



Back on track

India and China must address bilateral issues in a sustainable way, pursuing the BRICS spirit

By putting up a united front at the BRICS summit, and proposing a revival of the Panchsheel principles of peaceful cooperation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have signalled they are trying to put the bitterness of the past few months behind them. The tenor of the meetings between the two leaders was particularly remarkable given that the long Doklam military stand-off was resolved just a week ago. In fact, their agreement that Doklam-like situations must not recur is an indication that India and China are looking for new mechanisms to strengthen the border defence agreements that have held in the past. It is also significant that both countries expressed similar views about resisting economic protectionism of the kind that the Trump administration in the U.S. has been espousing; the BRICS countries have together committed to an “open and inclusive” multi-lateral trading system. Another area of welcome consonance was the North Korean nuclear tests. All five countries, Brazil, Russia and South Africa being the other three, condemned them unequivocally, while advocating dialogue and not the use of force. The messaging that emanated from both the Indian and Chinese delegations at Xiamen smoothed the interactions between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi, and allowed for a productive BRICS declaration that belied fears that bilateral tensions would overtake multilateral concerns. The government’s determination to hush any triumphalism over the Doklam outcome certainly helped. China’s nod to the inclusion of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed among the terrorist groups threatening regional stability, and its choosing not to speak of the contentious Belt and Road Initiative at the summit suggested it was heeding India’s concerns.

With the BRICS meet concluded, it is doubly important that Indian and Chinese officials re-engage in a sustained manner to address all areas of discord which led to the charged situation at Doklam. They must, for starters, review where the border defence standard operating procedures failed. Second, the two countries must convene the delayed meeting of the Special Representatives, and add the latest claims and counter-claims over the Sikkim boundary and the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction to the agenda for discussions. It is necessary to see that the much-acclaimed BRICS language on terrorist groups like the LeT and JeM is translated into actionable points as a show of good faith. Beijing will have an early opportunity to do so in October when the issue of designating JeM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist comes up at the UN Security Council and when the UN’s Financial Action Task Force takes stock of Pakistan’s actions against the LeT. It is imperative that the gains of the BRICS summit in terms of the India-China bilateral atmospherics are optimised.

Breaking the bank

The mega bid for IPL media rights further shifts the centre of gravity towards the BCCI

The Indian Premier League is the high point in the international cricket calendar. Since 2008 the annual summer staple has dished out gargantuan pay cheques, nail-biting contests and massive sixes. The player auctions often witness franchises breaking their respective banks. Despite the initial squeak of the former Australian wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist that he felt like ‘cattle’ up for sale to the highest bidder, or the 2013 spot-fixing scandal, the IPL is here to stay. For a brand which in its formative years Rahul Dravid succinctly described as “a domestic tournament with an international flavour”, the IPL has quadrupled its growth and in the future could perhaps challenge the International Cricket Council’s global events, be it the World Cup or the World Twenty20. The league features the world’s leading cricketers, with the unfortunate exception of Pakistani players, and it gained a further financial fillip this week when Star India offered ₹16,347.5 crore to acquire the media rights for the next five years. It dwarfed the ₹8,200 crore Sony paid for the TV rights in the previous 10-year contract. That a broadcaster is willing to stake so much is confirmation of the traction the IPL has gained among television audiences, and the lodestone it remains for corporates and advertisers.

The successful bid also reiterates the plain truth that India is cricket’s commercial hub. The trend of staggering money on offer for anything that is cricket-related in India has been evident over the last few years. The enormous bids Chinese phone manufacturers Vivo (₹2,199 crore) and Oppo (₹1,079 crore) made for the IPL title sponsorship and the Indian team’s sponsorship, respectively, earlier this year drive home the point. The new media rights deal will considerably bolster the annual income of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, 15.4% of which came from the IPL according to its annual report for 2015-16. The cash flow reinforces the BCCI’s uncontested status as the wealthiest and most powerful governing body in world cricket. Star India’s winning bid also highlights the rapid growth of the game’s shortest version. It translates, approximately, to ₹54.5 crore a match, greater than the ₹43 crore currently paid for an India home international (Test, ODI and T20). The club versus country debate will rage again, specifically when the player auction takes place in February 2018 and the league runs its course in April and May. Cricketers aren’t complaining, though. Tests remain the acme of cricket but with venues largely sporting empty stands, the five-day game needs its conveyor belt to be oiled by the commerce that the IPL and by extension the BCCI gifts to the game at large. More importantly, the confirmation of the commercial and administrative clout of the BCCI must underline yet again the need to continue the reform and clean-up of the way cricket is managed in India.

There is a Rohingya in all of us

By contemplating deportation of the hapless refugees, India undermines itself



SHIV VISVANATHAN

The timing could not have been more immaculately disastrous. At a time when Rohingya are being forced to flee the violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine state, in the Supreme Court this week the Centre refused to revise its stand on deporting Rohingya immigrants in India. It was in effect adhering to its position taken on August 9, when the Minister of State for Home Affairs informed Parliament that 40,000 Rohingya were to be deported. With that, the idea of India, the India of democracy and hospitality disappeared in a single stroke. A dream of India disappeared in a single moment. The marginal life of the Rohingya became a greater nightmare. The Government of India has returned to an idea of hard state, dropping its dreams of compassion, care and civility. Behind the tragedy of the decision will be a nit-picking bureaucracy and the security think tanks, convinced that an aspirational India does not need a defeated people like the Rohingya.

Most persecuted minority

In many ways, the Rohingya represent “the last man” of international society that Gandhi talked about. They are the world’s most persecuted minority. They are Muslims, belonging to the Sunni sect, scattered mainly over the Rakhine state of Myanmar. Harassed by the Myanmar Army and forced to serve as slave labour, they have also been systematically persecuted by the Buddhist majority. The persecution of the Rohingya also highlights the silence of Aung



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San Suu Kyi, destroying another myth of ethics and human rights. A woman whose campaign for human rights won her the Peace Nobel now stands embarrassingly silent in case her broader political strategies are affected. The dispensability of the Rohingya is clear and so is the callousness of the nation state. India can no longer criticise the West for being hostile to Syrian and Sudanese refugees.

One thing is clear. No Nehruvian state, or even regime of Indira Gandhi, would have made such a decision. Both upheld the principle of hospitality, of the openness of borders. Jawaharlal Nehru was open to Tibet and courageously invited the Dalai Lama to make a home here, and Indira Gandhi played host to refugees from the then East Pakistan, ignoring the threats of tough people such as Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon.

The Rohingya situation has been bleak for years. The turning point was the attitude of the Burmese military junta which cracked down on them in 1982, contending that Rohingya as late comers were not part of the original ancestors of Burmese society. Denied an autonomous cultural status, they

lost all claims to the entitlements of citizenship. They were denied not only access to health, education but also any claim to the idea of citizenship.

A slow exodus

Persecuted by the army and the Buddhist majority, they began a slow exodus over India, Bangladesh, spreading to States such as Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, moving as far as Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Their exodus has once again a cynical side to it as agents arranged for their travel. These touts of international suffering arranged for their travel at exorbitant rates. The Rohingya became temporary boat people as Bangladesh shut its borders on them piously condemning them as drug peddlers. The Rohingya then attempted to cross into Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia only to realise that fellow Islamic nations had little sympathy for them. The no-welcome sign was clear and categorical. Each state would react piously, claiming to have fulfilled its humanitarian quota. It was also realistically clear that unlike the Syrians, the Rohingya, as a tiny speck of the refugee population would hardly be front page news

Staring down censorship

Why did Beijing risk a backlash from the China studies community?



SONIKA GUPTA

Last month, the *China Quarterly* (CQ), the most reputed academic journal of China studies in the world, published by the Cambridge University Press (CUP), was asked by the Chinese government to block hundreds of articles in China. The censorship was sought with retrospective effect going back to the first issue in 1960. Most of the articles were on Tibet, the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square protests, Taiwan independence, Falun Gong, Xinjiang, democracy and human rights.

This was an unprecedented move of academic censorship in China. It is common practice that foreign scholars excise ‘sensitive’ information from their work published in Chinese on the mainland. This protects Chinese citizens associated with a particular piece of research and also guards against the possibility of visa denials for subsequent visits by scholars. However, the CQ censoring raised the stakes as this actively targeted the work of China scholars in English published outside China. The academic community reacted swiftly with stinging criticism. It

criticised the CUP for its failure to stand up for academic freedom. This backlash worked and within three days the CQ reinstated the banned content in China.

Defending the ban, an editorial in the *Global Times*, the mouthpiece of the government, termed the ban a “matter of principle” and asked the “West” to fall in line with Chinese laws to do business with the vast Chinese market. It also stated that academic freedom is a western value.

Facilitating dialogue

CQ has over six decades built a reputation for upholding the highest standards of research on China, with defining conversations on Chinese politics, economy and society. It has created a well-informed discourse on China that is itself open to critique and discussion. This censorship would have prevented Chinese scholars from participating in this conversation. Further, CQ is equally valuable to Chinese and non-Chinese scholars. Its censorship was hardly likely to produce an affirming consensus around the Chinese government’s view of its own politics within the Chinese academic community. As an English language journal, its readership in China is limited to the social sciences academics. Therefore, this censorship was not likely to have had a major impact on widespread Chinese efforts to control its popular mediascape. Why, then, did China risk a global



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political backlash from some of the most well-informed people on China?

It appears that there now is a broad policy of censoring academic debate in China. Following the CQ censorship, Lexis-Nexis, another widely used legal and academic database, revealed that it has been forced to pull two of its databases out of the Chinese market because of censorship. The *Journal of Asian Studies*, another top journal was also asked to remove content. While censorship is not new in China, its expansion to academic content in English is an alarming sign.

Internet sovereignty

The Chinese panopticon has evolved from party units at the workplace, neighbourhoods, professional organisations, media and academia to the more omnipresent monitoring regime online. China

for a sufficient length of time. At the most their memories would survive in a few PhD theses in international relations. The refugee has always been an enticing topic for PhDs.

In fact, Pope Francis’s statement that the “campaign of terror” against the Rohingya must cease fell on deaf ears. Sadly, India missed the leadership and compassion of a Mother Teresa. She would have stepped out and offered some care and relief to them, stirring the Indian middle class into some acts of caring.

The odd thing is that the genocide, the vulnerability of such a people is often lost in bureaucratic issues of legal and political status. It is not clear whether Rohingya are refugees or illegal migrants. As refugees they are entitled to some care; as illegal migrants they become subject to harassment and exploitation. Refugees become a target for an informal economy of bonded labour.

Union Home Minister Kiren Rijiju already sounded the warning signals in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha. He was clear that the Rohingya were illegal migrants. He was cited as claiming in an interview that the Rohingya “have no basis to live here. Anybody who is an illegal migrant will be deported.” Yet one wonders whether in terms of humanitarian law and the conventions of the UN, Mr. Rijiju is right. This is a group that is threatened with continuous persecution, whose homes are unsafe, whose livelihoods have been destroyed. To be forced to return to Myanmar would only subject them to harassment, ethnic persecution and a genocidal future.

Being human

One is grateful that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which often plays the Rip

Van Winkle of human rights, responded quickly. On August 18, it issued a notice to the government over its plan to deport Rohingya staying illegally in India, asking the government to report in four weeks.

The Commission added hopefully that the Supreme Court had declared that fundamental rights are applicable to all regardless of whether they are citizens of India. Yet such appeals to rights and humanitarianism cut little ice in today’s bureaucracy which is obsessed with security issues and content to raise the bogey of terrorism and law and order when it comes to such a helpless people. The NHRC came up with a memorable line that Rohingya refugees “are no doubt foreign nationals but they are human beings.”

It is clear that the everydayness of Rohingya life must be miserable. They face the challenge of survival and the prospect of persecution if they return to Myanmar. One need not hide under legal excuses. What India confronts is a case of ethics, a challenge to its understanding of citizenship and freedom. If we abandon the Rohingya, we abandon the idea of India as a home of refugees and hospitality. A country which offered a home to the Parsis, the Tibetans, the Afghans and the Jews cannot turn a little minority of helpless people back. One hopes civil society protests, challenging the indifference of the state. It is not just a question of saving a beleaguered people, it is question of saving the soul of India. The idea of India is being threatened today. Should civil society remain mute and indifferent? There is a Rohingya in all of us.

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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.

Cabinet rejig

The Narendra Modi government must be credited for choosing an outspoken Minister as the new Defence Minister. It’s a matter of great pride for all women in the country. Nirmala Sitharaman has made her mark in ‘Start Up India’, ‘Make in India’ and GST. One hopes that the government will now take steps towards enabling full-fledged women’s empowerment and act on the issue of reservation for women in Parliament.

JANGA BAHADUR SUNIWAR,
Bagrakote, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal

■ The motive behind the recent cabinet reshuffle is said to have been to reward performers and show the door to underachievers. Since two-thirds of the term of the present government is already over with hardly any credible achievements to its credit, what can we expect in the remainder of its term, and by simply bringing in talent from outside its

ranks? How will there be any visible change possible at this late stage after setting high and impossible expectations?

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

The secure babu

The government seems to have taken a practical and tactical decision to protect its bureaucrats from hackers and data breaches (“Top babus given secure mobiles”, September 5). Compromised telecom equipment can quickly cripple a nation’s civilian and military infrastructure. It doesn’t take much for a programmer to plant code into a router, even if he/she works overseas. Real security does not come with closing doors. The imperviousness and the privacy that a typewriter can offer are still unmatched but modern technology is here to stay. The Internet, e-mail and cell phone technology, though a great boon, can still be hacked

and massive volumes of data leaked with miniature devices from any corner of the world. India has to be ready for the “blend of the criminal actor, the nation-state actor, and the terrorist actor”, which will be the trend ahead.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,
Bengaluru

NEET impact

First of all, we must consider the reality in the Indian educational system before jumping to conclusions. MBBS aspirant A. Anitha’s death is the end result and symptomatic of an already ailing educational system; a system that has failed its own user. Public anger should be directed towards educational policy and reform. Every board demands a different kind of knowledge. Perhaps the State Board is ill-suited for the knowledge that NEET demands. Before the government seeks to democratise exams and processes, it should evince

equal interest in democratising learning at all levels. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be fair play.

MADHURE AKILLA C.,
Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu

Mission failure

A technical issue may have ended another successful ISRO launch but there is nothing to worry about. ISRO has had a long and successful history of launches and this setback is an opportunity to learn one more crucial lesson. Science has to be precise and there can be no room for errors (Editorial - “Down but not out”, September 5).

P.S.V. PRASAD BABU,
Bhadrachalam, Telangana

To be carried with you

Though vehicle users in Tamil Nadu will have to accept the court directive as far as original driving licences are concerned, there are other equally serious areas of concern which have been ignored (“Original driving licence

must from tomorrow”, September 5). Not wearing helmets, wrong driving techniques, gross violations in motor carriage, high speed and reckless driving, parking violations, drunk driving and minors driving vehicles are a few of many serious instances that go unpunished. There is also no control over vehicular exhaust emission standards.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Readers’ views

I feel that readers’ views should get top preference, while personal views, media practices and the RE’s experiences abroad come next (“The reader in mind?” - ‘Letters to the Editor’, September 5). The Readers’ Editor is the channel of communication between *The Hindu* and its readers. There must be a good and healthy exchange of views as well as an acknowledgement of them. A reader should feel that he is a major part of this unique column as no

other newspaper in India even thought of starting such a forum as the RE’s Office.

J.P. REDDY,
Nalgonda, Telangana

Fognini issue

Fabio Fognini swearing at a woman umpire at the U.S. Open and his consequent disqualification from the tournament after three days adds insult to injury to those players who lost to him in the earlier rounds. One wonders why there was an inordinate delay in handing out the punishment to Fognini. He could have been banned from participating in the next ATP tournament or the U.S. Open or even the next Grand Slam. Introducing the card system, as in football and hockey (red, yellow) will go a long way if thought of. Is it fair to throw a player out for his or her first-time offence?

A.V. NARAYANAN,
Tiruchi

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