



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TAMING THE AGENCY

Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts, highlights concerns of imperilled autonomy

BARELY 15 DAYS before Parliament is scheduled to convene for the Winter Session, the government has promulgated two ordinances, inviting questions about its intent. That these two ordinances have to do with the tenure of directors of the CBI and ED — two agencies that are widely seen to be regularly called out, in the recent past, for targeting political opponents — makes the move even more controversial. In September, the Supreme Court had made it clear that the tenure of the present ED director, Sanjay Mishra, should not be extended beyond November. It appears that the ordinance is aimed at circumventing the apex court's directive. By giving the government the power to extend the tenure of the heads of the two agencies to a maximum of five years — from two years, currently — the two ordinances carry the potential of further chipping away the independence of these agencies.

Article 123 of the Constitution allows the Centre and state governments to frame laws through an ordinance but the Constitution-makers envisaged a much restrained use of this practice. The Supreme Court, too, has repeatedly affirmed the constitutional principle that the primary power to frame laws rests with Parliament, and not the executive. In the DC Wadhwa case in 1986, the court clarified that, "the power to promulgate an Ordinance is essentially a power to be used to meet an extraordinary situation and it cannot be perverted to serve political ends." However, in the past seven years, the Centre, as well as several state governments, have increasingly been succumbing to the temptation of bypassing the parliamentary route to make laws. The first NDA government averaged 9.6 ordinances a year and in its 10 years in office the UPA promulgated about seven ordinances a year. In comparison, in its seven years, the current government averages close to 11 ordinances a year. In April it went against the SC ruling of 2017 to re-promulgate an ordinance.

Successive governments in the past have abused the CBI, ED, Narcotics Control Bureau and the Income Tax department for partisan purposes. But the aggression with which central agencies have targeted political opponents of the current dispensation, without displaying anything close to a similar alacrity against alleged offenders from the BJP, marks a new low. The cases that the ED under Mishra has probed, or is currently investigating, involve members of the Congress, NCP, DMK, Samajwadi Party, TMC and National Conference. The list of Opposition leaders under the CBI's scanner is as long. Extending the tenure of the heads of the two agencies also goes against the SC's stipulation of a two-year term for them in the Vineet Narain case. The court's observation in this landmark case in 1997 that the agencies need "permanent insulation against extraneous influences" has acquired greater prescience. It also points to the challenge that lies ahead.

THE NAYIKA

Falguni Nayar has defied all stereotypes, her story will hopefully inspire more women to become job creators

BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR when you are close to 50 isn't easy. It's harder in a business — online retailing of beauty, personal care and fashion products — where the target consumers are Generation Z and Millennials. Falguni Nayar has defied all stereotypes, becoming India's only second self-made woman billionaire after Biocin's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw. Not only was the Rs 5,352-crore initial public offering of Nayar's FSN E-Commerce Ventures Ltd oversubscribed nearly 82.5 times, but its shares debuted at Rs 2,001 in the BSE on Wednesday, against the issue price of Rs 1,125. At Friday's closing price of Rs 2,359, the Nayar family's 52.56 per cent stake in her company was worth \$7.9 billion. That makes her the country's second richest woman after Savitri Jindal, ahead of Mazumdar-Shaw, Leena Tewari of USV, Mallika Srinivasan of Amalgamations, Smita Crishna of Godrej and Anu Aga of Thermax. All of them, barring Mazumdar-Shaw and Nayar, are inheritors of businesses originally promoted by men.

Nayar's company — better known as Nykaa, an apt take on the Sanskrit word 'nayika' or heroine — is also interesting in other ways. It reported a profit of Rs 62 crore on operational revenues of Rs 2,441 crore for the year ended March 31, 2021. This is rare for any digital startup, including the likes of Zomato and One 97 Communications (Paytm) that have been burning cash despite being around for more than a decade. One reason could be that a lot of what is sold through the company's websites, mobile apps and 73 physical stores are under its own Nykaa and Kay Beauty brands. This is unlike Amazon or Flipkart that largely hawk others' brands/products, whose gross monetary value paid by consumers would be many times the actual revenue accruing to the company. Nykaa has also been different from other tech startups in not receiving much venture capital funding. Most of its investors have been high-net worth individuals.

Whether or not Nykaa's future performance meets its post-IPO expectations, Nayar's story should hopefully inspire more women to become job creators, not just job seekers. Dismantling patriarchy requires many more such entrepreneurs to emerge, particularly from India's small towns and hinterlands. Nykaa's own business model has been about leveraging rising female workforce participation and aspirations. The fact that 64 per cent of its sales last fiscal came from Tier 2 and 3 cities points to not just a huge untapped market; the demand for skincare and beauty accessories is ultimately a reflection of growing aspirations.

WIN LIKE AUSTRALIA

Its T20 triumph proves that winning is about seizing the game's big moments

THE IDEA OF Australia as the ultimate tournament team that harnesses its energies, keeps its cool and manages to peak just when it matters played out again in the Emirates, when they bestrode hurdles and odds to be crowned world T20 champions in its sixth edition. It was the unlikelyst of victory arcs — entering the tournament as an underdog and then incrementally growing into it.

Historically, Australia's cricketers have been hard-wired with the knack of lifting their game when it matters. The team was flawed, it still is, but it seemed to have only fuelled their desire to win the one trophy missing from their shelf. Each of the 11 men who featured in the final contributed to the success, but at the same time, there were some towering individual performances too. They had a man for every moment; Matthew Wade in the semifinal, Mitchell Marsh in the final, both unlikely heroes. They had the usual heroes too — the apostle of comebacks, David Warner; the metronome of consistency, Josh Hazlewood. The team had a few format-specific players — the pace trio is the same as they field in the Tests, the openers are the same as in ODIs — but in the end performances matter more than reputations and labelling. Together, they proved that winning tournaments is not so much about stacking potential match-winners in their side as it's about seizing the game's big moments.

There were echoes of their first 50-over World Cup victory in 1987, which ushered in an era of domination for nearly three decades, where they entered every bilateral series and knockout tournament as outright favourites, and accumulated four more ODI World Cup titles. Their maiden T20 title could possibly propel a similar reign. They have a robust domestic T20 league in BBL, high-value players zig-zagging the franchise circuit, a progressive coaching contingent and an opportunity to defend their title in their backyard next year. That it took them so long to win a World T20 is a mystery. The World Cup in UAE may just have reawakened the trophy-guzzling dragon.



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

Climate of inequality

Unequal systems are compromising capacity to deal with emergencies like Covid and climate change

THE DECLARATION OF the just-concluded COP26 at Glasgow begins by making a reference to the Covid-19 pandemic. That was, perhaps, inevitable. The pandemic delayed the climate summit by a year and loomed large on the proceedings. High travel costs and quarantine rules reportedly resulted in several developing countries sending smaller delegations. On the eve of the meet, *The Guardian* relayed the warning of activists that about two-thirds of civil society organisations who usually send representatives to UNFCCC conclaves would keep away from the Glasgow COP, "making it one of the whitest climate conferences". Health risks to those who attended were also obvious.

Yet, beyond such immediate links, there are other reasons to see the two challenges in a similar light. Covid, like climate change, is a global emergency — the interconnectedness of the world facilitated the proliferation of the virus and its mutants. Like decarbonising the world, rendering effete a virus that has no respect for national boundaries requires international cooperation. The WHO's message — "No one is safe till everyone is safe" — expressed this imperative aptly. From a practical, as well as ethical, standpoint, therefore, preventing temperatures from rising catastrophically and dealing with the virus should be guided by the common purpose: Putting human well-being above parochial interests and commercial profits.

Since the early years of the climate change discourse, civil society activism has consistently refashioned the technical issue of cutting down emissions into one of ecological justice. At the core of this principle is the understanding that while the entire world is vulnerable to storms, floods and other extreme weather events, some people are more at peril than others. People in the small island nations face the risk of death, disease and livelihood disruptions because of coastal flooding and sea-level rises. Evidence from the US shows economically-strained communities of Black, Hispanics and indigenous people are more vulnerable to cyclones. As their land turns arid and crops fail, hundreds of millions of people from Central America to Africa to South Asia will be forced out of their homes. Madagascar is currently in the grip of a drought that could trig-

ger the first climate change-induced famine.

Allied to the understanding of disproportionate vulnerabilities is the notion of "Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)". One of the founding principles of the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change, CBDR acknowledges that though all countries are obliged to address global warming, individual capabilities should guide the extent of each effort. It also recognises that all countries cannot be held similarly culpable for climate change — there is now enough evidence that a small percentage of the world's population puts a disproportionately high amount of GHGs into the atmosphere.

This is where the global concord on averting a climate catastrophe has gotten fractured. Developed countries have scarcely acknowledged that the roots of climate change lie in their industrial trajectories and high per capita emissions. This denial has led them to renege on pledge after pledge on climate funding and made them stingy with technology transfer to the global south. COP26 disappointed by its failure to frame a pathway to address this long-standing issue. But then that was expected.

With the carbon space shrinking, the principle of climate justice has come under duress and its scope has become constricted. The Paris Pact refers to CBDR but makes no mention of the historical responsibilities of nations. At COP26, there was precious little to allay the fears that decarbonisation could mean denying the poorest the things that people in the developed world take for granted or assuage apprehensions that a transition to a system that produces power intermittently from solar panels or wind turbines, and requires large-scale retrofitting of national grids, would end up jeopardising energy equity in large parts of the world — including in India, which showcased its ambitious renewable energy plans at the meet. According to the IPCC, annual investments of \$2.4 trillion would be required till 2035 to fund a global clean energy transition. A post-pandemic global economy might make such investments difficult, especially in the outposts of renewable energy.

Like extreme weather events, the virus takes a toll on livelihoods, and impacts social

classes differentially. Amongst the lasting images of the pandemic will be that of the procession of Indian migrant workers to their native villages. Lacking even the most basic social security, these workers continue to bear the scars of one of the most stringent lockdowns even after a large number of them have returned to their workplaces.

Medically, success on the equity front is crucial in the battle against the virus. The sharing of information among research agencies facilitated the development of vaccines at an unprecedented pace. But even before the vaccines had completed their clinical trials, developed countries signed agreements with pharma majors to procure doses of the most promising jobs. It's an irony that even as we are in the midst of the greatest global inoculation programme, vaccine inequity is a major reason for prolonging the pandemic. Latest estimates suggest that less than 10 per cent of the adult population in at least 70 countries has completed the inoculation regimen.

At the same time, several countries have begun administering booster doses. According to the WHO, six times more booster doses are being administered globally than primary ones — a development described as a "scandal" by the global health agency's head, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Experts have made it clear that the virus will continue to be a threat in a world dotted by pockets of inoculated populations. These warnings do not seem to have struck a chord with the vaccine hoarders.

For long, it has been apparent that very few people corner a lion's share of the world's resources, and exercise unfair sway in the way global wealth is used. Structural inequalities in political and economic systems are compromising humankind's capacity to deal with emergencies such as climate change and Covid, even as science continues to create pathways for human resilience.

The sentence carrying the reference to the pandemic in the Glasgow declaration also talks about "the importance of ensuring a sustainable, resilient and inclusive global recovery". In an unequal world, such statements are increasingly beginning to sound like homilies.

kaushik.dasgupta@expressindia.com



RADHIKA PANDEY AND GANESH GOPALAKRISHNAN

PATH TO THE DIGITAL RUPEE

Careful attention must be paid to matching design features with domestic priorities

IN LATE October, Nigeria launched its non-interest-yielding central bank digital currency (CBDC) — the eNaira. In doing so, it joined the Bahamas and five islands in the East Caribbean as the only economies to have introduced CBDCs. This is a short list, but one that is likely to be supplemented. CBDC pilot projects are underway in at least 17 other countries.

In substance, the great hope for the eNaira lies in its perceived potential to address inefficiencies in Nigeria's payment, remittances, and public welfare distribution systems, while progressing financial inclusion. The eNaira enables targeted welfare payments into the wallets of citizens directly, eliminating the need for intermediaries. In parallel, the Central Bank of Nigeria claims that the eNaira will offer secure and cost-effective channels for in-bound remittances — a key source of foreign exchange for the country. The eNaira is also attributed with progressing financial inclusion because it has been designed as an account-based CBDC with know your customer (KYC) norms linked to the unique identity indicators under Nigeria's National Financial Inclusion Strategy.

This desire to make domestic payments systems and cross-border remittances cheaper, faster and more efficient, and deepen financial inclusion, represent key areas of priority for most other emerging market and development economies (EMDEs). In fact, between 2019 and 2021, the last three surveys conducted by the Bank for International Settlements showed that the primary drivers for central banks of EMDEs to study CBDCs were domestic payments efficiency, financial inclusion and payments safety.

So, how could CBDCs solve all of these long-standing issues? And are CBDCs the most elegant solution for such problems? In short, it depends. In theory, the potential of CBDCs are only limited by their design and the capabilities of the central bank issuing it, but their appropriateness and form also depend on the state of the domestic banking and payments industry. Ultimately, CBDCs must be seen as a means to an end. A particular CBDC could, for example, be account-based or tokenised, may be distributed directly by the central bank or through intermediaries, may be interest-bearing (even the possibility of a negative interest has been considered), may be programmable, may offer limited pseudonymity to its holders (similar to, but not to the extent of, cash) and so on. Whether it may be one or the other depends on what its country requires it to be.

The first-order challenge, therefore, for any central bank considering CBDCs lies in matching their domestic priorities with design features. Given that a CBDC could substitute or complement cash and private e-money, there are also significant domestic economic consequences that will follow the design elements, particularly the potential of CBDCs to be interest-bearing. An economy that adopts an interest-bearing CBDC could make the interest rate on CBDCs the main tool of monetary policy transmission domestically (assuming a high degree of substitution of fiat and fiat-like currency). In such a case, monetary policy transmission would no longer be constrained by the downward rigidity of interest rates and traditional limitations of zero-lower bound.

On the other hand, as former RBI Governor

D Subbarao recently warned, rendering an Indian CBDC as an interest-bearing instrument could pose an existential threat to the banking system by eroding its critical role as intermediaries in the economy. If CBDCs compete with bank deposits and facilitate a reduction of bank-held deposits, banks stand to lose out on an important and stable source of funding. Banks may respond by increasing deposit rates, but this would necessitate a higher lending rate to preserve margins, and dampen lending activities. At the same time, banks may be perversely incentivised to engage in riskier lending and hold relatively riskier, less-liquid assets.

The resultant shrinking of balance sheets will lead to a more pronounced disintermediation role for financial institutions, which could have long-term effects on financial stability, and facilitate easier bank runs. The introduction of CBDCs would require central banks to maintain much larger balance sheets, even in non-crisis times. They would need to replace the lost funding (because of migration of deposits) by lending potentially huge sums to financial institutions, while purchasing correspondingly huge amounts of government and possibly private securities. CBDCs could also have implications for the state from seigniorage as the cost of printing, storing, transporting and distributing currency can be reduced.

Recent comments by RBI officials have focussed on the desirability of introducing CBDCs. But the path to a "Digital Rupee" is not clear.

The authors are respectively, Senior Fellow and Research Fellow at NIPFP. Views are personal

NOVEMBER 16, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

GARHWAL REPELL

OPPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS met the President Sanjiva Reddy to protest against the cancellation of the repoll in the Garhwal parliamentary constituency scheduled for November 22. They also submitted a memorandum to the President demanding a judicial enquiry by a serving judge of the Supreme Court to look into the circumstances leading to the cancellation of the repoll. They wanted responsibility to be fixed on those bent on subverting the Constitution. The memorandum urged the President to take steps for holding the Garhwal repoll immediately. It alleged that the cancellation was a direct at-

tack on democracy. They alleged that even without an Emergency there was a constitutional breakdown.

UP JAIL STRIKE

WITH THE UP government succeeding in getting the Garhwal repoll postponed, the prospects of the 18-day strike coming to an end has brightened. The government has made the jail strike a crucial issue and contended before the Election Commission that the strike and the deployment of 48 companies made it impossible to spare the police force necessary for monitoring polling in Garhwal. The Jail Minister, Ram Singh Khanna, was hopeful of

an early end to the strike. He said that if the strike was called off unconditionally, the government would not be vindictive.

PUNJAB CM'S WARNING

PUNJAB CM Darbara Singh has alleged that the majority community in the state was making attempts to dominate the minority issue. Nobody would be allowed to create such a situation, he warned. The government, he said, will not remain a spectator and allow extremists to create terror. Such extremists, he alleged, were strengthening the hands of Pakistan, which was receiving arms from the US. Terrorism is not a religious activity he said.



Doing business with Turkey

Its influence in the region is expanding. Delhi's current political divergence with Ankara only reinforces the case for a sustained dialogue between the two governments and strategic communities



RAJA MANDALA

By C. RAJA MOHAN

INDIA IS QUITE familiar with the transnational politics of Asianism, Islamism, and Communist internationalism. Independent India has been at the forefront of building a large movement of developing countries — or the “global south” — against the rich “global north”. The ambitious reach of these movements always exceeded their grasp. Internationalism based on religion, region or secular ideologies has always run headlong into resistance from sectarianism and nationalism. Yet, these ideas have a profound impact on global politics. Even more importantly, calls for regionalism and internationalism as well as religious and ethnic solidarity often end up as instruments for the pursuit of national interest.

At the moment, no one plays this internationalist card for national benefit better than Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Delhi, which has been worried about Erdogan's Islamist politics, must now begin to pay attention to another political idea from the Turkish president — promoting pan-Turkism.

The international symbol of solidarity among peoples of Turkic ethnicity has been the Council of Turkic States, formed in 2009 by Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. At a summit of the Council's leaders last week in Istanbul, it was announced that the forum has been elevated to an “Organisation of Turkic States”.

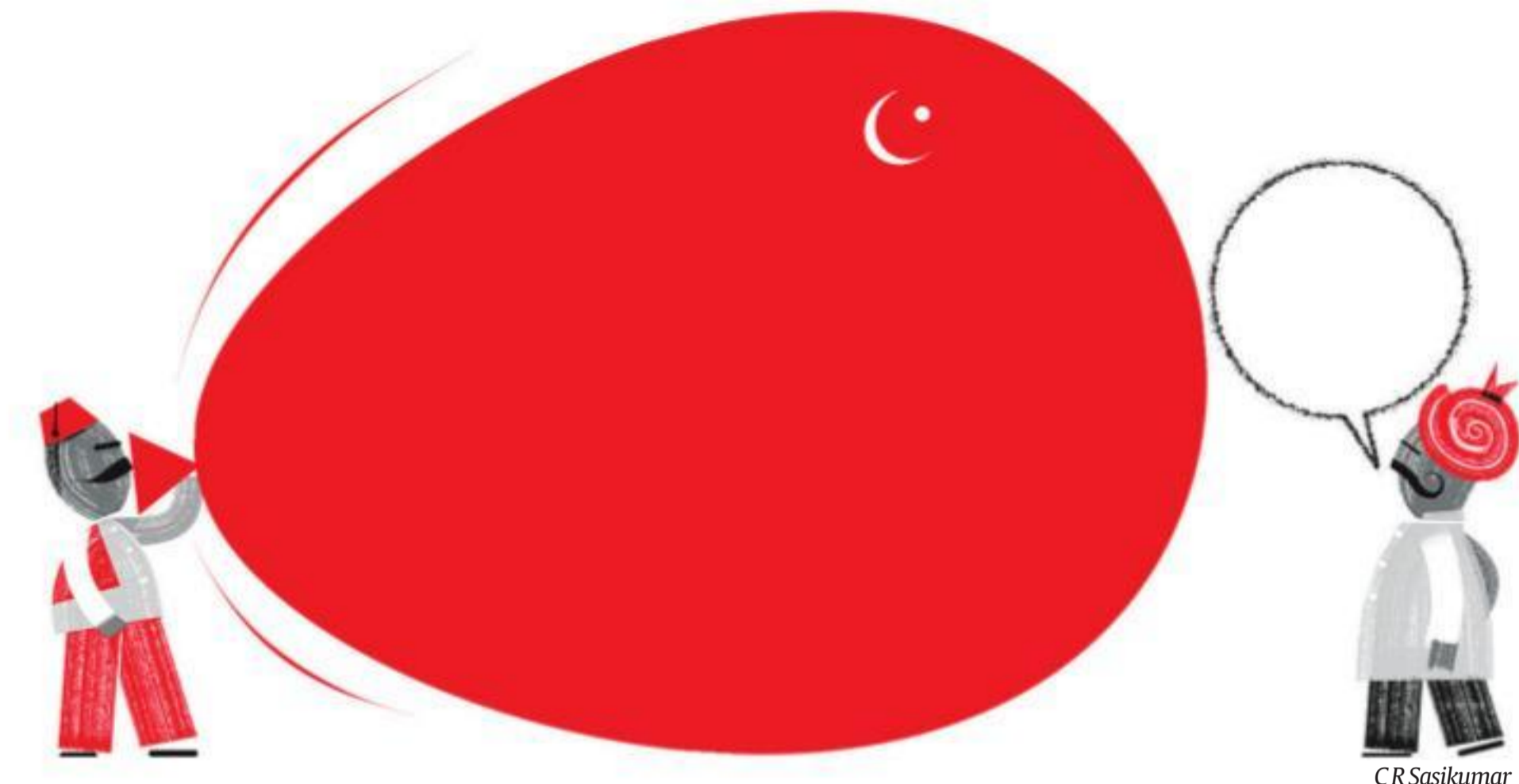
Some hope that the OTS could become an economic and political community like the European Union. Others visualise the emergence of an “Army of Turan”. In Persian, “Turan” refers to Central Asian regions to the north of Iran. Although an EU-like federation or NATO-like military alliance might be far-fetched today, there is no escaping the fact that Turkey is determined to rewrite the geopolitics of Eurasia.

The rise of pan-Turkism is bound to have important consequences for Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Central Asia and, more broadly, India's Eurasian neighbourhood.

The ideology of pan-Turkism is not new. Its origins date back to the mid-19th century when campaigns for uniting Turkic people in Russia gained traction. Its geographic scope would eventually become much wider, covering the huge spread of Turkic people from the “Balkans to the Great Wall of China”. A defining slogan of pan-Turkism is this: “Where there are Turks, there is Turkey.”

But the decline of Turkey and the integration of Turkic people into other states steadily diminished the salience of the idea in the 20th century. As the Cold War came to an end and the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Ankara saw new opportunities to engage with the newly independent republics of Turkish ethnicity in post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

President Turgut Ozal convened the first Turkish summit with some central Asian states in 1992. The arrival of Erdogan as the leader of Turkey in 2002 speeded up the process. He converted the annual summit with the inner Asian states into a Council of Turkic States in 2009. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan joined



CR Sasikumar

Turkey as founding members. In Ankara, it was hailed as the “first voluntary alliance of the Turkic states in history”. Uzbekistan joined the council last and raised its profile at the Istanbul summit last week.

Hungary, which has a long history of association with Turkic people, and Turkmenistan have observer status. At least a dozen other countries have apparently shown interest in getting observer status. The OTS also adopted a vision document called “Turkish World 2040” that will guide the organisation's efforts to develop intensive cooperation among its members and contribute vigorously to regional and international security.

Over the last three decades, a number of soft power initiatives — in education, culture, and religion — have raised Turkey's profile in Central Asia and generated new bonds with the region's elites. But it is in the domains of hard power — commercial and military — that Turkey's progress has been impressive.

Nearly 5,000 Turkish companies work in Central Asia. Turkish annual trade with the region is around \$10 billion. This could change as Turkey strengthens connectivity with Central Asia through the Caucasus. Turkey has also made impressive progress in building transportation corridors to Central Asia and beyond, to China, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The so-called Lapis Lazuli Corridor now connects Turkey to Afghanistan via Turkmenistan.

Turkey has stunned much of the world with its military power projection into the region. In the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan earlier this year, Turkish military intervention decisively tilted the war in favour of the latter. Many in the region are beginning to purchase Turkish drones that played a key role in Azerbaijan's victory. Last year, Kazakhstan signed an agreement for wide-ranging defence and security cooperation with Turkey.

That Kazakhstan, a member of the Russia-led regional security bloc, is moving towards strategic cooperation with Turkey, a member of US-led NATO, points to the thickening pan-Turkic bonds in a rapidly changing regional order. For the Central Asian states, living under the shadow of Chinese economic power and Russian military power, Turkey offers a chance for economic diversification and greater strategic autonomy.

Pan-Turkism certainly adds another layer of complexity to Eurasian geopolitics. That is a good reason for India to explore a more purposeful engagement with Turkey. But there is no denying that the current differences between Delhi and Ankara over Kashmir, Pakistan

and Afghanistan are real and serious.

The current political divergence only reinforces the case for a sustained dialogue between the two governments and the strategic communities of the two countries. Dealing with Turkey must now be an important part of India's foreign and security policy. Turkey's own geopolitics offers valuable lessons on how to deal with Ankara.

That Turkey is a NATO member has not stopped Erdogan from a strategic liaison with Russian President Vladimir Putin. That he purchases advanced weapons like S-400 missiles from Moscow does not stop Erdogan from meddling in Russia's Central Asian backyard. Ankara's criticism of China's repression of Turkic Uighurs in Xinjiang — that was once called “Eastern Turkestan” — goes hand-in-hand with deep economic collaboration with Beijing. Erdogan's ambitious pursuit of the Islamic world's leadership does not mean he will break diplomatic ties with Israel.

What does this policy tell India? One, Erdogan's enduring enthusiasm for Pakistan does not preclude Turkey from doing business — economic and strategic — with India. Erdogan, who plays hardball with everyone, will be surprised if Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not respond to Turkey's Pakistan's embrace with political activism in Ankara's neighbourhood.

Erdogan's ambitions have offended many countries in Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Many of them are eager to expand strategic cooperation with India in limiting Turkish hegemony. This opens a range of new opportunities for Indian foreign and security policy in Eurasia.

Meanwhile, sceptics will point to the fact that Erdogan's time is running out. After nearly two decades at the Turkish helm, Erdogan's grip over power looks shaky and he is having trouble getting Turkey's economy back on a high growth track. That does not, however, alter the Indian imperative to engage with Turkey.

As a great civilisational state, Turkey will endure as a pivotal state in Eurasia long after Erdogan is gone. Independent India has struggled to develop good relations with Turkey over the decades. A hard-headed approach in Delhi today, however, might open new possibilities with Ankara and in Turkey's Eurasian periphery.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“But the shocking failures of western governments with regard to polluting industries and subsidies — plans for a new coal mine in Cumbria are a particularly egregious example — in no way excuse the pro-coal policies pursued by India, China and others.” — THE GUARDIAN

The Glasgow cop-out

Solutions to climate change will not come from the same scientific-industrial-economic system that has created the problem



ARUN MAIRA

SCIENCE HAS CROSSED a frontier this year. Private citizens can fly away from Earth's problems into space, if they can afford to. On Earth, heads of nations gathered in Glasgow, in their 26th meeting since the first in Rio in 1992, to agree on a solution to prevent damages to Earth by human activity. They failed again.

It has not been easy to accept that technological advances, and more consumption and economic growth are the causes of the problem. And that economically richer nations must take more responsibility for solving a global problem that they have caused. The ethical implication — that they must reduce their consumption levels while poorer nations' citizens must use more energy and consume more to lift their standards of living in the meantime — is the principal sticking point for an equitable solution.

Greta Thunberg challenged global leaders in the UN in 2019. “How dare you turn to us, (young people, for solutions)”, she said. Many young people say that Greta had innocently got it wrong. She was asking the very people, who could not find a solution, to now come up with one. As Einstein had said, to work harder to find a solution with the same approach that has created the problem is insanity. The solutions the world needs will not come from the same science-industrial-economic system that has created the problem. New solutions are more likely to come from people who have been protesting for long about the conversion of their lands, their knowledge, and even their bodies, into property for a colonial industrial machine. Many have struggled to maintain nature-friendly lifestyles while being dismissed as anti-progress and anti-science by an industrial growth machine for whom nature is just a source of resources for itself.

While people in rich countries talk about saving the planet for their grandchildren, people in poorer countries need the planet's resources here and now to save their own lives. In fact, they have been aware of the consequences of environmental degradation long before rich people could afford technological solutions to protect their lifestyles, with bottled water and air purifiers, and by outsourcing the production of the stuff they need to low-cost factories in poorer countries, while they maintained a pristine environment in their own lands.

Climate change has been impacting everyone on the planet, albeit differently. As it accelerates, the impacts on economically poorer nations, and on the poor in all nations, will be much more than on the rich. The story of climate change must be seen through a broader lens of equity and resilience rather than a narrow lens of mitigation and carbon reduction. For the rich,

achieving “net zero carbon” is required to save lives in the future. The poor cannot afford to lose any more lives now by implementing solutions for net zero that the rich demand all must adopt. The solutions must be equitable and just, not merely technologically innovative.

COP26 in Glasgow was another cop out, Thunberg declared. “All blah blah” she said. Meanwhile, hundreds of people from poorer countries, and climate activists from rich ones too, were shut out of official discussions. It was the worst managed COP meeting ever, many said. The powerful people talked to each other and did not even listen to those who had experience on the ground who, waiting outside to be heard, could only protest, once again, at the exclusionary process. Einstein had warned us: Until those presently in power listen to the people outside, neither will there be justice, nor, tragically, will there be a new solution.

The solutions to save the planet from more carbon in the atmosphere must ensure all round well-being of humans everywhere. Their livelihoods must be protected. The response to the Covid crisis has taught us that a single goal agenda of preventing people from getting infected and dying from the virus, has caused more premature deaths due to loss of incomes, and more deaths from other treatable causes because resources were diverted to Covid alone. The numbers of deaths due to Covid came down, while deaths due to other causes went up. The future lives of children have been affected, even in rich countries, by the shutting down of schools to save them from the virus.

Complex problems, like climate change and human well-being, require whole systems solutions. All things must be considered, not just the medical or technical problem that presents itself for a solution. Otherwise, the side-effects of the medicine may kill the patient before the disease does.

The SDGs list 17 goals, covering the wide range of environmental, social, and economic problems which must be solved simultaneously to save the planet and people. All countries have these problems to different degrees and in different shapes. The solutions to preserving the environment will have to be local. “One size” solutions will not fit all. Solutions will have to be found and implemented within countries, and within cities and districts. They must be found and cooperatively implemented locally by stakeholders everywhere.

Power is monopolised by those in power. The UN Security Council, the WTO, the World Bank and IMF, and the COP summits are controlled by the most powerful nations. They have set the agenda and have framed the rules of the game so far. A more equitable and more sustainable world needs new institutional arrangements for its governance. The voice of nature and the voices of people outside the fortress of the powerful must be heard. The locals must have the freedom to find good solutions. They must coordinate with each other laterally as partners in global progress.

The writer is the author of A Billion Fireflies: Critical Conversations to Shape a New Post-pandemic World

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MIXED BAG

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Heavy weather’ (IE, November 15). That 195 nations participating in COP26 arrived at a consensus and made commitments towards the net-zero was a positive development. But the worrying outcome is the indifference of rich nations in ensuring emission equity — despite high per capita emission they did little in meeting the commitment of financing and transferring technology to developing nations. However, a notable pledge by about 100 countries was to reduce methane (a highly lethal gas) emission by 30 per cent by 2030. The conference raised the stature of India globally in deliberations about climate change. Its commitments to renewable energy and a net-zero economy by 2070 earned praise. India could not agree about phasing out of coal as coal accounts for 75 per cent of electricity generated. Its proposed amendment to phase down instead of phase out coal was accepted by all nations even if reluctantly.

YG Chouksey, Pune

MERE TOKENISM

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The legend of Birsa Munda’ (IE, November 15). The attempts to change the basic character of CNT and SPT Acts pertaining to tribal land rights in Jharkhand expose the duplicity of the government. The report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-economic, health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India is neither made public and not yet acted upon. Honouring tribal icons leaders is mere symbolism without any substantive

impact in their socio-economic development. In fact, beyond tokenism, tribals are “out of sight, out of mind”, unless they become prey for vested interests on account of the mineral wealth under their feet — these are mined and exploited, and the communities are displaced and rendered homeless. They constitute the biggest chunk of India's internally displaced population. Instead of declaring Birsa Munda's birthday November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, naming it as Adivasis Gaurav Divas would have suited their indigenous culture, since most don't consider themselves Hindu, and they have no caste system among them. Earlier, the BJP had wanted the new state named Vananchal instead of Jharkhand. Paradoxically, the BJP has accepted the existence of indigenous population in Assam but the central government has refused to accept this for India.

LR Murmu, Delhi

PURITY, A MIRAGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Let them have cake’ (IE, November 15). The rise of “purity culture” in recent years is fuelled by growing anxiety about globalisation and is furthered by majoritarian governments. This often manifests as a rejection of all “foreign” influences and increasing rigidity on traditional norms. Since cultures flourish only by the exchange of ideas and concepts around the globe, the very notion of a pure culture is an oxymoron. While this may be difficult to come to terms with, we must be careful not to let prejudice and hate overtake love for one's culture.

Ila Railkar, Mumbai

Surviving the BRCA mutation

Testing, risk assessment can help women prone to breast and ovarian cancer



SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

IN JULY 1946, Shanti Chand and Vimla Bhandari of Kolkata were blessed with a daughter. She was named Rita, after the Hollywood star Rita Hayworth. The glamour queen of the 1940s became, perhaps, the best-known case of the early onset of Alzheimer's disease, thanks to the relentless information campaign waged by her daughter Yasmin Aly Khan. But little Rita Bhandari, who grew up to be a beautiful, vivacious and articulate woman, died in my arms of ovarian cancer at 75. She shared not the fate of her namesake but the genetic misfortune of another Hollywood icon, Angelina Jolie. They were both prime candidates for breast or ovarian cancer because of their maternal lineage.

Jolie's mother, Marcheline Bertrand, a small-time French actress, died of breast and ovarian cancer. Jolie learnt that she had an 87 per cent chance of suffering from breast cancer. In 2013, at the height of her career, she had both her breasts removed surgically (she has since replaced them with implants). Jolie's chance of getting breast cancer reduced to 5 per cent. Two years later, after her annual check-up, she learnt that she had a 50 per cent chance of getting ovarian cancer. She underwent surgery for the removal of her ovaries and fallopian tubes. She suffered early menopause, but publicly announced that she felt no less a woman. She has since then written about her condition and her brave decisions in the hope that other women would benefit from this information. We were aware of Jolie's decisions but had

little access to her writings. Rita's family had been especially targeted by the emperor of maladies. Her mother died of brain cancer and her sister of Hodgkin's lymphoma, cancer of the lymph nodes. But more importantly, her maternal grandmother, two aunts and two cousins had all died of breast or ovarian cancer. We shared this history with Rita's consulting oncologist at the very first meeting.

The oncologist was quite well-read. She ordered BRCA and BRCA 1 mutation tests immediately. The results came three weeks later and indicated that Rita had an extremely high chance of getting ovarian cancer. It was too late, of course, as the disease had reached an advanced stage.

Since then, I have spent countless hours trying to read and understand as much as possible about the disease, its causes, consequences and the treatment. I had known the history; I had some little inkling of BRCA, could I not have prevailed on Rita to undergo a BRCA mutation test earlier, and followed up on it? That remorse is of little use now.

I have distilled below in a few paragraphs what I have learnt about the dreaded mutation. I want to share it widely in the hope that for at least some it may not be too late. BRCA 1 and an unrelated BRCA 2 are proteins associated with breast tissues which help repair damaged DNA or destroy cells if the damaged DNA cannot be repaired. They are thus tumour suppressor or caretaker genes. But

if BRCA itself has undergone a mutation, it loses the ability to repair DNA. This increases the susceptibility of the carrier of the mutant gene to breast and other cancers, notably ovarian cancer. Women with abnormal BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 genes have up to 80 per cent risk of developing breast cancer by age 90 and women with BRCA 1 mutations have up to 55 per cent risk of developing ovarian cancer.

Scientists had long suspected that some cancers are inherited, especially breast and ovarian cancer. Ashkenazi Jewish females have had a long, reported history (BRCA mutations are sometimes referred to as AJ mutations).

The discovery of BRCA mutations is of recent origin, starting in 1990. Testing for BRCA mutations became possible in 1994. Therefore, literature on the subject is also of recent origin. While BRCA mutations are primarily associated with breast and ovarian cancer, there is some evidence of their role in other cancers, especially in the abdominal and thoracic cavities. Women linked to the BRCA mutation have considerably elevated risk of pancreatic cancer.

The scientific literature I have perused is chiefly about the mechanics and the biochemistry of the functioning of BRCA mutations and various cancers. I will skip all this and jump straight to what to do if the presence of BRCA mutations is suspected because of family history. Most importantly, women post-puberty with a strong matrilineal family history of

That Kazakhstan, a member of the Russia-led regional security bloc, is moving towards strategic cooperation with Turkey, a member of US-led NATO, points to the thickening pan-Turkic bonds in a rapidly changing regional order. For the Central Asian states, living under the shadow of Chinese economic power and Russian military power, Turkey offers a chance for economic diversification and greater strategic autonomy.