

## QUAD NO MILITARY ALLIANCE

It was in December 2004 that we first heard the word Tsunami and for months on end, the word dominated global discourse. Till then, we had harboured notions that this was something that concerned far-off nations and not us. High sea waves, as much as 15 metres high in some coastal areas of Tamil Nadu while waves recorded near Sumatra island were double that size, up to 30 metres, equal to more than a 10-storey building, with widespread devastation all over the affected areas. That was a natural disaster of unforeseen magnitude and several countries of the world joined the relief efforts. The US sent one of its aircraft carriers and provided satellite data to affected nations including Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka. Its reconnaissance aircraft hovered over large parts of the Indian Ocean to help rescue efforts.

India was also helped in the rescue and relief efforts by Japan and Australia. Four nations, India, the US, Japan and Australia, came together to coordinate their efforts. It was a natural calamity which had claimed about 2,30,000 lives across many countries that brought them together. Thousands were left injured and a couple of millions lost their houses. Once the disaster had been dealt with, and rehabilitation efforts were over, there was not much reason for them to stick together.

In the last quarter of 2020, however, it seems the quadrilateral cooperation is being cemented again. The common interest that has brought these countries together again, also known as Quad, is the Chinese aggression in most domains. The need to counter unnatural predatory behaviour which China has displayed is proving to be a strong glue. Of course, Quad may soon shape up as a strong group meant to counter the Chinese, in the Indo Pacific region, and then in South China sea.

The stand-off in Ladakh has served to galvanise India to stand up to the Chinese slami slicing and silent usurpation of its territories. Our eastern neighbour has to blame itself for pushing us towards the US and nobody else. Before the stand-off began, India was behaving with a lot of cautions and diffidence in articulation of thoughts towards Quad. Several other vital issues also remained ambivalent even after US President Donald Trump opened trade war with China. It was a classic case of push becoming a shove in June this year when India lost 20 of its soldiers in Galwan clash. Perhaps China never wanted things to come to a head in this manner but some irreversible changes are happening now. India has shut down its markets to the Chinese and that seems to be happening across the continents.

The world is nowadays dealing with a double whammy, the double blow of a mysterious pandemic which originated in China, and melting economies. All fingers point towards Beijing when it comes to finding the complicity of the Chinese authorities for bringing the world to this sorry state of affairs.

With Quad getting strengthened in the near future, it is likely to emerge as a strong anti-China block. That is something the Chinese don't like but are unlikely to have any answers to it in the near future. Let us be clear that Quad is no military alliance, not yet at least. Whether it can become an anti-China alliance in the near future will depend on a host of variables not clear as yet.

## WITHERED REGIONAL PARTIES

"Modi tujhse bair nahin, Nitish teri khair nahin" is a muint fresh slogan from Bihar we heard recently from supporters of Loktantrik Janshakti Party (LJP). The slogan came into being after the decision to part ways with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was announced by Chirag Paswan. It is an interesting political jugglery as his father Ram Vilas Paswan will continue to be with NDA at the Centre.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United) is the face of the NDA campaign in Bihar. The BJP of Narendra Modi (as also Sushil Kumar Modi) is a part of the alliance led by JD(U). It is a peculiar arrangement in which two parties of the NDA are opponents in Bihar. The BJP can only be expected to be secretly happy at this development.

After winning 303 seats, at least 31 more than the majority mark of 272 seats in the Lok Sabha, the BJP was not dependant on allies for survival. Perhaps this lesser dependence also meant the party was less keen to accommodate them. That perhaps led to the parting of ways with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra over the post of Chief Minister. Recently, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has left the BJP-led NDA over differences on agricultural bills.

The BJP hopes to contest the elections to both the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures on its own. This gives party freedom to grow in the states where regional parties restrict it. Incidentally, the second generation of most dynast politicians is far feeble as compared to their founders. Be it Sukhbir Badal in Punjab, Akhilesh Yadav in UP, Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra, Supriya Sule succeeding Sharad Pawar, or Tejaswi Yadav as heir apparent of Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Marginalisation of the regional parties appears to be something that suits both the BJP and the Congress. In fact, neither of them seems keen to hang on to coat-tails of the alliance partners, regional parties in most cases. In Bihar, the fight between the JD(U) and the LJP may seem like a dent in the NDA but it doesn't impact the BJP much. The party is apparently unaffected by this development as its own vote share is hardly getting affected.

In Haryana, Dushyant Chautala is Deputy CM by virtue of his parties winning 10 seats in the 90-member assembly. But essentially the days of strong regional parties are over. In Jammu and Kashmir, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) founded by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has helped finishing the National Congress (NC) of the Abdullahs. Today, the PDP and the NC are far weaker parties which can hardly expect to win any future assembly elections on their own.

Overall, it appears that we are moving in the direction where only two or three political parties will remain dominating the political space. The heyday of various regional political parties ruling different states seems to be over already. Even if we see a regional party ruling in Telengana or Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress ruling West Bengal, they are just exceptions, rather than the rule, in present political landscape.

Of course, the LJP targeting Nitish, also called as 'Sushan Babu' for a long time, can only weaken the JD(U), a regional party ruling an important state. This appears to be a fight between two constituents of the NDA which suits the BJP fine. It is also unlikely to tilt the balance in favour of the RJD, or Congress much in the state.

# Bipolar disorder & COVID-19

■ FAYAZ AHMAD PAUL

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has till date infected more than 35 million people and led to over 1 million deaths across the globe. Thus, many governments have imposed regional or national mass shelters-in-place as an effort to slow its rapid spread. In this global health emergency, special attention should be paid to the potential impact of the measures taken to combat the pandemic for patients with bipolar disorders. Shelter-in-place and quarantines are key public health tools, yet they have high psychological and economic costs. They require sacrificing daily routines and public/personal social encounters that enhance health and quality of life besides providing emotional support. In the general population, the length of social isolation and the constrained physical space in which isolation takes place can be associated with a wide range of adverse psychological effects, including depression, lowered self-esteem, alienation, and helplessness. Anger, clinical anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder can persist for years after the end of the isolation, as indicated by literature on quarantine. This not to undermine the importance of these measures, but rather to underscore the potential consequences for vulnerable and marginalised populations.

The impact could be even more severe and long-lasting in persons with bipolar disorders. The present emergency is disrupting both public and private mental health services, and most patients cannot access outpatient care. Under threat are treatment continuity, alliance and adherence, and patient-driven recovery progress while the pandemic simultaneously escalates stress levels. Alarming news reports about the economic and human costs add heightened stress at the same time as social distancing measures reduce opportunities for exercise, sunlight exposure, participation in meaningful activities and social engagement. Job loss and financial uncertainty add more strain, potentially triggering anxiety as well as mood symptoms again, in a population already vulnerable. The regular rhythm of a healthy life becomes hard to maintain as classes have been cancelled or moved online, and work-at-home policies are implemented.

People with bipolar disorders are likely to be especially susceptible. Bipolar disorder has high co-morbidity with obesity, diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, and obstructive pulmonary disease, as well as smoking and substance use. These factors and related physical illnesses compromise immune functioning and heighten risk for severe acute respiratory syndrome, if one is infected with the coronavirus. Smoking and cardio-pulmonary disease are also common co-morbidities observed among those who perish from COVID-19. Moreover, current treatment protocols for COVID-19 are rapidly evolving, incurring risk for drug interactions, especially in patients being managed with complex regimens. Of course, bipolar disorder itself frequently involves polypharmacy. Because no specific antiviral treatment has been developed, current treatment options include off-label use of azithromycin and hydroxychloroquine. However, using these medications with patients with bipolar disorder requires careful attention because of interactions between azithromycin/lopinavir-ritonavir and the commonly recommended medications for bipolar disorder.

Social stigma flares when societies are under stress, with a malign eye falling on people associated with high-risk groups as well as on anyone considered different. Bipolar disorder is already prone to stigmatisation and will undoubtedly take a second hit when people with bipolar disorder also contract COVID-19. People with COVID have been ostracised; the perceived stigma of having two burdens could not just aggravate a sense of isolation but provoke hostility instead of support. Yet, crises are also times of opportunity. We can learn from examples of resilience and rethink besides adapting ways of working. Two months after the start of China's COVID-19 lockdown, Chinese mental health

clinicians are now seeing that if patients move from situations with insecure housing to more secure housing, they report more daily regulation and mood stability or improvement. These positive trends occur in patients returning to live with their families, as well as in hospitals.

The pandemic forces a rethinking of how best to improve access to and implementation of enhanced psychological and psychiatric intervention services specific to bipolar disorder psychiatry assessment and/or treatment, online prescription and medicine express delivery, tele-psychology management interventions, tele-therapy, online psycho-education programs, online mindfulness-based interventions, online sleep hygiene resources and apps, and facilitating access to existing (or development of) phone and online support lines staffed by mental health professionals trained in treating bipolar disorder. Despite the dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, this emergency situation provides both the opportunity for broader and more in-depth understanding of Bipolar Disorder patients' psychological functioning and development and implementation of mental health policies and services. A prompt and effective response holds the potential to ameliorate the personal and societal risks associated with poor mental health, with the added benefit of saving private and public money. These efforts offer the opportunity to address mental illness stigma and potentially ameliorate internalised stigma by fostering a society where they are demonstrably valued and their health needs are supported. Indeed, appropriate use of technology can help to maintain human connections despite physical distance.

The COVID crisis is a wave propelling sweeping changes in policy, access, delivery and attitudes. When it recedes, the landscape for the treatment of bipolar disorder will change. There will be damage and loss, but also opportunities to learn as well as changes in service delivery that could turn into significant advances in service delivery and outcomes.

The new Bill has not brought any major drastic changes but only a parallel system working with existing system. Prior to these Bills, farmers can sell their produce to the whole world but via the e-NAM system. The amendment of the Essential Commodities Act which is one of the three Bills under protest removes the scare or fear of farmers that traders who buy from farmers would be punished.

This Bill ensures that the farmer or the producer is given the same attention as production and farmer gets the best price for crops, so that the farming survives. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted on 20th September that MSP will remain and government will continue procurement. But, the Farm Bill hampers the monopoly of APMC, allowing sales and purchase of crops outside the state government-regulated market yards. The government declares MSPs for crops, but there is no law mandating the implementation. The only crop where MSP payment has statutory implementation is sugarcane for which FRP is determined. This is due to its pricing being governed by the sugarcane (control) order, 1966 issued under the Essential Commodities Act. Farmers in Punjab have organised three days protest against the Bills. Opposition parties including TMC, Congress and BSP opposed the Agriculture sector reform Bill saying they were against the interest of small and marginal farmers. Slamming the government, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said, this government has been eyeing how they can take the Farmers land to benefit their capitalist friends, whether is the land acquisition act whether in the industrial system and now it attacked Indian Agricultural system through the two bills on farming. One related to APMC, other related to contract farming (contract Farming is not something new in our country) and the third which is essential commodities act. - a three pronged attack on Indian farmers.

After this, there was a lot of controversy. Here are Pros and Cons of new Bill that explain the changes proposed by them to the existing laws in the country. The farmers had moved towards freer and more flexible system. Selling produce outside the physical territory of the Mandis will be an additional Marketing channels for farmers. The new Bill has not brought any major drastic changes but only a parallel system working with existing system. Prior to these Bills, farmers can sell their produce to the whole world but via the e-NAM system. The amendment of the Essential Commodities Act which is one of the three Bills under protest removes the scare or fear of farmers that traders who buy from farmers would be punished.

## Harley-Davidson's exit from India

■ FAHID FAYAZ DARANGAY

Harley-Davidson, Inc., H-D, or Harley, is an American motorcycle manufacturer founded in 1903 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was one of two major American motorcycle manufacturers that survived the Great Depression in 1930s. The company survived numerous ownership arrangements, subsidiary arrangements, periods of poor economic health and product quality, and intense global competition to become one of the world's largest motorcycle manufacturers and an iconic brand widely known for its loyal following. There are owner clubs and events worldwide, as well as a company-sponsored, brand-focused museum.

Harley-Davidson is noted for a style of customisation that gave rise to the chopper motorcycle style. The company traditionally marketed heavyweight, air-cooled cruiser motorcycles with engine displacements greater than 700 cc, but it has broadened its offerings to include more contemporary VRSC (2002) and middle-weight Street (2015) platforms.

Harley-Davidson manufactures its motorcycles at factories in York, Pennsylvania; Wisconsin; Manaus, Brazil; and Bawal, India (closing). Construction of a new plant in Thailand began in late 2018. The company markets its products worldwide, and also licenses and markets merchandise under the Harley-Davidson brand including apparel, home decor and ornaments, accessories, toys, scale models of its motorcycles, and video games based on its motorcycle line and the community.

Harley-Davidson India had started operations in August 2009 and appointed

its first dealership in July 2010. The company had 29 dealership facilities across India viz New Delhi, Gurgaon, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Kochi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Indore, Pune, Goa, Guwahati and Jaipur etc.

After 11 years of operations in India, Harley Davidson told employees that it is discontinuing sales and production operations in India as part of a global restructuring plan. Indian production volume fell from 11,753 units in FY16 to 4,533 units in FY20 and sales declined from 4,708 units to 2,470 units during the same period.

Harley's lacklustre performance in India could be blamed on high prices and the wrong product and marketing strategy, said people close to the company.

"The global leadership at HD targeted 35-50-year-old riders. While doing so, they didn't only miss out on what younger riders wanted, they became totally dependent on a marketing-led model, and there was no product innovation," said a motorcycle industry veteran who served as a senior executive at Harley-Davidson India in the past, requesting anonymity.

He added that even as Harley-Davidson stuck with selling cruiser bikes, rivals such as BMW, KTM, Yamaha and others came out with bikes that were lighter and more technologically advanced, catering to multiple categories.

"As a result, Harley-Davidson bikes stood no chance in the face of the competition. They were heavy, very expensive and did not suit the road and traffic conditions of India," he said.

"When a brand leaves a country, it results in unavailability of spares and service, makes customers anxious and consumer cases follow," he said, referring to recent exits by General Motors, MAN Trucks and UM Motocycles.

Harley-Davidson's spell in India was troubled for another reason. It found itself caught in an India-US tariff war. In June 2019, India slashed the tariff on premium motorcycles imported as completely built units from 100 per cent to 50 per cent after US President Donald Trump telephoned Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "He (Modi) reduced it by 50 per cent with one phone call. I said it's still unacceptable because it's 50 per cent versus nothing. It's still unacceptable. And they're working on it," Trump said.

Chief Executive Officer Jochen Zeitz, who took the reins at the company in February, had unveiled a major shift in strategy to boost profits by reducing Harley's product portfolio by 30 per cent and investing in 50 markets with growth potential in North America, Europe and parts of Asia Pacific. This statistic provides information about the market share of Harley-Davidson motorcycles in Italy from 2013 to 2018. The market share of Harley-Davidson peaked in 2014 at 3.01 percent. In the following years, the motorbike company lost market share, which amounted to 2.33 percent in 2018.

## YOUR COLUMN

### Amalgamation of engineering wings illogical

Dear Editor,

The recent decision of the J&K government to subsume engineering wings of various departments into Public Works Department will create only mess and confusion on the ground zero. It is also seen that various political parties have vehemently opposed this move of the government. There will be joblessness because of the merger decision and the technical staff who are presently working in different departments, are bound to face hierarchical issues in addition to the hiccups in their career progression. However, this decision has been taken in haste by the former Lt. Governor led state administrative council without any prior home-work or taking any stakeholders on board. J&K government should have consulted all the stakeholders for threadbare deliberations before arriving at any such decision. Few days back, All Migrant Camp Coordination Committee (AMCCC) has urged Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha to revoke the decision regarding merger of engineering wings of Relief Organisation with R&B, citing the reason that it will put the migrants living in various camps at Jammu to lot of hardships and miseries in getting their day to day problems redressed.

Engineering wing of the Relief Organisation (Migrants) Jammu was formulated/ enacted to look after the developmental works of migrant camps, quarters and migrants schools located at various locations in Jammu and Kashmir. It has been highly observed that the R&B department lacks the requisite capacity to handle such a broader mandate of handling engineering wings of around

15-16 departments. The R&B and PHE departments are already overburdened so it will be completely impossible for them to look into the problems of the migrant camps. Moreover, there are many migrant engineers who are idle and their services can be utilised in Relief Organisation's Engineering Wing so that the developmental works can be executed in migrant camps without any hurdle. Further, there is a provision of separate budget for the migrants, which is being utilized via Relief Organization (Migrants) Jammu for safeguarding the interests of the migrant families. Subsuming the engineering wings with PW (R&B) will create only confusion and lack of coordination thereby resulting in sufferings of the migrants.

It is also in place to mention here that the present Relief Commissioner (Migrants) Jammu T.K Bhat is the epitome of honesty, hard work, dedication as well as of punctuality. His workaholic attitude has been appreciated by all migrants. His experience and skills could not be utilised for the developmental works in migrant camps if in case Engineering Wing of the Relief Organisation be subsumed with the PW(R&B) department. It is high time now that the present J&K UT Lt. Governor must take due cognizance of this matter and must revoke this controversial decision of merging of Engineering Wings at the very earliest.

Vivek Koul  
Bank Colony  
Gole Gajral Jammu

### How many KPs willing to return to Valley?

Dear Editor,

'Return has to be with honour and one's own choice.' This propositional solution is not clear. I would like to ask what percentage of KP migrants are living in camps or govern-

ment-made settlements? And inspite of that how many among them are willing to go back to valley. The conditions KPs have put forward for their return would not be acceptable to any Govt. Creating another camp to protect them within valley and that too at the cost of other citizens of India.

And let the Govt experiment, asking for choice of KPs who would like to return on the conditions of the Govt.

The successive generations of Migrants are well settled and nobody will opt to return back leaving all that behind and getting uprooted again.

Moreover who would like to part with the incentives being enjoyed as migrants like free ration, cash doles, reservation in technical education institutes throughout the country, exemption from Income Tax and many others.

The question is how long the grant of such interim incentives by any system is justified

and unlike the reservation for SC/STs which is not costing directly the exchequer, these huge costs should be borne by any government?

Jagjeet Singh Soodan,  
Gandhi Nagar, Jammu.

## Time to awake

Dear Editor,

It is a sad reality but India has been labelled as the most depressed country by WHO. When someone suffers from a mental illness in this country, society ill treats him, labels and isolates him. In fact, sometimes patients themselves indulge in the process of self-stigmatization. It is the high time, we should eradicate the stigma around mental illnesses. We must normalise people sharing what they are going through and if they are afflicted by a particular mental illness. It is time that we should accept that a major cause of Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) is stress.

Neha Jamal,  
Punjab.