

**The Indian EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## A MISUSED POWER

**AFSPA must be repealed from states like Assam and Arunachal Pradesh where insurgent groups have been contained**

THE CENTRE IS reportedly considering the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act from parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This step is long overdue. The law and order situation in both these states, once majorly impacted by insurgencies, no longer warrants the Act. For nearly a decade, both these states have successfully contained the many violent separatist movements that had devastated the region. The time has now come for the AFSPA to be lifted and for authority to be fully restored to the civil administration.

The AFSPA, derived from the colonial era Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance, 1942, was first introduced in 1958 to counter the Naga rebellion in Assam and parts of Manipur. Over the years, it has provided legal cover to military operations in "disturbed areas" in the entire Northeast, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Security personnel operating under the AFSPA have powers that override the civil administration. This was deemed essential to counter the numerous well-equipped militant groups which threatened the sovereignty of the Indian state and disturbed public order in the region. Over the years, a judicious use of military might and negotiating skills has enabled the Indian state to subdue them and, in many cases, convince their leaderships to join the political mainstream. But the AFSPA has survived these insurgencies. At various moments, the constitutionality of the law as well as human rights violations by the armed forces operating under its cover have been questioned by the judiciary, state commissions and civil society. The courts and commissions have suggested procedural checks, but ducked disturbing questions about the extra-judicial powers the security establishment assumes under the Act and its consequences. The onus, hence, is now on the political establishment to reward peace in the region by repealing the law.

Two years ago, the Manik Sarkar government in Tripura repealed the Act after 18 years on the ground that militants are no longer active in the state. A similar situation prevails in Assam and Arunachal, where in the past decade or so, many militant groups, including the most influential of them, the ULFA, have negotiated peace with the state and joined the electoral process. Barring a handful of groups, like the Paresh Baruah faction of the ULFA, the threat from militancy is minimal in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Any further continuation of this law will only undermine the argument that the AFSPA is a contingency measure to counter insurgency, and not an essential feature — or scar — of the Indian state's democratic imagination.

## THE SAME GOVERNOR

**BJP carries on — and adds to — Congress tradition of blatant politicisation of the high office**

THE WAR of words between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the state's governor, Keshari Nath Tripathi, is an indication of how a constitutional office meant to rise above the political melee has become mired in controversy. After communal tensions broke out in North-24 Parganas, Banerjee accused the governor of "insulting and threatening" her and acting like a "BJP block president", while Tripathi has denied the allegations. But the unseemly stand-off between the two high offices is neither the first of its kind in West Bengal nor limited to the state.

Examples abound of governors appointed by regimes led by the Congress earlier and the BJP now going beyond their constitutionally mandated — and circumscribed — role. Even so, the current rash of controversies involving Raj Bhavans is striking. Tripura Governor Tathagata Ray has tweeted statements that could be called communally polarising: In June, he quoted Hindu Mahasabha leader Syama Prasad Mookerjee as saying that the "Hindu-Muslim problem" can be solved only by "civil war" and then, asked the Hindus of West Bengal to "polarise" or "prepare to be annihilated". In Puducherry, in June, Lt Governor Kiran Bedi — once the BJP candidate for Delhi CM — reportedly bypassed the Union Territory's elected government by giving direct instructions to officers. The legislature, in a symbolic action, passed a resolution giving absolute powers to the government. This week, Bedi administered the oath of office to three MLAs appointed by the Centre — a function usually carried out by the assembly Speaker. Perhaps the most high-profile governor-government conflict was played out in Delhi between Arvind Kejriwal and former LG Najeeb Jung (a UPA appointee), ranging from the functioning of the city-state's Anti-Corruption Bureau to the appointment of bureaucrats and even during an outbreak of vector-borne diseases in the capital last year. The discretionary powers of governors — in the appointment of a government after an unclear or fragmented mandate — have also routinely courted controversy, as after the Goa and Manipur elections earlier this year.

Over time, the Raj Bhavan has become a retirement home for ageing politicians or a reward for political fellow travellers. Successive Union governments have transformed a position of moral authority to one of a political agent. An oft-heard — and unpersuasive — response from the BJP to this criticism has been to cite instances of similar partisanship in the past. The NDA government must realise that the actions of its appointees diminish the office they have taken an oath to uphold.

## GRANDMA MISSILE

**In the interest of authenticity and continuity, the hottest news out of Pyongyang is always announced by Ri Chun-hee**

THE VOICE THAT launched a thousand missiles and megatons is back on air in North Korea's state-owned TV station. Well, maybe not a thousand, to be absolutely truthful, but about a dozen. But propaganda owes no allegiance to truth, and what Ri Chun-hee articulates is pure propaganda. On July 4, the septuagenarian grandmother was summoned out of retirement to exuberantly announce the successful launch of the Hwasong-14 ICBM, which is believed to be capable of striking Alaska with a nuclear warhead. The moose and the caribou out there must be seriously concerned. These mammals are slightly more endangered today, after the news of the launch, than they were yesterday. Sarah Palin can easily relocate to a state out of range. The wildlife can't.

But seriously, North Korea seems to have passed a significant milestone in delivery vehicle technology and the most credible voice in Pyongyang had to be called up to deliver the incredible news. Ri has read out all the news that matters in Pyongyang — the death of bellicose leaders and the birth of weapons of mass destruction. Mentored by Kim Il-sung, she has drawn on her training in the theatre to develop an exaggeratedly histrionic style. Her delivery is as remote from the Western concept of the news as Macbeth is from Marcus Aurelius. And she has an enormous emotional range, weeping while announcing funerals but jiggling to celebrate missile launches.

While North Korean officials believe that Ri can menace the US with her voice alone, the maximum firepower that the US can muster in retaliation is the Twitter handle of Donald Trump, who is lamely wondering if Beijing and Tokyo are too craven to administer stiff uppercuts to the regime in North Korea. Seriously, it's no contest.

# Importance of being simple



BIBEK DEBROY

**GST is no mean achievement but concerns over basic structure must be addressed in the here and now**

WHAT IS A good and simple tax and why is the present indirect tax structure bad and complicated? There are several reasons behind the bad, ugly and complicated visage — the constitutional structure, history and legacy, differential treatment of goods vis-à-vis services, multiple rates and exemptions. Exemptions mean loss in revenue. In 2015-16, such concessions/incentives on excise duty had a revenue impact of Rs 2,24,940 crore. Stated more directly, had those concessions/incentives not been there, revenue would have been that much more. In February 2016, there was a parliamentary question and, in response, the government gave figures for September 2015 — 1,36,365 indirect tax cases were pending, 40,967 before Supreme Court. The total sum involved was Rs 2,11,881 crore. Differences in rates, across items, are a primary reason behind tax disputes.

Ponder the following weighty matters. Is green coconut a fruit or a vegetable? Is Parachute oil, occasionally used for hair too, "coconut oil" or "hair oil"? Is Dant Manjan Lal toothpowder or a medicinal product? Is McDonald's McSwirl ice-cream or a dairy product? Is Scrabble a game or a puzzle? These, and there are several more examples, are matters on which courts have had to adjudicate, because of differences in rates. Other than prohibition, differences in rates are the reason behind liquor being smuggled across borders and cars being bought and registered in a state other than the state of residence.

"Simple" is a simple and objectively determined adjective. Across goods and services, there should be a single rate for everything and no items should be outside the tax net. You do not leave out liquor, petroleum products, electricity or legal services. There is also a trade-off between "simple" and "good", "good" being a term that is inherently subjective. Specifically, should indirect tax policy be used to address distributional concerns? Distributional concerns are indeed important. However, some issues of equity are beyond the purview of tax policy.

To the extent they are in the domain of tax policy, they pertain to direct taxes, where

progressivity can be built in. But in many developing countries, India included, there is a perception that indirect taxes must reflect concerns of the poor and deflect items consumed by relatively rich. As soon as this thin end of the wedge is in, one is asking for trouble. Mass consumption and elitist consumption involve subjective identification, based on static and arbitrary considerations. It also allows the insidious creeping in of lobbying for exemptions. Why did the excise exemptions mentioned earlier exist? Probably because someone lobbied for them. The exemption argument is simple. "Remove exemptions for others, but retain them for me."

Think of the following items and ask whether they deserve a GST rate of 0 per cent, even with that pro-poor lens — meat, fish, newspapers, printed books. Everyone wants a lower tax rate, more on that later. But should the items mentioned, and there are more like that, be given a 0 per cent rate because they are essential goods and services? Roughly, 300 items in the Centre's list and 80 items in the state list have such 0 per cent rates. Why create an artificial threshold of Rs 1,000 between hotels that have higher room tariffs and lower? (There is another threshold at Rs 7,500). For garments, there is a threshold of Rs 1,000 and for footwear, one of Rs 500. Is shampoo a demerit good that it should be taxed at 28 per cent? A revenue neutral rate is a rate that yields the same revenue before and after the change. Computing a revenue neutral rate isn't easy, because it's hard to estimate volume growth and a broadening of the tax base. In all probability, with all items under GST, a revenue neutral rate would have been around 17 per cent, perhaps even 18 per cent. With several items at 0 per cent, 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 12 per cent, the weighted average rate of items included is probably below 18 per cent.

Make no mistake. Introducing the GST in a country like India is no mean achievement. Few countries (probably around seven) have the GST, though several have VAT. Of the ones that have the GST, Canada and India are prob-

ably the only ones that have some kind of federal structure. Of course, many Union and state taxes (central excise, service tax, VAT, entertainment tax, octroi/entry tax, purchase tax, luxury tax, taxes on lottery) have been unified and inter-state check-posts are vanishing. The GST brings gains — efficiency (and thereby growth), lower compliance costs (for enterprises), lower collection costs (for governments), greater tax revenue. But empirical cross-country evidence (on VAT) indicates such gains happen when all items are included and there are no more than two or three rates. In working out compromise solutions, the GST Council has deviated quite a bit from that goal.

Concerns about rules (e-way bills, registrations, forms) are not that serious. They will sort themselves out, with tweaking here and there. Concern about the basic structure is more serious. Sure, there is hope that in the long run, there will be no more than two or three rates — a standard one, a merit (lower) and a demerit one (higher). There is the Keynes quote and let me give you all of it, not just the bit that is usually quoted. "The long run is a misleading guide to current affairs. In the long run we are all dead."

What are those three rates likely to be? Probably something like 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 24 per cent. Everyone will happily accept reduction from 28 per cent to 24 per cent, if it occurs. No one will happily accept increase from 0 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent to 12 per cent. Had it been that easy, the GST Council would have introduced it now. Once in place, a basic structure is not that easy to change, nor its consequences. Many old English houses continue to be dark because glass was heavily taxed, discouraging use of windows. Old houses in Amsterdam are narrow because taxes on houses were correlated with width of the façade. Similarly, on the basis of present rates, enterprises will take decisions and argue against change, even though promissory estoppel doesn't apply to taxation.

The writer is member, Niti Aayog. Views expressed are personal

## RULES AGAINST THE LAW

**Why the Centre's notification against cattle slaughter is controversial**



P.D.T. ACHARY

THE CATTLE MARKET notification issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on May 23 has heated up the debate on cow slaughter. The notification is flawed on two counts. One, it imposes a total ban on the sale of the cattle in the cattle market for slaughter. Prohibition of slaughter of cattle falls in the State List under the Constitution's Seventh Schedule. The Centre cannot make a law or subordinate legislation on this subject. It is rather disingenuous to argue that the notification deals only with sale or purchase of cattle. It clearly and directly prohibits slaughter and is, therefore, outside the jurisdiction of the Centre. The argument that sale of cattle for slaughter outside the cattle market is not prohibited has no merit as that is not the subject matter of the above notification.

Secondly, rule 22 of the notification is outside the scope of the parent act, namely the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. When Parliament makes a law it delegates to the government the power to make rules for its implementation. The rules cannot exceed the scope of the Act under which it is made. They cannot propound a policy which is not germane to the parent law.

The Supreme Court has delivered a number of judgments on the exact scope of the rules made under an Act. In *Shiv Kirpal Singh vs. V.V. Giri* (1970) the Court held that any rule made in contravention of the provisions of

the Act would be declared void on the ground that it goes beyond the scope of the power conferred on the government. Similarly, in *Hukam Chand v. Union of India* (AIR 1972, SC2427) the Court observed "the extent and amplitude of the rule making power would depend upon and be governed by the language of the section. If a particular rule were not to fall within the ambit and purview of the section, the Central government in such an event would have no power to make that rule".

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act was enacted to "prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals". This law was not enacted to prohibit the slaughter of cattle. It is interesting to note that Section 11 (3) (e) of this law says that any act committed in the course of killing an animal for human food does not come within its purview. But the caveat is that such act should not be accompanied by the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering.

How can the government, then, issue a notification prohibiting the sale or purchase of cattle in the cattle market for slaughter, in effect prohibiting slaughter of cattle? This rule amounts to saying that selling or purchasing cattle for slaughter is an act of cruelty. Obviously, the rule is in violation of the parent Act. As per the observation of the Supreme Court, quoted above, the Centre

has no power to make such a rule.

Cow slaughter has always been a sensitive issue in India. It hurts the sentiments of millions of people in the country. No representative government can afford to ignore the matter. Article 48 of the Constitution says that the State shall take special steps for prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves. However, the Constitution makers were wise enough to recognise the diversity of food habits in different parts of the country. Therefore, instead of keeping prohibition of slaughter of cows in the Union List, they put it under the State List. Thus, there is no Central law on prohibition of cow slaughter. Many states have passed stringent laws prohibiting the slaughter of cow. But the problem arises when the Centre attempts to do what the states alone can do under the Constitution.

The May 23 notification does have number of measures aimed at preventing cruelty to animals. Those are well within the scope of the Parent Act. But Rule 22 sticks out like a sore thumb. A revised notification without this rule will put an end to the needless controversy. Going strictly by the Constitution is the safest way for any government to deal with sensitive issues.

The writer is a former secretary general of the Lok Sabha

## JUNE 30/JULY 6, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

### VAJPAYEE ON PASSPORTS

THE CUMBERSOME PROCEDURES involved in the issue of passports will be resolved soon, External Affairs Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told Parliament. He assured the Lok Sabha that he would initiate steps to simplify the procedures so that people going abroad for employment and other purposes were not harassed. This would also help root out corruption in the issue of passports. Vajpayee said he was thinking about doing away with the system of police verification. This, he admitted, was causing considerable hardship, particularly to those coming from villages. He also wanted to change the rules so that members of Parliament too could recom-

mend issue of passports. Like deputy secretaries, MPs were also responsible persons. This would save passport applicants the trouble of going all the way to their states for getting the signature of a known government officer. Wherever necessary, the staff strength in passport offices would be strengthened. Referring to the hardship faced by Indians going abroad for employment, Vajpayee said the government has already taken steps to regulate employment. Restrictions have been placed on certain categories of workers like nurses. The Indian missions have been instructed to report to the government complaints of discrimination against Indian nationals.

### IN THE DOCK

THE FOUR-DAY DISCUSSIONS between the Centre and representatives of port and dock workers regarding pay revision concluded in Delhi without any tangible result. While three federations of port and dock workers agreed to meet the government again on or before July 14, the fourth federation, which is considered to have the largest membership, rejected the consensus arrived at the discussions. Labour Minister Ravindra Varma had initiated the talks on the implementation of Wage Revision Committee's report on port and dock workers in the wake of a threat of strike by the All India Port and Dock Workers Federation.





# The polygamy myth

The Quran and Hadith are replete with verses in support of family planning. Muslim backwardness on this count is a fallout of poor socio-economic conditions



S.Y. QURAISHI

A NEWS HEADLINE that grabbed my attention was from neighbouring Pakistan. It was about three men who among them have fathered nearly 100 children making their modest contribution to Pakistan's skyrocketing population, which is being counted for the first time in 19 years. Allah, they say, will provide for them — a standard reply of most Muslims, even in India.

No wonder, the prevalence of family planning among Muslims in India is the lowest among all communities. They are also at the bottom of the ladder in education, economic status and access to health services — the main determinants of fertility behaviour. It needs to be examined whether it's the cause or effect of the high birth rate. That question can be answered in a separate article. Here, I examine if religion is the contributor to high birth rate. This is a subject which is characterised by mass ignorance and it's time someone explodes the myths.

At the centre of the debate is the belief that Islam encourages polygamy which leads to a spurt in population growth. The reality is that though Islam does permit polygamy, it is subject to not one but two conditions — that they are orphans and will be treated with absolute equality. "And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only one]" (Al Nisa:4.3).

The polygamists conveniently miss both the conditions. It is noteworthy that everyone mentions the condition about equal treatment but completely misses out the references to orphans. This is the only verse in the Quran that refers to polygamy and that too in the context of fair treatment of orphan girls. The emphasis of the Holy Quran is very clearly on monogamy.

Is polygamy widely prevalent among Muslims? No. The only report on the subject is that of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, which revealed that polygamy was not exclusive to Muslims but was prevalent among all communities of India — tribals (15.2 per cent), Buddhists (9.7 per cent), Jains (6.7 per cent) and Hindus (5.8 per cent). Muslims were, in fact, found least polygamous (5.7 per cent).

Polygamy cannot be widespread in India as the number of women per thousand men is only 940. Experts have opined that polygamy cannot lead to high birth rate, since the number of polygamous men, small though they are, would leave an equal number of men unmarried. It is also observed that the second wife of a man has lesser number of children than the first/only wife. A study showed that the average number of children from the second wife of Muslims was only 1.78 as compared to 4.67 from the first wife.

Polygamy apart, what does the Shariah say about family planning? The Quran and Hadith (Hadees) are replete with verses and traditions supportive of the concept of family planning. It is extremely important to note that nowhere has the Quran prohibited family planning. There are only interpretations, for or against.

The anti-family planning interpretations are based on the following concepts:



CR Sasikumar

*Tawakkul* (reliance on Allah), *qadr* (predestination), and *rizq* (provision). "Do not kill your children (for fear of poverty); We make provisions for you, and for them too". (Sura 6:152 and 17:31). "And Allah has made for you, your mates from yourselves and made for you, out of them, children and grandchildren". (Sura 16:72).

The pro-family planning interpretations, on the contrary, are much more. These are based on: Tranquility of conjugal life, emphasis on ease, injunction about breast feeding (that delays conception and promotes spacing), preference for quality over numbers and permission for *al-azl* (withdrawal method) etc.

For me, the clinching verse of the Quran is: "Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage, keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace" (Sura 24:33). This is amplified by the Prophet: "O young men! Those of you who can support a wife and household should marry. For, marriage keeps you from looking with lust at women and preserves you from promiscuity. But those who cannot, should take to fasting, which is a means of tempering sexual desires". (Bukhari).

Then there is Hadees that refers to restricting the size of the family. Abu Sa'ad, a companion of the Prophet, reported, "A man came to the Prophet to ask about the practice of al-azl with his mate". He added, "I do not like her to get pregnant and I am a man who wants what other men want. But the Jews claim that *al-azl* is minor infanticide". The Prophet strongly dismissed this contention saying "The Jew lied, the Jew lied." (Authenticated by Abu Dawoud, Ibn Hanbal and al-Tahawi).

Please note that the first is the Quranic injunction, the second is the elaboration of the same by the Prophet and the third describes the method of birth control. I consider this a complete prescription for family planning.

This interpretation is strongly reinforced by the narrative based on Quranic verses and traditions of the Prophet (Hadees).

Based on their understanding of the Islamic law, the opinion of the great Imams is supportive of family planning. Interpreting verse 4:3 of the Holy Quran, Imam Shafei

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opined that more children should not be produced if they cannot be properly supported. Imam Raghil, interpreting 17:31 verse of Quran, says that it is not only the physical killing of children which is prohibited in Islam, but also killing them spiritually and intellectually. The denial of access to education, for example, amounts to killing them intellectually. "Those few (*qalil*)", records a Hadith, "who are virtuous are superior to those many who are undesirable".

It implies that the number of children should be restricted to the capacity of parents to make them virtuous. Imam Ghazzali, a sufi of great eminence, mentions a tradition from the Prophet: Smallness of a family (*qillat al'ayal*) is a facility (*yusur*) and its largeness (*kathrat*) results in *faqr* (indigence, poverty).

A plethora of opinions of contemporary ulama worldwide and *fatwas* strongly support family planning. For example, Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq (Saudi Arabia, 1968) opined, "The use of contraception is allowed, especially if the husband already has a large family, if he cannot bring up his children correctly, if his wife is weak or sick or has repeated pregnancies, or if the husband is poor."

Abder Rahim Omran (1992) of the respected Islamic University, Al Azhar, observes, "It is a wonder to the thinkers of today that Islam should give so much (importance) to child spacing and family planning so early in human history, and in the absence of compelling population pressures".

The above analysis should lead to a rethink among those who think that Islam is opposed to family planning. They should, on the contrary, understand that it is indeed the originator of the concept. It's true that the Muslims are most backward in family planning practices but the reason lies in their socio-economic backwardness. Literacy, income and better delivery of health services hold the key. The future of the country and all its constituent communities lies in the quality of upbringing of families, with education as the key strategy.

The writer is former Chief Election Commissioner of India. The views are personal. A longer version of this article is available on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India will suffer worse losses than 1962 if it incites a border clash."

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA.

## One question for the road

On drunk driving, we have the right law and equipment. But do we have the right strategy?

ABHIJIT BANERJEE,  
ESTHER DUFLO,  
DAN KENISTON AND  
NINA SINGH

IN APRIL, a young model, Sonika Chauhan, died in an accident in Kolkata. A prominent film actor has been charged with culpable homicide in the case. This tragedy bought us a few days of attention to the murderous mess that our roads have become. The attention did not last. Yet, in 2015, nearly 1.5 lakh people died in traffic accidents in India. And a lot of that was a result of reckless driving. Motorcyclists, and especially pillion riders, drive quite casually without helmets in most of the country. Driving in one's lane and signalling before one turns is at best optional, and in all likelihood, an admission that the driver is a sissy. And there is the menace of drunk driving — often invisible until the accident has occurred and the driver or passengers are dead.

Sobriety checks on strategic locations by the police is not enough to control drunk driving. Rather, the police need three things: Laws, tools, and the right strategy. The good news is that the police are finally getting the laws and the tools they need. The Lok Sabha passed the Indian Motor Vehicles Amendment Act in April. This piece of legislation, which will be brought to the upper house in July, raises the penalty for drunken driving from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000. Vehicles of drunken drivers are confiscated by the police, and the driver must appear in court to pay a fine or potentially face jail time. There is also a switch from multiple state-run registries of motor vehicles to a central registry which will expedite the tracking down of repeat offenders.

The results of action research in Rajasthan in 2010 have revealed that the most effective tool in catching drunken drivers is the portable breathalyser that instantly helps police to detect the incident of drunkenness instead of taking a drunk driver to hospital to ascertain his drunkenness — also a cumbersome exercise for police stations with limited resources, especially vehicles, and a paucity of testing clinics/facilities nearby. Thankfully, the situation is improving in Rajasthan, and around the country, as more and more police stations have been provided with breathalysers.

High fines and breathalysers themselves are, however, not enough until these are implemented with right strategies to control drunken driving. In 2010-2011, the Rajasthan Police, working with an international team of researchers, carried out a study to determine how best to combat drunken driving. As part of the pilot project launched in 183 police stations randomly selected across 10 districts of the state, two-thirds of the police stations used breathalysers on pre-determined points/surprise points to check drunk drivers. The remaining one-third of the police stations were left to use their traditional methods to provide a control group for the experiment.

We learnt many things from the study.

There is a fair amount of drunk driving. In the status quo, between 7pm and 10pm (when all the checks happened), more than one out of every 50 drivers was found drunk. Such drivers also had their strategies. When the checks with breathalyser were conducted on fixed points, within a couple of days most of the drunk drivers/would-be drinkers switched to alternative routes with no effect on road accidents or deaths.

Information goes out fast. It is, therefore, much more effective to spread the checkpoints randomly around all the possible main routes (we worked with three). Potential drunk drivers also find out when the checking stops, though they do so relatively slowly when the checking is random and they don't know when to expect it. Therefore, it is not enough to do a show of checking for some time and then stop. A long-term problem requires a long-term solution.

The right checkpoint strategy turned out to be only part of the answer. We discovered that many police stations were so occupied with other responsibilities that they barely had time to carry out the checks they were assigned. To counter this, half of the crackdown force were taken as special squads from the district police lines.

The special traffic enforcement squads performed better on every outcome compared to the teams from the local police station. Overall, they were 28.4 per cent more likely to show up at the checkpoints to perform sobriety checks. Once they reached the checkpoint, the special teams still performed better: They stopped an average of 50 per cent more vehicles per checkpoint than staff from the local police stations. Given that the dedicated teams both stayed longer and stopped more vehicles, it is not surprising that they caught roughly twice as many drunken drivers.

Perhaps, most importantly, the experiment revealed that checking for drunken driving, when done right, prevents accidents and saves lives. In 2010, each police station had 3.5 accidents and 1.5 traffic deaths per month. The intervention reduced the number of accidents and deaths during the checkpoint hours by 25 per cent each and a substantial part of this effect persisted up to three months after it was stopped. Not surprisingly, most of this gain came from the police stations where the checkpoints were rotated across several locations and where the checks were carried out by the special dedicated teams.

Ultimately, the right law and the right equipment have to be complemented by the right strategy. Such encouraging evidence, a dedicated force to implement traffic laws — including sobriety checks and implementation of randomised checkpoints — does not seem to be on the agenda right now. We wring our hands every time a young and visible person gets hurt or killed, but it is surely time to start treating road accidents not as isolated incidents but as an urgent public health issue.

Banerjee and Duflo teach economics at MIT. Keniston teaches economics at Yale, and Singh is a member of the Indian Police Service. The views are personal

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**INDOLENT OPPOSITION**  
THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No story of its own' (IE, July 5). The opposition does not have a narrative of its own to engage the electorate. Its reactionary, rather than pro-active politics, is making the BJP seem more formidable than it actually is. Due to the lack of a credible opposition, India has a ruling government full of vanity. The present state does not augur well for the Indian democracy.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

## NEW STEP

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'My journey to Israel' (IE, July 5). New Delhi has been cautious in dealing with Israel for the sake of the Arab world. The author's disclosure that his visit to Israel started with a message from New Delhi informing him that the Arab League nations had protested to the Indian government over his visit to Israel confirms this. There has been bilateral cooperation between the two countries. However, no Indian prime minister ever visited Israel in the last 70 years. Narendra Modi's visit has started a new chapter in Indo-Israel relations.

M.C. Joshi, Lucknow

## PHONE-Y WARNING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Health Warning' (IE, July 5). Such editorials ignite awareness among parents and guardians about the evils of mobile phones. Parents often provide children with technology but are ignorant of the responsibility that comes with it. It is time that parents take into account the

## LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

need to raise children with the social skills that were earlier taken for granted.

Arvind Kumar, Gujarat

## OLD SOLIDARITY

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Chorus from Gaza: He should have come to Palestine' (IE, July 5). While we celebrate the PM's Israel visit, it is important to remember the historic ties and solidarity with the displaced, besieged people of Palestine as well.

Bishwadeep Ghosh, Delhi

## Shalom Namo'ste

Why can't TV news simply say 'Modi in Israel'?



TELESCOPE

BY SHAILAJA BAJPAI

IT'S BEEN NamosteTV since we last met. Last Thursday, it was Na-no-lynching speech at Sabarmati Ashram; on Friday it was Na-yes-GST, live from Central Hall in Parliament; by Monday, it had become NaMostelsrael (India Today), a day before the PM visited the country and by Tuesday, TV news was waving "Shalom Namo'ste" (NDTV 24x7) greetings along with the Indian and Israeli flags. Why TV news cannot simply say, "Modi in Israel" like Times Now did or "Namaste Israel" (DD News), and spare viewers the spelling bee games, is a mystery for Maigret to solve once he's done on BBC First (Zee Café).

Many news channels sent senior reporters/anchors to visit Israel and get the all important interview with young Moshe, his Indian nanny Sandra and if they were lucky, Moshe's grandfather. This done, NDTV 24x7 spoke to university students, India Today to a lawyer and a journalist, Times Now revisited Chabad House in Mumbai — a target of the 26/11 terrorist attack — drones flew in and out of Hindi news channels, ABP informed us that Albert Einstein was asked to be the first president of the new country and CNN News 18 spoke to Israel's "new convoy"

to India. Sorry, don't usually pick on spelling errors but couldn't resist.

And since we are on the subjects of trivial pursuits, pause and consider the meaning of "Exclusive". Padmaja Joshi's interview with Moshe, telecast on Wednesday was labelled "Exclusive" (India Today); technically, that is correct: Joshi's chat with the young boy was unique to the extent that no one else could have had the exact same conversation. However, by then we had already seen and listened to Moshe interviews on other channels so this was no scoop. As to the meaning of "Super Exclusive" which is used frequently by Republic, well, once again, we'll leave it to Maigret, although this is probably beyond his powers of detection too.

The best aspect of the live broadcast by an Israeli TV channel of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu welcoming Modi at Tel Aviv airport? We could hear the leaders speaking to each other and during the introductions to their officials.

If Modi's Israel visit was "historic" (CNN News 18), so was GST. And to be fair, news channels did whatever it takes in the great scheme of things (aka *gst*) to explain the new

tax regime in a way that would not tax our brains too much — from interviews with ministers, explained with ministers and finance officials to economists, chartered accountants, traders and flow charts of how much what would now cost. If you still didn't understand, put it down to the nature of the tax slabs and your (limited) powers of comprehension. TV news really tried.

For instance, last week News State explained how and why tennis balls and badminton racquets cost more under GST in Uttarakhand; Tuesday, ABP showed how restaurants bills varied from state to state depending on their previous VAT charges, as well as the state of the Bhillwara textile industry — it's in the ICU, said the reporter, ventilator next.

Modi's speech against lynching and President Pranab Mukherjee's on "mob frenzy" Saturday, had at least one convert: Zee News on Sunday evening discussed both issues and asked hard questions. Zee News? Well, well, well. Now, that must rank as an exclusive.

It was heartening to hear Times Now say categorically that it was against the lynch-

ings and in sympathy with all "Muslims" who were victims of such barbarity but worryingly, *The Newshour* debate on Thursday was more about the #NotInMyName protests being organised outside the country in Karachi, London, etc., than the protests in India and the reasons for them — surely, it ought to have been the other way around?

Meanwhile, a word of praise — yes praise! — for Mirror Now and in particular anchor Faye D'Souza and *The Urban Debate* which is broadcast at the same time as the other usual suspects. Anchors, ahoy: D'Souza has a few lessons for you. She is calm but critical and seldom raises her voice or asks fully *phaltu* questions like, "Are you an Indian?" (Times Now). She conducts the debates with great aplomb — remember her firm but composed reply to Maulana Abbas who asked her to wear underwear on her show — listens to her guests and doesn't allow it to descend into chaos. You are actually better informed at the end of the debate than before it began.

Now, why can't others be like her?

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**SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**

[Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union] David Davis has said Brexit will be harder than landing on the moon. It is official: Brexit is beyond lunacy.

DAVID ALLEN GREEN, law and policy commentator at the *Financial Times*; 109,000 followers on Twitter

**UNDERSTANDING THE FALLOUT OF NORTH KOREA'S LATEST MISSILE TEST**

# Why Kim has upper hand in test of nerves

Pyongyang has long possessed missiles capable of hitting Japan and South Korea, but it now seems like even Alaska may be within its reach. So, what are President Donald Trump's options now, and what are their downsides?

IN JANUARY, President-elect Donald Trump tweeted a North Korean test of an intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach the US "won't happen!". On Tuesday, Pyongyang launched an ICBM that analysts said could potentially strike Alaska, and the President vented, "Does this guy [Kim Jong-un] have anything better to do with his life?" For Trump, the brutal fact is that as North Korea marches relentlessly ahead with its missile development programme, his options are increasingly narrowing.

The fear is not that Kim would launch a preemptive attack on the West Coast — that would be suicidal. But if Kim has the potential ability to strike back, it would shape every decision that Trump and his successors make about defending US allies in the region.

So what are Trump's options, and what are their downsides?

■ There is classic containment: limiting an adversary's ability to expand its influence, as the US did against the Soviet Union. But that does not solve the problem; it is just a way of living with it.

He could step up sanctions, bolster the US naval presence off the Korean Peninsula, and accelerate the secret US cyber programme to sabotage missile launches. But if that combination of intimidation and technical wizardry had been a success, Kim would not have conducted the test Tuesday, knowing that it would only lead to more sanctions, more military pressure and more covert activity.

■ He could also threaten preemptive military strikes if the US detects an imminent launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile. But experts who once argued for that step are no longer sure now. The reason is the North now has just too many missiles, of too many varieties, to make the risk worth taking. And Kim retains his ultimate weapon of retaliation: artillery along the northern edge of the Demilitarised Zone that can take out Seoul.

■ Then, there is negotiation. It would start with a freeze in North Korea's nuclear and missile tests in return for a US agreement to limit or suspend military exercises with South Korea. President Xi Jinping has long urged that approach, and President Vladimir Putin endorsed it last week.

However, that option essentially achieves the North Korean and Chinese goal of limiting US military freedom of action in the Pacific and, over time, erodes the quality of the US-South Korean military deterrent. And Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush discovered that after a while, the deals fell apart.

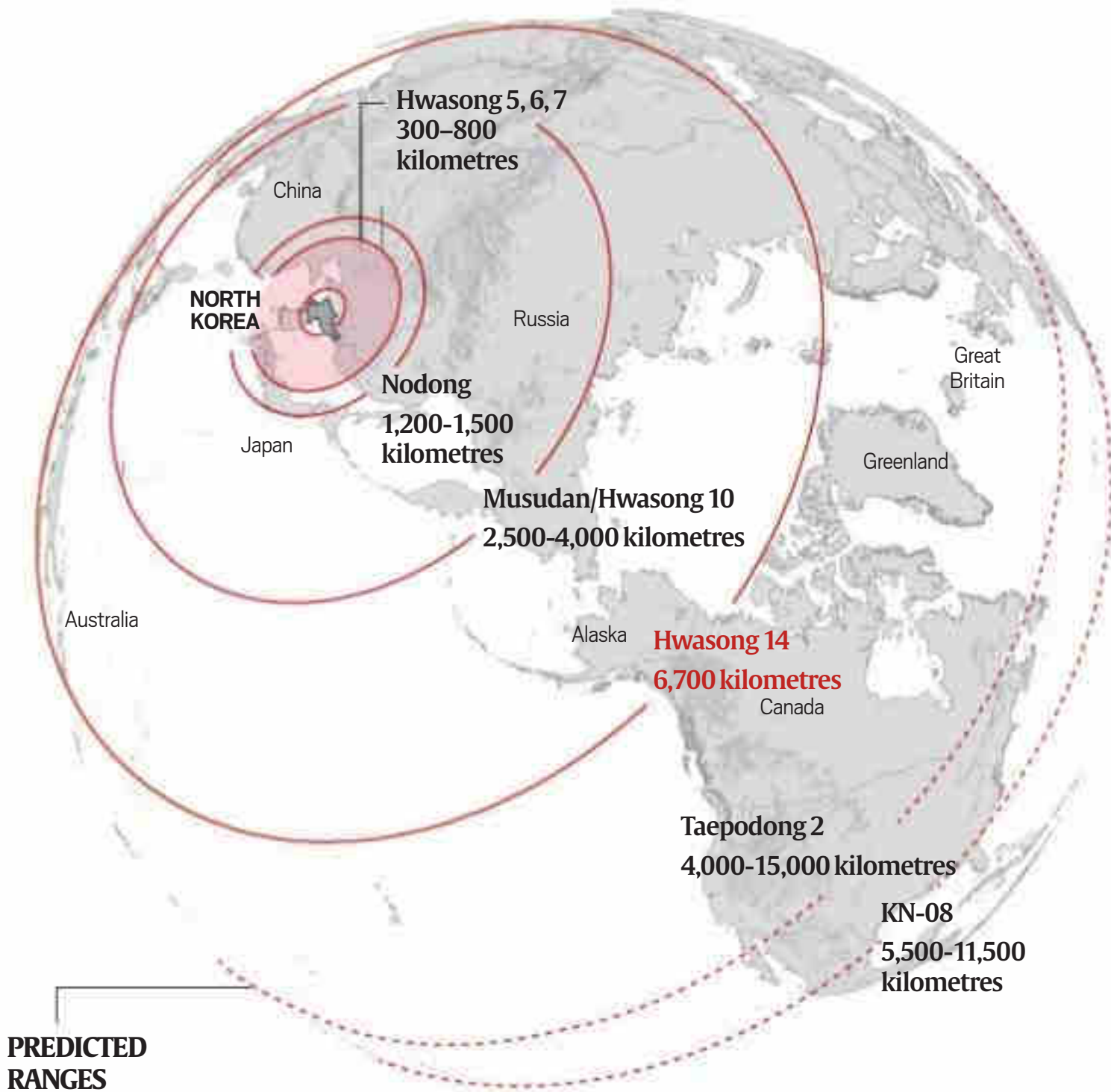
THE NEW YORK TIMES



North Korean ruler Kim Jong-un embraces an official of the DPRK Academy of Defence Science after the successful testfiring of the intercontinental ballistic missile Hwasong-14 (left) in this undated photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency in Pyongyang Wednesday. *Reuters*

**NORTH KOREA'S GROWING REACH**

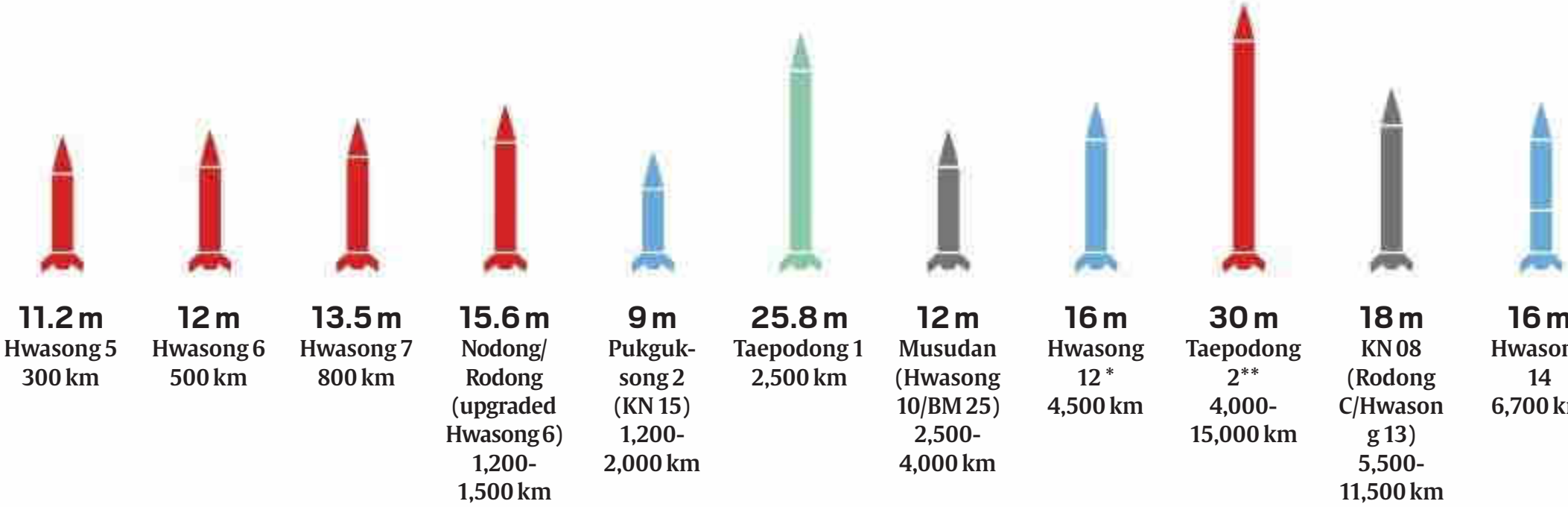
Pyongyang has been slowly expanding the reach of its missiles. As things stand, its missile range covers Alaska. The goal of the missile programme is to cover all of continental US



**NORTH KOREA'S MISSILE ARSENAL**

Pyongyang has 10-20 nuclear weapons, but the ability of its missile range to deliver nuclear warheads remains in question

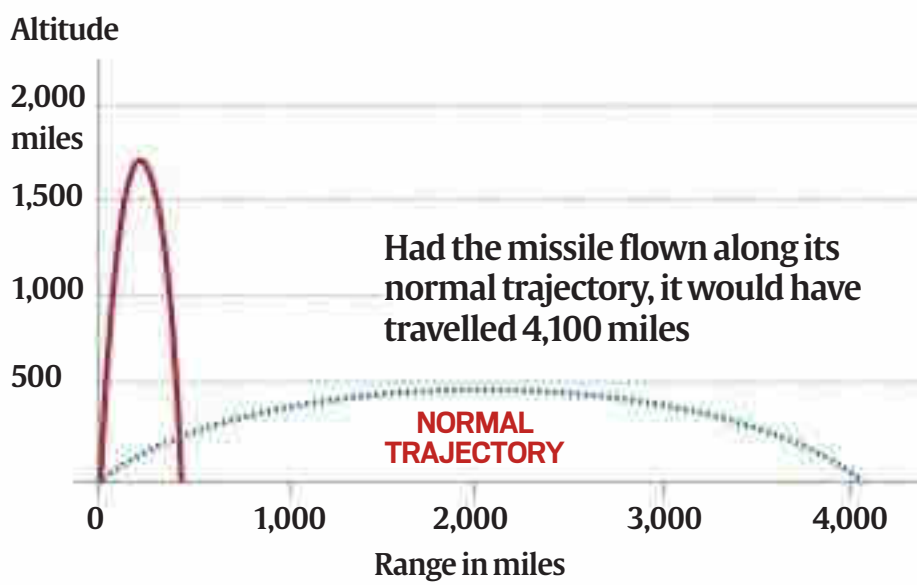
■ Operational ■ Tested successfully ■ Technology demonstrator ■ In development



\*Some believe Hwasong 12 same as KN 17, a mobile IRBM \*\* Same delivery system as Unha rocket, launched successfully in 2012, 2016 Sources: The NYT, AP, Reuters, CSIS

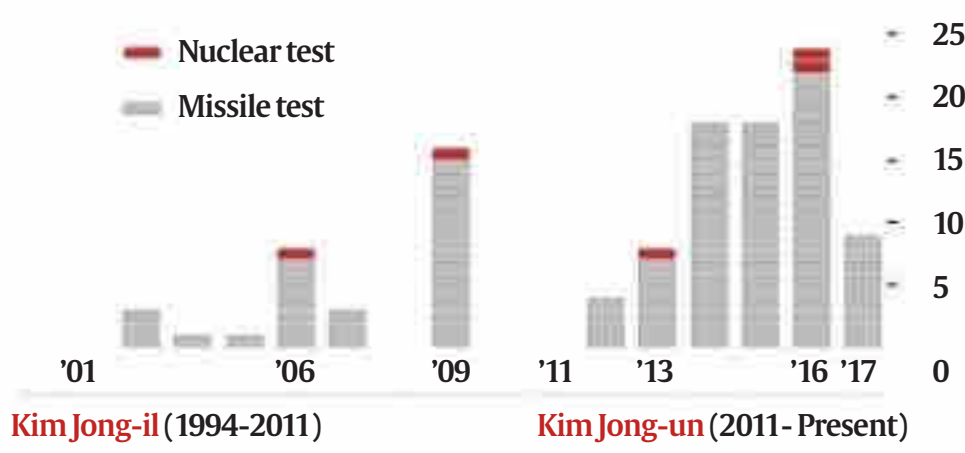
**HOW ALASKA COULD BE IN RANGE**

July 4 missile flew for 37 minutes, travelling 580 miles. But it first climbed 1,700 miles on a lofted trajectory



**NUMBERS OF MISSILE AND NUCLEAR TESTS**

The numbers of missile tests have spiked under Kim Jong-un; he has also carried out three nuclear tests



**40 YEARS IN MISSILE QUEST**

- Late 1970s:** Work begins on reverse engineering Soviet Scuds obtained from Egypt; Hwasong 5 testfired in 1984
- 1987-92:** Work begins on a variant of Scud C, Rodong 1, Hwasong 6, Taepodong 1, Musudan 1 and Taepodong 2
- July 5, 2006:** Seven missiles, including a long-range Taepodong 2, testfired
- Oct 9, 2006:** First underground nuclear test; four more followed over the next decade
- Apr 5, 2009:** Long-range rocket ostensibly attempts to put a satellite in orbit; US, Japan, South Korea say it is a disguised Taepodong 2 test
- Dec 12, 2012:** Multistage rocket places an Earth observational satellite in orbit
- Mar 9, 2016:** Claims to have successfully miniaturised a thermonuclear warhead
- Apr 23, 2016:** Submarine-launched missile testfired
- Mar 6, 2017:** Four ballistic missiles fired in claimed exercise to hit US bases in Japan
- May 14, 2017:** Ballistic missile flies 700 km; analysts say it has imputed range of 4,500 km, brings Guam in range
- July 4, 2017:** Analysts say missile has an imputed range of 6,700 km, brings Alaska in range. *AP, REUTERS*

## Populist leaders, cheering crowds: why Trump is in Poland this week

VANESSA GERA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ON WEDNESDAY, President Donald Trump tweeted: "Getting ready to leave for Poland, after which I will travel to Germany for the G-20..." Why is he visiting Poland ahead of long-time US allies Britain, France or Germany?

The White House has stressed Poland's importance as a loyal NATO ally and its potential as an energy partner. But there are several other reasons that make Poland a logical early destination for the President.

**A populist welcome**

Trump will be welcomed by populist leaders who are closely aligned with his worldview and who gained power in 2015 with the same nationalistic, anti-Muslim rhetoric that has put both the new US leader and the Poles in conflict with leaders in Western Europe. Like Trump, Poland's leaders — President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Beata Szydlo, and the head of their PiS party, the politician who is widely considered to be the country's most powerful, Jaroslaw Kaczynski — seek to restore more national sovereignty and weaken international institutions like the European Union.

**Cheering crowds**

Trump can probably count on large enthusiastic crowds to greet him in Warsaw, where he is expected to give a major televised address to the nation. In fact, according to Polish media reports, that is exactly what Poland's government promised the White House in its invitation. To make good on that pledge, ruling party lawmakers and pro-government activists plan to bus in groups from the provinces to hear Trump's speech. A warm reception would certainly be a plus for Trump after his somewhat awkward debut in Europe in May. He could also get a frosty reception at the G-20 due to his recent decision to pull the United States out of the Paris climate accord, and other policies. Some NATO allies have also been annoyed by his repeated calls for them to increase military spending.

**US boots on ground**

Poles, on the other hand, can expect only praise from Trump on their defence expenditures. A US ally in Iraq and Afghanistan, Poland is one of the five NATO members that spends the expected 2% of gross domestic product on its military. The Poland-US security relationship has also got a boost this year with the deployment of some 5,000 US troops to Poland as part of two separate American and NATO missions. The deployments are meant to reassure allies on NATO's eastern flank that the alliance is serious about protecting them from Russian aggression.

**The Polish-American vote**

The hundreds of thousands of Polish-American voters in the United States represent an important constituency in several battleground states, and last year they helped give Trump the edge he needed in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. They will certainly be grateful for Trump's visit to Warsaw, especially since he has chosen to address Poles at Krasinski Square, a location that symbolises Polish heroism during World War II. That large square has a memorial to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, a courageous but doomed uprising against Nazi Germany that resulted in more than 200,000 Polish deaths and the destruction of Warsaw.

**Energy ties**

Trump will attend a summit devoted to the Three Seas Initiative, an effort to expand and modernise energy and trade links among 12 countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black seas. One driving purpose of the initiative is to make the region less dependent on Russian energy. Under the project, US exports of liquefied natural gas, which began arriving in Poland in early June, would have the potential to supply more of the region. The visit coincides with efforts by Trump's administration to become a net exporter of oil, gas and other resources to boost US revenues and influence.

# What's blocking the Sikh pilgrimage to gurdwaras in Pakistan?

No *jathas* travelled to Sikh shrines in Pakistan this year for either the May 29 Guru Arjan Dev death anniversary or the June 29 Ranjit Singh death anniversary. KAMALDEEP BRAR explains why

**Why and when do Sikh *jathas* from India travel to Pakistan?**

The 1972 Simla Agreement provided for promoting travel facilities in order to normalise relations. In 1974, India and Pakistan signed a visa agreement, and along with that, a protocol saying the two countries must allow each other's nationals unfettered access to certain places of religious worship.

According to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, there are 172 historical gurdwaras in Pakistan, out of which pilgrims are allowed to visit 18. Seven are in Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak, five in Lahore, three in Aminabad, and

one each Kartarpur, Hasan Abdal and Sialkot. Pilgrims go to Pakistan on four occasions every year. Up to 3,000 pilgrims can travel for the birth anniversary of the first Guru, which falls mostly in the year's last quarter, and for the Baisakhi festival in April. Up to 1,000 Sikhs can go in May-June for the Martyrdom Day of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, who was sentenced to death in Lahore. Five hundred can go for the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who breathed his last in Lahore.

Initially only the SGPC sent *jathas* to Pakistan. With time, and the establishment of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak



Members of a pilgrims' *jatha* protest at Attari station after being allegedly prevented from boarding the train to Pakistan on June 28. The Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has announced a protest against the Indian government at Wagah on July 7. *Rana Simranjit Singh*

Committee (PSGPC) in 1999, other, smaller Sikh organisations too began sending *jathas* — among them, the Shiromani Akali Dal Delhi, Bhai Mardana Yadgari Society, Sukhmani Sahib Sewa Society Haryana, and the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee.

**What is the procedure by which these organisations obtain visas?**

There are two ways. First, through the Ministry of External Affairs — the pilgrims apply to deputy commissioners, the lists are security cleared by the home departments of

states and then by the union Home Ministry, before the MEA sends approved names to the Pakistani Ministry of Interior. This is how SGPC, SAD Delhi and DSGMC apply for visas.

The second way is for pilgrims or the *jatha* to apply directly to the Pakistani Interior Ministry. The PSGPC and Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) of Pakistan facilitate the process. The Pakistanis send the list to Indian security agencies for clearance, and visas are sent to pilgrims directly by the Pak government. But the Indian government can stop any pilgrim. This way is used more by NRI Sikhs, although some in India too use it.

Pilgrims can also visit on their own, but it is easier to get a visa as part of a *jatha* and, for a pilgrim, more economical.

**Has the recent deterioration of India-Pak relations affected the pilgrimages?**

The government has issued no public advisory against the pilgrimages; nor has Pakistan announced it is stopping them. Still, no *jathas* went this year for either the Arjan

Dev anniversary on May 29, or the Ranjit Singh one on June 29. Only a small party of 14 Sikhs managed to cross over on June 8.

SGPC said the MEA did not give permission to 521 pilgrims to travel to Pakistan for the Arjan Dev anniversary. For the Ranjit Singh anniversary, SGPC claimed the MEA had said it would have to bear the responsibility of the security of the *jatha*, which the SGPC did not want to commit to.

Some 300 others who applied through the direct method did get visas, but were allegedly not allowed to board the train to Pakistan.

**So who were the 14 who managed to cross over?**

They were in a *jatha* organised by the Sukhmani Seva Society. They, and 68 pilgrims of another *jatha*, were to board the Samjhauta Express from Attari on June 8, but were allegedly not allowed to do so by Indian Railways officials. However, the group of 14 had visas that allowed them to also cross over on foot — which is the route they then took.