



TechTak.in

AN EXCLUSIVE
TECH MOBILE CHANNEL



You **Tube** /techtakofficial

f /techtakofficial

t /techtakofficial

CAN INDIA TACKLE A PANDEMIC?

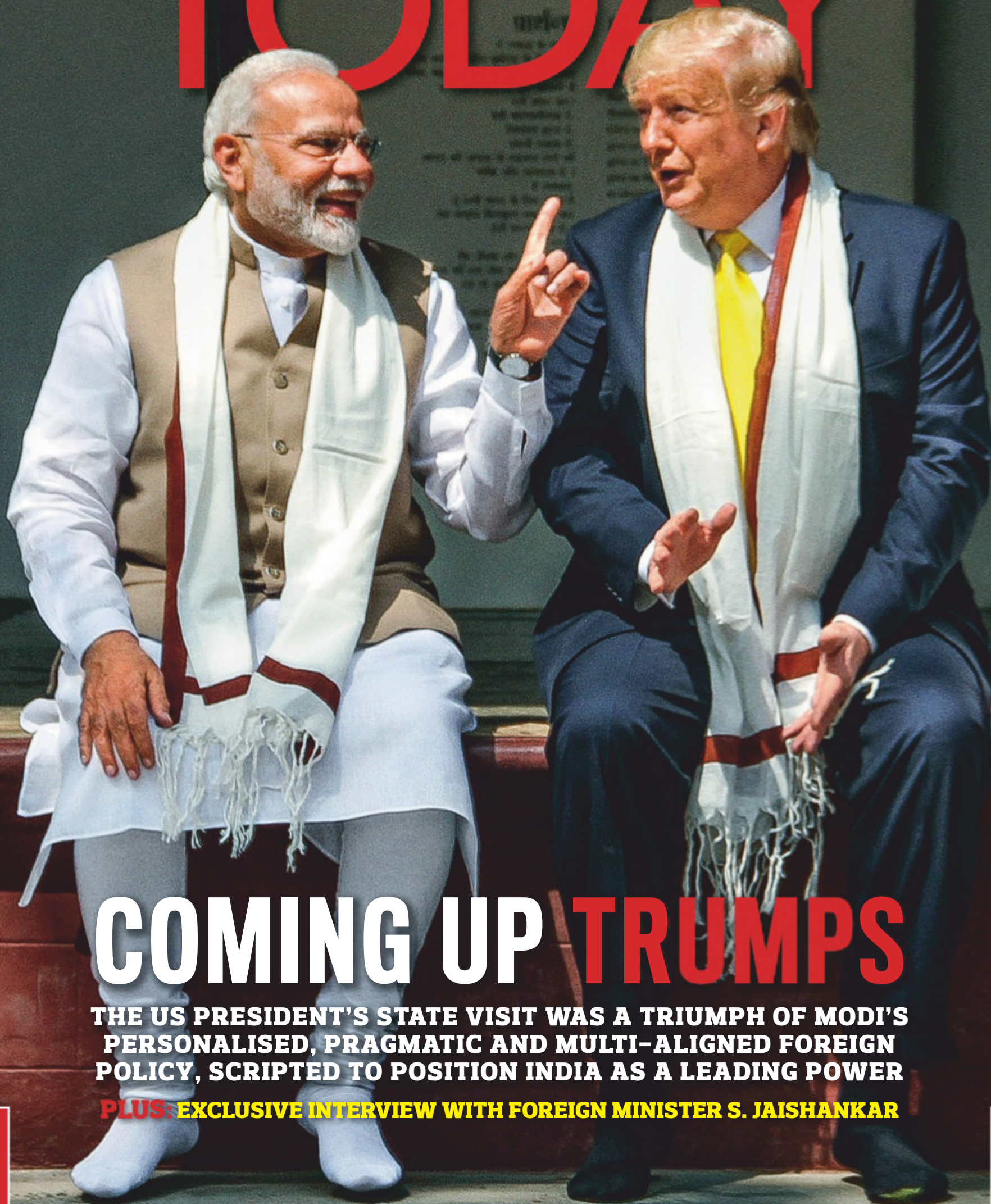
WHY DELHI BURNED

www.indiatoday.in



MARCH 9, 2020 ₹60

INDIA TODAY



COMING UP **TRUMPS**

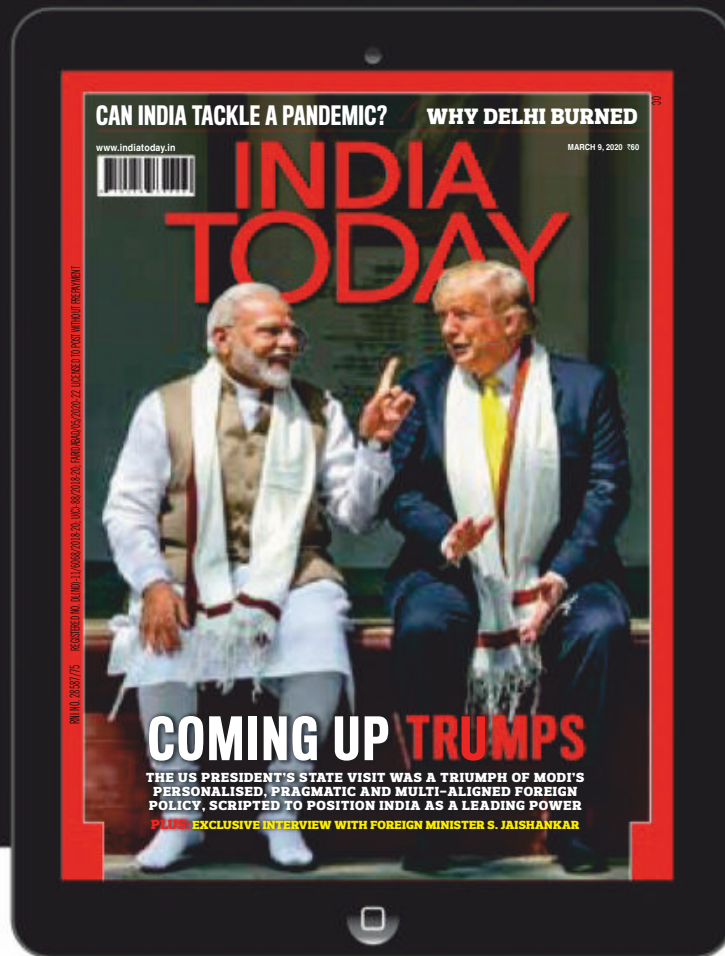
THE US PRESIDENT'S STATE VISIT WAS A TRIUMPH OF MODI'S PERSONALISED, PRAGMATIC AND MULTI-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY, SCRIPTED TO POSITION INDIA AS A LEADING POWER

PLUS: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH FOREIGN MINISTER S. JAISHANKAR

INDIA TODAY

INDIA
TODAY
GROUP

DIGITAL EDITION



EXCLUSIVE MULTIMEDIA CONTENT ONLY FOR IPAD

COVER STORY

THE BIG STORY

NATION

STATES

STATES

STATES

COMING UP TRUMPS

ARE WE READY?

VOTES AND THE CAA

THE SHAPE OF A NEW OPPOSITION

SIDHU IS BACK IN DEMAND

THE MOTHER OF ALL SCHEMES

#COMINGUPTRUMPS

SUBSCRIBE NOW

www.indiatoday.in/digitalmagazines

FROM THE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

If you missed US president Donald Trump's two-day state visit to India earlier this week, you were either living under a rock or lost in the Himalayas. I've rarely seen any head of state being given the kind of welcome Trump received in India—a roadshow and a raucous T-20 style final, held, somewhat appropriately, in the world's largest cricket stadium. In the grand finale that evening, the former real estate developer from Manhattan saw the monument that has inspired his garish casino in Atlantic City.

It is a visit the showman-president and master of impulsive diplomacy is unlikely to ever forget. Last October, we saw a sombre but significant welcome for Chinese president Xi Jinping in Mahabalipuram, as he arrived for the second India-China informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. And just a month before that, the Indian prime minister was in Vladivostok with Russian president Vladimir Putin where, among other things, both leaders attended a judo contest. All these visits, effective blends of diplomacy and showmanship, are significant threads in a new, pragmatic Indian foreign policy, as the world's fifth largest economy, soon to be the third largest, redefines its role on the world stage as an emerging power.

Today, there are few countries in the world that enjoy the unity in diplomatic diversity that India does. We share excellent relations with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Russia and the United States, not all of whom see eye to eye with each other. New Delhi has delinked idealism from its foreign policy as it pursues a new, pragmatic, India-first engagement with them.

This clean break from the past became apparent a year ago when Indian jets bombed a terror training camp in mainland Pakistan after a suicide bomb attack killed 40 CRPF troopers almost a fortnight earlier. It was a clear signal that unlike previous terror outrages, India was not going to lean on the US to pressurise a neighbour that had become accustomed to using terror as an instrument of statecraft. Instead, India rolled up its sleeves and did something about it. Pakistan's nuclear weapons did not matter and the Indian stance was perhaps vindicated when no country of consequence criticised its 'non-military pre-emptive strike'. The same pattern played out when Article 370 was abrogated—international censure, especially by the usual suspects, was muted.

New Delhi's policy towards its strategic competitor China's efforts to build influence in South Asia has been to focus on building small infrastructure projects in the neighbourhood with an emphasis on connectivity. India is working to rebuild its links with Africa and is pursu-



Our July 8, 2019 cover

ing ties with Europe. In the Asia-Pacific, it has raised its engagement in the so-called 'Quadrilateral of democracies'—Japan, Australia and the US being the other three pillars—to the foreign secretary level. This, even as it ensures none of its dalliances turn into formal alliances.

The new foreign policy is willing to weaponise trade and take on President Trump for terminating India's preferential trade status under its Generalized System of Preferences. Trump had to come to India, deal or no deal. India would not be rushed into a trade agreement, but it would not let that come in the way of deal-sweeteners like a \$3 billion defence deal and a newly announced global strategic partnership.

This vibrant and aggressive policy has seen India engage nearly every country on the planet. The abiding self-interest, of course, remains maximising our economic interests even though this policy might sometime seem contrary to an economic policy that erects trade barriers back home.

Our cover story, 'Coming up Trumps', is written by Group Editorial Director Raj Chengappa, who has tracked the changing contours of India's engagement with the world over the past few years and who sees an economic core to India's new foreign policy. "At the end of the day, without economic clout, you are nowhere," he says. Chengappa also interviewed foreign minister S. Jaishankar, who spoke extensively on a range of foreign policy issues.

Trump is a hot favourite for re-election this November, primarily because he has walked the talk on boosting US economic growth. This is a lesson his new best friend, Prime Minister Modi, would do well to learn from him.

(Aroon Purie)



www.srilanka.travel



REJUVENATION WITH THE WORLD'S OLDEST MEDICINAL HEALING METHODS, AYURVEDA

We are a country with a complete sensory experience. Spirituality is always present in every Sri Lankan. Ayurveda is one of the connecting blocks to achieve healing with attention to the mind, body and soul.

With the 3rd Century BC, we saw the introduction into Ayurveda – the world's oldest holistic and powerful mind and body healing systems. Before modern medicine and scientific research entered the market, Ayurveda was the most sought-after healing experiences mankind had to offer.



MAGNIFICENT
AND POWERFUL
SRI LANKA

CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Aroon Purie
VICE CHAIRPERSON: Kalli Purie

GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Raj Chengappa

GROUP CREATIVE EDITOR: Nilanjan Das; **GROUP PHOTO EDITOR:** Bandeep Singh

MANAGING EDITORS: Kai Jabir Friese, Rajesh Jha

CONSULTING EDITOR: Ajit Kumar Jha (Research)

EXECUTIVE EDITORS: S. Sahaya Ranjit, Sandeep Unnithan
MUMBAI: M.G. Arun

SENIOR DEPUTY EDITORS: Uday Mahurkar, Manisha Saroop
HYDERABAD: Amarnath K. Menon

DEPUTY EDITOR: Shweta Punj

SENIOR EDITORS: Kaushik Dekka, Sasi Nair, Anilesh Mahajan
MUMBAI: Suhani Singh; JAIPUR: Rohit Parihar

SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Ashish Mukherjee
MUMBAI: Kiran Dinkar Tare; PATNA: Amitabh Srivastava

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Shougat Dasgupta, Sonali Acharjee
KOLKATA: Romita Sengupta; BHOPAL: Rahul Noronha;
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Jeemon Jacob

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Zinnia Ray Chaudhuri
PUNE: Aditi S. Pai

PHOTO DEPARTMENT: Vikram Sharma (Deputy Photo Editor),
Yasir Iqbal (Deputy Chief Photographer),
Rajwant Singh Rawat (Principal Photographer),
Chandra Deep Kumar (Senior Photographer); MUMBAI: Mandar Suresh
Deodhar (Chief Photographer), Danesh Adil Jassawala (Photographer);
KOLKATA: Subir Halder (Principal Photographer);
CHENNAI: N.G. Jaison (Senior Photographer)

PHOTO RESEARCHERS: Prabhakar Tiwari (Chief Photo Researcher),
Saloni Vaid (Principal Photo Researcher),
Shubhrojit Brahma (Senior Photo Researcher)

CHIEF OF GRAPHICS: Tanmoy Chakraborty

ART DEPARTMENT: Sanjay Piplani (Senior Art Director);
Angshuman De (Art Director); Devajit Bora (Deputy Art Director);
Vikas Verma (Associate Art Director);
Bhoomesh Dutt Sharma (Senior Designer)
Siddhant Jumde (Senior Illustrator)

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT: Harish Agarwal (Chief of Production),
Naveen Gupta (Chief Coordinator)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER: Manoj Sharma

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Anil Fernandes (Impact)

IMPACT TEAM

Senior General Manager: Jitendra Lad (West)
General Manager: Mayur Rastogi (North),
Uendra Singh (Bangalore), Kaushiky Gangulie (East)

GROUP CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER: Vivek Malhotra

SALES AND OPERATIONS: D.V.S. Rama Rao, Chief General Manager
Deepak Bhatt, Senior General Manager (National Sales)
Vipin Bagga, General Manager (Operations)
Rajeev Gandhi, Deputy General Manager (North)
Syed Asif Saleem, Regional Sales Manager (West)
S Paramasivam, Deputy Regional Sales Manager (South)
Piyush Ranjan Das, Senior Sales Manager (East)



**Volume XLV Number 10; For the week
March 3-9, 2020, published on every Friday**

● Editorial/Corporate Office Living Media India Ltd., India Today Group Mediaplex,
FC-8, Sector-16A, Film City, Noida - 201301; Phone: 0120-4807100

● Subscriptions: For assistance contact Customer Care India Today Group, C-9,
Sector-10, Noida (UP)-201301; Phones: Toll-free number: 1800 1800 100 (from
BSNL/MTNL lines); (95120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900
from Rest of India (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.); Fax: (0120) 4078080;
Mumbai: 022-66063411/3412, Kolkata: 033-40525327, Chennai: 044-24303200;
e-mail: wecare@intoday.com

● Sales: Direct all trade enquiries to General Manager (Sales), Living Media India
Limited, C-9, Sector-10, Noida-201301 (UP)

● Regd. Office: K-9 Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001

● Impact Offices: 1201, 12th Floor, Tower 2 A, One Indiabulls Centre, (Jupiter
Mills), S.B. Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai-400013; Phone: 66063355;
Fax: 66063226 ● E-1, Ground Floor, Videocon Towers, Jhandewalan Extn,
New Delhi ● Guna Complex, 5th Floor, Main Building, No.443, Anna Salai,
Chennai-600018; Phone: 2847 8525 ● 201-204 Richmond Towers, 2nd Floor,
12, Richmond Road, Bangalore-560025; Phones: 22212448, 22213037,
22218343; Fax: 22218335; ● 52, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, 4th Floor,
Kolkata-700071; Phones: 22825398; Fax: 22827254; ● 6-3-885/7B, Somajiguda,
Hyderabad-500082; Phone: 23401657, 23400479, 23410100, 23402481,
23410982, 23411498; Fax: 23403484 ● 39/1045, Karakkatt Road, Kochi 682016;
Phones: 2377057, 2377058; Fax: 2377059 ● 2/C, "Suryarath Bldg", 2nd Floor,
Behind White House, Panchwati, Office C.G. Road, Ahmedabad-380006; Phone:
26560393, 26560929; Fax: 26565293 ● Copyright Living Media India Ltd. All
rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited.

**Printed and published by Manoj Sharma on behalf of Living Media
India Limited. Printed at Thomson Press India Limited,
18-35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007, (Haryana)
and at A-9, Industrial Complex, Maraimalai Nagar, District
Kancheepuram-603209, (Tamil Nadu). Published at K-9, Connaught
Circus, New Delhi-110001. Editor: Raj Chengappa.**

● INDIA TODAY does not take the responsibility for returning unsolicited
publication material.

All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of
competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only

**SYNDICATIONS
TODAY**
INDIA DELIVERED

For reprint rights and syndication enquiries, contact
syndications@intoday.com or call +91-120-4078000
www.syndicationstoday.in

UPFRONT
**WHEN/ WHY DELHI
BURNED PG 5**

**HOW TO GET
MORE RUPAY
PG 8**

INSIDE

LEISURE
**LILLY SINGH: NOT LATE,
THE LATEST PG 53**

**Q&A WITH
SANJNA KAPOOR
PG 62**



24 COVER STORY COMING UP TRUMPS

US President Donald Trump's visit was a feather in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic cap, highlighting India's global heft

36 INTERVIEW "THE INDO-US RELATIONSHIP IS BROADER TODAY"

Foreign minister S. Jaishankar on a range of issues, from Indo-US ties, Pakistan, China, CAA to Article 370

MEA

42 ASSAM VOTES AND THE CAA

While the CAA will help the BJP get the migrant Hindu vote and more, the party will have to work hard to placate the Assamese voters in 2021

48 CORONAVIRUS ARE WE READY?

Given the worrying trend of virus outbreaks every few years, India needs to assess if it is prepared for a pandemic



Cover Photograph by MEA/ AFP



Readers are recommended to make appropriate enquiries before sending money, incurring expenses or entering into commitments in relation to any advertisement appearing in this publication. The India Today Group does not vouch for any claims made by the advertisers of products and services. The printer, publisher, editor-in-chief and the editor of the India Today Group publications shall not be held liable for any consequences in the event of such claims not being honoured by the advertisers.

**FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE, CONTACT: Customer Care,
India Today Group, C-9, Sector-10, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)-201301.
Phones: 2479900 from Noida, 95120-2479900 from Delhi and
Faridabad, and 0120-2479900 from Rest of India. Toll Free No.:
1800 1800 100. Fax: 0120-4078080. E-mail: wecare@intoday.com**

E-MAIL to:
letters.editor@intoday.com or
log on to **www.indiatoday.in**

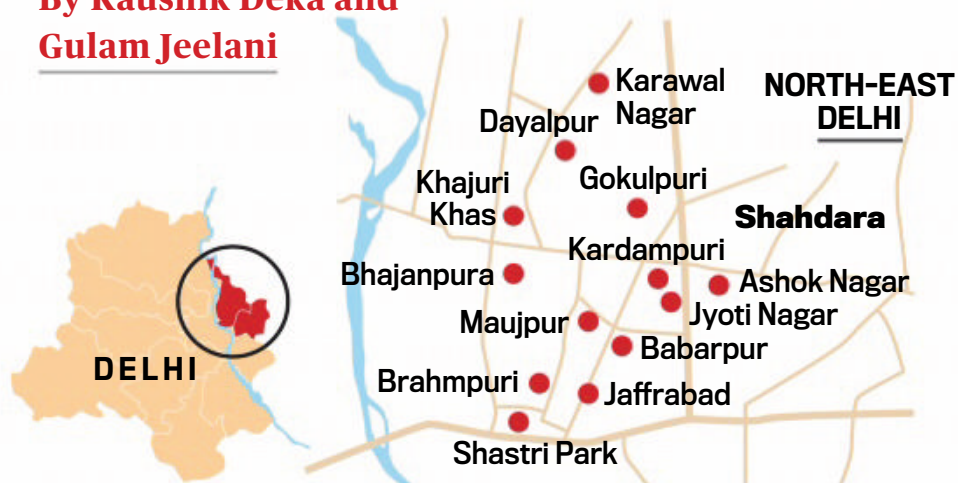


< STONE-FACED
Police and the mobs
face off in Jaffrabad
in North-east Delhi,
Feb. 24

DELHI RIOTS

CAPITAL SHAME

By Kaushik Deka and
Gulam Jeelani



For three full days, starting February 23, armed goons ran riot in large swathes of northeast Delhi. Some wore masks, most carried weapons—if not country pistols and swords, then iron rods or anything hard and handy—and they had murder on their minds. At the time of going to press, the hospitals had declared 27 dead and anywhere between 250 and 300 injured.

Most violent incidents took place within a 5 km radius of the Jaffrabad neighbourhood in north-east Delhi, some 15 km from the seat of the Union ministry of home affairs and 10 km from the Delhi Police headquarters. Much of the violence and wanton vandalism happened right under the nose of the police, which stood by as if in a surreal film script while people were brutalised, homes looted, and vehicles and shops and public property burned. The

THE FIRING SQUAD

fact that a head constable of the Delhi Police was among the people who lost their lives did little to window-dress the sordid reality of an administration in abeyance.

Ironically, several other parts of the national capital had turned into a sanitised fortress, ready to play host to a Very Very Important Person—US President Donald J. Trump. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was busy playing gracious master of ceremonies, and it wasn't until February 26, after Trump had left, that he managed to tweet his appeal for peace. Still no word, though, on any action proposed against party colleague and agent provocateur, Kapil Mishra.

Less than 24 hours before Trump landed in Ahmedabad, on February 24, for his 36-hour India sojourn, Mishra held a rally in Delhi's Maujpur area in support of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA, 2019. Ever since the government got the law passed in Parliament in December 2019, protests have raged across the country. In southeast Delhi's Shaheen Bagh neighbourhood, hundreds of protesters, prominently featuring Muslim women, have staged a continuous, peaceful sit-in protest for more than two months.

Inspired by their liberal fan following, several other sit-ins have sprung up in many other parts of Delhi, including Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh in northeast Delhi, which made Mishra see red. On February 23, he issued an ultimatum to the Delhi Police to clear the roads protesters had blocked in Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh: "Don't try to convince us after this, we'll not listen to you. Just three days." He also tweeted a call to action, urging people to gather in Maujpur at 3 pm: "in response to Jaffrabad, just in front

"Three days ultimatum to Delhi police—get the roads cleared in Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh. Don't try to convince us after this, we will not listen to you. Just three days."

—BJP leader
Kapil Mishra
on Twitter, Feb. 23



"We are sure the police commissioner has a TV in his office. Please ask him to watch this clip," Delhi High Court bench of **Justice S.**

Muralidhar and Justice Talwant Singh, on Feb. 26, while directing Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to advise police commissioner Amulya Patnaik to lodge FIRs against BJP leaders Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, and Kapil Mishra for alleged hate speeches



"THE HOME MINISTER SHOULD RESIGN IMMEDIATELY. WHAT WAS [HE] DOING EARLIER THIS WEEK?"

Congress president
Sonia Gandhi,
Feb. 26



"A few criminals do things like this... Police is here and doing its work. We're here as per the orders of PM Modi and Amit Shah. *Inshallah, yahan par bilkul aman hoga.*"

National
Security Advisor
Ajit Doval,
at Maujpur,
Feb. 26



"Peace and harmony are central to our ethos. I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times. It is important that there is calm and normalcy is restored at the earliest."

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, on Twitter, Feb. 26



of Jaffrabad”.

Later that day, all hell broke loose. Scenes of stone pelting and violent clashes—in Maujpur, Karawal Nagar, Babarpur, Chand Bagh and other areas—went live on television screens. The police fired tear gas shells and even clamped Section 144 in some areas, but evidently failed to curb the violence, which quickly spread to Sherpur Chowk, Gokulpuri, Kardampuri, Ghonda Chowk, Khajuri Khas, Bhajanpura and other areas. Most of these areas come under seven assembly constituencies—Seelampur, Babarpur, Mustafabad, Shahdara, Karawal Nagar, Ghonda and Rohtas Nagar; the BJP won the last three in the recent assembly election.

Attempting a gloss on the evident police reluctance to control the violence and enforce law and order, Delhi Police spokesman DCP Mandeep Singh Randhawa said: “The main reason for violence escalating in these areas is the mixed population and [the fact that] they are too congested. Before police could respond, anti-social elements had incited violence, but we are responding to all incidents.”

This is the third time in two months that the Delhi Police has found itself exposed to charges of deliberate inaction, of running manifestly biased investigations, or, when it has acted, of being high-handed and partisan. They were seen assaulting students in Jamia Millia Islamia University on December 15 last year and being mute witnesses to the violence in JNU on the night of January 5 during the ongoing wave of CAA protests.

Hearing a plea for an SIT probe into the Delhi riots and to take action against the politicians who had made inflammatory speeches that allegedly incited the violence, a Delhi High Court bench of Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice Talwant Singh asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and the DCP

(Crime Branch) who were present in the court if they had seen the video footage of Mishra’s speech; the answer was a ‘no’. At the time of going to press on February 26, no FIRs had been lodged against Mishra nor against Union minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur and Lok Sabha MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, the other two BJP leaders who have been in the news for their hate speech in the run-up to the Delhi assembly election earlier this month. “We can’t let another 1984 scenario happen in this city; not under the watch of this court,” observed Justice Muralidhar, in a reference to the anti-Sikh riots that broke out in the capital in the wake

This is the third time in two months that the Delhi Police has found itself exposed to charges of deliberate inaction

of Indira Gandhi’s assassination.

The Congress managed to belatedly bestir itself, and in a press conference on February 26, featuring several senior party leaders, interim party president Sonia Gandhi demanded home minister Amit Shah’s resignation, which provoked some predictable whataboutery from BJP eminences such as Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar, who also issued televised reminders of the Congress’s role in the riots of 1984. Other political observers saw an eerie reprise of Gujarat 2002 in the Delhi violence, and even pointed to an uncanny, this-time-that-year coincidence—the Gujarat communal riots of 2002 had also broken out on February 26-27. ■



Great Taste... Great Fun!



Also available in

**NO ONION
NO GARLIC**



@TopsSocial

www.tops.in

UPFRONT

DIGITAL PAYMENTS

WHO CARES ABOUT MDR?

The government's recent effort to promote digital transactions—by making them cheaper for consumers—looks to have come at a cost to banks.

Effective January 1 this year, the government has waived the merchant discount rate (MDR)—a fee paid by merchants to banks for the infrastructure that allows them to accept digital payments—on transactions made using RuPay cards and through BHIM-UPI apps. RuPay is a domestic card payment scheme launched in March 2012, while BHIM is a mobile payment app launched in December 2016, both by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). Historically, a well-defined revenue-generating structure has underpinned card payments. The bulk of the revenue—which comes from MDR fees paid by merchants—went to the banks that issued the cards and accepted the payments, with network providers like Visa, Mastercard or RuPay getting smaller shares.

The government's move to selectively do away with the MDR is an attempt to promote digital transactions on the RuPay and BHIM networks by making them a cheaper option for consumers. However, this also means that banks stand to lose around Rs 1,800 crore

in MDR payments in calendar year 2020, according to an estimate by Ashish Das, a professor of statistics at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. Without this revenue, banks may lose their appetite to invest in digital infrastructure.

The government's bid to promote digital payments by rationalising the MDR has been in the works since at least 2012. According to Das, in January 2018, two conflicting regulations were implemented—the RBI capped MDR charges at 0.9 per cent for debit cards, while the government simultaneously made MDR zero for transactions upto Rs 2,000. (However, the government also said it would compensate banks to the tune of 0.4 per cent.) When it came to credit cards, the MDR range was from 1.5 to 3 per cent.

BANKS COULD LOSE ABOUT Rs 1,800 CRORE IN MDR REVENUES IN CALENDAR 2020, SAYS IIT's PROF. DAS



However, big merchants were able to get away with paying no MDR on credit cards, with banks unable to do much about this for fear of damaging their business relationships with them. Instead, these charges were passed on to customers—which, experts say, went against prevailing norms.

However, the complete waiver of MDR on RuPay debit cards and BHIM-UPI payments leads to a different set of problems. While trying to incentivise the use of these home-grown payment systems, the new policy will choke a revenue stream for banks, and, as Das explains: “Now, most banks won't be interested in issuing RuPay cards or processing transactions using them, since they do not get any revenues out of those transactions.” The issue has been further complicated with some merchants allegedly approaching banks to enable payments only for RuPay-enabled debit cards, and not

those using Mastercard or Visa, since they would need to pay MDR on the latter.

Both RuPay and BHIM-UPI are currently in their nascent stages. The RuPay-based debit card system generated average revenues of Rs 57.5 crore per month for banks this financial year (up to December 2019). For BHIM-UPI, the average during the same period was about Rs 33 crore a month.

How should the government and the RBI find a win-win for all? Experts say any solution must take on board the reality that banks will likely promote whichever system generates more revenue for them. “Therefore, the RBI could set a revised cap on debit card MDR, on the lines currently set for RuPay debit card by the NPCI. Alternatively, the RBI could increase revenue support for RuPay cards, in order to maintain parity with extant MDR caps it had set,” says Das. ■

—M.G. Arun

IMPUNITY FOR ATROCITIES?

A disturbing video circulating on social media has brought to public attention the violence to which Dalits are subject, seemingly at the whims of their upper-caste neighbours. On February 16, in Rajasthan's Nagaur district, two young men were held by a group of Rajputs and severely beaten, one was stripped and (in effect) sexually assaulted with a screwdriver dipped in petrol. Had it not been filmed, the victims say, they would not have filed a police complaint because their assailants had already threatened them with dire consequences. For their part, the assailants accused their victims of theft. In Rajasthan, this latest atrocity is part of a growing trend of crimes against Dalits, with figures from the state reported to be at their highest in a decade. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, crimes against Dalits rose significantly across the country in the decade upto 2016, showing why many welcomed the Supreme Court's revision of its own order to weaken some provisions of the SC/ ST Act, which had prompted thousands to take to the streets in protest in April 2018.

7

arrests after a video of two Dalit men being beaten by upper-caste Rajputs in Rajasthan surfaced, three days after the incident on Feb. 16

44 mins

The time between the filing of an FIR by the victims and the filing of a counter-FIR by their assailants, accusing them of stealing Rs 50,000

8,591

cases of atrocities under the SC/ ST Act registered with the Rajasthan police in 2019, says NCRB. A 50.7% increase from 2018 and a 10-year high

422,799

crimes against Dalits/ or SCs registered from 2006 to 2016, says NCRB, rising 25% over 10 years; 16,654 cases in 2016 still pending investigation



5,347

of the 422,799 cases mentioned above were found to be false after a police investigation, 49% of them just from Rajasthan

16.3%

The conviction rate between 2014 and 2018 for crimes registered under the SC/ ST Act, says the Ministry of Home Affairs. Compared to 29.4% for total crimes under the IPC with penal provisions

47%

increase in crimes against Dalits in Uttar Pradesh from 2014 to 2018, says NCRB, followed by Gujarat (26%), Haryana (15%), Madhya Pradesh (14%), and Maharashtra (11%)

Illustration by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY



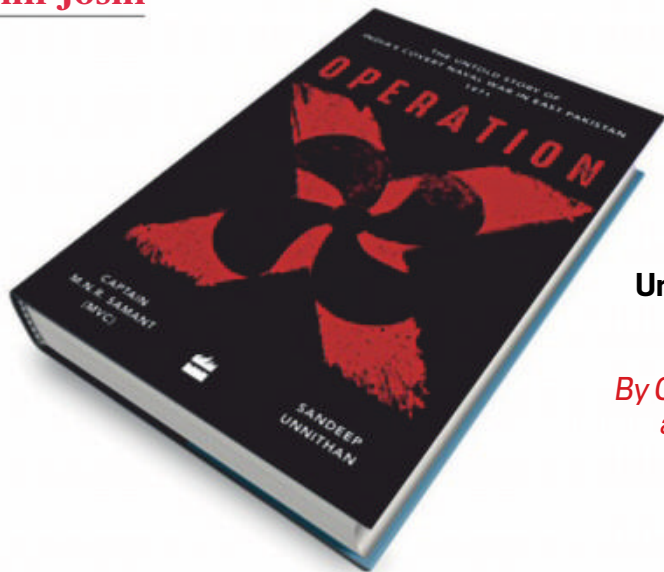
Fruit Inside..
Masti Outside!



BOOKS

UNDER THE SURFACE OF WAR

By Ruchir Joshi



**OPERATION X: The
Untold Story of India's
Covert Naval War in
East Pakistan**

By Captain M.N.R. Samant
and Sandeep Unnithan
HARPERCOLLINS
₹499; 272 pages

The Bangladesh War is India's feelgood war just as the Second World War is the US's. The liberation of Bangladesh and the trouncing of the Pakistan Army on both fronts comes with all the bells and whistles one wants as a patriotic, retrospectively war-thirsty follower of military history. Morally, the cause was unambiguous—we were the good guys and the Pakistanis were, without doubt, guilty of grotesque villainy; we may have been somewhat the Goliath in terms of the size of the army, etc., but given Nixon and Kissinger's bullying brinkmanship using the US Navy's 7th Fleet, we were also David enough; the declared conflict lasted just under three weeks, during which every Indian Blitzkrieg onanism was fully satisfied; every branch of the military and intelligence did its job, coordinating without too many disasters (one of these bloody mishaps is described in vividly horrifying detail at the end of the book being reviewed), and in close partnership with the Mukti Bahini guerrillas; among the happy outcomes were the complete vanquishment of the old enemy and truckloads of long-lasting egg on the faces of Nixon and Mao; but the most precious thing that resulted from the conflict was, of

course, freedom and independence for the people of Bangladesh.

Operation X takes as its starting point a group of Bengali submariners of the Pakistani Navy who desert their elite vessel in Marseilles, France, when they hear of the atrocities their own army has begun committing against the people of East Pakistan. The chapter recounting this story reads like a beautifully understated thriller as the eight sailors, with secret help from Indian diplomats, avoid Pakistani attempts to arrest them on French and Spanish soil and make their escape to India. Rapidly, the scene shifts to Navy life in pre-war Bombay, complete with a record player in a dock cabin churning out an eclectic soundtrack of the Bee Gees, Leonard Cohen and Jethro Tull, and from there to a covert

**OPERATION X HAS
ALL THE BELLS
AND WHISTLES
ONE WANTS AS
A PATRIOTIC,
RETROSPECTIVELY
WAR-THIRSTY
FOLLOWER OF
MILITARY HISTORY**

training camp on a mosquito-infested river bank at Plassey/ Polashi in central West Bengal in a sweltering May.

Over the next few months, Indian navy personnel train the eight submariners and other Bangla volunteers to become underwater saboteurs. By mid-August, these trainees infiltrate East Pakistan from Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and West Bengal to launch attacks against Pakistani shipping and dock facilities. The attacks involve floating downriver to the targets at night, diving underwater, finding the hull of the ship and attaching limpet mines to it in complete darkness, and then swimming away quickly without being spotted by the spotlights and machine guns. From August till end-November, when hostilities ramp up into proper war, the naval commandos of the Mukti Bahini inflict serious damage to Pakistani shipping, impeding everything from international shipping and water-based supply routes to troop movement across the vast riverine terrain.

Operation X is written in a narrative style which avoids any melodramatic overstating of the huge courage and dedication of the men it describes. The book moves from telling detail and anecdote to giving us the larger picture of the tectonic manoeuvres taking place over the best part of 1971. Those of us old enough to have proper memories of that year will remember war signalling its arrival for months. We knew of the mass murders and rape being carried out by the Pakistani army; and about some of the diplomatic manoeuvres being conducted internationally; some would have been witness to the refugees pouring into the camps; we also knew of the exploits of the Mukti Bahini overground. Reading *Operation X* changes the way one looks back at that time, whether it is the hoardings for the prophylactic Nirodh and the limited uses we imagined for the product, or the different kinds of meticulousness, sacrifice and craziness that went into the business of winning what, ultimately, was never a short war. ■

The writer is a filmmaker and the author of The Last Jet-Engine Laugh



Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

GLASSHOUSE

BANDIT PRINCESSES?

For all his depredations, notorious forest brigand **Veerappan**, gunned down in a police encounter in 2004, had big dreams for his children. He wanted Vidya Rani and Prabha Rani to become either IAS officers or doctors. But fate seems to have other plans. With the Tamil Nadu election due next year, political parties are making a beeline for the sisters. BJP leader Muralidhar Rao inducted older daughter Vidya, 30, into the party at an event held recently in Krishnagiri district. Younger daughter Prabha, 27, is reportedly being wooed by the DMK.

PANKAJ TIWARI



BIG BORE

Union Minister of State Anurag Thakur has competition. Karnataka's agriculture minister **B.C. Patil**, who recently joined the ruling BJP, wants Prime Minister Narendra Modi to draft a new law for shoot-at-sight orders for anyone raising pro-Pakistan slogans. Patil, a veteran cop, was a Kannada film star before turning full-time politician.



Ruling the Roost

When it comes to Brand MP, Madhya Pradesh chief minister **Kamal Nath** misses no opportunity to promote its cause. So, not only did he manage to persuade the International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA) to host their first award function in Bhopal and Indore next month, he is also considering a request by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in tribal-dominated Jhabua to include the prized black 'Kadakhnath' chicken in the IIFA guest menu. Fowl means or fare?

—Sandeep Unnithan with Anshuman Tiwari, Rahul Noronha, Aravind Gowda and Amarnath K. Menon



Tops Crunchy Breakfast



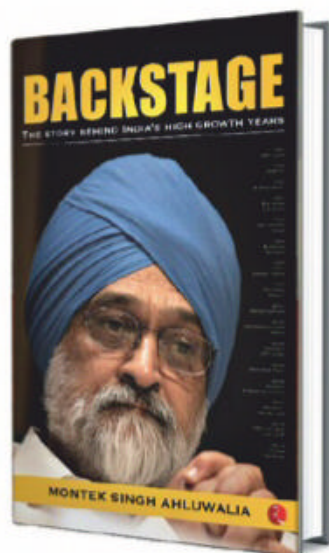
AN INSIDE VIEW OF HISTORY

By Ashok V. Desai

Two lions have roamed for decades in the corridors of power, both born in what later became Pakistan. One rose from being chief economic advisor to the finance ministry to prime minister. The other rose from being an economic advisor to the vice-chairman of the Planning Commission. Both celebrities have hitherto been unfailingly reticent. The first one, when he was prime minister, read out speeches full of thousands of meaningless words of propriety churned out by assistants. The second one circulated an incognito tract within the government in 1990, proposing a radical departure from its pseudo-socialism. A roving journalist then, I had speculated that it was written by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and called it the M document. He has now confessed that he was the author.

Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh went to Malaysia in 1990, and was impressed by its development. He asked Ahluwalia to tell him why it had done so well, which he did in that document. Earlier, Ahluwalia had accompanied Rajiv Gandhi on an official visit to France, where François Mitterrand, the French prime minister, held a party in their honour in Eiffel Tower. They had taken a baby elephant with them as a present; since she had not been handed over, they took her along to the party, where she happily munched on bananas.

Backstage: The Story behind India's High Growth Years by Ahluwalia is significant, not so much for the admissions and revelations but as a record—it tells the story (except for my role) of India's transformation from a flailing economy to a respectable racehorse. India had its last payments crisis in 1988-91. Finance minister Yashwant Sinha exhausted three tranches of loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), without fulfilling its conditionalities (he says that the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi, which supported the Janata Dal government, did not let him). When Narasimha Rao became prime minister, the IMF refused to lend any more unless he appointed a finance minister whose word it could



BACKSTAGE
The Story behind India's
High Growth Years
by Montek Singh Ahluwalia
RUPA
₹595; 464 pages

The book is significant, not for its revelations but as a record—it tells the story of India's transformation from a flailing economy to a respectable racehorse

trust. It trusted I.G. Patel, who had retired to Baroda after leaving the directorship of the London School of Economics; but he refused to return to Delhi. So Manmohan Singh became finance minister. I had written much about what was wrong with our policies and how to set the economy free. He called me and said, "You have had enough of a good time; it is time for you to serve your country!" Deepak Nayyar resigned as chief economic advisor, I moved into his seat, and helped Manmohan Singh design and implement crucial reforms. But then he brought in Ahluwalia, who made himself insufferable to me. So I resigned.

Ahluwalia has written a hundred pages on his stint in the finance ministry, and another hundred on Manmohan Singh's decade-long term as prime minister. He lists the principal tax reforms of the 1992-93 budget: reduction in personal income tax slabs from four to three, abolishing wealth tax on financial assets, reducing maximum customs duty on capital goods from 80 per cent to 55 per cent and on the rest from 150 per cent to 110 per cent. Wealth tax has not reappeared; on the other three measures, the present government has reversed direction.

An inexperienced set of economic policymakers is leading the country back into the pre-1991 era; they may have a long reign in which to ruin the economy, since there is no political competition.

The huge exchange reserves rule out a payments crisis and the economy is so depressed that inflation is not on the cards. The economy has collapsed under their stewardship; they have no idea how to revive it and do not know that they do not. But Ahluwalia is not one to give up; he has written an epilogue of advice on how to rescue it.

Ahluwalia's book is an important addition to the literature on India's recent economic history. He writes well. Manmohan Singh has writer's block. From Gah to Raisina, he has lived an eventful life which he will not relate himself. His biography should be Montek's next document. ■

Ashok V. Desai is a former chief economic advisor



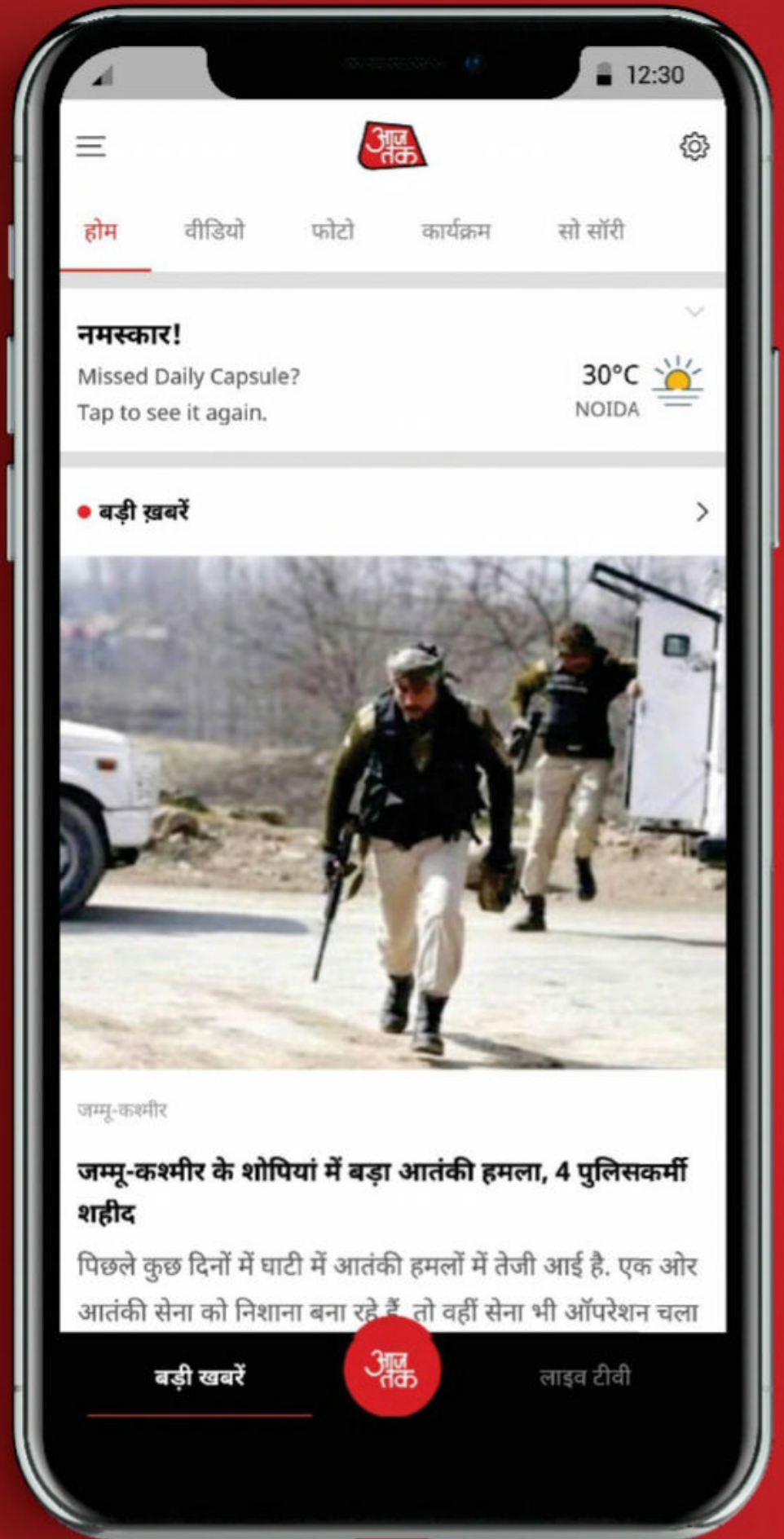
देश का नं. 1 हिंदी न्यूज़ ऐप

जुड़े रहिए हर खबर से,
कहीं भी, कभी भी

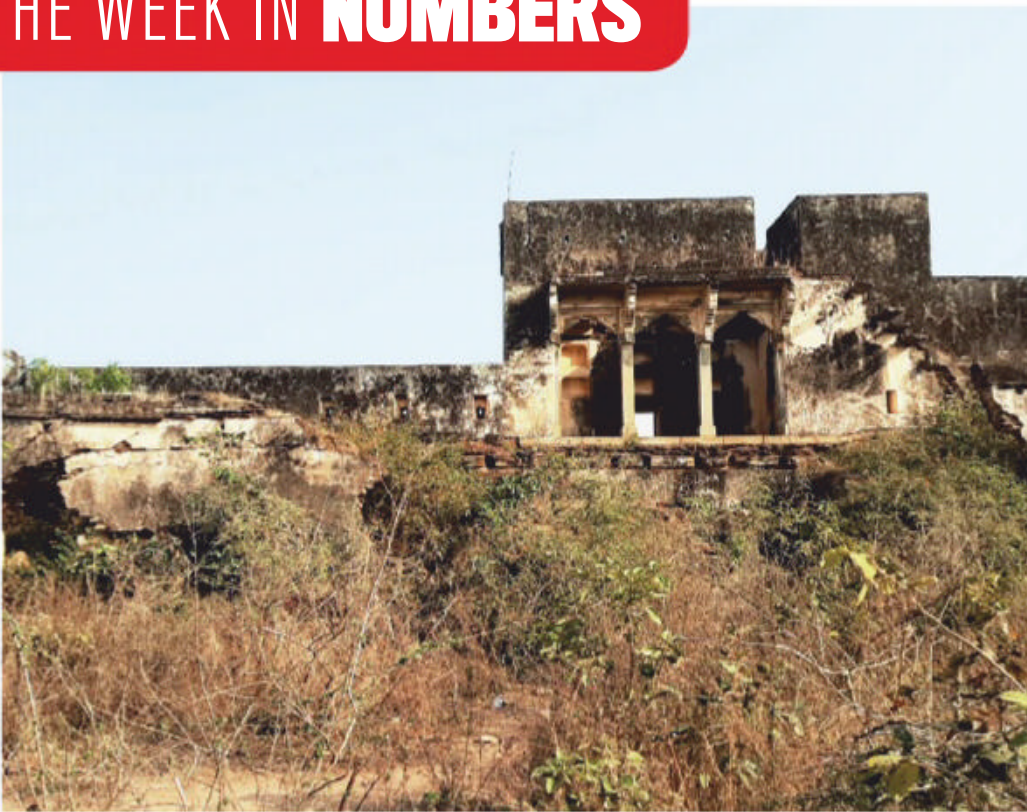
अभी डाउनलोड करें

aajtak.in/app

उपलब्ध है



THE WEEK IN NUMBERS



IANIS

3,350

TONNES

of gold were believed to have been discovered in **Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh**, sending much of India's mainstream press into a tizzy, prompting a Union minister to tweet in triumph, and causing some to congratulate the state's chief minister, Yogi Adityanath. A current RBI director even declared India would control the gold market. It took a Geological Survey of India statement to dampen the fervour. The 'discovery' was made about two decades ago that some 52,806.25 tonnes of ore in the area would yield about 160, not 3.35 million, kilos of gold

SCOTT HEINS/ GETTY IMAGES



26 HOURS

of deliberations over five days for a jury of seven men and five women in New York to find film producer **Harvey Weinstein** guilty on two counts—criminal sexual assault in the first degree and rape in the third degree. He was acquitted of three other charges, including those which could have left him facing a life sentence. As it is, the 67-year-old will likely spend anywhere from 5 to 25 years in prison—and that's not counting any jail time arising from a guilty verdict in his forthcoming trial in Los Angeles



HAIDAR HAMDANI/ GETTY IMAGES

16

CORONAVIRUS DEATHS

reported in Iran as of February 25. The government denied reports that up to 50 people had died in a single city. Iran's deputy health minister has also reportedly contracted the virus. Iran's death toll is ahead of South Korea's, with the latter reporting 11 deaths from 977 cases and the former 16 from just 95 cases

3

species threatened with extinction were nominated by India for special protection under a United Nations conservation treaty: the **Asian elephant**, the **great Indian bustard**, and the **Bengal florican**. India's proposal had cleared the first hurdle at the time of writing but had not yet been officially accepted



SHEKHAR GHOSH

82,308



Subscriptions added in December 2019 by **Reliance Jio**, reported the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India on February 25. (By way of comparison, the company added 9.1 million subscribers in October and 5.6 million in November.) In the same month, BSNL reportedly gained 427,089 customers, Bharti Airtel lost 11,050, while Idea Vodafone lost a scarcely credible 3.64 million

89 MILLION

Indian women are employed, out of 432 million working-age women (15 to 64), estimates a report from consulting firm Bain & Company, in collaboration with Google, released on February 18. The report adds that 19 million women are unemployed but seeking work, while 324 million women are out of the labour force



NewsTak.in

AN EXCLUSIVE
MOBILE NEWS CHANNEL



You Tube /newstak

f /newstakofficial

t /newstakofficial

STATES



ANI

BIHAR BOY

Prashant Kishor at the Feb. 18 press conference in Patna

BIHAR

THE SHAPE OF A NEW OPPOSITION

PK's recent manoeuvres hint at early moves to reconfigure the Opposition

By Amitabh Srivastava



At his first press conference in Patna on February 18, election strategist Prashant Kishor said he was in the state to get the '*Baat Bihar Ki*' initiative off the ground, the centrepiece of his pitch being a developmental push to secure for Bihar a place "among the top 10 states". PK insisted he was not there "to form alliances or stitch election strategies", but just two days later, he was spotted in a Delhi hotel, meeting with three leaders of the state's erstwhile 'grand alliance'—former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha of the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP), ex-chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi of the Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular (HAM-S) and Mukesh Sahni of the Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP).

Although the three leaders have not said so on record, and PK maintained his development narrative even after the Delhi meeting, word is that the confabulations were about alliance strategies for the upcoming Bihar election. The three parties are still unproven electorally, but they have some claim to vote banks—Kushwaha

has influence among the Kushwahas or Koeris, a dominant OBC community that makes up 8 per cent of the population in Bihar; Manjhi feels the 4 per cent Musahar vote is his own; and Sahni counts on the support of the EBC Mallah boatmen.

But why were the three meeting without a representative of the biggest opposition player, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) around? The idea, political observers say, is to pressure the RJD to fall in line. “A Nitish Kumar-led NDA will find it much easier if someone from the RJD first family [read: Tejashwi Yadav] were projected as the CM candidate,” said a leader present at the Delhi meeting, on condition of anonymity. “Note the JD(U) pitch: ‘our 15 years versus the RJD’s 15 years’. Nitish wins that perception battle hands down.”

The idea, then, is to deny the NDA that easy target. “The RJD is the NDA’s favourite punching bag; we want to change that narrative. If it works, the NDA won’t find it so easy to take us on,” he says.

The argument has some merit. The RJD with its traditional M-Y voter base of Muslims (16.5 per cent) and Yadavs (14 per cent) is no doubt formidable, but in a rainbow coalition, it is also a vulnerability, as other potential support groups—such as the Kushwahas, Dalits and Mallahs—balk at the prospect of going with a formation where the M-Y bloc is dominant. The M-Y vote bank can be decisive in a triangular or four-cornered contest, but in a bipolar contest, it is just not enough to swing the election.

Even before meeting Kishor in Delhi, the three opposition leaders were unconvinced about Tejashwi’s leadership. Lalu Prasad Yadav’s chosen heir seems to have made up his mind against letting the three parties have a larger share than he thinks is legitimate. “The RJD will fight at least 150 of the 243 assembly seats in Bihar,” says a senior RJD leader. “The Congress will get a larger share of the remaining seats. The other allies will get what is left. They can take it or leave it.”

The aggressive posturing by the three leaders has triggered much speculation in Bihar’s political circles. Is there space for a new opposition in the state? Bihar has often been described as a state of three principal parties—the JD(U), BJP and RJD. The Congress and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) are fourth and fifth in this pecking order, and perform well only when they back the winning horse. By themselves, the three first movers lack the necessary ballast, but they might count on PK, the ace election strategist, to help stitch a new-look winning combination. The 2019 Lok Sabha poll numbers suggest the three parties, along with Congress, can make a dent. The Congress bagged 7.8 per cent of the vote, RLSP (3.7 per cent), HAM-S (2.4 per cent) and VIP 1.7 per cent. Their combined 15.6 per cent vote plus the RJD’s 15.7 per cent add up to a sizeable vote share. But a reconstituted opposition is far from a done deal, and as Bihar Congress president M.M. Jha told INDIA TODAY on June 24, the actual seat distribution would “involve many practicalities”. ■

THE EARLY MOVES TO RECONFIGURE AN OPPOSITION ALLIANCE MAY FALTER STILL



PANKAJ TIWARI

▲ **IN THE RUNNING**

Digvijaya Singh (right) and Jyotiraditya Scindia

MADHYA PRADESH

The Upper Hand

The state Rajya Sabha byelections could see a nervy contest for the third seat

By **Rahul Noronha**

Hectic lobbying has begun for nominations to the three upcoming vacancies in the Rajya Sabha (RS) from Madhya Pradesh in April. Given their current numbers in the Vidhan Sabha, both the ruling Congress and the BJP will win one seat each. The third seat is likely to see a contest. The Congress has a better chance of bagging it, but the BJP under Amit Shah has made it a norm to not give up in close contests.

Currently, of the 11 RS seats from the state, the BJP has eight and the Congress three. Each candidate needs 58 votes to win a seat. At present, the Congress has 114 MLAs, the BJP 107, the SP one, the BSP two while four seats are with Independents. For the third seat, the Congress needs two more votes, which it expects will come from the ranks of the Independents, BSP and SP legislators that support the Kamal Nath government. The BJP needs nine more votes than the 107 it has to

win the third seat. Party sources say a second candidate will be fielded, in the hope that infighting in the Congress will lead to cross-voting in its favour.

The names of Congress probables include Digvijaya Singh (renominated), Jyotiraditya Scindia and a few other biggies. There is even a demand to give general secretary Priyanka Gandhi a nomination from MP. In all likelihood, though, Scindia will be the second candidate to ensure that his flock of upset MLAs—they have been demanding the PCC chief’s post for him—stay with the party.

As for the BJP candidates, the sure seat is likely to go to general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya or ex-minister J.S. Pawaiya. For the third seat, state BJP spokesperson Rahul Kothari says they are confident of “securing adequate numbers given that other parties and Independents may decide to support our candidates”, suggesting that this April, cross-voting is a real possibility. ■

RAJASTHAN

TAXING TIMES

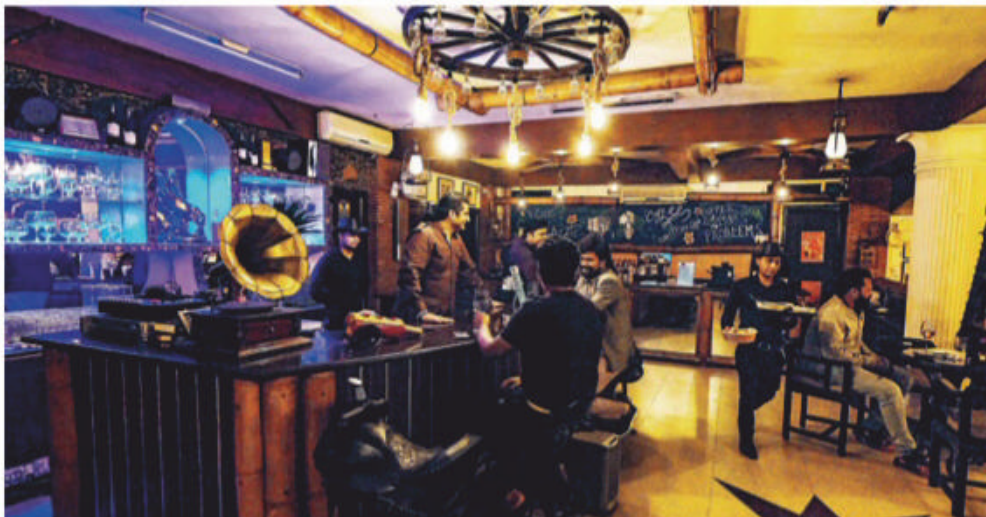
The state's new excise policy may deliver a bruising blow to tourism

By Rohit Parihar

Rajasthan's new excise policy for 2020-21, which has proposed a massive hike in liquor licence fees, has led to a lot of glum faces in the state's hotel and tourism industry. The Ashok Gehlot government is looking at it as a means to tide over the massive shortfall in the state's share in central taxes (estimated to go down by Rs 10,072 crore to Rs 36,039 crore), but along with the 20 per cent hike in liquor prices last year,

inter-state smuggling are set to rise, whereas sellers will stop issuing bills, which will, in turn, hit VAT collections, and hotels selling liquor without licence will mushroom.

Other peeves of the tourism industry include the lack of permits to sell draught beer and the 30-plus clearances to sell hard liquor at restaurants. Rajasthan, which shares borders with Punjab, Haryana, UP, MP and Gujarat, has also seen a spurt in liquor smuggling in the past



PURUSHOTTAM DIWAKAR

ON THE ROCKS A resto-bar in Jaipur

the hospitality industry says the new policy will lead to another washout tourist season.

On another level, the new excise policy also comes with targets (Rs 12,500 crore for 2020-21, up Rs 1,500 crore year on year) and penalties (for failing quarterly sales targets). Liquor vend owners gave a call for a boycott of the open e-auction, forcing the government to issue advertisements on February 24 to encourage bidding. Industry insiders say with liquor in Rajasthan now 40 per cent costlier than, say, neighbouring Haryana, bootlegging and

decade. In some areas, bootleggers now deliver liquor at home at half the rate charged at the vends.

Excise officials say they have made preparations to ensure that only bottles bearing barcodes are sold through PoS machines. This, they say, will make it tough for sellers to evade taxes or indulge in selling smuggled liquor. But stakeholders feel the new excise policy unfairly targets legal licence holders and insist that had the government engaged with them, they could have offered alternative suggestions to mobilise more revenues. ■



TAMIL NADU



CHENNAI

The Mother of All Schemes

A slew of women and child welfare schemes keeps alive memories of a matriarch

By Amarnath K. Menon

INDEX

A ROYAL RUN-DOWN

The Rajasthan government, in its 2020-21 budget, has earmarked Rs 4 crore to renovate four heritage properties of the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC)—in Alwar, Sawai Madhopur, Nathdwara and Pushkar. This, however, looks like a drop in the ocean as the bankrupt RTDC, by one estimate, needs Rs 100 crore for revival. The RTDC's luxury trains, too, have gone off track. While the 'Royal Rajasthan on Wheels' has stopped operations, the 'Palace on Wheels' is no longer attracting tourists. Another state entity, the Rajasthan State Hotels Corporation Ltd (RSHCL), is in dire straits, with a part of its heritage property in Jaipur's Khasa Kothi being rented out to a university. Calls for disinvestment are growing, but will Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot bite the bullet?



JAISON G.

ALL FOR AMMA

Chief minister Palaniswami (right) with his deputy Panneerselvam

Ahead of the assembly election due in May next year, the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is doling out fistfuls of state largesse in the name of its late lamented leader J. Jayalalithaa. February 24 marked her 72nd birth anniversary, and it will henceforth be observed as Girl Child Protection Day in Tamil Nadu.

To mark the occasion, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced five schemes for girls living in state-run homes. When orphaned/abandoned girls turn 22, the government will deposit Rs 2 lakh in their bank accounts. For girls who face problems after leaving the homes, on turning 19, a special grant will be given to ensure their social and financial safety. It will include assistance for higher

education, skill development, job opportunities and self-employment. “The assistance will continue till they are 50,” says Palaniswami, who also raised the monthly grant to foster parents of adopted children from Rs 2,000 for three years to Rs 4,000 for five years.

Noting that the ‘*Ammathottil*’ (cradle baby) scheme, introduced by Jayalalithaa, had greatly reduced cases of female infanticide, he pointed to how the female sex ratio at birth had increased from 918 in 2014-15 to 936 in 2019. “District administrations that make efforts to better it will get medals from now on,” says Palaniswami. In the fifth scheme, wards of state-run homes who fulfil the employment eligibility criteria will be given preference in select categories of government jobs.

Earlier, in January, the state renamed two universities after Amma—Tamil Nadu Dr J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University and Tamil Nadu Dr J. Jayalalithaa Music and Fine Arts University. The idea of freely invoking the late chief minister’s name is obviously to cash in on her goodwill and to try and ensure the rank and file continue to rally behind Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam.

Presenting its last full-fledged budget

ahead of the polls, the AIADMK government made generous allocations to its flagship welfare schemes, including Rs 6,500 crore for food subsidy, and announced interest waivers for prompt repayment of crop loans. Seeking to give fresh impetus to the low-cost Amma *unavagams* (canteens), it announced that mobile units would be launched to take food to construction work sites.

Panneerselvam, who holds the finance portfolio, while allocating Rs 4,315 crore to the social security pension scheme, announced an addition of 173,000 new beneficiaries. The government also announced enhanced compensation under the Amma accident-cum-life insurance scheme for BPL families—Rs 2 lakh in case of a natural death of a breadwinner or a permanent disability caused by an accident and Rs 4 lakh in the case of accident deaths. Palaniswami also launched the Amma Youth Sports Scheme on January 13, providing Rs 121.2 crore to provide playground facilities and sports equipment to village and town

panchayats to enthuse the rural youth. With all the Amma schemes for disadvantaged groups, the AIADMK will be hoping it has done enough to protect its vote bank next year. ■

Five Amma schemes were launched for girls in state-run homes

₹171 CRORE

Accumulated losses of RTDC and RSHCL

29

Operational properties (hotels, motels, restaurants and heritage complexes) of RTDC and RSHCL, out of the total **76**



Illustration by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

21.9%

Occupancy rate of RTDC hotels in 2017-18, down from **30.7%** in 2014-15

₹16 CRORE

Amount the Rajasthan government paid RTDC in 2019 to clear a part of employees’ superannuation benefits

804

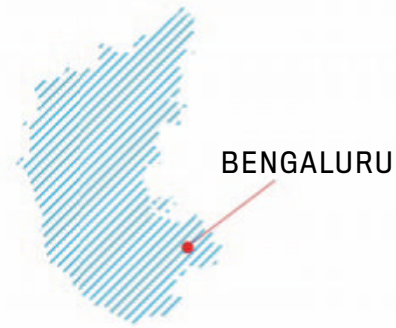
RTDC and RSHCL employees being accommodated, on deputation, in other state departments

₹8 CRORE

Decline in profits of RTDC’s ‘Palace on Wheels’ train, from **Rs 35.7 crore** in 2014-15 to **Rs 27.6 crore** in 2017-18

KARNATAKA

The Knives Are out for Yediyurappa



After repeatedly spurning the ministerial ambitions of party stalwarts and seeking to elevate his son, the chief minister faces serious dissent

By Aravind Gowda

A campaign is building up against Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa in the ruling BJP in Karnataka. This follows the denial of ministerial berths to several party old-timers in the February 6 cabinet expansion and the chief minister's reported bid to secure an influential post for his son B.Y. Vijayendra in the party organisation.

For over a week now, two unsigned letters (in English and Kannada) have been circulating in BJP circles, citing Yediyurappa's age and 'failing health' and his attempts to empower his son, and demanding the appointment of a new chief minister. Yediyurappa, who turns 77 on February 27, has drawn the ire of senior BJP leaders, such as Umesh Katti, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, Murugesh Nirani, M.P. Renukacharya, Siddu Savadi, Sanganna Karadi and Anand Mamani, as they were left out of the cabinet. Katti and Nirani met BJP president J.P. Nadda in the first week of February to lodge a complaint.

The 'rebellion' against Yediyurappa has been launched by Lingayat leaders in the state BJP. The Lingayats, the sect to which Yediyurappa also belongs, make up about 17 per cent of Karnataka's population and have been BJP loyalists. The infighting began when BSY, beholden to the 10 MLAs who had defected from the Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) last year and helped the BJP come to power in Karnataka, was forced to accommodate them in government.

There is also disgruntlement over efforts to prop up Vijayendra, with a senior BJP leader saying that dynastic rule will not be tolerated in the party.



^ **CORNERED** B.S. Yediyurappa at an event in Belagavi, Jan. 2020

"With age catching up, Yediyurappa wants to cement positions for his sons in the BJP," says N. Prakash, a Mysuru-based political analyst. "The induction of the 10 disqualified MLAs had already enraged party veterans. Yediyurappa's supporters are ganging up on him."

The appointment of the 10 MLAs itself was marked with drama, and Yediyurappa had to change the portfolios of

six of them within a day. Katti has gone public with his attack on Yediyurappa. "I have been a minister for 13 years.... With God's grace, my aim now is to occupy the chief minister's post," he said.

The miffed ministerial aspirants have lately been joined by more 'rebels'—Mohan Limbikayi, S. Munen-koppa, C.M. Nimbannavar, Aravind Bellad, Mahesh Kumtahalli and Shashikant Akkappa Naik. "We will intensify our fight in March after the chief minister's birthday celebrations," said one of them.

While Yediyurappa's followers have dismissed the letters as mischief by a few irate legislators, Prakash cautions: "The issue will affect the image of the government, which has hardly anything to show in terms of performance. Yediyurappa should also downplay his son's role in the BJP." ■

**THE REBELS TOO
ARE FROM THE
LINGAYAT SECT, WHO
ARE BJP LOYALISTS
AND FORM 17% OF THE
POPULATION**



AstroTak.in

AN EXCLUSIVE
ASTROLOGY MOBILE
CHANNEL



You Tube /astrotakofficial

f /astrotakofficial

t /astro_tak



SANJEEV KUMAR/GETTY IMAGES

^ **WHAT'S ON HIS MIND?**
Navjot Singh Sidhu

PUNJAB

SIDHU IS BACK IN DEMAND

After winning Delhi, AAP is now courting the charismatic motormouth to revive its Punjab unit

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

The Aam Aadmi Party's spectacular victory in the Delhi assembly election has infused new life into its fractured party organisation in Punjab. Not only is it now looking to win back rebels but also wooing cricketer-turned-Congress politician Navjot Singh Sidhu.

With assembly elections in Punjab just two years away, the challenge for AAP is to reinvigorate the faction-ridden state unit and overcome the trust deficit with the people. Sidhu, state AAP leaders feel, can not only be the rallying force but also rope in smaller political entities, such as Simarjit Singh Bains's Lok Insaaf Party.

Sidhu, though, is keeping his cards close to his chest, and did not respond to messages and calls from INDIA TODAY. The Congress MLA from Amritsar East resigned from the Punjab cabinet last July amid heightened tensions with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh. He has been keeping a low profile ever since. In November 2019, Sidhu attended the inauguration of the Kar-

tarpur Corridor, but not as part of the Punjab government delegation. He did not campaign for the Congress in the Delhi election either.

AAP leaders in Punjab claim Prashant Kishor, who strategised their party's Delhi campaign, had a word with Sidhu. If negotiations do make any headway, a major pain point will be Sidhu's insistence on being projected as the chief ministerial candidate and being given a free hand to pick candidates. AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal will also have to factor in Sidhu's penchant for courting controversies. There's high recall of his controversial trip to Pakistan for prime minister Imran Khan's swearing-in ceremony in 2018, when he was seen hugging Paki-

**POSSIBLE HURDLE:
HIS INSISTENCE ON
BEING PROJECTED
AS THE CM FACE**

stan army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, and his unsavoury remarks on India's air strikes in Balakot in 2019.

A key event that could shape the course of the Punjab assembly poll will be the elections to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) next year. While the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has controlled the SGPC for over three decades, the party lost a section of the *panthic* vote for its unconvincing stand on incidents of desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib in 2015.

AAP has attracted several Sikh politicians with an SGPC background in the past six years. Rebel Akali factions, including SAD (Taksali), are eyeing an alliance with these leaders for the SGPC poll. A defeat for the SAD in the SGPC will indirectly benefit AAP. Sidhu has clear feelers from SAD (Taksali). "Sidhu is welcome to join us, but his being incommunicado does not help," says Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, the Rajya Sabha MP who has joined forces with the outfit.

This is not AAP's first attempt to woo Sidhu. After quitting the BJP in 2016, Sidhu had held inconclusive parleys with Kejriwal. On Kishor's suggestion, he met Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka and joined the Congress ahead of the 2017 Punjab election.

Outside Delhi, AAP has presence only in the Punjab assembly. The party's lone Lok Sabha MP, Bhagwant Singh Mann, represents Sangrur in the state. In the previous assembly poll, AAP captured 20 seats and a 23.8 per cent vote share. Subsequently, MLAs Sukhpal Singh Khaira and Baldev Singh quit to launch the Punjab Ekta Dal while Amarjit Singh Sandhoa and Nazar Singh Manshahia joined the Congress. Advocate-turned-politician H.S. Phoolka resigned from his seat and MLA Kanwar Sandhu remains suspended from the party. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, AAP polled 7.6 per cent votes in Punjab and 12 of its candidates lost their deposits. Should he join, Sidhu could be the booster shot AAP needs in Punjab. But, for now, he is keeping everyone guessing. ■



STAY UPDATED

INDIA
TODAY

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON



NAMASTE
TRUMP
COVER STORY

Coming U



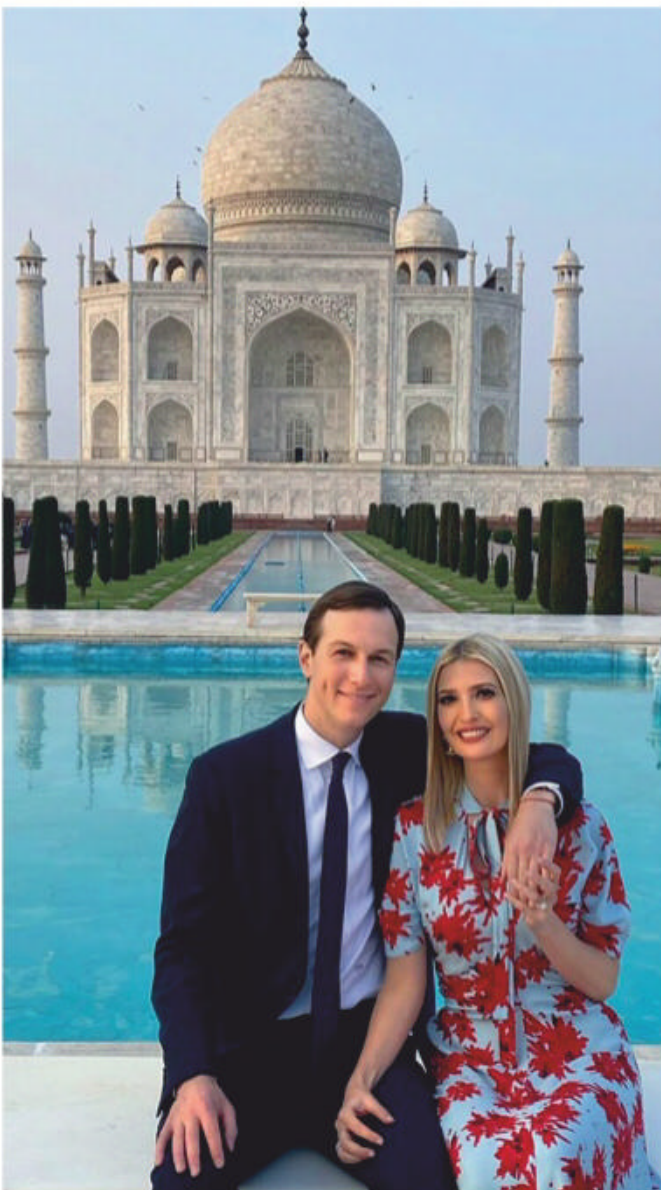
Up Trumps

The US president's state visit was a triumph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personalised, pragmatic and multi-aligned foreign policy

BY RAJ CHENGAPPA



ROUSING WELCOME
PM Narendra Modi with
US president Donald
Trump and his wife
Melania at the welcome
rally at Motera in
Ahmedabad on Feb. 24



IAN S

AFP



TURNING THE WHEEL

(Clockwise from above) Trump and the US First Lady try their hand at the Gandhi 'charkha' in Sabarmati Ashram; POTUS pays his respects at Rajghat; Melania Trump gets a *tika* from one of the students at Sarvodaya Co-ed Senior Secondary School in Delhi where she participated in a 'happiness class'; Ivanka Trump at the Taj Mahal with husband Jared Kushner

NAMASTE TRUMP COVER STORY

IF

US president Donald Trump believes he owes his success to always thinking big, Prime Minister Narendra Modi does it by thinking even bigger. When Trump, who represents the world's most powerful democracy, and Modi, who heads its most populous one, hugged each other at the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad at a public event telecast live, the roar of the 130,000 people assembled there was heard not just in India, but also in the US and across the world. The meticulously choreographed welcome organised for Trump on his first state visit to India sent out a message that reams of official joint statements would never have been able to convey as effectively—that India and the US had firmly cemented what they now termed as a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

The positive outcome of Trump's two-day official visit was, in many ways, a triumph of Modi's unique, highly personalised style of diplomacy and the pragmatic and decisive foreign policy he has advocated to secure India's position as "the standard-bearer of the South", as foreign minister S. Jaishankar put it. Modi has honed that quest into an art form since he became prime minister in 2014 and continues to do so in his second term. Trump not only acknowledged Modi as "an exceptional and terrific leader and a true friend", but also said that "India is going to be a tremendous player—it already is—now. You can play an important leadership role in shaping a better future as you take on greater responsibility for

solving problems and promoting peace throughout this incredible region".

Dealing with Trump remains India's toughest ask and, as the trip showed, Modi navigated the India-US relationship well. In office since January 2017, Trump has proven to be the world's Disruptor-in-Chief, shaking the foundations of America's transatlantic and transpacific partnerships, showing scant respect for global institutions and agreements, downsizing the US's role as the world's policeman to the discomfort of its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and waging a trade war against China. World leaders, including those from India, have struggled to deal with the mercurial American president, whose behaviour is unpredictable,

THE MEET AND GREET PM

Prime Minister Modi has set a blistering pace in his foreign policy initiatives



REUTERS



whose style of leadership is blunt, bullying and boastful, whose single-minded focus is to correct what he thinks are historical trade imbalances and who has a fetish for always coming out the winner.

With India, Trump has blown hot and cold. At their first bilateral meet in the White House in June 2017, he greeted Modi with warmth and respect. Soon after, however, he took India to task for its trade imbalances with the US, calling it “the tariff king of the world”. This, despite India’s trade imbalance with the US being only \$30 billion then as compared to the mammoth \$400 billion deficit with China that America was fighting to bring down. This led to a peculiar duality in Indo-US relations. While the two countries grew strategically closer on issues of defence and security, the barriers on the trade front began to strengthen. To Modi’s credit, he refused to be intimidated by Trump’s fulminations against India’s trade policy and stood his ground, something the US president acknowledged in his speech in Ahmedabad. “Everybody loves him,” he said, “but I will tell you this: he is very tough.” When Trump raised tariffs on steel and aluminium goods imported from India and withdrew India’s preferential trade status under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) that permitted duty-free imports of 3,000 goods of Indian manufacturers in June 2019, Modi retaliat-

IN A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM THE NEHRUVIAN ERA, THE MODI GOVT HAS REPLACED THE POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT IN FAVOUR OF MULTI-ALIGNMENT. RATHER THAN ABSTAINING ON KEY GLOBAL ISSUES, INDIA WOULD USE ITS PLACE AT THE HIGH TABLE TO SHAPE EVENTS



NO STONE UNTURNED

(From extreme left) French president Emmanuel Macron and PM Modi arrive by boat at a ghat in Varanasi, Mar. 2018; Modi with Chinese president Xi Jinping at Arjuna's Penance in Mamallapuram, Oct. 2019; with Russian president Vladimir Putin at the 'Zvezda' ship-building plant in Vladivostok, Russia, Sept. 2019; with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, visiting the 'Sidi Saiyyid Ni Jaali' in Ahmedabad, Sept. 2017



ed by raising tariffs on 28 categories of goods that the US was exporting.

Meanwhile, Trump's radical worldview unleashed a profound transformation in the structure of the existing international order. India, along with others, was confronted with what Shashi Tharoor and Samir Saran call in the title of their new book, 'The New World Disorder'. Globalisation went into retreat as did the liberal world order, and a muscular and insular form of nationalism began to see a dramatic resurgence. Trump not only undermined the institutional frameworks of the existing world order, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, he also preferred to act unilaterally on major issues, much to the angst of Europe, Japan and other US allies. Trump's actions saw tensions rise in Iran and North Korea. Europe was busy grappling with the fallout of Brexit. The muscular rise of China under Xi Jinping, the return of the Russian empire under Vladimir Putin, the revival of Japan under Shinzo Abe, the belligerence of Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, not to mention alpha leaders in other countries, set up other opportunities and challenges for India. Closer home, there was clear assertion of the military establishment over the civilian government in Pakistan, characterised by the complete rout of Nawaz Sharif.

It was in this turbulent world that Modi, aided by Jaishankar, who was then his foreign secretary, made a hard-headed assessment of the geopolitical situation which had gradually been moving from a unipolar world dominated by the US to a multipolar one. Modi lever-

Dilbahar's

Since 1964

**YUMMY
DIGESTIVES**



Yeh Zindagi....
Thodi Khatti....
Thodi Meethi....



**APLAM
CHAPLAM**

- ANARDANA GOLI
- HEENG KI TIKIYA
- JEERA GOLI
- PODINAWATI
- IMLI LADDU



For Trade Enquiries Contact

91191 07777 or

Email: sales@dilbahars.com

www.dilbahars.com

INDIA'S BIG OUTREACH

From security and infrastructure development aid to improving international connectivity, India's stature on the world stage has been growing

1. NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTIVITY

Since Narendra Modi first took over as prime minister in 2014, his government has invested heavily in connectivity projects in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Myanmar, building roads, railways, ports and telecom networks



AFGHANISTAN

➤ Operationalised Chabahar port in Iran, now used to ferry aid to Afghanistan; also an air freight corridor with the country. Completed the Afghan parliament building in Kabul in 2015



NEPAL

➤ Provided development financing for 6 cross-border rail links; operationalising 4 integrated check-posts, developing inland waterways and building road links



MYANMAR

➤ Investments in two trilateral high-way projects and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. Inland water terminals in Sittwe and Paletwa completed



SRI LANKA

➤ Upgraded Colombo-Matara railway line (\$99.77 mn Line of Credit); laid rail tracks in the Omanthai-Pallai, Madhu Church-Tallaimannar and Medawachchiya-Madhu sectors (\$416.38 mn LoC); built Pallai-Kankesanthurai rail line (\$382.37 mn LoC)



BANGLADESH

➤ Restored 4 of 6 pre-1965 cross-border rail links, to complete remaining this year; another three, including Agartala-Akhaura, to come onstream by 2021. Air connectivity to double to 120 flights a week by year-end. Dredging and deepening of over 450 km of riverways; development of new inland river terminal and infrastructure in Daikhowa



Total projects (since 2014)

142

Projects completed

52

2. WOOING THE DIASPORA

➤ Introduced OCI card in 2005; 3.5 mn cards issued since. Jurisdictional restrictions in submission of OCI applications removed in 2019, permitting Indian-origin US citizens to submit applications at Indian embassy in Washington or any other consulate

➤ Videsh Sampark: Five state outreach events organised in partnership with the governments of Telangana (2017), Maharashtra (2017), Kerala (2017), Gujarat (2018) and Madhya Pradesh (2018)

➤ First PIO Parliamentarians Conference held in January 2018 in New Delhi



GETTY IMAGES

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE • ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

3. OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

In the past five and a half years, India has been building infrastructure and capacity augmentation projects in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia

SPEEDING UP DELIVERY

97

Projects completed in **33 countries** between 2014 and 2019

245

Total projects in the neighbourhood (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives), of which 100 have been completed

REDISCOVERING AFRICA

➤ \$1 mn grant for **250 e-rickshaws to Senegal** in 2018

➤ \$178.13 mn **Upper Ruvu water treatment plant project in Tanzania** in 2016

➤ \$546 million for the 19-station, 26-km **light rail transit project** between Port Louis and Curepipe in Mauritius

➤ \$38 million **Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre in Niger** (in pix), completed in Dec. 2019. Built by an Indian company in just 14 months

➤ \$30 million



Supreme Court building in Mauritius, completed in Dec. 2019

➤ \$16.65 million **National Assembly complex of Ghana**, completed in 2014

112

Total new projects (since 2014) for 46 countries

4. PROVIDING NET SECURITY

India's role as a security provider has grown, from deploying defence capacities and ensuring freedom of navigation on the seas to humanitarian assistance

➤ Since May 2014, defence sector LoCs, ranging from \$20 million to \$600 million, have been offered to 11 countries. Defence projects concluded under grant assistance programmes include those in the Seychelles (for Dornier aircraft), the Maldives (helicopters), Mozambique (fast interceptor boats) and Afghanistan (Mi-24 helicopters)

GUARDING THE OCEAN

➤ Patrol boats have been provided to eight Indian Ocean region countries, with coastal radar systems provided to six. Inter-country training programmes have increased, with mobile training teams deputed to 11 countries, including Mauritius, Seychelles, Vietnam, Singapore and Sri Lanka

DISASTER RELIEF

India has emerged as a first responder of increasing frequency,

with demonstrated capacities. These include flood relief assistance (2017, Sri Lanka), earthquake relief (2018, Indonesia), cyclone relief (2018-19, Mozambique) and flood and landslide relief (2020, Madagascar)



RESCUING OUR CITIZENS

Several missions to evacuate nationals from danger in other countries have been conducted, most recently from Wuhan, China

aged the enormous heft India's rapid economic growth and the vast markets it provided along with the political stability his victory promised to build meaningful relations with a range of countries. Instead of abstaining on key international issues, India, he decided, would use its seat at the high table to shape events and, at times, even cast the deciding vote. If the new order was indeed to be multipolar, it needed to have India as one of the power centres. To do so, Modi was willing to bat on the front foot, and help India expand its space, options and stature on the international stage. Instead of being only non-aligned, India chose to be multi-aligned in the altered international landscape. The policy may have been a departure from the Nehruvian era but the zest with which India began engaging was reminiscent of that time.

So even while Modi supped with old friend Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok in September 2019, within weeks, he was rubbing shoulders with Trump as they addressed a packed 'Howdy Modi' rally of Indian-Americans at Houston in Texas. He followed it by hosting Chinese president Xi Jinping at the beachside resort of Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu despite serious differences between the two countries. Simultaneously, India became an active participant in an alphabet soup of international trade groupings, including the Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN (Modi persuaded all its 10 leaders to come for the Republic Day parade in 2018); Russia-India-China or RIC; Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS); the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, who form the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation or BIMSTEC; and the newly formed Quadrilateral Initiative (QUAD) comprising India, Japan, Australia and the US. All of them required India to play the circus juggler, adroitly managing many balls in the air.

Even so, India was acutely aware that with the rise of China, maintaining good relations with the US was imperative. When differences over trade threatened to scupper relations with Trump, Modi and his foreign affairs team began to work on two fronts to woo him back. In a major move, Modi appointed Jaishankar, whom he

admired for his expertise and whom he trusted implicitly, as his foreign minister after he was re-elected prime minister in May 2019. Together, they worked on reiterating to Trump and his administration that despite their differences on the trade front, convergences on key world issues were extraordinarily important. The relationship was also key to dealing with China. The multi-billion dollar manifestation of Xi's vaulting ambition, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vast network of infrastructure projects, would ensure China's sphere of influence extended deep into the Indian Ocean Rim countries, to Central Asia and Europe as well as the Pacific nations.

To act as a countervailing force against an expansive China, the US, Japan, Australia and India formed the Quad. It was significant that the joint statement released after the Trump-Modi bilateral meet in June 2017 noted that 'India was seen as central to peace and stability in the region'. Without mentioning China by name, it also reiterated that the two countries remained committed to the freedom of navigation and international law (read South China Sea and its islands) and transparent development of infrastructure and the use of responsible debt financing practices (a clear reference to the debt trap many needy countries have fallen into by taking loans from the Chinese government to build infrastructure projects). The US then persuaded India to upgrade the Quad talks to foreign minister-level in September 2019.

Meanwhile, in a strategic restructuring of its armed forces command structure, the US renamed its US Pacific Command the US Indo-Pacific Command and enlarged its territorial jurisdiction not just from Hollywood to Bollywood but also to Indian Ocean Rim countries on the eastern shores of Africa. India had by then emerged as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, deploying its naval vessels to check piracy and contributing to keeping the vital sea trade links free and peaceful, apart from being involved in rescue operations.

To deepen ties, the US included India in its Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) category that permitted selling it hi-tech military and civilian equipment. India also signed the foundation agreements involving logistics and communications and is close to signing the final foundational military pact, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA),



“YOU HAVE A PRESIDENT WHO HAS NO COMPUNCTIONS TRAINING HIS GUNS ON FRIENDS OR ALLIES. MAKING HIM FEEL GOOD IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE. MODI PLAYED IT IMMACULATELY”

ASHLEY TELLIS, *Carnegie Endowment*

involving sharing of accurate satellite maps. On Trump's current visit, the US agreed to sell India 24 advanced naval helicopters for \$2.6 billion which will enhance maritime security capabilities, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. In fact, defence sales between India and the US, unimaginable two decades ago, have ballooned to \$21 billion in the past 10 years, making America one of India's largest suppliers of defence equipment.

On the vexatious issue of trade, the two sides had been deadlocked for years. While US negotiators felt that India was unwilling to make any meaningful concessions, the Indians complained that the Americans kept shifting the goal posts every time they came close to an agreement, asking for more. Just prior to the Trump visit, negotiations were raised to a ministerial level, with commerce minister Piyush Goyal directly dealing with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. With differences broadly over market access and tariffs, the two reached a mini-deal, but Trump put off the negotiations and pushed for a bigger deal, possibly a Free Trade Agreement, between the two countries. In a positive development, just before he boarded Air Force One to return to the US, Trump agreed that the two sides could announce a Phase 1 trade deal in a couple of weeks while working on a larger deal later.

Overall, Ashley J. Tellis, senior fellow, Carnegie Endow-



ANI

HAPPY TO BE HERE

President Trumps holds forth at the banquet dinner hosted for him by President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Feb. 25

ment for International Peace, and an expert on Indo-US relations, thinks that Modi has handled Trump well. “You are dealing with a president who has no compunctions about training his guns on friends and allies and so everyone is looking for strategies to disarm him. Making him feel good is the first line of defence. Prime Minister Modi has played this immaculately from the beginning. Even when there was quite a bit of resistance to Trump from the elite in India, Modi went out of his way to befriend and engage him. You have to give the prime minister credit for that, as it has really paid off.” On the outcome of Trump’s visit, Jaishankar told INDIA TODAY, “We are seeing the India-American relationship develop and mature and getting deeper.” (*See accompanying interview.*)

However, even as it upped its friendship with the US, India made it a point to maintain a modicum of stability in its relations with China. India, Jaishankar points out, has an extraordinarily complex relationship with China, given the boundary dispute, the trade imbalances in Beijing’s favour and its relationship with Pakistan. “Firstly,” he says, “let’s recognise that these are not issues that are amenable to easy and ready solutions. And the second issue is whether or not you want to deal more intensely and open-mindedly with China.” Modi and his team surmised early that it would be best to engage in high level communication with China so that troublesome issues could be discussed with candour

INDIA
TODAY
Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2020



Vote for India's
**BEST
ADVENTURE
DESTINATION**
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>

and directness. That saw frequent informal summits with Modi and Xi. T.C.A. Raghavan, currently the director-general of the Indian Council of World Affairs, a former high commissioner to Pakistan and a foreign policy expert, acknowledges that the process Modi has built to deal with the top level is rare in India-China relations. China usually preferred to deal with India at the prime minister-to-prime minister level, but to have direct diplomacy between the two principals is seen by experts as a healthy development.

But China's BRI poses a serious threat to India's influence in the neighbourhood. As part of the BRI, China is investing \$26 billion to develop a China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that cuts through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) and threatens to alter the status quo in sensitive border areas. Emboldened by China's support and US dependence on it to enable a settlement in Afghanistan for Trump to pull out his troops, Pakistan stepped up its cross-border terrorist support for Kashmir that saw a spate of terrorist attacks, including in Uri and Pulwama.

Modi, who had initially made efforts to build a relationship with Nawaz Sharif, decided to act decisively. After the Uri attack in September 2016, Modi ordered the Indian Army to strike at terror camps across the LoC. After the Pulwama attack in February 2019, he authorised the Indian Air Force to strike at a terrorist camp in Balakot, inside Pakistan territory. In doing so, he signalled that India would not be constrained by threats of a nuclear escalation. As Raghavan says, "In strategic terms, the strikes added an element of unpredictability to India's actions when it came to responding to terrorist attacks from across the border. [It sent the message] that we are not going to be totally restrained. Yes, there is a risk of escalation, but there is also the fact that you can be unpredictable and unexpected in your response. That is a good thing where Pakistan is concerned."

To curb Pakistan's influence in the Islamic street, Modi adopted what he termed a 'Think West' approach. It was essentially entering into strategic relationships with key countries in the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Modi visited these countries and worked hard to develop a personal rapport with their leaders. That paid off when his government decided to end the status quo in Jammu and Kashmir and withdraw its special status under Article

370 in August 2019. While Pakistan cried foul, it found it hard to get the Gulf countries to condemn India's actions and failed in its attempts to get the UN Security Council to intervene as the US and France blocked any effort by China to raise it formally at the forum.

However, China's rising investments in projects in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh remain a worry. Unable to match China's deep pockets, India has focused on projects that will help build connectivity in these countries. Since 2014, 142 projects have been commissioned and 52 completed. These range from upgrading the Colombo-Matara highway in Sri Lanka to restoring four of the six pre-1965 cross-border rail links with Bangladesh and providing six cross border rail links in Nepal. Elsewhere, in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia, India has commissioned

a total of 112 projects, including the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre in Niger in 2019, which Jaishankar inaugurated recently.

But even as India does well in its recent foreign policy initiatives, the prolonged slowdown of its economy and its inability to enter export-boosting trade agreements are pulling it down. And while we may have had very good reason to not sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in East Asia, India needs to figure out how to enhance trade relations and not fall back on protectionism, raising tariff barriers and becoming economically insular.

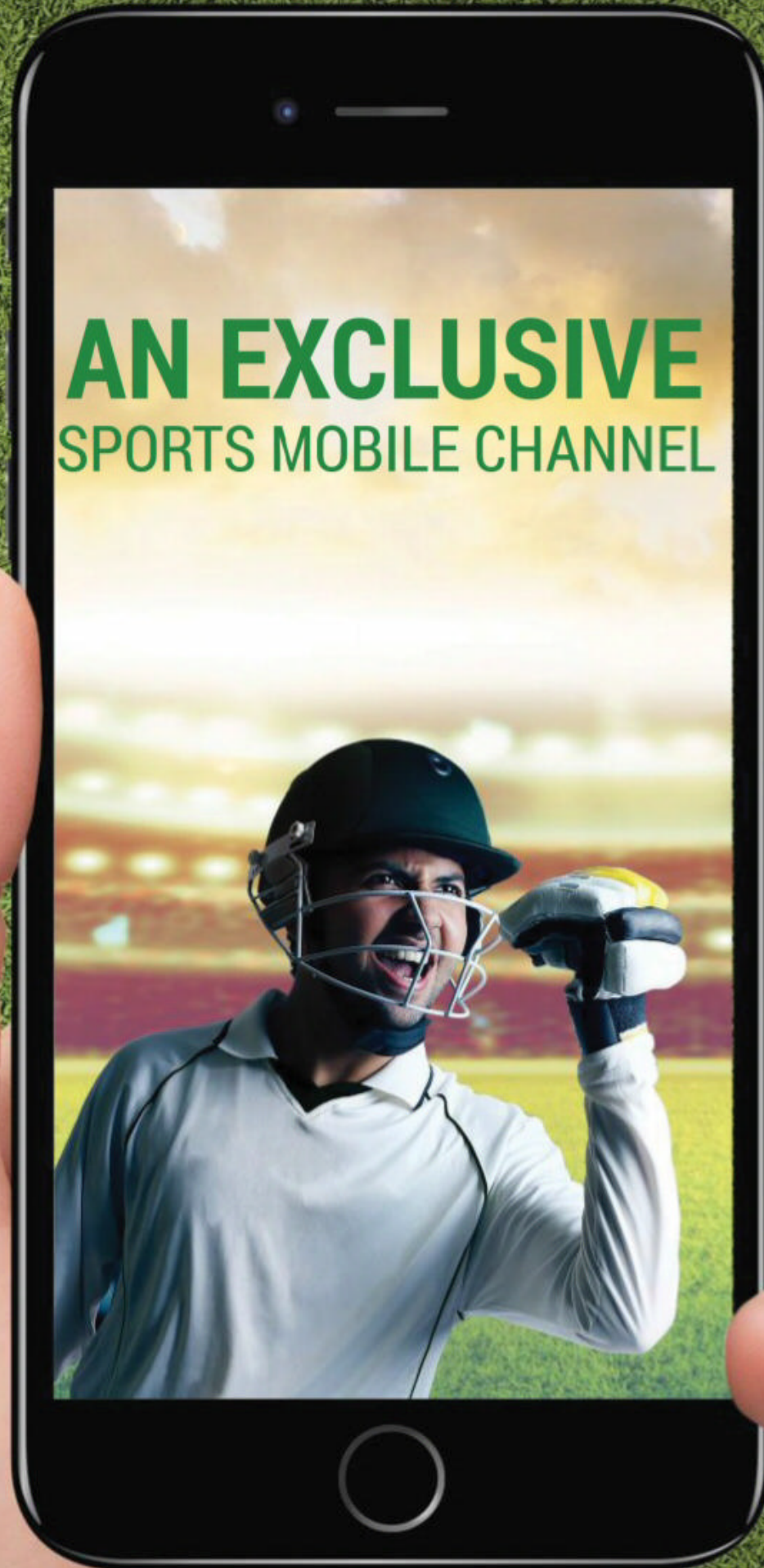
Besides, the Modi government has to battle the negative publicity over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The riots in some parts of the national capital while the US president was visiting the country did India's image no good. As Tellis puts it, "There were two foundations that made India attractive. The first was that India was an overperformer economically and therefore had material capabilities which were valuable to the balance of power. The second was that India is a liberal democracy and is like us. So we are natural allies precisely because of that. Now the problem is that both foundations have gotten eroded in the last few years. The economic slowdown is raising questions as to whether India will actually have the material capability to play the role that Americans imagine for it, apart from a perceived slow erosion of liberalism in India." These, then, would be the major foreign policy challenges before Team Modi for 2020 and beyond. ■

**"IN STRATEGIC TERMS,
INDIA'S SURGICAL
STRIKES ADDED
AN ELEMENT OF
UNPREDICTABILITY
TO ITS ACTIONS WHEN
IT CAME TO RESPOND-
ING TO TERROR
ATTACKS FROM
ACROSS THE BORDER"**

T.C.A. RAGHAVAN, Foreign policy expert



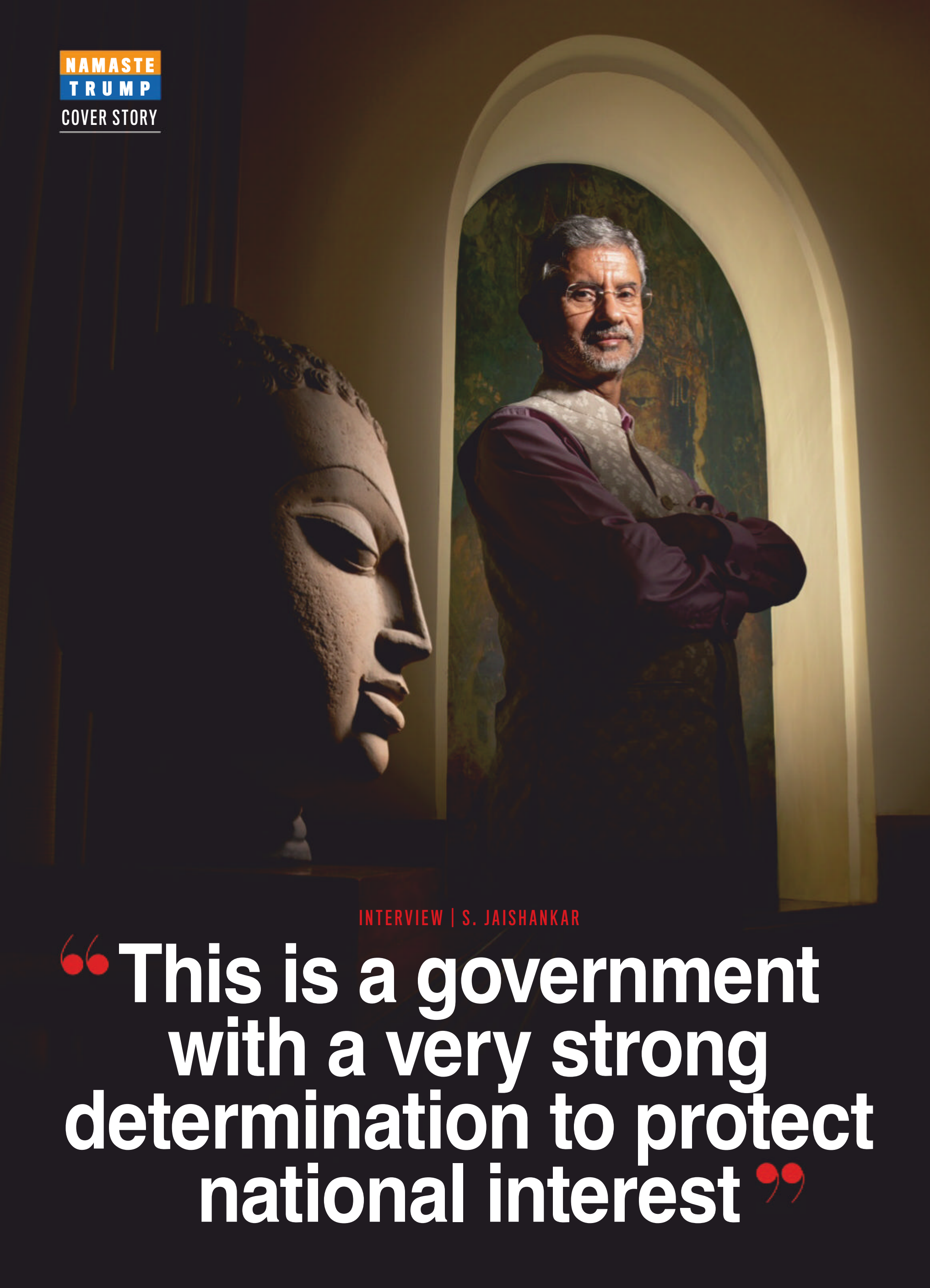
SportsTak.in



You Tube /sportstak

f /sportstak

Twitter /sports_tak



INTERVIEW | S. JAISHANKAR

“This is a government with a very strong determination to protect national interest”

The day after US president Donald Trump departed from New Delhi after a 36-hour state visit, external affairs minister **S. JAISHANKAR** sat down for an exclusive interview with Group Editorial Director **Raj Chengappa**. In one of his most detailed interviews to date, the foreign minister put the Indo-US relationship in perspective, outlining India's new foreign policy engagement with the world. Among other things, he expounded on the 'Modi Doctrine', the extraordinarily complex relationship with China, dealing with terrorism emanating from Pakistan, the abrogation of Article 370, the challenges of explaining the Citizenship (Amendment) Act to the world and the impact of the economic slowdown. Excerpts:

Raj Chengappa: What has been the big takeaway for India in this visit by the US president?

S. Jaishankar: This is the seventh visit by an American president, and the first time you've had a visit only to India, which says something. It comes in his first term; that he has taken time off from his political calendar shows the importance we both give to the relationship. What you are seeing is the India-America relationship mature, it is organically, smoothly moving forward. There are new areas of cooperation. You can see that in the politics of the relationship, in the strategic convergence, in the quality of the defence relationship—some agreements preceded the visit—in counter-terrorism, homeland security, in the entire economic family of issues—trade, technology transfers. Also in the energy relationship, which was not there [before]. For many years, nuclear was the focus with the US, but today we are importing substantial amounts of oil and gas...we could even be importing coal in the foreseeable future. One of the unique characteristics of this relationship today is the strong people to people component. It was to my mind appropriate that this visit began with an impressive P2P at the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad, because that really demonstrated that there is so much goodwill and popular support for this relationship.

RC: President Trump has placed great emphasis on trade and expressed concerns over India's balance of trade. We were supposed to get a mini-deal on this trip, perhaps the centrepiece of the entire trip. Why did it not materialise, and what is the big deal being talked about?

J: We have had negotiations between our trade ministers—most of those related to market access issues, some to tariff issues—and they were trying to put together a fair package. In between, people were in two minds: do we do a mini-deal or a bigger deal; do we do both or only do one? Finally, they agreed to promptly conclude the ongoing negotiations, which they hope can become phase 1 of a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement. So, the idea is to take [up] the immediate issues; if you can resolve them, it clears up some of the pending issues and gives you the foundation to move ahead.

RC: We are going to get a phase 1 deal pretty quickly, maybe in weeks...

J: Yes.

RC: Will it cover all the contentious issues, including restoration of our preferential status under the Generalized System of Preferences?

J: Forecasting a deal is never a good idea, but I can say that I know people have worked hard to put a package together, a fair package, which would allow a lot of issues that have till now largely dominated the debate to be settled so that we can then look at the bigger issues.

RC: In the joint statement, a particular phrase—comprehensive global strategic partnership—was used. Is this an upgrade?

J: It is an upgrade because people in diplomacy use words to characterise a relationship and people in the same business pick up the signals. It's a kind of a ratings process. What began as a much narrower relationship—narrower in the scope and areas of cooperation and in the significance of what we were trying to do—has really broadened; it has global impact. It is truly comprehensive. There is no aspect of human activity this relationship does not touch in some way [or the other].

RC: Part of that dealt with defence and co-production. Our defence relations with the US—purchases particularly—have grown significantly. President Trump also talked of selling us hi-tech equipment. Are we now moving towards purchasing entirely from the Americans?

J: No, broadly, what we are doing in defence mirrors what we are doing in overall strategy. In the latter, we are looking at a multi-polar world. There are different powers and they have their own relationships. Our objective is to have many positive relationships and to leverage them as effectively as possible. So, when you ask if we have bought more from the US, yes [we have], because for 40-odd years after the 1965 war, we did not buy anything from them, mainly because they wouldn't sell to us. For over a decade now, the equipment supply relationship with the

US has been an option. That is how it should be, for it is in India's interest to have multiple relationships, and to be close partners in defence is part of it.

RC: The Americans have objected to India purchasing the S-400 missile system from Russia. Has that been sorted out?

J: We will do what is in the national interest. We have said that to the Americans very clearly. I hope and expect that the people will understand. We are an independent-minded country.

RC: A part of the joint statement reiterated the Indo-Pacific partnership. Is it mere terminology or a counterbalancing effort against China?

J: The Indo-Pacific is a reality, a naval reality, a political reality, a trade reality, an economic reality. Why is it a reality? Because Indo-Pacific means we cannot deal with the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as two separate arenas, or in silos. The whole idea of the Indo-Pacific is to get people to recognise and plan and act as if the issue is much more serious. Again, I am giving you the Indian perspective. We

“TO REMAIN THE LEADER OF INNOVATION, THE US NEEDS TO REMAIN OPEN TO THE FLOW OF TALENT, WHICH, IN THIS (INDIA'S) CASE, IS H1-B CATEGORY OF VISAS”

started with 'Look East', then we added connectivity and security and a stronger sense of purpose, and it became 'Act East'. The fact today is that our key trading partners are China, Japan, Korea and Australia, all of whom are in a sense beyond the Indian Ocean, except perhaps Australia. So it is not that India's interests, either economic or strategic, are limited to the Indian Ocean. We operate beyond that, we operate politically, strategically. It's not like we have invented the Indo-Pacific as some kind of prediction, some kind of future prospect. We don't think it is a prerogative of one country. We want an open debate, an open approach.

RC: When Barack Obama visited India, he gave India an assurance that it will be made a permanent member of the UN Security Council. President Trump said it too. Is it just lip service? The US has been saying this for almost 10 years.

J: Well, the US support is welcome. In fact, it's important and valuable. But the reform of the Security Council con-

cerns many other countries. This is not a problem of a lack of an outcome. It is also not an Indo-US issue; it is a UN issue. And our sense today is that an overwhelming number of countries support the idea of a reformed UN. The fact that we are still looking at a 1945 design of a particular organisation, it would be fair to call it anachronistic. So much has changed in the world in the last 75 years. Even the G-7 is now, in a sense, the G-20, which shows the world has changed. So if things have changed everywhere, and people support it, why should we hold back in one arena unless somebody has a vested interest? We think the world is ready for a reformed UN, and we believe a vast number of countries support us. We would like to see text-based negotiations on this, and we would urge other countries, especially those with a prominent role in the UN, to support us.

RC: Regarding the US's immigration policy and its impact on the H1-B and H-4 visas, did we get any assurances from President Trump on the subject?

J: I don't think it works this way. Today, India itself is a source of innovation and a very important source of talent. There is a high degree of trust between India and the

United States, because we are democratic societies, we understand and respect the rules of a market economy. There is a direct connect between talent and innovation. The flow of talent from India is in American interest. And most Americans recognise it. So if the US wants to remain the leader of innovation and technology in the world, then it makes sense for it to remain open to the flow of talent. And India has both talent and innovation. Talent in this particular case is, significantly, H1-B category of visas. Do we

support and make a case for H1-B visas and smoother, more liberal H1-B visas? Of course, we do. Are we attempting to convince others that it is critical to your remaining a technology leader? Of course.

RC: Coming to a more general foreign policy question, the old order has given way to what one can describe as a new world disorder. Globalism is receding, and a new nationalism is emerging in its place, along with a weakening of international institutions. How does India protect its interests in this era of tectonic shifts?

J: By being confident, by not being risk-averse, by being nimble. What we have tried to do is follow global politics and these global relationships very carefully, understand them well, then see how they work for us. And we have done it reasonably successfully. If you look at the state of our relationships, we have kind of ramped up our ties with the US. At the same time, our ties with Russia are visibly better than they were some years ago. We have what is a



THE ISSUE ISN'T WHETHER OR NOT YOU TALK TO PAKISTAN, IT IS WHAT YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT AND WHAT SHOULD BE THE BEHAVIOURAL PATTERN AS YOU TALK”

very complex relationship with China. [It] has been managed reasonably well. We are today working with Europe with an intensity we have not shown for many years. The Japan relationship is great. With ASEAN, again, it's been very good. Part of it is that you have to work the big league well, but a lot of the little powers become important too. We have expanded our footprint at the same time. But at the end of it all, you just have the ability to read the global tea leaves and build those relationships and manage them in a way that you can actually do all of them together.

RC: Having read the global tea leaves, what do you think are India's big challenges for 2020 and beyond?

J: India faces the same challenges as the rest of the world, mostly. We have some unique ones [as well]. One big challenge is the sharpening contradiction between the US and China. Another one is the arguments within the western world. Then, there is a repositioning of America, because America has had a footprint throughout the world, places like Afghanistan or the Middle East or maybe even East Asia. So I would say these would be among the important challenges, but not the only challenges. I think the rise of China will continue to play out and have an impact. I would say West Asia—Middle East for the westerners—in the long term, if not less. And I think there are some big challenges out there in Africa. So it's not an easy world.

RC: What shift has PM Modi brought to foreign policy?

J: There is a very discernible shift. Everybody knows it, whether they like it or not. He has made an enormous difference in our profile. He has brought a more modernistic thinking into foreign policy, much greater willingness to engage [with] multiple players, a very strong commitment to advance our national interests but, at the same time, a very genuine feeling for the world. When people speak about na-

tionalism, in many countries, a nationalist leader is one who wants to do less with the world. Look at our last few years, our track record. It has been [of] much greater willingness... We are today first responders in humanitarian and disaster response situations. We have led important initiatives, like the International Solar Alliance and, now, the disaster resilient coalition (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure). Our development assistance programmes have gone up.

RC: What about the dogmas in our thinking vis-a-vis our relationship with Pakistan? What paradigm shift has the Modi regime brought to it?

J: Look, I think there has been a difference in agenda. There has been a difference in approach and much greater clarity. At the end of the day, what does it come down to? What it finally comes down to is the issue of cross-border terrorism and whether, in some way, our approach ends up normalising it or contributes to normalising it and not sharpening global awareness about it. What we have to do is make sure that the world doesn't accept the use of cross-border terrorism as a diplomatic tool under any circumstances. Which means I must keep the spotlight on that, make it very clear that this is simply not done. The issue is not whether or not you talk to them, it is what you talk to them about and what should be the behavioural pattern as you talk. So if we, the victims, go soft on somebody perpetrating terrorism against us, how do you expect the rest of the world to stand up for you more than you're standing up for yourself?

RC: Did the September 2016 surgical strikes and the February 2019 Balakot air strike change the way we dealt with Pakistan and contribute to that paradigm shift?

J: I don't know what the answer is, but you know, people should realise this is a government with a very strong determination to protect national interest and that it is not

willing to be tested at the cost of people's interest.

RC: There seems to be a cold peace with Pakistan. What can we do to bring dialogue back on the table?

J: I don't think any sensible person will say, 'we should not have a dialogue'. Not just India-Pakistan, any two neighbours should have that. But I ask you the reverse question: which country elsewhere in the world practises cross-border terrorism on its neighbour? Focus on that.

RC: At his press conference, the US president offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir, if they were willing. What is your opinion?

J: We have made our position very clear that this is a bilateral matter and we are completely confident of dealing with it.

RC: How has the abrogation of Article 370 played out internationally? How have you responded to it at various meetings in Europe? There has been concern in the US as well.

J: If you tell them what has happened in non-dogma terms, they do understand that there are multiple issues out here—of development, socio-economic rights and laws, of separatism and terrorism. All are kind of interconnected. If you

“CAA REDUCES STATELESSNESS. IT DOESN'T TAKE AWAY CITIZENSHIP FROM ANYBODY, [INSTEAD] IT GIVES CITIZENSHIP TO A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE IT”

explain the historical perspective to people, what your thinking is, those who are open-minded are willing to listen and appreciate that kind of move. Today, a few months since the abrogation in August [2019], there is a larger understanding, especially among governments because governments are more serious about this exercise. I'm not disrespecting the media, but governments are less polemical, less ideological, and so they don't take angular views where facts are adjusted to support a particular set of hypotheses. Most governments today have acknowledged or, at least, heard us out and got a good grasp of what our thinking is. We have also had a number of ambassadors go to Jammu and Kashmir. They have seen it for themselves and met people. My understanding is, sometimes people are critical of the government of India, but they come back and have an overall sense that the direction of developments in Jammu and Kashmir is positive. Obvi-

ously, there are still issues to be resolved, but there is still a fair amount of international understanding.

RC: Has the subject of CAA-NRC come up in your international discussions? How have we explained them?

J: Well, it has come up sometimes—for example, when I was in Brussels. It is mostly people wanting to know. Usually, a foreign minister, or somebody like that, will come up to you and say, 'This is what I hear, could you give me your perspective?' Naturally, we give to them what is the accurate perspective on the matter. We explain to them [thus]: since you asked about CAA, if you look at the objectives of the changes in the legislation, what does it do really? We already have a number of stateless people in this country, it reduces statelessness. It doesn't take away citizenship from anybody, [instead] it gives citizenship to a number of people who don't have citizenship. So, the total statelessness in India comes down. And you're managing it in a way that you don't create a greater 'pull factor' in your neighbourhood, because this country has its own challenges; it should not be burdened with the challenges of the larger region as well. Now, if you explain this to them conceptually, somebody in Europe understands that. Because, after

all, what is Europe trying to do today when it comes to migration? It is also trying to reduce statelessness. Europe also wants to do it without [generating] a 'pull factor'. When you ask them, 'Look, there must be a naturalisation/ citizenship practice in your country. Does it have a context, a criteria? Are those criteria social, do they use ethnicity, religion, language...' When they look at their own rules and regulations, the answer is mostly 'Yes'.

RC: Coming to China, we have had the 'Chennai spirit', and the stand-off at Doklam. We have differences over trade imbalance in China's favour and, of course, its relations with Pakistan, particularly with regards to CPEC, the economic corridor they plan to build in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Where does our relationship with China stand?

J: I will make two separate points, and it's important that you understand both of them. One, we have an extraordinarily complex relationship with China. You yourself said, there's the boundary question, there are security issues, there is their relationship with Pakistan, there are trade concerns. Each one is a complex issue in itself. Put together, it has taken multiple governments many years to grapple with these issues and, as China has risen, these issues have not become smaller, because China's capability has grown, its ambitions have grown, its influence has grown. First of all, let's recognise that these are not issues that are amenable to easy and ready solutions. The second issue that you have to look at is that recognising that these

INDIA
TODAY

Tourism

SURVEY & AWARDS 2020

are complex issues, do you deal more with China or less with it, at a higher level or a lower level, more intensively and more open-mindedly, or less so? Precisely because these issues are so serious and so complex, it's important to have very high-level communication. And so, in 2017, we came up with this suggestion: 'You are a rising power, we are a rising power, our relationship with the rest of the world is going to be different, our relationship with each other will be different. So if we don't communicate in a very honest manner with each other, it's not good for either of us.' And I think they recognised that, which is why you have these summit meetings, which to my mind, are quite helpful, because if leaders—quite apart from the content of the summit—talk with each other with a degree of candour and directness, it sends a good message down the system.

RC: Has the economic slowdown affected our diplomatic heft? We were seen as one of the fastest growing economies.

J: As in the other issues you raised—Article 370, CAA—the overall message we are conveying abroad is that this is a government deeply committed to deep reforms. Deep social reforms, economic reforms, political reforms, security reforms. The mindset is not that we have come to power and we inherited problems and let's kind of, somehow, get through it and leave it for people to carry as a burden. I think there is a very active intention of sorting out problems, including legacy problems. But the answer to your question would also be that, wherever I go, I see enormous interest in doing business with India. People are continuing to bet on us.

RC: Why did we pull out of RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership)? Is it a closed chapter?

J: Look, this is the trade minister's remit, but I also happened to be there. The common sense answer is: because the offers we got were not good enough. Why were they not good enough? Because they did not address our concerns: it didn't protect us from what is already an enormous deficit vis-à-vis RCEP countries. Deficits have a reason: they are not an outcome of competitive advantage but of non-tariff barriers and lack of market access and regulatory and policy impediments in different countries.

RC: And how would you describe India? Is it a world power in the making or is it a leading power?

J: I think it is contextual, it depends on the question you ask me. As a country which will soon be the most populous in the world, we should certainly have an aspiration to be a leading power. I don't feel the need to be apologetic or modest about it. I think it is only right that we should. But you don't get there because you aspire to do that, you have to get there by hard work, by doing your diplomacy right, by strategising. And that is what we are trying to do. ■

“THE
OVERALL
MESSAGE
WE ARE
CONVEYING
ABROAD IS
THAT THIS
GOVERNMENT
IS DEEPLY
COMMITTED
TO DEEP
REFORMS”

Vote for India's
**BEST
WILDLIFE
DESTINATION**
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>

VOTES AND THE CAA

WHILE THE CITIZENSHIP LEGISLATION MAY HELP THE BJP CONSOLIDATE ITS VOTE AMONG NON-ASSAMESE-SPEAKING HINDUS, THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO DO MUCH MORE TO PLACATE THE ANGER OF ASSAMESE VOTERS IN 2021

By Kaushik Deka

BIJU BORO/GETTY IMAGES



O

n January 25, the Assam minister for finance, education and health, Himanta Biswa Sarma, announced that the state government would introduce a bill which will make a person who has not studied Assamese as a subject till Class 10, even if s/he had schooled in the English medium, in-

eligible for a government job in Assam. This criterion would also apply for admission to state medical and engineering colleges. Assamese was to be made compulsory up to Class 10.

Once the bill is passed, his own children, Sarma admits, will not be eligible for government jobs in the state, as they study outside Assam and have not studied Assamese in school. However, it is a small price to pay for what the government hopes to gain in return—the electoral support of Assamese-speaking people who have been agitating against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, for nearly two months. Unlike the rest of India, protesters in Assam are not worried that the

CAA—pushed hard by the BJP-led Union and state governments—excludes Muslims. Rather, they fear it gives citizenship to illegal Hindu Bangla-speaking immigrants from Bangladesh, who, together with the Muslim Bangla speakers in Assam, may outnumber the Assamese in their own state.

This fear of losing their language and culture stems from the declining number of Assamese speakers and the growing number of Bangla speakers in the state. Assamese speakers went down to 48 per cent in 2011 from 58 per cent in 1991 while Bangla speakers in the state went up to 30 per cent from 22 per cent in the same period. The number of Assamese speakers could be even smaller as a large number of Muslim Bangla-speaking immigrants from Bangladesh also mention Assamese as their language in the Census, either in an attempt to assimilate or out of fear. For instance, in Dhubri, which is dominated by Muslims of immigrant origin who speak a Bangla dialect at home, the 2011 Census data shows there are 98,526 Assamese speakers as against 78,000 Bangla speakers. “Now that the NRC last year has legalised most of these Muslim immigrants, they may write Bangla as their mother tongue in the next Census, reducing Assamese to a minority,” says Abhijit Sarma, whose public interest litigation in the Supreme Court in 2009 led to the NRC in Assam.

This is why the Assamese and other original inhabitants of the state have continued their agitation against the BJP since 2016, when the first Narendra Modi government tabled a bill to grant citizenship to Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and Parsi illegal immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. While the Modi government ignored the protests in Assam, the bill could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha, and lapsed. In the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha poll—despite protests in the state—Modi, in a state rally, asserted that his government would certainly get the bill passed once voted to power. Indeed, CAA came into being in December 2019.

Initiatives such as making Assamese compulsory in schools are meant to counter any adverse impact the CAA may have on the BJP’s fortunes in the 2021 assembly election. There have been other announcements too—such as a new bill in the next assembly session to protect the land rights of the indigenous people. While the definition of indigenous people is currently contentious, the 14-member committee on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which provides for safeguards to protect the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people, has left its 91-page report with the Assam Accord Implementation department of the state government. Sources say the committee will declare all those who (or whose ancestors) entered Assam before 1951 as ‘Assamese’. The committee also recommends 80 per cent reservation for the Assamese in the state’s Lok Sabha and assembly seats as well as in central and state government, bank, railways and PSU jobs. If accepted by the central government, this definition is likely to neutralise any fears arising out of the CAA. However, BJP sources say the central government is not comfortable with this definition of Assamese as it would exclude a large section of the non-Assamese

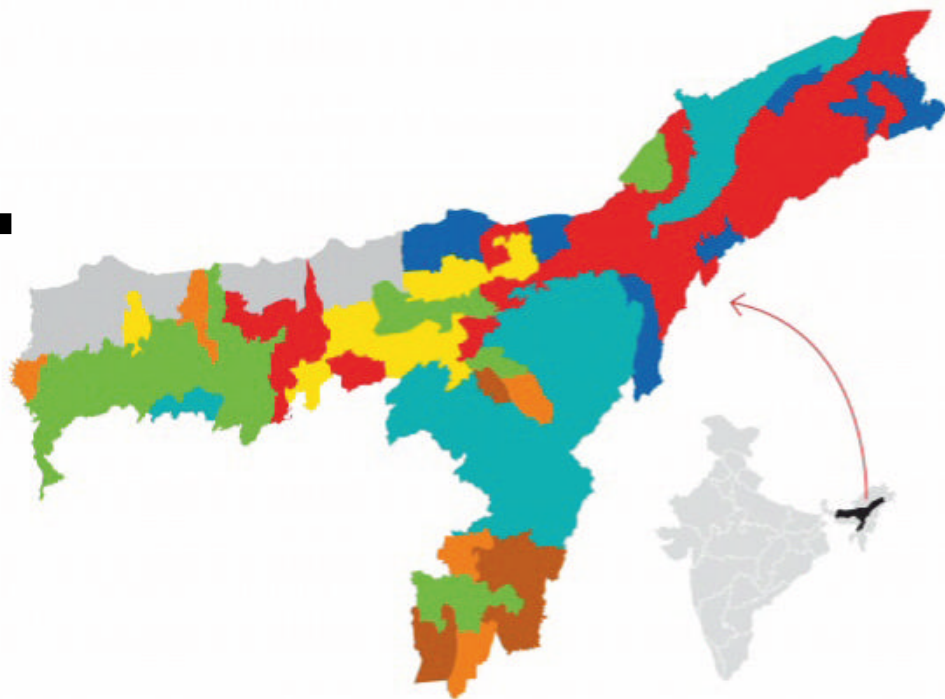


LADIES' MARCH

Women lead a protest against the CAA in Guwahati on January 19

HOW THE CAA WILL IMPACT THE BJP

The BJP, along with ally AGP, won 32 of 36 seats dominated by Assamese speakers who are hostile to the CAA, nine of them by thin margins. The BJP's challenge is to control damage in these seats and maintain status quo in 45 seats dominated by non-Muslims, where Assamese speakers have little influence. BJP-AGP won 38 seats last time. The alliance will also target the 12 seats it lost by margins of less than 10 per cent of votes polled.



	Total seats	Seats won in 2016					<10% votes*		
		BJP	AGP	BPF	Cong.	AIUDF	BJP + AGP	Cong or AIUDF	
● Seats where Assamese-speaking people play a decisive role	36	22	10	0	4	0	9	2	This is where BJP fortunes are likely to suffer the most due to the CAA; however, the fear of immigrant Muslims and mistrust in the Congress-AIUDF may still prompt the Assamese to go with the BJP in nine lower Assam seats
● Seats dominated by Muslim population of immigrant origin	33	4	0	0	17	12	4	7	BJP is not a player in these constituencies; division of votes between Congress and AIUDF may give the BJP a chance in a couple of seats
● Seats dominated by Bengali Hindus	8	7	0	0	1	0	3	0	This is the BJP's domain. Most voters support CAA here
● Seats where religious polarisation will determine outcome	6	4	1	0	0	1	3	0	CAA will be a big dividing force, results can swing any which way
● Swing seats with mixed population	12	9	3	0	0	0	3	2	Division of the Hindu vote may work to Congress-AIUDF advantage in some seats; BJP's challenge is to get the poll arithmetic right
● Constituencies where tea tribes and non-Assamese voters, including Bihari, Bengali, Marwari and Nepali voters, can decide winner	9	6	0	0	3	0	0	1	Little adverse impact of CAA in these areas; doles are the trick for BJP in tea gardens
● Tribal-dominated seats	10	8	0	0	1	0	3	0	Tribals have not yet come out strongly against the CAA; five constituencies are outside CAA purview
● BTAD seats	12	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	These seats are exempt from CAA; BJP ally BPF is the key player here

Total seats in the Assam Assembly: 126; 64 seats required for simple majority

*Seats won with less than 10 per cent of total votes polled

speaking population such as Hindu Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris, who form a strong vote bank for the BJP. On February 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a gathering in Kokrajhar, promised the people of Assam that he would soon implement Clause 6 yet home minister Amit Shah did not give the Clause 6 Committee an appointment when its members went to Delhi to submit their recommendations.

In the assembly poll next year, the BJP-Asom Gana Parishad-Bodoland People's Front (BPF) alliance will face off against the Congress-All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) combine. BJP leaders believe that despite the anti-CAA protests, the demographic mix in the state favours its electoral arithmetic, as was evident in the general election. The BJP won nine seats in 2019, four more than in the previous election. Assam has been resisting illegal Bangladeshi immigrants for the past five decades. A majority of these immigrants are Muslim, and the community now constitutes 35 per cent of the state population, the highest in the country. This makes Assam a fertile ground for the BJP to practise religious polarisation. The emergence of the Badruddin Ajmal-led AIUDF, whose support base is built on the immigrant Muslim, has only strengthened the BJP narrative. Among Sarma's key arguments in favour of the CAA has been to stop Ajmal from becoming the chief minister of Assam. "A pre-poll alliance will help the Congress-AIUDF sweep all Muslim-dominated seats, but they are unlikely to join hands as this will consolidate Hindu votes in the BJP's favour, irrespective of linguistic loyalty," says Vikas Tripathi, assistant professor in the department of political science at Gauhati University.

The BJP knows only too well that the anti-CAA protests are limited to the Brahmaputra Valley, dominated by Assamese and other indigenous groups opposed to the illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, irrespective of religion. People in Barak Valley, largely inhabited by Bangla speakers, have welcomed the CAA, while the act is not applicable in areas under the 6th Schedule, namely the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. Even in the Brahmaputra Valley, tea tribes, non-Assamese and non-Muslim groups—including Bengalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Punjabis and Nepalis—have not shown any significant resistance to the CAA. Of the state's 126 assembly constituencies, 17 are exempt from the CAA—12 in BTAD and five in the two hill districts. In 33 Muslim-dominated seats, where the BJP has been a non-starter, the CAA could give them a fighting chance. Sarma has said that if Hindu Bangladeshis get citizenship, they will emerge as a counter force against Muslims in 17 of these constituencies.

INITIATIVES SUCH AS MAKING ASSAMESE COMPULSORY IN SCHOOL ARE EXPECTED TO NEGATE ANY ANTI- CAA SENTIMENT IN THE STATE

The BJP is also hoping to gain the support of Assamese Muslims—those who are not of Bangladeshi origin, have been living in Assam for centuries and mostly speak Assamese—by proposing a Census for four such Muslim communities: Goriya, Moriya, Deshi and Julha, so that they are not denied any benefits extended to indigenous people. The state budget last year provided for a Development Corporation for Indigenous Muslims for the "holistic development" of the community.

The BJP also believes that religious polarisation over CAA will help them in six seats where Hindu and Muslim voters of immigrant origin are in equal number. Eight Bengali-Hindu dominated seats are already BJP strongholds—the CAA will only consolidate their position. Nine seats are dominated by tea tribes and non-Assamese groups, for whom the CAA will have little impact; in

INDIA
TODAY
Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2020

Vote for India's

**BEST
BEACHES**

in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>

2016, the BJP won six of them. “The non-Assamese groups are firmly with us,” says a senior BJP party functionary from Assam. “Our challenge is to retain the tea tribes, once a Congress fiefdom. Welfare schemes and doles will do the trick as they are indifferent to the CAA.” Even in the five tribal seats outside the 6th Schedule areas, the CAA has not provoked strong protests except in Sonowal’s own constituency—Majuli. The BJP won four of these in 2016.

There are 12 swing seats with a mixed population, where the CAA will play a limited role. The BJP and its ally AGP won all 12 in 2016 even if with a thin winning margin in three seats. The angry Assamese voter—though only a fraction here—may inflict some damage. But the biggest challenge for Modi and Sonowal will be to arrest the slide in 36 constituencies where the Assamese speakers will determine the winner. The BJP-AGP won 32 of these seats in 2016. The anti-CAA sentiment is the strongest here. “It’s difficult to ascertain the magnitude of the damage, but the BJP will suffer in these seats. It will depend on the alternative narrative opposition forces will provide. The twin leadership of the BJP—Sonowal’s tribal identity and Sarma’s Assamese Hindu identity—still gives the BJP an emotional edge,” says Tripathi.

To create an alternative political narrative, a section of the protesters are talking of starting a regional political force to counter the vote bank politics of the BJP and the Congress. “The Congress settled Muslim immigrants in the state to get votes. The BJP now wants to legalise Hindu immigrants. No national party has cared for the indigenous people and the AGP has failed to reflect our voice. We certainly need a new political force that is honest and can work to safeguard the interest of legal Indian citizens in Assam,” says singer Zubeen Garg, something of a cultural icon in the state. However, he has declined to be part of any such political party. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) also toyed with the idea of forming a party, but a section of the student group has strongly opposed the idea of joining electoral politics, as its first experiment had ended in disaster. The current AGP is an offshoot of AASU—both Sonowal and Sarma cut their political teeth in AASU.

The other alternative force is the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, led by RTI activist Akhil Gogoi, who has been talking of opening up a political front for some time. The police arrested Gogoi on December 12 last year while he was leading an anti-CAA protest in Jorhat. He was handed over to the National Investigation Agency, which booked him under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. He is currently in jail. “In the past six years, the BJP has penetrated deep into the grassroots [sic]. It will be very difficult for a new party to infiltrate that network. Besides, this protest has not thrown up any credible leadership yet. That is why the intensity of the anti-CAA protests is gradually fading,” says Ankuran Dutta, head of the communication and journalism department at Gauhati University.



A WINNING MOVE?

Amit Shah with Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal at the signing of the third Bodo Accord

Party insiders believe the BJP stands to gain from the emergence of a regional political force. “We have a strong support base among non-Assamese Hindus and tea tribes. The new party will have no support from them. It will have no impact in Muslim-dominated areas. In the Assamese-dominated areas, it will take away the BJP vote that might have moved to the Congress,” says a state BJP leader. Perhaps why the talk of a new political party has no serious takers.

Some observers believe that, in the absence of any regional force, the anger against the BJP may convert to support for the Congress. “When I travelled to upper Assam during the anti-CAA protests, I sensed the growing support for the Congress. However, in lower Assam, where Muslim immigrants are largely found, religious polarisation may still force indigenous people to back the BJP-AGP,” says celebrated poet Pranab Kumar Barman, who had supported Sonowal as CM in 2016. There are 24 Assamese-dominated seats in upper Assam. In 2016, the Congress won four; in six others, the BJP-AGP won by a slender margin of less than 10 per cent of the votes polled.

Backdoor negotiations are also on with both factions of ULFA, and an accord before the election, giving constitutional protection in certain areas of Assam, may dilute the anti-CAA sentiment, especially in upper Assam. The BJP has yet to fulfil its electoral promise of granting the Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Motok, Moran, Koch-Rajbongshi communities and tea tribes Scheduled Tribe status. To deflect attention from the CAA, the party may come good on this promise though this will increase the number of reserved seats in the state. “The Sonowal government remains committed to the interests of Assamese people from day one. It cleaned up the APSC examination process, opening up opportunities for meritorious candidates. The commission is now headed



by an honest former police officer. Even the state administration and police force are headed by Assamese people,” says Lakhya Konwar, a senior BJP leader.

The BJP has other bets too to expand its electoral footprint in Assam. Its second ally, the BPF, has a dominating presence in the BTAD, where it won all the 12 seats in 2016. However, the BPF remains an unreliable ally as it has been part of all state governments—Congress- or BJP-led—since 2006. To reduce its dependence on BPF, the BJP, on January 27, signed the third Bodo Accord with the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, an insurgent group demanding a sovereign country, the All Bodo Students Union and the United Bodo People’s Organisation, laying the ground for the emergence of another Bodo political party in BTAD, which will

mean a division of votes between the BPF and the new formation. Not only will this blunt the BPF’s bargaining power, it may also enable the BJP to win some seats in the BTAD based on the consolidation of the non-Bodo vote.

This experiment succeeded in the general election where independent candidate Naba Sarania won two consecutive times from BTAD capital Kokrajhar, primarily backed by non-Bodos. For the BJP, this experiment is important as the dominant Muslim presence in 33 seats and 12 BTAD seats leaves only 81 seats for it to contest. If the Congress gains in these seats on the back of anti-CAA protests, the BJP could be in trouble. “At the moment we can see some gains for Congress, but the election is still a year away. The Congress will have to build a credible leadership to sustain these gains,” says social activist Suresh Ranjan Goduka.

The leadership issue may vex the BJP as well. The party’s electoral strategy—in the face of a hostile public mood—will depend heavily on the strategic manoeuvring Sarma, the chief architect of the saffron expansion in the Northeast, can engineer. But he is yet to be rewarded with a position commensurate with his “contributions”. The party has not shown any indication to either bring him into national politics or fulfil his long-standing dream of becoming the Assam

chief minister. Whether Sarma will remain content to play second fiddle to Sonowal for another term will determine the electoral landscape of the state next year. Though both Sonowal and Sarma have avoided any public conflict in the past four years, what role Sarma decides to play will depend on what the party envisions for him after 2021. In an indirect hint of his intent, Sarma has already announced several times that he is unlikely to contest the 2021 election. That’s certainly not good news for the BJP as the party’s other mass leader, Sonowal, has moved from being hailed as a ‘Jatiya Nayak’ (state hero) five years ago to being dubbed a ‘Jatiya Khalnayak’ (state villain) now. ■

THE BJP HOPES THE SIGNING OF THE THIRD BODO ACCORD WILL HELP SPLIT THE BODO VOTE AND ALSO FETCH THE CONSOLIDATED NON-BODO VOTE



Vote for India's
BEST FESTIVALS
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>

ARE WE READY?

**GIVEN THE WORRYING TREND OF VIRUS
OUTBREAKS EVERY FEW YEARS, WE NEED TO
ASSESS IF INDIA'S EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES
CAN HANDLE A WUHAN-SIZED PANDEMIC**

By Sonali Acharjee

Vinaya Chandran knew exactly what he wanted to do even before he was released from the army quarantine camp in Manesar, Haryana—eat a home-cooked meal with his family in his hometown Alappuzha in Kerala. “The camp has looked after us well. We have all become close friends. But the food is not what I am used to,” says the 31-year-old medical student from Wuhan University, China. He and the 647 other Indians evacuated from Wuhan on January 30 and February 1 in two batches were released on February 19 after they tested negative for the Novel Coronavirus (nCoV). However, to avoid taking chances, each person has been home quarantined for an additional 14 days, with their respective district hospitals monitoring the situation. With over 80,239 cases worldwide and 2,700 deaths (as of February 26), the human cost of nCoV has been making headlines since December 2019, and no country wants to take the threat lightly. The virus was first identified as nCoV, then changed to severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and finally named Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization.

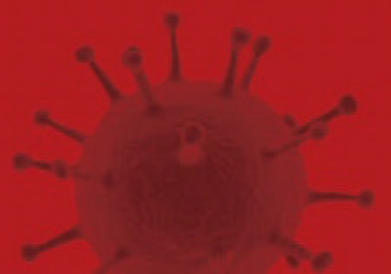
The devastating effects of a virus pandemic are being felt all the more by the global community this time around, because of the visual outpouring from Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak. This is not a tragedy happening in a forgotten corner of the planet. It is unfolding in the heart of the world's largest economy. Footage of helpless residents not being able to come close to their own family and desperate foreigners begging to return to their home countries have been doing the rounds for over two months. In India, the impact of nCoV has been considerably small, with just three confirmed outbreaks in Kerala. All of whom have now recovered and are under medical supervision. The state



LINE OF DEFENCE

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) screening inmates quarantined at an ITBP facility in Delhi's Chhawla village

PHOTO: ANIL K. SHARMA





has experienced virus outbreaks before and its health department began precautionary measures for nCoV even before they were implemented at a national level.

India might have escaped nCoV, but given the worrying trend of virus outbreaks every few years, we need to ask—do we have a system in place to handle a Wuhan-sized pandemic?

The burden of control and eradication of disease when it reaches alarming proportions does not fall entirely on a country's health system. It is supported by various other agencies. While in India, the ministry of health and family welfare is the nodal min-

istry handling biological and health emergencies, such crises also come under the purview of disaster management agencies, the ministry of home affairs and the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC). "India has pioneered the 'Delhi Declaration on Emergency Preparedness' which identifies risks, implements disaster risk reduction measures and prepares and operationalises readiness for a broad range of disasters, including diseases and outbreaks," says Professor S.S. Vasan, an Indian-origin scientist who is leading the vaccine development against the nCoV at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial

Research Organisation, Australia.

However, for a long time, disaster management in India followed no defined path and remained an informal state subject, since after the Bengal famine of 1943 it was assumed that the only disasters India could face would be related to food shortages. There was no mention of disaster management in the Constitution as a state or a central subject. Despite such calamities as the 1950 Assam earthquake or the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984, it was only after the 2001 Bhuj earthquake and the setting up of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in 2005 that disaster management protocols

1

Group of Ministers formed to monitor the Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) crisis

2

The Health ministry issues advisories for the public, for health workers and for laboratory and airport staff

21 international airports and 12 major ports screen passengers from high-risk routes; 2,315 flights and 249,447 passengers screened till date

3

23,259 people have been brought under community surveillance

8

The NDMA and the National Crisis Management Committee monitor the situation from national and inter-state perspectives

Should community resources at the state level be exhausted, additional support can be requisitioned from the NDRF

HOW TO FIGHT A PANDEMIC

7

State health departments are made first responders for confirmed cases; each state has a disaster management fund available to them via the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

At least two govt. hospitals identified in each district of the affected state. Private hospitals are put on standby

6

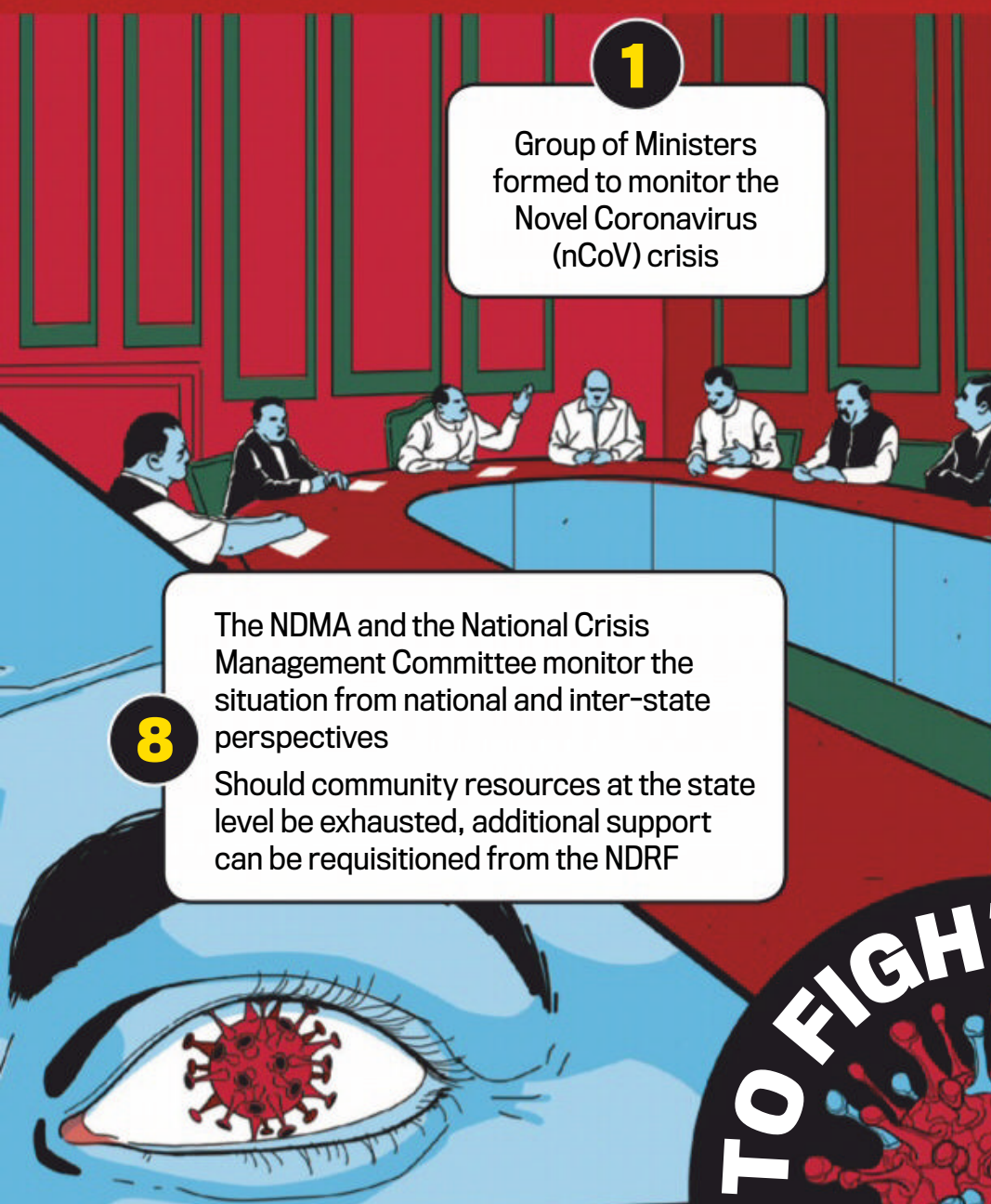
World Health Organization identifies The National Institute for Virology Pune as one of the 15 global testing labs for the virus

5

The NDRF distributes 100 bio-hazard suits to its 12 battalions; sensitises airport immigration staff

4

The Home ministry puts the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) on standby



and policies were evolved. An outbreak of nCoV, a biological disaster, would be part of Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence. As such the states or the health ministry can request additional assistance from the NDMA, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as well as the armed forces.

A NATION ALERTED

The standard procedure for a health emergency would start at the point of outbreak, then be tackled from a state perspective and, finally, be seen through a national lens. However, when the threat is coming from an international source, like nCoV, the system is reversed. The first level of action is national—to prevent the virus from reaching Indian soil.

India's initial response to nCoV was slow compared to other countries. The outbreak in Wuhan began to show signs of a serious epidemic in early January, and the European countries, Singapore, Japan and the US began to trace and isolate their China returnees almost immediately. In India, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) only monitors public health. We are yet to establish an organisation meant to watch health emergencies around the world, a practice followed by many countries in the West. As a result, India began rolling out its emergency health machinery to tackle nCoV only by the end of January.

A group of ministers (GoM) was constituted on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 30 and held its first meeting on February 3 for the management of nCoV. Members included the Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, minister of civil aviation Hardeep S. Puri, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy, minister of state for health and family welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey, and minister of state for shipping Mansukh Lal Mandaviya.

Following the first meeting, the

health ministry addressed four key issues—a risk advisory, travel screening, lab testing and quarantine facilities. Screening posts were set up at 21 international airports and 12 major ports. Staff at these entry points were trained to screen for possible infections after the Ebola outbreak in 2014, when the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) outlined the roles of health officers at airports to handle future infections. Passengers from suspected routes are given a leaflet to check if they are displaying certain symptoms and then screened on deboarding. Immigration officers and security personnel have been sensitised on how to handle passengers and equipped with personal protection equipment. Around 4,214 flights and 448,449 passengers have

**“AFTER THE
ZIKA AND EBOLA
OUTBREAKS,
INDIA STARTED
TO RETHINK OUR
REQUIREMENTS
FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AT A
NATIONAL LEVEL”**

Dr Jagdish Prasad
Principal Consultant, DGHS
and former director-general of
health services

been screened till date.

The second step was to isolate China returnees and suspected cases. A total of 23,259 people have been brought under community surveillance. “Every state is equipped with a rapid response team and government hospitals in each district are marked as isolation wards. The health teams can also ask for private hospitals to be on standby—in Delhi, for instance, both RML Hospital and Safdarjung Hospital have 25-bed isolation wards for nCoV cases. In case of a pandemic, hospitals will suspend regular work, which takes up about 80 per

INDIA
TODAY
Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2020



Vote for India's
**BEST
HERITAGE
DESTINATION**
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>



cent of the beds, to accommodate more patients,” says Dr Jagdish Prasad, former director general of health services. Zika and Ebola, he says, were major turning points for health emergency services in India. “We started to rethink our requirements for disease control at a national level,” adds Prasad, who is also the founder principal of Safdarjung Hospital and presently a principal consultant with the DGHS.

The National Institute for Virology (NIV) Pune, one of the 15 global laboratories identified by the WHO to provide reference testing for the nCoV, was also put on alert. Though India has a long way to go for native virological studies and vaccine development teams, we are not too far behind either in terms of laboratory training and testing. The US’s Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, has been training lab staff in India to handle, test and identify viruses. The NCDC, too, is equipped to support labs in testing. There are 105 viral research and diagnostic labs across India to support NIV if needed. For nCoV, 2,707 samples have been sent so far to NIV for a full report; only three from Kerala have tested positive.

The health ministry has issued advisories for the public, health workers and airport and lab staff, including travel and discharge advisories, guidelines for managing infected persons, isolating patients, and packaging and transporting test samples.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AGENCIES ON STAND BY

In the event that a health outbreak is identified as a national threat, each state has a disease surveillance programme which sends a daily report to the NCMC and the NDMA. The latter then view the crisis from a national and inter-state perspective and work with state teams to recommend measures, check resources and connect states to border and central agencies, if needed. “The first step was to have screenings at all porous and non-porous borders, and identify isolation wards. In Kerala, for example, there were two hospitals in

each district where isolation wards for nCoV cases were set up,” says Saurabh Dalal, consultant for medical preparedness and biological disasters, NDMA, who was in Kerala to monitor nCoV management. “Going forward, we plan to have a pandemic preparedness plan for each district. Only when all community resources have been exhausted will assistance from NDRF be requested.” As it was during the Nipah outbreak of 2018, the NDRF is on stand-by were nCoV to turn into a serious health pandemic. “The NDRF functions as a force of assistance to states under the assumption that there is a requisition made,” says S.N. Pradhan, director general of NDRF. “We have 12 battalions and 18 specialised teams, two of which are specifically trained to handle biological emergencies. Once nCoV was identified

“GOING FORWARD, WE PLAN TO HAVE A PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN FOR EACH DISTRICT AS WELL”

Saurabh Dalal
Consultant for medical preparedness and biological disasters, NDMA

as a possible threat, we distributed about 100 suits to our battalions and sent our doctors to sensitise the immigration bureau that would be dealing directly with passengers from high-risk routes.” In China, a 1,000-bed hospital was set up within 10 days and Wuhan was cordoned off. In India, the army can rapidly deploy such resources and shut down a state if needed. “But it can be decided only at the cabinet level, along with the ministry of home affairs,” says Pradhan.

STATE ACTION PLAN

States can use disaster response funds from the NDMA to detect and handle a crisis. Each state is also equipped with district emergency centres, and district magistrates become incident command-

ers. A private limited company under the state health department and the National Health Mission maintains stockpiles of personal protection equipment, masks and biological suits.

Kerala became the first state to declare a state emergency for a public health disaster. It was lifted within the first week of February. Widely praised for its handling of the nCoV crisis, not only did Kerala ensure mass isolation for suspected cases, it also made sure that 4 million children in schools were educated about the virus. Special advisories were issued for the blind, elderly, illiterate, differently-abled and health workers (demographic segments often overlooked during disaster communication). However, it is important to note state discrepancies in cases of health crises. Kerala enjoys a better quality of public healthcare and better health indicators than several northern states. Not every state has the capacity to handle a virus outbreak in the same manner. The NDMA has plans to document Kerala’s management of nCoV as a future example to other states.

Overall, our health disaster management largely rests on short-term steps for control and eradication. The long-term repercussions still need to be considered. There are other aspects of a pandemic that could have crippling effects on morale and economy. Food shortages, financial loss, miscommunication and human rights abuse are aspects of disaster management that have never been handled before. The 2003 SARS outbreak, for instance, is estimated to have resulted in global economic losses to the tune of \$30-100 billion, according to the Asian Development Bank; nCoV is predicted to have a similar impact.

Another loophole in the system is the presence of multiple agencies—the health and home ministries, NCMC, NDMA, NDRF, NCDC and state health departments—each with a stake in biological disaster management. Having too many bureaucratic players inevitably leads to longer decision time, confusion and overlap in responsibilities. While we have the guidelines on paper, real life implementation is an altogether different story. ■



BRIAN COX
IS KING
PG 56

T.M. KRISHNA AND
THE MRIDANGAM
PG 60

LEISURE

BEST FOOT
FORWARD
PG 56

Q&A WITH
SANJNA KAPOOR
PG 62

[LATE-NIGHT COMEDY]

NOT LATE, BUT THE LATEST

YOUTUBE STAR
LILLY SINGH
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE
YOUR USUAL LATE
NIGHT HOST, AND
SHE IS USING THAT
DIFFERENCE TO INVENT
A BRAND OF HUMOUR
THAT IS HERS ALONE

LILLY SINGH'S
late night talk
show, A Little Late
with Lilly Singh,
premiered in
September 2019



Photograph by RYAN PFLUGER/NBC

That the title of Lilly Singh's show sounds like a pun is no coincidence. Last year, Singh became the first Indian-origin, openly bisexual woman of colour to host a late night talk show, titled *A Little Late with Lilly Singh*. "The double meaning was on purpose," says Singh—the show airs at 1.35 am in the US (and 11 pm in India), but the name also alludes to it being a little late for such milestones in showbiz.

After the collective euphoria came the initial mixed reviews. For instance, there were comments about games on the show being complicated. "I think the key to making a good show and being a good creator is not to pay attention only to the positive feedback. There is value in listening to criticism," she says. But she also knows how to recognise real voices from the noise: "A comment like 'women aren't funny' is not something I am going to take seriously."

The biggest challenge, says Singh, was moving from YouTube where she headed a crew of five, to a major network like the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). "You have unions, a room full of writers, approval levels... it can be challenging. [Also] I look different from other current late night talk show hosts, and that sometimes needs to be taken into account in what I talk about. But I make sure my voice is heard. My goal from Season 1 was to learn as much as I possibly can."

And learn she did—about audience interaction, having fun and, well, a bit about swearing. "In real life, I don't swear," she laughs. "On my YouTube channel, I am still me, so I don't swear there. But on the show, in the video you are referring to, it was me playing a character that's not necessarily Lilly."

Born in Canada to immigrants from India, Singh started making YouTube videos a decade ago as a way to deal with depression. Her comedy sketches, where she discusses racism, dating, family and everyday life with

an inoffensive, sometimes goofy, sense of humour, were gigantic hits. Celebrity appearances by the likes of Michelle Obama, Priyanka Chopra, Dwayne Johnson and Madhuri Dixit helped and she soon became a star, while remaining the girl-on-the-next-laptop screen.

Over the years, she's been to the Met Gala, the Grammys, the Oscars and on the covers of prestigious magazines, besides writing a book and launching a production company. Yet she always returns to her 14.9 million YouTube subscribers. "YouTube has a special place in my heart," says Singh. "But I've learnt that the traditional and digital worlds are blending. Certain platforms make sense [for certain] stories. For some of my content—short form, to the point, not super-high production value—YouTube is the best."

Last year, Singh also came out as bisexual, which she has described as 'one of the scariest experiences' of her life. But a trip to India, where she had her first meet and greet soon after, comforted her. "I was a bit nervous," she admits. "But it was special because about 40 to 50 per cent of the people at my meet and greet came out to me. It was very cool to see that I had empowered them," she says.

The 31-year-old speaks of India as a "second home" and is currently working on projects about India, about which she is tight-lipped. "All I can say is we have stories about India's incredible people and institutions. I've been digging into some of the hidden gems of Indian culture." Also, her camaraderie with Bollywood is well-established. A few years ago, Shah Rukh Khan invited her over when she was in town and, more recently, Varun Dhawan and Ranveer Singh have appeared on her vlog that's been viewed 1.4 million times.

Today, Singh is better at managing her mental health. She surrounds herself with people who inspire her. She meditates and writes more. "I also mute a lot on social media—it's great to curate my feed so it serves my mental peace. I have got a dog, so that's a big one," she laughs. "Life is full up and downs, we just need to strengthen our tools." ■

—Anu Prabhakar

LILLY SINGH,
31, calls India her
"second home" and
is working on projects
about India's people
and institutions

CINEMA

WHEN SHE STARTS COLLECTING SHOES

ACTOR
**GULSHAN
DEVAIAH**
LIKES
COLLECTING
SHOES—BUT
HE HAS NOW
STARTED
STACKING UP
AWARDS AS
WELL

f Gulshan Devaiah's decade-long filmography is anything to go by, it's clear he can not only follow Bollywood's commercial formula (*Hate Story*, *Goliyon ki Raasleela*, *Ramleela* and *Commando 3*), but can also do justice to its indie spirit (*Shaitan*, *Huntermrr*, *A Death in the Gun*). Interestingly, he says, he wouldn't have had it any other way. "Sometimes, actors do something, and one wonders why did they do that?" said Devaiah. "I have not been obligated to do something because I need the money to maintain my lifestyle. I have managed my expectations and expenses well so far." If there's one indulgence, then it is shoes—he has over a hundred pairs.

Devaiah began 2020 on a high note. His zombie act in Dibakar Banerjee's socially relevant short in Netflix's *Ghost Stories* stood out in an otherwise lacklustre anthology. He drew acclaim for his turn as a suicidal writer in *Afsos*, a *Fargo*-like black comedy streaming on Amazon Prime. And he has been on the award circuit, having won his first best supporting actor Screen award for playing twin brothers—one a one-legged karate guru, the other a menacing don—in Vasan Bala's delightful action comedy *Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota*. "I didn't think of it as a validation at all," says Devaiah. "It's not that overwhelming feeling that finally it was good to be recognised. When people tell you that you deserve better, I would consider that as a validation more than winning an award." Nonetheless he's happy that he got to dress up and make his family "very happy".

Validation is now coming in the form of work. There's another digital series directed by Reema Kagti (*Talaash*, *Gold*). He is looking forward to making his Kannada-language debut, collaborating with one of the industry's most popular filmmakers, Rakshit Shetty. He also shot for his friend Radhika

Apte's directorial debut, *Sleepwalkers*, a short set in a beachside village in Maharashtra. The lines between mainstream and indie will always be blurred. "My approach to the use of my craft and my preparation and professionalism are always the same regardless of the type of film," he says. And the results show ■

—Suhani Singh



INDIA TODAY

Tourism

SURVEY & AWARDS 2020

Vote for India's
**BEST
MOUNTAIN
DESTINATION**
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>

TELEVISION

COX
IS
KING

BRIAN COX HAS BEEN ACTING IN THEATRE, AND IN BLOCKBUSTER FILMS, FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS, BUT IT IS WITH *SUCCESSION* THAT HE LANDED THE ROLE OF A LIFETIME



ALAMY

Q. Do you feel the success of *Succession* is partly due to a cultural shift that questions, and often ridicules, virtues and politically correct morality?

There is an element of that. It is a morality tale, Chaucerian in its ambition, and reflects the mores of the time. We are living in ludicrous times... the rise of the right, the idiocy of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, the ridiculousness of Vladimir Putin; and, in India, the move towards radical Hinduism, which is actually the opposite of what Hinduism is about. The zeitgeist of the time creates a show as extraordinary as ours.

Q. As someone playing a patriarch on the show, do you think it is imperative that children outshine parents in terms of achievements?

The demands Logan makes of his children is for them to be who they are and develop their abilities in certain areas. Like the whole bit when he says "you have to be a killer" (in season 2, which airs in India on Star World). It's not necessarily a good thing. But it's a survival mechanism that helps you in that world where one kills or is killed.

Q. Like Logan Roy, you too come from a humble background in Dundee, Scotland.

I had a blissful childhood until my father

Best
Foot Forward

CINEMA

Achintya Bose is the beating heart of ***Yeh Ballet***, a sensitively directed Netflix film

IT DOESN'T TAKE time—or dialogue—for Sooni Taraporevala to get to the point in her second feature film after *Little Zizou* (2009). Aerial shots of the Bandra-Worli Sea Link segue into a view from the "other" side—a little fishing village that signifies the salty origins of the shining new Mumbai. The story pivots around the volatile Asif and the soft-spoken Nishu, two young talents who emerge from the

city's slums and are catapulted to an esteemed ballet school in the US, propelled by their Israeli-American teacher, Saul (played by British actor Julian Sands).

Within the larger plot, the foeturn-bros track makes for interesting viewing. The film does occasionally err on the side of heavy drama, but it is in its visual layers that Taraporevala, a photographer herself, achieves



Manish Chauhan (left) and Achintya Bose in *Yeh Ballet*



A still from *Succession*

Succession, **BRIAN COX** says, is Chaucerian in its ambition and reflects the mores of our time

died when I was eight and then my mother got very ill. Danny Huston (fellow actor on the show) wanted to know my background. So I took a few of them to the spots of my childhood to show them the contrast. I've had a strong link to my city and kept in contact with it. It is very important to be reminded of where you come from.

Q. Everyone is watching *Succession*. What are you watching? I am fascinated by *The Crown* and its humanity. [The characters] are beset by tradition and the ancillary elements shoring up monarchy. But, ultimately, they are humans who make sacrifices and have ambitions. Peter Morgan has done an amazing job.

Q. Your interest in history was showcased in documentaries such as *Addicted to Pleasure* and *Brian*

Cox's Jute Journey. Do you plan to make more of such documentaries? *Jute Journey* came to me when I was in Calcutta in the 1980s and watching barges with jute on the Hooghly. I noticed many of them were from mills from Dundee, which made me think about the journey of jute. I want to tell intrinsic truths, which documentaries can help do.

Q. Logan Roy is an unscrupulous and unrepentant media magnate. What is Brian Cox's opinion on the role of media in a democracy? When you look at what goes on in the US with Fox News, you realise how warped and difficult it is for the proper news media to reflect the state of affairs. The media needs to maintain its integrity, which sometimes goes on a walkabout. ■

—with Abhishek Sikhwal



*In Yeh Ballet, **Sooni Taraporevala**, a sensitive photographer herself, has created a visually immersive piece*

her effects. Almost every department supports the production design and cinematography to create an immersive piece.

Based on Taraporevala's 2017 virtual reality documentary on the same subject, the film's emphasis is not so much on mastering muscles and faculties as on overcoming social divisions. Explicit in its politics, we even hear of the impending disaster of Mumbai's coastal road for its fishing communities.

The similarly themed *Gully Boy* looms large over this significantly smaller production; luckily for viewers, *Yeh Ballet* has its own voice and radiates its own light. While Manish Chauhan (from the original documentary) impresses with his balletic grace, and newcomer Mekhola Bose is superb as a plucky dancer, debutant Achintya Bose is the film's beating heart. It is his raw energy that makes *Yeh Ballet* a compelling watch. ■

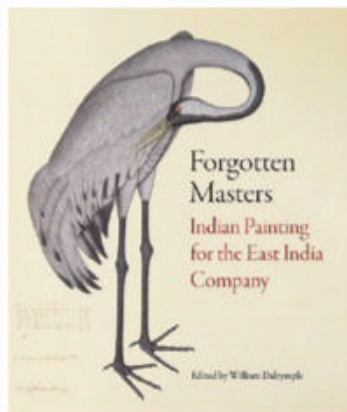
—Rehana Munir

INDIA TODAY Tourism SURVEY & AWARDS 2020

Vote for India's
**MOST
ICONIC
LANDSCAPE**
in a nationwide
online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>



FORGOTTEN MASTERS
Indian Painting for
the East India Company
 edited by *William Dalrymple*
 BLOOMSBURY
 ₹1,199; 192 pages



ART

NOT JUST COMPANY LTD.

INDIAN ART CREATED FOR THE EAST INDIA COMPANY
 IS A REVELATION IN CONTENT AND STYLE



FONDATION CUSTODIA, COLLECTION FRITS LUGT, PARIS

By the late 18th century, Indian artists found it increasingly difficult to earn a living from the declining centres of the Mughal court or its successors. Meanwhile, they began receiving commissions from patrons affiliated to the East India Company. The art these painters created for expatriates has never received its due.

As the sun set on the British empire, these were no longer displayed proudly in the UK, nor studied much in a newly independent India. In 2014, when art historian B.N. Goswamy picked out 101 images for his *Spirit of Indian Painting*, only one was a Company commission.

The very name 'Company School' betrays its emphasis on the colonial patrons "while excluding any reference

(even geographical) to the artists who created beautiful works of art", notes art historian Henry Noltie, whose essay on 18th and early 19th century Indian botanical drawings is part of a superb new volume called *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*, published alongside the first exhibition of Company-commissioned Indian art, on at the Wallace Collection in London till April 19, 2020. The show and the book have both been put together by author and historian William Dalrymple, whose interest in early colonialism has sustained a literary career, from *White Mughals*

(2002) to his most recent, *The Anarchy* (2019).

Sumptuously produced yet scholarly, *Forgotten Masters* features hundred masterworks by artists like Bhawani Das, Sita Ram, Shaikh Zain ud-Din of Patna, Shaikh Amir of Karraya,

Yellapah of Vellore, and Ghulam Ali Khan of Delhi. As the names show, 'Company School' artists were from different communities and may have trained in the Mughal, Maratha, Pahari, Punjabi, Tamil or Telugu traditions. Their subjects, too, were varied—botany, architecture, but also daily life, festivals, modes of transport and, crucially,

**These works
 should serve
 as a reminder
 that modern-
 ity in India
 began as
 colonial
 modernity**





Copyright THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

COMMISSIONED CANVAS (clockwise from above) A painting of the Arum tortuosum plant, by Vishnupersaud, 1821; 'Portrait of John Wombwell Smoking a Hookah', 1790; and 'English Child'

ordinary people.

Since previous Indian courtly art was dominated by rulers, durbars and deities, Mildred Archer argues that this documentation of the Indian natural and social world "democratised Indian painting". Many ordinary Indians appear, from dancing girls to servants of the new colonial household, palanquin bearers, the huge staff assembled for 'The Impey Children in their Nursery', or Shaikh Amir's portraits of Indian grooms with the sahib's dogs, horses and children. Nature had interested some Indian rulers, like Jahangir, but none appointed artists to document a personal zoo, as Justice Elijah and Lady Impey did in Calcutta. These gorgeous botanically accurate renditions of yams, palms or other plants by Manu Lall, Vishnupersaud and others; Shaikh Zain

ud-Din's birds or Haludar's studies of macaques, gibbons or sloth bears for the surgeon Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, were new for India.

Unlike the thick jewelled tones and decorative settings prized by Mughal and other Indian traditions, these images of soldiers, *pujaris* or city panoramas were often watercolours on white laid paper from England, with the surrounding area left empty.

In *Forgotten Masters*, we see the European patron's eyes turning the Indian miniaturist's brush to the service of architectural and anthropological precision, for a brief glorious period before photography made these skills superfluous. These works should be celebrated as Indian, but also serve as a reminder that modernity in India began as colonial modernity. ■

—Trisha Gupta

BOOKS

An Englishman in Pune

Uday S. Kulkarni's rendezvous with James Wales is a trip down an 18th century lane in India

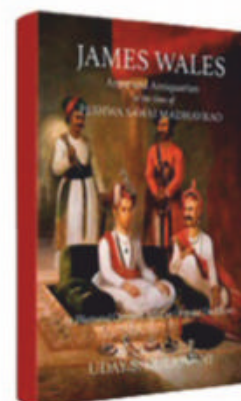
One of the first records of the artist James Wales is from 1777. Aged 30, he was evicted from his two-room tenement for failing to pay rent. According to the Edinburgh City Archives, his belongings were auctioned for £11 to pay off his landlady. In 1783, Wales moved to London and set himself up as a portrait and landscape painter. A chance meeting with the artist James Forbes led to a commission to complete Forbes's sketches of India and, in 1791, with permission from the East India Company, Wales, by then 44 years old, boarded a ship for Bombay.

Uday S. Kulkarni's book is a painstakingly detailed and fulsomely illustrated account of Wales's career in India, where he lived from July 1791 till his sudden death in November 1795.

India had proven to be good for Wales—by February 1792, he was advertising a framed set of engraved prints of his 'Twelve Views in Bombay' for Rs 350. But the real turnaround in his fortunes came when Charles Malet, long-time British Resident, suggested Wales move to Pune. Based on Malet's recommendations, he became the painter of choice for the local elite, from the Peshwa and Nana Phadnis to Company officials.

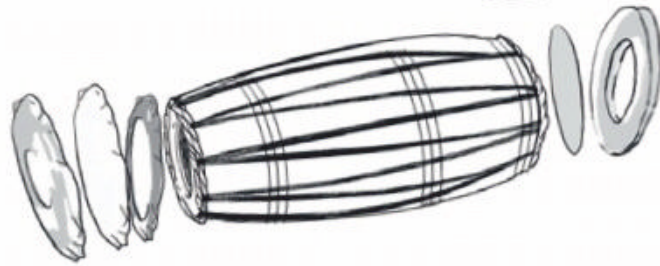
Wales's masterful oil portraits ('Peshwa in Durbar attended by his Minister', 'Nana Phadnis', 'Mahadji Scindia', and 'Con Saib', a portrait of Nuruddin Hussain Khan,) and his watercolours (of Ellora and Elephanta, among other antiquarian sites) provide a rare visual record of late 18th century India. But what makes this more than a coffee table book is Wales's daily journals and frequent letters to England, which bring to life this enterprising, curious foreigner's experience of a lost world, from 'nautch' girls dancing before antelopes at the Maratha durbar to observing preparations for a local *sati*. ■

—Trisha Gupta



JAMES WALES
Artist and Antiquarian in the
Time of Peshwa Sawai Madhav Rao
by Uday S. Kulkarni
MULA MUTHA PUBLISHERS
₹1,995; 250 pages

Drumming it Up



T.M. Krishna reveals the untold story of the *mridangam* and its makers



When musician and activist T.M. Krishna wrote his treatise on Carnatic music years ago, he left out the place of instrument makers in its long and clamorous history. In *Sebastian & Sons*, he partly fills that gap by telling the story of those who make the *mridangam*, the percussion instrument that today anchors every Carnatic performance.

Krishna's approach is characteristically thorough and earnest to a fault as he traces the evolution of the instrument and its makers. He explores the bylanes in which the makers live, with cousins, nephews, grand-nephews in the adjoining streets, all in the business of transforming pieces of animal skin from an untouchable object to the voice of the divine. He traces the families from Thanjavur, Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Palakkad and even Bangalore who engage in the craft. He documents their interactions with the percussion stars of past and present. He tran-



T.M. Krishna

scribes their memories about who had a robust "masculine" style and who had a nuanced "feminine" style, who demanded resonance, who demanded volume, and how the makers innovated to translate an artiste's imagination into sound.

The subject cannot be fairly treated without going where this writer goes, into the slaughterhouses, the skin markets, the imbalance of the maker-musician relationship, and the unthinking, frequent erasure of craftsmen without whom the music would not exist. "Who makes the sound?" Krishna asks, the person who made the drum, or the person who plays it? There may be no answer, but the

question must be asked.

He might have been briefer about the chemical composition of slaked lime or the genealogy of the grit inserted between the stretched membranes. The excess of detail hobbles its readability, and the book is sometimes a slog. So it's hard to believe that those who instantly took offence have actually read it through. Chennai's august Kalakshetra Foundation weasled out of hosting the book release, mumbling something about being a government-funded body. And readers who spotted the words *cow* and *caste* in an excerpt are now in a flap.

Still, the man cannot help being musical, whether he writes about achieving a choin-choin-choin versus a gonagonagona, or preferring a rom rom to a dhom dhom, or putting the oomph into it all. More to the point, in *Sebastian*, T.M. Krishna has done what he does best—name the unnamed and tell the untold story. ■

—Latha Anantharaman



SEBASTIAN & SONS
A Brief History of
Mridangam Makers
by T.M. Krishna
CONTEXT
₹799; 376 pages



MUSIC

STAYING SHARP

Venues may not be plenty in Bengaluru, but pianist **Aman Mahajan** is keeping the music alive

Part of the reason Aman Mahajan moved from Boston to Bengaluru in 2010 was the proliferation of venues such as BFlat (brand new back then) that were coming up in the city. Ten years later, a long-standing tussle between residents and pubs has virtually killed the live music scene in the city. Mahajan calls it “a huge loss for a city that didn’t have too many live music clubs in any case”. It’s one more challenge for a musician who is not part of the commercial scene. As he says, “The independent music scene doesn’t have enough stakeholders—good artiste managers, booking agents, music business people, indie labels. The musician often ends up taking on all of this.” The show, though, must go on.

That’s exactly what Mahajan is doing. In April, he releases *Heads and Tales*, an album of 15 tracks “of which 10 are completely improvised, based on concepts and ideas we came up with in the studio immediately before we recorded them”. It’s the result of ‘Tinctures’, a duo project with Berlin-based guitarist Nishad Pandey. Mahajan has also worked with Mystik Vibes (Muthu Kumar and Amith Nadig), “...dived into Hindustani and Carnatic music with no formal training” and played his compositions with Austrian musicians Patrick Dunst and Grilli Polheimer.

The soft-spoken pianist has also played keyboard and made a few forays into electronic sounds and computer music. His influences range from Indian music to jazz, contemporary pianist Shai Maestro, West African rhythms, percussionist Trilok Gurtu and folk and traditional music.

Mahajan describes himself as “a traveller through various musical cultures wanting to converse musically with people from across the globe”. Still, there’s a lot of India in his music, he says. Tracks, such as ‘Sitaphal-mandi’ and ‘Load Shedding’, capture the quintessence of life in India. “Playing music is a sort of internal dance between concept and emotion.

How you portray that is your artistry,” he says.

Next on Mahajan’s plate is a solo piano India tour in March-April with Vishruti Bindal of Natsukashii Artistes, to promote his new album *Refuge*, a debut piano-vocal duo effort with Radha Thomas of Bangalore Blues, on April 9, and a few performances in India with Brooklyn-based

vocalist Shilpa Ananth. ■

—Sowmya Rajaram



INDIA
TODAY
Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2020

Vote for India's
**FAVOURITE
STATE**
AS TRAVEL DESTINATION
in a nationwide online poll.

■ TO VOTE, LOG ON TO ■

<https://www.indiatoday.in/tourismawards-2020>



Q+A

DRAMA QUEEN

Junoon, the arts and theatre organisation, founded by **Sanjna Kapoor** and Sameera Iyengar, turns eight this month. Kapoor takes time out to chart its journey

Q. What was your vision for Junoon and how has it shaped up?

We wanted to see an urban landscape across India that has the arts as a fundamental part of its social life. We believe it is critical for a healthy society and we are taking baby steps towards it. What we believe we can do is be the conduit, and we do it through our several programmes. Like all start-ups, we had ambitious plans initially, but alongside we did smaller, practical things which are continuing.

Q. How have you gone about doing this?

Through programmes, like, the Mumbai Local (an interactive session organised by Junoon). We have done over 200 talks by artists. The other thing we delight in is curating. You can plan an event, get an eclectic group of artists and it is fantastic, but we speak to the artists about how we can come up with an idea together that will delight audiences. We also have our school programmes.

Q. How did your experience with Prithvi Theatre feed into Junoon?

Sameera worked with me at Prithvi for 10 years, I was there for 21. It was a huge learning ground. It also took a while for us to figure out how our shift in being needed to be without a venue. But it was a wonderful learning experience.

Q. Congratulations on receiving the French award, the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres recently. Tell us more.

It's a funny story. Apparently, often with this award, they take years to do the function after announcing the winner. So, I was told 12 years ago I was going to get it; it took 12 years to find a date [to receive it]!. It was a lovely, personal ceremony in the Ambassador's house.

—with Bhavya Dore

IndiaContent

**SEARCH FOR
EDITORIAL IMAGES
ENDS HERE**

