

14 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

MOST ARE INCLINED TO RECLINE INTO A RECLINING POSITION, IN ORDER TO ENJOY THE DECLINE.

— JUSTIN K. MCFARLANE BEAU

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Ordering a turmoil

The court verdict against Nawaz Sharif could be the beginning of a period of political instability in Pakistan



AYESHA SIDDIQA

PAKISTAN REPEATS HISTORY of not letting governments or prime ministers complete their term. This time around it was done through invoking the People's Representation Act, 1976 that punishes for non-disclosure of assets and doesn't allow a prime minister to hold an office of profit while he is the head of government. In Nawaz Sharif's case, he had a work permit of a company registered in the UAE.

However, the story doesn't end here. The five-judge bench of the Supreme Court has also sent all cases against Sharif's corruption to the country's primary anti-corruption body, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) where investigations will be conducted against Sharif and his entire family including his daughter and political heir, Maryam Nawaz and Sharif's finance minister, Ishaq Dar, who also happens to be the father-in-law of Sharif's other daughter. The NAB has been instructed to conduct an inquiry through a Joint Investigation Team (JIT). It is possible that the new JIT will also have the same composition as the earlier one which means officials from NAB, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), ISI and MI.

Moreover, since the highest court has expressed its displeasure with the current NAB chairman, these investigations will be monitored through a special committee. If proven guilty, articles 62 and 63 of the 1973 Constitution will apply, which means that Sharif and his family will be proven not to be *sadiq* (truthful) and *ameen* (honest) and hence unable to hold any political office. This was an addition introduced to the Constitution by the former military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq.

Clearly, the implications for Sharif and Pakistan range from short to longer-term.

Shahbaz Sharif, Nawaz's brother, is the new prime minister. But there are longer-term implications for Nawaz Sharif as this time non-parliamentary and non-elected institutions of the state are determined to end his political legacy by ensuring that his daughter Maryam Nawaz cannot enter politics in future, and possibly drag the family from riches to rags. According to the grapevine, the NAB has made informal estimates of Sharif's assets to be in billions of US dollars. The Supreme Court has already ordered NAB to investigate Sharif and his children's assets inside and outside the country. Corruption investigations are complicated and difficult. Given the media trial that is likely to accompany the investigation, the aim will be to totally decimate Nawaz Sharif to a point he totally surrenders. There is little possibility that Sharif, who has health issues as well, would be able to start a political career again or pass on the mantle to his progeny. Stripped of his wealth he may not even be able to invest in his grandchildren that would give hope to his supporters like the small trader from Lahore whose abrupt comment on the decision was "*Nawaz ko hakoombat sey tu nikaal diya, dil sey kaisey nikalo gey*" (you have kicked Nawaz from the government but how will you take him out of our hearts).

Indeed, there are many who were not entirely unhappy with Sharif and were ready to vote him into power a fourth time in 2018. But it is not sure that the election will be conducted next year according to schedule. Given the ongoing investigation and many other issues, there is a possibility that elections might get delayed and the country run through an interim setup that may be there for longer than the stipulated three months. The delimitation of constituencies on the basis of the

There is a possibility that elections might get delayed and the country run through an interim setup that may be there for longer than the stipulated three months. The delimitation of constituencies on the basis of the recent census that is not entirely beyond controversy will be one of the reasons for a possible delay. The formula for a national government that may be empowered to carry out certain reforms is much talked about.

recently completed census that is not entirely beyond controversy will be one of the reasons for a possible delay. The formula for a national government that may be empowered to carry out certain reforms is much talked about. Whatever the end goal of such a structure, it will certainly be a method to discipline the political system of the state and bring it in line with the overall expectations and narrative of the non-parliamentary elements. Although the more popular narrative in the country at the moment is that a new map is being drawn to eliminate corruption, it is questionable if the process would not be selective. In any case, the national accountability ordinance excludes the judiciary and military from this process.

Not that it is easy to absolve Sharif from his sin of amassing unaccounted for wealth. However, his departure is likely to be a great setback in terms of even marginal chances of peace and stability in the South Asian region. There is very little likelihood of an interim government being in full control of foreign policy or taking any peace initiative vis-à-vis its neighbours or certain other critical powers like the US. While many believe that Sharif put his eggs in the wrong basket by hoping that China would protect him since he made great achievement in pushing for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the fact is that Sharif was immaterial to developments vis-à-vis Beijing. Pakistan is now back to its traditional policy framework. The only question that remains is when will a next government get elected and if Imran Khan gets a chance to be in office.

The writer is a Pakistani political commentator and author

SHARIF'S TAIN

That the law caught up with the prime minister indicates a deepening of democracy in Pakistan

TWO WEEKS FROM now, Pakistan will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of its independence. And although the most common analysis that follows Friday's disqualification of its elected prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, is that no civilian prime minister has ever completed a full five-year term in power, the fact is the Supreme Court's 5-0 verdict was the outcome of a legal process conducted in the full media glare. Some may insist that the Court was fully within its rights to strike down the Sharif family's defence. But others argue it was not in the Court's place to also disqualify him from his prime ministership, as that is the job of Parliament.

The Pakistan Supreme Court was accused of "judicial dictatorship" when it sacked prime minister Yousaf Raza Gillani in 2012, after he refused to allow an investigation into the sources of then president Asif Ali Zardari's income. On the eve of this judgment, on Twitter, well-known human rights lawyer Asma Jahangir scolded the Court asking why two of the five-judges hadn't heard the full case against Nawaz Sharif. While she now agrees that Nawaz Sharif must step down, she stubbornly points out that "this decision will haunt the Court in times to come". No matter. In such a fragile democracy as Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif need not have opened himself up to accusations of corruption. His daughter and political heir, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, submitted forged documents in defence of her father in the Calibri font that never existed when the flats were bought. The fact the law has now caught up certainly demonstrates a deepening of democracy.

The best news is despite the speculation of its involvement behind the purdah, the army never once came out and showed its hand. In October 1999, months after Kargil, Nawaz Sharif was summarily shown the door by Musharraf. Today the army has kept quiet. The PM has been asked to step down by the Supreme Court. That in itself, is a major step forward. There are many stakeholders at this critical juncture: The political opposition from Imran Khan's PTI to Sharif's own party, the judiciary, civil society institutions, the National Accountability Bureau to which the cases have been transferred, and, of course, the army. How each one of them responds will shape the very contours of democracy in Pakistan.

BILLION DOLLAR BABY

Neymar's transfer fee is dizzying even by football's standards, his game will need to match it

WITH EACH PASSING year, zeros continue to get added to football's transfer tales. This summer the saga is unfolding in France, where Paris Saint Germain is relentlessly pursuing Neymar, Barcelona's Brazilian superstar. They've offered the Spanish club \$258 million, approximately Rs 1,655 crore, to buy the striker. If the deal goes through, it would make Neymar the most expensive player in the world and five times costlier than the club itself. By the time agent fees and taxes get settled, PSG would've paid close to half-a-billion dollars for their Neymar dream. From this deal, the 25-year-old forward is expected to earn Rs 4.20 crore per week, excluding the commercial deals. To put the "zeros" in perspective, listen to this: Neymar transfer fee will be more than India's annual sports budget and his quarterly earnings would surpass the country's annual football spend.

These are dizzying figures even by football's inflated standards. European football's governing body, UEFA, has a system in place that prohibits clubs from spending more than what they earn. But the suits in the boardroom know the ways to circumvent rules. The clubs, players and their agents often justify these astronomical sums by arguing that an athlete's shelf life is short. The defence might have held ground a decade ago, but not today. These are times when Roberto Carlos, at 42, was paid a million dollars for a three-month job in the Indian Super League. China, USA and Qatar offer fatter pay cheques.

In case Neymar does travel to Paris, this will be certainly be his last tang. The XXL price tag effectively prices him out of any possible future move. The colossal CTC would also weigh heavily on him. From having his face on the billboards to his name on the back of t-shirts, the marketing sharks will look to squeeze every ounce of marketability. In March, Neymar scored twice, earned a penalty and set-up a late winner against PSG as Barcelona completed one of the greatest comebacks of all time in the Champions League. In a PSG t-shirt with a price tag of \$258 million on it, the unforgiving fans will expect such shows every time he has the ball at his feet.



KHALED AHMED

THE SUPREME COURT of Pakistan has removed Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from office. Sharif is accused of money-laundering in the case relating to the Panama Papers in which he was not named. An inquiry set up by the court under a Joint Investigative Team (JIT) found him guilty of acquiring wealth he couldn't account for. The case was highly politicised and damaged the credibility of the court in the eyes of a polarised population.

The politicisation was triggered by the agitation of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), using street power to overthrow Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN) government after charging it with having rigged the 2013 election. The PTI stormed Islamabad in 2014 with the help of the army's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The move failed after the Supreme Court found that rigging hadn't taken place. But the nexus, with the army stuck to the PTI, has haunted the judicial process after the international money-laundering scandal broke last year.

The odour of the "nexus" lingers as public opinion grasps the significance of Sharif's ouster. The media, divided over the judicial process, is coming to terms with the process of accountability most Pakistanis think is missing. But the schism of politicisation remains, casting doubt on the impartiality of the court, especially in an environment of "immunity" granted to "street power" which renders court summons ineffective for the street agitators while the prime minister remains subject to the judicial process. The environment is vitiated further by half a dozen retired army officers who appear on TV channels castigating the prime minister while civilian discussants avoid contradicting them. Scholars and Pakistan-watchers like

AFTER NAWAZ

There will be a greater reliance on street power to intimidate Pakistan's institutions

Christophe Jaffrelot don't think corruption is the main reason behind Pakistan's malfunctioning as a state. The prime minister has been made to step down, for the third time before completing a full term in office, and what will follow may be more of the same: More "accountability" through corrective action taken by the succeeding government if it attains a majority in parliament in the next election. (A coalition will simply compound the ensuing disorder by enabling the army to call all the shots.) What will suffer most will be the economy which is already sending out ominous smoke-signals through the stock exchanges. The most destructive phenomenon in the post-Sharif period will be the vindictive rollback of ongoing projects on the charge of "kickbacks".

Employing hate-speech, which is the new political idiom, most Pakistanis say the country is doomed because of corruption. But the world outside is sanguine about the \$46 billion invested in Pakistan by China — only for infrastructure — which the Pakistanis have come to hate, focusing more on health and education. The world outside, however, didn't agree. *The Economist* began the trend of positive assessments in May 2015 noting the kudos the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had heaped on Islamabad for not being lax in macroeconomic discipline. The opposition — the PTI and most erstwhile Sharif allies — dismissed all predictions of better days to come by denouncing the IMF as well.

The Wall Street Journal opened on February 1, 2017 with praise for Pakistan, to the dismay of the honest Pakistani citizen. It noted the rising middle class and gave tidings of poverty-reduction that no one believed. As if by conspiracy, the reputable Bloomberg noted on February 6, 2017 the

rise of the Pakistani stock market by 46 per cent, placing it first in the ranking among the world's stock markets, predicting a 5 per cent growth rate in 2017. It said: "Since 2002, the rate of poverty has fallen by half and over the past three years the rate of terrorist deaths has declined by two-thirds."

As Pakistanis mourned what they perceived as economic mayhem under Sharif, *The Washington Post* on February 21, 2017, noted Pakistan "officially" graduating from its "frontier-market" category to the more prestigious — and well-capitalised — "emerging market" index. In fact, Pakistan joined 23 other countries "on the index that represents 10 per cent of world capitalisation". The conclusion in Pakistan against these assessments: All this has to be a Hindu-Jewish plot against Pakistan!

Jaffrelot doesn't mention corruption as the cause of trouble in Pakistan. He names the nature of Pakistan's nationalism or what he calls "nationalism without a nation", the dominance of the army, conflict between "mild" ideology and "hard Islam", and the dominance of textbook indoctrination that perpetuates conflict and prevents a rational geostrategic vision that would facilitate attention to the national economy and collection of taxes.

The prospect: There will be more reliance on street power to scare the permanent institutions of the state by the leader who wins a majority in the 2018 election, like Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India and President Erdogan in Turkey, but without the comforting relaxant of high rate of economic growth.

The writer is consulting editor, *'Newsweek'* Pakistan

JULY 29, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

LOK PAL BILL

HOME MINISTER CHARAN Singh introduced the Lok Pal Bill, aimed at combating corruption at higher political levels, in the Lok Sabha. The bill seeks to provide for the appointment of a Lok Pal to inquire into allegations of misconduct against public men. The office of the Prime Minister has been brought under the jurisdiction of the Lok Pal, besides chief ministers, members of the central council of ministers, members of the council of ministers of a Union Territory, MLAs of a Union Territory, members of the Delhi Administration's executive council and mayor of a municipal corporation in a Union Territory. The Lok Pal shall have an independ-

ent investigating machinery directly under his control. Allegations against civil servants do not come under its purview.

RAWALPINDI RULE

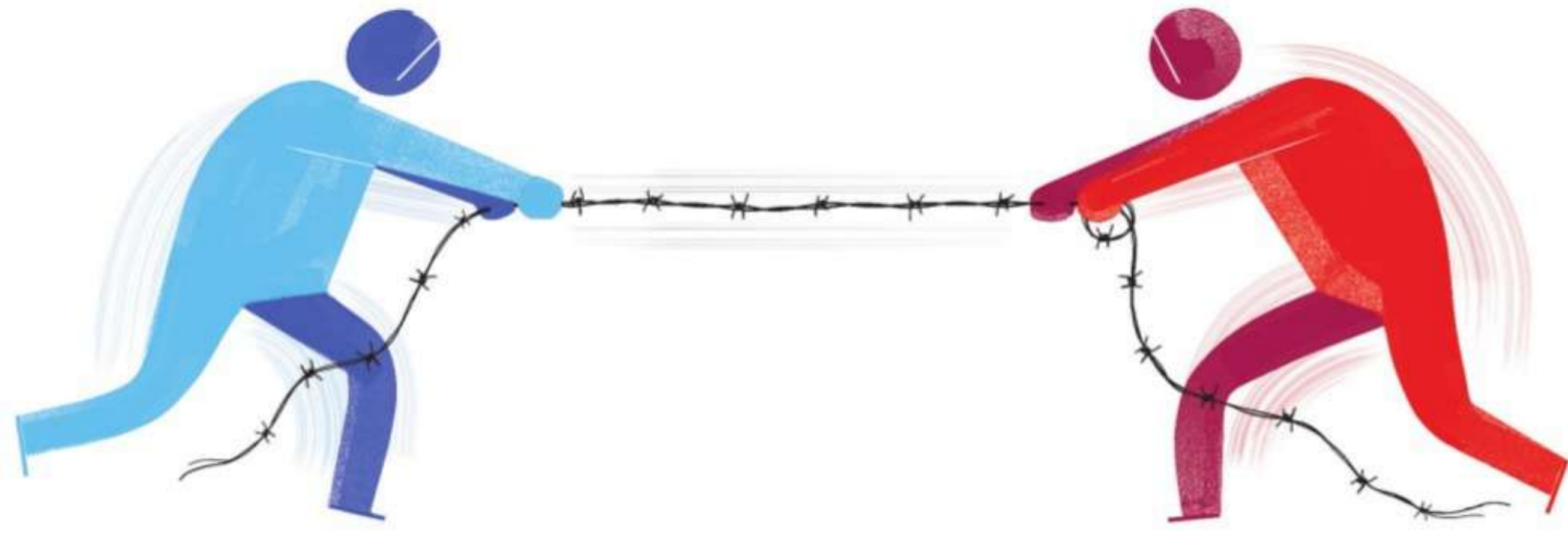
THE DEPOSED PAKISTANI prime minister, Z.A. Bhutto, and other political leaders have been released from custody, Radio Pakistan reported. Before their release, Pakistan Chief Martial Law Administrator General Zia-ul-Haq met Pakistan People's Party leaders and the opposition Pakistan National Alliance leaders separately. Zia told the leaders of the rules and regulations governing the restoration of political activity to a limited extent from August 1. Eight leaders belong-

ing to the FPP and the FNA, including Bhutto and Maulana Mufti Mahmood, were taken into "protective custody" on July 5 when the army took over power. In a broadcast, he said the army had acted at the "right time", otherwise the country would have been plunged into a civil war since "both the sides were armed to the teeth".

NO DOLE: MORARJI

FIRMLY RULING OUT payment of doles to the unemployed, Prime Minister Morarji Desai said plans to tackle the problem of unemployment are being prepared by the Janata government. The Planning Commission would eady the plan by the end the year.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE



C.R. Sasikumar

Doklam is not about a road

China's anger has to do with India building alliances with its adversaries in Asia, and the United States



PRAVEEN SWAMI

EUROPE'S WARS of the future, the Spanish general Manuel Fernández Silvestre y Patinga wrote in 1910, "will be concluded in one day's hard fighting". He had observed the Japan-Russia war, where armies fighting with new technologies like rapid-fire field guns and repeating small arms had become locked in entrenched, positional warfare. For him, like most contemporaries, the Japanese victory showed élan would overcome the machine: "The officers quit shelter with ringing shouts of Banzai," wrote an enthused French observer, "wildly echoed by all the rank and file".

The general, the millions sent to their death in the First World War showed, had learned the wrong lesson: In fact, Russia had been brought to its knees by economic crisis and political revolution. Even at the battle of Mukden, the collapsing Russians inflicted 70,000 casualties while losing 20,000 to the attacking Japanese.

Banker and part-time war theorist Jan Bloch, in an 1898 book, had predicted just this: "The future of war", he wrote, "is not fighting, but famine, not the slaying of men, but the bankruptcy of nations and the breakup of the whole social organisation".

This is a good time for strategic communities in India and China, both nuclear-weapons states, to reflect on what Bloch understood and the general didn't.

Ever since the Doklam crisis began this summer, strategists in India have been hostage to what might be described as a "Little Wars" mindset. For the most part, military debate has centred around the prospects of a limited border war, or a protracted but non-violent stand-off, like the Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1987-88. Defence Minister Arun Jaitley has assured Indians this is not 1962; the Ministry of External Affairs has studiously ignored threats emanating from Beijing, as have India's melodrama-addicted television anchors.

To ignore the abyss yawning ahead of the Doklam plateau is a profound mistake. The stand-off might, indeed, end with a negoti-

ated settlement, but there are grimmer prospects, which neither side has considered with care.

Fear is the key to understanding China's behaviour: While its neighbours see a fire-breathing dragon, the dragon sees the glint of spears and sabres. China's aggressive posture on its periphery — the expansion of military bases in the South China seas, the sharpening of territorial disputes with Vietnam and Japan, the enabling of North Korea's nuclear programme — is not an outcome of the might it harvested during the 1980s. Instead, it is the legacy of Chinese insecurity born of the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s, which left the country a strategic orphan — an orphan with nuclear weapons.

Ever since that split, aggression on the peripheries — first delivered against India in 1962 — has been a key tool for China.

From 1965, the Soviet Union began to mount increasing coercive pressure on China — at one stage, even proposing a joint strike with the United States to cripple its nuclear-weapons programme. From 17 divisions in 1965, Soviet forces facing China in the far-east grew to 27 divisions by 1969. The Chinese estimated that Soviet mechanised forces could overwhelm their defences and reach Beijing inside of two weeks.

The threat led China to engage in the second of its post-split border wars, attacking Soviet border guards on Damansky island on the Ussuri river — the first-ever skirmish between troops of nuclear powers. The Soviet Union suffered 58 dead to well over 200 People's Liberation Army fatalities.

Yet, the border attack was a strategic success. It persuaded the Soviet Union that ill-equipped as the PLA might be, its sheer numerical force could create havoc. Soviet nuclear could annihilate China, but Beijing's own rudimentary liquid-fueled nuclear missiles could deliver some devastation too — and victory would yield an ungovernable continent-sized begging-bowl.

Persuaded — wrongly — that Moscow was certain to attack by 1985, Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping moved to contain Soviet influence in Asia. From 1975, border clashes with Soviet ally Vietnam began to rise sharply — from 439 incidents in 1975 to 1,100 in 1978. The message wasn't heard: In December 1978, Vietnam overthrew the China-backed Khmer Rouge dictatorship in Cambodia.

That very month, China's Central Military Commission drew up plans to punish Vietnam. Fears of counter-attack by Moscow were allayed by intelligence, pro-

Fear is the key to understanding China's behaviour. While its neighbours see a fire-breathing dragon, the dragon sees the glint of spears and sabres. China's aggressive posture on its periphery — the expansion of military bases in the South China seas, the sharpening of territorial disputes with Vietnam and Japan, the enabling of North Korea's nuclear programme — is not an outcome of the might it harvested during the 1980s. Instead, it is the legacy of Chinese insecurity born of the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s, which left the country a strategic orphan — an orphan with nuclear weapons.

vided to Deng during a visit to Washington, that two-thirds of the 54 Soviet divisions facing east were unmanned and inadequately equipped.

Beijing proved unable to evict Hanoi from Cambodia, and fighting dragged on intermittently for a decade. But Deng understood the conflict as a strategic victory. By demonstrating that China's strategic interests were aligned with the United States in Asia, the scholar Xiaoming Zhang has shown, the war helped build an enduring partnership against the Soviets, yielding vast economic benefits.

Faced with a second period of strategic isolation — this time, in the form of the breakdown of the Sino-United States alliance — China is again turning to coercion. Doklam, like other recent stand-offs in Depsang or Demchok, is not about a road: It is a message about China's ire at India building alliances with its adversaries in Asia, and with the United States. Beijing seeks, through the threat of force, to instruct India on how countries ought to conduct themselves — but, more powerful than they were in the 1970s, countries like India and Vietnam are unwilling to comply.

No one can know for certain how far China might go to deliver on its warnings, but India needs to be crystal clear about how it might deal with escalation, each step of the way. However, India's anaemic military modernisation stands in stark contrast with Jaitley's fighting words.

Even military preparation, though, isn't enough. Europe, when Bloch was writing his book, looked a lot like Asia now: Riding a great wave of prosperity, its markets better-integrated than ever before. Like Asia today, though, it was also stage for new, rising powers, acquiring military muscle and old powers pushing back against them.

"If there is a general war", the great Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck prophesied in 1888, "it will be over some damn fool thing in the Balkans". Leaders, convinced that war could be contained, and its fallout calculated, allowed just such a damn fool thing drag their nations to disaster. Ten million soldiers and seven million civilians gave their lives by 1918; millions more in small wars that raged until 1923.

Beijing and New Delhi must make the effort to engage in a creative dialogue about how a changing Asia's tensions will be managed — aware that the price of a single misstep can be mass death.

praveen.swami@expressindia.com

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Democracy will not be threatened merely by the exit of Sharif, nor will it be boosted automatically by the triumphant elevation of Khan. The two leaders must urgently learn a humility that neither has seemed capable of so far."

—DAWN

What the gods drank

Whether in the Vedas, epics or Puranas, divine figures were far from puritanical



IN GOOD FAITH

D.N. JHA

I WAS AMUSED to read in the media that there was a ruckus in the Rajya Sabha over the alleged association of Hindu deities with alcohol. Since the objectionable remarks were expunged, I am not able to refer specifically to the god or to the MP who mentioned them. Our politicians may not be well versed in all our ancient lore specially because and knowledge of the past is not their strong point; but it is not too much to expect that they should have the basic idea of the qualities and activities of the divinities whom they worship and defend. For constraints of space it is not possible to discuss here the traits of all those gods and goddesses who used alcohol, but I would like to draw the attention of readers to only few of them who binged on intoxicating drinks.

In the Vedic texts *soma* was the name of a god as well as of a plant from which a heady drink of that name was derived and was offered to gods in most of the sacrifices; according to one opinion it was different from another intoxicating drink, *sura*, which was meant for the common people. *Soma* was a favourite beverage of the Vedic deities and was offered in most of the sacrifices performed to please gods like Indra, Agni, Varun, Maruts and so on, whose names occur frequently in the Rig Veda. Of them Indra, who is known by 45 epithets and to whom the largest number of Rig Vedic hymns — 250 out of more than a thousand — are dedicated, was the most important. A god of war and wielder of thunderbolt, rowdy and adulterous, potbellied from excessive drinking, he is described in Vedic passages as a great boozier and dipsomaniac; he is said to have drunk three lakes of soma before slaying the dragon Vritra. Like Indra, many other Vedic gods were soma drinkers but they do not seem to have been tipplers. Agni, for example, may have drunk moderately though a detailed analysis will show that teetotalism was unknown to the Vedic gods and drinking was an essential feature of sacrifices performed in their honour. In a ritual performed at the beginning of the Vajapeya sacrifice, a collective drinking took place in which a sacrificer offered five cups to Indra as well as 17 cups of *soma* and 17 cups of *sura* to 34 gods.

Like the Vedic texts, the epics provide evidence of the use of intoxicating drinks by those who enjoy godly status in Hindu religion. In the *Mahabharata*, for example, Sanjay describes Krishna (an incarnation of the god Vishnu) and Arjuna in the company of Draupadi and Satyabhama (wife of Krishna and an incarnation of Bhudevi), exhilarated by Bassia wine. In the *Harivamsa*,

which is an appendix to the *Mahabharata*, Balarama, an avatara of Vishnu, is described as "inflamed by plentiful libations of kadamba liquor" dancing with his wife. And in the *Ramayana*, Rama, an avatara of Vishnu, is described as embracing Sita and making her drink pure mairaya wine. Sita, incidentally, seems to have a great fascination for wine: While crossing the river Ganga, she promises to offer her rice cooked with meat (shall we call it biryani!) and thousands of jars of wine, and while being ferried across the Yamuna, she says that she will worship the river with a thousand cows and 100 jars of wine when her husband accomplishes his vow. The use of alcohol by the gods is not confined to the Vedic and epic traditions. In the Puranic mythology, Varuni, who emerged from the *samudramanthana* (churning of the ocean), is the Indian goddess of wine; Varuni was also the name of a variety of strong liquor.

The Tantric religion is characterised by the use of five *makaras* — *madya* (wine), *mamsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (gesture) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse) — and these were offered to gods, though only the followers of Vamachara were entitled to the use of *panchamakara* (five Ms). Much can be said about the Tantric affiliation of the goddess Kali and her various manifestations but it should suffice to refer to a goddess called Chandamari, a form of Kali and described in an 11th century text as using human skulls as drinking vessels. In the *Kulamavatantra*, an early medieval text, it is stated that "wine and meat are the symbols of Shakti and Shiva respectively and their consumer is Bhairava". Not surprisingly, liquor was offered to Bhairava in early India. The practice has continued in our own times and one can see this at Bhairava temple in Delhi and at Kala Bhairava temple in Ujjain. According to a practice current in Birbhum, a "gigantic vessel of wine is brought in front of the deity called Dharma" who is carried in a procession to the house of a Sundi, who belongs to the wine-making caste. In both Tantric and tribal religions, the divinities are often associated with alcohol in various ways. These few examples cited here clearly show that some gods and goddesses were fond of alcohol and their worship would remain incomplete without it.

It may be pointed out that there were a large variety of intoxicating drinks, nearly 50 types of them, available in ancient India. The use of alcohol by men was quite common, despite occasional dharmashastric objections in the case of Brahmans; and instances of drinking among women were not rare. Buddhist Jataka literature mentions many instances of drunkenness. Sanskrit literature is replete with references to intoxicating drinks. The works of Kalidasa and other poets speak frequently of alcoholic drinks. Ancient Indians were *bon vivant* in a sense. If their gods were fond of good things of life, our politicians need not be offended by the divine hedonism. Prohibitionists should be considerate: Don't forget, gods are watching!

The writer is former professor and chair, department of History, University of Delhi

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CLEAR THE AIR

THIS IS WITH reference to the letter ('Board clarifies' IE, July 26) from two of the trustees of Sameeksha Trust which brings out EPW. It is the trust which selected an investigative journalist as editor of EPW, which is respected for its academic research, news analysis and intellectual expanse. Unlike academic research, where sources and evidence can be examined by readers, investigative reports are different in that sources mostly remain confidential. In other words, investigative journalists must be rigorous but confidentiality is generally the norm. To ask a reporter to disclose the source is unprofessional and vastly different from asking a student of JNU to cite sources. If the trust indeed had reasons for concern at the legal notice being sent to them, it could have hired a legal counsel to examine the documents and inform the board, and thereby also ensured that sources remain confidential. Furthermore, the board did not have to ask the editor to "resign". Taking down the articles, preventing him from writing under his byline and appointing a co-editor were all meant to bring about his resignation. What saddens me, one of countless members of EPW community, is that the trust, in the past 15 months, has twice brought EPW to a precipice. It is this which fills us with alarm and concern.

Gautam Navlakha, Delhi

WRITER, TRANSLATOR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Remembrance of things past' (IE, July 28). It is a lovely coincidence that this tribute comes from an author who was intro-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

UNETHICAL PROFITS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Address this blockage' (IE, July 27). The article does not give any relevant data on the share of the manufacturers' and other stakeholders' profit in the final cost borne by customers. The writers say reforms are required to encourage research and indigenisation. They ask that patients be more informed. Their demands are not wrong. But they cannot be used as a shield against unethical profiteering and exploitative pricing.

Abhimanyu S. Shekhawat, Jaipur

duced to the writer through translation. For Naiyer Masud established himself first as the translator of Kafka's short stories in Urdu, *Kafka ke Afsaney*. He was amongst the rare writers who used obscure categories in a market-oriented literary scenario.

G. Javid Rasool, Lucknow

DASHED AMBITIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Opportunistic' (IE, July 28). By falling back into the BJP's arms Nitish Kumar has made one thing clear: He can no longer harbour ambitions to be PM. For the BJP, a powerful opponent has been neutralised. But the Bihar CM's reliability as an ally is now dubious.

Shantanu Das, Delhi



TENZING LAMSANG

Worries beyond China

For Bhutan, economic challenges from shifting Indian policy is the larger issue

WHILE DOKLAM is allegedly "disputed" territory between Bhutan and China, it has a far bigger impact on India's security. This is one key reason why Bhutan did not accept a generous "package deal" from China in 1996, that offered the larger disputed 495 sq km in the central sector and a part of the 269 sq km western sector, in exchange for sections of the 269 sq km which includes Gyemchen, claimed by China as the tri-junction.

Though Bhutan stands to gain more territory and also solve the border issue with China — which India doesn't have to worry about — and another 600 km of southern border with India on the narrowest parts of India's "Chicken's Neck". In 2003, the fourth king, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck personally led his troops to flush out thousands of Indian militants from the jungles of southern Bhutan. Bhutan also supports India at various international forums, apart from being the only country which along with India has

not joined China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) summit. Bhutan does not have diplomatic ties with China.

Some have taken all of the above to imply that Bhutan is an Indian "protectorate", which is an inaccurate assessment and shows a lack of understanding of the increasingly complex nature of the relationship between the two countries. In Bhutanese culture we have a philosophy called the "Driglam Namzha". An important lesson of this philosophy is having the ability to stoop and conquer, a quality imbibed by the Bhutanese leadership. This is what Bhutan has done over the decades benefiting from India and not giving any reason for China to see Bhutan as a hostile neighbour.

Bhutan, at the same time, is not a pushover. For example, the parliament recently refused to pass the Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal (BBIN) Bill which even the usually more argumentative Nepalese agreed to. However, this close relationship between Bhutan and India is getting tested, not so much in the heights of Doklam, as with issues in the growing and unsustainable trade imbalance and setbacks in the hydro projects promised by India.

As Bhutan's largest donor in its five-year plans, Indian assistance has been increasing, but its share of the plans has been falling and, more importantly, its assistance is virtually wiped out in a year's worth of the growing

trade deficit.

This is what led to a severe rupee shortage and economic crisis in 2012, which more than anything else played a decisive role in the 2013 elections. The impact of the withdrawal of subsidies by India is thus overhyped. Bhutan is acutely aware that it cannot sustain its economy without restoring this trade imbalance. Therefore, selling hydropower to India has long been held as the one main salvation to Bhutan's economic woes.

After the 2003 operations, 5,000 MW worth of hydro projects by 2020 was agreed to. In 2008 the Manmohan Singh government doubled this 5,000 MW to 10,000 MW by 2020 on the request of Bhutan's first elected government. The "10,000 MW by 2020" thus became a central diplomatic pillar between the two countries.

The initial 5,000 MW projects were understood to have soft financing and full ownership by Bhutan. However, with 10,000 MW, India asked and was given, a 50 per cent stake in four hydro projects as joint venture (JV) projects. The earlier soft financing conditions were also made far more stringent.

However, from 2014 onwards, Bhutan got a rude shock when the NDA government said that 10,000 MW by 2020 would not be possible due to "financing concerns". Furthermore, the four JVs and tougher financing conditions stayed though there was

no 10,000 MW by 2020. The Indian PSUs for the JV companies rubbed off the RGoB the wrong way, from making demands beyond the JV agreement to asking for more management control and even refusing financing. India's power ministry on in 2016 issued Cross Border Trade of Electricity (CBTE) guidelines, which was seen as targeting Bhutan's hydropower sector by restricting hydropower investments in Bhutan and suppressing tariff rates.

India declared itself to be power surplus in 2017 with falling tariff rates that now puts Bhutan's entire hydropower sector in jeopardy. Bhutan's trade deficit is set to worsen as India's GST taxes makes exports to Bhutan cheaper and imports from Bhutan more expensive putting at peril Bhutan's industrial sector.

With all of the above there are now serious challenges for Bhutan's economy. While some may assume this would make Bhutan more dependent on India, it may very well have the opposite impact as Bhutan would have to really explore a host of economic options to sustain its economy in the long run. In the bigger picture for Bhutan, Doklam, no doubt, is a serious issue, but it is a comparatively minor distraction compared to the developments in the economic sector.

The writer is the editor of 'The Bhutanese', a private newspaper in Thimphu, Bhutan