

# The smokescreen of an infiltrator-free India

The real aim of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is to segregate non-citizens on the basis of religion



SUSHANTA TALUKDAR

The BJP's poll promise to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in a phased manner in other parts of the country is only a smokescreen to hide its real agenda of using the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to segregate non-citizens on the basis of religion and subjecting only the Muslims among them to anti-immigration laws of the country.

At present, Assam is the only State in the country to have an NRC, which was compiled way back in 1951. The process of updating the 1951 NRC in Assam has been on since 2015 under constant monitoring by the Supreme Court. The complete draft of the updated NRC in Assam published on July 30, 2018 excluded the names of over 40 lakh of the total 3.29 crore applicants. The Supreme Court has fixed July 31 for publication of the final NRC list after disposal of all claims and objections.

**No definition of infiltrators**  
The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill incorporates the BJP's articulated ideological position vis-à-vis undocumented immigrants in respect of three countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ideological position of the ruling party is that undocumented immigrants belonging to Hindu and other religious minority groups in these three countries cannot be treated as "illegal migrants" in India and need to be granted citizenship, while the Muslims among them are "infiltrators" must be identified and driven out.

The BJP introduced the Bill in Parliament in 2016 when the NRC was being updated in Assam. The objective of the Bill is very clear: to remove the "illegal migrant" tag on members of six religious groups – Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis – from these three countries and reduce the requirement of residency in India to six years to make them eligible to apply for Indian citizenship.

However, in its manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the party has



At present, Assam is the only State in the country to have a National Register of Citizens. Villagers whose names were left out in the NRC draft list in their village in Howly block, Barpeta district, Assam in August 2018. ■RITU RAJ KONWAR

dropped Parsis from the list. "Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians escaping persecution from India's neighbouring countries will be given citizenship in India," the manifesto promises.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah have been harping on updating the NRC in their election rallies "to identify the infiltrators", and on the Bill. This is an attempt to manufacture consent of the people on the definition of "infiltrator" according to the ideological lexicon of the saffron party.

### The problem of cut-off date

However, the NRC smokescreen has thickened as the BJP has not spelt out in its manifesto the cut-off date for the proposed NRC for the entire country. If the cut-off date is going to be different from that taken for updating the NRC in Assam, what will be the legal status of those included in the updated register in Assam in the rest of the country, and vice versa?

The cut-off date for updating the NRC in Assam is March 24, 1971, which is also the cut-off date in the

Assam Accord for implementation of the core clause, Clause 5, which calls for identification, deletion of names and expulsion of "illegal migrants" from Bangladesh, irrespective of their religion. The Accord facilitated acceptance of undocumented migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan who came until this cut-off date as Indian citizens, except in respect of the stream of people who came in 1966-71 and who are to remain disenfranchised for a period of 10 years from the date of their registration as foreigners.

Updating the NRC in Assam on the basis of this core clause led to a broad political consensus in the State that the updated register will be a critical document for implementing this clause and addressing the apprehension of the Assamese and other ethnic communities in the State of losing their linguistic, cultural and ethnic identities due to unabated migration from Bangladesh.

The BJP has been pushing the campaign in Assam that 1951 should have been the cut-off date in the Assam Accord for identification of "infiltrators" from erstwhile East Pakis-

tan and present-day Bangladesh. Though it has not taken any official position on reviewing the Assam Accord for fear of antagonising the Assamese, it has been pushing the campaign in a desperate bid to make them accept religion as the basis in place of language, culture and ethnicity for construction of an Assamese identity.

The Assam government recently informed the Supreme Court that it has submitted a ₹900 crore proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs for sanctioning 1,000 Foreigners Tribunals to decide the cases of those to be excluded from the final NRC list. The State has a hundred Foreigners Tribunals at present.

### A legal shield

The BJP, however, needs the Bill to be first enacted as a legal shield for the large number of Bengali Hindus in Assam, in other northeastern States, and in West Bengal, who migrated from erstwhile East Bengal and after the creation of Bangladesh.

The BJP pushed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, notwithstanding widespread protests in the northeastern States and got it passed in the Lok Sabha. But it did not push it in the Rajya Sabha for lack of numbers.

To prevent its poll arithmetic going haywire in the Northeast on account of apprehensions that the Bill would make the NRC infructuous and trigger an influx of more "illegal migrants" from Bangladesh, the BJP in its manifesto promises "to protect the linguistic, cultural and social identity of the people of Northeast."

Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah's promises on the Bill cannot be discounted as mere poll rhetoric as the Ministry of Home Affairs on October 18, 2018 notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2018 making it mandatory for a person applying for Indian citizenship to declare her or his religion. However, the smokescreen of an infiltrator-free India without explicitly defining an infiltrator will not be able to hide the real threat posed to the country's secular fabric. If the Bill is made into an Act, it poses the threat of abusing the NRC to divide people on religious lines. The country can ill afford such a divisive agenda.

Sushanta Talukdar is the editor of *Nezine*, an online magazine focusing on the Northeast

# Fighting polio in Pakistan

Instead of insisting on the oral polio vaccine, using the inactivated polio vaccine along with other vaccines will help



T. JACOB JOHN & DHANYA DHARMAPALAN

Last month, the polio eradication programme in Pakistan was in the news for all the wrong reasons. On April 22, a government hospital in Mashokhel in Peshawar district was set on fire after many children allegedly fell sick after being given the anti-polio vaccine. On April 23 and 24, in two separate incidents, two police officers guarding vaccinators were shot dead. On April 25, in Chaman, which borders Afghanistan, a polio worker was shot dead and her helper injured. Since December 2012, nearly 90 people have been killed in the country for working to eradicate polio. Due to recurrent threats to workers, the Pakistan government has now suspended the anti-polio drive.

### Cases of wild poliovirus type 1

This is the worst time to take this decision. This year alone, eight paralysed children with wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been found in Pakistan. Environmental surveillance by testing sewage samples has shown 91 WPV1-positive samples, in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh. In the past week alone, 13 sewage samples were found to be positive for WPV1.

This is a worrying sign. With suspended immunisation activities, WPV1 will spread fast and the number of polio cases could increase and cause an outbreak. If Pakistan cannot eliminate polio, the global eradication programme is sure to stall.

When India eliminated WPV1 in January 2011, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), a public-private partnership led by national governments with five partners, did not ask if Pakistan would be able to follow suit; it simply assumed it would. This was unrealistic. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, oral polio vaccine (OPV) coverage of 98-99% was sustained with an average of 15 doses per child from 2003. There was full cooperation from the health workers and the public. The war on polio requires such intensity and coverage and it is unrealistic to expect this in Pakistan, where polio eradication is falsely depicted as a Western agenda with the sinister motive of reducing fertility.

The GPEI has pinned all its hopes on the

OPV and has excluded the alternate inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) to eradicate WPVs. The OPV is cheap and easy to give to children, but it has to be given to them again and again in pulse campaigns since its efficacy is poor. On the other hand, the IPV is highly efficacious and needs to be given just two-three times as part of routine immunisation.

### Risk of polio outbreaks

The OPV has another problem. If coverage declines (as is bound to happen in Pakistan), vaccine viruses will spread to children who are not vaccinated, back-mutate, de-attenuate and become virulent. Such viruses are called circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPV). They can cause polio outbreaks. Thus Pakistan will soon be at risk of polio outbreaks by both WPV1 and cVDPV.



It is to avoid the emergence of cVDPV that India strives to maintain high OPV coverage through routine immunisation, Mission Indradhanush and annual national pulse campaigns. In 2018, Papua New Guinea developed a cVDPV polio outbreak as OPV coverage fell to 60%. In 2017, as OPV coverage fell to 53%, Syria had an outbreak of cVDPV polio.

There is yet another problem in Pakistan. With the OPV being identified as the weapon in the war on polio and with some in Pakistan believing that the aim of eradication is to reduce fertility, a vaccine is given only three or four times, not 15-20 times.

Hope is not lost for polio eradication provided that the GPEI relents on its insistence on the OPV and uses the IPV along with other common vaccines. IPV-containing vaccines could be included in the routine immunisation programme and given without attracting the attention of militants. The false propaganda about polio vaccination in Pakistan will then lose its sting. While near-100% coverage with the OPV is necessary, 85-90% coverage with the IPV given in a routine schedule would be sufficient.

If the GPEI insists on the OPV as the only weapon against polio, we have hit the end of the road in Pakistan. But the world cannot afford to lose this war on polio. India could show the way forward by giving the IPV in its universal immunisation programme (at least two doses and preferably three) and then discontinuing the infectious OPV altogether.

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## SINGLE FILE

### Beyond Khalistan

By focussing only on this issue, New Delhi risks alienating the Sikh diaspora

TRIDIVESH SINGH MAINI



India-Canada ties have deteriorated in recent years, especially given the view that the current Justin Trudeau administration is soft on individuals and organisations that support the demand for Khalistan, a separate Sikh homeland. Members of Mr. Trudeau's Cabinet, especially Defence Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan, have been accused of having links with Sikh separatists. When Mr. Sajjan visited India in April 2017, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh refused to meet him for this reason. Similarly, Mr. Trudeau received the cold shoulder during his India visit in February 2018. When Mr. Singh met Mr. Trudeau, their discussion was on the Khalistan issue, rather than on areas of mutual cooperation. Recently, Mr. Trudeau drew the ire of the Indian government when a report on terror threats avoided the words 'Khalistani extremism'.

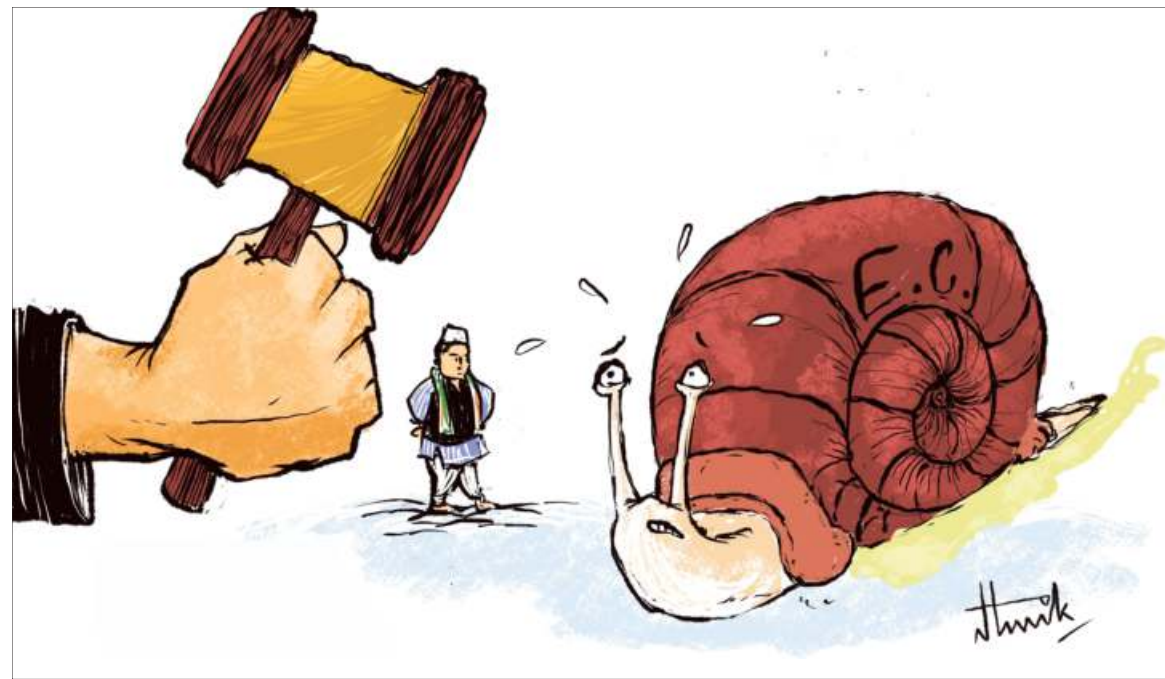
There is no doubt that some overseas Sikhs support a separate Sikh homeland, and that there is not much appetite for the same in Punjab. However, it is important to not link criticism of India on human rights issues, such as the Sikh pogrom of 1984 and extrajudicial killings in the 1980s and 1990s, with Sikh separatism. The Indian media, the government and even politicians in Punjab need to realise that Sikhs based in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. may have different political views. Similarly, non-violent support for a cause cannot be labelled as a militant activity.

If there is evidence of support for any violent activity, New Delhi and Canada must work together to tackle the problem. By focusing only on the Khalistan issue, New Delhi risks alienating the Sikh diaspora. India should instead reach out to the Sikh diaspora in a year when Sikhs and all other followers of Guru Nanak will be commemorating his 550th birth anniversary.

Critics of the Canadian government must also bear in mind that like all relationships, this is a multi-layered one. While New Delhi may be uncomfortable with the Canadian government's approach towards the activities of certain Sikh hard-liners, it is important to bear in mind that for the year 2017, Indian students received well over 25% (over 80,000) of the available study permits. In 2017, well over 40% of the 86,022 people who received invitations for permanent residency were Indians. During 2018, this rose by a staggering 13% to 41,000.

It is important to handle ties with Canada with nuance. First, members of the Sikh diaspora and Sikh politicians who are vocal on human rights issues shouldn't be labelled Khalistani sympathisers. Second, it should be remembered that the New Delhi-Ottawa relationship goes well beyond the Khalistan issue.

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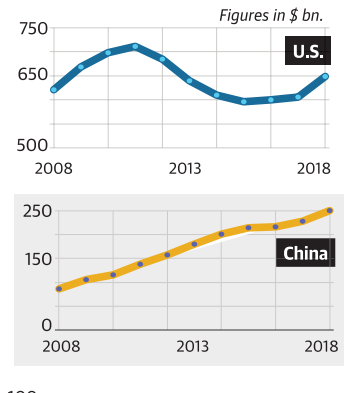
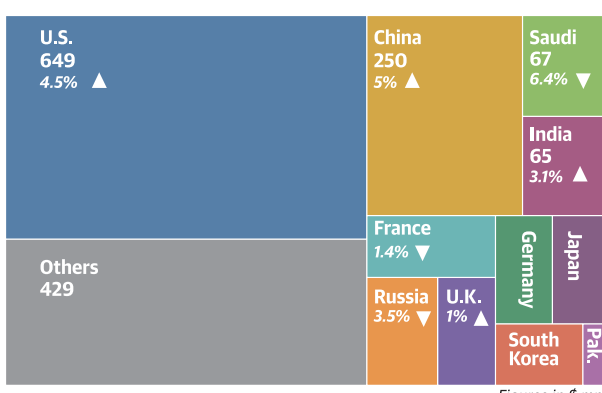
## DATA POINT

### The cost of military might

Worldwide, military expenditure rose by 2.6% from 2017 to reach \$1.8 trillion in 2018. The U.S. registered a substantial rise in spending for the first time since 2010; Pakistan saw an 11% jump in spending. India's spending rose by 3.1%  
By Varun B. Krishnan

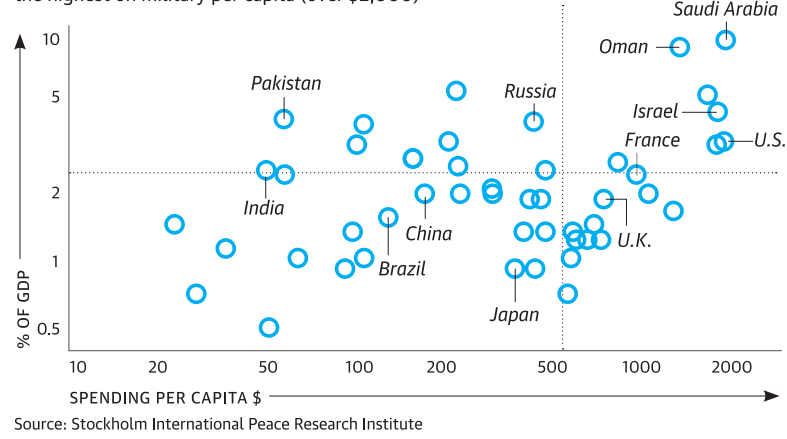
#### What nations spend

Each rectangle represents a country's defence spending in 2018. The larger the size, the higher the spending. The % indicates the annual change (2017 to 2018). The line charts show the decadal trend for the top five spenders



#### Per capita patterns

Saudi Arabia's military spending as a % of its GDP was highest at 8.8%. It also spent the highest on military per capita (over \$2,000)



## FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1969

### Three killed in police firing in Hyderabad

Three persons were killed and 12 others were injured according to official sources when police opened fire at three places in the city [Hyderabad] to-day [May 1] to disperse violent crowds which indulged in stoning and arson. The Telangana Praja Samithi, which has been spear-heading the separate Telangana State agitation, however, claimed that besides the three killed, 15 persons including a woman had received bullet injuries. According to them, over 30 persons had been admitted in various hospitals with lathi-injuries. An unspecified number of persons, including policemen and some officers, were injured in lathi-charges and stone-throwing at several places. A number of vehicles, including a military van and Government jeeps, a police station and a post office were set ablaze by mobs in various localities of the city. The Telangana Praja Samithi and the Students' Action Committee had given a call for observance of "Telangana Demands Day" to-day all over the region to press their demand for a separate Telangana.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1919.

### Rice in Bombay.

A notification in to-day's [May 1] 'Gazette' states: The Governor-in-Council is pleased to declare that rice, an article of commerce which in city of Bombay is being unreasonably withheld from the market. The Governor-in-Council is pleased to empower the Hon'ble Mr. Keatinge, Director of Civil Supplies, and any person specially authorized in writing by Mr. Keatinge in that behalf to take possession of any supplies of rice, which may be found in the city of Bombay on paying the owner of such supplies such compensation as may be determined by an agreement between the person herein before empowered and such owner, or in default of agreement on payment or tender of payment of such compensation as the person so empowered considers reasonable.

## POLL CALL

### Independent candidate

An independent candidate is one who contests polls without being affiliated to any political party. Independents often support policies that are different from major political parties. More and more independents have been contesting Lok Sabha elections since the first general election of 1951-52, but the number of winners has been decreasing. The vote percentage polled by them has also been decreasing. It is difficult for independent candidates to campaign and influence large numbers of voters in India with little money and influence. In its 255th report, the Law Commission of India sparked a debate when it recommended that independent candidates be barred from contesting elections as "they are either not serious or contest elections just to confuse the voters."

## MORE ON THE WEB

Remembering Ayrton Senna on his 25th death anniversary

<http://bit.ly/AyrtonSenna25>