view... I cannot take sides... I have to act on advice and cannot act on my own. Let me keep myself above all these differences... I cannot have any viewpoint which is not for the country as a whole but for any group or party only”.

Whomsoever becomes President, he or she cannot alter the requirements and prerequisites of the office, or the essential features of India's parliamentary democracy. The office does, however, have the potential to circumvent unnecessary controversies, particularly so in the present context: The rise of an alternative ideology and leadership have yet to be reconciled to by the elites which enjoyed status and privileges and considered themselves authors of the destiny of modern India.

The current situation is a replica of 1922, when, for the first time, nationalists became ministers in the provinces under the Government of India Act 1919. The colonial bureaucracy, along with governors of the provinces, were not merely unsympathetic but also contemptuous of them. In contemporary India, secularist forces are not pre-



CR Sasikumar

pared to relate Hindutva with secular, liberal and democratic principles. They unflinchingly cling to their self-made belief that it is communal, intolerant and fascist. They are victims of the ossification which has set in within Left-liberal ideologies, a solidification of the mind which keeps them dogmatic and unable to re-examine their own position.

Therefore, the presidential election assumes significance for more than one reason: The office is not merely a constitutional head. It becomes a decisive player in democratic causality. There are instances of such situations — the fall of the Janata Party government in 1979 made the role of Rashtrapati Bhavan crucial. Yet, there is a definite limit of presidential adventurism, even in times of political crises. Its importance lies in appealing beyond conventional politics or constitutional morality. Free from political compulsions or executive burdens, the President can act as an agent of redefining the idea of India, which is essential to restore the post-colonial identity of the Indian people.

This process was initiated by Rajendra Prasad, which led to a great confrontation with the then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Prasad, who confirmed the President should not intervene in executive and legislative business, also unfolded his role in discovering the soul of India. His confrontation with Nehru was not a battle for power, but a battle of ideas to rebuild India.

In his letter to chief ministers on August 1, 1951, Nehru stated that: “It is little realised here what great injuries to our credit abroad is done by the communal organisations of India because they represent just the things which a Western mind dislikes intensely and can not understand. The recent inauguration of [the] Somnath temple with pomp and ceremony created a very bad impression abroad about India and her professions.”

Prasad, differing outright with the PM, wrote to him, saying, “By rising from its ashes again, this temple of Somnath is... proclaiming to the world that no man and no power in the world can destroy that for which people have boundless faith and love in their hearts. Today, our attempt is not to rectify history. Our only aim is to proclaim anew our attachment to the faith, convictions and the values on which our religion has rested since immemorial ages... India being a civilisational nation can't be provincialised, its roots go to hundreds and thousands of years celebrat-

The presidential election assumes significance for more than one reason: The office is not merely a constitutional head. It becomes a decisive player in democratic causality. There are instances of such situations — the fall of the Janata Party government in 1979 made the role of Rashtrapati Bhavan crucial. Yet, there is a definite limit of presidential adventurism even in times of political crises. Its importance lies in appealing beyond conventional politics or constitutional morality. Free from political compulsions, or executive burdens, the President can act as an agent of redefining the idea of India, which is essential to restore the post-colonial identity of the Indian people.

ing umpteen diversities. The present challenge is to regain India's identity through contextualising her age-old past”.

Prasad's letter to Gyanvati Darbar on March 26, 1959, unravels the civilisational role of the President of India: “In the age of rationalism, where everything smacking of anything like religion and spiritualism is looked at askance, and when a wave of scepticism is carrying everything before it, at any rate, in the so-called educated and advanced and ‘progressive people’, it will be no small service if anything could be done to catch up with the spirit which made greater India, of which we are all proud, and of which we could get a glimpse... in Cambodia, in Japan and even in Indonesia in ceremonies... not in India... but someday, we shall certainly regain and recover our balance”.

A new President of India has to begin where Prasad left his great ideological legacies. In this regard, the election is not merely a political game of dice, but also a battle of ideologies. The office should be filled not with sectarian or other narrow considerations, but with an intent to privilege it with a philosopher-king. He must represent the soul of India, not a secularist's soul. She should address not merely the present but posterity too. Besides constitutional requirements, his words and actions should be indicative of civilisational imperatives.

Rajendra Prasad aptly said, “the country may throw out the ministry, not the president, for views”. It is essential that the presidential candidate is not compromised, or used for the rehabilitation of a tired politician, but rather, is a positive mind who embraces the arduous task of the decolonisation of the Indian mind.

The opposition parties and their intellectuals have lost their gravity and are now defined more by what they oppose than what they support. Prime Minister Modi has combined the spirit of cultural legacies in his speeches, which are an assertion of a genuine idea of India, in the midst of ceaseless opposition from secularist forces. Therefore, the President's election would be far more than merely a defeat of the Opposition; it would be the resurrection of the spirit of Rajendra Prasad.

The writer is associate professor, Delhi University, and honorary director, India Policy Foundation

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Western media paints a picture that political struggle is rife in China. It is actually what's happening in the US, but not in China.”

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

All about winning

Perhaps that's why we are told the entire Opp is corrupt and the government is scandal-free



KAPIL SIBAL

I WORRY FOR my country.

The Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo are establishing new norms for both the government and politics. For Modi, the machinery of government is meant for self-propagation. Government is a vehicle to announce, through means fair and foul, new water-marks of performance, whether or not they have any reference to reality. Ends justify the means. For Shah, the new idiom of politics is to belittle all that happened prior to 2014 and to build a larger-than-life image of the BJP. For both, facts are irrelevant, only perception matters. Politics must be muscular, majoritarian with a no-holds-barred campaign to invade the minds of citizens, embedding in them the mirage of change for the better.

The duo, with these ends in mind, attempt to cajole, threaten, and, if necessary, capture the narrative that serves their political objectives. They regard the CBI and other investigating agencies, including the ED, the NIA and the state investigating agencies where the BJP is in government, the departments of the Government of India or state governments, who do their bidding. The media, particularly the electronic media, is no longer a platform for disseminating news to allow viewers the freedom to decide for themselves, but a propaganda vehicle for the government as well as the BJP. Business houses, potential recipients of beneficial government policies, sing paeans for favours. Vulnerable to proceedings by taxmen, they are susceptible to surrendering national interest by doing the government's bidding.

The Republic has been taken for a ride. The nature of the Indian state has changed since 2014.

On the ground, we see the rise of an intolerant, aggressive majoritarian mindset. Hindutva, which has nothing to do with Hinduism, is represented by vigilantes, ready to kill human beings to save a cow. Anti-Romeo squads, love jihad and the conversation on triple talaq embolden the embers of intolerance. Consequent fires are stoked by some electronic channels and the army of soldiers on social media platforms seconded, perhaps by the BJP, who run amok with threats and abuses to silence opposition. There is no scope for discussion or debate. There is no nuanced position on any issue.

Demonetisation was successful because the prime minister was decisive in his intent to target black money, even though millions lost their jobs and more than 100 people died in queues. Its impact is still felt by sectors of the economy which are struggling to recover. Surgical strikes epitomised nationalistic fervour and the commitment to punish those who seek to intrude across the border. This one-off was projected as a panacea, ensuring that Pakistan dare not foray across the border again.

We are told that the entire opposition is corrupt and the government is scandal-free.

Three years of a BJP government, the duo says, have transformed India. There is hope for the common citizen. Shah says that what the BJP has done in three years, the Congress did not do in 70. The BJP, we are told, got rid of nepotism and caste-based politics, yet Yogi Adityanath provides soap and sachets of shampoo to Dalits before he visits them. Dalits at Una are flogged but that has nothing to do with caste. The inauguration of the Dhola-Sadiya 9.15 km bridge, connecting Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, construction of which began in 2010, and the longest road tunnel (9.2 km) inaugurated on April 2, 2017, cutting the distance between Jammu and Srinagar by 30 km, for which construction started in May 2011, are photo-ops for Modi. They claim that GDP continues to grow above 7 per cent and the Sensex being at a record high are achievements of this government. The people, according to the duo, must celebrate every day for the transformation of India as it moves to be a \$20 trillion economy in the near future.

It is as if the history of India started in 2014 and all the years before that, since Independence, were a washout.

That there are no jobs for the 12 million kids who move out of school will never make headline news; nor will these be topics to rant about in a channel which is perceived as the alter ego of the government. That only 1.35 lakh jobs were created in 2015 and over 2 lakh jobs in 2016 is a matter of little concern because Shah now says that it is not for the government to create jobs. That a world moving towards automation will leave millions jobless in India is of no relevance since the duo's politics is to win the next election. Thoughtless roll-backs in the education system will disempower our children. We need to prepare our children to compete in a global environment. That is not a matter of much concern, both for the media and government. That institutions of government are being saffronised with RSS *pracharaks* being selectively picked in utter disregard of the quality and culture of our constitution is disheartening.

Healthcare is for the rich; public health facilities for the poor are shoddy. The real-estate market has collapsed; interest rates are down and the economy is stagnant. The off-take of bank credit is negligible and inventories in factories have dampened the prospects of enhanced productivity. The small and medium-scale sector, the backbone of our economy, is dormant and needs hand-holding. Black money is back in circulation along with fake notes. Demonetisation has not deterred terrorists. GDP numbers, no longer relied on, are for academics to debate. Yet the government keeps on patting itself on the back.

Both government and politics in India are far removed from the concerns of the common person. The brazen attitude of establishments to take their partisan agenda forward is disquieting. The state's constitutional commitment for bringing peace and tranquillity is not a priority. This exclusive duo wants an exclusive India. That is their hope.

We must get together to challenge the duo and ensure that in 2019, we start afresh.

The writer is a Congress leader and former Union minister



SWARAJ THAPA

Mamata's Bengali blunder

Why the Darjeeling hills are rife with discontent now

IT IS A disturbing message, of colonialism, through the use of state apparatus that Mamata Banerjee is attempting to send across in the Darjeeling hills, pushing the region to boiling point. Last week, Banerjee drove cowboy-style around the hill station with a loud hailer in her hand, urging tourists on to “feel safe”. This was a day after a three-hour-long face-off between the police and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) supporters, very near the Raj Bhavan, after the latter was prevented from holding protests against the chief minister. Many were injured; about half a dozen vehicles were burnt. Not only were the hills flooded with security personnel, Banerjee even called in the army.

Banerjee's actions, looped endlessly on Kolkata TV channels, may have endeared her to mainland Bengal. They prompted some to say that the TMC had devised a regionalism plan to counter the BJP's apparent rise in Bengal. But, to the Gorkhas, they were a depiction of domination tantamount to colonialism.

The immediate provocation was the announcement by the state government that the Bengali language would be made a compulsory subject in all schools in the state. State education minister Partha Chatterjee gave a

press conference on May 15 on the issue; a day later, Banerjee posted on her official Facebook page that one of the three languages under the three-language policy in the state would have to be Bengali. Protests scaled up thereafter in the hills where the Nepali-speaking majority sensed that Bengali was being imposed on them. The confusion multiplied when Banerjee walked into Mirik and announced Bengali would be optional in the hills — but with the rider that it will be taught as a fourth language. Opposition reached a crescendo after GJM supremo Bimal Gurung synchronised dharmas and rallies with Banerjee's visit to Darjeeling and her declaration of holding a cabinet meeting there after a gap of 45 years.

Banerjee responded with a crackdown against GJM cadres. Worse, she did not spare civil society. She slapped criminal cases for hate speech against several persons, including two eminent literary figures, both Sahitya Akademi award winners, two school principals, including the head of the prestigious St Paul's School, as well as yours truly. But criticism of government is the hallmark of a democracy. If anyone criticises the government, should this be seen as hate speech?

The conflagration was a manifestation of

the underlying tensions between the GJM and the TMC-led government. The tripartite agreement is in shambles: The GJM has decided to go back to its demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland. It has also appealed to other hill outfits for support, who have responded positively. The TMC-led government is in no mood to give and take. And the Centre is unable to take a call on intervening.

The Darjeeling hills always had a special status because of its Nepali-speaking majority and distinctions vis-a-vis mainland Bengal. This is why successive governments experimented with various formulations including creating an autonomous council and a “state within a state” concept. Jyoti Basu set up the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) after violence in Darjeeling. This was the basis on which the GTA was set up as an interim administrative body with an autonomous character. That the Centre too is a party to the negotiations underlines the special status of the region.

But Banerjee has attempted to change all that. She makes it a point to speak in Bengali in the hills. She has plastered the walls in the hills with posters in Bengali lauding the government's achievements. She held the anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose in

Chowrasta for two consecutive years, bringing Baul singers and Bengali pop artists, a concept disliked instantly. Her latest move to hold a cabinet meeting in Darjeeling and her decision to create a mini secretariat in the hill station was also seen in the same light.

The deployment of the army in Darjeeling was another nail in the wall. For a people who always wanted to join the Indian mainstream through the dream of a separate state, so that their identity issue is resolved, calling in the army was almost akin to the suggestion that they were indulging in anti-national activities. Most families also have someone in the army, which only endears them closer to the defence services.

For a region surrounded by three international borders and a terrain that is difficult to manoeuvre, the trouble does not bode well. The GJM has announced it will tread the path of a statehood demand again. Containment by force won't work. Banerjee seems to have decided to play with fire, but any political or security instability in the region will mean that anti-national forces too may get a playground to act against national interest.

The writer, a former journalist, is with the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

POINTLESS PROTEST

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Language matters’ (IE, June 14). The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's (GJM) demand for Gorkhaland is unexpected. The West Bengal government has clarified that Bangla will not be imposed in the Darjeeling hills. The point of Gorkhaland was resolved by creating the semi-autonomous GTA. The election to this agency is round the corner and it will not be a cakewalk for the GJM. The party is arousing old sentiments. But crippling the economy and administration of the Darjeeling hills will not serve any purpose.

Chanchal Nandy, Burdwan

RIGHTS & WRONGS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Leaning on the law’ (IE, June 15). The author pointed out that the Constitution's provisions related to Fundamental Rights should be applied in a manner that they do not violate Directive Principles. The conflict between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles stretches back decades. The Supreme Court, in the Champakam Dorairaj case in 1951, ruled that in case of a conflict between the two, Fundamental Rights would prevail. So, the contention that the recent rules do not violate Fundamental Rights of people in the slaughter business is not right.

Pranav Mahashabde, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Leaning on the law’ (IE, June 15). Laws must follow greater good for the greater number. Cow protection laws have had an adverse on the meat and leather industries. The government must focus on

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.

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more pressing issues.

Abhishek Anshu, Patna

BJP's LAPSES

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The power paradox’ (IE, June 14). The BJP slogan ‘Sabka saath, sabka vikas’ contradicts a politics of polarising voters. The party's promises of development contradict its promotion of a Hindu Rashtra. Such issues do gain emotional currency, but don't hold sway permanently.

M. N. Bhartiya, Goa