

Trying to be a first-rate reporter on the average American newspaper is like trying to play Bach's 'St. Matthew's Passion' on a ukulele
Baghician's Observation

Back to square one in Kashmir

As was expected, the Centre had ended the temporary respite in search operations by the security forces in Kashmir after the end of Ramzan. Apparently, it will make no difference to the ground situation. Local separatist elements and terrorists sent into the Valley by Pakistan will continue their attacks and killings. The merit of the cease operations (the Government insists that it was not a 'ceasefire') lay in its political message. It was an expression of intent of the Government to have a period of peace. Everyone in the Valley welcomed the step. But ultimately it failed to initiate a process of dialogue between the Centre and the stakeholders in Kashmir. The stalemate continues. India-Pakistan dialogue remains suspended because the Centre thinks 'terror and talks' cannot go on together. The separatists remain where they are. The relationship between the two ruling coalition partners - the PDP and the BJP - is anything but happy. It has been proved that they are two incompatible partners. It is only power that holds them together, but for how long nobody knows.

Meanwhile, the situation in Kashmir continues to drift. Pakistani border guards and armed militants continue to kill security forces personnel and civilians. The security forces kill terrorists and home-bred militants. There is no political initiative on the part of New Delhi to break the deadlock. The Centre has rejected the 33 page report of the UN Human Rights Commission on Kashmir on alleged violation of human rights in Indian Kashmir because it thinks that the report is biased in favour of Pakistan. India has also objected to the reference in the report to 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan' because India does not recognize the existence of 'Azad' Kashmir. Its stand is that the entire Jammu and Kashmir State is Indian. Only a part of it remains under the illegal occupation of Pakistan.

But mere rejection of the UNHRC report cannot evade the issue. Kashmiri apart, many Indians also believe that innocent people have been tortured and killed in Kashmir by the security forces in course of their operations. Raising this question invites the charge of being pro-Pakistani or anti-national but the alienation of the Kashmiri people from India is an undeniable fact. Statesmanship demands breaking the deadlock, open channels of dialogue and discussion with all concerned. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's bus-yatra to Lahore in 1999 was a major initiative to break the ice. But the present leadership does not have the maturity and farsightedness of Vajpayee. And the situation continues to drift - dangerously.

A real reformer, an implementer

REFLEX ACTION

Subrata Majumder

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not a radical reformer. He is a great administrator and not a reformer as he seems, the Economist said. The report card of his four years governance envisages that he is more laudable in administration and bureaucracy than in economic reforms. Nonetheless, he ushered the country into high growth trajectory and bolstered it into the highest global growth trend, surpassing China.

With absolute majority in Lok Sabha, high hopes loomed large for reform oriented planks, which would make a corruption free society and bring 'Ache Din' in the country. But soon the hopes were belied. The land and labour reforms, which were big ticket reforms mandated, failed to fructify. Endeavour was made to bring the reforms through State legislations. Only a few were successful to attract the investment by these reforms. At World Economic Forum, investors bemoaned the absence of any big ticket reform by India government. Modi has not come with many big ideas of his own. Half of his major reforms were culmination of reforms, whose seeds were sown during the UPA government. Aadhar - the identification of billions of Indians - was created in January 2009, under the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. GST - the national uniform tax system and the first major taxation reform - was first seeded by Rajiv Gandhi in 1985.

Modi is known as quick fixer to address the chronic problems of administration. He pitched for Minimum Government Maximum Governance. He coaxed the Japanese investors by committing red carpet, instead of red tape. That was the plank of his reforms. He reduced multiple channels for taking decision. He dissolved large number of Cabinet Committees which were overlapping. He reduced Cabinet Committees from 12 in UPA to 6, letting the decision making process faster. Cabinet Committees are the highest body for decision making in the country. His major attempts for economic reforms can be seen through the lenses of procedural simplifications and faster implementation of the policies. He introduced Jan Dhan

Yojana, a scheme to cover a larger part of people in the country. Over 70 percent of the population were brought under banking system, which was hitherto limited to 32 percent in 2013 under UPA. He introduced Indian Banking Code, which will address the bad debts and faster debt recovery by replacing multiple regulations with single law. He opened up various sensitive sectors expeditiously to allure foreign investors, scrapping the caps for investment. He cleaned off the messy regulations of factory law by scrapping the multiple systems for submitting returns into a single format, with an eye to expedite his Make in India initiative.

In nut shell, his challenges were to seize in hard bargain with bureaucrats to put the reforms on fast tracks. Resultantly, ease of doing business sparked and the business corruption subsided. It helped the nation to leapfrog in high growth trajectory. GDP growth surged from 6.4 percent in 2013 to 7.4 percent in 2016-17. The growth subverted the much hyped paranoia of demonetization and GST, which were the potential salves of the opposition. The average annual growth rate of GDP during the four years of NDA was 7.3 percent. Undoubtedly, in the race of reforms, Modi is left much behind Dr. Manmohan Singh. Singh indulged in radical economic reforms, driving the country into a turnaround from a close economy to an open economy. He dismantled the License Raj - the cudgel to desist the private sector to play key role in the economy and empower the public sector. He reworked the industrial and trade policies, abrogating the licensing requirements. He opened up the economy more to the private sectors and foreign enterprises and rejuvenated the Indian stock

market. Dr. Singh enlivened the service sector by ceding several tax concessions. Software companies sprang up, placing the country a pivot for global software exports.

Notwithstanding Modi's slow pace in economic reforms, India emerged globally a competitive destination for doing business. According to Global Manufacturing Competitiveness Index (CMCI) 2016, by Deloitte survey, India might outbid China in low cost manufacturing competitiveness in the next five years. According to the survey, while China will lose the powerhouse of low cost manufacturing competitiveness, the Mighty Five - the five Asia Pacific nations, Malaysia, India, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam - will emerge as the choice for low cost manufacturing in place of China. India will be the frontrunner with four countries chasing behind, the survey said. India was placed on the rising curve for global ease of doing business. It ranked up from 142 in 2013 in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business annual survey to 100 in 2017.

FDI surged during Modi regime. It doubled from US \$ 22 billion in 2013 to US \$ 44 billion in 2017. India had never seen such boom in FDI during Manmohan era. Despite he was ascribed as the main architect for economic reforms and opening door to the foreign investors. Mr Modi was reckoned a pioneer in reforming subsidy less growth. He dismantled the subsidy base of diesel price mechanism. Diesel oil is an important component for transporting daily essentials, particularly food items, to the market. With the dismantling of diesel oil subsidy, diesel prices increased in proportion to global oil price hike. Food items are generally the triggers for inflation. Despite this, inflation hovered at low ebb.

The chemistry between reforms and growth suggests that reforms do not necessarily lead to growth. Reforms need to be implemented. Surely, Dr Manmohan Singh was the pioneer to open the economy. But, the messy road prevailed for the investors. Modi's strong challenges to tackle the bureaucrats and implement the reforms, helped the growth. (IPA)



Swans paddle in front of Christo's work The London Mastaba, on the Serpentine in Hyde Park, London, Britain. --REUTERS

Peaceful nation status and negatives

FOCUS

Gyan Pathak

Against the popular belief among Indians that India is one of the most peaceful nations of the world, it has been declared 29th worst peaceful nation ranking 136th out of 163 nations measured for peacefulness by the Global Peace Index 2018. In comparison to last year, India scored only a little better by 0.025 pushing its rank up by four from 140th rank. The country's overall score is 2.504 on a scale of 0-10. The slightly improved overall score for India was due to the government's efforts to tackle violent crime, falling levels of military expenditures, particularly on weapons imports, resulting in improvement in its Militarisation score. However, the concentration of power in the office of Prime Minister Narendra Modi led to deterioration in India's score for Political Instability, and the country's scores on the Political Terror Scale and Internal Conflicts at 4 and 4, respectively, remain elevated, says the report. While referring to South Asia, the report said that the strengthening scores on the Political Terror Scale, refugees and IDPs, and terrorism impact were partially offset by deterioration in external conflicts after a border dispute

with China flared in the Doklam Pass. The three-month standoff involved India, which sent troops to the area. On relations with the neighbouring countries, the report said that India kept peace until 1980 but it declined since then. Diplomatic exchanges increased but at a much slower rate. China maintained a lower number of diplomatic exchanges until surpassing Russia and India in 1980. India is thus far behind China in diplomatic exchanges, which is not only a tool for deterrence against other countries, but also for conflict prevention, apart from other economic and political benefits.

On safety and security, the report said that India's military personnel rate almost tripled in the 1960s and the 1970s, but has since declined slowly. It reflects the changing nature of warfare, which increasingly relies on technological strength rather than sheer number of personnel. In this context it refers to successful detonation of nuclear weapons by India among Pakistan and North Korea, the countries which did not sign the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 1970 or have withdrawn since signing. India is estimated to

have around 700 nuclear weapons in 2015 compared to around 800 the previous year. In the GPI domain score, relating to ongoing domestic and international conflict, India scores 2.826 securing the position of the 17th worst country in the world. Syria is presently the worst country. Afghanistan and Pakistan are 2nd and 4th worst countries. All other countries in South Asia are faring better than India. On societal safety and security, India scores 2.356, which is indicative of the fact that the country needs to give more attention to improve the situation. The scores of majority of the countries of the world have been deteriorating on this account. Therefore, in comparison to other countries it ranks 69th in the world. This rank is not a matter of satisfaction for India, because its score is still higher enough to make people

miserable with great sufferings. On Militarization, India scores 2.413, ranking as the 16th most militarized country. It means, in terms of peacefulness, that India is the 16th worst country of the world. Israel is the worst in peacefulness with most militarized status. Afghanistan and Pakistan are even more militarized than India, being at 14th and 12th in the world. In other words, Pakistan and Afghanistan are 12th and 14th worst peaceful countries in terms of militarization. Keeping in mind the legacy of conflicts between India and Pakistan, the militarization of both the countries to such a high degree is a cause of great concern not only for both the countries, but also for South Asia and the world. The GPI has also estimated the cost of violence. The economic cost of violence for India was 806,236.9 million dollars in 2017

while the economic impact was of 1,190,509.6 million dollars. As percentage of GDP of the country the total cost of violence was 9 per cent, ranking 59th in the world. The per capita loss due to violence was 95.4 dollars.

It is of great concern that global peacefulness has deteriorated by 2.38 per cent since 2008. It deteriorated for eight of the last eleven years, with the last improvement in peacefulness occurring in 2014. The current year is thus the fourth successive year of deterioration.

Global Peace Index is prepared by the Institute for Economics & Peace headquartered in Sydney. It is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. The GPI covers 97 per cent of the world's population, using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources, and measures the state of peace using three thematic domains: the level of Societal Safety and Security; the extent of Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict; and the degree of Militarization. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8						
9				10		
		11				
12	13	14		15	16	17
18			19	20		21
	22		23			
24				25	26	27
		28				
29						30

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cajolery
 - 2 Daybreak
 - 3 Dodged
 - 4 Young horse
 - 5 Added clause
 - 6 Mouse-coloured
 - 7 Torn
 - 8 Female pig
 - 9 Stop up
 - 10 Dry
 - 11 Endures
 - 12 Leave empty
 - 13 Stratum
 - 14 Salamanders
- DOWN**
- 1 Handles skilfully
 - 2 Was ahead
 - 3 At all times
 - 4 Hindu garment
 - 5 Postpone
 - 6 Workshops
 - 7 No score
 - 8 Out of bed
 - 9 Tracking system
 - 10 Intertwines
 - 11 Denial
 - 12 Printing measure
 - 13 Scheme
 - 14 Consumed
 - 15 Ply the needle

SUDOKU: 2228

7	8			9	6			
1				3	4			
4		5	7	1	9			
	4	7		5				6
	3		9		7	5		
9				3	2	1		
		6		8	1	4	2	
	7	2					8	
		2	4				3	9

Yesterday's Solution 2227

5	1	2	3	9	4	6	7	8
3	8	6	2	7	1	4	9	5
9	4	7	5	6	8	2	3	1
7	5	1	4	8	6	9	2	3
6	2	8	9	5	3	1	4	7
4	3	9	7	1	2	5	8	6
8	9	3	1	4	5	7	6	2
1	6	4	8	2	7	3	5	9
2	7	5	6	3	9	8	1	4

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 236

S	E	E	R	D	A	R	T	S
U	M	O	T	I	V	E	I	
E	B	B	S	M	E	D	A	L
L	E	S	R	V				
O	U	R	E	N	T	R	E	E
P	E	S	E	T	A	E	A	R
E	R	A	P	I	D	P	I	T
A	S	T	A	L	I	N	A	
S	P	I	E	D	C	A	L	M

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