



A thought for today

India wants the world not just to be interconnected but also that it should be sensibly run

ANGELA MERKEL

Modi In Germany

India must cement mutually beneficial ties with an evolving EU

Marking growing warmth in bilateral ties, India and Germany have signed a slew of pacts covering cyber security, urban development, vocational education and infrastructure during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the European nation. In fact, Modi even took the opportunity to emphasise that India and Germany are made for each other. There's great scope for synergy. German investments in Indian infrastructure under the Make In India framework or the Smart Cities initiative can do wonders for the Indian economy. Meanwhile, India is a huge market for German companies – an equation that Berlin would like to strengthen further.

Germany today is looking for stable partners in the developing world in light of uncertainties in the overall global order. Europe, for example, is undergoing fundamental shifts following Brexit. Add to this US President Donald Trump trying to modify America-Europe relations by asking EU members to shoulder greater responsibility for their defence. Trump has also criticised the American trade deficit with Germany, stating this needed to change. All of this compelled German Chancellor Angela Merkel to comment that the US and UK may no longer be completely reliable partners.

It's in this context that Modi's ongoing Europe tour needs to be seen. Germany has decided to play the role of sheet anchor of EU and is even quietly going about laying the foundation of a combined European defence force by integrating military divisions from smaller European nations. Then there is Germany's determination on climate change mitigation efforts – something that isn't shared by Trump. And with Emmanuel Macron – a strong Europhile – being elected French President, the Germany-France relationship is likely to shape the future direction of Europe. This is precisely why Modi's schedule also includes visits to Spain and France. As EU evolves, India would do well to reaffirm its support to the European bloc and push for investments and technology transfers.

Besides, it needs to be borne in mind that China too is eyeing developments in EU for its own strategic interests. For New Delhi to not lose out to Beijing, the former should devote more resources to actualising the India-EU free trade agreement. As Europe emerges from America's shadows it will become a veritable standalone pole of the multipolar global order. India needs to capitalise on this and take ties with the continent to the next level.



New Lexicon Of Indian Cities

Three years of urban renaissance, unfolding across the country

Venkaiah Naidu



When the nagar panchayat of the sleepy town of Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan with a population of 1,18,473 woke up to the need to find out where it stands on revenue collection and resource management, the best way was to get its credit rating done. It got a rating of 'A' in March this year which is five notches above the investment grade of BBB.

Little known Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh and Belagavi in Karnataka besides Cuttack in Odisha and Ranchi in Jharkhand were among the 200 cities and towns that got similarly rated and secured investment grade. New Delhi Municipal Council, Navi Mumbai and Pune lead the pack with the highest grade of AA+.

About 20 cities are now gearing up to issue municipal bonds to mobilise resources for their infrastructure development initiatives under new urban missions launched during the last two years. This gives a glimpse of the urban transformation taking place in the country now.

There is more to substantiate this urban renaissance. Dibrugarh in Assam, Begusarai in Bihar, Ambikapur in Chhattisgarh and Bahraich in UP are among the 500 cities and towns that are now working on five year action plans, a first of its kind in our country, to ensure basic urban infrastructure – like ensuring water taps to all urban households besides enabling water supply at the normative 135 litres per head per day and expanding sewerage and drainage networks, non-motorised transport and public spaces under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT). Project investment of Rs 78,000 crore is being made under this mission with central assistance of Rs 37,000 crore.

Taking urban planning and execution to a new level, the pilgrim towns of Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh) and Ajmer (Rajasthan) and the tourism destination of Agra (UP) are among 60 cities vigorously pursuing five year Smart City Plans with an investment of about Rs 2,000 crore each. In a new feature,



These plans are being executed by Special Purpose Vehicles incorporated under the Companies Act of 2013, to ensure quick decision making and timely execution of projects. The 60 cities so far selected for financing these plans have proposed an investment of Rs 1,33,680 crore for which central assistance of Rs 30,000 crore is being provided.

AMRUT and chosen smart cities account for over 70% of the country's urban population and are now pursuing well documented and comprehensive infrastructure development action plans, ending the project based and ad hoc approach followed till recently.

Our country has a rich legacy of culture and heritage and we need to protect and revive the same. Heritage related infrastructure is being developed in Amritsar, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Dwarka, Warangal (Telangana) and Vellankini (Tamil Nadu) etc under the Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY).

Over 2,500 cities and towns have so far got approved construction of 18.75 lakh affordable houses for urban poor in

City Liveability Index is the next logical move and will soon be rolled out

a short span of two years, with a total investment of Rs 1.04 lakh crore, as against the 13.80 lakh houses sanctioned during 2004-14 at less than one third of investment.

Competition among cities and towns to do better than others is now the new normal. 98 cities and towns have been selected through several rounds of competition for smart city development. This spirit has resulted in building over 33 lakh individual household toilets so far, out of the target of 66 lakh toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission (urban). Over 600 cities and towns have declared themselves Open Defecation Free and their claims have been independently verified.

In the latest Swachh Survekshan, Indore has topped Mysuru to emerge as the cleanest city in the country. Jharkhand

and Chhattisgarh have emerged as the real movers and shakers in the latest swachh rankings, in an indication of the churning going on in new urban India.

Under the 'bottom up' planning introduced as a part of the paradigm shift in our approach to urban development, reversing the hitherto Delhi driven 'top down' approach, states/UTs and cities were involved in formulating the design and guidelines of the new urban missions launched during the last two years. About 2.50 crore citizens participated in the formulation of smart city plans. This Team India approach has resulted in approving an investment of about Rs 4.50 lakh crore for improving urban infrastructure in a short time.

Cities being the prime engines of economic growth, ease of doing business, particularly in respect of construction permits and approvals, needs to be improved. Delhi and Mumbai have moved on to online approvals, reducing the time taken for according approvals from about one year to 30 days. Another 50 cities with population of million plus each are set to follow suit.

Encouraged by the new buoyancy of spirit among city governments, we are now focusing on transformative urban reforms. These are: 'trust and verify' approach under which birth and death certificates, permits for low risk construction and mutations are first issued and later verified; making land titling laws to end uncertainty about property titles; credit rating necessary for mobilisation of resources through municipal bonds; value capture financing to finance urban infra projects by capturing a share of increase in the value of assets further to public investment and professionalisation of municipal cadres through induction of technical talent necessary for effective urban planning.

Indian cities are now shaking off the legacy of sloth and adopting a new lexicon. A good beginning has been made. Further consolidation will make a big difference to life in urban areas. City Liveability Index is the next logical move and will soon be rolled out.

The writer is Union Minister of Urban Development and Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation

Temple Politics

Adityanath visit to disputed site in Ayodhya sends out communal signals

Yesterday in a highly choreographed move full of political symbolism, Yogi Adityanath became the first Uttar Pradesh chief minister in 15 years to visit the disputed Ram janmabhoomi/ Babri mosque site in Ayodhya. This is just a day after a special CBI court in Lucknow framed charges of criminal conspiracy in the 1992 Babri demolition case against top BJP leaders including LK Advani, MM Joshi and Union minister Uma Bharti. Adityanath met these three senior leaders before they appeared in court and in Ayodhya he was accompanied by Dharam Das, against whom also conspiracy charges have been framed.



This sends a disturbing signal, with UP's ruling party appearing to take sides when it should be conveying neutrality.

Adityanath offered prayers at the banks of Saryu river in Ayodhya. He should have gone a step ahead and also met leaders of the Muslim community who are party to the dispute. This would have been in line with the top court's assessment that it would be best to settle the dispute amicably. Extending the olive branch could go a long way in disentangling an issue that appears intractable to most outsiders. It would also put pressure on the warring parties to make a reasoned argument, if they resist efforts to bring them to terms.

The CM's Ayodhya visit is part of a larger pattern. Since BJP came to power in March, four UP cabinet ministers have already visited the makeshift temple at the disputed site. Rather than upping the ante on such an emotive and explosive dispute, Adityanath must focus on bread and butter issues such as providing employment to local youth, reviving industrial and agricultural growth in the state or providing it 24x7 power supply as promised in the BJP election manifesto.

Ministering Happiness

How mantris can change it from 'utleast' to utmost

Bachi Karkaria



Ever since Arundhati Roy's catchy new title burst upon us, it is rumoured that the Chief Provider of Happiness aka achhe din began cracking the whip on his Cabinet. He thundered, "Mitron, how can tiny Bhutan have Gross National happiness while in mahaan Bharat those elitists, leftists and nothing-is-rightists keep carping and harping on all that's going wrong. We must have a new Ministry of Utmost Happiness." His colleagues weren't in the utleast happy. So instead NaMore delivered a Mantri ka Diktat to include the h-agenda in the three top portfolios. Here's how Messrs Jaitley, Jaitley and Singh can score on this new KRA and raise the HQ of us ordinary people.

FM-ji, now that GST has got going, please make accessing goods and services less taxing. Your last Budget had much good news, but why does softening the tax slab at the lower end always mean hardening the tax slap at the higher end? What's the point of skilling and killing ourselves to earn more if what the pay slip giveth, the sarkar taketh away? Also, please quicken the tempo of your Los Bravos caller tune, "Black is black, I want my defaulters back."

The Defence Ministry has unhappily had to adapt Milton's line to "Peace hath its defeats no less renowned than war." At least, the army chief didn't endorse Paresh Rabble's call to give our Arundhati the 'human shield' treatment even if he commended Major Gogoi. But there are many who would adapt another quote, bellowing "Arundhati's friends are the nation's enemies." We would all be happier if we knew who the nation's friends/ enemies really are.

Which brings us closer to Home. It has had to call upon the Defence Ministry's forces so often that an inter-ministerial war could break out. It could get quite 'dirty' if abuse-pelting is resorted to. What a fun that would be for the barons of breaking news, but not for those affected by broken law and order. HM-ji should also give a quota for 'anti national' labels. We have serious reservations over those on whom this new stone is being cast. And true Indians would find the utmost happiness if the h-word routinely attached to 'communal' was 'harmony' not 'hatred'.

Alec Smart said: "Forget cattle class, we're being herded into cattle-clash."

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Major Gogoi and Farooq Dar – Grey is the colour of decision making in hybrid conflicts such as Kashmir

Syed Ata Hasnain



Major Nitin Gogoi faded from the lime-light after the army and the Advocate General justified his action of taking Farooq Dar as a supposed 'human shield' to save lives of election officials and some policemen on 9 April. He has returned all guns blazing, with the army's decision to allow the media to directly interact with him and also award him an army chief's commendation.

Even as the incident allowed extreme ideologues of the right and the liberal camp to take aim at each other, the reality of sub-conventional hybrid conflict isn't easily understood. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir has many grey areas, even if it seems black or white to most people. Let me explain.

In 2008, when the Amarnath Shrine Board land case triggered street turbulence no one had much idea how to handle it. In the initial days of the agitation the army imposed restrictions on movement of all its vehicles except as part of large convoys.

But someone erred somewhere.

A small three vehicle convoy was stopped by a mob near Khunmoh. Just like Gogoi's case, this was not a copy book situation. The mob looked menacing and was armed with missiles including petrol bombs. The havaldar had the choice to open fire, kill a couple of local citizens and bash his way through to the nearest army or police camp. Instead he left one vehicle to the mob,

For now, putting this affair behind it is the best option for the army

withdrew into the remaining two vehicles, turning them around and making haste to an army camp a kilometre away.

The vehicle, a large truck, was gleefully burned by the mob. My superiors were livid at the ignominy of an army vehicle being burnt and soldiers withdrawing in the face of threats. I refused, however, to order an inquiry or chide the havaldar.

For people who have lived these situations all their lives it is second nature to look for out



of the box solutions, right or wrong. There is little room for procrastination. By his action the havaldar achieved minimum possible loss to the state and did not embarrass his superiors into defending possible killings. The issue was played down in the media but a stern message to the people of Khunmoh was passed through local police that a repetition would invite tough reprisals.

Armchair warriors are good people. But they know nothing about how such situations pan out into the most awkward threats at different levels. There are no neat, black and white solutions. If Major

Gogoi is telling the truth – and I see no reason why a professional soldier will choose to lie – then all his actions fall in the zone of grey.

Like my havaldar he chose to prevent loss of life but by an ingenious method, which many senior veterans and highly educated people say amounts to gross violation of dignity and human rights of an Indian citizen. As an educated military leader with full awareness of the necessity of following the rules of engagement I will always work towards maximising human rights, but never at levels even close to absolute because that is practically

never possible in a conflict zone.

This is because I know that I am mostly dealing with people who are not adversaries but acting on behalf of them. If they have chosen to take public order in their hands then they have abrogated certain rights too. Gogoi respected almost all those rights except the right to dignity of Farooq Dar, whose innocence or otherwise from stone throwing has yet to be established. In such situations there are no ideal solutions.

Was putting Gogoi in front of the media incorrect? What the army did not take into account was the unnecessary raking up of an issue that had receded. To announce an award when an individual is under investigation is not something which even I, an ardent army loyalist, find easy to defend.

Grey is the colour of decision making in hybrid conflicts. The security forces should know it, as should the political leadership and media. It will save everyone much embarrassment. For now, putting this affair behind it is the best option for the army.

The writer commanded the 15 Corps in Jammu and Kashmir

dilbert



Kirpa Sagar

Soul is an integral and indivisible part of the Oversoul or God. While the soul exists inside a living body, the Oversoul that is all-pervading, occupies the space outside. Both are formless and invisible.

Soul has no birth or death; it is self-existent like God and does not intervene in any movement or action of the body that it dwells in. It remains as immutable as its source, God. It acts only as the light which enables man to see what is Reality and distinguish the same from the unreal, while itself having nothing to do with his thoughts, speech and action.

What is the soul's relationship with the living body? Suppose, we are standing in an open ground and the sunlight is there all around. And we enter a small room and keep the door open. Naturally, the sunlight outside exists in the room also and we can see

things as clearly as outside. This is the relationship between soul and Oversoul. While the Oversoul is the sunlight prevailing outside, the soul is its integral part illuminating the room – that is, the body it dwells in, from inside.

Suppose we close the door from inside. There is darkness. The situation will get restored as soon as the door is opened or the very structure falls. And herein lies the dilemma of the soul. Even though an undivided part of the Oversoul, it stands separated from it simply because the door is closed. The light inside is shut out from the light outside. Naturally, the part would like to meet the whole. But the soul starts identifying itself with the body it resides in, in the room filled with darkness.

The human body is composed of

the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and sky – by the same Creator of the Universe, God. And all these frames or structures are made to install or house what we call jiva, the living being. Jiva is one of the nine objects comprising the universe. The other eight are: the sun, moon, stars, earth, water, fire, air and sky.

Jiva tends to lean towards materialism and the mind acts as the principal instrument for the same. And it is the mind that closes the door and the room, and the soul gets engulfed by darkness. Naturally, jiva also starts fumbling and stumbling. There are delusions that lead to all kinds of beliefs and bondages. Jiva remains ignorant about reality, truth.

How to attain liberation while ignorance prevails? The air in a balloon would like to merge with its

source – the air outside – but somebody must make a hole in the balloon. Hence the need for an enlightened guru.

Once you progress on the spiritual path and begin to see the light, the greatest benefit goes to the jiva. Hitherto, it was commanded by the mind and kept in darkness. Now that the light of the soul is restored, jiva, too, realises the Truth. It also begins to know its real identity as also the Creator and understand that its real happiness does not lie with creation but with the Creator. Real and lasting joy will come when jiva and soul function in unison, as jivatma or the individual soul. Both attain salvation, their final destination. (The writer is a follower of Sant Nirankari Mission).

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Sacred space

Cosmic identity

When I look up in the universe, I know I'm small but I'm also big. I'm big because I'm connected to the universe, and the universe is connected to me.

Neil deGrasse Tyson

The Individual Soul And The Oversoul

