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June 26-28, 2020



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Former India Captain



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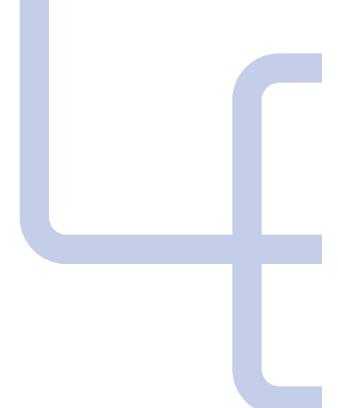
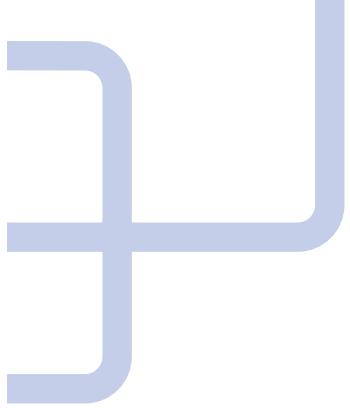
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June 26

Time	Speaker	Topic
9 AM	Shri Pranab Mukherjee	Inaugural Address - Importance of Civil Services
10 AM	Ankita Tandon (VP, Unacademy)	Opening Address - Let's Crack It
11 AM	Armstrong Pame (IAS)	The Will to Succeed
12 PM	Tina Dabi (AIR 1, 2015)	The First Shot - In Discussion with Rakesh Verma (Ex. IAS)
1 PM	Athar Amir Khan (AIR 2, 2015)	Toppers' Talk: Dreaming Big
2 PM	Saumya Pandey (AIR 4 2016)	Toppers' Talk: The Power of Grit
3 PM	Rajkummar Rao	Breaking Norms
4 PM	Vipul Pandey (IFoS)	Stirring a Green Revolution
5 PM	Roopa DM (IPS)	Challenges of Bureaucrats in Day-to-Day Administration
6 PM	Various Educators - Parallel Rooms	Mentor's Den with Top Unacademy Educators
7 PM	Mrunal Patel	Comprehensive Strategy to Crack UPSC CSE
9 PM	Various Educators - Parallel Rooms	Choose Your Optional

June 27

Time	Speaker	Topic
9 AM	Rakesh Verma	Alternative Career Options for UPSC Aspirants
10 AM	Nishant Jain (AIR 13, 2014)	Toppers' Talk: Going Above and Beyond
11 AM	Shri Jairam Ramesh	Indian Economy vs Global Pandemic
12 PM	Prasanth Nair (IAS)	A Revolution From Within
1 PM	Top Unacademy Educators Panel	"Ask Me Anything" with Top Unacademy Educators
3 PM	Rujuta Diwekar	A Healthy You for a Successful Future
4 PM	Kapil Dev	Leading a Historic Team
5 PM	Dr. Kiran Bedi	What Competitive Exams May Not Be Able to Test Civil Services Aspirants Adequately on?
6 PM	Atish Mathur	UPSC CSE: Myths vs Reality
7 PM	Nandini Maharaj (AIR 42, 2018)	Life at LBSNAA
9 PM	Noorul Hasan (IPS Officer, AIR 625, 2015)	Writing Your Own Destiny
	Various Educators - Parallel Rooms	Choose Your Optional

June 28

Time	Speaker	Topic
9 AM	Deepanshu Singh	Going on Despite All Odds
10 AM	Prof. DP Agrawal	The Science Behind Civil Services Exams
11 AM	Sanjukta Parashar (IPS)	Stepping Out of Your Comfort Zone
12 PM	Awdhesh Singh	UPSC CSE 101: Essay Writing
3 PM	Dr. Chhavi Rajawat	Being a Leader at the Grassroots Level
4 PM	Dr. Shashi Tharoor	Robust Bureaucracy
5 PM	Abhishek Srivastava	Preparing with Unacademy - A Perfect Study Partner
6 PM	Anand Vardhan (AIR 7, 2016)	Toppers' Talk: Strategy to Crack UPSC CSE
7 PM	Junaid Ahmed (AIR 3, 2018)	Toppers' Talk: Cracking it Amidst All Odds
8 PM	Dr. Sidharth Arora	Overcoming Challenges
9 PM	Various Educators - Parallel Rooms	Choose Your Optional

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FILM REVIEW

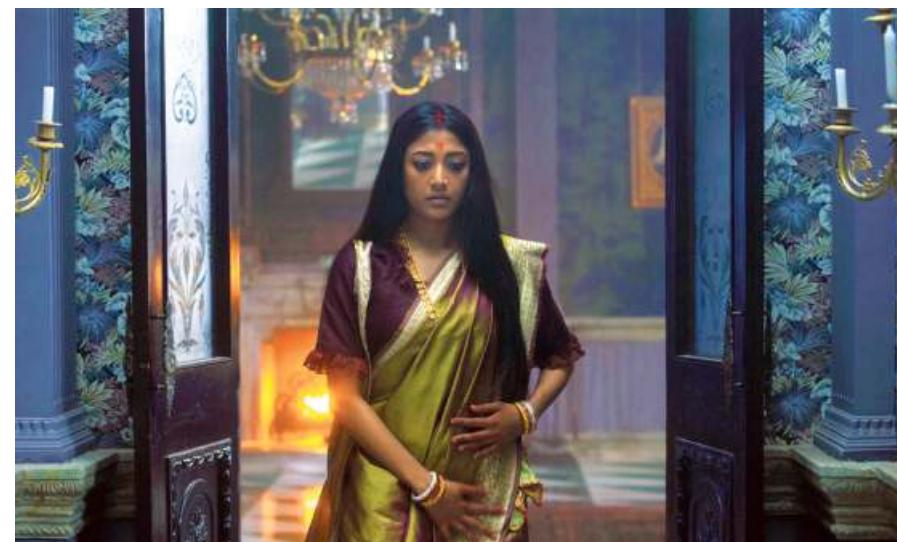
Bulbbul: strikes at the putrid core of patriarchy

Anvita Dutt mixes the feudal with the supernatural, the spooky, the mythological and the fablesque in a thoughtful, moving and engaging manner

NAMRATA JOSHI

Back in 1962, in *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, Abrar Alvi took us in to one of the many crumbling *havelis* of a decaying feudal Bengal. Mansions in which the desires of lonely women are throttled by unfaithful aristocratic husbands, where they strike undefined relationships with other men without quite being able to take them to a logical conclusion. In her debut film, *Bulbbul*, which starts off in Bengal Presidency in 1881, Anvita Dutt does something similar but adds to the locale. She mixes the feudal with the supernatural and the spooky, the mythological and the fablesque to strike at the putrid core of patriarchy in a thoughtful, moving, engaging and powerful manner.

A word—*vash* (control) — and an image, that of *bichchue* (toe rings), conveys it all about the lot of young girls. *Bulbbul*, a child bride, arrives in the Thakur family thinking life is all about fun and games with Satya, her *devar* (husband's younger brother), who is her own age. Not quite. Over time the rot in the *haveli* begins to reveal itself. It's a world of twisted relationships, dysfunctional families and perversions. The women inside it — *Bulbbul* (Tripti Dimri) and Binodini (Paoli Dam) — are competitors, always in a game of one upmanship and insinuations, giving it back to each other with wordplay. However, they also bond in an indistinct but sinewy sisterhood in a space that denies them anything private. As *Bulbbul*'s husband Indranil (Rahul Bose) asks her rhetorically:



Critical gaze: *Bulbbul* doesn't baulk from showing extreme violation ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bulbbul

DIRECTOR: Anvita Dutt
CAST: Tripti Dimri, Avinash Tiwary, Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Paoli Dam, Rahul Bose

STORYLINE: *Bulbbul*, a child bride, arrives in the Thakur family thinking life is all about fun and games with Satya, her *devar* (husband's younger brother), who is her age. But, over time, the rot in the *haveli* begins to reveal itself.

"Ek patni ka uske pati ke alawa kya niji ho sakta (What can be personal for a wife other than her husband)?"

Sharm (shame), *maryada* (propriety), *sahi* (right), *galat* (wrong) — that's all that seems to govern a woman's life.

Bulbbul doesn't baulk from showing extreme violence and violation. A doll here, the talk of broken bones there, a reference to falling down the stairs of the house — bit by bit the hints at

the intrinsic oppression, and their repercussions, pile on and reach the peak in a rousing, powerful monologue by Binodini about "badi haveli ke bade raaz (the big secrets of the big mansion)" wherein women of the household might be showered with silk and jewellry, but told to stay silent about secrets. Dam packs in a punch as does Dimri in the lead. From the vulnerable and the innocent to the transformation into the mysterious tease, Dimri is a stunner who speaks volumes with her eyes. And the audience can do little but stay enraptured.

Dutt shows delicacy in dealing with the indecorous, a touch of the poignant and the poetic in highlighting the pain. The film is essentially about companionships that unknowingly blossom into more and then some friendships that crave to find a fruition that they can't. Then there are jealousies that raise their heads, as they do between Satya (Avinash Tiwary) and Dr Sudip (Parambrata Chattopadhyay, the confidante after my heart) due to unresolved emotions for *Bulbbul*.

The film is essentially be a re-imagination of the legend of *chudail* (witch) with the twisted feet as a devi with a cause and a mission but I was swept away by the overwhelming romance — unexpressed but implicit, fulsome in its tacitness. Like a simple conversation towards the end of the film, between *Bulbbul* and Sudip, over a shared bidi (cigarette). The oblique talk of hope, boundaries and the unreachable between them even as their eyes stay transfixed on the other. The gaze of love, or something like that. "Kahani poori kaise hogi," weeps *Bulbbul* at one point in the film. No some love stories don't ever come a full circle to a conclusion. And that makes them all the more beautiful.

More than 20 Indian Pride factions will feature alongside Trans Pride Pakistan and politicians like Joe Biden, Justin Trudeau, and Alexander van der Bellen

KENNETH ROSARIO

Queer organisations across the world have come together to organise a 24-hour virtual Pride. This virtual celebration of queerness comes in light of several parades being cancelled or postponed in cities like London, New York and Madrid, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first of its kind, Global Pride, includes non-stop streaming of content from Pride organisations, activists, civil society groups, politicians and world leaders. The digital Pride will replace live gatherings and seek global participation, even from countries where homosexuality is criminalised.

Taking place across various time zones, the virtual Pride event will begin at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday, June 27 and go on till 12.41 p.m. on Sunday, June 28 in India. More than 20 Pride organisations in India will feature in this event, alongside Trans Pride Pakistan and Nemat Sadat from Afghanistan.

Political support

Politicians like former American Vice President Joe Biden, who is gunning for the Presidential seat in the upcoming November elections; Canadian PM Justin Trudeau; and Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen will participate in the virtual event.

They will band for queer pride alongside political leaders like the only openly trans gender MP in Europe Vladimir Luxuria; Mayor of New York Bill de Blasio; and Argentinian government legislator, Vilma Ibarra.

Since the outbreak of CO-



Fight for freedom: Sarah Hegazi raising a rainbow flag at a concert in Cairo in 2017; (below) Vladimir Luxuria ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Global Pride aims to be world's largest virtual queer celebration

VID-19, more than an estimated 200 Prides have been cancelled or postponed globally, compelling queer organisations to find quick and relevant alternatives. "I remember the first conversation we had about this project, and how so many people thought it would be an impossible task to deliver, especially in less than three months," said Steve Taylor of European Pride Organisers Association.

"But yet again the grit and determination of the LGBTQIA+ community have ensured we will have a historic, groundbreaking show that will bring our community together in these trying times."

Queer resistance

The Global Pride line-up includes Denise Ho, a Hong Kong-based Cantopop singer and actress who is also a pro-

democracy and Hong Kong human rights activist. Ho has been blacklisted by the Chinese government for her active participation in the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. Ahmed Alaa, was jailed in Egypt after raising a rainbow flag at a concert in Cairo in 2017, will also participate. During the Global Pride broadcast, there will be a tribute to Sarah Hegazi, a lesbian activist jailed with Alaa, who took her own life earlier this month. She had reportedly suffered post-traumatic stress disorder following torture while in prison. Sophia Jiménez, a singer and drag queen from Mexico is part of the line-up as well. She has performed with contestants of *Ru Paul's Drag Race* and was a finalist in *La Más Drag 2*, a television talent show of drag queens.

Among 40 contributions

from Africa; there is Ahmed Umar, a sculptor from Sudan who will talk about the fight for LGBTI+ equality in his country where homosexuality can still attract the death penalty. LGBTQIA+ people, who face severe social and legal restrictions in countries like Iraq, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Palestine, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Jamaica, have also made their contributions. The show will also feature a contribution from Antarctica. "Global Pride is our movement's response to the COVID-19 crisis," says J. Andrew Baker of InterPride, one of the organisers of Global Pride. The hope is to create the largest virtual queer event in history and raise funds for Pride and queer organisations that may find it difficult to survive the pandemic.

Global Pride will be broadcast on Saturday, June 27 at globalpride2020.org; on Todrick Hall's YouTube channel; and on Facebook page: [GlobalPride2020](https://www.facebook.com/GlobalPride2020)

POOCH CAFE

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

TIGER

WUMO

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

PEANUTS

CALVIN AND HOBBES

GRAFFITI

HEALTH CAPSULES

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13363

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

12 Courteousness (8)

14 Quantum of electromagnetic radiation (6)

15 Turning (6)

17 Calf meat (4)

Solution will appear on June 27, 2020.

Solution No. 13362

■ Across
5 Woodworker (9)
8 Boundless (4)
9 Unmasking (8)
10 Shrink back in fear (6)
11 Late Baroque style (6)
13 Repressed (4-2)
15 Swot for an exam (6)
16 Omit (5,3)
18 Ogle (4)

■ Down
1 Strict disciplinarian — met train (anag) (8)
2 Formal discourse to an audience (6)
3 Concealed marksman (6)
4 In smaller quantity (4)
5 Keen-sighted (5-4)
7 Practical joker (9)

M-BM-BME



Bad to worse

Ties between India and Pakistan seem strained beyond immediate repair

In another round of tit-for-tat manoeuvres, India, followed by Pakistan, has decided to halve the strength of diplomatic missions in each other's capital. The government's decision, conveyed in a démarche to the Pakistani Chargé d'affaires on Tuesday, follows the ill-treatment and torture of Indian personnel posted in Islamabad, in clear violation of their diplomatic rights. Pakistan's contention was that the two men arrested were carrying fake currency, but it is more likely the action was a response to arrests and the expulsion of two Pakistani High Commission officials accused of espionage last month, who were also taken into custody by Indian security officials. New Delhi also accused Pakistan High Commission officials of maintaining "links to terror organisations" as a reason for its decision. While expulsions of diplomats are not uncommon between countries as inimical to each other as India and Pakistan are, this is the first time such a measure has been taken since 2001. Then, the Parliament attack in December 2001, and the largest military mobilisation of the time along the India-Pakistan border, Operation Parakram, were the triggers. Eventually, after a thaw in ties, and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan for the SAARC summit in 2004, the move was reversed and diplomats were gradually taken back to a full strength of over 100 in each High Commission.

The latest decision follows not one event, but a general downslide in relations in the past year. After the Pulwama attack last February, the Balakot air strike and the August 5 decision to amend Article 370 of the Constitution and reorganise Jammu and Kashmir, India and Pakistan have snapped all trading ties, downgraded missions – now without High Commissioners – and shut down most diplomatic activities. India and Pakistan have had no talks since 2015, when PM Modi visited Lahore, and the External Affairs Ministers met a few months later. All sporting and cultural exchanges are at an end, and visas are rarely granted, apart from the rare exception being made for the Kartarpur corridor inaugurated last year. From the LoC, where ceasefire violations continue to claim lives of soldiers and civilians on both sides, to practically every multilateral forum India and Pakistan are a part of, both sides are at daggers drawn. Even on non-contentious issues such as cooperating on the coronavirus pandemic as a part of the SAARC grouping, or collaborating against the recent locust invasion that affected the region, Islamabad and New Delhi are unable to find common cause. While the present seems bleak, the future does not augur well for a change, particularly as India-China tensions occupy New Delhi's concerns and focus. The decision to reduce mission strengths is unlikely to impact working relations between India and Pakistan at present. It is a sign, however, that just when it seems ties between the two neighbours cannot get much worse, they do.

Signalling intent

India needs enhanced manufacturing capabilities and improved efficiencies

The Centre's decision to make it mandatory for vendors on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) procurement platform to specify the country of origin of new products listed by them is on the face of it unexceptionable, aimed as it is at promoting India-made goods. Apart from the place of manufacture, the platform's administrators have also sought details on the extent of local content and set guidelines on the percentage of localisation for enabling procurement in the case of bids of a specified value. However, the timing and thrust of the announcement – set in the backdrop of the government's new-found push for self-reliance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on the global economy, coupled with the recent heightened border tensions with China – raises several questions. The government's attempts to raise the share of manufacturing in the economy through the 'Make in India' programme have so far failed to significantly boost investment in new, cutting-edge technology-driven or export-oriented industries and instead only taken the country back to import substitution plants making goods predominantly for domestic consumption. To that extent, the drive for self-reliance and greater localisation risks once again eroding India industry's global competitiveness by placing a premium on 'Indianness' over quality or cost.

The Centre's move with its GeM portal has also predictably kindled and amplified a gathering clamour for the identification and subsequent boycott of Chinese products including on private e-commerce platforms. The weaponisation of trade ties, especially one where India's reliance on imports from China now extend beyond smartphones and low-cost electronics to heavy machinery and active pharmaceutical ingredients, is a double-edged sword and fraught with risks for the Indian economy as well. India's drug makers, who are seeking to entrench themselves as a pharmacy to the world amid the pandemic and accompanying rush for affordable generic treatments, depend on the northern neighbour for about 70% of their requirements of bulk drugs and intermediates. For India to wean itself off these dependencies will take time. The fact is that enhancing manufacturing capacities with improved efficiency and reduced cost would require an overhaul of bureaucratic processes. Attaining genuine self-reliance is a long and capital intensive process that would require far greater investment in education, skill-building and infrastructure. The GeM move on country of origin is at best symbolic. For now, policymakers ought to tone down any trade-linked rhetoric and give diplomats and military negotiators the room to smoothen ties.

China, Kashmir and the ghost of August 5

Apart from Pakistan and its involvement in the Kashmir conflict, India may now have a third party in the game — Beijing capture attempts.

For both India and China, the region is of great strategic importance. For India, Chinese aggression close to Eastern Ladakh could frustrate its hold over Siachen glacier and compromise its security in the western frontier given the close partnership between Islamabad and Beijing. For China, the region is important for the CPEC and its access to Central Asia, both of which are part of its "Belt and Road" grand strategy.

More worry

More so, as a second-order consequence of the August decision, New Delhi may have unwittingly brought China and Pakistan closer than ever on the Kashmir question. From being somewhat neutral on the Kashmir question in the 1990s and 2000s, China today is an aggrieved party, or so it claims, in the Kashmir conflict. If Pakistani involvement in the Kashmir conflict were not enough, we now have China in the game as well as a much more powerful third party.

Furthermore, we have always known that China and Pakistan shared a formidable strategic alliance and yet, by wisely deemphasising that and dealing with them separately – not as a strategic alliance – New Delhi had contained their combined effect on itself to a great extent. Not anymore. Our strategy should have been to continue to weaken the China-Pakistan alliance by engaging China economically, multilaterally and regionally. Instead we may have brought them closer than ever.

The lesson is self-evident. A country the size of India can ill-afford to be narrowly tactical in its foreign and security policy decision making. Geopolitics in South-East Asia is changing way faster than we previously imagined and, therefore, our decisions should not be made based on tactical and political considerations, but on cold, clear-headed strategic assessment.

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HAPPYMON JACOB

Sometimes, a seemingly rhetorical statement or a symbolic political decision has the undesirable ability to fundamentally alter the material reality around a particular issue, especially when it comes to sensitive international disputes and conflicts. The impact of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's decision on Kashmir in 2019 on the current China-India military stand-off on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is one such phenomenon. As a political scientist, I am aware of the apparent "methodological overreach" in my attempt at linking the two even though it might not be an analytical overreach. Consider the following.

What is becoming clear now is that by "inventing" a rhetorical position around the issue of Aksai Chin, a territory India may never have intended to take back by force from China, New Delhi seems to have aggravated the existing Chinese sensitivities on it. Put differently, India's infrastructure-building activities on its side of the LAC and the China's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) connectivity to Pakistan were already on a collision course, and it seems the reorganisation of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) on August 5 last year, and the rhetoric surrounding it, may have finally triggered a conflict that was building up for a long time.

The ground reality

The impact of August 5 has been felt on two fronts – China and Pakistan. Official data show a steady rise in violence in Kashmir since 2014, and the August 2019 decision has done little to reduce this despite the restrictions of movement and a heavy security presence in Kashmir. Early trends on violence in 2020 show that the le-

On the boil

According to Government of India data, most indicators of violence in Kashmir record a spike since 2014



THE TRENDS FOR 2011 TO 2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Ceasefire violations	62	114	347	583	405	449	971	1629	3479
Net infiltration	52	121	97	65	33	119	136	143	138
Terrorists killed	100	50	67	110	108	150	213	257	157
Security personnel killed*	33	38	53	47	39	82	80	91	79
Civilians killed*	31	11	15	28	17	15	40	39	37
Kashmiri youth joining militant groups	23	21	16	53	66	88	126	218	139

*OFFICIAL DATA IS AVAILABLE UP TO NOVEMBER 17, 2019 (FOR SECURITY AND CIVILIAN CASUALTIES).

vels of violence will indeed cross those of 2019.

The impact of August 5 goes beyond a mere spike in violence in Kashmir. Since August, retired Pakistani officials close to the establishment have argued that in the wake of India's Kashmir decision, the Simla Agreement of 1972 – which forms a key basis of bilateral relations, including the management of the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir – is not valid anymore. The Pakistani side argues that the Indian decision *vis-à-vis* Kashmir goes against the spirit of the Simla Agreement since the agreement states that "pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation...". This of course does not take away from the fact that Pakistan has altered the situation in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) several times over in the past.

If this indeed reflects an emerging official thinking within Pakistan, this might have serious implications. For one, this would mean that the agreement governing the India-Pakistan border in J&K will no longer be the Simla Agreement but would, as a result, have to be the one signed between the two sides in Karachi in 1949, at the end of their first war in 1948. Since the Simla Agreement formalised several territorial changes which took place after 1949 and until December 1971, such territorial adjustments could become null and void. This raises two specific issues. For one, since the current ceasefire agreement between In-

dia and Pakistan (declared in 2003) is essentially a reiteration of the ceasefire agreement declared at the end of the 1971 war, this could mean an end to the existing ceasefire agreement between them. Second, if "Simla is dead", does it mean that the LoC that came into being (replacing the ceasefire Line in 1971) also stands nullified? In other words, the entire basis of India-Pakistan negotiations on J&K since 1972 may cease to exist if Pakistan decides to undermine the Simla Agreement, or accuse India of having done so by the August decision and then decide not to abide by it.

The China challenge

Let us return to the impact of August 5 on the current India-China stand-off. It was clear soon after the August decision that Beijing was deeply uneasy about India's decision for at least two reasons. One, India's strong official claim about a territory, Aksai Chin, that has been under the Chinese control; and two, bringing Ladakh under India's central rule annoyed Beijing since it considers Ladakh's borders to be disputed between them. From Beijing's perspective, the August decision also complicated the ongoing boundary talks between the two sides. Pakistani appeals to Beijing to push back against India may have sharpened the Chinese reaction. There is also some similarity between the Pakistani and Chinese positions on India's August decision: both sides argue that India changed the status of a territory (J&K) whose borders were still being negotiated.

Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's visit to Beijing in August 2019 and his assurances to China that India's decision had "no implication for the external boundaries of India or the Line of Actual Control with China. India was not raising any additional territorial claims. The Chinese concerns in this regard were misplaced" did not calm Beijing. Mr. Jaishankar was right about the implication of the reorganisation of J&K, but not the Home Minister's statement about Aksai Chin. China took the position that India "continued to damage China's territorial sovereignty by unilaterally modifying the form of domestic law" and that it was "unacceptable".

Fallout of India's official stand

Cut to June 19, 2020. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after an all-party meeting to discuss the LAC stand-off, stated: "Neither is anyone inside the Indian territory nor any of our border posts captured." Notwithstanding the clarifications from his Office, leading to even more controversy, the question is whether this was a deliberate climb-down from the August rhetoric so as to calm nerves in Beijing. We do not know. What we do know, however, is that the climbdown, if indeed that was the case, was not only ineffective but may also have had the opposite effect. Going by the Chinese statements thereafter, the Prime Minister's clarification has clearly been used by Beijing to justify its position on the LAC. It could now further embolden China to undertake more border raids and land

The perils of follow the leader syndrome

To the thinking Indian, the management of the pandemic, among other issues, is both unsatisfactory and misguided



DUSHYANT DAVE

André Gide, the French writer, once said, "Everything has been said before, but since nobody listens we have to keep going back and begin all over again." These words only underscore the need to be vocal especially when one has the country's best interests at heart, more so when India is passing through one of its most difficult phases since Independence.

Listen to the inner voice

The novel coronavirus pandemic is causing great pain. But the reason for its most painful blow is its handling or mishandling by the government of the day, affecting not only the economy but also the very livelihoods of lakhs of Indians. We need to stir up our collective conscience, the inner voice that warns us that things are not normal. But how do we do it?

We must remind ourselves of what B.R. Ambedkar said on November 25, 1949: "The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with power which enables him to subvert their institutions."

... this caution is far more ne-

cessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship."

These words of caution hold good even today.

Managing disaster

COVID-19 has posed a grave threat to India right from the time of the national lockdown. And yet, even now, the planners in the country do not have a national plan to combat the disease. The Disaster Management Act, 2005 expressly defines "Disaster" as "a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area".

The Act is comprehensive and provides for, *inter alia*, the constitution of a National Authority, a National Executive committee, the constitution of an advisory committee of experts in the field to make recommendations and to prepare a national plan. This plan must provide for measures for pre-

vention or mitigation. The Act lays down "guidelines for minimum standards of relief, including "ex gratia" assistance on account of loss of life... and for restoration of means of livelihood". It enables the creation of a National Disaster Response Fund in which the central government must make due contribution and requires "any grants that may be made by any person or institution for the purpose of disaster management" to be credited into the same Fund. It also provides for a National Disaster Mitigation Fund, exclusively for mitigation. The Act also provides for State and local-level plans and for creating State Disaster Response Fund among others.

The Act was not enforced for a long time even by the United Progressive Alliance/Congress government which enacted it. The Supreme Court of India intervened at the instance of Swaraj Abhiyan (*Swaraj Abhiyan vs Union Of India And Ors*) and Prashant Bhushan. Justices Madan Lokur and N.V. Ramana directed, in 2016, that the Act be implemented, and in particular the preparation of a National Plan, a National Disaster Response Fund, or NDMP, and a National Disaster Mitigation Fund, or NDMF. So, for the first time, the government came out with a National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP), the crux being sent to this fund are not even audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. It is a totally opaque exercise. Curiously on May 22, the government of India issued a notification to fight the locust menace by extending relief under the NDRF as also the SDRF. So, according to the government, the threat of locusts is more severe than the novel coronavirus. Clearly, the government of the day has not only ignored the binding law but also circumvented it. The government has decided to fight the crisis in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner instead of the organised steps as mandated by the Act. In so doing,

2016, which dealt with various kinds of disasters; it was amended in 2019. So why is this National Plan not even in place? Without it, the fight against COVID-19 is ad hoc, and has resulted in thousands of government orders, confusing those who are to enforce them as well as the public.

Obtuse steps

Worse still, the NDRF is inactive. On April 3, 2020, the government of India agreed to contribute its share to the NDRF. But curiously, "keeping in mind the need for a dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like [that] posed by COVID-19", a public charitable trust under the name of Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) was set up to receive grants made by persons and institutions out of the NDRF, in violation of Section 46 of the Act. The crores being sent to this fund are not even audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. It is a totally opaque exercise. Curiously on May 22, the government of India issued a notification to fight the locust menace by extending relief under the NDRF as also the SDRF. So, according to the government, the threat of locusts is more severe than the novel coronavirus. Clearly, the government of the day has not only ignored the binding law but also circumvented it. The government has decided to fight the crisis in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner instead of the organised steps as mandated by the Act. In so doing,

No one can deny that the Prime Minister means well, but his actions speak otherwise.

With Parliament not in session and the judiciary virtually silent, despite its *suo motu* intervention in the migrants' crisis, no one is even demanding the implementation of an immediate National Plan for COVID-19. It appears that constitutional bodies have not paid heed to Dr. Ambedkar's warning.

The media and civil society have to step in to guard the nation as they are the last bastions of a vibrant democracy. One can only think of the poem by Josiah Gilbert Holland, with the line, "...A time like this demands, Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands."

As Albert Einstein once said,

"The strength of the Constitution lies entirely in the determination of each Citizen to defend it."

So, let us all take a vow to defend the Constitution of India. I know of no other way forward.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

China face-off
A dispassionate analysis of all news reports, opinion pieces and even letters to the Editor on the India-China tensions reveals the preparedness

Pakistan to remain on FATF 'greylist'

However, Islamabad faced several setbacks such as a U.S. report slamming its record on terrorism

KALLO BHATTACHERJI
SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
NEW DELHI

Pakistan received another extension on the "greylist", as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary session on Wednesday decided to continue to keep all countries that were on the list under scrutiny for Terror Financing and Money Laundering until October 2020.

However, Islamabad faced setbacks on other fronts, with the United States slamming its record on terrorism, including its failure to act against groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and received a U.S. veto against its joint effort with China to list an Indian engineer on the UN Security Council

C Pakistan allowed groups targeting Afghanistan as well as groups targeting India to operate from its territory

U.S. REPORT ON TERRORISM

(UNSC's) 1267 list. At the FATF plenary, held through videoconferencing, Pakistan was due for a decision on whether it would be kept on the "greylist" or downgraded to the blacklist for failing to meet the finance watchdog's 27-point action plan on countering terror financing and anti-money laundering (CFT/AML) measures.

Sources said the FATF, which had given Pakistan two extensions to comply with its action plan since October 2019, decided unani-

mously to postpone decisions on all countries under "increased monitoring" or the "greylist", as well on "high risk jurisdictions", as the "blacklist" is formally known, owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

The FATF decision came even as the U.S. released its 2019 country report for terrorism, where the State Department said Pakistan had continued to "serve as a safe haven" for regional terrorist groups.

"It allowed groups targeting Afghanistan, including the Afghan Taliban and affiliated HQN, as well as groups targeting India, including LeT and its affiliated front organizations, and JeM, to operate from its territory," said the report, adding that while

Pakistan had played a "constructive role" in facilitating U.S. talks with the Taliban.

Pakistan said it was "dis-

appointed" at the U.S. for veiling its joint request with China to have one of four Indians listed with the UNSC sanctions Committee on designating terror entities.

In September 2019, Pakistan and China moved the joint proposal to declare Mr. Dongara, an Indian engineer working in Afghanistan, as a terrorist.

"We are disappointed that Pakistan's proposal to designate Venumadhv Dongara as a terrorist has been objected to. Pakistan hopes that the listing requests of other three Indian nationals will be given due consideration," said a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

(With inputs from Suhanshi Haidar)

U.S. REPORT ON TERRORISM

Education gap widened: UNESCO

'School closures due to pandemic have interrupted student support mechanisms'



Children who depend on the free noon meals at school are among the badly-hit.

three systems for educational continuity. "Even as governments increasingly rely on technology, the digital divide lays bare the limitations of this approach. Not all students and teachers have access to adequate internet connection, equipment, skills and working conditions to take advantage of available platforms," said the report.

School closures also interrupted support mechanisms from which many disadvantaged learners benefit.

Resources for blind and deaf students may not be available outside schools, while children with learning disabilities or those who are on the autism spectrum may struggle with independent work in front of a computer or the disruption of daily school routines, said the report.

For poor students who depend on school for free

meals or even free sanitary napkins, closures have been a major blow. Cancellation of examinations in many countries, including India, may result in scoring dependent on teachers' judgements of students instead, which could be affected by stereotypes of certain types of students, said the report. Higher drop-out rates are also a concern; during an earlier Ebola epidemic in Africa, many older girls never returned to school once the crisis was over.

In order to combat the situation, 17% of low and middle-income countries are planning to recruit more teachers, 22% to increase class time and 68% to introduce remedial classes when schools reopen, said the report. "How such classes are planned and targeted will be critical to whether disadvantaged students can catch up," it added.

Workers at a manganese mine in Madhya Pradesh.

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Next few weeks are critical in combating COVID-19, says Fauci

He asks people to avoid crowds, wear masks; says no plan to slow down testing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

The next few weeks are critical to tamping down a disturbing COVID-19 surge, Dr. Anthony Fauci told the U.S. Congress on Tuesday — issuing a plea for people to avoid crowds and wear masks just hours before mask-shunning President Donald Trump was set to address a crowd of his young supporters in one hot spot.

Dr. Fauci and other top health officials also said they have not been asked to slow down virus testing, in contrast to Mr. Trump's claim last weekend that he had ordered fewer tests be performed because they were uncovering too many infections. Mr. Trump said earlier on Tuesday that he wasn't kidding when he made that remark. "We will be doing more testing," Dr. Fauci, infectious disease chief at the National Institutes of Health, pledged to a House committee conducting oversight of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic.

The leading public health officials spent more than five hours testifying before the committee at a fraught moment, with COVID-19 cases rising in about half the States and political polarisation competing for attention with public health recommendations.

Dr. Fauci told lawmakers he understands the pent-up desire to get back to normal as the U.S. begins emerging from months of stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns. But that has "to be a gradual step-by-step process and not throwing caution to the wind", he said.

"Plan A, don't go in a



Expert testimony: Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, in Washington on Tuesday. ■ NYT

crowd. Plan B, if you do, make sure you wear a mask," Dr. Fauci said.

Record surges

Troubling surges worsened on Tuesday in several States, with Arizona, California, Mississippi, Nevada and Texas setting single-day records for new COVID-19 cases, and some Governors saying they'll consider reinstating restrictions or delaying plans to ease up in order to help slow the spread of the virus.

Arizona, where Mr. Trump was headed for a speech at a Phoenix megachurch, reported a new daily record of nearly 3,600 additional infections on Tuesday. Arizona emerged as a COVID-19 hot spot after Republican Governor Doug Ducey lifted his stay-home orders in mid-May. Last week, he al-

lowed cities and counties to require masks in public places and many have done so.

Texas surpassed 5,000 new cases for a single day for the first time — just days after it eclipsed 4,000 new cases for the first time.

Another worrisome trend — an increase in infections among young adults. Dr. Fauci said while COVID-19 tends to be less severe in younger people, some of them do get very sick and even die.

If people say, "I'm young,

I'm healthy, who cares?" you should care, not only for yourself but for the impact you might have" on sickening someone more vulnerable, Dr. Fauci said.

About 2.3 million Americans have been infected and some 1,20,000 have died, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Beijing outbreak under control

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

The new COVID-19 outbreak that has infected 256 people in Beijing since early June is "under control", officials said on Wednesday, but fears still remain over the risk of community transmission.

"The Beijing epidemic directly linked to Xinfadi (market) is basically under control, but at the same time we have discovered household and workplace cluster infections and cases of community transmission," said Beijing municipal government spokesman Xu Hejian.

Tourism-dependent Maldives to open up for visitors in mid-July

Case numbers are lower than expected, says President



Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in a 2018 photo. ■ AFP

ELSEWHERE



Singapore PM's brother joins Opposition party

SINGAPORE
Singapore Prime Minister's brother Lee Hsien Yang said on Wednesday that he had joined an Opposition party competing against his sibling in a July 10 general election but that he was undecided on whether he would run as a candidate. ■ REUTERS

Teenager arrested after criticising Hasina on FB

DHAKA
Police in Bangladesh's Bhaluka said on Wednesday that they arrested Mohammad Emon, 15, during the weekend for criticising Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Facebook. The arrest took place after an official from the ruling Awami League made a complaint. ■ AFP

Ahead of vote, Putin reviews military parade

Constitutional ballot could allow him to serve two more terms as President

REUTERS MOSCOW
President Vladimir Putin reviewed a spectacular Red Square military parade on Wednesday, a patriotic display critics said was designed to lift his lower-than-usual ratings on the eve of a nationwide vote that could extend his rule until 2036.

Mr. Putin watched as intercontinental ballistic missile launchers trundled past, nuclear-capable bombers flew overhead, and columns of tanks and over 14,000 troops, including some from allies like China, marched past under hot sunshine.

World War anniversary
The parade, to mark the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Union's Second World War victory over the Nazis, was postponed from May 9 because of the COVID-19 outbreak, but critics said it was still irresponsible to go



Victory march: Personnel from the Indian armed forces at the parade in Moscow on Wednesday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

ahead with it. Thousands of people thronged Moscow's streets to watch tanks roll through the city on what was a public holiday.

Mr. Putin struck a conciliatory tone towards the West, despite complaining beforehand about what he called attempts by some European countries to rewrite history. He also made an indirect reference to his desire

for the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to hold a summit to try to tackle the world's problems. "We are open to dialogue and cooperation on the most current international questions," he said.

In the event, around 10 world leaders attended, most of them from ex-Soviet countries. The president of Kyrgyzstan had to drop out

at the last minute after two people who accompanied him to Moscow tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival.

The parade was held on the eve of a nationwide vote, from June 25 until July 1, on constitutional changes, including an amendment that would allow Mr. Putin two more six-year terms as President if re-elected. Current constitutional limits bar him from seeking re-election when his term ends in 2024.

Experts from state pollster VTsIOM have forecast that 67-71% of voters will endorse the changes. Kremlin critics say the vote is a sham they fear will be falsified.

Some analysts say the authorities, backed by state media, use the annual parade to boost patriotic feeling, something that could help lift Mr. Putin's approval rating which is at 59%, according to independent pollster Levada.

N. Korea suspends military plan against South

Pyongyang has also taken down loudspeakers from the demilitarised zone

REUTERS SEOUL

North Korea is suspending military action plans against South Korea, the official KCNA news agency reported on Wednesday, as a report from Seoul suggested that North Korean troops were taking down loudspeakers near the demilitarised zone (DMZ) on Wednesday, just days after they were seen reinstalling around 20 of the devices. About 40 such systems had been taken down after the two Koreas signed an accord in 2018 to cease "all hostile acts". A spokesman for South Korea's Unification Ministry said it was monitoring the situation and had no change in its stance that inter-Korean agreements should be kept.



Honouring martyrs: Remains of South Korean soldiers killed in the Korean War at a repatriation ceremony in Hawaii. ■ AFP

cut off communication hot lines with the South.

Kim holds meeting

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un presided over a video conference meeting of the ruling party's Central Military Commission on Tuesday, where members "took stock of the prevailing situation" before deciding to suspend the military plans, KCNA said, without elaborating.

The committee also discussed documents outlining measures for "further bolstering the war deterrent of the country," KCNA reported. Late on Wednesday, KCNA issued another statement by Kim Yong-chol, a senior Pyongyang official, criticising the South Korean Defence Minister's remarks to Parliament that the North's actions must be withdrawn, not suspended.

The Ministry also confirmed South Korean media reports that a number of official North Korea propaganda websites had removed some articles critical of South Korea, though the spokesman said it was unclear why.

Pak. crash was caused by pilot error

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ISLAMABAD

A plane crash which killed 97 people in Pakistan last month was because of human error by the pilots, who were discussing the COVID-19 crisis during the landing, according to an initial report released on Wednesday.

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crashed into a crowded residential area on May 22 after both engines failed as it approached Karachi airport. "The pilot, as well as the (air traffic) controller, didn't follow the standard rules," said Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Pakistan's Aviation Minister, announcing the findings in Parliament. He said the pilots had been discussing the virus as they attempted to land the Airbus A320 and had disengaged the craft's autopilot.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. V/W/TC/7/2020 DATED 22.06.2020

Divisional Railway Manager / Works Branch / Thiruvananthapuram - 14 for and on behalf of the President of India invites online tenders for the following works as per tender notice given in our e-tender portal www.reps.gov.in. The tender(s) / contractor(s) to apply for e-tender for WORKS in Thiruvananthapuram Division, need to get enrolled in the e-tender portal www.reps.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted.

Sl. No.	Description	Approx. value Rs. (in lakh)	Ernest Money Deposit (in Rs.)	Tender form (in Rs.)	Cost of Completion in months	Period of
1	ZONE A - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Vallathol Nagar (Indl) to Trichur (Indl), Trichur to Guruvayur Trichur permanent way section.	25.2	50400	3360		TWELVE
2	ZONE B - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Trichur (Excl) to Korattiy Angadi (Excl) in Chalakudi permanent way section	21	42000	3360		TWELVE
3	ZONE C - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Korattiy Angadi (Indl) to Ernakulam North (Excl) Alwaye permanent way section	25.2	50400	3360		TWELVE
4	ZONE D - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Ermakulam Town, Ermakulam Jn., Ermakulam - Chotanikara Road - (KFE) Section (Station & colony - Excluding Chotanikara Road - KFE) Ermakulam - Kumbalam (Station & colony) & Ernakulam Goods station & colony	39.2	78400	3360		TWELVE
5	ZONE D1 - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Ermakulam - Diesel shed, trip shed, Ermakulam Marshalling Coaching depot, Ermakulam Marshalling Goods station & colony, Iruppanam station & colony, Mattacchery - Cochini Harbour Terminus station & colony, Ernakulam Jn. (Excl)	23.1	46200	3360		TWELVE
6	Zone E - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Chottanikara Road (Indl) to Chengannur (Excl) in Piravam Town - Kottayam P. way section.	38.5	77000	3360		TWELVE
7	Zone F - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Kumbalam (Excl) to Kayamkulam Junction (Excl) in Alleppey P. way section	23.1	46200	3360		TWELVE
8	Zone G - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Chengannur (Incl) Munroortur (Incl) and Kayamkulam (Incl) in Mavelikkara P. way section.	30.8	61600	3360		TWELVE
9	Zone H - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Munroortur (Excl) Varkala (Excl) in Quilon P. way section	26.6	53200	3360		TWELVE
10	Zone I - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works Varkala (Indl) to Thiruvananthapuram Central (Excl) (excluding Thiruvananthapuram Pettah station, Railway depot and Pettah colony) in Varkala P. way section.	17.5	35000	3360		TWELVE
11	Zone J1 - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Thiruvananthapuram station and service buildings, Divisional Office, Poopappura colony and Thamancoor colony	39.2	78400	3360		TWELVE
12	Zone J2 - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Thiruvananthapuram - Rural T.V.C (Excl) Nagercoil Town (INCL) in Thiruvananthapuram P. way section	21.70	43400	3360		TWELVE
13	Zone J3 - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Thiruvananthapuram Coaching depot, Railway hospital / Pettah, Thiruvananthapuram Pettah station and Pettah colony	29.4	58800	3360		TWELVE
14	Zone K - Supply of materials and execution of miscellaneous works in Nagercoil Town (Excl) to Tirunelveli (Excl) and Nagercoil Town to Kanniyakumari - in Nagercoil P. way section	38.5	77000	3360		TWELVE

Tender Closing date and time : Sl No : 1 to 14 : 14.07.2020 at 11.00 hrs.

Details of approximate value of tender, tender form cost, EMD & location are given on the e-portal www.reps.gov.in. For details of bid submission, please refer website portal www.reps.gov.in.

Divisional Railway Manager / Works Thiruvananthapuram - 14

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Victory march: Personnel from the Indian armed forces at the parade in Moscow on Wednesday. ■ GETTY IMAGES



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