

## KASHMIR ONCE AGAIN

Ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's India visit China once again raked up Kashmir urging both India and Pakistan to settle the issue through dialogue. Now the powerful US Democratic Senator Mark Warner, who is co-chair of the Senate India Caucus, on Tuesday said that he is 'disturbed' over the Kashmir situation after scrapping the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcation of it into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh since August 5. The US and Chinese stand look as if all the bonhomie it had during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to USA and meeting Chinese President at UNGA looks to be over and once again it is the business ruling the roost of diplomatic relations. India has made its stand very clear to the world that Kashmir is its internal issue and there is no need for external mediation and is capable of finding a solution to the problem on its own. There is neither any democratic violation, nor any human rights violation as propagated by vested interest in Kashmir. India has defended imposition of restrictions in Kashmir Valley on the grounds that they were put to prevent Pakistan from creating more mischief through proxies and terrorists. On the other hand Chinese authorities have effectively outlawed the practice of Islam in this region. In Xinjiang, a population of 13 million ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims are subjected to forced political indoctrination, collective punishment, restrictions on movement and communications, heightened religious restrictions and mass surveillance. Last year, Human Rights Watch and other independent organizations reported on the Chinese government's mass arbitrary detention, torture, and mistreatment of an estimated one million Turkic Muslims in this region. The statement by US Democratic Senator Warner, who is also currently a Vice Chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus and the Vice Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is significant because he has been one of the best friends of India inside and outside the Senate. For past several years, he has been Co-Chair of the influential Senate India Caucus which is the only country-specific caucus in the United States Senate. Both US and China should set their house first as far as human rights violations are concerned rather than poking their nose in other's internal issues.

## CHASING BLACK MONEY

At last, India received the first tranche of Swiss bank account details. But how far the data is going to help in exposing the spread of black money stacked in tax havens, only time will tell. Fighting corruption and tax evasion and bringing back an unimaginably huge amount of black money was Narendra Modi's election slogan in 2014 that caught the imagination of a large number of voters and was majorly instrumental in catapulting him to power. Over five years down the line - after his first term and re-election as PM in 2019 - the report card on the Modi government's war on ill-gotten wealth and flushing out cheats remain boasts only barring few amendments in tax rules, including GST, and some schemes for the declaration of undisclosed assets. However, what punctures the bubble is that most of these steps, while seeming to be effective on paper, have not yielded much tangible returns. Clearly, loopholes in the efforts to clean our graft-ridden economy render the task an uphill one. Alarming, the money parked by Indians in Swiss banks rose by over 50 per cent to Rs 7,000 crore in 2017. As crooks continue to get around the system, what falls in the lap of the honest taxpayer is disillusionment. The disenchantment will go only when every Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi is effectively prosecuted and penalised. There is much expectation towards this end from the crumbling of the famed secrecy walls of Swiss banks. The ball now is in the court of the prosecution. It must use the data received to trace unaccounted wealth and bring it to book. Earlier, those who figured on the HSBC list and in Panama and Paradise papers, encompassing undeclared funds in offshore entities, were brought under the tax scanner, even as there were reports that many of the foreign accounts were unactionable.

## OFF 'D' CUFF

Recently, there have been lots of examples of young people protesting against the current state of world affairs and the state of the environment. The deteriorating global climate seems to have galvanised many youngsters with 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg emerging as a role model. Her recent speech at the United Nations was full of passion, including anger at world leaders and previous generations for ruining the environment, thereby making the future of the current young generation look very bleak indeed. In fact, this sense of anger directed at past generations is increasingly defining the current crop of youth. Children and teenagers believe that their parents and grandparents have given them a broken world where there is chaos, economic depression, insecurity and environmental degradation.

They are not wrong and we need to empathise with them. But blaming previous generations alone won't achieve anything. Instead, the youth should focus on finding solutions to the problems. For, if we start digging for dirt there will always be things that previous generations will get blamed for. The idea ought to be, to look forward, not brood over the past.

Besides, it is not that the previous generation did not give us anything positive. All the technological advancements in medical science and communications, the huge strides made in poverty

## Past imperfect but future can be bright

reduction, the massive gains in life expectancy, and the great increase in material wealth have all been due to the hard work of the previous generation. True, inequality has also increased - and continues to increase - leading to many of the problems of today. But the youth of today that is so well-informed and practical, needs to find solutions for this, taking the help of adults so that something can be worked out together.

Now, if the baby boomer generation had cribbed about the fact that they inherited a world destroyed by the Second World War, and remained resentful, we would have seen none of the progress in the post-war years. Instead of complaining about the past, baby boomers went about rebuilding the world, generating unprecedented prosperity. This is why it's important for millennials and the youth today to not just protest about the past but dedicate themselves to finding solutions for the future. The past will always have imperfections. But the past also gives us positives. It is the reason why we are here. Therefore, instead of complaining about the hand we have been dealt, we should be grateful for the positives, recognise the negatives and look to build a better future.

After all, we cannot do anything about the past. We can only accept it. However, we can change out present and future.

# Kashmir: Calm before the storm

■ NILESH KUNWAR

Ever since the abrogation of Article 370, terrorist activities in Kashmir have been on a comparatively low key and though this comes as a big relief for its beleaguered people, to interpret this as a sign of Pakistan turning a new leaf by scaling down, (if not ending) its three decade old state policy of waging proxy war against India would be incorrect. Au contraire, by openly pledging support for the secessionist lobby in Kashmir and using drones to supply extremists in Punjab with sophisticated arms and other warlike stores, the Pakistan army and ISI have made it abundantly clear that they are dead serious about Kashmir as well as expanding the proxy war arena by reviving terrorism in Punjab.

It doesn't require rocket science to understand that there's a very good reason behind terrorists in Kashmir presently keeping a low profile and not surprisingly it's because of a serious development in Pakistan.

Despite being given adequate time by Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which is the apex global body monitoring terror funding, Islamabad's has not been able to satisfactorily comply with the observations on curbing terror financing that have been raised by the Asia Pacific Group (APG), which is the FATF's regional body. Out of the 40 observations raised, Pakistan was found "non-compliant" on five and only "partially compliant" on 25 other recommendations.

Due to its poor performance in complying with these guidelines, Islamabad runs the risk of being 'black listed' when the FATF meets from 13 to 18 October to consider findings of the mutual evaluation report (MER) on Pakistan that has been brought out by APG. But since the FATF charter mentions that a country can avoid being blacklisted if it has the support of at least three member states, Islamabad may once again escape

black listing thanks to China, Turkey and Malaysia.

Yet, as Pakistan would not like to embarrass these countries, it is obvious that ISI has directed terrorist groups fighting in Kashmir to refrain from any large-scale action till the FATF meet is over!

Abrogation of Article 370 has derailed Islamabad's Kashmir narrative and its attempt to undo this move through international intervention has failed miserably. The UNSC outrightly refused to entertain Islamabad's complaint that Article 370 abrogation violated UNSC resolutions on Kashmir and it was only Beijing's compromise formula of holding a 'closed door' meeting on Kashmir that served as a face saver for Pakistan. Even at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meet, expect for Turkey and Malaysia, no other member state of this 57-member strong group sided with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Lastly, Islamabad's much hyped threat to take the abrogation of Article 370 issue to the International court of Justice (ICJ) proved to be a no starter.

The tremendous desperation and abject disarray that abrogation of Article 370 has caused in Pakistan can be judged by the hysterically menacing statements emanating from Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Prime Minister Imran Khan is repeatedly painting an extremely gloomy picture prophesising that revocation of Article 370 would act as a flashpoint resulting in outbreak of war between India and Pakistan, which in turn will culminate in a nuclear Armageddon. Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa too spoke about how "Pakistan Army firmly stands by the Kashmiris in their just struggle to the very end," and by saying that "We are prepared and shall go to any extent to fulfil our obligations," ended up accepting Rawalpindi's direct role in masterminding the ongoing proxy war in Kashmir.

Khan's UNGA address gives us a clear indication of what we can expect after the FATF meet is over and once restrictions in Kashmir are lifted. In his speech Khan had said, "Why would we ever want to disrupt peace (in Kashmir)? But it's (New Delhi's doing) because there is no other narrative left for India."

This statement makes no sense whatsoever because when New Delhi is trying to show to the world that all's well in Kashmir after Article 370 abrogation, why should it "disrupt peace" and sabotage its own Kashmir narrative. On the other hand, peace being disrupted in Kashmir suits Khan's reflection that "Does he (Modi) think the people of Kashmir will quietly accept the status quo?"

A turbulent Kashmir will also be perfectly in line with Khan's prediction that "What is going to happen will be a blood bath. The people will come out."

But Khan's crystal gazing on Kashmir isn't mere madness and there's definitely a method in it - that of preparing grounds for deniability of Pakistan's own involvement in terrorist activities by using the "I told you so" refrain as a shield. In fact, by using the UNGA podium to incite Muslims all over the world and saying "Whatever happens (in Kashmir), we will be blamed," he has only let the cat out of the bag and this should set alarm bells ringing for New Delhi. Having lost the diplomatic battle on Kashmir, it would be naive to think that Islamabad will be content silently licking its wounds. Again, one doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to deduce that in order to get its 'K' narrative back on tracks, Islamabad in general and Rawalpindi in particular will certainly "go to any extent" to see Kashmir go up in flames as now there is nothing for Pakistan to lose.

Let's not be lulled into complacency because what we are experiencing today in Kashmir is only the proverbial calm before the storm!

## Peace deal in pieces

■ TILAK DEVASHER

After nine rounds of 'peace' talks between the US special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Doha, President Trump, in a tweet on September 7, called off the exercise. He also called off secret talks with the Taliban and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, to be held at Camp David to personally clinch the deal. The reason cited was the killing of a US soldier in a Taliban suicide attack in Kabul.

As per media reports, the proposed agreement laid out a timetable for the withdrawal of around 5,400 out of nearly 14,000 US troops from five Afghan bases in 135 days. Within two weeks of the agreement, intra-Afghan talks were to be initiated.

In reality, the agreement was less of a 'peace' deal and more of an 'exit' deal, because, as constituted, it was unlikely to bring peace to Afghanistan.

It had several deficiencies: there was no agreement on a ceasefire; there was nothing in it for the legitimate Afghan government - the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - that was excluded from the discussions; the US had to accept the Taliban word that they would not let Afghan territory be used for terrorism against other countries and deny safe havens to the Al-Qaeda (AQ); there was no clarity about the remaining US troops (8,600) for residual counter-terrorism (CT) and intelligence presence against the AQ. The basic weakness of the US position in the negotiations was its desperation to exit due to Trump's electoral calculations. The Taliban have had the upper hand throughout the negotiations, because they knew the US had a time-frame for withdrawal - the 2020 presidential election. This convinced them not to agree to a ceasefire. The US would probably have greater success if it were to delink negotiations from domestic politics.

There has been much speculation about why the deal was called off. The killing of a soldier could not have been the reason, because 16 US soldiers were earlier killed in 2019. By this logic, the US should not have continued talks with the

Taliban in the first place.

One reason could be the Taliban insistence that the deal be announced before the Camp David visit, thereby denying Trump the spotlight of clinching the deal. There were also reports that the Taliban Rahbari Shura - or supreme council - had stopped the group's negotiating team from visiting the US, since any interaction with the Americans in Washington would have been viewed as abject surrender. So, Trump pulled the plug before the Taliban made their stand public.

Another reason could be the strong opposition in the US to the deal, since nine former US ambassadors to Afghanistan warned that 'there is an outcome far worse than the status quo, namely a return to the total civil war that consumed Afghanistan.' Secretary of State Pompeo had also declined to sign on the deal.

What of the future? Three trends are apparent. One, the US has warned that things 'are about to get worse' for the Taliban. According to Pompeo, US forces have killed over 1,000 Taliban in the past 10 days.

Second, some have speculated that Trump's announcement could be signalling US bargaining position - ceasefire and direct talks with the Afghan government - and, not necessarily, a permanent closure of talks.

However, even though the doors of future talks have been left open, it is unlikely that they would be resumed soon. The US could reduce troop levels in the meanwhile, even without an agreement. Without some road map for an intra-Afghan dialogue, this could be hugely problematic.

Third, the suspension of talks has opened the door for the postponed Afghan presidential election on September 28. The election had been in doubt because it would have interfered with the intra-Afghan dialogue that was expected to begin soon after the proposed agreement. Though there are security concerns, a credible election is critical to have a legitimate government that can forge national consensus on talks with the Taliban.

The Taliban have certainly gained legitimacy from the negotiations. The US, in effect, recognised them as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the principal stakeholder in the agreement, and like a government-in-waiting. Despite the setback, the Taliban believe that the US will leave sooner or later. Their goal is to re-establish the Islamic Emirate and not share power. They do not believe in the constitution, democracy, election or women's rights. They have threatened to scale up violence (as has the US) and disrupt the election. On September 17, two suicide attacks, one of which targeted President Ghani's rally, killed 48, and could be indicative of things to come.

The military situation is stalemated. Despite reports about the ever-increasing areas controlled by the Taliban, the fact is that the war has become one of attrition: Taliban capturing districts, but being unable to hold on due to the government onslaught.

According to Afghan media, the Taliban are taking heavy casualties. The military situation is not a win-win for them or a lose-lose for the government. If the Taliban were winning, they would hardly be negotiating. They know they can't win so long as the US is in Afghanistan.

Pakistan did not expect the talks to break down when everything seemed settled. This is a challenge since it could end up being blamed for not being able to convince the Taliban for a ceasefire. Pakistan is trying to project that developments in Kashmir have diverted its attention; the implication is to persuade the US to intervene in Kashmir. What, however, would be uncomfortable for Pakistan is that the Taliban have delinked the situation in Afghanistan from Kashmir.

For the moment, the situation looks bleak. There is bound to be an intensification of violence, especially in the run-up to the election. If the election is credible, the new Afghan government would be better placed to deal with the Taliban. If the election is discredited, or there is a run-off, Afghanistan will fall further into spiralling violence.

## Status of Union territory is better than semi-state

■ SHYAM SUDAN

The abrogation and scrapping of Articles 370 and 35A was a very bold and historic decision of the centre government. Now with the abrogation of this controversial status people are feeling comfortable and rejuvenated. Because earlier due to this constitutional hurdle large segment of society was feeling insecure and disintegrated from the rest of the nation. Now the people are hoping for welfare of all three regions of the state without any disparity and exploitation.

But the new bifurcation of state i.e. of two union territory with the provision of semi-state is somewhat irksome and uncertain in nature.

People are hoping for full-fledged status of union territory rather than the status of semi-state. According to public opinion this new design with the status of semi state to Jammu and Kashmir will create more turbulence and disarray in the political management. This will create problem for both the regions of the state like the situation of Delhi. Delhi which is also enjoying the status of semi state, always creating political uncertainty and chaos in the life of public. Due to lack of all the privileges and powers, chief minister of such a semi state is unable to take decision with his firm determination and with bold political will. This dual management also effected the spirit of credibility in important matters of state. Because in semi state structure all the forces including police department is under the direct control of centre. These forces are not answerable to the chief minister of the state in immediate matters of the state, such thing further create problem in proper coordination and balance with the centre. Proper collaboration is necessary between the state and centre for the betterment of people of state. But the structure of semi state can create more gap between the two i.e. centre and state.

Jammu and Kashmir is the most disturbing state than any other states of India. There is need of a strong political roofing to tackle with nefarious design of neighbouring countries as well as to handle with internal problem of law and order situation. There is a need of a strong and answerable political regime which can make a proper coordination with centre. Any kind of weak and trembling political stage can attract antinational elements to fulfill their nefarious agenda.

Here with the status of semi-state problem of law and order can create disturbance for the state. A very strong and accountable ruling government is needed in the state to hear the grievances of the people and to change their mindset of secessionist section of society. There is great challenge from international platform as well as from our neighbours. Moreover their is need of an accountable platform to satisfy and pacify the various dissenting voices from the state. In order to dodge the nefarious activities across the state and to satisfy the aspirations of people a very trustworthy and mature political roofing is needed in the state. The system of semi state doesn't satisfy the ambition of people with genuine way. Strong democratic structure is necessary to satisfy the aspirations and desires of public in a congenial way. Any deviation and lackness in democratic structure can dissatisfy the public feeling and sentiment in such a vulnerable and turmoil state.

People responded with full patience and cooperation the decisive step of abrogation of article 370. Now they are cooperating with government with their optimistic approach. They are demanding for separate state not for separate identity in the name of any special article. With the scrapping of Article 370, a new ray of hope imbibe in their minds. They are fed up with dynastic ruler and their fake visionary approach and hollow assurances. Their dreams got vanished and ruined with the announcement of separate semi state status for Jammu and Kashmir. It seems that they are satisfied with this new political design. People of Leh are feeling very comfortable and satisfy with the new bifurcation because they got the status of full fledged union territory with no interference from regional politics. They came under the direct supervision of centre which is a welcoming step, according to the response of the people of Leh and Ladakh. But Jammu resident who are constantly feeling a hidden wave of exploitation and mismanagement in the political scenario of Jammu and Kashmir continuously demanding for some strong initiative from the central government.

However government is taking every possible measure to convince the people about the importance of this new political design through various public platform and media. There is an urgent need to launch various development processes to pacify the frustration of public. Also there is an urgent need to fulfill all the promises made by government including recruitment of 50,000 unemployed youths and other developmental schemes to satisfy the public dilemma and anger. Their is need of introspection from the government ends that how can it gives a soothing and healing touch to the victims of militancy within stipulated time frame.

## YOUR COLUMN

### Selective agenda?

Dear Editor,

The most crucial point is whether only dissenting voices are vital for a vibrant democracy? Are incidents of lynching selective, pre-planned and state-sponsored? Are state governments responsible for such heinous crimes? Is the mob swayed by a particular community? Is the Modi government responsible for every act of omission? These protagonists never find fault with the West Bengal Government, which uses state machinery against political opponents. There is total failure of law and order. Why do these stalwarts of democracy turn a blind eye towards it and only focus on a selective agenda?

Deepak Mehra,  
Via e-mail.

### What makes ideal teacher

Dear Editor,

Times have changed, and so have the teachers. They

seldom act as a friend, philosopher and guide, because teaching has become a tough job. They are charged with academic, intellectual and moral degradation and deterioration. The charges may be true, but a teacher is the product of society.

A decadent society cannot aspire to produce ideal teachers. Despite all this, still there are hundreds of devoted teachers who work conscientiously to contribute their mite in educating children in their custody. Teachers may come and go, but the kind mentioned in the middle will go on forever.

Tarsem S Bumrah,  
Batala.

### Go for 'Dharam Shiksha'

Dear Editor,

Our school used to have a 'dharam shiksha' period every day. The attendance was compulsory. Though run by a Hindu NGO, the classes were not confined exclusively to the teachings of Hindu religion, though majority of students were Hindus. There were days when we were taught about Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Pandits, maulvis, granthis, priests, and scholars were invited to speak on their respective religions. They explained in simple Hindi. The ques-

tion-answer sessions would clear many doubts students had about any religion. To make it more interesting, singers were invited to render bhajan, sufiana kalam, shabad etc. Students were also asked to participate in the singing sessions. Diwali, Eid, Guru Nanak's birthday and Christmas were jointly celebrated. I can say with certainty that those classes were rewarding, educative and enlightening. They left a lasting impression and helped me become broad-minded. Such classes should be introduced in public and government schools. It is worth a try.

RN Sharma,  
Gurugram.

### Economic revival

Dear Editor,

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has slashed repo rate for the fifth consecutive time and slashed growth projections for this year from 6.9 per cent earlier to 6.1 per cent now. The problem faced by the economy is not of liquidity crunch.

Unless there is a revival plan, companies will invest in expanding capacity. Fresh resources need to be made available.

Srishti Mathur,  
Ujjain.