

THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE OLYMPICS,
INDEFINABLE, SPRINGING FROM THE SOUL, THAT
MUST BE PRESERVED. — CHRIS BRASHER

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The climate deadline

The crisis deserves sober, continuing analysis,
deliberation and action

ARUNABHA GHOSH

DIRE NECESSITY

IPCC report could intensify pressure on Delhi to hike its climate
ambition. Financial, technological incentives hold the key

HUMANS HAVE ALREADY put so much greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that damage control is now their best possible recourse. The planet is likely to be hotter by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next two decades, even if nations begin cutting emissions sharply immediately, warns a report issued on Monday by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The already noticeable effects of warming could become harsher as a result — rainfall could become more unpredictable, heat waves more scorching and droughts more taxing. The threshold of 2 degrees Celsius, the more conservative determinant for several Paris Climate Change Pact goals and critical to check cataclysmic weather events, is likely to be passed by 2060 in the business-as-usual scenario — decades earlier than that predicted by the IPCC scientists in 2018. The report does, however, leave a small window of opportunity to take corrective measures. Its hypothesis that “aggressive emission cuts beginning now could reduce warming after 2050”, may set the tone for climate diplomacy in the coming months and years.

In about three months from now, climate negotiators will meet in Glasgow, where upscaling climate ambitions is likely to be the major issue of contention. The nationally determined contributions (NDC) to check emissions, the core of the Paris Pact, have been criticised as inadequate for attaining the agreement’s goals. Increasingly, the NDCs are being seen as a precursor to achieving carbon neutrality by mid-century — net-zero commitments announced by more than 100 countries. Net-zero is a state in which a country’s emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of GHGs from the atmosphere through natural processes as well as futuristic technologies such as carbon capture and storage. It also requires phasing out fossil fuel-based energy. Developed countries expect India to do more heavy lifting on this count. India regards the emphasis on net-zero as a deviation from the landmark pact’s architecture. Moreover, as a UN Climate Change Report, released in February, pointed out, “there remains a significant gap between longer-term carbon neutrality and the commitments undertaken in the NDCs, which must be addressed”.

India has rightly argued that any commitment to net-zero would mean compromising developmental goals of countries with a far shorter legacy of emissions compared to the developed world. Delhi has pointed to the developed countries’ poor track record with respect to fulfilling their technology transfer and financial-aid commitments to developing countries. At the same time, the small window of opportunity to make the planet less hotter in 30 years would be lost if the world’s third largest emitter is not on board in the carbon neutrality project. Resolving this tension would hold the key in obviating the grim scenario projected in the IPCC report.

IS THERE A way to shift from the sensational to the strategic? Earlier this week, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported on climate science, warning against the folly of a business-as-usual development model. Past assessments have been disregarded as sensationalist. For attention to shift from a day of front-page news to a more strategic conversation, we must understand what the science says, what the politics delivers, and what the economy demands.

Globally, average surface temperatures have already risen by 1.09°C between 1850 and 1900, and 2010 and 2019, thanks to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. What happens next depends on our development and technological choices.

The IPCC document explores several scenarios based on shared socioeconomic pathways and different levels of radiative forcing (or the change in the energy balance in the atmosphere due to natural or human causes). If we followed high fossil fuel development (doubling emissions by 2050), temperatures would rise by 4.4°C (range of 3.3-5.7°C) by 2100. If a more sustainable pathway were pursued (with net-zero emissions by 2060 and negative emissions thereafter), average global temperature rise would be 1.4°C (range of 1.0-1.8°C).

Regardless, it is likely that average rise in temperatures will breach the 1.5°C barrier within the next two decades. If emissions are not mitigated rapidly, we are staring at rising climate risks and catastrophic impacts.

Science has become better at attributing warming to human influence and extreme events to a changing climate. Less than 0.1°C of the warming observed since the pre-industrial era is thanks to natural reasons. Human influence is very likely the main reason behind glacial retreat since the 1990s. Since observations began, glaciers have lost the maximum mass during 2010-19.

India is particularly vulnerable. If warming exceeds 4°C, India could see about 40 per cent increase in precipitation annually, leading to extreme rainfall events. My colleagues at CEEW find that three-quarters of India’s districts are now hotspots of extreme weather events. Since 1990, more than 300 such events have resulted in damages exceeding Rs 5.6 lakh crore.

Just because our time horizons are limited

does not mean that the climate will stop changing at the end of the century. Average rate of sea-level rise was 1.3 mm per year during 1901-71. Scientists say with high confidence that this rate increased to 3.7 mm annually during 2006-18. Even with warming restricted to 1.5°C, we are still on course for more than 2 metres of sea-level rise beyond this century. We are bequeathing a very different world to future generations.

The world needs transformational change but countries have more myopic outlooks. The IPCC says that in order to stabilise rise in temperatures, two things have to happen: Anthropogenic emissions must become net-zero and, in the interim, cumulative emissions cannot exceed a global carbon budget. To stay within the 1.5°C limit, starting in 2020, the remaining global carbon budget is 300-500 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide (GtCO₂) (with a likelihood of 50 per cent-83 per cent). But who will cut their emissions?

Of late, several large emitters have promised net-zero emission targets. But China and the United States have already emitted 129 GtCO₂ and 344 GtCO₂, respectively, between 1990 and 2010. CEEW analysts calculate that despite their self-laudatory targets, China would consume 87 per cent of the global carbon space (if it reached net-zero in 2060) and the US would eat up 26 per cent (if it reached net-zero in 2050). Clearly, mere announcements of net-zero targets do little to retard the “carbon grab” of the largest emitters. To use a Tokyo Olympics analogy, the largest current and historical polluters are putting gold medals on themselves, while poorer participants are left to compete on a very uneven playing field.

The carbon budget did not, however, begin in 2020. What’s left of it is a consequence of past inaction. In a pathbreaking study, CEEW researchers find that rich countries, as a whole, emitted ~25 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂eq) more than their estimated emission allowance during 2008-20, thanks to non-participation in pre-2020 climate agreements and misuse of accounting loopholes. To put it in context, this is more than half the world’s greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, or nine years’ worth of India’s 2016 emissions. Climate justice demands that developed countries now take steps to free up carbon space for others.

If climate science is stark and climate politics has been unjust, how do we meet our development aspirations? The claim on a fair share of the carbon budget is not a licence to pollute. India must adopt a more climate-friendly development pathway for its own sake. Its per capita incomes, energy consumption and carbon footprint are well below the global average but it must deliver high rates of economic growth within a shrinking carbon budget.

India has an energy revolution underway. This ranges from household electrification to smart meters, scaling up solar and wind to new ambitions in biofuels and hydrogen, energy efficiency to clean cooking for millions, electrification of railways to electric vehicles, being the first country with a cooling action plan to skilling thousands in green jobs.

Next, the discourse must shift from energy to the economy. There are very few sunrise sectors that are not low-carbon. India must tap new technology frontiers (green hydrogen), new business models (distributed and digitalised services, for distributed energy, EV charging, cold chains), new construction materials (low-carbon cement, recycled plastic), new opportunities in the circular economy of minerals, municipal waste and agricultural residue, and new practices for sustainable agriculture and food systems. Many of these technologies and business models are proven but need policy and regulatory support.

Finally, it will become imperative to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and repair the climate in critical regions, such as the poles. If those tipping points are breached, there will be disastrous consequences. This will require new levels of international cooperation.

Climate science is not sensationalism but gets plugged that way because of our short attention spans. The climate crisis is a strategic threat to our development prospects. It deserves sober, continuing analysis, deliberation and action. The headlines look bad; reality will get worse.

The writer is CEO, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (ceew.in) and a member of the Climate Crisis Advisory Group, an independent international scientific body

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Opposition parties explore a united front, but any coalition will
need to have a clear agenda to be convincing

A WEEK AFTER Rahul Gandhi hosted a breakfast meeting for Opposition MPs, Congress leader Kapil Sibal held a dinner conclave on Monday at his residence ostensibly to deliberate on building a united front against the BJP before the 2024 general election. If Gandhi was focussed on formulating a consensus within the Opposition in Parliament against the government on its handling of Covid-19, the Pegasus scandal and the farmers’ agitation, the Sibal show had markings of the making of a broader front of parties opposed to the BJP. These conclaves are significant since many Opposition fronts in the 1980s and thereafter, were born out of meetings held over a meal or two. Though the Monday event has not revealed a roadmap for forging a united Opposition front, it stood out for the impressive guest list: Leaders such as NCP supremo Sharad Pawar and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, representatives of the BJD, YSRCP, TRS etc. who were absent at the meeting convened by Gandhi, showed up at Sibal’s residence.

One important takeaway from these meetings is that the Congress continues to be the pivot of Opposition politics. The thin attendance at Pawar’s residence a few weeks ago, had revealed that an anti-BJP national front without the Congress was a non-starter. Some of the leaders who attended the dinner on Monday reportedly said the Congress has to get its act together for the Opposition to mount a real challenge in 2024. Ironically, the dinner conclave may not add up to more than a show of strength by the C-22 leaders in the Congress and a signal to the Gandhi family that they continue to be together and have the clout to attract the support of other Opposition leaders. However, can such conclaves subsume the contradictions that have prevented the Opposition parties from fighting the NDA as a united front? For instance, parties such as the Trinamool Congress, YSR Congress, TRS, and BJD have benefited from the decline of the Congress and see the party as their rival in their strongholds. The fact remains that the Opposition, other than presenting itself as a loose coalition of anti-BJP parties, is yet to project a political vision or present policy measures that distinguishes it as an alternative to the BJP.

Meanwhile, the BJP has taken note of the Opposition moves to isolate it. The NDA has been shrinking since the 2019 win, with allies such as Akali Dal and Shiv Sena leaving the alliance. The BJP seems to be wanting to reverse the tide and has used the recent Cabinet expansion at the Centre to induct MPs from JD(U) and LJP in the Cabinet. A new phase of coalition politics seems to be in the making.

SPORTING GESTURE

Sport is often seen as war without weapons. Neeraj Chopra’s
nod towards Pakistan’s Arshad Nadeem disproves this view

GEOGE ORWELL WASN’T often wrong. “Serious sport,” he said, “has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. In other words, it is war minus the shooting.” At least this once, though, he didn’t quite get it right. And it is India’s Olympic Gold winner, Neeraj Chopra, and his friend and rival Arshad Nadeem from Pakistan, who fly against the face of Orwell’s cynical wisdom.

Serious sport, and all the sports persons worth admiring, play a game well and appreciate their competitors. Unfortunately, the tensions between the two largest countries in the Subcontinent — despite their shared culture and history — has often spilled into sports. Cricket is the usual casualty, with the two countries rarely being able to play a bilateral series. But the javelin, even though its origins are as a weapon, was not allowed to be a pawn in the bitter games between jingoists. When asked about Nadeem, Chopra was clear: “It would have been good to have Nadeem on the podium too. *Asia ka naam ho jata.*”

For all the talk of sports as war and the players as warriors, the true spirit of competition comes from pursuing excellence and building solidarity. On the grandest stage of his career, the world’s best javelin thrower — an Indian soldier — did not put down a friend who had lost, one who appreciated his win. That, as much as Neeraj’s athletic ability, is worth admiring. As politicians rush to congratulate the Indian Olympians, they could learn a bit about statesmanship, sporting spirit and magnanimity from a 23-year-old whose pride in his nation is not contingent on hating the neighbouring one.



REKHA SHARMA

COLLEGIUM, HEAL THYSELF

In certain cases, some corrections need to be made in judicial appointments

LORD DENNING said, “Every judge, in a sense, is on trial to see that he does his job honestly, and properly”, and that “justice is rooted in confidence, and confidence is destroyed when right-minded people go away thinking that the judge is biased”. It goes to the credit of our earlier judges, though appointed by the state, that they administered justice judicially, and with the requisite detachment within the rule of law.

The situation, however, changed with Indira Gandhi assuming office. In the matter of appointment of judges, political philosophy, and the political leaning of a candidate became a major consideration. And then came the Emergency. Judges were put to test in the matter of ADM Jabalpur, and barring one brave exception, the judges failed the Constitution, and thus the nation. They just forgot, nay ignored, the words of Lord James Mansfield in *Rex versus Wilkes*: “The constitution does not allow reasons of State to influence our judgments: God forbid it should! We must not regard political consequences; how formidable soever they might be: If rebellion was the certain consequence, we are bound to say *fiat justitia, ruat caelum*”, meaning, let justice be done though the heaven falls.”

Realising the gravity of the said situation, and with an ardent desire to stop the judiciary from becoming an organ of state power, it was felt that the role of the state in the appointment of judges in terms of Article 124 (2) and 217 needed to be reconsidered. But then, in 1982

in SP Gupta’s case, the Supreme Court gave its approval to the primacy of the state in the matter of appointment of judges. Mercifully, that judgment of a bench of five judges was overturned subsequently by a bench of nine judges. It held that the provisions for consultation with the Chief Justice of India, and the Chief Justices of the high courts in Articles 124 (2) and 217 of the Constitution were introduced because of the realisation that the Chief Justice is best equipped to know and assess the worth of a candidate, and his/her suitability for appointment as a superior judge. It also held that the initiation of the proposal for appointment of a judge to the SC must be made by the CJI after wider consultation with senior judges, and likewise in the case of high courts. And no appointment of any judge to the SC or any high court can be made unless it conforms with the opinion of the CJI. Thus, what is known as the “collegium system” was born.

Governments, irrespective of which party is in power, have from time to time expressed their reservations about the courts taking upon themselves the power to appoint judges. The present government tried to dilute the primacy of the judiciary by introducing Article 124(A) by a constitutional amendment, and by enacting National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014. The SC has struck down both the amendment and the Act. Hence, the judiciary continues to enjoy primacy in the matter of appointments.

Has the collegium system succeeded? Unfortunately, in some cases, it has not covered itself with glory. There have been cases where the nearest relative of Supreme Court judges has been appointed as a high court judge, ignoring merit.

Has the collegium system succeeded? Unfortunately, in some cases, it has not covered itself with glory. There have been cases where the nearest relative of Supreme Court judges has been appointed as a high court judge, ignoring merit. During the regime of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, judges far lower in the combined All India Seniority of High Court judges were appointed to SC, and the reason assigned was that those selected were found more meritorious.

More recently, three senior-most district judges of Delhi who were directly appointed as Additional District Judge from the Bar with impeccable integrity, and with “very good” ACRs have not been recommended for elevation to the High Court by the collegium, while officers junior to them have been recommended. This has raised eyebrows and protests, including by the coordinate committee of the various Bar Associations, and Bar Council of Delhi. The collegium must remember that the brightest star of the Indian judiciary, Justice H R Khanna, was from the subordinate judiciary, and was elevated as high court judge solely on account of his honesty and seniority. The collegium system is still the best, but it needs to weed out what is wrong in its actual working. It is hoped that the system will make course corrections in deserving cases.

The writer is a former judge of the Delhi High Court



AUGUST 11, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

UN ENERGY MEET

THE UNITED NATIONS conference on new and renewable sources of energy opened on August 10 with a call by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for equal distribution of conventional energy and help to the developing world in its crippling crisis. Both Mrs Gandhi who delivered the keynote address and the Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi who inaugurated the 10-day conference asked industrialised nations to stop reckless use of fossil fuels and help poor countries get the energy they need to develop. The Prime Minister said that energy should become the focal point of contemporary international cooperation to facilitate development of new and renewable

sources of energy such as wind power, solar power wind power and biomass energy.

FLYING RULES

THE DEPARTMENTAL ENQUIRY into the Pitts crash which killed Sanjay Gandhi has recommended that rules governing grant of “open rating” licenses should be tightened and only qualified pilots should fly acrobatic planes. At present, any pilot who has flown four types of light planes get an open rating which allows them to fly all kinds of planes including light ones.

OPPOSITION MERGER

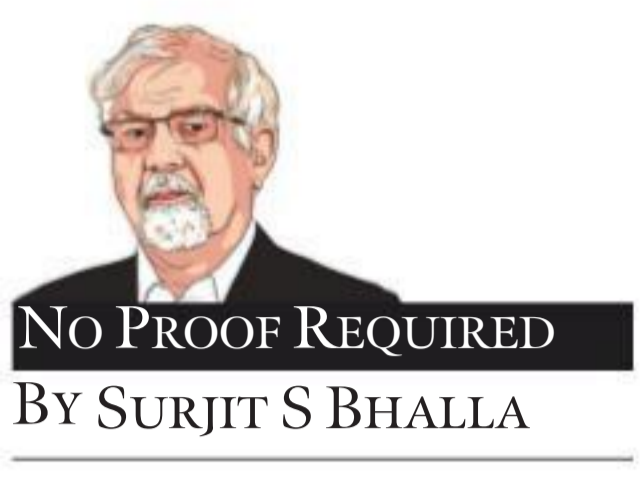
LEADERS OF THE Lok Dal, Janata Party and Congress (U) have agreed to merge their outfits into a “united party”. Lok Dal general secretary Madhu Limaye said that the BJP president Atal Bihari Vajpayee had informed that his party was against merging with any other party but would extend cooperation to the united party. He said Chandrashekar had expressed his willingness to work with Charan Singh.

DACOITS HELD

THE DELHI POLICE has arrested three dreaded dacoits of eastern Uttar Pradesh. A large stock of arms, including a foreign-made pistol, was recovered from them.

Retro tax out, reforms in

The repeal of the 2012 retrospective tax signals strengthening of Modi government's reformist credentials — and is a necessary step towards important financial sector reforms



NO PROOF REQUIRED
BY SURJIT S BHALLA

THE REPEAL OF the retrospective tax was long overdue, and strongly signifies that the reformist trend in Modi 2.0 is not only continuing, but also strengthening. The institution of the tax in 2012 — it meant that the state could impose a tax on an activity ex-post, that is, the government could change the goalpost according to its fancy — was a stunner. Rumour has it that very few people in the Ministry of Finance, or outside, knew about this policy. Did PM Manmohan Singh know? Likely, but not entirely certain. Most experts believed that this policy was uniquely Indian, one befitting a country which had the word "socialism" inserted into the preamble to the Constitution some quarter century after the Constitution was written.

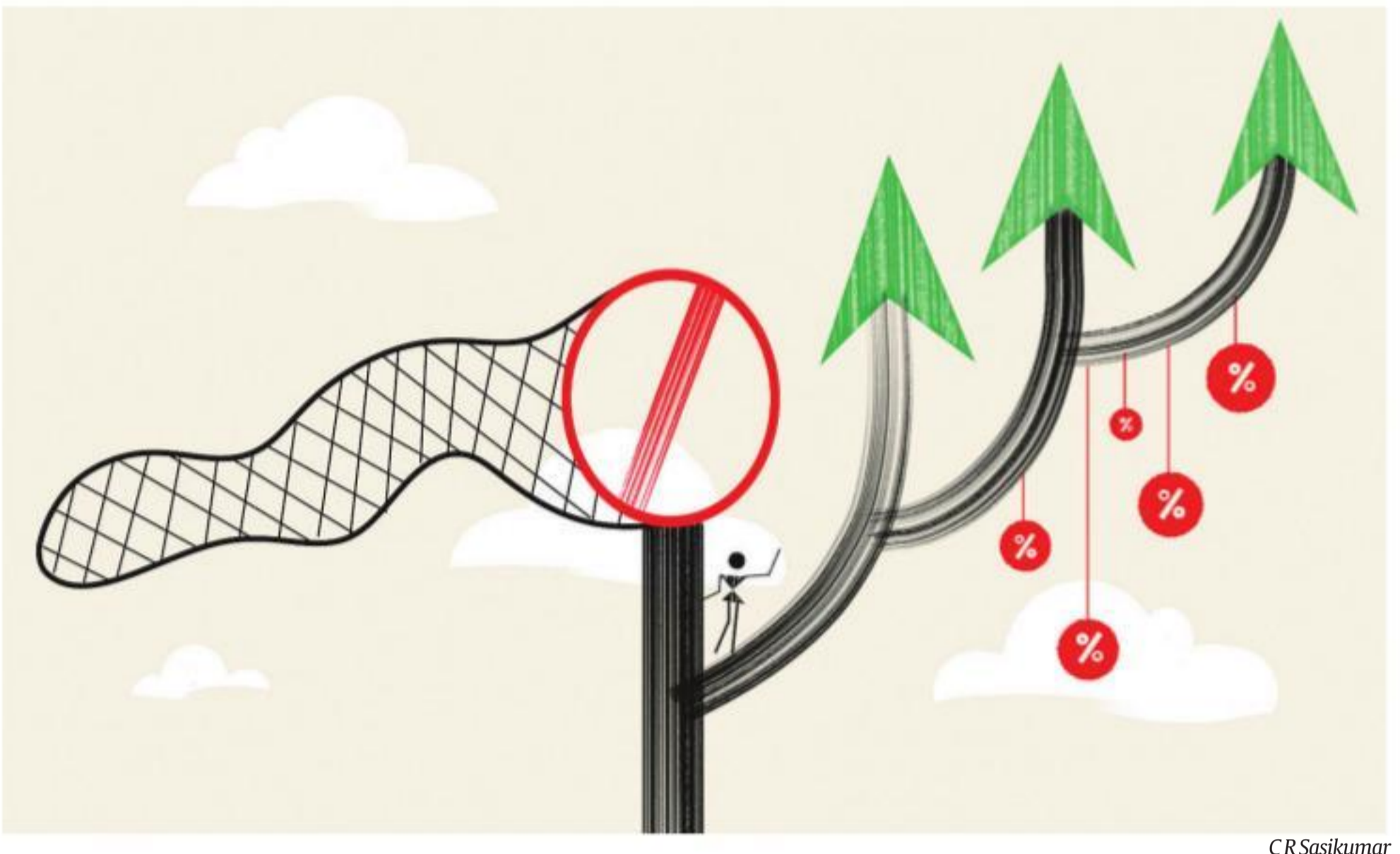
We were foolish to think that a retrospective tax could not happen in modern India. A year after the retro tax, it came to light that ITC had been fighting a retrospective excise tax case for 17 years, and that the Supreme Court had decided in its favour. The allegation — ITC had evaded excise taxes for four years from March 1983; it had allegedly sold cigarettes at a higher price than that printed on the packaging.

It was widely anticipated that the retro tax would be thrown into the dustbin of history (where it belonged) in the interim budget of 2014. The tax lingered till now, with assurance by the late Arun Jaitley that the Indian government would not impose any new retro taxes. Mercifully, the BJP has kept to that principled promise. In recent days, instead of losing cases in its own Supreme Court (the ITC case noted above), it has been losing in international courts (Caim and Vodafone).

According to some critics, this delivery on a pre-2014 election promise is little more than window dressing on a tax that de facto does not exist anymore. The Modi government could easily claim that it was only following Indian law, an Act of Parliament, by pursuing the Caim and Vodafone cases to their logical conclusion. So why make de facto de-jure? And why now? The reason offered by FM Nirmala Sitharaman is, "the country today stands at a juncture when a quick recovery of the economy after the Covid-19 pandemic is the need of the hour and foreign investment has an important role to play in promoting faster economic growth and employment."

Was that the reason? Possible, but it is contradicted by the fact that India is enjoying one of the best years of foreign direct investment and foreign portfolio investment. What more could foreign investors want?

It is not just a question of what investors (domestic or foreign) want. The larger answer is that this is what Modi and his team wanted before the 2014 election, and they are holding to their promise. Not only the promise of not imposing new retro taxes, but also the promise of repeal. Like many others, I had consistently argued that a modern nation, especially a democratic nation, does not go about imposing retroactive taxes. It is bad enough that for many decades, India had one of the highest effective corporate taxes in the world. (An



CR Sasikumar

effective tax is simply the ratio of the tax paid to income earned. The difference between the stated nominal and the actual effective arises because of legal tax deductions). At around 27 per cent, India had one of the highest effective corporate tax rates in 2019 (and earlier). That changed in October 2019, when Sitharaman reduced corporate taxes to near world competitive levels. In parallel, after having one of the highest real policy rates in the world, the Shaktikanta Das-induced trend for India to have a competitive real policy rate.

This march towards an internationally competitive economy needed the stamp of a tax litigation friendly regime — an empty dream with the retro-tax still a possibility. Why should investors, domestic and foreign, trust that India will no longer indulge in the unthinkable?

The end to the retro tax is a pointer of more capital reforms to come. The Commerce Department HLAG committee report was published in September 2019. That report had argued for several reforms, including some major reforms in the capital market. A long-neglected aspect of Indian exports are exports related to financial services. In 2018, Indian financial sector exports were a paltry \$5 billion. Putting this in perspective is the reality that food exports from a food-deficit India in 1980 were of a higher value — \$10 billion.

Major foreign investment banks enjoy one of the largest rents from participating as "monopolists" in the Indian equity markets. If rumours become reality, Indian investors will soon be able to directly buy and sell securities in foreign capital markets — and enjoy zero commissions on most trades. And no fees to financial intermediaries. These purchases will be curtailed at \$2,50,000 per individual as part of the long-standing RBI Liberalised Remittance Scheme. Today, financial transactions can easily be tracked by tax authorities.

Think what would happen to portfolio inflows into India if a foreigner could purchase securities directly from the Indian capital market. Where would tax havens go? Commission rates in India will go down for all investors, including domestic. Markets will be more stable, as a collection of individual

China's GDP growth peaked more than a decade ago. The deceleration of Chinese growth will likely increase in the coming decade. There is only one country in the world that has the scale to match China. India can enjoy a late-comer advantage for the next two decades. But it cannot do so with a retrogressive tax regime. India needs to be trusted completely on the rule of law. The rule of law will also help privatisation and other associated best practices. This is likely the real reason why the retro tax had to be formally booted out.

investors is unlikely to collude as big investors allegedly do. At present, the only way a foreign individual can participate in Indian markets is via the expensive high commission (low returns?) monopolistic FII route.

Another financial market reform, and one directly influenced by this goodbye to the retro tax, is that Indian sovereign (and corporate) bonds can become part of global bond indices. The cost of borrowing for governments and corporates will come down as individuals across the world invest in the now high nominal (and real) Indian yields. Today, Europe and Japan have zero nominal 10-year yields, and the US is at 1.3 per cent.

More capital will mean more investment — and more investment means higher growth. The 2020s are being defined by the US-China cold economic war. China has enjoyed superlative economic growth for three decades. There is the important stylised inverted U-shaped pattern of catch-up growth. In early stages, a country is far from the productivity frontier defined by the advanced countries. Little investment goes a long way and a country grows faster than the average GDP growth of 2 per cent of an advanced country. After the peak (of the inverted U), growth decelerates and the economy begins to approach the low productivity growth of the West.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"China's new type of whole nation system has proven its vitality through the Tokyo Games." — GLOBAL TIMES

Arriving at a consensus

What needs to be resolved is IAF's certainty about indivisibility of air power, versus army and navy's belief that aviation must be at their disposal



ARUN PRAKASH

INDIA'S CHIEF OF Defence Staff (CDS) could have avoided controversy and the recent inter-service spat had he been a little more selective about phraseology. While the air chief was entitled to take umbrage at the IAF being termed a "support arm," no one could have reasonably objected if the CDS had described "air-power" as performing a support function, since the two are not synonymous.

One felt a sense of déjà vu at the ensuing uproar having witnessed similar scenarios during the proceedings of the 1999 Arun Singh Task Force as well as the 2011 Naresh Chandra committee on defence reforms. This was not the first time that air-power issues have triggered bitter debates that serve to stall and delay the process of defence reform in India — and elsewhere.

Ever since the advent of military aviation, air power has been the cause of fierce controversies and debates worldwide. While the outcome of strategic bombing in the Second World War remains an issue of disputation, the extensive employment of air power in support of land and maritime operations met with outstanding success. Allied air operations did, however, see multiple instances of inter-service overlap and confusion, and this led the US Congress to enact the National Security Act of 1947, which, apart from unifying the armed forces, created an independent US Air Force.

However, many issues related to resources as well as institutional boundaries remained unresolved and bitter infighting broke out between the US Navy and the USAF over aviation "roles and missions". Given the urgency of addressing these contentious issues, in March 1948, the US Secretary of Defence cloistered himself with the service chiefs, and, together, they hammered out a consensus. This was enshrined in the "US Code of Federal Laws", and remains the legal basis for roles and missions of the US military.

In India, no such discussion has ever taken place and there is no mutually agreed upon or government-mandated demarcation of aviation roles and missions. Periodic "sniping" and even "poaching" has, therefore, taken place, leaving the IAF beset with a deep sense of insecurity, for reasons that I outline.

The 1970s saw an acrimonious debate between the IAF and the Indian Navy (IN) about the discharge of the maritime reconnaissance (MR) role, which the air force had inherited at independence. The penetration in 1971 of our waters by Pakistani submarines, having brought matters to a head, the government decided to hand over the MR role and aircraft to the IN in 1976.

The Indian Army, too, had been demanding the creation of an integral air arm, citing unsatisfactory aviation support by the IAF in forward areas. The issue became another inter-service squabble till the government intervened in 1985 and sanctioned the transfer of assets from the IAF to the newly formed

Army Aviation Corps. The controversy did not end here as control of attack helicopters remained an issue of inter-service contention.

The IAF, having seen sister services appropriate its roles and assets, remained wary about jointness. Concepts of CDS and integrated commands which would require air assets being placed under non-IAF control, ring alarm bells in Air HQs. There are misperceptions on both sides of the "air-power divide", and the crying need of the day is for the tri-service leadership to sit around a table and provide mutual reassurance regarding service "roles and missions".

Air power, in the post-Cold War era, acquired a new aura. Based on the lethality and speed of modern air power, it is claimed that once "air dominance" has been achieved, the war is virtually won. In this paradigm, close support of surface forces receives low priority because quick military victories can be won from the air at minimal cost. However, such euphoric assumptions were based on recent conflicts where modern air forces wielding advanced technology had encountered irregular forces.

India, on the other hand, is faced with well-equipped, motivated and competent adversaries. The PAF, although numerically inferior, is a professional peer and has the assurance of Chinese support. The PLA Air Force not only outnumbers the IAF, but has the advantage of an advanced technological base. In our calculus, therefore, we cannot afford to bank on any specific advantage, nor speak nonchalantly about establishing "air dominance" over Pakistan or Tibet.

For too long have we treated the demarcation of air power roles and missions as a "holy cow" and shirked from free and frank discussion. The facade of inter-service bonhomie has concealed a germ of discord which needs to be excoriated. The conundrum that needs to be resolved is posed by the IAF's certainty about the "indivisibility of air power", versus the belief of the army and navy that aviation must be an integral resource, available at their disposal.

Questions that military leaders will need to address, jointly, are: One, should attainment of air dominance be an end in itself, superseding military and maritime strategies? Two, should air power be seen as merely an instrumentality to gain operational objectives on land, sea and air? Three, is there a via-media which will maximise the synergy and combat effectiveness of all three services, perhaps by modifying the IAF's 2012 doctrine?

Three final points need to be made in the closely related context of the joint commands being currently contemplated/constituted. First, it must be ensured that allocation of air power is not made piece-meal, but flows from an integrated, tri-service plan. Second, operational deployment of the command's aviation resources must be managed on behalf of the C-in-C, by his 2/3-star IAF component commander. Finally, the government must clarify that most high-level posts will, eventually, be tenable by officers of all three services. The rationale for integrated commands must, therefore, not be dictated by provision, to each service, of its "quota" of ranks/posts.

The writer is a retired chief of naval staff, who flew with the IAF fighter squadron in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war



JAMYANG TSERING NAMGYAL

Ladakh's moment

Region will no longer be an also-ran among Indian states

OVER THE PAST few days, there has been much discussion about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to remove Articles 370 and 35 (A). For many Indians, this was a decision long overdue. The last two years have seen peace and progress in Jammu and Kashmir. However, as the Member of Parliament from Ladakh, I would like to throw light on how this period has been for the people of Ladakh, who are equally important stakeholders in the debates around 370 and 35 (A).

Ladakh is a land of enchanting beauty and diversity. People of different faiths and communities co-exist here. Ladakh is also of great strategic importance to our nation. For decades, the people of Ladakh had aspirations which were not met in full. The most fundamental demand we had was to become a Union Territory — with the slogan "Free Ladakh from Kashmir" — so that our development needs are addressed faster. It was PM Modi who heeded this foundational demand of the people of Ladakh.

Since Ladakh was made a UT, it feels like the government has moved closer to the people. Earlier, going to Srinagar or Jammu was tedious. Moreover, the complexities of the Valley and Jammu were such that Ladakh often featured as an afterthought.

In the last two years we are already seeing glimpses of what is sure to be a glorious future for Ladakh. A budget allocation of almost Rs 6,000 crore, the highest ever, has been given to Ladakh during 2021-22. This will be used

across different sectors to fulfil long-pending demands, particularly in healthcare, infrastructure connectivity and more. The allocation for the welfare of the ST community has also seen a sharp rise.

An integrated multi-purpose corporation is being proposed to take up various projects as per the specific needs of the Ladakh region. Such emphasis on localised governance to support the UT administration and the central government is laudable. It will give a shot in the arm to grassroots and participative governance.

Whenever I have interacted with PM Modi, he has spoken about boosting the education levels in Ladakh. It is a matter of great happiness that the Sindhu Central University is being set up in Ladakh. This project is going to go a long way in augmenting educational infrastructure. The youngsters of Ladakh are talented, but are in need of the right nurturing, which this University will provide.

Solar energy is a sector of the future. In that context, the MoU with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) for setting up a 50 MW solar energy plant is a major positive development. Similarly, a tripartite MoU, between ONGC, the UT administration and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh, for the first-ever Geothermal Field Development Project has been inked. I see these projects as beneficial for India's energy requirements and our commitment to a sustainable future.

Work has been progressing at a rapid pace in some areas in the last two years. Tunnel construction is happening faster and covering even the remotest areas like Drass and Lungnak. For a connectivity-deprived land, this is great news. Recently, Rs 1,300 crore was approved for laying an Inter-State Transmission line to connect Zaskar and the Nubra valley to the National Grid. Work is underway to ensure high speed internet access across Ladakh. Youngsters are particularly excited about this development as it brings the world to their phones. We are on track to realise the dream of a digital Ladakh through hundreds of 4G mobile towers under the Universal Service Obligation Fund. Ladakh is also home to the highest motorable roads in the world.

The development of border infrastructure, such as the ongoing construction of the Zoji La Tunnel, the approval for the Shinkun La Tunnel, the Lachung La and Taglang La Tunnel, the road to Daulat Beg Oldi, Umling La road, Col. Rinchen Bridge at the river Shyok are strategically vital for us. Rs 250 crore has been allotted under the Changthang Development Package to build requirements for the people living in the eastern border villages of Ladakh. Such care towards remote areas is a welcome sign.

The people of Ladakh can never forget February 3, 2019. That was the day PM Modi inaugurated many development works and laid the foundation stone for several more projects. He described Ladakh as a land of

heroes and recalled Ladakh's role in upholding the unity of India. Two projects that stand out are the Dah Hydroelectric project and the Srinagar-Alusteng-Drass- Kargil-Leh Transmission system which will cater to the power and water needs of Ladakh. The people of Ladakh often faced the brunt of delayed projects and rising project costs. In the last seven years, thanks to the vision of the Modi government, we are seeing a change in the old culture of keeping projects in suspended animation so that the pockets of a few could be lined.

The PM also laid the foundation stone for a new terminal at the Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport. This will bring more tourists to Ladakh and take our people to different parts of our country and the world.

For long, it was ingrained in us that Ladakh is an "also-ran" alongside more powerful participants. It was unthinkable that it would emerge from the shadow of others and that we would get the opportunity to shape our own destiny. What PM Modi did in 2019 has set the stage for a long-standing transformation of Ladakh, placing it in the fifth gear of development. He has successfully developed a sense of integration, security, and acceptance. He has respected and honoured us, moving us away from the erstwhile sense of isolation and insecurity.

The writer is Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Ladakh

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CRIMINAL COPS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ending police brutality' (IE, August 9). Nothing can be more catastrophic than witnessing the protector become the oppressor. Police officers misusing their authority must be deprived of their privileges and strict actions must be taken against them.

Melvin Thomas, Bhopal

WELFARE INJUSTICE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Bihar denies SC/ST scholarship for 3 years, says 'technical issues with portal' (IE, August 10). It is a gross injustice to more than 15 lakh SC/ST students who were denied the opportunity to avail much needed financial assistance. To not have a welfare scheme is bad, but not implementing an existing scheme is worse.

LR Murmu, Delhi

COURT DEFIED

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'In rare show of unanimity, Opp backs Govt on key OBC Bill, seeks debate' (IE, August 10). The 1931 Poona Pact shaped India and its caste struggle. Gandhi fought tooth and nail to oppose the question of separate electorates. Governments over time have used all their political acumen to get more and more reservations for various castes in complete disregard of the Indra Sawhney cap reaffirmed by the Nagraj verdict.

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Despite multiple observations by the top court, the granting of the OBC list right to states will again see a rise in arbitrary allocations by the states.

Udit Sarkar, Kolkata

ACT NOW

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'India may see more heat waves, droughts, cyclones' (IE, August 10). Urgent action is now needed to meet net-zero emissions targets. Governments need to encourage climate-friendly policies and companies must be more climate-conscious. The report also states that the effects of global warming are already here, as seen in the recent flooding in Maharashtra, heat wave in Canada and the devastating forest fire in Greece.

Parth Nawale, Mumbai