



A thought for today

We face sophisticated cyber threats from state-sponsored hackers, hackers for hire, organised cyber syndicates, and terrorists

JAMES COMEY

Virtual Shield Up

Digital India will stand or fall by whether it understands and implements cybersecurity

Two academics from IIT Kanpur, who briefed a parliamentary standing committee on cybersecurity, have pointed out that risks have escalated following India's drive to digitise its economy. These risks are pronounced in the financial sector as last year's malware-related breach which led to millions of debit cards being blocked showed. This vulnerability in financial sector feeds into larger challenges of cyberwarfare and the need to secure India's critical infrastructure, which now increasingly runs on an IT foundation.

Enhancing cybersecurity should necessarily start with the financial sector as a survey showed that 72% of cybercrime takes place. As banks dominate this area, RBI is at the forefront of devising standards for protection. However, the IIT Kanpur study showed that the central bank is not equipped to deal with this challenge. This should worry the government as digitisation is at the heart of all financial inclusion initiatives. Therefore, government should quickly actualise finance minister Arun Jaitley's budget proposal to establish a computer emergency response team for financial sector, or Cert-Fin, to provide domain expertise and coordination in this sector.

Preliminary work to establish Cert-Fin has started. But now details need to be worked out and adequate funding provided. Once this is done it will strengthen Cert-In, the national agency to enhance cybersecurity. In all of this the government has a role to play. Not only is it the largest repository of sensitive data following the Aadhaar project, it also seems lax in the matter of security. Cert-In, for instance, says as many as 164 government websites were hacked during 2015. In addition there have been other instances where government agencies have placed Aadhaar numbers in public domain.

If individuals are always vulnerable to cybercrime, nations are at risk from acts of cyberwarfare. For example, relations between Russia and US have been adversely impacted by allegations of hacking. In a modern economy powered by computer networks, there is always a threat that hackers can trigger chaos in any sector. Therefore, the briefing to parliamentarians should serve as a timely reminder that there needs to be a collective effort to enhance cybersecurity. Individual organisations can and do take precautions. But government must step up its game. Sectoral regulators and agencies such as Cert-In need to be at the vanguard of strengthening cybersecurity.



Movement In The Mountains

Gorkhaland agitation is marked by a new sense of urgency. Someone will have to take note

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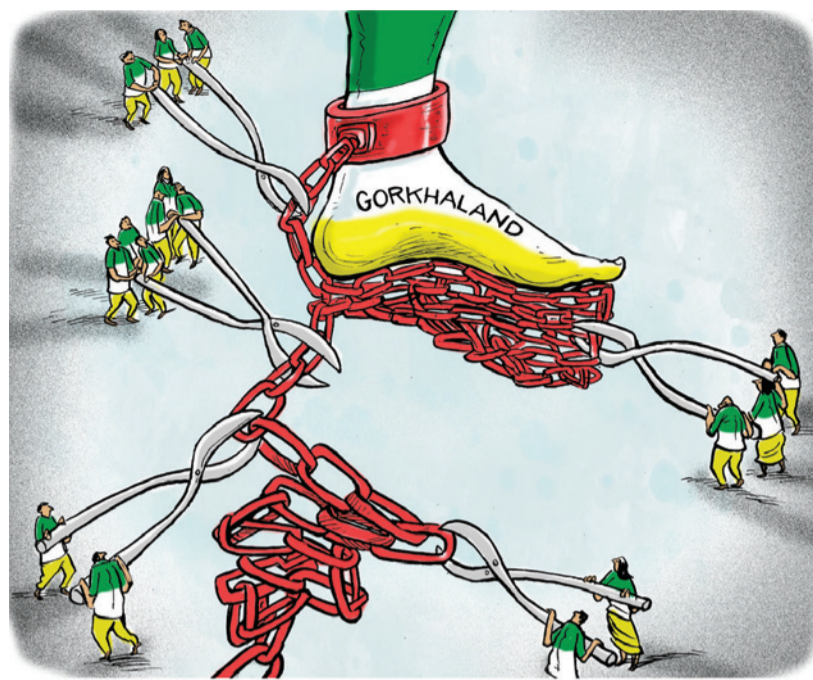


Sometime in the late '80s, three boys barely in their teens headed towards a gushing mountain stream that goes by the name of Dhobikhola just outside Kurseong, an unassuming town overshadowed by the glamorous beauty of Darjeeling to its north and the pivotal importance of Siliguri to its south. The fog had lifted in the morning and there was promise that the sun would be out. Tiny ponds used to form in the crevices of kholas then – all dried up now – and young men would clamber up the slippery rocks to take a dip in the cold, clear pools.

The boys, on a break from school, had packed sandwiches and tea in a flask. They were excited about their little excursion. Suddenly a vehicle with CRPF jawans screeched to a halt in front of them and all three were bundled in. An officer asked for information on local leaders active during the agitation for a separate state of Gorkhaland that had erupted with Subhash Ghisingh in 1986. The jawans were cursing and hitting the boys.

One of the kids remembered advice he had been given by elders: if you are caught by CRPF, speak in English. "Sir," he said in English, "I go to school and live in a hostel. My father is with the SBI. These are my friends and we don't know the people you are talking about." The beatings stopped and the officer asked if the statement could be verified. Then he said something that both terrified and relieved the boys. "Run home, don't turn back. If you do, you will be shot."

The boys ran and ran, like Tom Hanks in *Forrest Gump*. But unlike in the movie, the shackles never really came off. They don't, if you belong to any of the communities on India's margins. However hard one tries to integrate, osmosis remains difficult in a country that thwarts its own people.



hands of students, housewives, professionals, senior citizens.

In street meetings and town rallies, warnings openly go out from the public to local legislators and administrators. This time, you will not cheat us or mislead us, they say. You will not make contracts behind our back. In fact, Gorkha Janmukti Morcha leader Bimal Gurung, who snatched the baton from Ghisingh, has begun to look marginalised.

Though it was Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who lit the fire when she said Bengali would be compulsory even in the schools of Darjeeling where a majority speak Nepali – language, she should have known, is an intrinsic part of identity – and Gurung, battling shrinking political space and anti-incumbency, stoked it, the latest round of calls for a Gorkha homeland has taken a life of its own. It hasn't mattered that BJP, which sent SS Ahluwalia to Parliament from Darjeeling with support from the Morcha, has turned its back on the people, looking as it does to make inroads into Bengal.

The party knows that its endorsement of Gorkhaland may backfire during the next elections, what with Mamata reiterating that she will not allow a division of her beloved state, however far the hills might be from Kolkata – ethnically, culturally, linguistically.

The indefinite bandh in Darjeeling is now its longest ever at 47 days and shows no sign of ending. Smartphone in hand and talking to a diaspora that has spread to every corner of India and the globe, never before has there been such communication of resolve, commitment to cause.

Solidarity videos are being streamed from Hong Kong and Manchester; marches are out in Assam, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and all the 15 million estimated Indian Gorkhas seem to be sharing a common anguish, a hope that the shackles may finally be coming loose, a conviction that Gorkhaland is an idea whose time has come.

The Gorkha, call him Nepalese if you will, has gone beyond the condescending stereotype that has forever defined him

It is that, apart from a sense of other injustices, which is fuelling the agitation for Gorkhaland this time in the hills of Darjeeling. If there is a difference in the nature of protests from those in the 1980s, it is that hundreds of thousands of young men and women have travelled out of the region in the past decades – some have returned, many have not – and all of them have grown up to ask one question: where do we belong? Where is home?

It is not the Darjeeling of Bengal, where they feel discriminated against, where at the best of times they are left to fend for themselves. The inquiry has become urgent – and articulate – with the new generation not content anymore just to join the army and unquestioningly serve a nation that doesn't seem to care for or notice them.

The Gorkha, call him Nepalese if you

Pakistan and India must return to the negotiating table, without further ado and preconditions

Abdul Basit



I am leaving New Delhi shortly, after completing my tenure. I regret our two countries could not commence the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue as agreed in December 2015. Be that as it may, I for one would not like to think we are destined to live in perpetual hostility.

In a significant move, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended Prime Minister-elect Narendra Modi's inauguration along with other SAARC leaders. That reflected our sincere desire to make a new beginning. The two PMs in their maiden meeting agreed to resume bilateral dialogue as soon as possible. After such a propitious start, the press conference by the then Indian foreign secretary issuing a charge sheet against Pakistan, when PM Sharif was still in town, was unhelpful to say the least.

We also found India's decision to cancel its foreign secretary's scheduled visit to Islamabad in August 2014 in reaction to my interaction with the Hurriyat leadership quite baffling. It is imperative to find an amicable solution to the

Jammu & Kashmir dispute. And a solution that does not find resonance among Kashmiris would ineluctably fall flat. Simply put, we cannot put the J&K dispute on the back burner.

We must settle this once and for all, as well as Siachen and Sir Creek, to build a permanent peace between the two countries. I am aware that many in India are not yet convinced that J&K is the root cause of our troubled relationship. They hold the view that terrorism is the major issue. To them my submission is that the wars our two countries

Simply put, we cannot put the J&K dispute on the back burner

have fought during the last 70 years all predated the Samjhauta Express blast (2007), the Mumbai attacks (2008) and Pathankot (2016). Effective diplomacy is not about glossing over or shelving seemingly intractable issues but to address them conclusively and satisfactorily.

This is not to say the menace of terrorism can be ignored and left unaddressed. During the last three years, the "Zarb-i-Azb" operation has successfully achieved its objectives. Now



the all-encompassing "Raddul Fasaad" operation is underway to take the counter-terrorism drive to its logical conclusion. The public discourse aside, Islamabad and New Delhi have exchanged letters on Mumbai. Some proposals are under consideration to expedite the trial.

As for Pathankot, it is in our mutual interest to determine beyond a shadow of doubt its fons et origo and bring the culprits to book. Meanwhile, it is necessary to eschew the temptation of jumping the gun about perpetrators of the crime. Convicting the perpetrators of the Samjhauta Express blast in which 42 Pakistanis lost their lives is equally important. The people of Pakistan are

concerned at the glacial pace of the trial.

To move from conflict management to conflict resolution, a few suggestions. First, it is time to return to the negotiating table without further ado and preconditions. Talks are not a favour by one country to another. Dialogue is unavoidable. Since it will happen sooner or later, why waste time?

Second, it is incumbent to maintain peace and tranquillity along the LoC. In his 2015 address to the UNGA, Prime Minister Sharif proposed to formalise the 2003 ceasefire understanding, entrusting UNMOGIP to monitor. Third, all the other existing CBMs/

agreements should also be adhered to in letter and spirit. Fourth, Pakistan is not interested in a Sisyphian arms race but will maintain the credibility of its full spectrum deterrence under all circumstances. Our 1998 Strategic Restraint Regime proposal is still on the table. Maintaining regional strategic stability should be one of our top most priorities.

I may mention here that while foreign secretary S Jaishankar never denied me an official meeting, I wish we could also meet privately to discuss bilateral issues informally. Similarly, I met NSA Ajit Doval many times. We also exchanged gifts on the occasions of Eid and Diwali. As bilateral relations deteriorated, Doval Sahab's interest in meeting me also apparently sapped somewhat. I strongly feel that diplomatic interaction becomes all the more necessary in strained situations to avoid culs de sac.

To conclude, I thank the people of India for their warmth and affection. These three years have been very exciting. I and my wife Summiya have made many friends across India. We would always cherish their friendship and look forward to staying in touch with them.

The writer is high commissioner for Pakistan

Legalise Marijuana

Medical and recreational usage will prevent addiction to hard drugs

Union women and child development minister Maneka Gandhi's suggestion that marijuana for medical needs should be legalised is welcome. Such an amendment would reflect an enlightened drug policy that takes into cognisance medical data and international trends. In the US today more than half the states allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes. In fact, a report of the US National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine which analysed more than 10,000 scientific studies on marijuana found strong evidence of the organic drug helping in the treatment of chronic pain, nausea after chemotherapy, and some symptoms of multiple sclerosis.

There's no reason why Indian policymakers shouldn't take a similar informed approach to marijuana and even legalise possession of small quantities of the mild intoxicant for recreational purposes. All the more so because the consumption of marijuana and other cannabis derivatives such as bhang dates back hundreds of years and has strong roots in Indian culture. Till 1985, marijuana and cannabis derivatives were legally sold in the country through authorised retail shops. However, the enactment of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in that year – done under US and international pressure – clubbed marijuana with hard drugs and made all illegal.

Now that opinion and trends with respect to marijuana are reversing in the US and other countries, India should follow suit. Besides, several studies have shown that moderate consumption of marijuana is far less harmful than tobacco and alcohol. If the latter can be sold over the counter, the same standards should be applied to marijuana as well. Plus, decriminalising marijuana use will prevent people from graduating to harder drugs that should remain proscribed. Distinction between the two will also help unclog our prisons that are bursting at the seams. Hence, a liberal approach to marijuana coupled with greater focus on de-addiction for hard drugs must be the way forward.



Feminism bleeds blue

We still won, even though our cricket team lost this one

Radhika Vaz



Cricket never caught on with me, partly due to my contrarian approach to the world around me and partly because neither parent was into it. We are not a sporty family, my husband's near constant enthusiasm for physical activity being viewed as a bit of an irritation, and the only time we resemble sports lovers is once every 4 years when the Olympics come to town. Then a few evenings ago my mum asked if I had watched our Women in Blue play against England. No I had not. Obviously. And by the way what she was doing watching cricket? But not only had she watched, she knew the names of the players and had opinions on why they lost. I looked her straight in the eye and asked "who are you and what have you done with my mother?" My mum, a counsellor by profession, and I discuss how porn is the newest addiction, why affairs are probably not the worst thing to happen to a marriage, and how gender is a spectrum. But not once in the 44 years that I have known her have we discussed cricket.

Yet here she was on a roll telling me how poorly these wonderful heroes were being interviewed. Apparently some idiot had asked the players if they had ever got into a cat-fight. "Would they ever ask the men if they got into dog-fights?" my mother wondered. No ma they would not and by the way there are people out there saying that given the women lost why are we treating them like they won. This led to a discussion on the whole nasty business of double standards in our country and by the time my dad walked into the room he wished he had not.

I now know that the real reason I am not cricket crazy is because traditionally the game has ignored women at every level. You see young boys play cricket on the streets, in housing colonies and on playgrounds, but where are the girls? And most schools have a cricket team just for boys. If this isn't shutting women out I am not sure what is! And so even though our team lost this one we still won – because if these women could get my mum talking about batting line-ups then maybe cricket is slowly (very slowly) coming out of the dark and moving into the light of gender equality.

The writer is a comedian

dilbert



Find Truth With The Power Of Discrimination

Kamal Jain

The Shivasutras say that a seeker is one who makes right effort to find the truth, seeking moment to moment application of viveka, discrimination; the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. In sadhana, we need to be vigilant in applying discrimination, which is part of being awake, aware and clear.

Right effort means to get engaged in sadhana without distractions. Different thoughts, feelings, sensations, attitudes and impulses are distractions which arise from our ego and mind. Discrimination helps us to examine our mind and ego and put right effort to engage fully in sadhana by warding off distractions.

Adi Shankara, in 'Vivekachoodamani', talks about discrimination: "Neither by weapons, nor by wind, nor by fire, nor by millions of actions can this bondage be destroyed. By nothing, save the wonder sword of knowledge, which

comes from discrimination and is sharpened by purification of the mind and intellect, can we end this bondage."

Viveka destroys ignorance which binds us, causing sufferings, and is sharpened by cleansing of mind and intellect. Purification can be done by reducing vasanas, desires. When desires are controlled, agitations of the mind are calmed down. The quieter mind enhances contemplative power which makes the ability to discriminate, sharper.

Dhammapada states that a wise man calmly considers what is right and what is wrong, and faces different opinions with truth, non-violence and peace. Thus, viveka becomes a great blessing and can be used in every walk of life.

Discrimination is essential in our relationship with others and to differentiate between saintly appearance and a true saint. Not all situations that

are pleasant are spiritually beneficial. Our inner growth lies in learning to differentiate between platitudes and real spiritual truths; between sentimentality and true compassion.

Viveka has great transforming power. Viveka brings about true wisdom in us and by use of it we are able to entirely change our whole nature from negative to positive. It is the ability of discrimination and thereby earned wisdom which facilitate victory over anger, jealousy and negativity in totality.

There is yet another level to the process of cultivating viveka. In the spiritual journey, one needs to know not only what is good or bad, but what is real or unreal; what is Self and 'not self'. Here, viveka is more than a capacity of the mind; it becomes the property of Soul.

The challenge lies in cultivating the ability to discriminate in order to

progress in our sadhana. Any practitioner of any tradition can develop his discriminative ability through studying scriptures, contemplation, witnessing consciousness, practice and through interactions with his guru and fellow seekers. Our conscience and intuition is also helpful in its cultivation, provided we heed our inner voice.

Sit quietly and meditatively; watch what arises in the mind and in the inner sky of awareness. If it is a thought, feeling or sensation which asserts, "that's mine" or "me", it comes from mind or ego. Keep watching the flow of thoughts, feelings and impulsive sensations and say silently to yourself about these, "that's not me or mine", in response to whatever arises in your spacious awareness and you would reach a point where there would be a space of emptiness. Viveka would now be at a developed stage and will allow you to see the difference between form and emptiness, real and unreal, with clarity.

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