

The  
Hindustan Times

ESTABLISHED IN 1924

# Don't be cowed by Beijing

## After Malabar, the focus must be on better integration of navies

Naval exercise is nowadays geopolitics in miniature. This week, the annual Malabar exercise will play out in the Indian Ocean. The highlight will be the presence of three carriers, one from each participating country: India, the US and Japan. Along with their respective escort ships, this could result in 20 or more ships participating. Malabar is probably today the most significant naval exercise in the Indian Ocean, militarily and politically. A true measure of its symbolism is that China, as it has done almost every year, has already wagged a finger and sent a spy ship to watch the proceedings.

The present exercises reflects the common concerns India, the US and Japan have about the future of the maritime Indo-Pacific. A slow shrinkage of the US footprint in the region is merging with the growing military presence of China. These three countries share a view that Beijing's idea of how the world should be run is incompatible with their own. Naval exercises can be treated as a dating game but they fall short of a marriage. That has to come from a broad foreign and economic policy engagement. Security cooperation, trade and investment, common political values and a convergence of world views are among the ways true alliances are forged. Trying to use all that to stitch that together a disparate bunch of countries and in the face of China is not easy.

When dealing with a power like China, maintaining discipline in the ranks is always an issue. The collapse of the Quad — which at one point included five navies — is a testament to the reluctance of governments to be on the wrong side of Beijing. Malabar has weathered a number of episodes when New Delhi, Tokyo and Washington, individually, sought to unsuccessfully woo Beijing. But with this maturity must come progress. There is a need to take these naval exercises to a higher level. Inter-operability and much greater integration is what these navies — and their respective governments — need to be considering for the next generation of Malabar exercises.

# Why stalking continues to be rampant in India

## Despite a strong law, women don't report such cases, and conviction rate is low

On December 16, 2012, a young paramedic was gang raped in south Delhi. The incident led to public protests and a demand for strong laws against violence against women. As a response to the public demand, the offence of stalking along with a host of laws was added to the Indian Penal Code in 2013. According to the law, any man who follows, contacts, tries to foster an interaction with, or monitors a woman could be charged with stalking. A single incident of such behaviour, once the woman has expressed her disinterest, can result in the aggressor being charged under section 354D IPC, ie stalking. Unfortunately, the law has not proved to be a deterrent. According to a national daily, in the last 180 days, a stalker has been arrested every day in Delhi. In the first six months of 2017, 203 men have already been arrested for stalking while 259 cases were registered.

At an all-India level, since 2013, the number of FIRs being filed in stalking cases has also been rising. Though the National Crime Records Bureau did not report data for Section 354D in 2013, it said 346 FIRs were pending investigation by policemen in the beginning of 2014. Thereafter, 4,699 stalking cases were registered in that year, and 6,266 FIRs were registered in 2015. This number is just the tip of the iceberg, say experts. One of the reasons why stalking continues to grow in this country is because women do not come forward to reports such cases; the targets are often picked for their vulnerability.

While arrests are a deterrent, many get bail right away. According to NCRB data, over 80% of the people accused under the legal section are given bail before even the chargesheet is filed. The conviction rate for stalking cases continues to fall across India. According to a report in HT, in 2015, 26% of stalking cases ended in a conviction, which is even lower than the previous year when only 35% of cases ended in a conviction.

straightforward

SHASHI SHEKHAR



# It's time we went back to nature

## So many people around us are restless because gadgets have snatched away our peace of mind

I woke up earlier than usual that morning. Gradually, when I regained my senses, I felt another sound apart from the sound of the air-conditioner that had broken my slumber. The sound has a unique rhythm and melody. It ebbs and flows and follows a pattern. It was the sound of falling rain. When I sat down in my balcony with a cup of tea, Sunday was standing before me in all its hypnotic beauty.

Close to four decades ago, my late sister had penned a poem called 'Yayati'. In it Yayati's son Yadu gently chides his father: 'Barish mein bheegne ki umrah hoti hai pita' (Father, is there a specific age to get drenched in the rain?). Really? Why put an age constraint over an enjoyable pursuit? I ventured out as I was. The park was full of water and the pitter-patter of rain. Trees brimming over with happiness, the dancing grass and the rain gripping them into a long, languid embrace. Often, during my morning walk, I notice snakes and feel afraid.

I want to reach the middle of the park but clad in slippers and shorts I would make ideal fodder for a snake. I am reminded of an old adage that says the only difference between an animal and human being is that an animal is driven by emotion and the human being by his intelligence. I am momentarily jolted but

the rain is enticing me and the grass beckoning me from a distance. I am transported back to my childhood. We never stopped ourselves then. Why should I do that today? Let me move forward.

There is a bench built on a slope in Meghdootam Park. I lie down on the bench. The rain is singing a lullaby and the clouds wearing a cloak of darkness. When the cauldron of worldly thoughts within me goes cold, I fall asleep. After some time, when I open my eyes, it appears I've just gotten up from my mother's lap. When did I feel so energetic the last time round? I don't burden my brain and keep lying there. The combination of the rain, my drenched body, the lush surroundings and the hazy moisture goes on for some time. When the rain took a break for an interval, while returning home, I realised that in the mad rush of our daily schedules, we've cut ourselves away from nature.

Being cut off from nature equals being cut off from oneself. A person separate from his own self is the world's most unfortunate refugee. Our world is increasingly getting full of such people. Its impact is showing. At the beginning of this decade, Taiwanese researchers discovered, in two schools, that children were becoming myopic. According to a report in The Ophthalmology Journal,



• The rain is waiting for you outside

RAJ K RAJ/HT PHOTO

these researchers asked the school management to encourage children to play in an open playground. The results were positive. One year later, the children playing in the open stood out distinctly from the book-worms. As many as 17.5% of the kids who preferred being indoors were myopic, while the figure was significantly lower at 8.41% in kids who played outdoors.

The question is, what kind of future does a planet full of myopic people have? A long time ago I had read a Michigan Uni-

versity report in 'Psychological Science.' The researchers sent the selected group of children to two destinations. The first group was sent to areas full of greenery and the other to fashionable, yet crowded malls. When the groups returned, the researchers found out that the retention power of the children who returned from green areas had enhanced by 20%, even as those who returned from crowded areas showed no improvement. Clearly the computer in the hand of every person in form of a mobile phone has snatched away a lot from them. This includes their sleep and peace.

We are living in a world full of restless and dissatisfied people. That day, while getting drenched in the rain, I was thinking that the health market is booming.

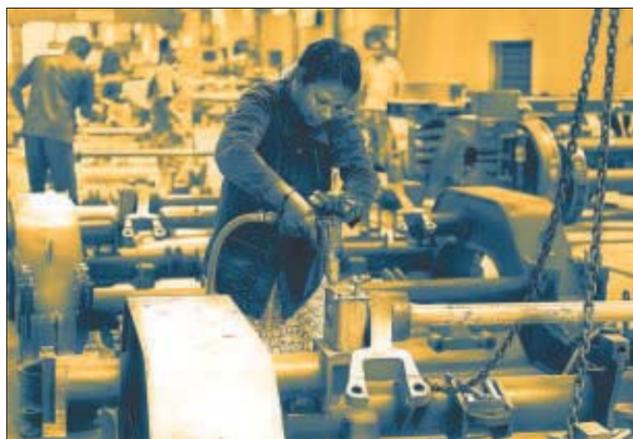
If some vendors are peddling recipes for a size-zero body, others are giving a guarantee for six-pack abs. Modern-day Hercules and Venus don't take birth these days, they are created. When uniqueness is sold in the market, it creates aberrations.

If I talk just about India, the manner in which the number of mental patients is growing is a matter of concern. Health ministry statistics say the number of patients in this category had reached 5 crore at the end of 2005.

Rather than adding to this list, it is better that we return to nature. Don't wait any longer. The rain is waiting for you outside.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief Hindustan Times. [letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)

## GROWTH PANGS



• Though public sector investment improved, private sector investment in manufacturing declined from 19.2% in 2011-2012 to 16.8% in 2014-15

AFP

# Sluggish investment may derail India growth story

## The Centre must activate stalled infrastructure projects and clean up the banking sector to stay on course

PRAVAKAR SAHOO



The NDA government launched the 'Make in India' programme in 2014 to boost investments in the manufacturing sector. Subsequently, it took further steps — infrastructure development, FDI reforms, initiatives for quick approvals and clearances, bringing insolvency and bankruptcy code and the Goods and Services Tax — to push private investment, particularly in manufacturing. Unfortunately, private investment remains sluggish and could even derail India's growth story. The investment ratio slowed down to around 30% after the global financial crisis (GFC) from 38% in 2007. Though public sector investment improved, private sector investment in manufacturing declined from 19.2% in 2011-2012 to 16.8% in 2014-15.

Investments in the corporate sector also witnessed a fall post-GFC from 16% in 2008 to around 10% in 2016, due to debt burdens, slowdown in private credit and twin balance sheets problems in the banking and corporate sectors. Stalled projects after GFC, almost 6 to 7% of GDP even now, weakened the balance sheets of corporations and public sector banks and, in turn, limited private

investment and banks' capability to lend.

Stalled projects, both in terms of value and number, is a cause of concern. Unfortunately manufacturing, which is essential for job creation, has maximum number of stalled projects. Recent data shows, the new investment realisation rate in transport infrastructure sector is falling since 2008 mostly due to issues like land acquisition, environmental clearances and other market conditions. It's time to review all stalled projects and effectively use bankruptcy laws, asset restructuring, etc. to clean up bad assets and provide restructuring option to stakeholders. The reasons for stalled projects are mostly related to unfavourable market conditions, and delay in clearances and debt overhang. Falling exports also affected investment. Both Special Economic Zones and Exports Oriented Units have failed to deliver in terms of exports, investment and employment generation.

The government must revise these specific schemes, designed to augment production for exports, to suit the changing global environment and ensure proper functioning. Apart from infrastructure development, the government must work on trade facilitation. There is an urgent need to activate stalled projects and clean up balance sheets of corporate firms and the banking sector to revive the investment cycle. It is important to revive overall investment for balanced growth.

Pravakar Sahoo is professor, Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

## pulp-it

R SUKUMAR



# In India, life coaches are becoming a rage

## Even a decade ago, people were willing to put up with sub-optimality. Today, no one is ready to accept it

Life coach. End-of-life coach. Lifestyle coach. CEO Coach. Executive Coach. Here a coach, there a coach, everywhere a coach coach.

It's almost as if they crawled out of the woodwork overnight, but suddenly, coaches are everywhere. Everyone seems to want a coach. And it seems possible for just about anyone to become a coach.

Many of us lead complex lives surrounded by multiple screens (which means there is an information overload) and driven by multiple objectives. We also work in an environment which is not just complex, but also competitive. There may be some people who have the natural ability to deal with this complexity — at work, at play — but not everyone can. In truth, most can't (as a popular management writer once put it 'It's the great bell curve of life — some rich, some poor, then the rest of us'). Even a decade ago, people were willing to put up with this sub-optimality. And it was quite possible to get by, even succeed, doing so. Today, it isn't.

It's the same reason coaches have become so critical to sport where science, strategy, and preparedness are increasingly playing as important a role as natural ability.

Nor does anyone have to put up with this sub-optimality anymore. Coaches, for just about anything, are easily found. Even better, becoming a coach is just a click away. Tear yourself away from this column and tap that modern day horn of plenty, Google, for information on becoming a coach — a certified coach, if you will. The results run into pages. Which means becoming a certified coach for just about anything in India circa 2017 is as easy or as difficult as it was to become a certified programmer in C++ in India circa 1999.

I have met with several of these new-age coaches over the past few years. Most of

the people I met were CEO or Executive Coaches (which fits in with what I do). Like with every other profession, some are really smart people who have had fulfilling careers in senior management and have enough expertise and experience to help others; others are opportunists who have jumped into coaching because there's demand for it. I have also spoken to many young people (including some young CEOs) who have coaches.

Some of these CEOs decided to find coaches for themselves because they found themselves lacking in a particular area. Others did so simply because they wanted someone they could talk to and bounce ideas off. "It can get pretty lonely and stressful at the top," one of these young CEOs told me. "And there's no one in the company with whom I can share the kind of things I share with my coach."

"So, he is like a therapist," I ventured. "Minus the couch," the CEO said.

That's true only to an extent, a CEO coach (he has been a director and business head at several companies, in India, and elsewhere) told me. According to him, CEO coaches are good listeners and sounding boards but their biggest strength is their ability to help deal with situations and scenarios leaders typically face in the course of their work. "We aren't really equipped to help with anything else," he added, admitting that CEO coaches can't really make someone a better person (although they can make a CEO perform better).

Another CEO coach I spoke to, a much older man who has held several very public and high-profile positions, admitted that some young leaders also seek out coaches from a desire to tap into their networks. "I can help people with a lot of things, but sometimes I find that the only thing they want is to be introduced to so-and-so," this person said. "I usually say no and terminate these relationships."

Both the CEO coaches also agreed that this whole business of leaders seeking out coaches was becoming something of a fad — "You should see some of the people who claim to be CEO coaches," one of them told me snarkily — although the young leaders I spoke with disagreed.

"It's actually quite humbling to seek help," the young CEO said.

R Sukumar is editor, Mint. [letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)



## DO THE BEST YOU CAN AND LEAVE THE REST TO GOD

Ajit Bishnoi

A boy from a middle class background wanted to study in IIM, Ahmedabad. He was good in studies, therefore, his goal was not unrealistic. He did very well in the Class XII exams and got admission in a prestigious college. He spent three years in getting a degree in economics. Now he was ready to compete for his dream institution. Another boy from a rich background also wanted to study in the same institute as the boy. He got admission in a much sought-after college, as

well. In due course, he obtained his degree in accounts. Time had come to prepare for the tough competition.

Both these boys sought help from a coaching institute, which was famous for 100% success. Let us name the boy from middle class Vivek, and the other Sunil. Being in a small group, they became friends. Sunil used to brag that he was sure to be selected. The competitive exam came and both did very well, except Sunil left his cell number on the last page of his answer sheet. The examiner went through his answers and

was just about to give him top grades till he saw the cell number. He reported the matter to the authorities. Vivek had completed too and he had left the matter where he should have. He had faith in the system; the other one did not. He tried to influence the outcome and failed. One should work to one's abilities and leave the rest to god. This, at the end makes life easier for all.

Innervoice comprises contributions from our readers

The views expressed are personal. [innervoice@hindustantimes.com](mailto:innervoice@hindustantimes.com)