



# Shutdown showdown

Unbridled Trumpism has reduced any  
space for bipartisan cooperation

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YK

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

world has lost an actor who mesmerised millions with her mellifluous voice. It is unfortunate that the leading lady, of her time, faced hardships.

**C.K. Prem Kumar,**  
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must carry the postal address.

An ideal Mamdani model is one that focuses on the architecture of inclusion, by making welfarism fiscally honest and micro-economically careful

**What could work as a model**

The more useful question for a Mamdani model is not Rawls or Pareto, but how to build a thermostat between them – automatic stabilisers that lean Rawlsian under stress and lean Pareto as capacity grows. In short: make welfarism fiscally honest and micro-economically careful.

How can one do this? Some simple steps could be helpful. First, one may want to subsidise outcomes, not inputs, and cap fares selectively, contracting for on-time kilometres and peak seat availability, publish open data audits, and keep a modest price signal with transparent provider compensation. Examples to borrow from are the 2016 Bus Contracting Model in Singapore and France's Solidarité Transport discounts which protects access while preserving a non-zero fare.

Second, one may want to replace blunt price controls with contingent buffers by using means-tested, automatic vouchers that scale in shocks, and pair them with zoning fast-tracks and tax incentives to expand supply and add sunset/trigger rules.

Finally, one may want to default to cash/e-vouchers that are backed by credible public options and hard quality budgets – fund staffing, accreditation and inspections. This way, services will not residualise, and public providers can set a quality floor that disciplines private prices. Other examples may be from Brazil's Bolsa Família (conditional cash transfers) and Kenya's Inua Jamii programme.

Where do mission-driven firms and socially minded entrepreneurs fit in this conversation? They are the connective tissue. If the state is Rawlsian and markets are Pareto, we need institutions that straddle both. A stakeholder-oriented bus operator can accept capped fares given long-term contracts, reciprocal data-sharing, and reputational gains. A

childcare chain investing in staff development can align with public training subsidies. Indian health systems (Aravind Eye Care and L.V. Prasad Eye Institute) show how cross-subsidy models complemented with a “focused factories” orientation (in the McDonald’s sense) can deliver scale and quality, with the paying rich underwriting the poor. These are not acts of charity but of business model design.

Fiscal honesty is the other pillar. Welfareism fails not just by mispricing, but by underfunding. If Mamdani-style promises are to endure – in NYC or anywhere, wrestling with inequality amid Artificial Intelligence-led churn – they must be transparently costed and paired with growth measures: productivity compacts with industry, regulatory simplification to lower supply costs, and public investment that expands capacity (depots, fleets, childcare centres, housing stock). Welfare that crowds in supply lasts longer than welfare that waits for supply to appear or crowds it out.

There is also a social and geopolitics of dignity. A Rawls-Pareto thermostat is not merely technical; it signals respect. Users should be treated as customers with recourse – working grievance redress, real-time service information, and independent audits in plain language. Suppliers should be partners with obligations – service standards, open books for subsidised lines, and penalties for gaming.

### Programmed oscillation

Economic history does not force a choice between kindness and competence; it teaches sequencing. In shocks and downturns, lean Rawlsian: insure households against ruin, subsidise access, keep systems intact. As capacity catches up, lean Pareto: restore prices that ration sensibly, move to cash and vouchers, foster provider competition, and invest in productivity so that tomorrow’s welfare is cheaper to deliver. The oscillation need not lurch; it can be programmed.

If the Mamdani model is to mean anything durable in 2026 and beyond, it should stand for welfareism disciplined by design: promise access, protect quality, pay for it honestly, and build bridges for mission-driven firms to co-produce public value. That is not an abandonment of markets or justice. It recognises that a society secure enough to take risks – and productive enough to finance fairness – needs both. May his team and others inspired by these ideas looking at the Big Apple, focus less on the romance of “free” and more on the architecture that makes inclusion work at scale.

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### friendlier template

Bihar was a tough assignment being the first SIR exercise after two decades, and which saw protests and doubts. The foundational lines have been drawn now. Article 326 of the Constitution that defines an elector is getting highlighted as an equal truth as Article 324 in running elections. A SIR is legitimate but genuine electors need to be facilitated using a time frame that is adequate.

Transparency levels should satisfy citizen and political party. The clear order from the ECI, that “No document is to be collected from electors during the Enumeration Phase”, should be a respite for millions of ordinary voters who are apprehensive the moment the word ‘document’ is mentioned. The draft roll will include all those whose signed enumeration forms, further rationalised and partly pre-filled, are received.

Only those electors whose names could not be matched/linked with previous SIR will be notified and heard before the registration official who decides on either inclusion or exclusion. Three visits to the house of each elector by the BLO is reassuring. The familiar Form 6 for new enrolment, Form 7 for deletion and Form 8 for correction will remain in place. Critics of the SIR have reasons to be satisfied with the modifications they could orchestrate; they should walk the next steps without grudge or imaginary fear.

Electoral roll management, largely a technical exercise, becomes cluttered when it becomes an echo chamber for issues such as infiltration or disenfranchisement that are hyped. The SIR is essentially a clean up exercise. The pan-India picture will hopefully not cause any shock this time. The bulk of exclusion will always come from

An electoral roll that has been intensely revised must be accepted, and political parties and the Election Commission should focus on upholding the trust of the Indian voter



# GROUND ZERO



Women cricketers practising at the Karnataka Institute of Cricket in Bengaluru. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Over the last few years, more girls and women across India are playing cricket professionally, inspired by the tremendous growth of the game. India's victory in the ICC Women's World Cup in early November has inspired many more budding players. **Mehul Malpani, Amol Karhadkar, Y.B. Sarangi, and Suruchi Kumari** report on the changing reality of Indian women's cricket

After a day of training at the Sai Sports Academy in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur town, Pinky Ahirwar, 18, starts walking her bicycle back with a group of girls and boys, all teens. The cycle belonged to her older brother who got it from the State government five years ago, after he finished Class 10. "I used to come for practice by a shared auto-rickshaw, which cost ₹40 daily. So, I got the bicycle fixed and saved that money to spend on my diet instead. That helps me in training," she says.

She has been training at the academy for about one and a half years. Her diet involves chana (chickpea) and banana – staple sources of protein and energy for young athletes training in rural northern India.

As Ahirwar's village, Dhidhonja, is about 35 kilometres from Chhatarpur, she stays in a rented room with her brother and sister, who are in college. Ahirwar, however, quit studies after school to focus on cricket training.

The academy in Chhatarpur, a small town in the poverty-ridden Bundelkhand region, is run by Rajeev Bilthare, who started it in 2013. He began training girls from 2016. It produced the pacer, Kranti Goud, who was part of the team that won the ICC Women's World Cup, 2025, on November 2. Goud, a 22-year-old tribal girl from a rural town about 85 km from Chhatarpur, was among the first batch of women cricketers at the academy when she joined in 2017. "Now at least 60 young players train at the academy, including about 20 girls," Bilthare says.

It is not just in Madhya Pradesh; girls and women across India are playing cricket professionally, inspired by the tremendous growth of the game. Before the World Cup, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia had said, "This event will give more encouragement to our women and our girls to take up cricket in a more serious, competitive manner. And they will see a proper and secure future in their career."

In Haryana's Shri Ram Narain Cricket Club, coach Ashish Parmal says he got more than 30 calls from parents the day after the World Cup final, asking whether they could enrol their daughters. This was where national cricketer and India's highest scorer in the final match in the world cup, Shafali Verma, first trained.

In Chennai, Prithi Ashwin, who spearheads the Gen-Next Cricket Institute along with her husband, cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin, says the academy received 10 calls from parents asking about coaching during the World Cup.

Irfan Sait, Head Coach and Managing Director of the Karnataka Institute of Cricket (KIOC) in Bengaluru, who has been part of the State's cricketing ecosystem for over four decades, says there has been a "sea change" in women's cricket. Sait has trained many women players including Mamatha Maben, Nooshin Al Khadeer, Karuna Jain, who were all part of the national team.

Despite this, many coaches still measure a girl's ability against a boy's. At an academy in Bengaluru, one of them says, "When I coach a 19-year-old woman, I often evaluate her against the standard of a 16-year-old boy." Girls are also still a fraction of the players at academies. As Ashish Parmal, a BCCI Level A coach at an academy in Haryana, says, "We train 31 girls in Rohtak and 62 in the Gurgaon centre, both of which boast a collective strength of over 500 boys across Under-15, Under-19, Under-23 and Senior categories."

## Fields of promise

Around 4 p.m., eight girls and at least 15 boys,



The same people who taunted my mother for 'wasting money on a boy's sport' later said I was an idol for their children

SONIA MENDHIYA  
Cricketer from Haryana

from ages 8 to 22, gather at the academy in Chhatarpur. It is run out of a rented ground, converted from a field, with uneven grass in parts and trees along the sides.

There are four nets in a corner, one of them occupied by three girls. Other players are scattered across the ground, stretching or working on their batting stance or bowling action. A group of players, including three girls, is practising at the pitch.

Bharti Verma, 17, a medium pacer who attended a national-level under-17 camp, charges in to deliver a ball. Her shoes, with screw-on spikes, are worn out. Her father, a farmer, who sustains a family of six, bought them for her about two years ago for ₹1,500. Now, a basic pair would cost at least ₹2,000, she says.

Verma says her father has promised her a new pair. "I have been training here for five years and my parents have been supportive. Whenever I have asked them for cricketing gear, they have always managed to arrange it for me, even if it takes some time," she says, adding that she recently injured her ankle while playing in her regular shoes.

Sukhdeep Singh, 24, an assistant coach and a player, says it is tough to run an academy. He lists several infrastructural problems, like there being no covers to protect the pitches from the rain or dew. In the long list of don't-haves are washrooms and a dressing room. "Until a year ago, we were running the academy next to a private school so players could use the toilets there," he says. Now, players go to a house next to the ground.

Bilthare, who is also a sports officer at a local government college, says that there has been "absolutely no help" from the authorities. "I started a girls unit in 2016 with five girls, and ran camps across colleges and schools in the area to attract more girls for a year. I managed to put together a squad of about 20. I bought them two kit bags and began training them. It was the only one for a few years in the entire Sagar division," he says. He is hoping for a ground lease from the government.

Bilthare says, "Many players train here for



Girls practising at the Sai Sports Academy in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur town. A.M. FARUQUI

free. Kranti was also enrolled for free when she first came. It is not possible to buy expensive equipment and invest in infrastructure with just fee income."

"Some girls from here are playing at various levels – from the division to the State level. A girl is also playing a T20 tournament organised by the BCCI. Our players have talent to go further if they get the right support and resources," he adds.

Irrespective of the lack of resources or of being outnumbered by boys, girls continue to follow their passion. Vaishnavi Pal, 18, joined the academy on November 5. "I started playing with my brother and cousins in our colony, but the neighbours objected. So, we moved to a ground nearby. A local coach saw me and encouraged me to join his academy. I trained there for five years before coming here," says Pal.

A resident of Shivpuri district, Pal has come to stay at her aunt's place for better access to the club. Her mother recently won a three-year battle against cancer. "My parents asked me to focus on the game," she says.

## Self-consciousness to self-confidence

At the Cricket Mantras Academy in Nahur, a Mumbai suburb, a group of girls pad up under the watchful eyes of coach Swapnil Pradhan. The crack of the ball meeting bat and the chatter of girls and boys fills the air.

Among the trainees is Diksha Pawar, 19, an off-spinner who has represented Mumbai in the Under-19 team. Pawar says her journey began by chance. "When I was a child, I liked sports, mostly basketball," she says. "But my dad had enrolled my brother in a cricket academy. When I saw the boys play, I told him, 'I want to play too.' Soon, I joined the same academy. There were almost 100 boys; I was the only girl. At first, it felt strange. But over time, I got used to it. It became normal."

The early self-consciousness soon gave way to confidence. "I remember one match where I scored 20 runs and took two wickets against boys. That is when I felt I could belong; that I could play this game not as a girl, but as a cricketer," she says.

Pawar's idols include Deepti Sharma and Jemimah Rodrigues, who were both part of the winning World Cup team. Rodrigues is the daughter of Pawar's first coach. "Jemi used to practise in Bhandup [another suburb] back then. I was also practising there," she recalls. "She always pushed herself, no matter how things were going. She believed in herself. Her belief and optimism came through in her seminal knock. That is what I want to learn from her."

For Arya Davane, 15, who has represented West Zone Under-17 and was selected for the BCCI off-season camp at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the journey began with defiance.

"In 2022, during a practice match against the boys, one of them said, 'She is a girl; she will get out soon,'" Davane recounts. "That hurt. I scored just 10 and got out early. But I told myself, 'I will show them that I'm just as capable.'" Davane's role model is Australia's leg-spinner Alana King. "I saw her bowl during the World Cup. I hope to bowl like her someday," she says.

The coach, Pradhan, believes this new generation of girls is at a turning point. "When India won the Men's T20 World Cup in 2007 and the Indian Premier League began, Indian cricket exploded. Something similar is happening now – the Women's Premier League [that began in 2023] and the World Cup win are catalysts. There are plenty of opportunities and that is drawing more girls and parents towards the game. Soon, competition will rise, more teams will form, and the ecosystem will grow stronger."

Cricket Mantras runs a Gulf Oil-sponsored batch of 12 girls, including Pawar and Davane. "The structure is improving," Pradhan says. "But we need to make sure coaching, scouting, and exposure grow in tandem."

In Thane, north-east of Mumbai, coach Kiran Salgaonkar echoes that sentiment. Having mentored female cricketers for over 25 years at the Salgaonkar Cricket Academy, he says, "If match fees for women are still far below that of men, it is unjust. The girls put in the same amount of work and are just as dedicated. The rewards should be equal too."

While match fees are equal for both men and women at the international level, the annual retainers for women remain a tenth of what male players earn. At the domestic level, the disparity is sharper – a male cricketer can earn between ₹40,000 and ₹60,000 per match day, while a woman's earnings rarely cross ₹20,000. Over a full season, a man could earn ₹15 lakh; a woman, at best, ₹4 lakh.

## Sources of motivation

In Kolkata, the Pal and Chatterjee Cricket Academy (PCCA), situated at Vivekananda Park in Sarat Bose Road area, is a prominent hub for women cricketers. Founded by cricketers Pankaj Pal and Utpal Chatterjee (not the former India player) in 2009 with just two boys, PCCA, which relies on tuition fees, corporate funding, and donations, began enrolling girls in 2014.

According to Pal, the number of girls stands at close to 100 now and around 30 of them have made it to different Bengal teams. Sukanya Parida, who trained here, has donned the India colours. The PCCA conducts matches involving mixed gender teams. "We give equal attention to both boys and girls, but for the girls, coaching is free," says Pal.

Adrija Sarkar, 14, an all-rounder, idolises former cricketer Jhulan Goswami. "My aspiration is to represent my country. Watching our women's team becoming the world champions has inspired me," she says.

Sarkar's mother Mousumi Deb Sarkar feels the inflow of money has made women's cricket a lucrative career option. "Being financially secure is important. Hearing that Richa Ghosh [a World Cup winner] is getting so many crores of rupees is a big motivation," she says.

Upasana Ghoshal doesn't have apprehensions about her five-year-old daughter Adrika's safety during practice sessions. She says she prepares her child to stay safe, telling her how to react to certain situations.

PCCA has several young and experienced coaches who focus on their trainees' basics. Pal remembers, "When we began girls' coaching in 2014, we found only a few players. Now, clubs conduct trials to select girls for admission."

## Playing despite taunts

On Jhajjar Road in Rohtak district stands the 30-year-old Shri Ram Narain Cricket Club. Between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., its indoor net practice arena gets filled with trainees wearing the academy's blue uniforms.

Among them is Sneha Jhakar, 18, a right-arm pace bowler. She says her brother was once an aspiring cricketer but because they didn't have money for both of them to play, he took a job and fought within their joint family to get her enrolled in this academy.

Across the ground, is Sonia Mendhiya, 21. Hailing from Bahmanwas village in Haryana, Mendhiya was the only girl who played gully cricket with boys from the age of 10, despite her mother's objections and neighbors' taunts.

"One of the boys told me about this academy, and I joined without thinking twice," she says. Two years ago, she played for the winning Indian U-19 Women's T20 World Cup team under Shafali's captaincy.

Though her village is only about 12 km from the academy, Mendhiya endured a long journey to train from the age of 14. After her father died early, her mother, an Anganwadi worker, raised four children alone. When Mendhiya joined the academy in 2018, the annual fee was ₹31,000; now it is ₹92,000. The academy waived her fee for the initial years and with training, Mendhiya soon started playing tournaments.

About five years ago, she spent her first match fees buying better quality bats for herself. Over the years, she has managed to pay her own academy fees, buy a scooter, and renovate her home. "The same people who taunted my mother for 'wasting money on a boy's sport' later said I was an idol for their children," she recalls.

But even after her success, the comments haven't stopped. "Now they don't taunt my game," she says. "They question why I wear shorts to the gym."

With no hostel at the academy and parents unwilling to let their daughters stay alone in rented accommodation, a few travel at least three hours every day to train here. Suman Sandhu, 21, comes from Karnal; Sneha Jakhar, 18, from Fatehpur; and Aishika Gautam, 16, from Hisar.

Sandhu earlier played cricket with her brother, who quit for higher studies. She had to wait for two years before getting her own cricket kit and moving to this academy for better facilities. "Parental support comes only after good performance," she says.

Despite Haryana's strides in women's education and sports, stereotypes hang heavy. Chahat Grewal, 13, admires T20 captain Harmanpreet Kaur. "People ask why we're learning boys' sport," she says. "Even on social media, one bad match and they tell you to go back to the kitchen. We don't get the same support unless we win medals or score runs."

However, women in Haryana have built resilience because of their successes in sport. Coaches say nearly every Haryana district now has 40-50 girls playing cricket. "District-level competitions by Haryana Cricket Association are for boys only," says coach Bijender Sharma. Girls need these matches too."

Sandhu remembers beginning training in Karnal at 19. She threatened to quit school if her parents didn't register her. "It worked," she says, laughing.

With inputs from Rishita Khanna in Bengaluru and Sanjana Ganesh in Chennai



Risky bets

SEBI right in stopping MFs investing in pre-IPO shares

Domestic institutions have lately attracted a lot of criticism for jostling with retail investors to bid in over-priced Initial Public Offers (IPOs), in India's super-heated primary market. Therefore, it is surprising that mutual funds should want to dabble in an even riskier segment — shares in unlisted firms.



Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recently asked mutual funds to desist from investing in private share placements from unlisted companies. SEBI has drawn attention to Clause 11 of the Seventh Schedule of the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996, which mandates that all investments by MFs in equity shares must be made only in listed securities or ‘to be listed’ securities. Some mutual funds seem to have interpreted the “to be listed” part liberally, to buy up shares in private firms with no IPO plans in the near future. SEBI’s move to put a decisive stop to this practice was much needed, given the fiduciary responsibilities of mutual funds.

In the last five years, India’s private markets have come of age with scores of venture capital-funded firms scaling up. A large pipeline of companies waiting to go public has given rise to a thriving, but wholly unregulated market for shares in private companies. Employees, angel investors and venture capital funds offload their shares to HNIs and family offices looking to stockpile them ahead of a future IPO. But if investing in unlisted firms is a risky strategy for these entities, it is doubly so for mutual funds. One, as all transactions in unlisted shares happen outside exchange platforms, there is no transparent order book or valuation to verify the price. Often given the scarcity factor, buyers pay hefty commissions and accept steep prices quoted by a market intermediary. Unlike listed shares, investing in private firms is a shot in the dark with once-a-year filings with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs being the only source of financial information. Two, unlisted shares can experience large swings in their valuation based on business performance, market fancy for it and new rounds of fund-raising. Such shares can therefore expose mutual fund schemes to large losses. Sometimes IPO plans get deferred indefinitely, closing the exit window for pre-IPO investors. Mutual funds which offer anytime exit to investors, cannot afford to take on such illiquid instruments.

Finally, there is no guarantee that stock prices discovered in the IPO will be higher than those in private markets. In recent months, there have been cases like HDB Financial and NSDL where IPO prices had to be set at a 15-40 per cent discount to the pre-IPO price. Such instances could lead to large write-offs for mutual funds. Therefore, it is best that mutual funds stay in their lane and invest only in listed instruments with good liquidity and transparent valuation. They already have the opportunity to bag firm allotments in IPOs as anchor investors and should be content with this.

OTHER VOICES.

The Guardian

Gaza’s future: the ceasefire brought relief

What future is there for Palestinians in Gaza? The announcement of the ceasefire brought profound relief, shaded by an equally deep sense of trepidation. Almost a month later, the picture looks bleaker. The Israeli offensive abated, Hamas has returned the surviving hostages and the remains of some of those who have died, and Israel has released some Palestinian detainees and the remains of others. But more than 200 Palestinians, including children, have reportedly died in strikes that Israel says are in response to Hamas attacks. Thousands of bodies are still believed to be trapped beneath the ruins – debris which, it is estimated, would take a fleet of more than a hundred lorries seven years to shift. Aid is flowing again, but remains wholly inadequate, with NGOs warning that Israel’s new registration system is obstructing delivery. Israeli demolitions continue in the half of Gaza that its forces still hold. Unicef warned this week that the education system – in so far as it survives after two years of war and the destruction of more than 90% of school and university buildings – is on the brink of collapse. LONDON, NOVEMBER 6

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Democrats Don’t Mind Your Flight Delays

Most folks on Capitol Hill were optimistic this week about a deal to end the month-long government shutdown, which has accomplished nothing. But behold the cynicism of Democrats, who now want to exploit their Tuesday election victories to prolong the dysfunction at the public’s expense. “I think it would be very strange,” Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut mused to Axios, “if on the heels of the American people having rewarded Democrats for standing up and fighting, we surrendered without getting anything for the people we’ve been fighting for.” Mr. Murphy elaborated to another outlet that a compromise now could damage the “Democratic brand.” NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 6



COP30 — Time to stump up the cash

CLIMATE MOVES. This upcoming summit in Brazil is being dubbed as an ‘implementation COP’ and no big decisions are expected



JOYDEEP GUPTA

F lash floods and landslides all over the Himalayas, cyclone Montha in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, flood in usually-parched Marathwada, early and long heatwaves throughout the country, rising seas wiping out homes and livelihoods all along the coast.

It is in this backdrop that India will take part in the annual UN climate summit (COP30) with a draft estimate that it needs \$21 trillion over the next 10 ten years to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, adapt to climate change impacts, and deal with disasters.

There was no sign of anything near that amount being available from rich countries, banks, or investors, as leaders of nearly 200 nations gathered in Belem, Brazil on Thursday in advance of the November 10-21 summit.

In its latest report on climate finance, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) once again asked rich nations when and how they would pay to help poorer countries deal with climate change. Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on climate finance that the time for continuous reviews without action had passed. “Dialogue is important, but action is imperative.”

Around 80 per cent of all GHGs added to the atmosphere since the start of the Industrial Age are from rich nations, the reason developing countries seek finance and technology to deal with climate change being caused by the emissions.

However, India is now the third largest emitter — behind China and the US — though its per capita emissions are far lower than the global average.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) reported the highest absolute increase in total GHG emissions — excluding land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) — in India and China in 2024, while Indonesia recorded the fastest relative growth in emissions.

LANDMARK PARIS PACT

COP30 is taking place 10 years after the landmark Paris Agreement, under which all countries agreed to hold global warming since the start of the Industrial Age within two degrees Celsius, with an aspirational goal of 1.5 degrees.

With that aspirational goal breached already, this year’s summit is supposed to take stock of progress in the last 10 years and plan ahead. But that has been hit by the withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement under President Donald Trump — apart from reversing domestic action, the move has also frozen billions of dollars in climate finance that the US had earlier promised to developing countries.

The US withdrawal has also had knock-on effects on companies’ plans to control GHG emissions and on clean energy investments. Many governments have also deprioritised climate action — only 64 countries had updated their national climate plans by September 30. Going by the updated plans from countries responsible for about 30 per cent of global emissions, the world will be 2.3-2.5 degrees warmer by 2100 from the start of the Industrial Age. Seven of the 64 countries were from the G20, a group whose emissions (excluding the African Union) account for 77 per cent

Going by the updated plans from countries responsible for about 30 per cent of global emissions, the world will be 2.3-2.5 degrees warmer by 2100 from the start of the Industrial Age

of global emissions. This implies many more floods, droughts, landslides in the years to come, alongside faster glacier retreat, sea level rise and drop in food production. Global reinsurance major Swiss Re estimated that natural catastrophes cost India over \$12 billion in 2025.

Between 2000 and 2025, India’s cumulative disaster bill had crossed \$180 billion, it said, and added that global insurance losses from natural catastrophes continue to follow the 5-7 per cent annual growth rate (in real terms) that has been seen in recent years.

In its 2025 emissions gap report, UNEP said, “Ten years of the Paris Agreement has spurred climate action, but ambition and implementation still fall short of what is needed.” GHG emissions are still increasing in all major sectors.

“However, despite the key role of fossil fuels in driving total emissions, deforestation and land-use change was decisive for the rapid increase in 2024 emissions. Global net land use, land-use change and forestry carbon dioxide emissions increased by 21 per cent in 2024, and were responsible for 53 per cent of the overall increase in global GHG emissions... Fossil carbon dioxide increased by 1.1 per cent and was responsible for 36 per cent of the increase in global GHG emissions.” Carbon dioxide is the main GHG causing climate change.

“Every fraction of a degree of global warming matters,” said UNEP. “Each additional 0.1 degree of global warming is associated with an escalation of the damages, losses and adverse health impacts that are already being experienced at current levels of global warming, and which hit the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest.”

The report also pointed out, “Accelerated mitigation action provides benefits and opportunities... The required technologies are available, and wind and solar energy development

continue to exceed expectations, lowering deployment costs and driving market expansion. Yet deployment remains insufficient, and accelerated emission reductions require overcoming policy, governance, institutional and technical barriers; unparalleled increase in support to developing countries; and redesigning the international financial architecture.”

While mitigation of emissions remains inadequate, the situation is far worse when it comes to adaptation to climate impacts. In its 2025 adaptation gap report, UNEP says adaptation finance needs of developing countries by 2035 are at least 12 times as much as current international public adaptation finance flows.

The goal was to have \$40 billion available to developing countries by 2025, but this goal will be missed.

The adaptation finance gap is now \$284-339 billion per year until 2035, with needs that are 12-14 times as much as current finance flows, says UNEP. There is little chance of this being available from rich country governments, and private investors are far more likely to finance mitigation rather than adaptation.

UNEP estimates adaptation costs in developing countries is now over \$500 billion per year. This does not account for the loss and damage being caused by climate impacts as adaptation is proving inadequate. The UN Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage plans to spend \$250 million by the end of 2026, though it has far less in its account right now, as many developed countries have not met their pledges yet.

FOREST FUND LAUNCHED

The Tropical Forest Fund was launched at the COP30 with investment from Norway, Portugal, Indonesia, Brazil and Colombia, with more expected as the meet progresses.

The writer is India Programme Lead, Earth Journalism Network

Reimagining labour laws for MSMEs

A tailored Employment Relations Code can bring small firms into the fold of protection without drowning them in compliance

Uttam Prakash  
Rohit Mani Tiwari

T he newly introduced Shram Shakti Niti 2025 highlights MSMEs’ place at the centre of India’s employment and production system. These enterprises keep supply chains moving, nurture local skills, and employ more than 70 per cent of the country’s workforce. Their strength lies in their ability to stay lean, make quick decisions, and build teams that work closely together.

The consolidation of nearly 50 laws into four labour codes; on Wages, Social Security, Industrial Relations, and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is an important reform. But the next stage must recognise that MSMEs’ character, rhythm, and constraints are different from those of large enterprises. MSMEs rely on trust-based relationships and operate with limited administrative bandwidth. Their needs are not about exemption but about proportionality — rules that protect workers while allowing flexibility for businesses to survive and grow.

MSMEs function in an ecosystem defined by personal engagement, short production cycles, and intense competition. For many, the owner is also the HR head, the accountant, and the

compliance officer. Applying identical compliance procedures to a 10-person and a thousand-person enterprise creates a structural mismatch.

A differentiated approach would help formalise employment without stifling enterprise. It would also help secure the rights of workers in the very segment where informality is highest. Strengthening MSMEs is, in effect, a way of strengthening labour protection.

The next logical step in India’s labour reforms could be an Employment Relations (ER) Code—a dedicated framework for enterprises employing up to say 50 workers. It would not replace existing laws but work within them, adapting procedures to the size and capacity of small firms.

The ER Code would focus on partnership at the enterprise level. It would encourage employers and employees to decide on wages, safety, and social security together, within a framework of accountability.

HOW IT COULD WORK

Under the ER Code, small establishments would register to come within the formal system. Each would form a Work Council, made up of representatives of employers and employees. These councils would deliberate and record mutual agreements on working hours, safety



MSMEs. Different labour codes

norms, and benefits. The Labour Department’s role would be advisory rather than punitive, focused on guidance, feedback, and mentoring support.

Digital integration would make this process transparent and efficient. Each enterprise and its Work Council could be linked to EPFO, ESIC, and DGFASLI databases. With every worker already holding a Universal Account Number (UAN), employment records and benefits could travel with workers as they change jobs. Institutions would then evolve from inspectors to mentors, helping enterprises comply, mediate disputes, and build trust-based workplaces.

In this model, enforcement would rely on self-regulation supported by technology. Verified digital records of Work Council agreements could serve both as proof of compliance and as a

basis for incentives such as easier credit or tax benefits for enterprises that maintain strong employment practices. Linking incentives with compliance would reward good behaviour and encourage gradual formalisation.

While designed for smaller units, the ER approach could eventually influence larger enterprises as well. Over time, labour governance could shift from compulsion to collaboration, from uniform rules to flexible frameworks that achieve the same goals with greater participation.

A reform spirit worth deepening The Shram Shakti Niti 2025 already reflects this evolution in thinking. It positions the Ministry of Labour as an employment facilitator, not merely a regulator, and promotes digital integration and risk-based inspection.

The next leap for India’s MSME story lies in policy that scales. Building institutions that treat small enterprises with the dignity of trust is the real test of reform. The proposed Employment Relations Code can be that bridge, turning the promise of self-reliance into a living framework where enterprise and equity grow together.

Prakash is Regional Provident Fund Commissioner serving in Kochi; Tiwari is Regional Labour Commissioner (C), Thiruvananthapuram. Views are personal

● LETTERS TO EDITOR Send your letters by email to bleditor@thehindu.co.in or by post to ‘Letters to the Editor’, The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

AI policy: Pragmatic approach

Apropos your Edit “Sensible policy” (November 7). India’s new AI Governance Framework reflects a mature and pragmatic approach to regulating emerging technologies. By choosing to adapt existing laws rather than rushing into rigid new legislation, the government acknowledges that flexibility is crucial in a field advancing faster than legal systems can respond. Yet, the framework also exposes unresolved gaps around liability, data protection and competition.

Traditional principles like purpose limitation and data minimisation clash with AI’s dependence on vast, evolving datasets, creating uncertainty for developers. Equally concerning is the growing market concentration among global tech giants that could stifle domestic innovation. To ensure responsible and inclusive growth, India must move swiftly from policy intent to implementation, aligning innovation with accountability and fairness.

K Chidanand Kumar  
Bengaluru

This refers to the Editorial ‘Sensible Policy’ (November 7). India’s middle-path approach to governance contrasts with the EU’s rule-driven model and the US’s market-based system.

Though the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) is a step forward, enforcement remains weak and data breaches continue, showing that privacy safeguards need real strengthening.

In the AI era, where historical data drive models, strict limits are needed to prevent misuse of client-specific information. AI systems should rely

only on anonymised or generic data, and sensitive data should be stored on secure local servers with clear audit trails.

Srinivasan Velamur  
Chennai

Improve service

This refers to “Personal-touch banking is needed, FM tells CS Shetty” (November 7). The clarion call given by the Finance Minister for improving the customer service in banks is both timely and welcome.

The steady decline in service quality,

particularly in public sector banks, is evident. According to RBI data, the number of cases handled under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme rose by a staggering 85 per cent in 2023-24. It would be simplistic to attribute this merely to the surge in the digital transactions. The cold attitude and inadequate working knowledge of employees—especially at the counters call for an urgent and well-structured remedial drive from the HR management of banks.

R Mohan  
Kumbakonam





OPINION



{ OUR TAKE }

Brics moment at Belém COP30

In the absence of the US, the bloc will need to lead the conversation on battling the climate crisis

COP30, beginning Monday in Belém, Brazil, is being held at a time of great shift in global power dynamics. The US, the world’s largest historical emitter, has been in climate denial since COP29 at Baku, and will be missing at the high table in Belém. The absence of the US will cast a shadow when nations debate questions on mitigation and adaptation towards realising climate goals. The conference will provide clarity on whether the US’s retreat has left a leadership void in the global efforts to tackle the climate crisis, or if other nations or coalitions will step up efforts to bridge gaps in ambition regarding carbon dioxide emissions, climate finance, and technology transfer.

At COP29, the US presented an ambitious nationally determined contribution (NDC) with an economy-wide target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by 61-66% below 2005 levels in 2035. It was already on a path of transition with the Inflation Reduction Act, a major piece of climate, tax, and health care legislation. But the Trump administration not only withdrew from the Paris Agreement but also dismantled several climate policies. The US action has dampened the response world over to COP30 and led to general anxiety over which direction the world is going and who is going to pay up for climate action in the developing world.

Early signs are that China, the world’s largest polluter, may step in, with Brazil, the COP30 host, and the EU, to provide leadership. In September, Chinese President Xi Jinping called on countries to adopt a low-carbon growth path. He promised to cut economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by 7-10% from peak levels and increase non-fossil fuel energy consumption to over 30% of the total energy consumption. On Thursday, China, Brazil, and the EU made some noteworthy speeches at Belém’s Leaders’ Summit. China was represented by vice-premier Ding Xuexiang, who insisted that low-carbon transition is the trend of the times and called for the removal of trade barriers, in reference to the ongoing tariff wars. Brazil’s president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, asked China to show stronger leadership commitment to address the climate emergency and warned against “extremist forces” that “peddle untruths to obtain electoral gains and imprison future generations in an outdated model that perpetuates social and economic disparities and environmental degradation”. The EU has confirmed the European Commission’s earlier “statement of intent” for the 2035 NDC that promises to reduce emissions by 66.25% to 72.5% from 1990 levels. Numerous other statements at Belém suggest that the world is willing to move on climate action without the US. For instance, the Brazilian COP30 and Azerbaijan COP29 presidencies have released a report on the “Baku To Belém Roadmap To 1.3T”, which plots the path to deliver climate finance amounting to \$1.3 trillion annually to enable developing countries to adopt low greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

So, is Belém likely to be a Brics moment? Russia and the Arab countries are unlikely to back any big move against fossil fuels, but Belém may still be a moment of South-South solidarity if New Delhi steps up. It must do so for at least two reasons. One, India, with its low per capita emissions and vulnerable population, is at great risk of climate impacts. As per the UN’s 2024 estimates, clean energy attracted \$2 trillion in investment — \$800 billion more than in fossil fuels. India has a lot to showcase on energy transition because it has already delivered on one of its 2030 NDCs, five years in advance. Considering its leadership role in drafting the Paris Agreement, or the launching of the International Solar Alliance, it is prudent for New Delhi to be a voice for the Global South.

You don’t mess with Zohran, or Indian Americans

New York mayor-elect’s campaign saw the community return to back the Democratic Party, the move driven by a need for respect and belonging

“Indians go home”. That was the mantra of the Make America Great Again (MAGA) crowd this year. Indian Americans listened, and they did go home, not to India, but back to the Democratic Party they have long supported. In doing so, they have begun to redraw the map of American politics. And they may finally be ready to shed their meekness and speak up.

They have just shaken the foundation of New York City. Zohran Mamdani, 34, the son of filmmaker Mira Nair, won the mayor’s race by a landslide, defeating former governor Andrew Cuomo. He will be the city’s first Muslim mayor, its first of Indian descent, and its youngest leader in more than a century.

His victory marks the moment a community that had long stayed quiet under fire finally found its voice, living out the stories his mother once told on screen about identity, belonging, and courage.

What makes Mamdani’s story remarkable is that it seemed right out of a Bollywood melodrama. With his signature smile, he didn’t just campaign; he performed. He blared Kishore Kumar at block parties, quoted *Lagaan* on perseverance, and turned policy debates into dance-offs. His rallies looked less like stump speeches and more like *My Name Is Khan* with campaign signs. Punjabi aunties swayed beside Puerto Rican students and Black union workers, all shouting his name, all part of the same beat. His campaign could have been directed by Karan Johar, equal parts family drama, social change, and a big dance number to *dhoom machale dhoom* for the finale.

And somewhere between the *bhangra* and

the ballots, something shifted.

For decades, Indian Americans have carved out their place in the American dream, showing, in true Shah Rukh Khan fashion, that charm and resilience can outlast hate. Educated, family-oriented, and mostly apolitical, we became the model minority every politician wanted to claim. Traditionally we leaned Democratic, but in recent years many began to look rightward. The language of discipline, entrepreneurship, and family values felt closer to our lived experience than the Democrats’ fixation on sickening cultural battles.

I felt that pull myself. Since I came to America in 1980, I have voted Democratic, yet I sat out the last presidential election. I was uneasy about President Joe Biden’s age and lack of direction. At the same time, I found myself agreeing with parts of the Republican message.

Donald Trump’s talk of family, faith, and his warnings about socialism struck a chord. For those of us who grew up in, or visited India, “socialism” was not an abstract ideology, it was a ugly reality of ration lines, shortages, and corrupt bureaucrats deciding what people could eat or earn. Many of my friends and relatives lived through those nightmares and left because of them.

For a while, I thought the Republican Party might finally open its doors to immigrants like me and to people like Nikk Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Usha Vance, who had built their lives from scratch. That hope did not last.

Over the past year, the MAGA movement turned its anger on the very group it once courted. Influencers like Laura Loomer began targeting Indian professionals. Members of Congress such as Marjorie Taylor Greene called for ending all H-1B visas, claiming that Indians were “stealing American jobs”. Online trolls mocked our accents, ridiculed our temples, and questioned our loyalty. The message was clear: No matter how much we contributed, we would never be American enough.

The hypocrisy is staggering. Indian Americans, less than two per cent of the population,



Vivek Wadhwa

Maritime sector needs more wind in its sails

India’s maritime sector has seldom received the kind of attention it did recently in Mumbai. At the India Maritime Week 2025 (IMW-25), ports, shipbuilding, and reform were firmly at the centre of the national agenda. An ambitious \$1 trillion-plus investment roadmap was unveiled, signalling opportunities across the blue economy, digital port infrastructure, and green corridors. As with such set-piece spectacles, the events were framed as a celebration of the recent gains in the commercial maritime arena — shorter container dwell times, faster vessel turnaround, record cargo volumes and port surpluses, and India’s emergence as the world’s third-largest supplier of seafarers. The underlying message was clear — India is open to maritime investment and ready to lead.

The optimism was evident during Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi’s address to the Maritime Leaders’ Conclave. Citing enhancements in supply-chain security, streamlined documentation, and 100% foreign direct investment in ports and shipping, the PM described how the maritime sector had, in his words, positioned India as a “steady lighthouse in rough global seas”. He pointed to two infrastructure milestones — a megawatt-scale green hydrogen facility at Kandla and the expansion of JNPT’s Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal, backed by record foreign investment from Singapore — as emblematic of India’s maritime aspirations.

The appraisal rests on measurable gains. Container dwell time has fallen below three days, and vessel turnaround now averages under 48 hours — figures comparable to those in advanced maritime economies. Cargo through-

put at major ports is at an all-time high, and the number of operational inland waterways has grown to almost thirty. India’s human capital in shipping is also expanding rapidly, with Indian seafarers making up almost 12% of the world’s seafaring workforce, placing the country among the top three suppliers globally. Together, these advances point to the emergence of a nascent shipping and commercial ecosystem.

Even so, India’s maritime managers confront a troubling paradox. Despite visible gains, the country’s maritime governance is beset by structural weaknesses that inhibit real progress. Notwithstanding massive public investment in port infrastructure, growth in the sector is largely owed to a handful of high-performing ports — notably JNPT, Mundra, and Vizhinjam — while many smaller facilities continue to struggle to attract private investment or generate meaningful throughput. The bulk of India’s coastal cargo still moves through large gateway ports, with smaller, privately owned ports catering primarily to export-import trade rather than domestic movement. That points to a troubling anomaly. The government’s push for coastal shipping and port-led industrialisation has not translated into a balanced growth story. A few ports are thriving, but the broader network — especially State-controlled and non-major ports — remains underutilised.

India’s inland waterways tell a similar story. The sector has registered impressive percentage growth in recent years, yet it carries only a small fraction of the country’s total freight traffic.



Abhijit Singh

Most movement is confined to a few commodity-specific corridors, leaving vast stretches of the national waterways network largely idle, raising questions about whether investments in the sector have meaningfully served the logistics needs of the hinterland economy.

Not that the government’s efforts are in any way misdirected. The focus has broadly been well placed — especially on green hydrogen and sustainable shipping. The pilot hydrogen facility at Kandla is especially laudable, marking an important first step toward decarbonising the maritime sector. Even so, India still lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for green bunkering and fuel certification (notwithstanding recent guidelines by the DG Shipping). With an aging, mostly oil-fired merchant fleet, green fuels require a long-term plan for retrofitting and propulsion system replacement. But that, in turn, hinges on shipyard modernisation and technology partnerships, requiring levels of investment that appear impractical in the near term.

Part of the problem for the government is that the risk appetite among foreign investors remains modest. Maritime infrastructure is a long-gestation, capital-intensive business, marked by a degree of investment circumspection. Over the years, public and private enterprises have signed numerous MoUs and issued intent declarations, but conversion rates have remained historically modest. The case of the Sagarmala Programme is instructive: Only a quarter of the over 800 projects envisaged have come to fruition. While IMW-25 has secured investment pledges worth ₹12 lakh crore and over 600 MoUs, it remains to be seen how many will translate into actual investment.

Notably, India’s recent maritime reforms — the Merchant Shipping Act 2025, the Indian Ports Act 2025, and the Coastal Shipping Bill 2025 — remain largely untested frameworks for

the daily struggles of working families.

Many parents, including immigrants like me, are bewildered by school debates over boys in girls’ locker rooms while basic education standards decline.

Mamdani’s win captures both sides of this new reality. It reflects a community that has found confidence and voice, yet it also exposes the risks of ideology untethered from pragmatism. His promise to open government-run stores may sound compassionate, but anyone who remembers India’s old socialist model and ration shops knows how that story ends. Bureaucracy and populism may win applause in the short term, but they are the enemies of progress. They hollow out innovation, crush aspiration, and turn the dream of equality into the mediocrity of dependence.

Republicans, for their part, still have an opening if they can put aside outrage and rediscover the ideas that once defined them: enterprise, merit, and optimism. But until they do, the voters they alienated will keep their distance.

Mamdani’s rise is a moment of pride for Indian Americans, yet it highlights a paradox. The same ideals that inspire hope can also repeat the mistakes of the socialist India that some of its best and brightest left behind.

Vivek Wadhwa is CEO, Vionix Biosciences. The views expressed are personal



What makes Mamdani’s story remarkable is that it seemed right out of a Bollywood melodrama. With his signature smile, he didn’t just campaign; he performed. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

India & Africa: Working on building a common future

President Droupadi Murmu’s visit to Angola and Botswana will deepen India’s engagement with Africa. In 2024, she visited Mauritius, Algeria, Mauritania, and Malawi. Both Angola and Botswana are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). Angola is the current chair of the AU. The visit comes against the backdrop of high-level exchanges: The president of Angola visited India in May 2024, while Botswana’s president last visited India in December 2006. In the interim, Indian vice presidents visited Botswana in 2010 and 2018.

As preparations gather pace for the fourth India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS IV), expected next year, Murmu’s trip signals continuity, high-level attention, and strategic outreach to key African partners. Angola is grow-

ing in importance globally due to its natural resources, especially oil, gas, and critical minerals vital for energy transitions. With a strategic Atlantic coastline enhancing maritime connectivity, Angola has diversified its partnerships with China, the EU, and India. Ongoing reforms, modernisation, and energy diversification have further strengthened its global economic and diplomatic profile. Indian engagement with Angola has expanded beyond the energy trade to strategic domains such as defence, agriculture, mining, and infrastructure. India has offered a \$200-million defence line of credit to Angola. Its investments reflect growing confidence in Angola’s reform trajectory and openness to diversified partnerships.

Botswana stands out for its stable democ-

racy, prudent governance, and transparent management of natural resources, particularly diamonds. It has evolved into an upper-middle-income economy and remains the world’s leading producer of rough diamonds by value, and the second-largest by volume. With one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa, Botswana, plays a vital role in promoting regional peace, wildlife conservation, and climate resilience.

Indian investment in Botswana is expanding — from diamond cutting and polishing to power generation, health care, mining, and agriculture. Indian firms have contributed to skill development, jobs, and industrial diversification, reinforcing people-to-people ties.

Angola is a major supplier of oil to India and enjoys a trade surplus in bilateral trade worth around \$5 billion, with Indian exports at roughly \$500 million. In contrast, trade with Botswana is modest at about \$500 million, with Indian exports at about \$170 million.

A major development in Angola is the Lobito Corridor, an ambitious infrastructure initiative revitalising the railway network that connects

the mineral-rich interiors of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia to Angola’s Atlantic port of Lobito. This project aims to provide a faster, more efficient trade route for critical minerals such as copper and cobalt, reduce dependency on other corridors, and enhance regional economic integration.

The Indian diaspora in both countries remains small but influential, with about 8,000 persons of Indian origin in Angola and 10,000 in Botswana. Both nations have benefited from India’s ITEC capacity-building programmes, though Angola’s Portuguese language preference has sometimes posed a constraint.

For India, Angola and Botswana are key African partners for energy security, critical minerals, and the diamond trade. Angola offers opportunities in oil, gas, and infrastructure, while Botswana’s stability and governance make it a model partner. Together, they represent India’s balanced and forward-looking engagement with Africa, reinforcing the spirit of South–South cooperation.

Gurjit Singh is a former ambassador of India to the African Union. The views expressed are personal



Gurjit Singh

{ EDITOR’S PICK }

HT’s editors offer a book recommendation every Saturday, which provides history, context, and helps understand recent news events

UNDERSTANDING BIHAR’S ‘JUNGLE RAJ’

The Bihar elections have been pitched by the ruling dispensation, the NDA, as a battle between its “*susashan*” (good governance) and “*jungle raj*” (lawlessness), the phrase used by political opponents to refer to the RJD’s 15-year rule in the state.

However, American anthropologist Jeffrey Witsoe, in his 2013 book *Democracy Against Development*, problematises this dismissal of the RJD rule as merely a period of governance failure. He offers a nuanced reading of how democratisation occurred with the rising to power of “bottom up” backward-caste politics, against a milieu of a governance envisioned and implemented by a largely upper caste bureaucracy. Lalu Prasad disrupted State functioning as an extension of his politics to end upper caste hegemony. This led to a chaotic phase where the State was captured by a new (backward) caste elite that was more focussed on accumulation of assets, rather than any radical redistribution.



Democracy against Development  
Jeffrey Witsoe  
2013



# Adam Smith and the moral economy we have lost



ANTARA HALDAR

With the 250th anniversary of *The Wealth of Nations* approaching next year, the world is gearing up to honour Adam Smith. But which Smith should be recognised? The hard-nosed “founding father” of modern economics, or the philosopher who wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*? Scholars have wrestled with this question, a riddle known as “Das Adam Smith Problem,” for centuries, because it concerns not just dualities within Smith’s thought, but also our own uneasy relationship with morality and

markets. The “problem” was first formulated in late-19th-century Germany, where economists of the historical school, including Wilhelm Hasbach and August Oncken, saw a glaring contradiction between the compassionate, sympathy-driven moral psychology of Smith’s first book and the self-interested calculus of his second. To them, the sentimental Scot of 1759 was irreconcilable with the architect of capitalism of 1776.

This contradiction suited the intellectual temper of the time. As industrial capitalism took hold, economics was busily reinventing itself as a “science” detached from ethics, while philosophy and theology were left to fret over the moral wreckage. Das Adam Smith Problem thus became a projection of modernity’s own split personality: One half was absorbed by mechanism and efficiency, the other by conscience and community.

Yet the German historicists were wrong, or at least incomplete. Later readers — from

Jacob Viner, a founder of the Chicago school of economics, in the 1920s, to the editors of the “Glasgow Edition” of Smith’s works in the 1970s — showed that the two books shared a philosophical spine. Far from renouncing his earlier moral philosophy, the later Smith had extended it to the economic sphere. The “invisible hand” was never meant as an ode to greed; it was a metaphor for the way that social benefits can arise from individual human motives (or “passions”), provided that institutions channel them appropriately.

As Smith’s contemporary and friend David Hume observed, the scaffolding of social order rests on a fragile blend of self-love and sympathy. Smith’s own answer to the human predicament was not to abolish self-interest but to channel it through habits of virtue, civic trust, and the judgement of an imagined “impartial spectator.” Markets, in this vision, were not moral vacuums but extensions of moral life. The misunder-

standing endures because modern economics, in its quest for predictive precision, amputated Smith’s psychology. In the 20th century, as models grew more mathematical, “economic man” was stripped of sentiment and context.

It was the Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen who brought the original debate back to the fore. “The so-called Adam Smith Problem,” he wrote, “is largely of our own making.” For Dr Sen, Smith’s idea of self-interest was never naked greed, but a sentiment woven into the fabric of social life — one disciplined by prudence, justice, and benevolence. The contradiction, Dr Sen suggests, lies not in Smith, but in our own impoverished reading of him. It is we who have elevated greed as a virtue.

Recent scholarship has added to this insight. The Boston University philosopher Charles Griswold portrays Smith as a philosopher of virtue, while the Harvard University economic historian Emma Rothschild

has restored his Enlightenment humanism. Together, they show that the division between the moral and the economic is a historical artefact — one that we urgently need to dispense with.

With the fissure between morality and markets emerging as the central fault line of our age, this task has become more pressing than ever. From the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of populism to the planetary emergency of climate change and misaligned AI, what further evidence do we need that our economy is unmoored from ethics? Revisiting Smith through the lens of Das Adam Smith Problem reveals a thinker who might guide us out of this impasse. Far from preaching laissez-faire to the exclusion of all else, Smith was preoccupied with moral education and institutional design. He warned that commerce, if not accompanied by civic virtue, would corrupt “moral sentiments.” He anticipated the distortions of inequality and the dangers of what we would now call “regulatory capture.”

Smith’s answer was neither state socialism nor unbridled markets, but something subtler: A moral economy

grounded in sympathy and the pursuit of human flourishing. In that sense, he stands closer to Aristotle’s virtue ethics, or even to modern behavioural and cooperative economics, than to the mechanistic utilitarianism often attributed to him.

The irony is that in our rush to claim Smith as the father of modern economics, we have exiled the Smith that might redeem that discipline. We have failed to recognise his two key works as complementary elements of a unified, albeit unfinished, “science of man.” By solving Das Adam Smith Problem, we would also close the rift between efficiency and empathy that is undermining our entire civilisation.

The problem lies not in Smith, but in our own society. If 18th-century thinkers identified it, we must resolve it, not by resurrecting markets or morals alone, but by reviving the dialogue between them. Smith began that exchange, and we have yet to finish it.

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# RJD in different clothes



PLAIN POLITICS  
ADITI PHADNIS

“Be warned. The faces may have changed. But the people are still the same,” said Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his rally in Darbhanga last month. “Jungle raj will try to return wearing different clothes. The responsibility for keeping them out is yours.”

The clothes have certainly changed. Tejashwi Yadav addresses public meetings in colourful T-shirts and jeans. White khadi is out. And the Union home minister’s remarks highlight exactly what he wants to show — that the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) is under new management.

New? Maybe not so much. Everyone in Patna is talking about Sanjay Yadav, Bihar’s high-value import from Haryana. Tejashwi says Sanjay Yadav is “his philosopher, guide and tuition teacher”. But others, including his sister Rohini, say he is much more than that. Sanjay and Tejashwi met through Akhilesh Yadav around 2011. (There’s something about Haryanvi talent that the RJD attracts like a magnet. Lalu Prasad’s right-hand man and former Union minister Prem Chand Gupta was originally from Hisar and started out as an exporter-importer who made his money in Hong Kong and later turned Lalu Prasad’s advisor.) Sanjay was living a quiet life in Mahendragarh, Haryana, with a computer science background until he was thrown into the hurly burly of Bihar politics. If at least some of Tejashwi’s six sisters and one

brother, Tej Pratap, are to be believed, Sanjay is responsible for driving a stake through the family’s heart especially after he was given a Rajya Sabha seat in 2024, overriding the claim of Abdul Bari Siddiqui, a long-time Lalu Prasad loyalist.

Tejashwi was four months old when his father became chief minister of Bihar. He went to school in Delhi but dropped out in Class X to pursue professional cricket. In classmate, he met his wife, then his classmate, Rachel Godinho (now Rajshri Yadav), also from Haryana. The two married despite family opposition. Now in his 30s, he says at rallies: “I’m just a young person but I understand the ambitions and thirst of young people. My *chacha* (uncle), who is chief minister, is ill. You tell me: Will you let people from Delhi and Gujarat run Bihar? Or will a Bihar *ka lai* (Bihar’s darling) run your state?” The crowds are not big but the response is enthusiastic.

The RJD is seeing a subterranean shift — allegedly at the behest of Sanjay — though the moves are measured and cautious. Tejashwi is still projected as the true inheritor of Lalu Prasad’s legacy. This is most evident in the lineup on the dais at his election meetings. Election meetings of the Janata Dal (United) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have central and state leaders on the stage. The RJD has *mukhias* (village headmen), suggesting the organic organisational link between the party and Bihar’s villages is intact. Unlike the Congress. The otherwise fragmented Yadav community seems to have consolidated behind him. The Muslims, lacking a statewide alternative to fend off the BJP, see Tejashwi as their best bet. One of them said: “Field Yogi Adityanath or Amit Shah from the RJD — you’ll see, they’ll get every single Muslim vote.”

But his inheritance is a double-edged sword because the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is understandably interested only in

highlighting that part of the RJD’s tenure in government that evokes kidnapping, extortion, and lawlessness. The NDA identifies Lalu Prasad’s contribution to the actualisation of social justice and empowerment with the present family-dominated RJD. That is only part of the truth.

In this year’s Assembly elections, Tejashwi allocated 36 per cent of the RJD’s tickets (51 of 143) to Yadavs, who constitute 14.26 per cent of the population. The Muslims, 17.70 per cent of the population, received only 19 seats, around 13 per cent of the total, the same as in 2020. But it is the inclusion of other castes in the RJD list of nominees that is remarkable. In the past Bhumihars could not have thought of the RJD as a political possibility. This time, six candidates contesting on the RJD ticket are Bhumihars, a “forward” community traditionally hostile to Lalu Prasad’s party. Surajbhan Singh, a strongman of Mokama, actually joined the RJD this year and has fielded his wife from the seat (he is debarred from contesting because of a criminal conviction). Sagar Rai, with a background in the Indian Police Service, is also a Bhumihar candidate fielded by the RJD.

What is more, Tejashwi took advice from his colleagues and stooped to conquer the mercurial and unpredictable Mukesh Sahani, the leader of the Nishad and Mallah communities, by offering him deputy chief ministership. In the Gaura Bauram seat, he forced the RJD candidate to stand down in favour of Mr Sahani’s Vikasheel Insaan Party (VIP) at considerable cost. He has never publicly criticised Nitish Kumar. “He must get one chance — people do want to try him out at least once,” says Sunil Kumar, who runs a small store in Patna’s Bakergunj. He doesn’t reveal his caste but it is not hard to guess. He tries to hide it. But the sense of longing is palpable.

# The 1st Republic, the lost Republic

Bihar is blessed with a land more fertile for revolutions than any in India. Why has it fallen so far behind then? Constant obsession with politics is at the root of its destruction

Bihar, now voting to elect its 18th state Assembly, says with pride that democracy was born here. That’s why Prime Minister Narendra Modi says that India is the mother of democracy.

A signboard on the highway as you approach Bihar’s Vaishali district reads: “Welcome to the First Republic in the World.” This is no folklore. There is plenty of recorded history, rock edicts, and academic writing affirming this. For a refresher, you can swing by Patna’s spectacular museum.

Democracy, the idea of a republic where each individual has a voice and a choice, is Bihar’s greatest contribution to India, and India’s to the world. Which raises the question: How good has democracy been for Bihar? Where is its people’s democracy dividend?

The state of its society, people and economy shows it’s got nothing. Not even what you would call a tiny royalty for patent over democracy. It has no industry, tax revenues, or economic activity besides subsistence farming. Its per capita income is the country’s lowest and one-fifth of our richest state. The gap is widening. Its only productive activity is labour export, mostly for the lowest paying jobs in states with better economies.

In exasperation over the state of Bihar’s morass and the renewed hopes from another caste census, I had written in National Interest on October 7, 2023: “What Bihar thinks today, Bihar used to think the day before yesterday.” As the state goes through its current election, its third generation in independent India is still paying for that old-think-turned-new-think — content with caste, identity, social coalitions, and still at the bottom of the pile.

We can see why nobody seems bothered. Bihar has been left so far behind the rest, even its neighbouring states, that the only comparison its voters make is with their own past. Am I doing better than my parents? The answer is mostly yes. Will my children do better than me? The realistic hope is yes. That sets the bar for aspiration frightfully low.

Over the generations, Bihar’s voters have lived by and fought for minimalistic expectations: Protection from feudal and upper caste oppression, three meals a day, and going ahead basic law and order, electricity, and some connectivity. So far, so good. Tragic that this is all you dream of in India of 2025. That’s why Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar, both of whom

used to deride giveaways, are now front-loading their political offering with just those. Of course, their rivals promise a government job to each of its 27.6 million families. It isn’t a cruel joke. It’s the serious reality of Bihar even after 20 years under Nitish Kumar.

Where’s the ambition for a leap forward, to break out of the trap? And it is no tiny state on the peripheries. This is almost 140 million people in the nation’s heartland, or one in 10 Indians living a sub-sub-Saharan Africa quality of life. In this election, too, the main contenders are offering more of the same and sadly, it might just be enough. The third, Prashant Kishor, at least, has some new ideas. He won’t admit it, but he also knows that even imagining new ideas in Bihar is seen as an act of wishful thinking, if not outright nuttiness.

It is particularly tragic for a state with such

a deep, vibrant, and audacious political culture. See it this way. But for Bihar, there would’ve been no Gandhi. He returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and first caught the national — and international — imagination with the satyagraha against forced indigo cultivation by British contractors in Champaran. That zone still has some of the poorest districts of India’s poorest state by far. Go there to see how poor, distant and deprived its people are even now. You can then imagine how wretched their existence was in 2017. And yet they embraced Gandhi. The poorest of Bihar were his first political allies.

Besides the incidental fact that he was a Bihari, would Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) have risen to being hailed as Lok Nayak (leader of the masses) but for the people of Bihar, their political awareness and courage? His Nav Nirman Andolan (rejuvenation movement) had Bihari human resources and acquired pan-India influence so dramatically, it forced a rattled Indira Gandhi into imposing the Emergency, and ultimately led to her defeat in 1977. He acquired the most moral and briefly political capital since Gandhi in 20th Century India. Bihar triggered the decline of the Congress party’s national domination. It never recovered.

If Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan owe their rise to Bihar and its people, let’s talk about Karpoori Thakur who rose in the mid-sixties. Until then, the state had elected upper-caste chief ministers as its



NATIONAL  
INTEREST  
SHEKHAR GUPTA

# The rebel poet-filmmaker

EYE CULTURE  
ATANU BISWAS

“No one else can shake the people’s middle-class mindset, wealth, and contentment. You have departed, pride has dissipated, and humility has surfaced.” This is my translation of a few lines from *Ritwik, for You*, a poem written by Bengali poet Shakti Chattopadhyay in 1976, shortly after the death of filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak.

November 4 marked the centenary of Ghatak, Indian cinema’s rebel auteur. Along with Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, he is often hailed as one of Bengali cinema’s three maestros. However, in a 1997 article, Jacob Levich referred to Ghatak as the “problem child” and Ray as the “suitable boy” of Indian art cinema. Ghatak’s films are “ragged, provisional, intensely personal, yet epic in shape, scope, and aspirations,” according to Mr Levich.

His films continue to be among the most potent artistic representations of the trauma of displacement associated with Partition. Drawing from his own experience of Partition as a young immigrant, his Partition trilogy, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1965), illustrates the consequences of this colonial geopolitical exercise. Depicting a startlingly honest indictment of the family as an institution, *The Meghe*

*Dhaka Tara* may be one of the most tragic films ever produced.

A committed Marxist, a lay Jungian, and occasionally a novelist, Ghatak was a key figure in the Indian People’s Theatre Association, the Communist Party of India’s cultural wing.

Ghatak confined his filmmaking to Bengal, even though he wrote the script for *Madhumati* (1958), the Hindi blockbuster directed by Bimal Roy. Despite his talent, financial difficulties limited him to making only eight films. His first film, *Nagarik* (1952), is a blatantly Communist picture that criticises the Horatio Alger-like aspirations of a naive young man in the Calcutta slums. It’s arguably the first Bengali art film. But it was released in 1977, after his passing.

Long before the Herbie films, his first commercial release, the bitter-sweet comedy *Ajantrik* (1958), was one of the first Indian films to feature an inanimate object — a run-down 1920s Chevrolet Jalopy taxicab — as a character. Its stunning depiction of the intricate interaction between man and machine is still relevant today. With a scenario akin to François Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows* (1959), Ghatak’s *Bari Theke Paliye* (1958) appears to be the most playful of his films. It tells the story of an imaginative village boy who flees to the big city. Preceding Robert Altman’s *Nashville* (1975), *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* (1973) is among the

early works in a hyperlink structure, with several characters in a collection of connected storylines. But under Ghatak’s direction, the narrative transforms into a visionary, alluring political movie.

*Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* (1977), Ghatak’s swan song, is arguably the most harsh and purposefully indecorous self-portrait ever recorded on celluloid. Here, in the role of his alter ego, the director alternates between being irritable, hectoring, resentful, and pitiful.

“As a creator of powerful images in an epic style, he was virtually unsurpassed in Indian cinema,” Satyajit Ray stated in the “foreword” to *Cinema and I*, a compilation of Ghatak’s cinematic essays.

Ghatak’s brilliance influenced a generation of filmmakers, and he was often hailed as a filmmakers’ filmmaker. Euripides, a legendary Greek tragedian from the 5th century BC, is renowned for his theatrical innovations, having a significant impact on drama even now. Was the non-conformist Ritwik Ghatak the Euripides of Indian cinema? In reference to Euripides, Ghatak remarked, “We must orientate our entire creative endeavour along... the channel of epic mentality.” And that may have transformed his filmmaking art into a way to convey and end people’s misery.

The author is professor of statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

# Time for job hugging in the ad world



YES, BUT...  
SANDEEP GOYAL

Founded in New York as Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) in 1949, the ad agency went public in 1964. The merger of DDB, BBDO and Needham Harper created the Omnicom Group in 1986. The agency itself was renamed DDB Worldwide in 1999. Today, it faces possible extinction.

The news is that Omnicom will retire the advertising network DDB as part of its merger with the Interpublic Group (IPG), most likely in November itself. The merged company will reportedly consolidate creative operations into three networks: McCann, BBDO, and TBWA. Two other IPG agencies — FCB and Mullen-Lowe/Lintas are on shaky ground too, and may also face the scalpel in the merger, sooner or later.

In the past few years, the “right-sizing” and “consolidation” at WPP has resulted in iconic advertising brand names like J Walter Thompson, Young & Rubicam, and Wun-

derman being consigned to the dustbin. Ad agency Grey too is slowly losing its identity as it slithers unsung under the larger Ogilvy umbrella, most likely into oblivion.

Once a global network stitched together by high-profile acquisitions, Dentsu of Japan now finds itself grappling with a multitude of problems. The integration of Aegis, Merkle, and other international assets has proven more complex than was expected. This has left the Japanese giant, once my joint-venture partners in India, with a fragmented global operation and a no-win choice about what to keep and what to let go. Dentsu’s global operation, which generated over \$4.5 billion in net revenue in 2024, is now on sale. Dentsu in recent months has cut around 3,400 jobs — about 8 per cent of its international workforce. Revenues have slipped, with organic growth down 8.9 per cent in Asia-Pacific (excluding Japan) and 3.4 per cent in the Americas. There is real trouble out there.

As if all this uncertainty was not enough, artificial intelligence (AI) is dramatically reshaping the operational processes in the advertising business. With the capacity to decipher complex patterns, predict outcomes, and automate tasks, AI is redefining the landscape for many creative agencies, reshaping strategies, and propelling the industry into an era of data-driven, personalised, and highly targeted advertising.

The impact of AI can be felt across the broad spectrum of advertising functions, from fostering enhanced customer insights to innovating media buying. For most old-timers in the business, it is becoming increasingly difficult to comprehend the breadth and depth of AI’s transformative influence on the world of media, and advertising agencies.

In the good ole days, finding a new job after quitting one in advertising was a no-brainer. Job-hopping was an industry pastime. There were openings everywhere, at all times, and invariably at a better salary package. The market was overwhelmingly weighed in favour of the talent — but in recent months, the tide has turned dramatically. Redundancies across agencies triggered by mergers, machines talking to machines in media buying, AI writing copy, visualising campaigns, and even creating ad-films have resulted in the job market suddenly drying up. This is true worldwide; it is true in India.

Given this new reality, managements at ad agencies should actually be delighted by the abundance of talent available. But that’s where the catch is. Given the new thrust on technology and data-driven personalisation of brand communication, the talent on offer is actually unemployable and unfortunately obsolete. “Seniority” is no longer a virtue. It is no longer an indication of maturity and

deeper understanding of advertising — instead, it is a signal of talent from a generation long past.

Unfortunately, that understanding of the new reality hasn’t yet sunk in for practitioners (and even managers) in the industry. It is appalling that most leading network ad agencies in India (yes, most means almost all) are still zilch in AI. They have not even got themselves licensed copies of AI softwares, let alone have employees use it. Art directors are mostly using free versions to create rudimentary visuals. Why? The holding companies are still “undecided”. WPP Open, the AI platform meant to deliver “speed & scale”, for example, is still in beta and nowhere near an India rollout.


In advertising today, those who currently have jobs, need to quickly get into “job-hugging” mode. Covet their jobs. Value them. And no longer treat them as a disposable and easily replaceable. Everyone needs to upskill, and that too quickly. The job market is going to become tighter and tighter, and more ruthless in the days, and months, to come. The day is not far when a bright 18-year-old with “ideas and attitude” will be more welcome at the agency than a senior with 18 years of “experience”. That is the uncoated truth. Unfortunately, but real.

The author is chairman of Rediffusion



## Winter is coming





**A thought for today**  
*Work is that which you dislike doing but perform for the sake of external rewards*  
**ABRAHAM MASLOW**

# Muskular Pay

But bosses running bigger cos don't demand homage

Elon Musk moved closer to the first trillion-dollar pay package on Thursday. He's already worth \$491bn, as of Friday afternoon, and growing valuations of his major companies – Tesla, SpaceX, xAI – could make him the first trillionaire with his current stakes well before the promised \$1tn. The prospect of a man possibly worth \$2tn, or even more – larger than the revenue of many big companies – in a few years is mind-boggling.

How can one man be worth so much, many have asked. But 75% of Tesla's stock – of which Musk is the single biggest holder – backed the proposal to give him 424mn new shares, doubling his stake in the company, if he meets certain goals over the next 10 years. These include selling 20mn cars – not difficult, considering current sales of 1.8mn a year – and raising Tesla's market value to \$8.5tn, from \$1.4tn currently. That sounds tough, but recall how he won shareholder approval for a controversial \$56bn bonus in 2018, contingent upon Tesla's market value touching \$650bn over 10 years. Tesla hit trillion-dollar valuation in Oct 2021.

Musk may do the impossible again. What's in question, though, is not the possibility but the desirability of his reward. Nvidia, Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet and Amazon are all significantly bigger than Tesla but their chiefs don't demand the kind of homage that Musk does. Yes, he's invested in Tesla like nobody else – 15 years ago he pumped his own \$35mn to pull it from the brink of bankruptcy – but Satya Nadella, Sundar Pichai and Tim Cook have done more for their shareholders without Musk's theatrics. In fact, Musk has been a liability for Tesla of late. Last month, a Yale working paper estimated that his abrasive politics had cost Tesla 1mn car sales. He's promised cheaper EVs, then robotaxis, and now autonomous robots, without delivering, while Chinese rival BYD has stolen a march. Perhaps, the promise of a trillion dollars will make him pull himself and Tesla together.

# Sea Of Questions

Goa's disturbing response to a spurt in crime

The answer to the question why Goa imposed National Security Act in its north and south districts in the middle of peak tourist season, won't even be found at the bottom of a bottle of feni. Govt says it's to combat crime. But why does it need a law designed to tackle terrorism for that? True, incidence of gang wars, murders and shootings has jumped. The recent attack on activist Rama Kankonkar in broad daylight shocked Goans. But isn't putting the scare in criminals the job of cops? If policing is bad, what will NSA do? Or does govt want the option of detaining people for months without a charge, as NSA allows? Two more questions. NSA will be applied for three months. Will Goa's policing issues be magically fixed by then? And what about tourism?

Goa is already facing tough competition attracting sea-sun-and-sand tourists. Southeast Asian destinations like Phuket in Thailand score on parameters like value for money and safety. When tourists also figure out Goa will be under a law that allows cops to simply lock people up, they aren't exactly going to rush there. Goa's major crime problem actually tracks back to a politics-criminal gang nexus, which has spotted a goldmine in the state's rapid conversion of agricultural and eco-zone land into settlement zones, often through dubious means. Final question: No question of fixing that, is there?

# Great Groups, Not Great Men, Do Great Things

But not every 'team' fits the criteria

It starts in the family, in our first playground, first school project. Our entire life is made up of navigating different groups' dynamics. The same applies to the collective human experience. A nation, a World Cup win, a great music album, a major scientific advance... it is all the work of groups, suggests **Colin M. Fisher in *The Collective Edge: Unlocking the Secret Power of Groups***.

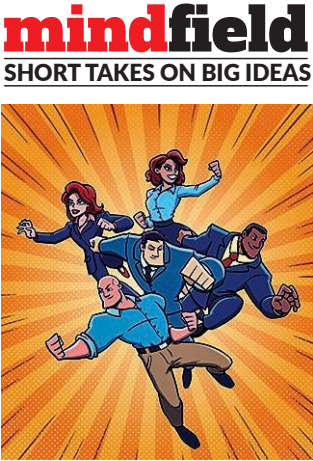
You think Edison invented incandescent light bulbs? Nope, these predate him. He did patent a new version. Even this was not solo work but we are suckers for Great Man stories. We remember the individual and forget the group. A flip side of this 'fundamental attribution error' is that we have an inflated idea of our own contribution to groups.

Real teams are humanity's best tool for solving problems, the book says. Defeating Thanos needs working together. Groups are the seeds from which tomorrows grow.

Not all groups have 'groupiness', nor can it be achieved by the usual 'team building' exercises. These over-bill how you need trust to cooperate, but under-bill how you need to cooperate to build trust. When a group accomplishes what it sets out to do, that feels good, then it sticks together. Real teams satisfy all our big drives: autonomy, belonging, competence.

Whether you want to change yourself or the world, you need to work with the invisible forces of group dynamics instead of being mindlessly pushed around by them, the book says. This doesn't just concern traditional team leaders, but everyone who wants to improve their relationships at home, school or work.

For example, contrary to common thinking, motivation is *not* a function



**mindfield**  
SHORT TAKES ON BIG IDEAS

# 'Making India Global AI Hub'

Chairman of Adani Group, writing on the Google-Adani project to build an AI and data centre complex in Visakhapatnam, argues India will benefit at multiple levels & all data will be kept here

**Gautam Adani**



The \$15bn partnership between Google and the Adani Group to develop India's largest AI and data centre hub in Visakhapatnam represents a fundamental shift in how we think about national infrastructure. This is not simply an investment, it is a strategic move to position India at the centre of the global AI economy.

**New pillars of sovereignty** | In the 20th century, nations built their power on ports, railways and electricity grids. These remain essential, but the 21st century demands a new foundation: energy, data, and 'compute'. Control over these resources is no longer optional, it is fundamental to economic independence and technological self-reliance.

This partnership combines Google's global AI capabilities with Adani's expertise in energy and infra execution. Together, we will establish a gigawatt-scale campus powered entirely by renewable energy, thus making it one of the world's most advanced and sustainable data centre facilities. The campus will support hyperscale computing workloads, AI model training, and secure cloud services.

Doing so, we are directly contributing to G.O.F.'s **India AI Mission**, which envisions building the foundational compute and data capabilities needed to democratise artificial intelligence. Our project aligns with this national goal by creating the infra backbone that will power India's AI-first future.

It represents the convergence of India's two defining missions: energy transition and digital transformation. Each strengthens the other, creating a foundation for genuine technological sovereignty.

**Foundation of digital economy** | Visakhapatnam's location on India's eastern seaboard makes it an ideal digital gateway connecting Asia and Africa. Just as our ports decentralised trade, this hub will decentralise India's digital infra, reducing dependence on concentrated coastal metros.

Our joint venture, AdaniConneX, will deliver the physical and digital infra. Adani Green Energy will provide 100% renewable power; while Google's tensor

processing units (TPUs) and graphics processing units (GPUs), fiber and subsea networks will ensure global connectivity. This approach, linking clean energy, secure infra, and world-class compute and connectivity, creates a model for sustainable digital growth.

**Democratising access to tech** | This infrastructure will level the playing field for Indian innovators. Small businesses, engineers and data scientists will gain access to computing resources that were previously

accelerates this vision by translating policy intent into practical, high-impact outcomes on the ground.

**Sustainability at scale** | AI's computational demands are immense, and its environmental footprint is significant. Powering this campus with 100% renewable energy, drawn from Adani Green Energy's solar and wind portfolio, demonstrates that scale and sustainability are not competing priorities. We can build world-class digital infra while advancing India's climate commitments.

This approach sets a standard for responsible technology deployment. As AI becomes central to economic growth, ensuring its environmental sustainability is both a competitive advantage and a moral imperative.

**Partnership built on confidence** | This collaboration reflects the growing confidence global leaders have in India's business environment, marked by policy stability, openness to partnership, and ambitious vision. Google sees India not as a back-office of technology, but as a co-architect of its future.

For the Adani Group, this partnership deepens our commitment to building infra that serves national priorities while competing on the global stage. It demonstrates how Indian enterprise can lead in emerging sectors by combining execution capabilities with strategic vision.



Image: AI

**Empowering India's future** | India's success in the AI era will not be measured by how many foreign models we adopt, but by how effectively we empower our own innovators to build our own models. The Visakhapatnam campus will be remembered as the catalyst that enabled thousands of Indian minds to shape the future of AI.

This partnership is a new beginning of an India where technology empowers the many, not the few. Where innovation rises from villages as much as cities. Where intelligence is not imported, but made in India, by India, for the world.

The coming decade will decide whether nations become consumers or creators of intelligence. Our mission is to ensure that the potential of technology is never constrained by infra, but inspired by it. And in this way, the world no longer sees India as a participant but as a co-architect of the technological era.

# Why So Much Changes When She Makes The Move

That many women today can pursue men they like, reversing centuries-old dictum that men should chase & women should be chaste, is arguably the most fundamental demonstration of gender equality

**Shinie Antony**



Lust is not gender-based. Until recently, however, men and women had to follow different manuals. Both macho brags and mothers' dire warnings pointed to the same norm: The male had to go out and seduce while the female waited for the kiss of true love. With birth control iffy and abortions illegal, only marital sex got a thumbs-up, which was for the grim purpose of filling up the world. Anything else was taboo and came with statutory warnings.

Cavemen had been hitting women on the head with their clubs and dragging them into caves for millennia, we were told. The trad romance tableau shows boy chasing girl. Him in hot pursuit and her primly looking for the exit. Puberty put men firmly in the animal kingdom even as women grew a halo and were handed harps. A boudoir contained at any given moment a randy bull and a doe caught in a car's headlights. For a long, long time, the ball was always in his court.

While men had to be the more athletic of the two, women were terrified of staying stationary. The pressure on her to prove her virtue while also keeping her options open had her maintain a midding pace. Pausing now and then for him to catch up only to give him the slip – because being seen as easy was worse than dying palely of TB in some seaside sanatorium. If you zoom in on the picture, he is panting while her breath is even. This tried and tested model chugged along out of sheer necessity. After all, touch is touch. Men in films played stalkers. Women had to babble and sing in nasal tones. *Aaja*, said he. *Nahi*, said she.

But just when female coyness was in danger of becoming a rigid mating ritual and man was cursed to forever run after a paramour, the femme-homme world

convulsed. The alphabet exploded every which way. A was no longer 'Alpha male' and C stood for 'Consent'. Neither were women going around 'giving' themselves, nor were they being 'taken' at all. Hereon only elastics could be 'loose', not a girl, never a girl. 'Mistress' went extinct, and 'girlfriend' became 'partner'. The language of sex gently started to shift.

In this new atmosphere where many a gendered proverb had to reword itself, desire suddenly loomed two-way. Where once role reversals depicted aggressor



**WHO'S CHASING WHO?** AI depiction of the theme of the movie *Babygirl*

female woosers as evil or comic, with the male either disinterested or downright terrified, a cool breeze began to blow between the sexes. The stereotypical predator-prey image was punctured; in its place sprang a more honest equation.

As libidos shed their pink and blue tags, the dating scene blew a fuse. The hands swiping left/right are both female and male, with hookups the new arranged marriage.

## Calvin & Hobbes



**Narayani Ganesh**

The Gita, Buddhist and other faith teachings say that anger is one among the three poisons, the other two being ignorance and desire, the primary sources of suffering and distress. Why do we get angry? There are many reasons why we fly off the handle. Basically, it all boils down to how well we are able to acknowledge our emotions and keep them in control so that they do not go haywire.

To control negative emotions does not mean to suppress or ignore them, but to acknowledge their presence, befriend them and ensure that they do not propel one to destructive thought and action. That is, we need to cultivate the art of mindfulness, which will help us stay calm and avoid rashness that may lead to violence and perhaps, regret. Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn would say that mindfulness

recognises anger, is aware of its presence, accepts and allows it to be there – once we recognise our anger, we embrace it... And things are bound to change (for the better).

Anger is also perceived as a source of powerful wisdom. "In its pure, awakened form, when it is not driven by ego, anger brings good to the world. It can be, for example, the energy that inspires great movements for freedom and social justice, or the force that helps us simply say, 'No!' to actions that cause suffering," says *Lion's Roar* editor-in-chief Melvin McLeod. But the tricky part is to know when to rein in that anger so that it does not turn around and become harmful to us and others. For this, one has to cultivate the art of knowing when to stop; when to cool down and knowing how and

when to convert the powerful steam released by anger into a force that can fuel positive action. What was poison can be transformed into becoming an antidote to suffering.

A therapist once advised a frustrated, angry young woman to vent her anger by smashing dinner plates. Others advise to let it all out by shouting or swearing. But all of these only aggravate the negative feeling; giving expression in acts of aggression that may now seem harmless could later manifest as violence in more serious situations.

You cannot overcome negative emotions by indulging in negative acts of aggression. The answer is, to understand why you are so angry and try and work around that. If it is because someone has wronged you or you lost your job, your lover, your



**THE SPEAKING TREE**

**Sacredspace**



*A mind not to be changed by place or time. The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n.*

**John Milton, Paradise Lost**

# Smashing Dinner Plates Is Not A Solution

finances, your health, then smashing dinner plates is not going to help deal with your situation.

Learning and practising deep breathing and meditation could help immensely. These will also help clear mind clutter and enhance your capacity to think with clarity and purpose, so that you chalk out a plan, step-by-step, for doing things that could make your situation better. To right a wrong, committing another wrong does not work. One has to make a conscious effort to see life from a wider perspective and come to terms with the fact that what you are going through right now is just a passing phase.

There is a lot of truth in the saying, "This too shall pass." Befriend anger and frustration, and cultivate loving kindness, first towards yourself and then towards others. Anger will then fly out the window.

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DECCAN HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1948

## A launchpad for bigger lift-offs

The successful launch of GSAT-7R (CMS-03) – the heaviest-ever communication satellite from India – on Sunday marks the country’s confident entry into a new territory of space exploration. It is a strong demonstration by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) of its prowess to undertake complex future missions, including Gaganyaan, the space agency’s ambitious human space-flight programme, and the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, India’s proposed space-based facility. The 4,410-kg satellite was indigenously designed and developed, and put into space by the country’s most powerful launch vehicle, the LVM-3, on its fifth operational flight. The launcher was last used in the 2023 Chandrayaan-3 mission, which saw India become the first country to land near the south pole of the moon. ISRO modified the vehicle to enhance its payload capability by 10%; the vehicle’s cryogenic upper stage was also upgraded for the mission. It is the first time ISRO has put a communication satellite weighing over 4,000 kg into Geo-synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) from Indian soil. ISRO noted after the launch that India’s space sector is “soaring high” and bringing valuable services to the user community.

The multi-band communication satellite comes with immense strategic value – it is designed to provide services over the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). GSAT-7R promises to equip the Indian Navy with stronger space-based communications and maritime domain awareness. With state-of-the-art indigenous components, the satellite is expected to provide seamless connectivity between the Navy’s ships, submarines, aircraft, and Maritime Operations Centres. The significance of such communication is self-evident at a time when the IOR is becoming increasingly critical to India’s national security landscape. The Navy said the satellite was a testament to the nation’s pursuit of self-reliance.

The launch was also used for the in-orbit test of the indigenously developed C25 cryogenic stage. ISRO has achieved first-time success in the operation and gained useful data on engine performance, stability, and control in microgravity conditions. It has now demonstrated expertise in cryogenic propulsion, which will enable it to undertake advanced orbital missions. The success will enhance the precision and efficiency of its missions and boost future capabilities to place multiple satellites into orbit. The space agency has planned a series of launches in the next six months; it is preparing for the first unmanned mission under the Gaganyaan programme and to put a robotic astronaut in space. The country’s vision for space exploration is promising. In the GSAT-7R launch, it has set the tone for what could be a packed calendar.

GSAT-7R will enhance India’s strategic communication; launch demonstrates competence for complex missions

## Metro delays warrant push for self-reliance

Bengaluru Metro’s Pink Line, like the recently delayed Yellow Line, appears headed for a slow start. The 7.5-km elevated section between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere is ready, but trial runs have been stalled for want of trains. Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), the Bengaluru-headquartered public sector manufacturer, was to deliver a prototype by June 2025. That deadline has now slipped, with prototype testing alone expected to take another six months. At the core of this crisis lies a chronic shortage of rolling stock. The problem began in 2019, when the contract for the Yellow Line was awarded to the Chinese company CRRC. A ‘Make in India’ clause required the firm to establish a local manufacturing facility, but this proved difficult amid rising geopolitical tensions and restrictions on Chinese entities. After prolonged delays, CRRC partnered with Titagarh Rail Systems, a domestic manufacturer based in Kolkata, to assemble coaches in India. The partnership eventually revived production, but the years lost proved costly for Namma Metro.

Now, even BEML – awarded a Rs 3,177-crore contract for 53 driverless trainsets for the Blue and Pink lines – has run into trouble. Delays in the import of major components such as gearboxes, motor wheel sets, and current collection devices have slowed manufacturing schedules. The absence of domestic testing facilities for crucial safety procedures, including bogey fatigue and car body squeeze tests, has compounded the lag. The result is a widening mismatch between civil completion and rolling stock readiness. The ripple effects extend beyond Bengaluru. Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Pune Metros also face low train frequencies due to similar procurement bottlenecks. The country’s rapid metro expansion is thus colliding with the limited capacity of its rolling stock supply chain.

However, this challenge presents an opening for Karnataka. The state, which has long depended on the IT and services sector, is already home to BEML, the country’s largest domestic supplier of metro coaches. Karnataka can leverage this base to attract private players into the manufacturing of ancillary components – bogies, brake systems, door mechanisms, and traction equipment – that are currently dependent on imports. The state government should act decisively by offering targeted incentives, facilitating industrial clusters around BEML’s KGF unit, and investing in vocational training for specialised skills training for the rail sector. As metro systems expand into tier-2 cities, India’s demand for rolling stock and sub-systems will soar. Karnataka, with its engineering prowess and manufacturing potential, can seize this moment to become the nation’s hub for metro systems, transforming delay into opportunity.

Rolling stock supply chains are strained. Can Karnataka fix the gaps with its own manufacturing hub?

## Dynastic politics is condemned and shamed in India, but still thrives on the wannability factor

JOHN J KENNEDY

Dynasty in Indian politics is a phenomenon we have quietly learned to live with. Of course, we all agree that it shouldn’t exist, and we also publicly affirm that leadership should be based on ability, not ancestry. However, during every election season, we see the same old surnames bloom on posters, and we continue to elect them. Shashi Tharoor, Congress MP, recently wrote in his Project Syndicate essay that political pedigree still trumps merit, and when surnames stand in for substance, the quality of governance inevitably suffers. True. But the bigger question is this. If dynasty is such an obvious flaw, why does it not just survive but thrive?

No doubt, Tharoor is right in his assertion that dynastic politics is a grave threat to Indian democracy. He goes on to add that it’s not a Congress-only problem. Across India’s political landscape, political succession has often resembled the reading of a family will rather than a democratic process. Consider these examples, which are all too familiar to us. In Maharashtra, the Thackerays have passed the baton from Bal to Uddhav to Aditya. In Tamil Nadu, the Karunanidhi clan continues through Stalin and Udhayanidhi. In Bihar, the Paswans have inherited the Lok Janshakti Party; in Punjab, the Badals dominate the Akali Dal; in Telangana, the KCR family runs the show. From the DMK and BRS to the SP and Shiv Sena, politics increasingly resembles a family tree more than a contest of ideas. It is also common knowledge that Tharoor’s own party, the Congress, practically wrote the manual on political inheritance. Sure enough, his appeal now to “trade dynasty for meritocracy” has bruised the party’s high command and, worse, handed the BJP an easy talking point. The ruling party quickly turned his words into a jab at Rahul Gandhi, insisting that every other party but theirs is a family firm.

However, the numbers tell a different story. According to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms

### POWER INHERITED

# Cycle of privilege: Why India votes for dynasty

(ADR), one in five Indian lawmakers is a dynast, and nearly 17% of them belong to the BJP. So, if Congress is the face of dynasty with 32%, the BJP is its quiet custodian. Curiously, though, Tharoor’s essay spares the BJP the scrutiny he applies to others. Perhaps that’s because the BJP’s dynasty runs on a different fuel. It does not always rely on bloodlines as much as on ideological inheritance and inner-circle loyalty. There may be no sons and daughters at the topmost position, but power still flows through tightly guarded networks of patronage. Nepotism wears saffron too, just that it is better disguised.

So, what does the persistence of dynasties reveal about voters and



politicians? The most certain thing is that Indian voters have grown accustomed to political inheritance. In many states, politics follows the same caste and kinship patterns. Voters treat family names like trusted brands. In a vibrant democracy, with newer parties entering the fray regularly and with the ever-shifting promises, a familiar surname feels like a safe bet. Voters who accept the father often accept the son as well. Consequently, familiarity outweighs competence, and parties oblige because a specific surname saves them the effort of building credibility from scratch. It’s a silent pact between ambition and habit. Leaders and voters agree to keep that cycle intact.

### The surname sells

Interestingly, there’s also a gender twist that complicates things. Nearly half of India’s women legislators, ADR reports, come from political families. Daughters, wives, and widows are often held up as symbols of women’s

empowerment. But what kind of empowerment depends on a surname? While dynasty often serves as a gateway for women to enter politics, it also reinforces old hierarchies that block genuine equality. In fact, it clearly reflects India’s democratic paradox: an advancement for women but built on inherited privilege.

At the same time, it must be remembered that not every dynast is underserving. Some have indeed evolved into competent, even visionary leaders. To dismiss them solely because of birth would be unfair. However, we must not forget that democracy is about fairness and not just competence. It’s about making sure anyone, regardless of origin, has a genuine chance to rise on merit. When that space is dominated by family-backed politicians, democracy loses its character as a public institution and becomes a gated community of privilege.

So why does the system persist? Because it works, at least for those who benefit from it. Parties want candidates who can win, not those who merely deserve to. Dynasts bring money, networks, and name recognition. Add caste and community loyalties, and the formula is unbeatable. Perhaps, until campaign financing is cleaned up, internal elections are truly representative, and voters demand more than just surnames, dynasty will remain the default setting. Reforms such as term limits and internal democracy could help, but what India really needs is a cultural shift in how it perceives leadership itself. It would be wishful thinking to believe that dynasty will disappear anytime soon. It’s too deeply rooted in our political culture, feeding on the needs of parties, the loyalties of communities, and the insecurities of voters. What may change is its form, not its presence.

Dynasty has been shamed often, but never dismantled. It endures because it benefits everyone in some way, and even those who denounce it often fall in line when opportunity knocks. Tharoor’s call for merit in politics is timely and necessary. Even so, India’s democracy continues to suffer this contradiction, perhaps not for lack of imagination, but out of fear of the chaos the alternative may bring. So, for now, bloodlines will shape ballot lines, and we will continue to choose familiarity over freedom.

(The writer is an educator and political analyst based in Bengaluru)

### RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

## When the flute played again

### A concert brought back memories of early lessons and lost tunes

HARINI RAGHAVAN

Recently, I happened to meet a flautist after more than four decades at a Karnatic music concert organised by our association. When the concert ended, he came to greet us – the organisers. There was something familiar about him. Then it struck me – he had played the flute recital at my wedding reception! My husband and I reminded him of the long-ago occasion, and we chatted about concerts, classes, and musicians we knew.

Later that evening, memories of my journey through Karnatic music began to flood back. I was the youngest of four siblings. My elder sisters were learning vocal music, and their daily practice afforded me some familiarity with the songs and ragas. I picked up

the songs by ear and sang them – in my own style – much to their embarrassment. Eventually, I too was enrolled in vocal classes at a music school that also taught instruments.

The beginners’ lessons felt dull since I already knew the basics. What really caught my attention was the flute class in the next room. I was fascinated by the sound of bamboo and the effortless grace with which it was played. I asked my mother to let me switch to flute, but she dismissed it as a passing fancy – the whim of the youngest child whose requests were rarely taken seriously.

Still, my passion for the flute lingered. I joined the school music band, where the flute was one of the instruments, and was given one to practise at home. I began experimenting with tunes and entertaining my family. But as my vocal lessons advanced, and new songs were taught, I returned to singing with renewed interest, leaving behind my flute experiments. Though my singing was not considered as good as my sisters’, that never stopped me from

performing whenever I could.

At my wedding reception, a flute concert had been arranged, and the artist was none other than the tutor from my music school. He was surprised to see me as the bride and performed with special warmth that evening.

After my wedding, I continued my music lessons, though with frequent breaks. I never aspired to perform publicly; I sang purely for the joy it brought me. I would sing readily with all eagerness whenever asked to sing. Over the years, attending concerts of great artists deepened my connection with the art form and inspired me to volunteer with a local music organisation.

I have a long tenure of over 25 years with this organisation, and I still take pleasure in organising concerts, meeting artists and music enthusiasts, and helping spread Karnatic music in my area of residence. That unexpected meeting with the flautist stirred old memories. I should have perhaps learnt from him, but here I am now, organising his concerts and those of other artists.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Bengaluru must address garbage crisis, reclaim its dignity

Apropos ‘HC orders unified tech platform to tackle B’lu-ru’s garbage mess’ (Nov 7), Bengaluru’s garbage crisis has become a civic disgrace, exposing years of administrative neglect and poor waste management planning. The city is drowning in nearly 6,000 tonnes of daily waste, much of it unsegregated and dumped in overflowing landfills. Despite repeated court admonitions, the BBMP’s inefficiency and contractor-driven system have failed to deliver sustainable solutions. The Karnataka

High Court has now intervened, directing the adoption of feasible technological methods to tackle the crisis. Bengaluru needs a systemic overhaul – transparent operations, penalties for violations, and public participation in managing waste locally. Unless technology is backed by political will and civic discipline, India’s Silicon Valley risks becoming its stink capital. The court’s push offers a last chance for Bengaluru to reclaim its dignity. **N Sadhasiva Reddy**, Bengaluru

### Restore trust

Apropos ‘Evasive EC erodes trust in poll processes’ (Nov 7), Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi’s allegations of widespread voter fraud in the Haryana Assembly election demand serious attention. His claims, drawn from the Election Commission’s own data, point to possible manipulation through fake and duplicate entries. The EC’s denial and counter-questions cannot substitute for a transparent explanation. When the body entrusted with safeguarding electoral integrity appears evasive, citizens’ faith in free and fair elections inevitably weakens. This

issue transcends party politics; it is about the trust that sustains democracy. Repeated irregularities in voter rolls across states suggest a deeper institutional failure rather than mere administrative oversight. Asking the Leader of the Opposition to seek judicial remedy sidesteps EC’s responsibility for accountability. The EC must act with transparency and urgency to restore credibility. **K Chidanand Kumar**, Bengaluru

### Ensure road safety

The increasing number of highway accidents across the country is deeply worrying. Every year, thousands

of lives are lost in incidents that could easily be prevented. Reckless driving, use of mobile phones while driving, poor road conditions, and weak enforcement of traffic rules are among the major causes. The government must take urgent steps to improve road maintenance and ensure strict implementation of laws. Equally important is creating public awareness about road safety and responsible driving. **Meghapushpa M Patil**, Vijayapura

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### SPEAK OUT

Mahatma Gandhi had said the Congress should be dissolved after independence, but the Gandhi family kept it alive for personal gain...

Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana CM



Often the surest way to convey misinformation is to tell the strict truth.

Mark Twain

### TO BE PRECISE



### IN PERSPECTIVE

## At COP30, a case for mineral diplomacy

The summit offers nations a platform to leverage global partnerships in critical minerals for effective climate action

SALONI SACHDEVA MICHAEL AND KAIRA RAKHEJA

As COP30 draws close, expectations are high that nations will work to translate climate commitments into on-the-ground action. The summit offers an opportunity to confront the material realities of the clean energy transition, including the need to secure critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, graphite, and rare earth elements.

Minerals have long been part of the energy transition conversation. Growing trade tensions, export restrictions, and the weaponisation of mineral supply chains have brought the subject to the forefront. A handful of countries, including China, Indonesia, South Korea, and Japan, control most of the global refining and processing capacity. China alone controls around 90% of rare earth processing, 70% of global cobalt refining, and over 60% of lithium refining. This dominance is a result of two decades of strategic investment in refining, processing, and manufacturing, while other countries remained dependent on imports. In 2025, China imposed export controls on 12 rare earth elements and tightened restrictions across the lithium-ion battery supply chain, showing how such concentration exposes the energy transition to strategic risks, from price volatility to potential supply chain disruptions.

The scale of the challenge is immense. The International Energy Agency under Stated Policies Scenario estimates that the demand for lithium can grow fivefold by 2040, while the demand for graphite and nickel might double. Meanwhile, the demand for cobalt and rare earth elements is likely to increase 50-60% by 2040. In short, minerals are fast becoming the new oil of the 21st century: vital, contested, and geopolitically charged. Like oil, the challenge is not just scarcity; it is concentration. The extraction of critical minerals is often geographically limited to resource-rich but economically vulnerable regions. This imbalance exposes developing economies to the risks of extractive dependence, while leaving manufacturing nations vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions.

Addressing these risks requires greater diversification and coordinated international engagement. COP30 must embed this agenda, recognising supply chain resilience and equitable access as climate imperatives. Global initiatives such as the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) and the Quad have begun shaping a new architecture for responsible and resilient critical mineral supply chains.

Multilateral partnerships like the India-Australia Critical Minerals Partnership and the US-Japan framework underscore this momentum. Together, they aim to align trade and investment priorities, foster technology transfer, and ensure equitable benefit sharing.

Yet, their success will depend on the readiness of individual nations to meaningfully participate in the global critical mineral value chain. This includes policy coherence, institutional coordination, infrastructure, and human resource development, be it in extraction, processing, manufacturing, or recycling.

The path forward lies in translating global and domestic commitments into practical frameworks that strengthen governance, mobilise resources, and build long-term technological capability.

### Road to sustainability

First, countries must move away from past mining models and instead prioritise sustainability and robust environmental, social, and governance standards across the value chain. Tools like AI-based mineral mapping, digital traceability systems, and stronger audit mechanisms can help enhance oversight. Frameworks like the G7 Minerals Action Plan and groupings like the Quad can be leveraged to ensure wider participation in the setting and implementation of global standards.

Second, long-term and targeted financing will be crucial to developing the critical mineral supply chain. Establishing a global clean minerals investment facility could bridge capital and operational expenditure gaps, enable processing and recycling projects beyond traditional monopoly geographies, and mobilise capital alongside development banks and green financing institutions to ensure risk sharing and a steady capital flow.

Third, advancing technology, refining, and recycling will require coordinated leadership from governments, industry, and research institutions. Governments must create enabling policies and funding mechanisms for technology development and skill-building, while industry should invest in modern infrastructure. Universities and research institutes can drive joint R&D and cross-border training in mining, chemical, and process engineering. Partnerships that connect emerging economies like India, Indonesia, and African nations with technology leaders such as Japan and the US can accelerate progress in processing, recycling, and alternative battery chemistries.

COP30 offers a defining moment to turn mineral diplomacy into climate action, ensuring that the race to decarbonise also becomes a race to cooperate, diversify, and build a just and resilient clean energy future.

(Saloni is Energy Specialist, India Clean Energy Transition, and Kaira is Energy Analyst, South Asia, at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis [IEEFA])





## Red rules once again in JNU

The Jawaharlal Nehru University has just witnessed a red sweep with Left Unity, an alliance of the All India Students Association (AISA), Students Federation of India (SFI) and Democratic Students Federation (DSF), bagging all four central posts of president, vice president, general secretary, and joint secretary in the students' union elections. Left Unity also bagged a majority of the councillors' posts. The Left reclaimed its position in JNU, brushing aside the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, which had won one seat in the last election. The Left's convincing victory can be attributed to the fact that it fought on a united platform, unlike in the previous election. The victory of the Left is also a win for JNU's long-standing tradition of dissent and student activism. The presidential debate, a hallowed convention in JNU, this year too was marked by lively discussions on a variety of subjects, including student issues, the Gaza conflict, the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir, the Ladakh imbroglio and the incarceration of Sonam Wangchuk. The election outcome is a setback to the BJP's students' outfit, ABVP, which had been banking on cracks in Left unity to secure a toehold in the student panel. The National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the Congress students' wing, also fared very poorly in a setback to the Grand Old Party. Student union elections are often a weather-vane for the national mood, though JNU has a unique position in that it has always been a red bastion.

In the past nearly a decade, JNU, once known as the premier academic institution of India, has been wracked by controversy, such as the 2016 sedition row, when an event to protest the hanging of Parliament attack accused Afzal Guru turned ugly with anti-national slogans allegedly being raised. Many students, including then JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar, were arrested on sedition charges. This was when the 'tukde tukde' gang moniker surfaced and the university was dubbed with an anti-national tag. In 2020, protests over fee hikes resulted in violent clashes leading to the police being called into the campus. Film shows and food festivals have also been causes for conflict in JNU, as in recent years the ABVP has gained ground in the university, resulting in clashes between the left- and the right-wing students. Two prominent ministers in the Narendra Modi government, S Jaishankar and Nirmala Sitharaman, are JNU alumni. In the last decade or so, JNU's decidedly left-of-the-centre ethos has been replaced with a section of the faculty subscribing to the saffron ideology. The culture of lively debate, discussion, and questioning of authority was being slowly replaced by the straitjacket of traditional teaching methods. It is to be hoped that with the Left sweep in the student union polls, JNU's old spark will be reignited.

## Mighty Pawars in land scam

Land and scam allegations are back in the headlines in Maharashtra, specifically in and around Pune, involving the mighty Pawars. In only two days, the police in Pune and the Economic Offences Wing registered two FIRs against a bunch of people, including officials in the tehsildar's office and Digvijay Amarsinh Patil, a partner with Parth Ajit Pawar in Amadea Enterprises LLP. The first pertains to about 40 acres of prime land in Mundhwa, off the posh Koregaon Park, earmarked for the use of the Scheduled Caste Mahar community, which was bought by the firm for merely Rs 300 crore, though its commercial value is reportedly Rs 1,800 crore. The second FIR naming Patil, registered Friday by the Pune sub-divisional officer, is about an alleged deal involving government land in Pune's Bopodi, which too was traced to Amadea Enterprises LLP.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, also the state home minister overseeing the police, also formed an inquiry committee to probe the Mundhwa deal irregularities, and the opposition called for Ajit Pawar's resignation even as Pawar shrugged off all responsibility on the grounds that he had nothing to do with either deal. The allegations and FIRs come close to the elections to local bodies in Maharashtra, overdue for more than two to three years. The land scams queer the pitch for Ajit Pawar, whose hold over grassroots was the basis of him usurping the Nationalist Congress Party from his uncle Sharad Pawar and becoming deputy chief minister to Fadnavis. Ajit Pawar is also the state finance minister and Pune's guardian minister. What does Fadnavis ordering a probe say about the largely warm, though need-based, relationship between the two men and their respective parties, the BJP and the NCP? Is this a well-thought-out strategy to stymie Pawar's local-level influence and handicap him in the elections in a bid to contain or downsize him?

Though the political stakes are high, the land scam allegations demand thorough enquiries. It is not enough for Ajit Pawar to shrug off responsibility on the grounds that his name is not in the records. Was he unaware that his son, Parth, was a partner in the firm that had inked the two deals, and was it unknown in the local corridors of power that the Patil-Pawar company papers had been expedited or shown concessions? If not, why was the stamp duty on the Mundhwa deal allegedly waived? There's more than meets the eye in this saga—both in the allegations and the rapid response by the CM. But the ring-fencing of Pawars by insinuations is pointless unless Parth Ajit Pawar himself faces criminal charges; he does not so far. Has the shrewd Fadnavis left this as a bargaining chip on the table to keep all the Pawars in place?



Guest Column

NISHANT SAHDEV

In many cities, roads now manage traffic on their own, and water systems fix leaks before they happen. These are early signs that cities are starting to think for themselves. By the end of this century, the most consequential form of intelligence may not be human or robotic; it will be urban. Once-static spaces are becoming dynamic networks that sense, learn, and act. Fuelled by sensors, algorithms, and oceans of data, cities will anticipate needs, adapt autonomously, and shape decisions. They could balance energy in real time, detect disease before it spreads, and even guide policymaking.

This change is more than technological. It is political, economic, and civilisational. Choices taken now will determine whether urban intelligence expands freedom or constrains it, spreads opportunity or deepens inequality, and strengthens democracy or enables control.

The leap from "smart" to "thinking" cities is already underway. In Hangzhou, Alibaba's City Brain cut congestion so sharply the city fell from fifth to fifty-seventh on global traffic rankings. Singapore's Virtual Singapore uses a living digital twin to simulate disaster responses and energy use. Toronto's cancelled

Quayside project, despite its demise, showed how machine learning could integrate housing, transport, and utilities from the ground up.

A smart city reacts to data; a thinking city learns from it and acts. Its sensors and processors resemble a nervous system, while flows of vehicles, water, and power mirror physical laws. With constant feedback, the city behaves like a brain. India's Smart Cities Mission has digitised services and governance. The next step is deeper: weaving AI into infrastructure and planning and creating governance frameworks to guide its use. Urban intelligence rests on physical foundations: energy, water, computation, and talent. A single hyperscale data centre, the "brain" of an AI city, can consume over 100 megawatts of electricity and millions of litres of water daily. Global data centres could draw more than 945 terawatt-hours a year by 2030, nearly double today's level. In the United States, AI capacity may grow thirtyfold by 2035.

India is part of this surge. National data capacity is expected to rise from 870 megawatts in 2023 to over 1,300 by 2027, with hubs emerging in Hyderabad, Chennai, and Navi Mumbai. Some facilities already use up to 19 million litres of water a day. Ignoring limits on power, water, and

land risks creating new crises while solving old ones.

Human capital is just as decisive. AI systems still depend on people to design, verify, and govern them. By 2027, global demand for skilled AI workers will exceed supply. India's demographic advantage matters only with sustained investment in education, research, and innovation. Without it, dependence on foreign technology hardens into digital subordination and weaker sovereignty.

Governance must evolve as rapidly as technology itself. Thinking cities generate vast data on how people move, work, and live. Those data can enable efficient services and targeted welfare—but also surveillance, bias, and manipulation. The same system that optimises bus routes can monitor dissent. Regulation cannot be an afterthought.

Europe's AI Act imposes strict requirements for high-risk systems: transparency, data quality, and human oversight. India is developing its own AI and data rules. But national law is only one layer. Municipalities, where algorithms most directly shape lives, need their own guardrails. That means algorithm audit boards empowered to test and halt harmful models; citizen assemblies to decide how public data are used; mandatory model cards

and impact assessments for municipal AI; and "red team" stress tests for critical systems in transport, energy, water, and health. Oversight must be built in from the start, not bolted on after harm occurs.

Inclusion should be part of AI from the beginning, not added later. AI learns from data—so if people without IDs, phones, or stable homes are not in the data, they won't get the services either. This has already caused harm—in the US, AI is used in policing targeted minorities, and in the Netherlands, a welfare system wrongly punished many families. If future cities learn mostly from rich and connected people, they will become unfair from the inside. Building inclusive systems demands representative datasets, rigorous bias testing, and meaningful participation from affected communities. India's digital public infrastructure—Aadhaar, UPI, and allied platforms—shows that scale and inclusion can coexist, but only when deliberately pursued. The real test of a thinking city is not the speed of its computation but the breadth of its inclusion. Cities are also emerging as strategic assets in a shifting geopolitical landscape. Shenzhen's rise as a hardware capital accelerated China's technological ascent. Be'er Sheva's cybersecurity

cluster reshaped Israel's global profile. Global data capacity is likely to triple by 2030, concentrating in a handful of urban hubs. Yet, more than half of the top 100 sites already face high climate risk—a figure likely to reach 68% by 2040, with water scarcity the sharpest constraint.

For India, passivity is not an option. Attracting investment alone is insufficient. The country needs local R&D, ethical and environmental safeguards, and governance grounded in democratic values. Otherwise, cities could become marketplaces for foreign ambitions rather than engines of national strategy. India's global influence may depend as much on whether Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi evolve into intelligent, adaptive cities as on satellites or nuclear reactors.

Ultimately, this is a civilisational choice. Humanity has long built cities in its own image; now cities are beginning to build minds of their own. They can become our strongest allies or our sharpest rivals. The difference will lie less in their intelligence than in our wisdom.

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# It has taken time but women in India are now unstoppable

Organised women's cricket in India began not under the auspices of the dominant BCCI but through dedicated efforts of pioneering individuals



HerStory

DEEPA GAHLOT

It's different now, but many women over the age of 40 would remember when they tried to participate in team sports like cricket, hockey or football, they were either shooed away by the boys or scolded by their parents for wasting time with "uchhal kood" (jumping about).

Sports were not considered 'suitable' for girls, particularly after puberty, and making a career out of playing a 'game' was not even in the realm of possibility. Which is why the Indian women's team winning the World Cup is such a big thing—not just the victory, but what it will do for the still struggling women's sports in the country.

There were a few female sports-persons over the years—Nilima Ghose is widely considered to be India's first female sports star. She was part of the first female team, which included Mary D'Souza, to compete at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, Finland.

The one who brought the spotlight to women in sports is PT Usha, known as the "Queen of Indian Track and Field" and the "Payoli Express". She dominated Asian track events for nearly two decades and became a household name.

When cricket played by men dominates the Indian sports scene, everything else takes a backseat, and women have to stand even further back in the queue for recognition and reward. Still, the really

persistent and hard-working female athletes, like Karnam Malleswari (Weightlifting), Mary Kom (Boxing), the Phogat sisters and Sakshi Malik (Wrestling), PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal (Badminton), Sania Mirza (Tennis), Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastics), and Hima Das (Athletics) have broken through the indifference. More often than not, it's not the women from privileged families with access to funds and coaching who are the winners, but the ones who had to struggle through financial problems and snide comments from society and the particularly regressive sneering, "Who will marry this girl?"

Mitali Raj, Jhulan Goswami and Harmanpreet Kaur laid the foundations for the popularity of women's cricket in India, and the current team of winners have built on it. Despite the cricket craze in India, it was not enough for women to play and excel; they had to fight the indifference of the sports establishment and people, who would not bother to watch women's matches.

Organised women's cricket in India began not under the auspices of the dominant Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) but through the dedicated efforts of pioneering individuals. According to information on the net, the foundation for women's cricket was laid in the early 1970s by enthusiasts. The most crucial initial step was the registration of the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) in 1973 at

Lucknow, founded by Mahendra Kumar Sharma. The WCAI's formation swiftly led to the first women's inter-state nationals held in Pune later that year. India's debut on the world stage came in 1976, when the senior women's team played their first-ever Test match against the West Indies in Bangalore, which ended in a draw.

Players like Shantha Rangaswamy, the first captain, and Diana Edulji were the torchbearers of this era, playing with minimal resources and overcoming immense social hurdles. They often had to travel in general train compartments, stay in basic accommodations, and struggle for even minimal match fees or equipment. Still, India—the WCAI—hosted and played its first One-Day International (ODI) match as part of the 1978 Women's Cricket World Cup. Despite the players' hard work, women's cricket was still stymied by lack of funding, infrastructure, and visibility. The team's international tours were managed with personal dedication and non-official sponsorships.

The turning point was the initiative by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to develop women's cricket globally; the WCAI merged with the BCCI in November 2006. This was a pivotal moment, as it placed the women's team under the wing of the world's richest and most powerful cricket board, granting them greater financial stability, better infrastructure, and enhanced

coaching support.

This period was defined by the rise of Mithali Raj, the prolific batter and long-time captain who became the highest run-scorer in women's international cricket, and Jhulan Goswami, the fast bowler and world record holder for most wickets in women's ODIs. The team made history by reaching the final of the 2005 World Cup under Mithali Raj's captaincy, which was a crucial early sign of their growing potential, even before the BCCI merger.

The 2017 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup saw the team's thrilling journey to the final and magnificent individual performances, like Harmanpreet Kaur's 171 runs against Australia in the semi-final that made her an overnight sensation. India narrowly lost the final to England, but the performance on the field by the 'Women in Blue' earned them media attention and recognition.

This led to significant policy changes, like pay parity when, in 2022, the BCCI announced equal match fees for its centrally contracted men and women cricketers across all formats (Test, ODI, and T20I). This landmark decision positioned India as one of the few nations to implement gender pay equality in match fees, dramatically boosting the professional standing of the players. The Women's Premier League (WPL), launched in 2023, revolutionised women's cricket. After the World Cup win, names like Smriti Mandhana, Sha-

fali Verma, Deepti Sharma and Jemima Rodrigues are stars. Social media is awash with stories of how they rose to sporting glory from ordinary families, many from small-town India—which in itself is an achievement. Most dramatic is the story of Amanjit Kaur, whose father, Bhupinder Singh, a carpenter and woodworker, handmade a bat for his daughter when they could not afford one.

Harmanpreet Kaur's father worked as a clerk at the Moga district court; Shafali Varma's father runs a small jewellery shop; Renuka Singh Thakur lost her father and was raised by her mother and uncle. Deepti Sharma comes from a middle-class family in Agra, and Kranti Goud from a village in Madhya Pradesh. The common factor is the support of their families and their defiance of narrow-minded social norms.

The BBC's Annesha Ghosh charts the rise of these winners. "These are women whose careers were built playing cricket in village lanes, with second-hand bats and seamless balls, and many doubting their ambition because of their gender. Theirs is a legacy that was forged because they kept going when it would have been easier to stop."

It has taken time, but these women have proved to be unstoppable.

Deepa Gahlot is a Mumbai-based columnist, critic and author.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Democracy Under Threat

If Rahul Gandhi's claims of voter manipulation hold truth, India's democratic integrity is endangered. Elections must remain transparent and credible. Institutions must act to restore faith before skepticism corrodes democracy's foundation.

Aditya Kamble, Kalaburagi

#### Hope In Leadership

Zohran Mamdani's victory signals a return to people-first politics. His inclusive campaign defied divisive rhetoric, proving empathy still wins. True test lies ahead—turning ideals into lasting change.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

#### Age of Consent

In many countries, the age of consent is 16—a balanced standard that India, too, must reconsider. Just as gender-specific laws risk misuse, so do child-specific ones; hence, greater scru-

#### Right to Clean Air

It is indeed high time clean air ceased to be a mere aspiration and became a real, enforceable fundamental right. Air is the invisible threat that sustains all life, yet we treat it as an expendable commodity, poisoning it with fumes of our own progress. The right to breathe without fear of disease or death should stand alongside the right to live and the right to liberty. Recognising clean air as a fundamental right would not merely be a legal reform; it would be a moral awakening and a collective pledge to safeguard humanity and the planet alike.

tiny is needed in each case. Moreover, the solution lies not in fear but in education. Sex education—covering topics like good touch/bad touch, consent, and use of protection—should no longer be taboo.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak

#### NY Mayor

Zohran Mamdani's election as New York's mayor marks not just a personal milestone but a generational shift in politics. Against the politics of populism and division, Mamdani's campaign offered an alternative rooted in inclusivity, fairness, and social justice. That he won despite open resistance from President Donald Trump makes his victory even more meaningful. It represents a clear pushback against politics built on fear, privilege, and exclusion. But the true test will be translating ideals into policy amid insti-



Narayanan Kizhumundayur, Thrissur

tutional and financial challenges.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

#### Fair Elections

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is vital before the November 11 elections, as opposition parties in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have exposed 25 lakh fake voters, with some people appearing multiple times under different names. Such shocking manipulation

threatens India's democracy. The Election Commission must conduct Aadhaar-based cross-verification, door-to-door checks, and independent audits, while its own verification process should face external scrutiny. Immediate corrective action is essential to protect the purity of the people's mandate and ensure fair, transparent elections.

R.S. Narula, Patiala

#### Dignified Exit

The dignified withdrawal of Mehli Mistry from his brief contest with the Tata Trusts reflects rare restraint and loyalty in an age of corporate ego battles. By choosing to uphold Ratan Tata's guiding philosophy that no individual is above the institution, Mistry has demonstrated a sense of integrity that aligns with the very ethos of the Tata legacy. His quiet exit not only brings closure to a potentially damaging episode but also preserves the sanctity of one of India's oldest philan-

thropic organisations.

Vandana, Chandigarh

#### A Word of Caution

Dy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin has called upon women to become the brand ambassadors of the DMK since the government has been implementing a number of welfare schemes for them. The women in Coimbatore, however, are advised not to stretch their canvassing activities beyond sunset or visit isolated areas near the airport, in the interest of their own safety.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

#### A Tribute

Veteran singer and actress Sulakshana Pandit passed away at 71, leaving behind a golden legacy of timeless melodies and memorable performances in Indian cinema. Sulakshana Pandit was a cherished name in Bollywood's musical era and was remembered for her heartwarming contributions to both film and music.

C.K. Subramaniam, Navi Mumbai



## The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

### Declare emergency

Right to breathe clean air non-negotiable

WHEN a wellness expert, rather than a lawmaker, has to move the Supreme Court over the right to breathe, it signals a collapse of political will. Luke Coutinho's PIL urging the apex court to declare air pollution a "national public health emergency" exposes what India has refused to admit — that the air itself has turned against its people. From Delhi to Lucknow, from Gurugram to Patna, citizens are inhaling poison sanctioned by apathy. Masks and purifiers have become status symbols for the few who can afford them, while millions of children grow up gasping through toxic haze. The latest estimates — 22 lakh Delhi children with permanent lung damage — should have sparked outrage and action. Instead, silence hangs thicker than the smog. Lakhs of people succumb to diseases linked to PM2.5 exposure every year; show studies.

But the governments seem to have normalised the abnormal. The same annual charade unfolds: firecracker bans, token stubble-burning fines and political blame games between Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. Meanwhile, construction dust, diesel fumes and unchecked industries continue to choke the nation's lungs. India has clean-air missions on paper, but no one is held to account when targets fail year after year. The right to life under Article 21 cannot coexist with air unfit to breathe.

A Supreme Court declaration of a public health emergency may be the last resort to jolt an indifferent system. It must lead to binding timelines, stricter enforcement and criminal accountability for wilful neglect. A nation that cannot guarantee its citizens clean air cannot claim to be on the path to greatness. The time for advisories and platitudes is over. What is needed now is the political courage to treat poisoned air not as an inconvenience, but as a national disgrace demanding emergency action. The right to breathe clean air must become non-negotiable.

### Due process counts

SC bats for rights of arrested persons

EVERY now and then, the Supreme Court has to remind law enforcement agencies that they are not a law unto themselves — they must adhere strictly to the due process of law. On Thursday, it ruled that the requirement of furnishing grounds of arrest to an accused would also apply to cases registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, not just to offences under special laws like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. The order aims to protect the personal liberty of the arrested persons. They must be informed about the grounds in writing and in a language they understand.

This vital exercise has to be completed within a reasonable time frame — before/at the time of arrest or "in any case two hours prior to the production of the arrested person before the magistrate for remand proceedings". The court has also drawn the attention of the agencies concerned to Article 22(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees that an accused must be informed "as soon as may be" of the grounds of his/her arrest. Overlooking this constitutional safeguard amounts to violation of a person's fundamental right to life and liberty, rendering the arrest illegal.

It's critical for the Supreme Court and other courts to be on the same page over this matter. The latest SC verdict has come on an appeal in the Mumbai BMW hit-and-run case of July 2024. An accused had challenged his arrest, arguing that the reasons were not given to him in writing. Although the Bombay High Court acknowledged the procedural lapse, it upheld the arrest, citing the gravity of the offence. Now, he has been granted bail by the SC, which decided not to go into the merits of the case but only to examine the "questions of law". The ruling is expected to deter the police and other agencies from making arbitrary arrests and riding roughshod over the rights of suspects. A procedure grounded in transparency and fairness augurs well for the delivery of justice.

#### ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

## The Tribune.

LAHORE, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1925

### Military assistant surgeons

A SOMEWHAT curious situation has arisen with regard to the employment of military assistant surgeons in the Civil Medical Department of this province. In August 1924, a resolution was moved in the Punjab Legislative Council, asking the Punjab Government to recommend to the Government of India that: (1) In future, no civil surgeons' posts or other appointments in the Civil Medical Service of Punjab be reserved for military assistant surgeons; (2) Further importation of military assistant surgeons to the Civil Medical Department (CMD) of this province be discontinued; (3) All such surgeons serving at present in the CMD be reverted to the Military Department, and their places filled by civil assistant surgeons; (4) Till such time as this revision can be secured, military assistant surgeons in civil employ (except those possessed of qualifications registerable in the UK) be entrusted only with duties in which civil assistant surgeons are not required to serve under them. The resolution was the outcome of genuine and widespread dissatisfaction among civil assistant surgeons, which had found strong expression in the Press and otherwise. If in spite of general support from the non-official benches it was defeated in the Council, it was mainly because the minister in charge of the department undertook to remedy the just grievance of the civil assistant surgeons and consequently all official members voted against it.

# 'Sadda beta' has pushed the envelope

For a few tremulous hours, one half of India recognised itself in Zohran's victory



## THE GREAT GAME

JYOTI MALHOTRA

INDIA has taken to Zohran Mamdani's victory in New York in a "sadda beta" kind of way, giving him the kind of media love reserved for biggies like Shah Rukh Khan. It's not just his unabashed grin or the viral video which shows him eating *biryani* (with his fingers) or the fact that he wears his left-wing politics on his sleeve (read, Palestine). In the last 72 hours, reports of people googling "democratic socialism" has increased by leaps and bounds.

It helps, of course, that Zohran's parents are of Indian origin — Mira Nair, the girl from Amritsar, also studied at Tara Hall in Shimla; his father, Mahmood Mamdani, a Gujarati Khoja (Shia) Muslim — whose own diasporic parents were born and raised in Tanganyika in east Africa — grew up in Kampala, Uganda. The languages spoken in the Nair-Mamdani household, besides English, are Punjabi, Hindi/Urdu, Gujarati and Swahili.

On stage in New York, as he celebrated his victory earlier this week, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Mamdani household was the newest advertisement for the United Colours of Benetton — besides his parents, Zohran was flanked by his wife, Rama Duwaji, a girl of Syrian descent, whom he met on the dating app Hinge — they celebrated their *nikaah* a year ago in Dubai.

For one moment, amidst the madness of Trump, America had redeemed itself. "Give me

your tired, your poor/ Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," say the first lines from the 1883 Emma Lazarus poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty. A multi-coloured family had broken through the bipolar White-Black politics of America and made it their own. (It helped that 40 per cent of New York's population is immigrant.)

That's why it's interesting that the Indian media, divided down the middle just like the rest of the country, made Zohran Mamdani's victory its own this week. It wasn't just about the *Dhoom Machale* song, although that helped. It was about the fact that for a few tremulous hours one half of India recognised itself in that victory.

This is the half that has grown up on Jawaharlal Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech, which Zohran quoted at the beginning of his own. It continues to believe that the idea of New York — energetic and vibrant and messy and



**MULTI-COLOURED** : As Zohran celebrated his victory, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Mamdani household was the newest advertisement for the United Colours of Benetton. AP/PTI

It is this idea of a *khichri* that joins New York with India — both spaces are defined by the art of ferment.

authentic — could still be the idea of India, a little bit of this and that, welcoming immigrants, even as it accommodates people of all faiths and castes and creeds at home.

The other half is viscerally critical of Zohran because he is critical of PM Modi's politics, in Gujarat and afterwards, believes that he promotes "bigotry and bias" against Hindus and vehemently disagrees with his views on Israel and

Gaza — Mamdani believes Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, while India has hugely promoted the Israel relationship in the Modi years. (Ironically, and perhaps that is the role of irony, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar was in India on the day New York voted in Mamdani.)

Naturally, not one member of Modi's government has welcomed or congratulated Mamdani on his victory.

On the day New York went to vote, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Rekha Sharma, former chairperson of the National Commission for Women, articulated the right-wing sentiment on X. "For this one I am with Mr Trump. People of Indian origin when you vote think twice. An Indian mother doesn't make Mr Mamdani a well-wisher of India."

It would be interesting to know how the pro-Modi Indian diaspora in New York voted — all those who gatecrash the PM's public appearances, were they for or against Mam-

dani? If they voted in favour, what does this do to the Modi government's diaspora policy with which it has been so intimately connected for decades?

For the first time in a long time, a powerful American of Indian origin so clearly represents the social-political cleavage back home. From domestic politics to foreign policy, Zohran's victory is also emblematic of the disappearing idea of compromise that defined India's decades in the aftermath of Partition — when you kept your own beliefs but also participated in someone else's joy, even if you didn't much care for that someone.

That's why the Indian media's momentary celebration of Mamdani is significant. For a few hours, the back-to-back coverage of the Bihar elections and the debate over Panjab University's overhaul gave way to *Dhoom Machale*, the Bollywood song, some say, that is inspired by an Indonesian pop number — the perfect example of a *khichri* in *filmi* music, a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

It is this idea of a *khichri*, when you throw everything into a melting pot and something that is more than *dal* and more than rice emerges to tickle your taste buds that joins New York with India — both spaces are defined by the art of ferment.

"*Sadda beta*" Zohran has pushed the envelope back home in New York — at 34, he doesn't understand the meaning of fear. Here in Chandigarh, as this newspaper goes to bed, the news that Panjab University students have forced the Centre to withdraw its move to change the functioning of their University, echoes that absence of fear.

Move over, the young are saying. We are changing the old order, making it give way to the new. Democratic Socialist or simply democratic, our time has come.

#### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now. — Martin Luther King, Jr

## Let's not treat kids like puppets

JYOTI SHARMA

A friend once paid me a visit shortly after the birth of my daughter. She arrived with her husband and twin sons, who were three years old.

My mother-in-law warmly welcomed them with tea, biscuits, *namkeen* and dried fruit. In middle-class families like ours, serving dried fruit is regarded as a gesture reserved for special occasions rather than everyday hospitality. The children were delighted by the rare treat, and with innocent excitement, they began eating them enthusiastically, grabbing handfuls at a time.

As a new mother, I felt a bit uncomfortable on my friend's behalf in front of my in-laws. I got worried that my friend might feel awkward and be judged because of her children's behaviour. Typically, in such situations, parents scold the children or ask them to behave. But what happened next surprised me and taught me something profound.

Instead of scolding her sons, she quietly picked up the box of dried fruit from the table and carried them into the kitchen with calm composure. Then, turning politely to my mother-in-law, she said, "Aunty ji, please keep these here in the kitchen. The boys are eating too much, and I'm worried they might fall sick. They don't usually get to eat these regularly, so they are just a little overexcited."

I was deeply touched by her controlled reaction. She had balanced kindness, responsibility and empathy — without shame, without reprimand. Her response was not just about managing a situation. It revealed a deep understanding of childhood and parenting.

Until then, I had a fixed notion of how my own child should behave in front of others. I often felt a sense of pressure to ensure that she acted 'properly' — as though her behaviour were a direct reflection of my parenting. But that experience with my friend changed something inside me. Her wisdom and patience taught me a lesson I will carry for life. She reminded me of something so fundamental, yet so often forgotten: this is how children are. They are not puppets to be controlled at every turn. Let them be loud, curious and imperfect. Let them be free — let them make mistakes. Let us not scold them for every little mistake.

Childhood is meant to be messy, exuberant and unfiltered. It should be seen with compassion, not judgment. Rather than constantly correcting children, let us allow them the freedom to be themselves — until they are ready to learn, understand and imbibe those manners we value so much.

We should let them be until they are old enough to understand social expectations. Let's remember that it is not the children who must always adapt to us. Sometimes, it is we who must adapt to them and create a space that nurtures their growth.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Political will a must to stem the rot

Apropos of 'Lokpal has flattered to deceive'; all these years, the common man hoped that the Lokpal would eradicate corruption and facilitate clean governance. However, that belief seems to have crumbled. The Lokpal Act officially came into force in 2014 but the institution only became functionally operational years later. States like Maharashtra and Karnataka had established it much earlier and earned public trust. Even Anna Hazare's hunger strikes and protests could not give an effective Lokpal to the people. The concept was borrowed from Sweden, which has parliamentary ombudsmen. However, in India, political will is needed to help the Lokpal win the confidence of the public.

RAJ KUMAR GOYAL, PATIALA

### Big sharks need to be caught

Refer to 'Lokpal has flattered to deceive'; the article showcases the stark reality of corruption in our society. The writer has no grouse about Lokpal members asking for BMWs, provided that they bring some big sharks to book. But the big fish will include political leaders and bureaucrats. The writer has rightly said that the battle against corruption cannot be fought without a strong political will, which should be aligned with people's faith in institutions.

SURINDER PAL, CHANDIGARH

### Rahul Gandhi's bold stand

Rahul Gandhi has articulated his stand on 'vote theft' in state elections across the country with clarity and conviction. Rahul's courage lies not just in questioning the system but in doing so openly in front of the people, knowing the risks involved. In a political landscape where many avoid challenging institutional irregularities, his voice has reignited a national conversation on the sanctity of the ballot. By highlighting alleged irregularities, he has reminded citizens that democracy thrives only when every vote counts and the mandate is respected. Whether one agrees with his kind of politics or not, the courage to confront uncomfortable truths deserves acknowledgment.

BHASKAR DEKA, GUWAHATI

### Need an empathetic society

Apropos of 'Bullied by recovery agents over Rs 1K dues, Ropar widow dies by suicide'; the woman's death raises the larger issue of social emancipation. Family bonds have become weak to the extent that we don't give or seek timely help, when it is needed. We give thousands in donations to mandirs and gurdwaras, while a needy neighbour's need is knowingly overlooked and is not a priority for us, even as a duty. All social schemes are on paper or speak out loud on advertisement billboards. The poor and needy continue to suffer silently. Apathy has overtaken our moral values; we continue to live in denial that something of this kind could happen to us or somebody who is our own.

MANMOHAN SINGH, KHARAR

### Power versus poverty

The front page of the newspaper painted a painful irony — one is a news report 'Bullied by recovery agents over Rs 1K dues, Ropar widow dies by suicide' about a woman taking her life over a small loan instalment after being pushed to the brink. The adjacent report 'Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's son faces probe in Rs 300-cr land deal' is about a politician's son allegedly committing irregularities. Such contrast exposes the deep moral divide in our society where power shields corruption and poverty continues to suffer in silence. It is time to reflect on whether our nation is heading.

ASHOK GOYAL, CHANDIGARH

### Onus on authorities

The Supreme Court's order on removal of stray dogs, cattle and other animals from public places, expressways and highways is a remarkable suo motu initiative. Schools, hospitals, bus stands, railway stations and other public places, where the daily footfall is high, are plagued by the menace of stray dogs. The danger of dogbites in the case of children and the elderly is high as they are unable to protect themselves. It remains to be seen with what seriousness the SC order is given a practical shape by the states and local authorities.

ASHOK KUMAR, BY MAIL



# Bilawal's leak rekindles civil-military tensions



**RANA BANERJI**  
EX-SPECIAL SECRETARY,  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

**B**ILAWAL Bhutto Zardari's 'masterstroke' in leaking on 'X', on November 3, salient aspects of the proposed 27th Amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, has predictably set the cat among pigeons. It is now being said that the proposed changes won't just curtail powers of the already emasculated higher judiciary but also dangerously dabble in the troubled realm of civil-military relations in Pakistan.

The amendment, said to be the brainchild of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, aims to establish federal constitutional courts in the provinces, restore executive magistrates and transfer judges, under Article 200, without their consent to other equivalent courts.

It also reportedly seeks to reduce the share of funds devolving to provinces under the National Finance Commission (NFC) award, especially under the education, health

and mineral resources sectors. What is far more contentious is the proposed tampering with Article 243 of the Constitution. A brief recall of history reveals that the term 'supreme command' of the armed forces, vesting in the President, was a phrase inserted by Gen Zia-ul-Haq through the Revival of the Constitution Order (RCO) of 1985.

Presidential discretion was brought in through the Eighth Amendment, but removed by PM Nawaz Sharif in the 13th Amendment. This change proved short-lived. Gen Pervez Musharraf's 17th Amendment restored presidential dominance. The 18th Amendment brought back the original 1973 balance.

The attempt to alter the powers of the President under Article 243 could be intended to define a role for a field marshal. The military's 'rationale' stresses changes in the nature of warfare, requiring far greater integration and synergy, joint planning, inter-service cooperation and strategic alignment between the conventional, cyber and nuclear aspects of the military responses.

Legal experts in Pakistan hold conflicting views on the increase in the Army Chief's tenure to five years, introduced through the 26th Amendment. One view is



**'MASTERSTROKE':** Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has revealed on 'X' salient aspects of the proposed 27th Amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. REUTERS

that since the Army Act, 1952 has been amended, the term automatically stands extended. The other contends that because the Army Chief's appointment was made under the previous rules, a fresh notification would be required to extend his tenure, come November 25.

Many conspiracy theories abound, pointing to PM Shehbaz Sharif's equation of complete docility to Field Marshal Asim Munir in contrast to Nawaz Sharif's rumoured restlessness over the Army Chief's overwhelming persona and powers.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's newfound reliance on former DG ISI Lt

The 27th Amendment may redraw the fragile balance between Pakistan's military, judiciary and provinces.

Gen (retd) Nadeem Anjum as an adviser, which led to the crackdown on the Tehrik-e-Labbaik in Muridke, has also led to malicious tongue-wagging.

Resentment could be building up within the Army due to long extensions given to the favoured few. Could the setting up of a new post of chief of defence or restoring the commander-in-chief's post through this amendment address this issue? Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, current Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCSC), is slated to retire on November 29.

Can another four-star slot be opened to accommodate Lt Gen Asim Malik, whose

term as DG ISI was recently extended in a rather open-ended manner?

The amendment was slated to be tabled in the Senate after approval by the Federal Cabinet on November 7. Provisions attempting to dilute financial powers devolved to provinces after the 18th Amendment caused unease within the ruling alliance's main partner, the People's Party of Pakistan (PPP).

In their central executive meeting held on November 6, they rejected all other clauses in the draft Bill except those pertaining to Article 243, if only to avoid burning bridges with the military establishment.

As many as 64 votes would be required to pass it in the Senate. The PPP holds 26 seats, while the PML-N holds 20 there. Among other coalition partners, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) has four members, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) holds three while six independent senators support the government side.

On the Opposition benches, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), holding 14 seats, has categorically rejected the move. The Awami National Party (ANP) holds three seats, while the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) has seven. The Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC)

have one senator each.

The National Assembly (NA) comprises 336 members, but 10 seats are currently vacant. The ruling coalition will need 224 votes to pass it. At present, the ruling alliance commands the support of 237 members there. The PML-N has 125 members, followed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with 22, the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid with five, the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party with four and one member each from the Pakistan Muslim League-Zia, the Balochistan Awami Party and the National Party. The government also enjoys the backing of four independent members.

The Opposition has 89 members in the NA. These include 75 Independents (PTI supporters), 10 members from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-Pakistan) and one member each from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM), the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNPM) and the Pash-tunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP).

Mathematical calculations notwithstanding, the powerful military establishment may ultimately prevail in setting the future direction of this uneasy civil-military relationship.

# Beyond electric vehicles: The energy reality we ignore



**ARUN MAIRA**  
FORMER MEMBER,  
PLANNING COMMISSION

**E**LECTRIC vehicle producers have objected to the Indian government 'diluting' vehicle emission norms by providing incentives to producers of hybrid cars and higher incentives for producers of smaller cars.

Their case is that these concessions reduce their incentives to make capital investments to produce pure electric vehicles, which, they claim, is the best technology for reducing vehicular emissions. Their case does not hold up if one considers the transport system emission in its entirety.

The wealthy want to maintain their lifestyles while complaining about environmental pollution. They want the government to do something about the pollution that is driving them away from Delhi for holidays in the hills and on the beaches.

The government's preference for smaller cars is justified because smaller cars consume less fuel and produce fewer emissions per person transported than the larger ones. Producers of large, luxury, electric and

hybrid vehicles will be disadvantaged, no doubt, and their wealthy customers will have to pay more taxes than ordinary citizens who can only afford small cars.

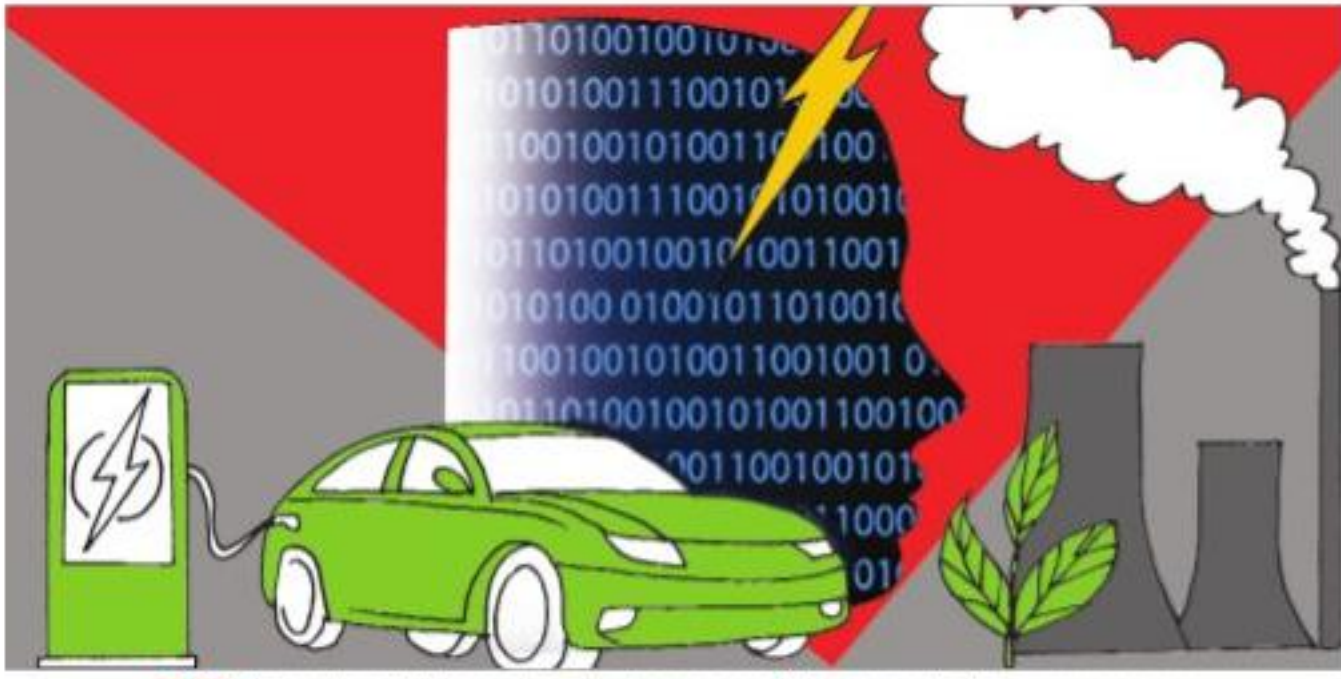
Global aspirations for the lifestyles of US citizens are the root cause of the global climate crisis. By 2010, mankind's global footprint — which is the pressure economic growth puts on the natural environment — had already reached 130 per cent of the earth's capacity to renew itself. The US's footprint on the earth's resources was as heavy as 9.7 hectares per person.

Europe and Japan's footprints were 4.7 hectares per person — half of that of the US. China was one-sixth of the US — 1.6 hectares — and India's only 0.8 hectares per person. An Indian consumes one-twelfth of the earth's resources compared to an American.

Scientists have predicted that if the citizens of India and China were to have a global footprint even half of that of the US, then these two countries' economies alone would require another whole planet to sustain them.

There is only one earth to share amongst everyone. India has the least amount of land per capita compared to the US, China and other advanced countries. Equity between rich and poor countries while advocating policies to reduce global emissions and promotion of new technologies is a major sticking point in global climate policies.

Equity in emission solu-



**FACT:** The systems that produce and power e-vehicles are not green. SANDEEP JOSHI

tions matters even more within India, where inequities between the rich and poor are amongst the highest in the world.

Vaclav Smil, a Czech-Canadian environmental scientist, has calculated the total energy consumption of transportation and food production systems, which are basic human needs. He explains, in his book *How the World Really Works*, that while electric cars consume less non-renewable energy when they run, large amounts of non-renewable energy, plastic materials and rare minerals are used to produce them.

Re-charging of the cars in operation also requires electricity, which is mostly supplied by producers using non-renewable energy. Thus, the cars themselves may be 'green' but the entire system for producing and running them is not.

Smil explains that global food systems are even larger

Humanity's obsession with reducing human labour may prove to be its undoing.

consumers of non-renewable energy and materials than transportation systems. They consume large amounts of fertiliser for improving the productivity of farms and plastics and non-renewable energy for refrigeration and transportation across long supply chains. The gases produced by animals on farms are a tiny part of the overall pollution caused by modern food systems.

He calculates that the total systems' needs of non-renewable energy and the pollution caused by global, large-scale food supply systems is much more than the energy requirements and pollution caused by local food production systems, with smaller farms growing a diversity of crops and using fertilisers produced organically from the farms' own wastes.

Global-scale food production systems with large farms use less human labour as they can be more efficiently mech-

anised and fertilised and their crops harvested, too. In these systems, agriculture is more 'productive' in terms of the numbers of humans employed on the farm.

Small farms, with more 'scope' in what they produce (a variety of crops) rather than the 'scale' of any one crop, require more human effort and are less productive per capita. However, they are more productive in terms of food output per unit of non-renewable energy and materials consumed and in the financial capital required for each unit of nutrition produced.

Smil suggests that the solution for the high, non-renewable-energy-consuming footprint of agriculture and food systems, and the future of humankind too, may lie in humans returning to work in smaller farms in local food webs.

Artificial intelligence ostensibly saves humans the burden of solving their own problems. It is the new trillion-dollar industry. Massive server farms on the ground, with hardly a human in them, for enabling computations in the cloud, consume as much energy as cities with millions of people.

Technology cannot violate a fundamental law of physics. Material and energy are an integral system. Energy is produced from materials. The conversion ratio is constant:  $E=MC^2$ . More energy cannot be produced without more materials. (Even the human brain requires a body to support it and be fed.)

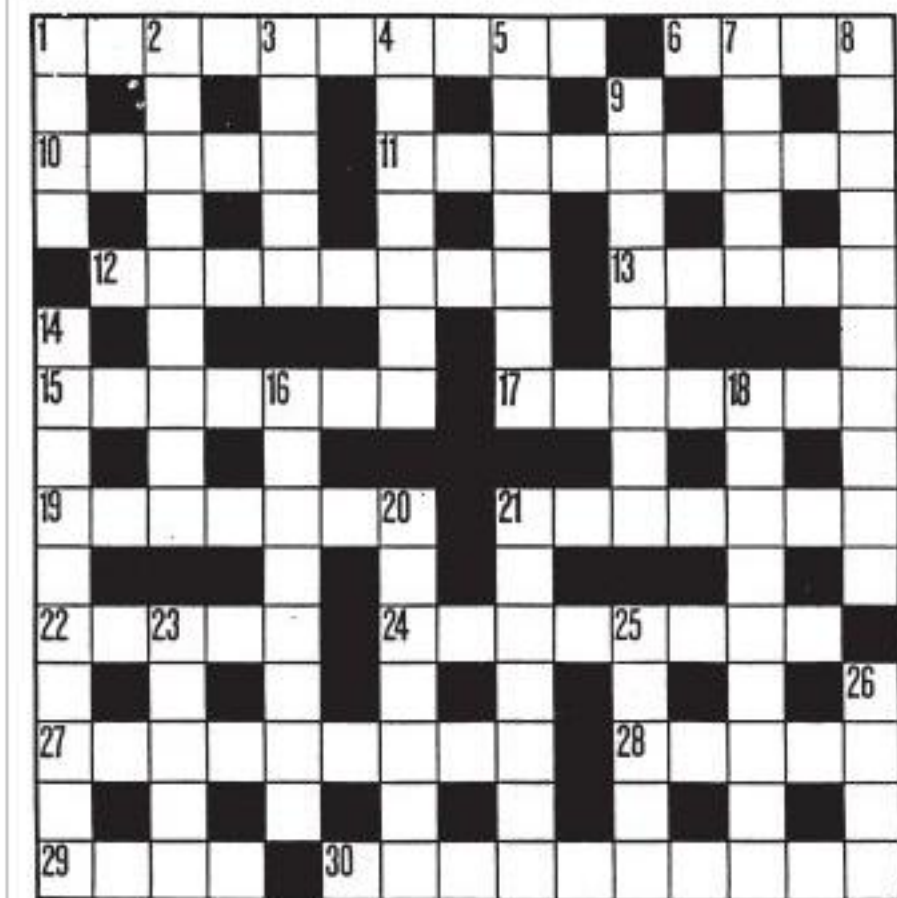
Humanity's progress is being driven by a suicidal view of human flourishing: with refinement in lifestyles by reducing human effort; and improvement of the 'productivity' of economy by reducing the employment of human labour and human intelligence in the economy. This is neither sustainable for the environment nor for the economy.

The virtual economy has become untethered from ground realities. Machines and AI are replacing humans in agriculture, manufacturing and services at the same time and even in creative industries. If humans cannot do any work to earn money, who will pay for the products and services produced by investors in new-tech enterprises with trillion-dollar valuations in stock markets?

So far, advertisers are propping up these enterprises with advertisements tempting humans (who are provided free services on their platforms) to buy some real products and services. When they do not have enough money to buy them, the entire virtual economy will collapse.

In the final analysis, the only way to save humanity from committing homicide (collective suicide) is: (1) take a total systems view of energy use while promoting new energy-saving gadgets; and (2) discourage further use of non-human energy to displace human labour at home and work, and the replacement of human intelligence with artificial intelligence.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 1 Behaving as expected (4,2,4)
- 6 Person in charge (4)
- 10 Jack in cards (5)
- 11 Found guilty (9)
- 12 Consist of (8)
- 13 Oath (5)
- 15 Social behaviour (7)
- 17 Cause to lose interest (4,3)
- 19 Cut-price (7)
- 21 Having hidden meaning (7)
- 22 Gather in large numbers (5)
- 24 Capital of Chile (8)
- 27 Say again (9)
- 28 Intuitive awareness (5)
- 29 Supplant (4)
- 30 Highly successful book (4-6)

**Yesterday's Solution**  
**Across:** 1 Mustard, 5 Stiff, 8 Pay homage, 9 Tor, 10 Peak, 12 Complete, 14 Motive, 15 Unwary, 17 Up-market, 18 Akin, 21 Lot, 22 Off the map, 24 Niche, 25 Run away.

**Down:** 1 Mop up, 2 Sly, 3 Agog, 4 Dragon, 5 Sweeping, 6 In the dark, 7 Forgery, 11 Automatic, 13 Evermore, 14 Maudlin, 16 Heifer, 19 Nippy, 20 Thin, 23 Mow.

### DOWN

- 1 Use as transport (4)
- 2 Plain (9)
- 3 Association (3-2)
- 4 Methods to achieve an end (7)
- 5 Sharp to the taste (7)
- 7 External (5)
- 8 Secondary unwelcome result (4,6)
- 9 Fail (8)
- 14 Showman (10)
- 16 Be a burden to (8)
- 18 Eight-sided (9)
- 20 Illness (7)
- 21 Abstract idea (7)
- 23 Also known as (5)
- 25 Put into circulation (5)
- 26 Scoff derisively (4)

## SU DO KU



MEDIUM

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

### CALENDAR

#### NOVEMBER 8, 2025, SATURDAY

- Shaka Samvat 1947
- Kartik Shaka 17
- Kartik Purnimots 23
- Hijari 1447
- Krishna Paksha Tithi 3, up to 7:33 am
- Krishna Paksha Tithi 4, up to 4:26 am
- Shiva Yoga up to 6:32 pm
- Mithshikha Nakshatra up to 10:03 am
- Moon enters Gemini sign 11:15 am

## FORECAST

SUNSET:	SATURDAY	17:30 HRS
SUNRISE:	SUNDAY	06:42 HRS
CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	29	12
New Delhi	27	11
Amritsar	25	12
Bathinda	27	11
Jalandhar	25	12
Ludhiana	26	13
Bhiwani	27	09
Hisar	27	09
Sirsa	27	09
Dharamsala	26	12
Manali	21	06
Shimla	21	11
Srinagar	18	01
Jammu	28	13
Kargil	15	-02
Leh	10	-03
Dehradun	28	12
Mussoorie	19	09

TEMPERATURE IN °C







# ‘One catalytic reaction could fix climate change’

Nobel Laureate David MacMillan explains how chemistry touches every aspect of our lives and how asking the right questions can solve the knottiest of problems

Shalini Umachandran  
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David MacMillan, who shared the 2021 Chemistry Nobel Prize with Benjamin List, doesn't see himself primarily as a chemist. He sees himself as a curious person who's deeply interested in the world around him. "If you look around the room you're in, everything you see—everything in the world—requires a chemical reaction," he says. MacMillan, 57, was at the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru on 3 November for The Nobel Prize Dialogue 2025, a series of talks addressing global issues, in association with the Tata Trusts. MacMillan's Nobel was awarded was for "the development of asymmetric organocatalysis", in other words, designing organic molecules (common elements that make up all living things) that are non-toxic and easy-to-handle to speed up chemical reactions. This makes it cheaper and greener to carry out catalysis for everything from clothing to medication. "Organocatalysis has democratised catalysis," says MacMillan. "In India, it's used in almost every lab, every company, every startup." Across the world, 90% of industrial-scale chemical reactions use catalysis and it is the basis of 35% of the global GDP. MacMillan, who is James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of Chemistry at Princeton University, sat down for a chat with *Lounge* with a cup of chai "that's super flavoursome with all the spices—more chemistry". Edited excerpts.

**I feared organic chemistry as a student, failed it repeatedly, it is the stuff of nightmares for me. What would you tell someone like 15-year-old me and help them see its beauty?**

There are many like that. My 20-year-old daughter, she's taking organic chemistry in university, and I was on a Zoom call this morning working with her on it. Her mum's an organic chemist, I'm an organic chemist, but she has tremendous anxiety about everything to do with it. It's a bizarre subject, very different from other subjects, but I always tell people it's like chess. Once you learn the rules—and the rules are tricky—you learn how to play the game. The more you play the game, you become more sophisticated at it. It becomes fun when you get to put your hands on the molecules and design ways in which they will react with each other that were previously impossible.

**A decade ago, I discovered books like 'Elemental' by Tim James, which explains the periodic table lucidly and makes it fun, and 'A is for Arsenic' by Kathryn Harkup, which talks chemistry through the poisons in Agatha Christie novels. They made**

**chemistry real, showed how it touches every aspect of our lives. Then, there are shows like 'Breaking Bad' and 'Lessons in Chemistry'. Do books and shows like these do harm or good to chemistry's image?**

After I won the Nobel Prize, I went on Scottish TV and radio, and Scottish people have a great sense of humour. I come from a working class area in Scotland (Bellshill), so they kept asking me, did I begin by "breaking bad"? Is that where I became an organic chemist? It was very funny, but it is interesting that the image we have of organic chemists is basically the drug world. There is some of that, of course, but my view is that chemists do not do a good job of explaining to the world broadly what chemistry is. It's like a PR problem. Think about physics—physics sounds cool because of black holes and stars; biology, you think of medicine. You think of chemistry, you think of oil spills and air pollution. You don't think of flowers and their incredible smells or life-saving medicines. **Can that perception change?**

That's why I love to tell people about catalysis, because everyone has a good feeling about catalysing new things. There is a progressive, aspirational component to it. When I talk to kids, I say, "you can invent new chemical reactions that could change the world". In my group (at Princeton University's Frick Chemistry Lab), literally, chemical reactions that are discovered on a Monday will be used by Friday by people in the pharmaceutical industry. That's incredibly enabling and empowering for a young student. We scientists tend to stay in our silos; we have to learn how to be better at telling the outside world about the value of what we do ... the younger generation are so much better communicators than my generation.

**So chemistry is about asking the right questions. How do you teach people to ask better questions?**

This is a fundamental problem that we face in science. We tend to do (research) for more funding or to publish a paper, but in society, we have such big questions we're not addressing by asking the right questions of science. One of the very boring questions people ask me is "what will AI do for chemistry?" AI can create questions for a chemist or a scientist. I don't think AI will, in the short term, be able to invent new chemical reactions, but AI could come up with a conjecture, saying we have plenty of these resources, but none of that, and could you join molecules to potentially solve this problem. AI can make those recognitions in ways that humans tend not to. It can identify problems for humans to solve in chemistry, which could be really useful. The question selection is actually often more important than even the solution. Having said that, I don't want to make a thing about AI.



Chemists are creative people, and if you give them time, they'll solve it.

**There are good questions and then there's misinformation and disinformation. What does that do to science?**

It's absolutely dismantling what we care about in science and society. The obvious example is the vaccine question. This is misinformation, or disinformation, where people are actively seeking to suggest that the science is not correct. Science is complex, and it's only getting more complex, and we're doing a bad job of explaining it in simple terms. When people no longer understand it, they start to dismiss it.

Then there's the social media echo chamber, not having your news coming from credible sources the way they used. Basically, you can dial up any opinion you want, and an algorithm on social media will return your opinions back to you. It's extremely problematic when people no longer buy into the foundations of knowledge. How do they spread the disinformation? Using smartphones to criticise science, when this phone is one of the greatest products of science. The irony! **Could this be because science's bene-**

David MacMillan at the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru for The Nobel Prize Dialogue 2025.

COURTESY TATA TRUSTS

**fits haven't reached all, equitably?**

I believe so. My father was a steel worker, my mother a maid. I was able to, through education, grow, grow, grow. Education is one of the best ways to overcome social injustice. Ignorance is very expensive, and education is the best way to raise a society. For me, education is a great social justice leveller, but it has to be available for everyone in good quality.

**Much of the work of chemists goes to Big Pharma, which people don't trust for reasons ranging from inflated prices to causing dependencies. How do you reconcile with this?**

I'll be honest and say that I consult for pharma. I make money from my interactions with pharma. So maybe I'm conflicted. At the same time, the scientists who work in the pharmaceutical industry are some of the most noble people you'll meet. They sign a document, pick a salary, saying their names will go on a patent, but they will never make money from the patent. It will belong to the company, but their whole life they'll spend trying to come up with medicines for the human race. The issue pharma runs into is the

MacMillan received the 2021 Chemistry Nobel for, to put it simply, designing organic molecules that are non-toxic, safe and easy-to-handle to speed up chemical reactions.

# Should we never speak ill of the dead?

Public reckoning after the death of a popular but controversial figure can reveal the limits of our moral imagination

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In the last few weeks, the deaths of two notable public figures—one a marketing maven who gave India some of its most memorable advertisements, and the other, an actor who was widely loved for his comic roles—have inspired a flurry of conversations on social media platforms. As is typical of such exchanges on the internet, the opinions have been divisive, each side going for the jugular, painting the legacies left behind by these men in stark black and white terms.

The bodies of work left behind by ad guru Piyush Pandey and actor Satish Shah speak volubly of their unique gifts without a doubt. But their afterlives have been sullied, at least for a section of their admirers, for the political line they had toed. Of the two, Pandey was perhaps the less culpable. As a professional whose job was to make his clients successful, irrespective of the ideologies they stood for, he didn't let scruples get in the way of achieving business goals. In contrast to Pandey, Shah wore his biases brazenly on his sleeves. His views didn't seem to be framed by any overt professional agenda. He *was* his prejudices.

The death of a well-known figure, especially someone who had a controversial career, inspires three types of reactions in the public. An overwhelming number of fans remain unshakeable in their admira-

tion for the immutable genius of the departed person. For these ardent devotees, legacy lies in the work alone and art equals identity. Any attempt to complicate either by pointing out an unsavoury track record is slammed as being in poor taste. They may have been aware of the deceased person's bad karma, but their lives were not directly affected by it—so, it is easier for them to dissociate the art from the artist. Shortly after Shah's death, actor Naseeruddin Shah, his friend of over 50 years, wrote a moving piece reminiscing about his colleague and his many shining qualities in a national daily. Everything he wrote was true—but it was not the entire truth.

On the other end of the spectrum from the faithful fans are the detractors, who want nothing to do with eulogies that pour into the public domain for the dead person. They believe that the work and its maker are impossible to separate. Once a legacy is maligned by morally questionable acts, speech or choices, the person, who has built their career through a lifetime of hard work, loses their credibility and must be "cancelled". By not speaking against the actions of the dead, the living abjure their responsibility towards those who had been exploited, abused and harmed by these "geniuses".

Finally, there is a third school of people who are conflicted between these two extremes. They want to believe, and some indeed do, that it is possible to hold both these views at once. That the artist or actor or writer or musician who changed their lives for the better, comforted them in their hour of darkness, and helped them make sense of the world through their work was a "monster" to other people. If such a "hero" happens to be alive and active (Woody Allen or J.K. Rowling, for example), it becomes especially troubling to engage with their continuing output.



Whether legacy lies in art or in identity remains a question.

ISTOCKPHOTO

The simple act of going to see their movies, or picking up their new book, can become loaded with conflicting meanings and feelings that the human mind, always eager to avoid uncertainties, finds hard to grapple with.

One of the most clear-eyed analyses of this dilemma is offered by Claire Dederer,

culture writer and memoirist, in her 2023 book, *Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma*. She begins her study with her uncomfortable relationship with the work of filmmaker Roman Polanski. As someone who has been profoundly moved by his movies, she is outraged by the man accused of raping a 13-year-old girl decades ago. Dederer

refuses to accept the logic that the past is another country, where people operated under different norms and therefore deserve to be judged with more clemency. That is just a pernicious loophole used to give a free pass to rotten conduct. It's a bit like saying that the brutality of the British Raj towards its subjects was par for the course during the colonial era. Hence, imperialist cruelty should be overlooked, if not justified, because those atrocities took place at a time when the standards of behaviour, between the ruler and the ruled, were different.

Instead, Dederer argues that the "stain" on the character of the once-revered celebrity "spreads" and blights their work, be it during their lifetime or after their death. The tendency to absolve a man of genius (from Picasso to V.S. Naipaul, the number of vile men far outweighs their counterparts) is just another name for justifying the adoration their fans feel for them. "Genius is the name we give our love when we don't want to argue about it, when we want our opinion to become fact," she writes. In this context, Dederer also makes a persuasive case for using the first-person "I" to signal her full ownership of her feelings towards her fallen heroes instead of hiding behind the anonymity of the third-person pronoun as most of us are wont to do. It takes courage to remove the shield of collective ownership, especially in a morally charged public debate.

As Dederer argues, in the case of the "monsters", the most convincing arguments come not from a kangaroo court of justice but from individuals—from "moral feelings" rather than lofty "ethical thoughts". However, if pushed too far, the former can turn into a form of self-congratulation. This is one of the reasons why Dederer is against "cancel culture". Not

because it is an offshoot of a certain "woke culture" but because "it is hopelessly unuseful, with its suggestion that the loss of status for the accused is somehow at par with the suffering endured by the victim."

The intent behind cancel culture is, ostensibly, to penalise the perpetrator but what it ends up doing, in the process of making demands for erasure, is decenter systemic problems and put the focus on the audience or the consumer. "Liberalism wants you to turn your gaze away from the system," she writes, "and focus instead on the importance of your choices."

So, what should we—or rather, you and I—do when faced with the "monster" dilemma? The book doesn't offer a straight answer because there is no "one size fits all" moral philosophy that can guide us along "the right path". The only demand that Dederer makes of her reader is to not close their minds off to the problems and paradoxes of genius—to take on board that part of their lives that is uplifting as well as the one that is unspeakably horrible.

Is it possible, even rational, to empirically start deploring a beautiful anthem about national unity one fine day, only because the man who composed it turned out to be the architect of a slogan that divided the country years later? Speaking for myself, I don't think so. However, I do strongly believe that it is possible, indeed necessary, to never forget the creator he once was and what he became by the end of his life. In this act of remembering there is grief for the values, ethos and feelings that eroded during the course of a shining, successful career.

To take stock of a legacy is to not only celebrate the peaks of achievement but also mourn the passing of time—the end of an era of civility, harmony and values that once made us human.



## ● WEB EXCLUSIVE

ASEAN is an economic powerhouse that must resolve its contradictions.

— By Suchitra Durai

Log on to [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## ● WORDLY WISE

We won't have a society if we destroy the environment.

— Margaret Mead

The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

IN 1932

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## COP 30 must address the most vulnerable

THE UNFCCC'S 30TH Conference of Parties (COP 30) that begins in Belem, Brazil, on November 10 will mark a decade since the Paris Climate Pact came into force. A lot has changed since the landmark treaty was adopted, and at the same time, the needle hasn't moved much on several longstanding climate issues. Renewables have edged out fossil fuels as the biggest source of energy. Yet, there has scarcely been a slowdown in the trajectory of global greenhouse gas emissions. Policies now in place are expected to shave off warming by 2100 by nearly one full degree — from 3.6 degrees Celsius pre-Paris to around 2.7 degrees Celsius. That's still way short of the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold set in Paris. In the run-up to COP 30, more than 60 countries have submitted revised climate action plans. Many more, including India, are expected to do so at Belem. However, by all accounts, collective ambition will not be enough to keep global warming below the threshold set at Paris.

The large deficits in global-warming mitigation mean that countries have to invest more in shielding people from extreme weather events. The spiralling effects of climate change are already evident in the record-breaking heatwaves of 2024, the toll taken by floods, typhoons and cyclones over the past 10 years, and the forest fires that have raged in different parts of the world in the last three years. According to a World Meteorological Organisation Report, released in October, "millions of people lack the protection against dangerous weather, which is also inflicting a dangerous toll on vital economic assets". The report underlined the importance of investing in early warning systems. Another analysis of global efforts to make people resilient to climate-change impacts, the UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2025 released in the run-up to COP 30, shows that developing countries will need \$310 billion annually between now and 2035 to protect people from searing heat, rising seas, rivers in spate and deadly storms — this is nearly 12 times the finances currently allocated for adaptation.

One of the priorities at COP 30 will be to create a roadmap to track global adaptation progress. Unlike mitigation, adaptation has no single global metric. The roadmap will also need to be sensitive to the fact that social inequalities make some people more vulnerable than others. In other words, while the Belem meet will need to find ways to scale up climate finances, it will also need to create mechanisms to ensure that the funds reach those who need them the most. The negotiators will have their task cut out in the next fortnight.

## SC draws a red line against arbitrary arrest

IN A CRUCIAL ruling, the Supreme Court has said that the police must communicate the grounds of arrest to a person in writing, in the language he understands, within a reasonable time, and in any case at least two hours before the arrested individual is produced for remand proceedings before the magistrate. A bench headed by Chief Justice B R Gavai said that this key procedural safeguard will extend to all offences and not just those under stringent special statutes like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). In giving primacy to the personal liberty of an individual, the ruling sets a welcome precedent.

While this provision has existed on paper since the enactment of penal laws, it has mostly been ignored as an inconvenience by the police. The SC has repeatedly raised the bar in terms of protecting individuals from arbitrary arrest. In invalidating NewsClick editor Prabir Purkayastha's arrest in 2024, it extended this procedural shield against arrest even to the stringent anti-terror legislation. The SC rightly acknowledged that the stigma attached to arrest undermines a person's social dignity and results in consequences that reverberate beyond the individual: "The arrest of an individual invariably impacts not only the person arrested himself, but also the persons associated with him, i.e. family, friends, relatives, etc, affecting their psychological balance and overall social well-being. This Court has on several occasions underscored that there is a stigma attached to arrest which impairs the reputation and the standing of an individual in society."

From prohibiting the police from taking custody of a woman after sunset or in the absence of female police officers, to requiring the police to mandatorily present an accused before a judge within 24 hours, procedural safeguards serve as a bulwark of individual rights and liberties, protecting citizens from state arbitrariness. With the SC standing guard, the police must comply with the law — in letter and spirit.

## Widening the football field is a good idea

THE INDIAN FOOTBALL dressing room must soon get accustomed to English with a Western Australian twang. Indian ancestry has taken Ryan Williams, the winger from the Perth suburb of Subiaco, to India's national side — after relinquishing his Australian passport. This is not the first time the country, ranked 136th in the world, has looked beyond its borders to address its dwindling stock of quality footballers. A decade ago, Arata Izumi, whose father was from Gujarat, wore the India colours, but with negligible success. But this could be the way forward, as India seeks to move up the footballing ladder after inhabiting the lower echelons for decades.

Even powerhouses such as Spain and Italy have used the strategy to strengthen their national squads. The recent instance of success has been Cape Verde's remarkable journey from whipping boys to securing their maiden World Cup qualification. The second least populated country to have qualified for the world's grandest sporting spectacle managed to form a 25-member squad from expatriates settled in five different countries. Several football associations, especially of African nations, aggressively seek players of their heritage settled in Europe. In two World Cups, Jerome Boateng turned up for Germany and his half-brother Kevin Prince, also born in Berlin, appeared in Ghana's garbs.

But this country's welcoming embrace may not see a rush of footballers. The process is complex as they have to forsake their citizenship and passports, as opposed to the players in Africa, Europe, Australia and some American countries. Those from developed countries may shy away from the gamble of shifting to India, its sporting bodies whimsical, its policies shape-shifting frequently. If something goes wrong, reacquiring the old nationality is a cumbersome process. However, if Williams's move succeeds, at least some of those with Indian parentage could entertain thoughts of returning to the land of their ancestors.

## PK's holier-than-thou politics has a challenge — and an opportunity

IN BIHAR'S ELECTORAL contest this time, the future of the new entrant, Prashant Kishor's (PK) Jan Suraj Party, is being talked about. An unknown, untested player often generates more curiosity. Disproportionate interest in its performance can also be due to its holier-than-thou attitude in keeping its distance from Bihar's two main political blocs.

In the past four decades, roughly from the emergence of the Telugu Desam Party in 1983, not many parties have breached the threshold dramatically or even gradually. The Asom Gana Parishad did capture power in Assam's 1985 election, but that was mainly in the backdrop of the bitter and popular movement in the state over an evocative issue. The BSP took almost a quarter of a century to win Uttar Pradesh on its own, while more recently, the AAP rode on the combination of media hype, anti-incumbency and urban middle-class sensibilities. Parties that easily cross the threshold are either so-called dynastic parties, breakaway factions of established forces (such as the Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal or Nationalist Congress Party). Notably, most "new" forces appeared only during the twilight period of the dominant party or after its decline.

In Bihar, most new entrants have always been legatees of the Janata family of parties or claimants to the "Mandal" heritage. PK brings to the political menu a new offering that does not emerge from these legacies. He has so far also deftly avoided any specific response to the Hindutva arguments of the BJP. One could argue that his party continues to grope for a suitable political platform outside of

these two ideological nodes — and that is where he faces a challenge. But that is also where his opportunities lie.

The social-justice ideology has practically run its course in Bihar. On the other hand, even after 10 years of national prominence, Bihar seems elusive for Hindutva. The current rant about *ghuspaithiyas* is testimony to the fact that the BJP has to invent new stories of victimhood. The ideological bankruptcy of the social-justice ideology and the inadequacy of Hindutva — a combination of homogenising Hindu identity and an anti-minority plank — have produced an ideological vacuum. Whether PK's party (at least so far, it is the political initiative of one leader) can make any ideological claims to fill this vacuum is a crucial question. Or, rather, his ideological equivocations and the talk of governance may work as an asset for a politics that avoids current ideological tropes.

This, in a sense, connects to the other challenge. The second set of challenges he faces is to breach supposedly "established" social bases of Bihar's political parties. These are often talked of in caste-community terms. As election data of the past 10 years show, it is too simplistic to imagine solid vote blocs behind any of the political forces. First, the social-justice bloc has long faced a crisis of double credibility — it does not deliver much, and if it does, the lower sections among the backward castes rarely receive much. Second, the BJP does not seem to have much to offer in response to the social-justice expectations of the state's



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

The real question that these elections will answer is not if PK will be a main player in the state but whether, post-Bihar, he can strive to be a significant player outside Bihar

## The city of ambition has a new overlord who understands it



TOM GOLDSTEIN

ZOHRAN MAMDANI'S SPEECH, in which he credited the working people of New York for his smashing victory in the mayor's race, amounted to a prolonged shout-out. It was not subtle. He was not at all gracious to his opponents.

Liberal cable television commentators have been a reliable chorus of cheerleaders for the Mayor-elect. But they did not like this speech. They thought Mamdani was abrasive and missed an opportunity to begin a healing process.

Of course he wasn't conciliatory. That is not his style. He did it his way. Out with the old, in with the new. Or, as one *New York Times* guest columnist put it: "The Old Order is Dead. Do Not Resuscitate". One indication of change: His campaign received more than 400 RSVP's from reporters for his victory party, many from media outlets I had never heard of. The place that, a century ago, was labelled "The City of Ambition" by photographer Alfred Steiglitz now has a new overlord.

Against the odds ("It is dirty!" "It is expensive!" "It is dangerous!" "It is choked in traffic!"), New York retains an enduring appeal. It is a magnet for the young, the talented, the different. My daughter graduated from Yale last spring. It seems like at least half her class wound up in New York this fall, echoing the 1970s hit song, 'New York, New York'. The challenge of New York is encapsulated by the lyrics: "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere." New York continues to welcome people of starkly different backgrounds. At 34, Mamdani viscerally understood this in a way that a grizzled, veteran politician like Andrew Cuomo, his principal opponent and a former New York state governor, could not. "I wish Andrew Cuomo only the best in private life," the mayor-elect said dismissively, "but let tonight be the final time I utter his name as we turn the page on a politics that abandoned the many and answers only to the few".

Besides its sheer size (more than 8 million residents), New York stands apart from any other city because, in the words of Kurt Andersen, the author and editor, it is "the undisputed national epicentre of no fewer than seven glamour businesses

— finance, news media, advertising, book publishing, theatre, fashion and fine art".

I have a more than passing interest in what happens in New York. I was not born there, but I spent large chunks of my adult life there, including in the early 1980s when I served as press secretary to then-mayor Edward Koch. Ed adored the press, and he lived his life as a Broadway play, with the pliant press corps serving as reviewers of his every utterance and decision. I was 34 years old, on the old side for Koch aides, and the hardest part of the job was keeping up with him.

He did it his way, and he was mostly successful, at least at the start of his three terms. Koch was tireless and candid and funny, three traits Mamdani seems to possess in abundance.

Mamdani's success at the ballot box can be viewed through many different lenses. Perhaps the simplest — and most accurate interpretation — rests on voter turnout. The New York mayor's race drew more than 2 million voters, almost double the 1.1 million people who voted four years ago and the highest in more than 50 years.

With characteristic hyperbole, the *New York Post*, Rupert Murdoch's tabloid, evaluated Mamdani's victory differently: "Zohran Mamdani owes his spectacular political rise to one New York City demographic above all others: South Asians... And while they make up only 5 per cent of the city's population, this rapidly growing ethnic group is making itself heard." That sweeping claim must await further analysis, as Mamdani turns from the challenges of campaigning to the trials of governing.

It is hard to prove, but I think voters like Mamdani more for his personality than they identify with his left-wing politics. Time will tell.

But 'New York, New York' is no longer the unofficial anthem of the city. At the end of his victory speech, Mamdani walked off the stage with a Bollywood hit song, 'Dhoom Machale' playing in the background. It translates to "have a blast".

The writer is former dean of the journalism schools at Columbia University, the University of California at Berkeley and OP Jindal Global University



ZAINAB SULAIMAN

Silly me. No matter what I choose, the game is only now really beginning. I'm on a page that shows me the interest loss, alongside an icon of a smashed piggy bank that takes up a quarter of the page to drive the point home. I soldier on, knowing I'm being judged. 'Just one last step,' a pop-up consoles

## This is the age of fintech, but try breaking an FD

SORRY, WE ARE currently facing technical challenges. Try again later." I've done it a few times too many. Withdrawn my own money that is. How dare I try and shut down one FD after the other? Don't I, as a customer, know what's best for me?

Which is why, whenever I try to prematurely close an FD — which is every few weeks, I admit, but hey, it's my money — the bank decides to give me a short lesson in finance.

This, it does on its state-of-the-art app, a flashy thing that promises change and progress, but in reality sucks the lifeblood out of hapless customers like me. The option to "Close FD" shows up in a dull grey, which means it's not the default option. Instead, "Lock FD", boldly highlighted in red, is. So, if my finger accidentally taps the screen a little harder than usual, it will lock the FD — the exact opposite of what I want to do. But I'm careful... ish. Once, I did tap that option, but managed to log out super quick before any real damage could happen.

Now, once past that trap, it throws up a prettier page with icons of stacked cash and a clock ticking away that informs me of "good news". Apparently, they'll give me a loan at an interest rate 2 per cent higher than the FD rate — why ever do I need to break the FD? I ignore the red "Avoid now" button and close down the pop-up. I am taken to a deceptively innocent-looking page that has two options — "partial closure" or "full closure".

Silly me. No matter what I choose, the game is only now really beginning. I'm on a page that shows me the interest loss, alongside an icon of a smashed piggy bank that takes up a quarter of the page to drive the point home. I soldier on, knowing I'm being judged. "Just one last step," a pop-up consoles. Apparently they need to understand the reason I need to access my own money. I'm given a bunch of reasons to tick off, ranging from "I am in need of funds" — makes me feel broke — to "I have other investment options" — makes me feel angry, as I don't. I pound on the almost-invisible "Skip" option at the bottom of the page and am asked to enter my PIN. Usually, this is the final step and most banks give up and hand over your money to you. Not this sly fox.

Unless you press the "Verify PIN" option at the end of the page, it won't work. But maybe it's my fault? Spoiled by the options to tap, tap, tap to transfer your money across the universe, I'm somewhat unnecessarily taken aback that this one insists on verification. A few dizzying moments pass before you are finally informed: "Done! You have successfully closed your FD".

Unsurprisingly, the same app swallows your money in one big gulp when you decide to open an FD. In fact, when you tap on the "FD" button to check out your paltry savings, it takes you straight to the "Start a New FD" page. If you decide to go ahead, you just need to add the amount and the duration and just tap. You are informed — in full caps no less — that "YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY OPENED YOUR FD". All this from one freeing page.

At the end of the day, you can run, run and run, but there's nowhere to hide.

Sulaiman is a Bengaluru-based writer and teacher

## 40 YEARS AGO

November 8, 1985



## Sri Lanka massacre

THIRTY-TWO SINHALESE were shot dead by Tamil militants at Navalavathe village in Sri Lanka's Trincomalee district as President J R Jayawardene rejected the Tamils' demand for the linkage of the Northern and Eastern provinces. This was the second-biggest massacre of members of the majority community since May, reports said. Official sources said the militants drove into the village, shot dead men, women and children and later set fire to their houses.

## PM for link language

PRIME MINISTER RAJIV Gandhi underscored the need to develop human values and create a sense of oneness through one

language known to all for strengthening the country's unity and integrity. He said that while science and technology were important for all-round development and betterment of the poor, humanism, culture and traditions could not be given a go-by. Gandhi said the widening gap between economic progress and age-old human values should be bridged.

## Minister resigns over accident

HIMACHAL PRADESH TRANSPORT Minister Sat Mahajan resigned, owning moral responsibility for the HRTC bus accident near Bandlidhar, which has so far claimed 53 lives. In his resignation letter addressed to Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh, Mahajan expressed shock over the mishap and asked

him to relieve him from the ministry. The bus, belonging to the Himachal Pradesh Road Transport Corporation, had rolled down a gorge near Bandlidhar village in Sirmour district.

## Extremists arrested in Canada

THE CANADIAN POLICE arrested four Sikh extremists in Vancouver in the first Air India Kanishka crash. UNI learnt from high-level sources that a special intelligence operation had been launched by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police four months ago to track down the cause of the crash. The Canadian police searches centred around known International Sikh Youth Federation activists. They also announced they had arrested Talwinder Singh, wanted for murder in India.



# The Ideas Page

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2025



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11

## AI mania masks economic fissures and rising uncertainty



SAJJID Z CHINO

THE TONE AND tenor in Washington, DC on the sidelines of the recent IMF-World Bank meetings revealed how divided and uncertain the policy, investor and analyst community remains. One would have presumed economic uncertainty would have peaked during the spring meetings in April, a few weeks after "Liberation Day". The uncertainty then was deep, but narrow, concentrated on the scale and scope of the Trump tariffs. Now it has broadened ominously. Is the US economy on the verge of a recession or has it bucked one? Are the Trump tariffs even legal? Will the breathless AI build-out become progressively unviable? Are we playing with fiscal fire globally? Is the cherished independence of some central banks under existential threat?

Start with US economic performance. The Atlanta Fed Nowcaster suggests US growth last quarter was tracking an eye-popping 3.9 per cent. Far from a tariff-induced recession, US growth is accelerating! Tempting as it may be, it's too early to claim victory. Below strong headline growth lie caveats and fissures. First, surging AI investment has been responsible for much of recent growth. Absent that, US growth would have averaged just 1 per cent in the first half of 2025. Second, the US labour market has come to a virtual stall, which is typically a precursor to a recession. Third, US inflation pressures continue to build as tariffs are slowly passed on to consumers, which, alongside slowing job growth, will put more pressure on households.

But, given the conflicting signals, which is the signal and which is the noise? Is the labour market about to break? Or are softer jobs numbers simply reflecting a much lower "breakeven rate" because of the anti-immigration efforts by the administration? Will the AI boom offset the tariff pressures and bail the economy out? And if so, will policymakers draw the wrong conclusion that tariffs were not harmful, prompting

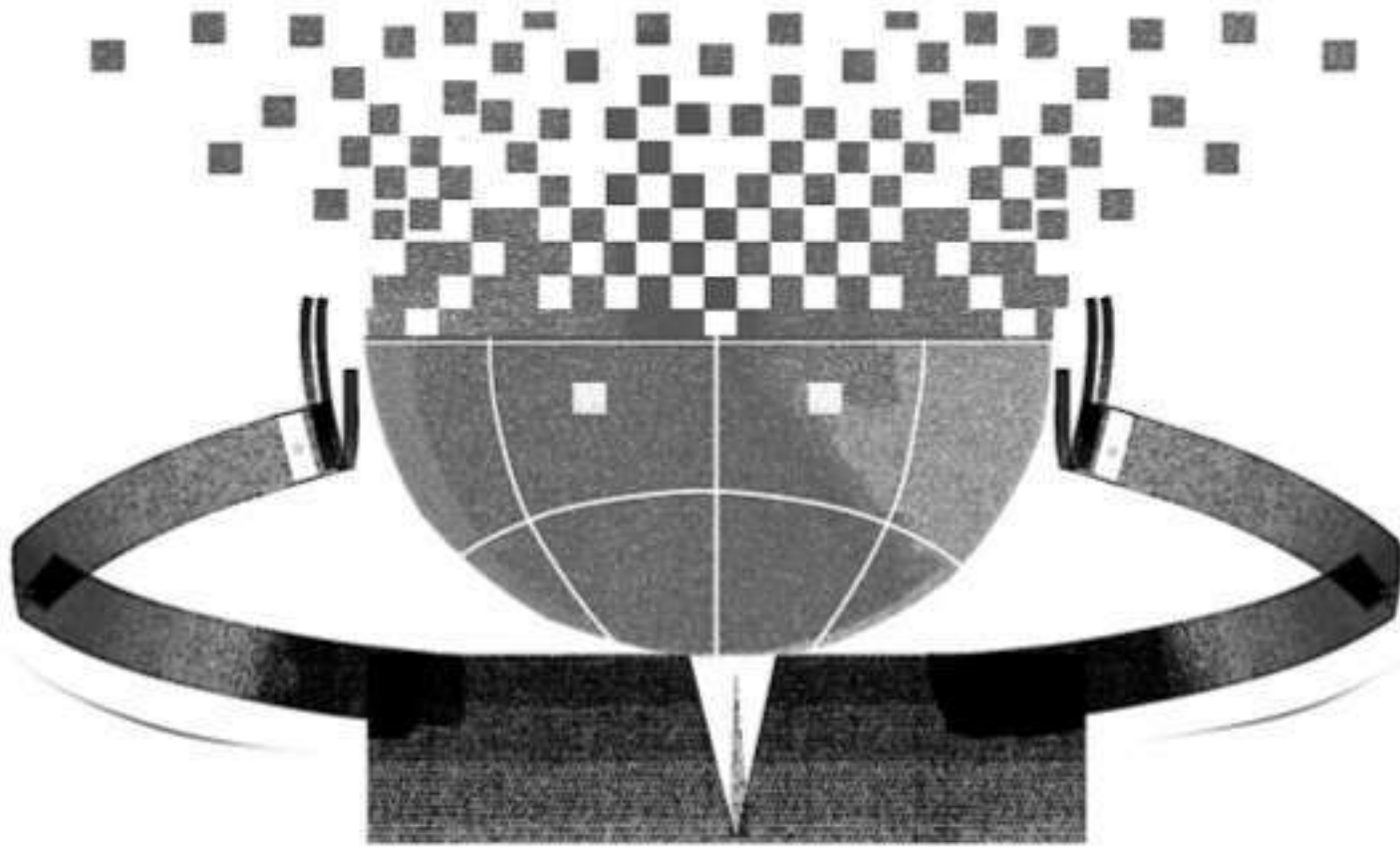


ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

more to be rolled out?

Meanwhile, AI mania continues to grip the world. Global investments in "data centres" have jumped from \$400 billion in 2024 to an estimated \$600 billion in 2025 and are projected to rise to \$3-4 trillion a year by 2030. It's understandable why mania will drive more mania. Some, like Nouriel Roubini, believe AI will result in exponential productivity growth, which, if true, will result in a winner-takes-all outcome. So, the first-mover advantage becomes crucial. Further, as the Richmond Fed notes, current AI investment — when compared to the telecom boom of the 1990s — suggests it's early days yet. We may only be in the second inning of a nine-inning baseball game. Recognising this, the frenzy in the stock market is giddy. Just 30 AI-related stocks now account for 44 per cent of the S&P's market capitalisation.

But is the exuberance getting irrational? Eventually, AI investments of the kind envisaged will necessitate meaningful leverage. Will the use-cases be enough to justify these investment levels? Will the use-cases be sufficiently monetisable? And then the elephant-in-the-room question. To what extent will AI be labour-substituting ver-

US tariffs are the highest since the 1930s and an inexorable descent towards deglobalisation is on. The promise of AI (on productivity) is matched only by its peril (on unemployment)

sus labour-augmenting? If it's the former, will the distribution of income become even more skewed in favour of capital at the expense of labour? What will this imply for future employment, consumption and demand? Are we setting ourselves up for the classic fallacy of composition that Keynes warned of? Is the recent wave of AI-related layoffs just the canary in the coalmine? Ominous uncertainties abound.

The case of Taiwan is instructive. Taiwan has been at the epicentre of the AI boom, exporting servers, GPUs and high-end chips that populate US data centres. Taiwan's exports to the US are growing at a sizzling 50 per cent pace, pushing GDP growth up to 7 per cent. Yet, because the AI buildout is so capital intensive, there has been no positive spillover to jobs and consumption. Even as AI exports have boomed, consumption growth is averaging less than 1 per cent and consumer confidence is falling! So much so that Taiwan's government had to roll out a 2 per cent of GDP fiscal package in September in spite of the AI mania. A sign of things to come globally?

If these contradictions were to slowly pervade the global economy, where will the fiscal space come from? Unsustainable fiscal

deficits in advanced economies are proving to be a key source of global instability. G7 public debt is already at 125 per cent of GDP and expected to rise to 140 per cent by 2030. The US fiscal deficit is running at almost 8 per cent of GDP for an economy above its pre-pandemic path! Exorbitant procyclicality, anyone? Japan's public debt is 230 per cent of GDP but that is unlikely to stop the new PM from announcing another fiscal package. Bond markets are growing increasingly nervous, but the politics everywhere seems incapable of orchestrating much-needed fiscal adjustment. The gamble with fiscal fire is well and truly on.

Finally, the US Supreme Court has just begun to hear whether President Donald Trump's invoking of the IEEPA (International Emergency Economic Powers Act) to impose tariffs — both reciprocal and fentanyl — is legal. If it is deemed illegal, the US treasury will have to refund Rs \$100 billion of tariff revenues, putting more pressure on the US fiscal. The administration is likely to respond by invoking other statutes of the law (sections 122, 232, 301) to impose country-specific and sectoral tariffs. But all this will simply compound confusion and uncertainty. And what happens to the legality of trade agreements based on IEEPA tariffs?

Five years after the pandemic and a year into Trump's presidency, underlying macro fissures have only widened and uncertainties have only grown. US tariffs are the highest since the 1930s and an inexorable descent towards deglobalisation is on. Emerging markets are still grappling with pandemic-induced scarring and now confront a China Shock 2.0 — an avalanche of cheap Chinese imports. The promise of AI (on productivity) is matched only by its peril (on unemployment) at a time when countries lack the fiscal space to backstop labour markets.

The global community that descends on Washington remains divided and uncertain on both the prognosis and the policy response. But equity markets will have none of this. The AI frenzy is propelling markets to ever-new highs. The pressures and problems of the present are being ignored for the (yet untested) promise of the future. Markets may be priced to perfection. But reality rarely follows suit.

The writer is head of Asia Economics at J P Morgan

## Vande Mataram: The national song with a tragic journey

RAMRAJYA  
BY RAM MADHAV

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi on Friday inaugurated year-long celebrations commemorating 150 years of the stirring national song, 'Vande Mataram'. He described the song as "an enduring symbol of devotion to the nation". 'Vande Mataram' was the war cry of thousands of freedom fighters. It first appeared in 1875. As the Indian National Congress movement turned into a mass movement in the early 1900s, 'Vande Mataram' became the main slogan and inspiration for millions. "The partition (of Bengal) took effect on October 16, 1905... streets of Calcutta were full of the cries of 'Bande Mataram', which overnight became the national song of Bengal and which was soon to become the theme song of the national movement," historian Bipan Chandra writes.

It was declared the national song on January 24, 1950. However, it also endured a tragic journey, from being an inspiration to becoming a victim of communal politics.

The rise of the Muslim League in the early 1900s posed a serious challenge to the Congress leadership's belief in "one nation — one people". Gandhi sought to cajole the League leadership into supporting the unity of the nation, a tactic that many latter-day commentators thought naive. The more Gandhi and the Congress offered concessions, the harder the League's position became. An early victim of this stridency was 'Vande Mataram'. It had been a regular practice since 1905 to sing 'Vande Mataram' at all important Congress events. In December 1923, the annual Congress session was held in Kakinada. Gandhi was in Yerawada prison. Maulana Mohammad Ali, who was elected president of the session, was present along with senior leaders like Motilal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Patel and Kasturba Gandhi.

As per convention, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, a renowned Hindustani musician from Maharashtra, was there to sing 'Vande Mataram' at the inaugural. When Paluskar climbed the dais, Mohammad Ali raised an objection, saying it would hurt the sentiments of religious Muslims. Seeing the silence of the leaders, Paluskar took it upon himself to challenge Mohammad Ali. According to a biography of Paluskar, "Digambar was incensed and hit back: 'This is a national forum, not the platform of any single community. This is no mosque to object to music. There is no justification for a ban on music here. When the president could put up with the music in the presidential procession, why does he object to it here?' Having silenced the president, without waiting for his reply, he proceeded to sing 'Vande Mataram' and completed it."

To placate the League, Congress introduced Muhammad Iqbal's 'Saare Jahan se Acchha' in its sessions. Yet, the opposition to 'Vande Mataram' continued. It became part of the so-called 'Muslim grievances' against Congress.

In 1937, elections were held for the provincial councils. The Congress needed the League's support to form governments in some of them. When the dialogue was initiated, Muhammad Ali Jinnah invoked the grievance about 'Vande Mataram'. A "committee" was formed to review 'Vande Mataram'. Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were its members. It recommended that only the first two stanzas be sung. Just a month before, in October 1937, the Congress had declared 'Vande Mataram' the national song.

The national song was partitioned in 1937 to appease the Muslim League. Ten years later, the nation was partitioned.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP



ILLUSTRATION: KOMAL

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To placate the League, Congress introduced Muhammad Iqbal's 'Saare Jahan se Acchha' in its sessions. Yet, the opposition to 'Vande Mataram' continued. It became part of the so-called "Muslim grievances" against Congress. In July 1939, Gandhi wrote of 'Vande Mataram' in *Harizon*, "No matter what its source was, and how and when it was composed, it had become a most powerful battle cry among Hindus and Muslims of Bengal during the Partition days. As a lad, when I knew nothing of 'Anand Math' or even Bankim, its immortal author, 'Vande Mataram' had gripped me... It never occurred to me that it was a Hindu song or meant only for Hindus. Unfortunately, now we have fallen on evil days."

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Freedom vs control

This refers to the editorial, 'JNU's tradition of debate is in the dock' (*IE*, November 7). The current regime seeks to negate the very idea of universities, where freedom, inquiry, dissent and debate constitute the essential foundation of learning. The rising number of legal disputes points to an institution struggling to reconcile its identity as a space for free expression with growing administrative control. As Amartya Sen remarked, "We have been much too tolerant with intolerance, this has to end."

SS Paul, Nadia

### Catching up in AI race

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Playing catch-up with China in the AI race' (*IE*, November 7). India faces numerous challenges in the global AI competition, such as limited world-class supercomputing facilities for large-scale AI development, a fragmented, low-quality, and poorly annotated data ecosystem hindering AI model training, a shortage of researchers, investment gaps and regulatory issues. A balanced strategy prioritising the development of sovereign and multilingual foundational models, along with scaling AI training beyond top universities, can improve India's position.

Vaibhav Goyal, Chandigarh

### Mocking democracy

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Trump wants to be Xi — or is that a joke?' (*IE*, November 7). US President Donald Trump's remarks admiring his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping's disciplined cabinet expose a fascination with absolute control. His "joke" echoes the populist temptation to conflate loyalty with governance, a trait seen in several democracies sliding towards strongman politics. Trump's yearning for autocracy, masked as jest, reflects how easily democracy can be mocked into submission when laughter becomes a cover for longing.

Palak Verma, Goidindgarh



PRAKASH SINGH

THE MAOIST INSURGENCY, once described by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as "the gravest internal security threat" to the country, is undergoing a complete meltdown. There are serious differences within the party on the feasibility of continuing the armed struggle; there are mass surrenders; the politburo and the central committee of the CPI (Maoist) have been almost decimated, while its People's Liberation Guerrilla Army is on its last legs.

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), 333 Maoists had been killed and 398 arrested this year till October 29. On October 2, 103 Maoists laid down arms in Bijapur district. On October 15, Mallajula Venugopal Rao, a politburo, central committee and central military commission member, along with 60 other cadres surrendered in Gadchiroli district. On October 17, around 210 cadres laid down arms in Bastar district. In all, according to SATP, 1,787 Maoists have surrendered this year as of October 29. The number of LWE-affected districts, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, has shrunk to 11.

This is a huge achievement and the result of the central political leadership pursuing an integrated and holistic approach to deal with the LWE insurgency. It also shows the potential of our police and CAPFs to defeat an insurgency.

The Maoist movement, in retrospect, was bound to fail in

## Maoist insurgency is dying, now tackle its causes

India. In the initial stages, when Charu Mazumdar, its chief ideologue, gave the slogans "China's Chairman is our Chairman" and "China's path is our path", several party leaders expressed their reservations. Any revolutionary movement, to be successful, must have its roots in the soil. Marxism-Leninism was, for the cadres, an abracadabra they never understood. They were drawn to the movement because it took up the cause of the marginalised. The question today is, have their grievances been addressed?

The ideological undercurrent that inspired the Naxalite movement — a deep sense of injustice arising from social inequality, economic deprivation, and political marginalisation — unfortunately continues to persist. The Naxalite philosophy, stripped of its potential for violence but retaining its moral critique of inequality and exploitation, may endure and erupt again, maybe in a different form.

India's progress in recent years has been phenomenal but uneven. Large sections of the rural poor, especially in tribal and forested areas, still have limited access to land, education, healthcare, and livelihoods. India still ranks lowest among the G20 countries in both per capita GDP and PPP terms. The Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, has shown only "modest shifts" in the past two decades.

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In most LWE-affected districts, human-development indicators lag far behind the national averages. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Malkangiri district (Odisha) — an LWE stronghold — is 0.37, compared to the state's average of 0.579. This demonstrates severe shortfalls in life expectancy, healthcare access, and nutrition. In Gadchiroli district (Maharashtra), the NFHS-5-based District Nutrition Profile (2022) shows that around one-third of children under five are stunted or wasted, and more than 60 per cent of women of reproductive age are anaemic. These and other data show that while roads have come up, banks opened, and Industrial Training Institutes and Eklavya Model Schools set up, the basic metrics of well-being — education, health and nutrition — remain poor in areas where Maoists once found fertile ground.

Tribal communities in mineral-rich areas of central India have borne the brunt of "development". On the other hand, implementation of the Forest Rights Act has been tardy.

The Government of India is well on its way to defeating the Maoist insurrection. However, the ideological spark that ignited Naxalbari will perhaps not be extinguished so easily and will continue to flicker beneath the surface unless we bridge the chasm between glittering growth and the grim realities of inequality and deprivation.

Singh, a retired police chief, is author of The Naxalite Movement in India

## On autism, let's talk about support, not vaccines

changing storm of a diagnosis on autism, often handed out in the coldest, harshest of ways. It doesn't matter where the child lies on the spectrum — mild, moderate, or severe — for parents, especially mothers, the diagnosis is life-altering. The journey of early interventions and therapies is spent in isolation and reimagining finances. I wish someone with as powerful a platform as Sridhar Vembu's would choose to shed light on the issues impacting parents.

Vembu has spoken in the past about how autism destroyed his family life. I understand the toll this diagnosis has taken, and I have the most profound empathy for him. But in no way am I endorsing this anti-vaccine theory. Instead, what we need is a discussion on the lack of support for parents and caregivers.

We need significant policy-level changes to support families with neurodivergent children. Health insurance in India should cover therapy for our children. Therapy that some kids need lifelong — that in some cases costs Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 per month, forcing many parents to give up after a year or two, because the finances don't make sense anymore. I wish Vembu

I wish someone with as powerful a platform as Sridhar Vembu's would choose to shed light on the issues impacting parents

would also talk about how parents of neurodivergent kids need a more flexible work routine, without impacting their salaries. I'm not sure if Zoho offers special concessions for such parents, and I hope they do. However, such a policy at a national level could make life much easier for many caregivers. Let's also discuss how access to sound therapy is currently limited to the metros and tier-1 cities at best. Assuming you can afford therapy, finding a compassionate therapist who understands neurodivergence and is in line with the global best practices is like searching for a unicorn.

We should also discuss how parents spend years trying to find a school where inclusivity is more than a buzzword. The harsh reality is that the school system is often designed to get rid of children who do Jaipur

not meet developmental milestones, require constant movement, and usually struggle to make friends.

Finally, let's not forget the sheer amount of online misinformation on autism — Instagram therapists sermonising and offering masterclasses, diet detoxes, and new treatments. Parents often spend life savings on some of these treatments. We need systems in place to protect vulnerable parents.

Of course, we need more acceptance of this word itself. It takes a special kind of fierceness to presume competence in your child, even when the world is placing doubt. I really wish Mr Vembu would talk about that — instead, the autism debate never moves past those dreaded vaccines.

The writer is a former journalist



SHRUTI DHAPOLA

HERE WE GO again. Do vaccines cause autism? That's the crux of the debate sparked by Sridhar Vembu, the founder of Zoho, who recently posted a link on X asking parents to take the analysis seriously, and claiming that we are giving too many vaccines and ergo, "seeing a rapid increase in autism in India". When it was pointed out that the links between autism and vaccines are not proven, he appeared to double down. While this debate raged on, all I could feel was the same frustration I have had for the past three years.

I am someone who has been part of this parent community, navigating the ever-



DECCAN  
Chronicle

8 NOVEMBER 2025

Higher voter turnout in Bihar win for democracy

The turnout in the first phase of the Bihar Assembly polls for 121 seats of 243 seats, at around 64.66 per cent, was the highest in any polls in the state since 2010. Close to 10 per cent more voters turned up at poll booths in these constituencies than in the Lok Sabha polls held last year. Amazing as the statistics are, what makes them more intriguing is that the percentages are up substantially since the Special Intensive Revision exercise deleted around 15.3 lakh voters, around four per cent, in those 121 seats. Given the fact that the lists of those who voted or did not vote are never released, it is hard to find out how this greater awareness of the need to vote has come about. Controversial as the SIR exercise has been to become the political hot potato in the wrangling between the ruling dispensation and the Opposition, the irony is hard to escape if it can be concluded that the poll rolls cleanup exercise raised the consciousness of the voters in a big state that is considered backward when measured against various development parameters. If the SIR has cleaned up the rolls of duplicate and ineligible entries, it may be said to have served its purpose to an extent. Factors like the fear of name deletion if they did not vote this time may also have played a role in getting more voters to the booths though greater awareness from social media messaging, welfare schemes and women’s empowerment may have helped bring about this record.

The other question pertinent to Bihar is whether sections of migrant workers who were still on the rolls after SIR decided not to travel back home to vote despite the monetary inducements offered in cash for votes. The bigger national question, of course, is about where the migrant worker is to vote — in the state in which his place of work is situated or in his/her state of origin? The issue of migrant workers tilting the demographics of constituencies outside their home state is another tricky one that crops up. There might be a solution if ever inter-state electronic voting is allowed, but to suggest that would be to poke another hornet’s nest in an already deeply politically polarised issue in India’s election process, which is controlled by a constitutional authority that has not always been the objective ‘neutral umpire’ that it professes to be. The other leading point to arise from the first phase is the matter of women outnumbering the men at the ballot box. The reasons for this are crystal clear. Welfare schemes aimed specifically at women, like ₹10,000 payments made through the chief minister’s women’s employment scheme to around 75 lakh women across the state, have played their role in getting them to vote much as the promise of government jobs from both alliances may have prompted members of the Gen Z to turn up. Regular theories like larger turnouts suggesting greater play of the anti-incumbency factor may not be applicable as newer voters seem to have exercised their right. This reflects as much the hyperbolic media, traditional and social, coverage of the stakes involved in political power as well as Bihar’s shifting social and political landscape as a state apparently left behind for some time wishing to catch up. Regardless of which alliance wins and how the third player in the fray, Jan Suraj party led by Prashant Kishor, influences the verdict, a higher turnout of eligible voters is by itself a win for democracy.

A song that has unified India

If there is any single expression that encapsulates the multi-faceted battle that Indians waged to regain freedom from British colonialism, it would indisputably be *Vande Mataram* — a simple formulation that became a war cry for crores of Indians and expressed their defiance against the empire on which the sun never set. Penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee on November 7, 1875, in his novel *Anandamath*, the poem *Vande Mataram* reawakened nationalism among Indians. It introduced the concept of Mother India, the personification of the nation. It openly reflected the desire of Indians to see their country as a powerful and radiant goddess, symbolising a strong and awakened India. Though *Vande Mataram* was sung by armed rebels in *Anandamath*, it found acceptance among freedom fighters across the ideological spectrum. Early nationalist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Subramania Bharati invoked it as an anthem of courage and defiance. Its words echoed in public meetings, student marches, and even amid police lathicharges. However, when India gained independence, the slogan *Vande Mataram* — the emotional expression of the freedom movement — lost out to *Jana Gana Mana* because of its religious associations in *Anandamath*. The Constituent Assembly nevertheless adopted the lyric *Vande Mataram* as the national song, giving it a place of honour parallel, though not equal to, the National Anthem. In recent decades, however, the national song has become a site of ideological contestation. Some groups have used it for cultural assertion and as a litmus test of patriotism, demanding public proof of national loyalty where none should be necessary. Others, meanwhile, reject it entirely for its historical context, without recognising that meanings evolve over time. As we commemorate 150 years of *Vande Mataram* the song, we should remember it as an anthem that once unified India — nothing more but nothing less either.

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Can India really afford to trust America today?



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

Amid President Donald Trump’s transactional diplomacy and tariff warfare aimed at both America’s allies and rivals, a recent headline in London’s *Financial Times* said it all: “Rely on America at your peril”. This is good advice for policymakers in New Delhi, some of whom are prone to repose too much faith in Washington’s assurances. India, like most countries across the world, has little choice but to lump what comes its way that originates from the current occupant of the White House. Remember that for the past 80 years or more, Britain and the US have enjoyed a so-called “special relationship”, based on a shared Anglo-Saxon heritage. Despite that, even London is not spared when it comes to Mr Trump’s whims and fancies and when America stands to gain from any deal. In his view, the US should be the sole 100 per cent beneficiary from any financial or monetary transaction. Since that is rare in any bilateral deal, Mr Trump will settle for the next best option, to gain at least the lion’s share, or 75 per cent, in any contract. India, of course, is no match for the United States in almost any sector; but till today it has successfully charted an independent foreign policy based on “neutrality” or “non-alignment” since the Jawaharlal Nehru era. This had of course led to friction with several previous US administrations but nothing comparable with the reality under the egotistical Mr Trump. This is all the more so as heads of state and heads of government across the world are falling over themselves in desperate attempts to appease the US President’s vanity and try to win him over with deals favourable to America, giving up their sense of self-respect, honour and dignity. In this climate, India is still valiantly holding out in the face of incredibly strong pressure from Washington. The negotiations on the free trade agreement are continuing, but New Delhi is standing firm and not backed down on its “red lines”, particularly over agriculture. Not yet. Irrespective of any tactical or short-term setbacks, no government in India can afford to be seen as succumbing to dictates from Washington. India simply cannot emulate what Cambodia, Pakistan, Israel and now even Japan’s new woman Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, have done by recommending Mr Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize. This kind of fawning behaviour was unbecoming of all these Asian leaders, but India has at least set an example befitting a sovereign nation. The real challenge for India remains to successfully conclude a free trade agreement with the United States on terms that both nations can find acceptable. For India, protecting its agriculture and dairy sectors is the key priority, while America seems driven to “correct” its \$43 billion bilateral trade deficit. The strange thing is that, in comparison, the US has an annual trade deficit of a staggering \$298 billion with the People’s Republic of China, yet that did not stand in the way of recent bonhomie between President Trump and China’s Xi Jinping at an airbase in South Korea, which led to US reducing its steep tariffs on Beijing. The bogey of India’s Russian oil purchases raised by Mr Trump and his advisers is part of the strong-arm tactics by the US to bulldoze India, which paradoxically is even now being hailed as a “strategic defence partner” of Washington. One wonders

India’s greatest advantage is its largely non-export economy, which reduces any excessive dependence on undependable bigger economies only focused on themselves

whether all parts of the US administration are in sync, or are the commerce, state and defence departments devising their own policies? Some members of the Trump team are resorting to totally unacceptable and grossly unethical diplomatic dealings, which crossed all limits. Targeting non-resident Indian businessmen for transporting oil to India on allegedly blacklisted ships reeks of reprehensible race and colour prejudice by White America driven by the MAGA lobby. One wonders if Mr Trump’s top advisers have thought their strategy through: whether creating needless bitterness in an otherwise friendly country like India really serves America’s long-term interests. Given that unlike America, Moscow has always remained, through decades, a steady and dependable friend for this country, New Delhi must be wary about getting into Washington’s clutches after having experienced America’s hostile attitude and antics. It is no secret that the US has always been an unreliable and undependable defence partner, right from the 1950s, and there is no reason to believe things would be any better in future. The growing internal turmoil within America, especially with no end in sight to month-long federal government shutdown, is an added cause of concern. Over a million US employees are without pay over a month and the mighty American aviation network is on the rocks with a large chunk of Air Traffic Controllers off duty. That’s a potentially dangerous situation as without the guidance, navigation and command of

ATCs, every flight is a possible aviation disaster. How America governs itself is, of course, its own concern and not the business of foreign nations. But the staggering decline in the quality of everything — from the economy, armed forces, aviation, race relations to international relations — is undeniable. Regrettably, however, the self-created US mess is now contaminating the non-US world too, including India. India’s greatest advantage is its largely non-export economy, which reduces any excessive dependence on undependable bigger economies that are only focused on themselves. Mr Trump’s “Make America Great Again” movement is taking a onetime “sole superpower” steadily downhill, as the besieged President makes desperate attempts to make the rest of the world fall in line. It is becoming quite evident Mr Trump is trading short-term victories for long-term problems, and in the process taking a wrecking ball to the diplomatic capital his predecessors spent over eight decades to build up. While, sadly, many Indians are being adversely affected by the downturn in relations with the US, including students, and Indian-origin American residents, with some even targeted or killed in racist attacks, not to mention of many immigrants being handcuffed and deported on 25-hour-long flights, it is not entirely a bad thing that fewer Indians look at America as “land of opportunity”. It is anything but that any longer. Of course, there will always be some who swear by America, but their numbers are fewer. To most people, it is becoming clear that the US is fast losing influence with key players across the globe, especially in the non-white Global South. There is now a visible anti-American wave worldwide, as London’s *Financial Times* highlighted in its headline.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College, New Delhi. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

NATIONAL SONG

It is with reference to the news article “Vande Mataram continues to stir the heart” - November 7 “Vande Mataram” written in 1875 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee played a vital role in the Indian Independence movement. It first gained political significance when Rabindranath Tagore sang the song at the Congress session in 1896. It gradually became popular amongst political activists, leading to the British government imposing ban on the song. In Jan. 1950, the Constituent Assembly adopted Vande Mataram as National Song. The Central government celebrating the 150th year of Vande Mataram song is welcome.

P. Victor Selvaraj  
Palayamkottai

WHY GILL IN T20IS?

Kudos to our T-20 team for their victory over Australia on the Gold Coast in Queensland to take an unassailable lead of 2-1. Our bowlers stepped up to win the match. Our Vice-captain, Subhman Gill is proving to be a true Test class player and is blocking the chances of dynamic openers like Sanju Samson and Jaiswal. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are sorely missed. Tilak Varma had shown promise at No. 3 but is yet to get a permanent slot. Axar Patel has filled the void created by the retirement of Jadeja, who also quit the T-20 version along with Rohit and Kohli. Washington Sunder should be utilised more as a bowler. Similar is the case with our top T-20 wicket taking bowler, Arshdeep Singh, who should be encouraged.

N. V. Krishnan  
Chennai

STARS CONVERGE

The news that veteran actors Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan are set to reunite on silver screen after 46 years for a new Tamil film has sent waves of excitement across the industry. As fans of these two legendary actors eagerly await further updates on this film, their reunification after over four decades is set to become a historical moment in Indian cinema. More than a big movie, Thalaivar 173 will be a throwback to a strong bonding of the two, whose decades-long friendship and brotherhood in Indian cinema has been characterised by deep mutual respect despite professional rivalry. The two towering figures are back side by side, and ready to shake things up all over again.

R. SIVAKUMAR  
Chennai

Mail your letters to  
chennai@deccanmail.com

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



“Spilt milk? The cat licked it clean — No one cried Broken heart? Repeatedly been — No one died Falsely accused? Through a veil of green — The ink has dried!” — From The Hymn Book of The Akela

Did ‘woke’ ads in UK trigger racist backlash against Asians & blacks?

Sarah Pochin, an MP of Britain’s Reform Party, said in a TV show: “It drives me mad when I see ads full of black people, full of Asian people.” This remark was condemned by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and other ministers as racist, though Nigel Farage, Reform’s leader, simply reprimanded Ms Pochin for using “ugly” language. Ms Pochin apologised for the language but didn’t withdraw her implication. What caused her remark? It is a fact that TV ads feature, in terms of the make-up of Britain’s population, a disproportionate “representation” of blacks, though not very many Asian, actors and models. Today on British TV and one will inevitably see ads with black males, possibly their white wives and their children selling stuff. An objective statistical survey concluded that in 2022, over 40 per cent of TV ads featured black people persuading the viewers to various products, whereas the black population of Britain is barely six per cent. Yes, disproportionate!

But! TV ads are not instruments of “representation” in any sense. They are produced to flog the advert company’s clients’ toothpaste, coffee, cars or whatever, and are not constitutional instruments of democracy. Shouldn’t Ms Pochin realise that black people in the ads are not necessarily in favour of the product they are selling. They are, for God’s sake, actors, hired to mouth persuasive lines to target consumers. It’s unlikely that the advertising agencies who conceive, write and produce these ads, are simply targeting black consumers. They aim to sell their clients’ products to the largest number of people and might assume that white buyers are just as likely to be persuaded by black actors flogging the product as all white ones. What Ms Pochin was moaning about was her perception that even advertising agencies are being “woke” by including black, Asian, gay and disabled actors in advertisements. Decades ago, I was a founder member of two theatrical groups, the Black Theatre Co-op (BTC) and later the Asian Co-op Theatre (ACT), and wrote several plays for them, which were performed all over the country. At the time, in the 1980s, there were other groups of black and Asian actors, directors and playwrights getting together to produce stage productions. My interest was to find dramatic expression of the experience of the black and Asian population of Britain — its “new communities”. Obviously, these directors and actors shared, to some extent, this purpose or ideal, but certainly for the actors in these growing theatrical

outfits there grew cultural pressures and demands for what was then called “integrated casting”. I wouldn’t go so far as to say that these were “demands”, as were the growing movements for fairness in employment, education, housing, etc, of the black communities, but they were certainly concerns of the cultural sections of them. The mainstream theatre companies, including the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, etc, took note and adopted the principle. In the decades that followed, the birth and productions of the BTC, ACT and other companies reflected this. One could go to the theatre and be not at all surprised to see a black Julius Caesar or an Asian Portia (but not quite yet a white Othello?). I must confess that though I regarded this development as a victory and a triumph, my own interest remained in writing about the experience of blacks and Asians rather than their insertion into the classics or contemporary soap operas. Yes, I would, and have, adapted Shakespeare in “ethnic” versions — monologues for female Asian actors — and have written Hindi feature films, including Indian versions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and even *King Lear*. (Any interest from producers/directors, do get in touch — *fd*). (No adverts for your rubbish here! — Ed. Sorry yaar, kuchh to amdani ho jaye? — *fd*) Ms Pochin’s party, Reform, is at present scoring 35 per cent of tentative voting intentions in the public opinion surveys, posing a serious, if

tentative, threat to the Labour Party. The 2029 elections are still four years away. Reform and Nigel Farage have, in the last weeks, apart from the Pochin nonsense, faced some setbacks. As a party, Reform has been called far-right and from some commentators even “fascist”. If one peruses their public principles, agenda, promises to the voting public and the records of their representatives, two directions and dedications emerge. They are desperately, inhumanely, in racist stances against anyone who appears in Britain as an asylum seeker, legal or illegal. They have promised the British voter that they will “rid” the country by deporting them all. This pledge, in its various avatars, veers into clear anti-Muslim and then anti-immigrant policies, even though a few of their prominent members and office-holders are Asians — all Uncle *Tomashas*! Alongside with this, Nigel Farage has promised to nationalise certain industries, making energy cheaper for everyone and to cut the public welfare budget by £92 billion — or at least he did till this week when, in a public U-turn, he said this ridiculous pledge would have to be re-examined and rescinded. It has already been questioned by the main parties and economic experts who say it’s not feasible. But there you have it: extreme nationalism and untenable promises to the voters. Holocaust and Volkswagens, anyone? National socialism? What did the Germans of the 1920s call it?



SATURDAY INTERVIEW

‘Bihar result will impact Modi’

An ex-Delhi MLA and prominent Congress leader, Alka Lamba has been active in politics for more than two decades. Having commenced her career as president of the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU), Lamba later served as an AICC spokesperson. She now heads the All India Mahila Congress, concentrating on growing women's participation in politics and strengthening the party's grassroots network.

As the political temperature increases ahead of the 2025 Bihar Assembly polls, the Congress party is gearing up to make its presence felt both within the state and across the national political landscape. Contesting 61 seats under its own symbol, Lamba stresses that the party's campaign stretches across all 243 constituencies through its alliance with the INDIA bloc, in an exclusive interview with **The Statesman's Anurag Kumar.**

**Q. The Congress is contesting on 61 seats in Bihar. How confident are you about the party's chances in the assembly polls?**

**A:** On its own election symbol, Congress is fighting on 61 seats but that does not mean that we are only fighting in these seats. We are supporting our entire INDIA alliance allies, and in that sense, we are fighting for all 243 seats in the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections. The campaigning is in full swing. There is excitement among people regarding the INDIA alliance and its candidates.

**Q. What, according to you, were the main reasons behind the Congress' poor performance in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections?**

**A:** Thanks to Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, if

we talk about politics at the national level, people are moving away from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) towards Congress. In Delhi, we ruled for 15 years under the late Sheila Dikshit. Then, there was regime change, and in a democracy, it is natural, and we welcomed it.

Arvind Kejriwal came and ruled for 10 years. Now, he is gone, and the BJP is here. Let us see if the state government will complete its full five-year term or not. The Congress, on its part, is constantly trying to make its presence strong in the national capital.

**Q. How do you assess the performance of Rekha Gupta's government in Delhi so far?**

**A:** Whether it is giving Rs 1,500 financial aid to women, free cylinders on Diwali, or cleaning of the river Yamuna, the BJP till now has failed to impress. So far, the CM has only blamed others for her failures. Let us see how it goes.

**Q. AAP or BJP, who ruled Delhi better?**

**A:** You are talking about AAP and BJP. I want to add Congress to the list. The 15 years of Congress rule under the late Sheila Dikshit was the golden period for Delhi. Flyovers were constructed, the metro started, and it was a green Delhi.

**Q. How do you evaluate the Modi government's performance over the past years?**

**A:** There was only 'jumlebazii' (hollow promises) and benefitting Adani and Ambani, nothing else. Neither black money returned nor terrorism stopped in Jammu and Kashmir. The entire tenure is a failure. It is now understood that with the help of 'vote chori' (vote theft), the Modi government is in power. Rahul Gandhi's yatras are

exposing the government. The downfall of the BJP has started. Bihar Assembly poll results will have a direct impact on Delhi and Modi's politics.

**Q. As head of the Mahila Congress, how do you view the current state of women's political participation in India from the grassroots to the national level?**

**A:** See, there are two things - women entering the electoral field (chunavi maidan) and women using their voting rights. Women entering the electoral field is still not satisfactory because the issue of 33 per cent reservation for females is still not being implemented by the central government. However, it is good to see that women are increasingly using their voting rights. It is a positive sign.

**Q. What are the key socio-economic issues women in India face today?**

**A:** There are many socio-economic issues facing women in India. The Constitution has given us rights, but on the ground, there are biases. The security of women is still an issue.

**Q. In your current role as head of the women's wing, what are your top priorities(s) for the Congress in the coming year?**

**A:** When I became the president of Mahila Congress, I started the online membership drive. This was the first time something like this had happened in this wing of the organisation. Today, we have 5,50,000 members. Now we are finding those women who are prominent in their fields and want to join politics. We are training women in leadership skills so that they can join active politics.



**Q. How do you view Rahul Gandhi's leadership of the Congress party?**

**A:** Rahul Gandhi is an honest and visionary leader. He is ready for everything. He is standing with the youth and fighting against the wrong decisions of the government. ED, CBI, IT dept, EC, among others, are being used against the opposition. Rahul raised all these issues and received the support of the people, and this has weakened the BJP, especially PM Modi.

**Q. Who do you consider the better politician - Rahul or Priyanka Gandhi Vadra - and why?**

**A:** My favourite politician is still late Indra Gandhi. I have never met her, but I have heard a lot about her. However, I have learned a lot from Sonia Gandhi.

Talking about Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, they are

motivating and strengthening leaders like us. Priyanka has reached Parliament and is doing a good job. Rahul Gandhi has turned into a mature politician and takes the PM head-on. We consider him a big leader of the future and also see the future of India in him

**Q. Mallikarjun Kharge is the president of the Congress yet it appears that major decisions are often attributed to Rahul Gandhi. Your comments.**

**A:** This is his (Kharge) nobility that he discusses not only with Rahul Gandhi but also with other youth leaders of the future on important matters. He also takes advice. It is a very good thing, and a sign of his big-heartedness.

There is a sync between the youth leaders and him. This type of coordination is only visible in the Congress, not in the BJP and other parties.

100 Years Ago



Front page of The Statesman dated 08 November, 1925

OCCASIONAL NOTE

THE railwaymen appear to have broken up the project, originating in the fertile mind of Mr. Cook, for an industrial alliance of all the unions. This action followed on the defeat of a proposal for the amalgamation of the three railway unions. The break-up surprising. There is not at present in Great Britain the goodwill that would enable all the union to unite, since the unions of skilled men would require great concessions from the men in the unskilled unions' who are in sheltered trades and have been able to raise their earnings out of all proportion to those of the workers who have to face competition with their products. The people who talk of one great union ignore the jealousies and the real grievances that keep various classes of workmen apart.

News Items

LEPROSY SCOURGE

CURABLE IN EARLY STAGES

LONDON, NOV.

THAT leprosy can now be cured in the early stages is emphasized in a memorandum by Sir Leonard Rogers, which has been adopted by the Executive Committee of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association.

The memorandum says that the medical profession in leprosy countries requires to be taught regarding the early signs of leprosy, and then compulsory notification could be enforced. Much has already been done to improve the treatment of the disease, but still more remains to be accomplished before any but the early stages can be considered to be readily curable in the practical sense of losing all symptoms and in-feetivity. So continued research must remain the most the urgent need.— Reuter.

NEXT VICEROY

“CLEMENCY CANNING” AS PATTERN

(Special Cable.) LONDON, NOV.

THE Outlook expresses the opinion that Mr. Wood will probably prove to be a good rather than a great Viceroy, and says his strength is in character rather than in intellect. He is one of those men who have the stuff of greatness in them, but who can only show it in the last resort and in the gravest crisis. He is not in the least of the “prancing proconsul” type, “Clemency Canning” is probably nearer his ideal, and he should do well.— Copyright.

LINER EPISODE

SHIP’S OFFICER COMMITTED FOR TRIAL

LONDON, NOV.

TOWERS, the first officer of the Canadian Pacific liner Melita, who ran amok on the ship at Antwerp and shot the captain, named Clews, through the head, and wounded the first and second engineer, was charged at Southampton Police-court with the murder of Clews and the attempted murder of the two engineers, Girmour and Holliday, and committed to the Assizes for trial.— Reuter.

STABBING AFFRAY

MAN KILLED: ASSAILANT ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

KARACHI, NOV.

A FATAL stabbing affray, followed by an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide, occurred near the premises of Messrs. Ralli Bros., Karachi, yesterday afternoon.

It is alleged that a Maratta peon of Messrs. Ralli Bros., stabbed to death Santdas Lokumal Madhwani, a young clerk in the same firm. After attacking the clerk, who died instantaneously, the peon attempted suicide, inflicting serious injuries on himself. He was removed to the Civil Hospital where he is undergoing treatment.

The affair is said to be a sequel to a dispute.

Indian way best for climate crisis

SHEHZAD POONAWALLA AND VIJETA RATTANI

The global community is witnessing an alarming increase in frequency, intensity and scale of broken climate records, as the average global temperature is increasing at a rate of about 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade. Reports suggest that in 2025 alone, heatwaves in Europe killed thousands and wildfires caused more than 400,000 hectares of infrastructure damage, while the US lost a staggering \$15 billion to weather disasters till June 2025.

Asia recorded warming at twice the global average, fuelling extreme weather events, causing severe strain on lives, economies and resources. Further, projected temperature rise likely to exceed more than 1.5°C in near future would lead to widespread disruptions and intense damage to agriculture and water sectors, eco-systems, infrastructure, health and developmental dividends.

The global climate regime is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The dominant discourse that has largely driven the global climate agenda has been the western worldview which sees nature as a commodity. This approach that has fuelled economic growth in Western countries since the industrial revolution, has come at a heavy environmental cost, resulting in current challenges of climate crises, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss.

Reluctance to assume their historical responsibility towards the current carbon stock at the global climate negotiations (COP), developed countries have failed to honour their finance and technology commitments, flattened the equity and differentiated responsibility principles in the Paris Climate Agreement and have largely ignored the voices of indigenous peoples calling for climate justice, resulting in the growing trust deficit in the negotiation process and incremental climate outcomes.

The technological innovations, action plans and increase in renewable capacities prove to be highly inadequate to curb temperature rise or help communities deal with climate impacts. Global greenhouse gas emissions, as per the UN Emission Gap report, set a new record of 57.7 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2024, a 2.3 per cent increase from 2023 levels, with the power sector contributing the highest, as rampant fossil fuel use continues.

If the dominant discourse considers nature and environment as merely exploitable resources and commodities, there is little hope of solving the climate crises. This is despite the limited time window to curb temperature levels within liveable limits of 1.5 degree C, as mentioned in the Paris Agreement. Going ahead, what is that fundamental thinking shift required for real, sustainable, transformative actions and who can provide that?

In our understanding, the only philosophical approach that can offer a more balanced view point involving

peaceful co-existence with nature and based on reverence towards nature is the ancient *Bharatiya* Approach. It is this living civilization that stresses on the idea of “*Mother Earth*” – the earth as a living entity rather than a resource; *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* - World as One Family rather than focusing on a particular sect or faith, and minimalism based on responsible consumption and Nyay - justice for the needy and vulnerable.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad talks of *sarvātmabhāva*, meaning one's identification with all while the *Bhagavad Gita* promotes collective action for environmental conservation for communities' own survival. In application, the means of production and distribution revolved around nature conservation. Sustainable lifestyles involved reduced and moderate consumption, minimal wastage, material reuse, balanced diets, mindful living with more focus on the quality of life. By ascribing sacredness to all beings and ecosystems at large, the Bharatiya *Sanatana* outlook has ingrained sustainability as part of collective consciousness and wisdom.

It is this traditional Indian worldview that needs to drive global climate and environmental agenda. In practice, this goes beyond focus on just nature-based solutions, environmental management, forming regulations and implementing action plans. It deals with laying the right foundation for strong structural shifts in economies and energy systems; revamping the



global financial architecture and global governance systems; and advocating pro-environmental education, lifestyles and consumption patterns for balanced and inclusive approach to climate crises. It promotes cooperation, building capacities, enabling technology transfer and forward-looking finance to the poor and vulnerable countries to choose science and equity based alternative developmental pathways.

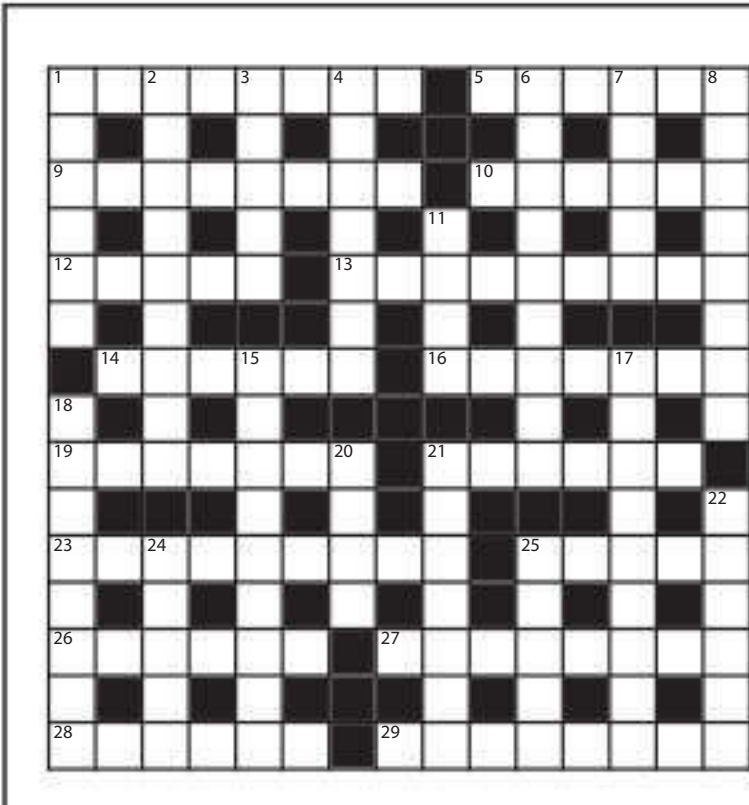
Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has pursued an ambitious and proactive climate agenda integrating with wider developmental goals. Initiatives such as Mission LiFE for pro-environment friendly lifestyles, circular economy framework for resource-resilient economy, renewable energy capacity, community-based adaptation actions etc are examples of its commitment to its traditional ethos. Additionally, special focus on vulnerable sections including farmers and women to make them self-reliant and equal stakeholders in India's developmental

journey, are historic shifts to promote justice and inclusiveness.

Examples are Mission Shakti, Ujjwala Yojana, gender-sensitive planning and PM-KISAN, PM Fasal Bima Yojana and National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture etc. With its focus on collective climate actions, India has pushed for partnerships, capacity building initiatives, multi-stakeholder approaches across levels towards climate planning and implementation. Highlighting the need for shift to re-define development, PM Modi has even suggested developing the concept of a “green gross domestic product.” While the long-standing western approach has been detrimental to climate cause, global climate agenda needs traditional Indian wisdom as its core narrative to promote environmental-friendly balanced and inclusive development.

(The writers are, respectively, National Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party, and an expert who works and writes on climate change aspects.)

Crossword | No. 293286



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

- 1 Dull part of cricket pitch (8)
- 5 Functional uniform with fur (6)
- 9 Embraced sixth sense love employed (8)
- 10 American directors on ship (6)
- 12 Fine, limp fringe (5)
- 13 Exploit Oscar during unusual free trip (9)
- 14 One suspended in hot incense (6)
- 16 Endlessly lucky Ken rolled joint (7)

DOWN

- 19 Demanding individual run out by you and I (7)
- 21 A small platter is out of place (6)
- 23 Profanities as naughty child draws across middle of frieze (9)
- 25 Golf shot starts to spin hard after nasty knock (5)
- 26 Emphatic type with male mice hearts (6)
- 27 Manipulate mechanic? (8)

- 28 Elegant and witty, eases oddly inside (6)
- 29 Pressing item is dull and inflexible (8)
- 1 Regarding enemy rising loudly and unmatched (3-3)
- 2 Seaplane crashed across end of Southwold promenade (9)
- 3 Shy laugh the French dismissed (5)
- 4 Secret agent skins up with little sign of hesitation (7)

- 6 Bores quit changing nickname (9)
- 7 Sword turned up in pedal bin (5)
- 8 Approved of final section by journalist written about Old Republican (8)
- 11 Heartless cook behind house wine (4)
- 15 Supplies reportedly more disgusting diners regularly (9)

- 17 Stand after knock out in the manner of Australian native (5,4)
- 18 Dim Foe I d routed changed (8)
- 20 Part of nourishing piece of beef (4)
- 21 Club succeeded in promotion of street artist (7)
- 22 Pelt across right bend in piste (3,3)
- 24 Leapt around in coat (5)
- 25 Avoid drink in street (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)





## The Mamdani Test

New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's stunning victory marks a rare moment when the improbable becomes political reality. At 34, the young legislator ~ once dismissed as an outsider with no money, machine, or name recognition ~ has broken through barriers of identity, ideology, and expectation to become the city's first Muslim and first African-born mayor. His ascent signals not just a generational shift in urban politics but a broader test of whether the American left can govern as effectively as it campaigns. Mr Mamdani's triumph is both deeply personal and profoundly political. He represents a new breed of leader shaped by social activism and economic urgency rather than party patronage.

His campaign fused the language of solidarity with the metrics of affordability ~ free childcare, expanded transit, housing justice, and state intervention in market failures. In doing so, he captured the imagination of younger, diverse voters who feel alienated from the party establishment but remain invested in the idea of government as a force for fairness.

Yet, the victory's symbolism risks obscuring its complexity. New York may have handed Mr Mamdani a mandate for change, but not a blank cheque. The same structural limits that constrained his predecessors still stand in his way ~ an independent state government, deep ties between City Hall and Wall Street, and a sceptical business community wary of redistributive zeal.

For all his charisma, Mr Mamdani will need to learn the fine art of negotiation: how to turn protest energy into administrative action without diluting the moral clarity that brought him to power. Every decision will be watched through a magnifying glass, not just as governance but as a referendum on whether the American left can mature from rhetoric into responsible leadership. His biggest challenge, however, lies outside New York. Conservatives are already casting him as the poster child of a reckless socialist experiment, while centrists within his own party worry that his agenda could alienate swing voters ahead of the midterm elections.

The coming months will show whether Mr Mamdani can transcend those caricatures by delivering practical results ~ lower rents, safer streets, and better services ~ without retreating from his convictions. Interestingly, Mr Mamdani's victory coincides with solid performances by moderate Democrats in other states, suggesting that the party's voters are less divided by ideology than by tone.

What unites them is not a label but a longing for stability, equity, and a government that works. If the left can interpret that yearning through competent, compassionate governance, it could redefine the political mainstream. For now, Mr Mamdani stands as a symbol of possibility ~ a young mayor with the audacity to believe that ideals and efficiency need not be opposites. His success or failure will resonate far beyond the boroughs of New York. It will answer a larger question that American politics has dodged for too long: can a movement built on protest learn to govern without losing its soul?

## Headwinds

India's renewable energy story has, until now, been one of ambition and acceleration. With targets to double non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 gigawatts, the country's energy transition is among the most aggressive in the developing world. But the government's new proposal to tighten deviation norms for renewable producers ~ effectively demanding greater precision between forecasted and actual power supplied ~ signals a new phase: one where enthusiasm must meet engineering discipline.

The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission's move to gradually narrow the permissible deviation gap between committed and delivered energy reflects an important truth, that grid reliability cannot be sacrificed at the altar of green ambition. As renewable capacity expands, unpredictability in generation, especially from wind and solar, can destabilise grid management. The principle of accountability, therefore, is sound. But the manner and pace of its enforcement deserve scrutiny. India's grid reforms must evolve in tandem with its climate goals, not in conflict with them. Sudden regulatory tightening can strain investor confidence, stall new projects, and erode the trust built between private developers and policymakers. Predictability in rules is as vital to the energy ecosystem as predictability in power generation itself.

Wind energy producers argue that these rules unfairly penalise the physics of their trade. Unlike solar, which follows daylight patterns, or coal and gas plants that can adjust output, wind generation depends on meteorological conditions beyond human control. If penalties are imposed without allowing flexibility for such natural variability, projects that were financially modelled following earlier, looser norms could become unviable almost overnight. Industry estimates suggest that revenue losses for older wind farms could reach nearly half their earnings, a devastating blow for a sector already grappling with delayed payments and thin margins.

Solar developers, too, have voiced concerns that strict adherence rules could raise operating costs and deter new investment, particularly for smaller players. Investors attracted by India's clean energy narrative might think twice if regulatory uncertainty outweighs potential returns. The intent of better forecasting is welcome, but its implementation must be realistic and phased in harmony with technological and financial readiness. The broader risk is that in trying to impose conventional standards on inherently variable renewables, India could inadvertently slow the very transition it seeks to accelerate. A more balanced approach would be to incentivise better forecasting tools, encourage hybrid generation models that combine solar and wind, and promote battery storage systems that smooth supply fluctuations. Instead of punishing unpredictability, the policy should reward innovation that reduces it.

Ultimately, the credibility of India's green transition will depend not just on the number of gigawatts installed but on the ecosystem that sustains them, one that integrates reliability with flexibility, discipline with support. The new deviation rules, though well-intentioned, should not turn into deterrents for those powering India's clean energy future. What the sector needs is a clear roadmap, not a regulatory cliff.

# Indo-US pact

*The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) could significantly impact India-US defence ties by creating a delicate balancing act between India's national security needs and US foreign policy objectives. India maintains a policy of strategic autonomy and has historically strong ties with Russia, which complicates its alignment with the US, particularly when it comes to issues like sanctions and arms purchases*

The India-US defense pact signed last week is a 10-year framework agreement that aims to deepen defense cooperation between the two nations through enhanced coordination, information sharing, and technological collaboration. The agreement, signed by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, is considered a cornerstone for regional stability and strengthens India's position as a key partner of the US in the Indo-Pacific.

The agreement seeks to strengthen the strategic partnership by focusing on deeper defense industrial collaboration, enhanced technological cooperation, increased information sharing and improved coordination between military forces.

The pact was signed amid trade tensions and tariff issues between the two countries, with officials on both sides emphasizing its importance in resetting and strengthening the strategic partnership. The pact is designed to provide policy direction for the entire spectrum of the India-US defense relationship and is seen as a signal of growing strategic convergence and a new decade of partnership. Both countries view the partnership as critical for ensuring a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

The agreement includes plans for joint production in India of American defense equipment, such as the Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stryker armoured personnel carriers. The pact also aims to deepen technological cooperation in defense and high-tech areas.

It reinforces the strategic alignment between the two countries, demonstrating their ability to advance security cooperation independently of trade disputes. The deal is seen as a strategic counterweight to China's growing influence in the region, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

The current India-US defence framework rests on a history of steadily growing cooperation that has evolved significantly since the early 2000s. The original 10-year defence framework pact was signed in 2005 and renewed in 2015.

In 2016, the US designated India as a



"Major Defence Partner," a unique status that allows India to receive license-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies. India was elevated to the Strategic Trade Authorization Tier1 status in 2018, further streamlining the export of high-technology items from the US. This Defence Framework Pact signed last week builds on a series of foundational agreements that enable closer military collaboration, information sharing, and technology cooperation. The primary agreements that have been signed are:

General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA): Signed in 2002, this pact facilitates the sharing of classified military information and intelligence between the two nations, establishing protocols for its protection.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA): Signed in August 2016, this agreement allows the militaries of both countries to use each other's bases and assets for logistics support such as refuelling, repair, and replenishment of supplies during joint operations or training exercises. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA): Signed in September 2018, this pact enables India to access advanced, encrypted communication equipment from the US and facilitates secure information exchange during exercises and operations, enhancing interoperability.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA): Signed in October 2020, BECA provides for the sharing of geospatial intelligence and information for military purposes, which is critical for navigation accuracy and targeting.

The implementation of the recent Indo-US defence pact will present a mix of significant opportunities for strategic alignment, alongside several complex challenges related to technology transfer, bureaucracy, and geopolitical dynamics.

A primary opportunity for India is enhanced access to cutting-edge US military technology, particularly in areas like AI, drones, and secure communications. This facilitates the modernisation of India's armed forces and boosts its indigenous defence capabilities. The pact promotes collaboration in the co-production and co-development of defence equipment, supporting India's "Make in India" initiative and diversifying its defence

supply chains away from traditional partners like Russia. More extensive joint military exercises and information sharing will improve the ability of the two militaries to work together effectively during potential humanitarian aid missions or joint operations in the Indo-Pacific.

The strengthened partnership serves as a key pillar for a free and open Indo-Pacific, creating a stronger collective deterrence against potential regional aggressors and enhancing overall security cooperation. However, the implementation of the India-US defence pact also faces several potential challenges, ranging from bureaucratic hurdles to geopolitical sensitivities. Both countries face complex bureaucratic processes and differing defence acquisition procedures. Navigating these systems can cause significant delays in joint projects and procurement. Despite the "Major Defence Partner" status, strict US export control regimes and concerns over intellectual property (IP) protection can hinder the seamless transfer of sensitive, state-of-the-art technology.

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The ongoing S-400 deal remains a major point of contention. While the US has so far avoided imposing sanctions on India, the threat remains a persistent point of friction, influencing both countries' strategic decisions. CAATSA mandates sanctions on countries engaging in significant defence transactions with Russia. India's purchase of the S-400 Triumf air defence missile system from Russia falls squarely under this purview. The US has the authority to grant a national security waiver, which it has used so far to exempt India from sanctions. However, this

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Editor's  
TAKE

The rise of Munir and  
Pak democracy in retreat

Asim Munir's push to add economic muscle to the army through the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment marks a decisive shift towards military-led governance

Pakistan has been in a crisis situation for long and that keep compounding over the years. The fragile democracy has not been able to take roots as Pakistan army has ruled the beleagured state either directly or by proxy. The leaders have played to the tune of army Generals or paid the price for being non-complying. Now Pakistan's democracy stands at another turning point once again. Field Marshal Asim Munir's bid to usurp more power through proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment makes his intentions clear – centralised, military-led governance.

The 27th Amendment seeks to undo the spirit of the 18th Amendment of 2010, which devolved fiscal and administrative powers to the provinces – a move that strengthened federalism and civilian control by giving fiscal powers to the states.

However, this never went well with the army. For years, generals have complained that the provinces hold too much of the country's resources. Now, Munir appears set to reclaim that power for the centre – and thereby for the army. The proposed amendment reportedly redefines the National Finance Commission Award, expands presidential authority, and introduces measures to "discipline" the judiciary. Together, these changes would give the military unprecedented influence over Pakistan's political and economic structure.

A new Constitutional Court, along with greater control over judicial appointments and transfers, would ensure that dissent from the bench is neutralised.

This is not a return to martial law but an evolution of Pakistan's "hybrid" system, where civilian governments serve under military direction. Munir, whose command is expected to extend until 2027 and possibly beyond, without the declaration of emergency.

Pakistan is grappling with economic freefall, rising terrorism on its western border with Afghanistan, and growing public disillusionment with the political class

Instead of empowering institutions to manage these crises, the state is tightening its grip.

Each military attempt to impose order has left the country weaker, its political class more dependent, and its people more cynical.

Munir's bid to expand the army's political and economic footprint – from industry and infrastructure to constitutional authority – may offer the illusion of stability. But as the country's past shows that its repeated experiments with military regimes have only weakened the democracy and undermined growth and development.

As the 27th Amendment advances, Pakistan faces a stark choice: between reclaiming a participatory democracy or accepting permanent tutelage under its most powerful institution. The real danger today is the slow, constitutional erosion of freedom. Pakistan is sinking under its own weight.



KIRAN KARNIK



ROHIT PRASAD

Much has been written about India's demographic dividend – the great advantage of having the world's largest working-age population. Yet, while this dividend is often seen as the country's greatest economic strength, an equally powerful but less discussed demographic gain lies ahead. This new dividend stems from another profound transformation: the steady rise in longevity and healthspan. Over the last fifty years, life expectancy in India has climbed from about fifty years in 1970 to more than seventy today. Increasingly, people are living into their eighties and nineties, and centenarians are no longer rare. But this phenomenon is not merely about adding years to life - it is about adding purpose, vitality, and engagement to those years.

More and more Indians are entering their sixties with energy, experience, and a desire to stay active contributors to society. This is not a small trend. By 2050, India's older population - those aged sixty and above – is projected to cross 300 million, nearly double today's 150 million. That means one in every five Indians will be a senior citizen. This demographic transition will undoubtedly pose challenges for our systems of healthcare, finance, social security, and caregiving. But it also opens up a tremendous opportunity: a rising, vibrant market segment, and a vast demographic reservoir of wisdom, skill, and social capital waiting to be engaged. These are people who have spent decades building families, businesses, institutions, and communities - as doctors, teachers, engineers, artists, homemakers, farmers, and artisans – and now have the chance to give back in new ways. Each year, the International Day of Older Persons reminds the world to reflect on the contributions of senior citizens. For India, as we move toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, it is an apt moment to redefine what life after sixty means. It need not be a slow winding down but rather a new chapter of purpose and participation. National policies already acknowledge that senior citizens are a valuable resource, not merely a dependent group. Organisations like HelpAge India have been advancing this idea, shifting focus from welfare alone to empowerment and engagement. They highlight stories of resilience and contribution and are steadily building a new social narrative – one that sees ageing not as decline, but as an advantage.

The elderly of the twenty-first century are breaking free from old stereotypes. They seek continuity, connection, and contribution well beyond the conventional retirement age. A 2022 HelpAge India study found that nearly 40 per cent of elders wish to remain employed for

India's longevity dividend is rising

Indians are not just living longer; they are living healthier, more purposeful lives well into their eighties and beyond. What was once seen as the end of productive life is now emerging as an era of renewed engagement, creativity, and contribution



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Kiran Kamik is former  
President of NASSCOM  
and current Chairperson  
of HelpAge India;  
Rohit Prasad is CEO of  
HelpAge India

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as long as possible. A study found that while many young people still see the elderly as dependent, most also view them as wise and deserving of respect – signalling a generational shift. Older adults want to stay engaged, and younger Indians increasingly recognise their value. Though many elders still need welfare support – healthcare, pensions, and caregiving – a growing number, in both cities and villages, are ready to contribute meaningfully. They bring experience, emotional intelligence, and institutional memory, eager to mentor, volunteer, or begin anew. The question is whether India is ready to harness this immense human potential.

Despite this promise of longevity, the current ecosystem is still unprepared for active ageing. There are too few opportunities for elders to engage meaningfully with society. Structured platforms, inclusive workplaces, and enabling environments that recognise older adults as assets rather than burdens are urgently needed. Around the world, leaders well past seventy continue to shape nations. A study found that while many young people still see the elderly as dependent, most also view them as wise and deserving of respect – signalling a generational shift.

Older adults want to stay engaged, and younger Indians increasingly recognise their value. Though many elders still need welfare support-healthcare, pensions, and caregiving-a growing number, in both cities and villages, are ready to contribute meaningfully. They bring experience, emotional intelligence, and institutional memory, eager to mentor, volunteer, or begin anew. The question is whether India is ready to harness this immense human potential.Across India, China, Russia, and the United States, leaders well past seventy continue to shape nations. In business, science, literature, and the arts, countless older individ-

uals innovate and inspire. Yet beyond these visible figures lies a silent majority of seniors who quietly contribute every day-running small enterprises, growing food, cooking, or caring for grandchildren. It is for this vital generation that we must build an environment of dignity, purpose, and opportunity. To truly tap the elder asset pool, India must reimagine ageing across work, learning, and community life. Workplaces should evolve to include those wishing to continue beyond retirement, with flexible or project-based roles.

A "Senior Talent Exchange" could link experienced professionals with organisations that value their insight. Government programmes like "Senior Able Citizen for Re-employment in Dignity" are promising beginnings. Volunteering pathways must also be strengthened. Initiatives such as Tata Engage and Seniors in Seva show how retired individuals can contribute to education, environment, and community building. A national "Silver NSS," modelled on the National Service Scheme, could channel senior citizens' expertise into nation-building. Mentorship is another crucial frontier. Seniors can offer guidance to youth and startups, creating bridges of learning and empathy. Lifelong learning opportunities-digital literacy, financial awareness, and creative education-can help elders remain confident participants in a changing society.

Strengthening community-based elder collectives is equally essential. Senior citizens' associations and local networks can become platforms for economic and social engagement. Empowering these groups with training and digital access will help elders lead in livelihoods, governance, and social change. Creating such an ecosystem is not just about elder welfare; it is nation-building. The longevity dividend is here-India must now embrace it as a defining strength of its development journey.

From intent to institution: Building an inclusive India



UMA  
TULI

2ND OPINION  
THE PIONEER

When we speak of empowering persons with disabilities, conversations often revolve around empathy, awareness, and intent. But genuine transformation does not emerge from sentiment-it stems from structure. India now stands at a pivotal moment where inclusion must move from ideal to institution, from promise to practice.

At the recent three-day International Conference on Inclusion in New Delhi, five foundational pillars for inclusive transformation were outlined: Policy and Advocacy, Inclusive Education, Research and Innovation, Legal Empowerment, and Media and Public Sensitisation. Together, these recommendations form a roadmap to make inclusion a lived reality rather than a distant aspiration.

Policy must begin and end with the participation of those it seeks to serve. Persons with disabilities should be seen not as beneficiaries but as partners in shaping, implementing, and evaluating inclusion frameworks. The maxim "Nothing about us, without us" must move from slogan to policy principle. Experts stressed institutionalising participation-ensuring representation of persons with disabilities and their organisations at every policy table. Governments must understand that rehabilitation and inclusion are interlinked, not sequential. Rehabilitative measures should go beyond medical care to enable social and economic participation. Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) must be expanded across ministries, integrating education, health, employment, social protection, and digital access. Accountability must be built into every policy-because what is not measured is rarely achieved.

Education is the bedrock of inclusion. Despite progressive laws such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and the National Education Policy (2020), implementation gaps persist. The conference recommended time-bound, verifiable action plans for infrastructure accessibility, teacher training, and assistive technology. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework was emphasised as a cornerstone for inclusive classrooms.

Teacher preparation emerged as a key challenge. Disability inclusion must become a core competency for educators. Only when teachers adapt curricula and pedagogy will classrooms truly become inclusive spaces.

Innovation must drive inclusion through evidence-based models linking education, vocational training, and employment. Integrated pathways – from early intervention to entrepreneurship – should be scaled up. Research must advance assistive technologies and AI-driven accessibility tools to ensure no one is excluded from the digital age. Legal rights are meaningful only when enforced. Recommendations included expanding legal literacy, creating disability desks in courts, and ensuring barrier-free judicial environments. Judges, lawyers, and law students should receive specialised training on disability rights laws. Media must shift from portraying persons with disabilities as subjects of sympathy to leaders of innovation and resilience. Stories of empowerment must replace narratives of pity. Accessibility and disability inclusion should be the responsibility of every ministry, department, and citizen. Inclusion cannot be the mandate of one ministry alone-it must be a shared national mission embedded in governance, education, economy, and everyday life.

The writer is Founder and Managing Secretary,  
Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust

PIC TALK



Visitors admire captivating artworks at the 'India Art Festival', New Delhi.

PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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ZOHRAN MAMDANI'S VICTORY REDEFINES  
URBAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

The November 2025 mayoral election in New York City was historic, not only in symbolism but in its tangible implications. Zohran Mamdani, the city's youngest mayor and its first Muslim and South Asian leader, won decisively, reflecting a public demand for pragmatic governance grounded in everyday realities. While these measures are local in scope, their impact ripples outward, influencing national economic momentum and signalling trends that global markets watch closely. Historically, New York City has been a bellwether of social and political currents. From Fiorello La Guardia's reformist tenure in the 1930s to David Dinkins becoming the city's first Black mayor in 1990, the mayoralty has often mirrored

broader societal shifts. Mamdani's election continues this legacy, marking a milestone in religious, ethnic, and generational representation in American urban politics. His triumph, however, is layered with complexity. Allegations of anti-Semitic rhetoric and enduring partisan polarisation remind us that symbolic wins alone cannot cement credibility. Mamdani's victory offers a wider lesson: leadership must balance vision with accountability, rhetoric with reality, and policy with human impact. Local choices, grounded in empathy and responsibility, remain the most enduring currency of credibility-at home and abroad.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | NAINITAL

Please send your letter to the [info@dailypioneer.com](mailto:info@dailypioneer.com).  
In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Politics over patriotism divides citizens

Patriotism cannot be measured by whether someone sings a song or not. Singing Vande Mataram does not automatically make one a patriot, and refusing to sing it does not make one a traitor.

Our Constitution gives every citizen the freedom to express love for the country in their own way. There is no law stating that everyone must sing Vande Mataram. Unfortunately, political parties often turn symbolic issues into controversies to gain attention and support. Earlier, it was the Special Intensive Revision of voter rolls; now, it is Vande Mataram.

These issues stir emotions and divide people instead of solving real problems. Both the BJP and Congress use this issue to appease different groups. One side claims the song was unfairly shortened, while the other defends its decision on secular values.

Yet neither side speaks about employment, education, healthcare, or the environment-issues that truly matter to citizens. Real patriotism means caring for the country, respecting its diversity, and improving people's lives. India deserves meaningful debate and sincere progress, not loud arguments over a song. The sooner this unnecessary row ends, the better it will be for the nation.

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD

Protecting innocence, our moral duty

Child sexual abuse is a deep-rooted problem. Rape is the fourth most common crime against females in India. This shows our country harbours paedophiles seeking to exploit children.

Such people are monsters-often within the home, school, or neighbourhood, and well known to the victim. Several rape cases have triggered protests and led the Government to reform laws on sexual assault. The number of juveniles taking to crime has also risen alarmingly.

This is worrying in a nation where nearly 39 per cent of the population is under 18. Most children who are sexually abused never recover. Abuse cuts across linguistic, religious, and class boundaries, and is often committed by someone the child trusts. Today, the internet has worsened the danger by connecting paedophiles with children.

Yet it has also enabled victims to report abuse and seek help. Protecting children must be society's highest moral duty. Adults must act as guardians, not predators, if humanity is to survive its own cruelty.

Every child deserves safety, dignity, and justice. Let silence never protect the guilty. Let empathy become our law.

JAYANTHI SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Ending violence requires development

Apropos "New York elects hope over hate" (Nov. 7): Zohra Mamdani's victory is more than a political upset – it is proof that empathy and equity still matter in public life. In an era when populism thrives on outrage and fear, her election shows that moral clarity and inclusive governance can resonate even amid cynicism.

Mamdani's rise from community organiser to New York mayor underscores the power of lived experience over privilege. Yet her journey also reveals how identity politics distorts democracy-her faith and views on Gaza were attacked not for substance but for symbolism.

Democracy must evolve by judging leaders for integrity and fairness, not identity. America, like many nations, stands at a crossroads between anger and compassion. Mamdani's message-that leadership is service, not spectacle-offers a way forward.

When discourse turns divisive, civic participation grounded in empathy becomes vital. Governments must enable debate free from hate so that politics regains its true purpose. Mamdani's success calls for an evolution in civic discourse, urging us to judge leadership by integrity and fairness, not by the distortions of identity politics.

AVINASHIAPPAN MYILSAMI | COIMBATORE



# From dharma to dogma: The genesis of caste

If caste were only a social structure, reformers would have erased it. If merely legal, the Constitution would suffice. But caste is sustained in religious belief. It persists because it hides behind dharma's name

FIRST  
Column



ACHARYA  
PRASHANT

Every few years, incidents remind us that caste persists in different avatars. Our Constitution guarantees equality, yet divisions control how we live, marry, vote, and worship. Knowingly or unknowingly, we judge people by birth. Caste survives despite legal systems, educational programmes, and metropolitan anonymity. We wrongly believe social reform alone can fix what is mostly psychological. Caste is not a census number; it is a paradigm of evaluation. People constitute systems; as long as people do not inwardly change, systemic change will not help much.

## Caste and the Constitution

The Constitution guarantees liberty, equality, and fraternity. Yet caste persists because exclusivity, superiority, and material benefits are irresistible. Caste has become ingrained in habit, rooted in livelihood, kinship, and identity. Our constitutional principles are like rangoli patterns on the ground; they cannot change the soil underneath. That soil pervades everyday life. Many trades favour one community over another. Marriage remains mostly endogamous, with nine of ten unions within caste. Lineage maps out towns and villages. And when voting time comes, we rarely cast our vote; we vote our caste.

## When Caste Masquerades as Dharma

The persistence of caste cannot be explained by sociology alone. Laws may impact behaviour and reforms may change customs, but neither explains nor eradicates how caste has been sanctified in dharma's name.

For humans, consciousness is paramount. An insult to self-worth hurts far more than bodily injury. More than our flesh, we protect our 'feeling' of being right-our dharma. Dharma is the inner compass for right seeing and living, man's most sacred possession, guiding all people.

India's tragedy is that somewhere in history, caste and dharma were kneaded together like salt in dough. What began as a division of labour merged with notions of virtue and sin. Acting within one's caste became dharma; going outside it became sin.

If caste were only a social structure, reformers would have erased it. If merely legal, the



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AND PURANAS  
THAN THE  
UPANISHADS

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Constitution would suffice. But caste is sustained in religious belief. It persists because it hides behind dharma's name.

As long as this false dharma based on birth endures, caste will endure. What is worshipped will not be questioned, and what is not questioned will not change.

## The History of Caste: The Distortion of Dharma

To understand why caste became inseparable from Indian life, let us start from the beginning. The *Purusha Sukta* in the *Rigveda* speaks of an all-encompassing Being from whom everything comes. The hymn is metaphorical: the Brahmin came from His mouth, the Kshatriya from His arms, the Vaishya from His thighs, the Shudra from His feet. The symbolism points to how every form of work emerges from the same living whole, without any mention of hierarchy. The *Rigveda* differentiates between *Arya* and *Dasa*, indicating early social stratification. There is still dispute about whether *varna* was originally fluid or hierarchical. The goal is not to prove a perfect history, but to understand that any tradition has both liberating and limiting parts. It is our ethics which decide which thread we will follow next.

The *Upanishads* are the best argument against caste because they do not just reject birth-based differences; they also reject body identification. The *Vajrasuchika Upanishad* says that caste is not real. The *Bhagavad Gita* said that *varna* comes from *guna* (physical tendencies) and *karma* (choices), not birth.

But by about 400 BC, the *Dharmasutras* had become practical guides. Spiritual

symbolism had now become social distortion, and scriptures were starting to show inequality based on caste. Over time, these grew into *Dharmashastras*, remembered as law codes such as the *Manusmriti*. Here lay the tipping point. The *Purusha Sukta* was reread with harmful additions: claims of Brahmin superiority, prohibitions on hearing the Vedas, and punishments for non-compliance. The spiritual metaphor became a manual of social control.

Later, the *Puranas* reinforced these distortions. With the *Puranas'* dualistic approach came theism, and the social order was declared divinely ordained. Story after story contained subtle caste validation.

*Advaita Vedanta* maintained a steadfast intellectual stance: since all distinctions are illusory, how can caste be authentic? But as caste became the dominant social system, even *Advaita* found itself compromised between transcendental truth (paramarthik) and practical social order (vyavaharik). The peak of truth was made distinct from the foundation of living.

Caste's story, on the other hand, is not one of unbroken supremacy. Buddha did not accept the authority of the Brahmins. Bhakti poets Kabir, Ravidas, and Chokhamela ridiculed caste. Basava's Veerashaivism and Guru Nanak's teachings went against the idea of hierarchy. But Bhakti emphasised that all individuals are equal in the eyes of God, even as the unequal social hierarchy persisted unopposed.

These movements show that resistance to caste comes from within; it is not imported. But their idea of equality was often reab-

sorbed. What started as a spiritual mistake became a social law, then a habit, and finally heredity. The lesson is serious: to fight caste, you need both spiritual clarity and institutional change.

## The Cost of Discrimination

Endogamy, or marrying within one's own group, is at the heart of caste. It keeps bloodlines and a sense of belonging. But communities that marry within closed circles risk losing genetic diversity and cultural exchange. Yet caste continues not just as a belief but also as a source of profit. The priest's ritual authority gave him power over knowledge, while the landlord's caste position made his hold on land and labour even stronger. Endogamy preserved not just bloodlines but property.

## The Path Forward: Returning from Smriti to Shruti

The solution cannot principally come from courts; it must arise from understanding dharma itself. *Sanatan Dharma* was never meant to be a set of strict rules and inherited beliefs. It was the dharma of shruti, the direct revelation of truth. Over time, however, we began living by smriti, remembered law, and social convention.

As long as *Smriti* remained faithful to *Shruti*, it guided society; when it diverged, it enslaved society. Much of what we call "Hindu practice" belongs to this later distortion, drawn more from the *Manusmriti* and *Puranas* than the *Upanishads*. We talk about Vedic heritage, yet we live by hierarchies that came after the Vedic period.

This appeal to return to *Shruti* has a crucial objection: what if the texts themselves are

complicit? What if hierarchy is inherent rather than incidental?

We need to consider this criticism. If the *Upanishads* were enough, why did Vedantic philosophy persist alongside millennia of discrimination? Sublime texts alone do not ensure comprehension or accurate interpretation. We need culture and institutions to support scriptural wisdom's right interpretation and dissemination.

## Democratisation of Interpretation

We must ask who has the authority to interpret *Shruti*. In the past, only Brahmins, especially priests, had that right. But we cannot have the same gatekeepers who let the truth get distorted in charge of bringing it back.

It is important to make interpretation more democratic. *Shruti* should be accessible not as a privilege but as a birthright of consciousness. This means having translations of the *Upanishads* in vernacular languages, open discourse, and the recognition that spiritual realisation, not lineage, is what qualifies someone to understand the *Upanishads*. When religion diverges from philosophy, it transforms into a blind and violent force, serving as a tool of fear rather than liberation. The *Upanishadic* view starts where hierarchy stops. It sees the sacred not in birth but in realisation.

In Vedanta's light, every division dissolves. The way forward is cleansing religion, valuing truth over tradition, realisation over recollection. No interpretation of any scripture is valid if it violates the principles inherent in the Mahavakyas "Aham Brahmasmi" and "Tat Tvam Asi."

## The Path in Practice

It begins with modern, scientific education of the ego-self in school and college curricula. Students must be exposed to the process of biological and social conditioning, the matter of false identities, and the question "Who am I?"

Cultural change valuing the *Upanishads* over the *Manusmriti* must be promoted, as well as rigorous interpretation of *Smriti* texts true to the spirit of Vedanta. Religious institutions must open doors regardless of birth, and spiritual leaders should publicly reject caste-based privilege. Legal and economic measures too remain vital: affirmative action, anti-discrimination enforcement, and equalisation of opportunity. The soil is renewed not by one hand alone but by many-the teacher, the reformer, the legislator, and the rebel.

# Bridging the green finance gap: India's domestic progress and global positioning



VAIBHAV  
PRATAP SINGH

As the world confronts the climate crisis, the issue of finance has become increasingly prominent. Over the last decade, thematic finance, or capital raised for specific goals, has grown significantly, with green finance emerging as a key component. Climate finance, a subset of green finance, focuses on mitigation and adaptation projects under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), whereas green finance, a natural progression of socially responsible investing that began in the 1970s, supports environmentally beneficial initiatives and has a broader scope.

Globally, the financial flows for green investments have surged. According to the Climate Bonds Initiative, the issuance of Green, Social, Sustainability, and Sustainability-linked (GSS+) bonds surpassed USD 5.7 trillion by the end of 2024, with annual flows for the first time exceeding USD 1 trillion. Yet, this capital remains concentrated in developed markets. Cross-border flows to developing nations are limited, often influenced by macro-economic risks and geopolitical priorities. A key milestone came at COP29 in Azerbaijan, where the global climate finance commitment (originally by 2020, but revised to 2025) was revised from the original USD 100 billion annual target to USD 300 billion by 2030. Even so, estimates from the London School of Economics suggest that the world will need between USD 6.3 and 6.7 trillion annually by 2030, with emerging markets and developing countries (excluding China) alone requiring around USD 3.1 to 3.5 trillion.

For developing countries, the challenge lies not only in the volume but also in the structure of finance. OECD data show that in 2022, of USD 92 billion in public funds committed to developing nations, 69 per cent came as loans, 28 per cent as grants, and just 2 per cent as equity. The current debt-heavy nature of these flows increases the costs of energy transition projects, such as renewable energy initiatives, requiring significant investments. Competing domestic demands in developing countries highlight the need for more financial support from developed nations, further complicating the transition.

Through the comprehension of the above data, the World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks announced at COP29 a collective target to provide USD 120 billion annual-



ly in climate finance for low- and middle-income countries by 2030, including USD 42 billion for adaptation projects, complemented by an expected USD 65 billion from private-sector mobilisation.

Amid these global dynamics, India is demonstrating leadership both domestically and internationally. To meet its net-zero vision and climate resilience goals, India requires an estimated USD 10-20 trillion by 2070, primarily for decarbonising power, transport, and industry, with adaptation costs potentially reaching INR 57 trillion through 2030. In 2022 alone, India mobilised roughly USD 50 billion domestically for clean energy and efficiency projects. India first issued Sovereign Green Bonds in January 2023, raising INR 8,000 crore (roughly USD 1 billion) to finance projects like energy-efficient electric locomotives, showcasing the country's commitment to sustainable financing.

In addition to capital mobilisation, India is building market infrastructure that supports a green transition. A draft climate taxonomy has been released to classify climate-aligned activities, expected to promote a domestic green investor base. A domestic carbon market, anticipated by 2026, will help outline sectoral decarbonisation pathways, while regulatory frameworks, including climate disclosures for banks and green bond guidelines from SEBI and the RBI, aim to strengthen investor confidence. Globally, India has leveraged its role in G77+, BRICS, and the G20 to advocate for equitable financial flows, pressing for reforms in multilateral development banks and international credit rating

systems.

However, there are plenty of challenges in India's transition trajectory. Some of the finance-related challenges include a relatively shallow bond market. These challenges, coupled with implementation issues such as the poor financial health of electricity distribution companies, could limit the adoption of new projects in the country. Additionally, constraints on fiscal space and the creditworthiness of subnational entities may lead to a focus on priorities other than climate change.

Addressing these issues requires a phased national and subnational net-zero strategy across all sectors, with sector-specific policy and financial support packages. Improving the business case for emerging technologies, particularly in industrial decarbonisation, would allow extensive participation of foreign climate finance. Recycling capital from greenfield projects to bond-financed mature projects can further strengthen domestic financial flows.

India is at a critical point in its climate transition. The country is making efforts to close the gap in green finance and support the Global South by promoting domestic financing, developing market infrastructure, and fostering equitable international financial flows. These measures are necessary to ensure that India's net-zero transition is both achievable and sustainable.

The writer is the Executive Director, Climate and Sustainability Initiative (CSI)

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# Democrats wins in three states: A warning for Trump leadership



KS  
TOMAR

The recent gubernatorial and mayoral elections across New York, New Jersey, and Virginia have dealt a sharp political blow to Donald Trump and his Republican allies, while offering Democrats a decisive resurgence. The defeats of Trump-backed candidates signal more than just electoral setbacks-they mark a growing fatigue with Trump's brand of polarising populism and a possible turning point in America's political mood.

Once the most electrifying figure in conservative politics, Donald Trump now faces signs of waning influence. His endorsed candidates in New York, New Jersey, and Virginia failed to gain traction despite his energetic campaigning and online interventions. In New York, voters brushed aside his nominee's fiery rhetoric in favour of practical issues such as jobs, inflation, and urban recovery. Similarly, in New Jersey and Virginia, Democrats capitalised on the disillusionment of suburban and moderate voters who have grown weary of Trump's combative tone and disregard for institutions.

What was once a movement of anti-establishment energy now appears trapped in repetition. Many traditional conservatives feel estranged from Trump's dominance over the Republican agenda, while independents increasingly view his nominees as extensions of a personality cult rather than advocates of coherent policy. The Republican Party, long a disciplined electoral machine, seems caught between loyalty to Trump and the need to reinvent itself for an electorate demanding competence over charisma.

For Trump personally, these defeats serve as a reality check. Known for his impulsive decision-making and resistance to counsel, he now faces quiet but mounting pressure from within his own party to recalibrate. Republican strategists argue for message discipline, coalition-building, and a clearer economic agenda. Yet moderation is antithetical to Trump's brand-his political identity thrives on disruption, conflict, and the aura of unpredictability.

Still, the electoral backlash could compel at least tactical restraint. The American political mood is shifting from confrontation to pragmatism, and the Republican Party risks alienating swing voters if it remains anchored to grievance-based rhetoric. Whether Trump can evolve-or even sees the need to-remains an open question.

The American voter has delivered a nuanced verdict. Many still admire Trump's nationalism and

assertive stance on immigration, yet they are tired of chaos. The electorate increasingly prizes stability, predictability, and tangible governance outcomes over slogans and showmanship. Democrats, in contrast, offered disciplined campaigns focused on middle-class economics, infrastructure, and healthcare-issues that resonate more deeply than culture wars. Populist energy may ignite movements, but as these elections reveal, it cannot sustain governance without coherent policy. The contrast between the Democrats' steady messaging and the Republicans' dependence on Trump's personality underscores the limits of charisma as a political strategy. The Democrats' success suggests that moderation, not extremism, may once again define national discourse.

The impact of these results extends far beyond US borders, especially to Asia. For nations like India, Japan, and South Korea, Trump's unpredictability-marked by abrupt tariffs, inconsistent diplomacy, and transactional alliances-has long been a source of unease.

A less predictable America could accelerate this regional pivot. Domestic realities also contributed to Republican setbacks. Rising living costs, labour unrest, and disillusionment over unmet economic promises have eroded Trump's working-class base. His tariff-heavy trade policies, meant to protect US industries, have hurt small manufacturers and exporters instead. Meanwhile, his emphasis on loyalty over competence in appointments and his polarising stances on abortion, immigration, and minority rights have alienated suburban and educated voters.

America's evolving demographics amplify this shift. Younger voters, minorities, and suburban women increasingly align with Democratic values of inclusivity, climate responsibility, and social progress. Trump's nostalgic appeals to a vanished industrial America resonate less with this emerging electorate. The results expose the vulnerabilities of Trump's governance style: charismatic yet chaotic, forceful yet inconsistent. While his political instincts remain formidable, the aura of inevitability surrounding him has dimmed. For the Republican Party, this is a moment of reckoning: evolve or risk irrelevance. For the Democrats, it is a reminder that public trust must be earned through steady governance, not just opposition to Trump. And for the world, particularly Asia, it is a signal that America's internal struggle between populism and pragmatism is far from over-but for now, reason seems to be regaining its ground.

The writer is a senior political analyst and Ex Chairperson of the Standing Committee of All-State Public Service Commissions in India

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# Humans-AI jugalbandi is the way forward

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is proving to be one of the most transformative technologies in human history. Just like internet, AI is a technology wave that will make significant changes to established ways of doing things. And reflection of such transformation is always evident. From content writing to software coding; from customer service to process automation; AI-powered platforms are bringing in significant changes to multiple fields and sectors. As an outcome, several jobs are becoming redundant. According to a 2023 study by published by a team of researchers from

OpenAI— OpenResearch, and the University of Pennsylvania, several jobs would face the heat of AI-powered automation. Jobs like interpreters and translators; survey researchers; poets, lyricists and creative writers; animal scientists, public relations specialists; writers and authors; mathematicians; tax preparers; journalists; financial quantitative analysts; and web and digital interface designers are found out to be most vulnerable. Even jobs like data scientists are also listed in the report as a job, which will get impacted. Three years into the survey, many of its predictions have proved

true. Media industry has been disrupted badly across the world as generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, Perplexity handle most of the writing work and thereby have reduced demand for writers, editors and related jobs. In the technology industry, demand for coders is going down as AI tools write most of the codes. Similarly, entry level jobs- L1& L2 in the software services industry are getting reduced as the tasks get automated. In the era of Agentic AI, many processes across sectors like financial services, manufacturing, retail and others are being automated. Now,

the question comes that is an apocalyptic like situation in the job market going to happen? The reality is AI is considered as a black box, whose full-scale impact is not known to anybody. Recently, GenAI expert Ethan Mollick said, "I can tell you that no one knows anything." According to Mollick, nobody knows what the future holds in the job market. This seems to a realistic assessment. For instance, after initial euphoria over using novel platforms like ChatGPT, people are finding out that its reliability can't be foolproof. Moreover, while consumers are adopting AI at a faster pace, enterprises

are making cautious moves. Firstly, large scale job dislocations will not happen. This has already been seen in the last three years. Job shift will happen, albeit gradually. Secondly, after the initial enthusiasm fades, many established methods are likely to come back. During Covid, many predictions and projections were done about edtech, remote working and metaverse among others. However, they were found wrong in the post-pandemic period. So, all established ways of doing things are not going to be replaced by AI-powered platforms for sure. Thirdly, job dislocation is a sensitive

issue worldwide. Mass layoffs by technology firms in the US have become a political issue. In a developing economy like India, no government can afford serious dislocation of jobs, which has the potential of creating a civil unrest. Last but not the least, AI has already been creating new jobs across sectors. In the tech-driven world, developers' jobs may be getting redundant in some areas but the demand for AI, data, ML, and related engineering professionals is on the rise. All in all, the world will see AI doing a tango with humans and not a case of AI replacing humans in the long-run.

## LETTERS

### Time for a Vande Mataram pledge

It is good news that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for a yearlong celebration of 'Vande Mataram', a touching Bengali song written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee on November 7, 1875 that was first published in his 1882 Bengali novel Anandamath. Although, this is a wonderful gesture, the authorities should not overlook the negatives that beset the country. Even though technology keeps getting updated periodically, we continue to hear about road, train and aircraft accidents and helicopter developing glitches. The staff working in these segments must be made tech savvy so that they can effectively render their roles and help in reducing the spate of accidents. A similar measure is required to reduce the impact of catastrophes like cyclones and heavy rains. Damaged roads across cities, manholes, footpaths, water logging on roads due to rains, and neglect of healthcare and farmers issues are problems that people confront on an everyday basis. We hope the government se are addressed and resolved so that people are assured of safe living conditions as a true tribute to 'Vande Mataram'.

G Murali Mohan Rao, Secunderabad-11

### Sulakshana Pandit exemplified timeless charm

SAD to read about the demise of the graceful and melodious Sulakshana Pandit, the luminous star of the 1970s, whose voice flowed like velvet and whose presence lit up the screen with quiet elegance. She was 71 and leaves behind a legacy woven in music, memory, and timeless charm. Born into a family where music flowed naturally, she was a niece of Pandit Jasraj, it was no surprise that she began singing at the tender age of nine. Sulakshana Pandit made her silver screen debut in Uljhan (1975) opposite Sanjeev Kumar and went on to as the lead opposite Rajesh Khanna, Shashi Kapoor and Vinod Khanna.

Bhagwan Thadani, Mumbai

### Targeting armed forces is unbecoming of Rahul

THIS refers to your editorial 'Dragging armed forces into politics not good for the country' (THI, Nov 7). The caste narrative is being typified by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is crossing the 'Lakshman Rekha' as his schism. It has assumed irrational and diabolic proportions, with his penchant for pursuing divisive agenda to create unrest in the country. This time around, Rahul Gandhi needlessly dragged the armed forces into the political controversy to allege that a mere 10 per cent 'hold control over the Army' — meaning the upper castes hold sway. Such a statement from a the LoP in the Lok Sabha is a dangerous move. The defence forces protect the country's sovereignty. Individuals suited for different ranks are recruited in which neither caste or religion has any role to play. Rahul Gandhi was needlessly critical about 'Agniveer' recruitment; one wonders for how long he will harp on the anti-national card. No wonder Congress' credibility is touching a new-low in peoples' perception.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

### Landmark case: CJI must have recused himself

COURT adjournments in India indisputably lead to heavy piling of pending cases giving credence to the adage 'Justice delayed is justice denied.' However, all the cited causes for frequent adjournments need not be viewed as hackneyed and considered as run of the mill type. Chief Justice of India B R Gavai instead of being quick to point the finger at the central government for his disinclination to grant further adjournment in the hearing of the petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021, should have recused himself as the head of the bench in view of his fast-approaching retirement date considering the constitutional significance involved in the case.

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## BENGALURU ONLINE

### I know Siddaramaiah, there will be no leadership change: HDK

MYSURU: Commenting on the internal fight within the Congress government in Karnataka, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H. D. Kumaraswamy said on Friday that he knows Chief Minister Siddaramaiah well and there will not be any leadership change in the state.

He made the statement while speaking to the media in Mysuru before the start of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting. When asked about the Congress's internal leadership change and talk of a "November revolution", Union Minister Kumaraswamy said: "In November, there will be neither a revolution nor a vomit. I know Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's nature very well. I understood it even when he was in our party. So, there will be no change," he remarked. Responding to a query about Deputy Chief Minister and State Congress President D.K. Shivakumar's statement that he talks to god, Kumaraswamy said: "We don't know what god tells D.K. Shivakumar. That is between him and God." When asked about D.K. Shivakumar's claim that the Congress will return to power in 2028, Kumaraswamy replied: "I know what happened to those who earlier claimed they would rule for 10 or 20 years. Who knows what will happen in 2028?"

Asked about Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's announcement to make Mysuru a 'Greater Mysuru', the Union Minister said: "This is just part of the rivalry between Siddaramaiah and D.K. Shivakumar. To counter Shivakumar's declaration of 'Greater Bengaluru', Siddaramaiah announced 'Greater Mysuru'. 'Neither of this will happen -- they are simply wasting time with such political games', Union Minister Kumaraswamy added. Talking about the sugarcane crisis, Union Minister Kumaraswamy has levelled serious allegations against the Chief Minister, claiming that he has written to the Prime Minister in an attempt to evade his responsibility in resolving the problems faced by sugarcane farmers.

Read more at  
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

# The 'family first' politics must end



ROUND one of the Bihar Assembly elections is over. The fate of 1,314 candidates across 121 seats is now sealed in the EVMs. The second phase for 122 seats will be held on November 11, and the results will be announced on November 14.

This year's voter turnout stood at 65 per cent-the highest in Bihar's electoral history. While the NDA hails it as a vote for vikas (development), the Mahagathbandhan insists it is a vote for badlav (change). The Election Commission of India (ECI) called it "a victory for democracy," and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar lauded Bihar for showing the way through the Systematic Inclusive Registration (SIR) initiative, even as Tamil Nadu has gone to the Supreme Court opposing the programme.

But beyond numbers and claims, this election offers crucial lessons about Bihar — and India's — political culture.

Every party, old or new, promises "change". Yet, when it comes to practice, none are different. Take the Jan Suraj party, contesting its first election on the plank of "new politics." Its candidate list included several with criminal backgrounds — one of whom was even killed by a rival gang during campaign.

Even 75 years after Inde-

pendence, Bihar's political DNA remains trapped in a cycle of criminalisation, caste, and dynasticism. Parties that promise transformation end up replicating the same rot.

Politics in Bihar — and India — has become a family business. Power flows not from merit but from the surname and social privilege. Around 26 per cent of the outgoing Bihar Assembly belongs to political families. In the RJD, the number is even higher — about 42 per cent of its MLAs are said to be dynasts.

Defenders of dynasticism ask, "What's wrong if a politician's son or daughter becomes an MLA or MP?" The problem is not about the lineage but the feudal mindset it perpetuates. Birth becomes a privilege, not a responsibility. It breeds entitlement, weakens meritocracy, and creates an informal hierarchy where loyalty to the family outweighs loyalty to the people.

The Congress is a textbook example. The party has a "president," but everyone knows who the high command is. No spokesperson dares say that decisions rest with Sonia or Rahul Gandhi, even though it's common knowledge. What, then, is the party president — a leader or a rubber stamp?

The BJP too is not entirely free of family politics. But unlike other parties, dynasts in the BJP don't wield unchecked control over the organisation. They are subject to the party's discipline and hierarchy — a key difference.

Every opposition leader ac-

## Until then India will oscillate between 'vikas' and 'badlav'



Bihar's record voter turnout in this election may have showcased the strength of India's democracy, but it also exposed its deepest weakness — the stranglehold of dynastic politics. From RJD to Congress and even new entrants promising "clean politics," family rule remains the default setting. The result is a democracy run like a private enterprise, where lineage trumps leadership and slogans replace substance. As parties exploit caste and religion to mask their failures, the promise of real change keeps slipping away. Unless India's youth challenge this family-first culture and reclaim politics through merit and morality, the nation will continue to oscillate endlessly between Vikas and Badlav, never finding genuine Parivartan.

cuses the BJP of being "communal" while branding themselves as "secular." But scratch the surface, and you'll find that few understand what secularism truly means.

For many, secularism is reduced to tokenism — wearing a skull cap at a function or offering selective outrage. True secularism lies in equal respect for all faiths, not in appeasing one and mocking another.

Take 'Vande Mataram'. Some leaders from the Congress, SP and other parties like AIMIM still refuse to sing it, citing distorted interpretations of its lyrics — an attitude that dates

back to the Congress's 1937 decision to drop certain lines under pressure from a section of Muslim leaders. None of today's self-proclaimed secular leaders have the courage to explain the song's real spirit — one that inspired millions during the freedom struggle just because they still believe in politics of appeasement though Muslims and other minorities have proved that they are not goats to blindly vote on the basis of caste or religion.

The double standards are glaring. Hindu girls wearing earrings or small chains are barred from exam halls in

some states, but no one protests. However, if a Muslim girl is asked to remove her veil for identification, there's an uproar.

The same hypocrisy is seen in the way some leaders demonise Sanatana Dharma — a philosophy of duty, righteousness, and balance rooted in science and harmony with nature. Congress, RJD, and TMC leaders have compared it to "Covid" and "dengue," vowing to "eradicate" it. This is not secularism — its selective intolerance dressed as progressivism.

Every party claims to champion "young blood," yet when tickets are distributed, it's the same outdated, regressive leaders who corner the seats. Youth are asked to clap, canvass, and campaign — not lead.

Politics in Bihar continues to run on caste equations, money power, and muscle strength. Ideology is replaced by arithmetic. Parties claim to be "value-based," but their actions betray a deep cynicism — where winning matters more than principles.

The tragedy is that India's youth have accepted this as normal. The result: fresh energy and new ideas are blocked by an ageing political elite obsessed with power preservation.

All parties today speak the language of inclusion, yet their actions prove that India's democracy is far from immune to khatri. The danger is not from any external threat but from within — from leaders who place family above nation.

When politics becomes inheritance and ideology be-

comes convenience, governance suffers. The electorate is reduced to vote banks, divided by caste, religion, and freebies.

The fast-growing freebie culture is another symptom of this disease. Offering doles instead of development, and subsidies instead of self-reliance, has become the new political currency. It weakens institutions, discourages hard work, and converts citizens into dependents.

The cure for this malaise lies not in slogans but in citizens — especially the youth — refusing to play along. Young Indians must rise above caste and religion-based politics, enter public life with purpose, and reclaim democracy from the clutches of dynasts and dealers.

Political renewal will not come from the top. It will come when voters stop selling their votes for crisp notes, stop being silent spectators, and start holding leaders accountable.

The Election Commission called this election "a victory for democracy." It will truly be one only when Bihar's record turnout translates into record accountability.

Democracy cannot survive on symbolism. It needs substance — leaders who serve, not rule; parties that build, not divide; and voters who think, not trade.

Until that happens, Bihar — and India — will keep oscillating between Vikas and Badlav, without ever finding true Parivartan.

(The author is former Chief Editor of The Hans India)

# The twin engines: 2024-25 economic divergence in AP and Telangana

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

A decade after the bifurcation of the unified state of Andhra Pradesh, the two successor states—Telangana and Andhra Pradesh—have etched distinct economic identities. While the former, anchored by the cosmopolitan hub of Hyderabad, has cemented its status as a services powerhouse, Andhra Pradesh has strategically leveraged its coastal resources and focused on rejuvenating its agricultural and industrial base. The latest economic indicators for the fiscal year 2024-25 reveal a tale of two economies, both striving for growth but facing unique structural and fiscal challenges.

### Growth trajectories and economic size:

Both states remain pivotal to India's southern economic landscape. As per the latest official estimates, Andhra Pradesh's economic engine appears robust and accelerating. Its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices is projected to be around ₹16.06 lakh crore for 2024-25 (advance estimates). Crucially, the growth rate at constant (2011-12) prices is estimated to have jumped significantly to 9.24 per cent in 2024-25, a 6.18 per cent rise over in the previous fiscal year. This indicates a strong rebound in real economic ac-

tivity. In contrast, Telangana continues its high-growth trajectory, leveraging its robust services base. While the final 2024-25 figures are still developing, the state registered an impressive GSDP of approximately ₹14.64 lakh crore (at current prices) in 2023-24, with a current prices growth rate exceeding 14.2 per cent, ranking among the fastest-growing major states in the country.

Andhra Pradesh currently holds a marginally larger nominal GSDP, while Telangana maintains a stronger average growth rate, demonstrating the economic momentum generated by its focus on urban centers and high-value sectors.

Sectoral dominance: services vs. agriculture:

The fundamental difference between the two economies lies in their primary drivers, reflected in the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) composition:

### 1. Telangana-The services hub:

Telangana's economy is heavily skewed towards the Services sector, which contributed a massive 65.7% to the state's GSVA in the 2023-24 advance estimates. This dominance is driven almost entirely by the rapid expansion of Information Technology (IT), IT-Enabled Services (ITES), pharmaceuticals, and financial ser-



A significant common challenge for both states is the rising public debt, though the intensity of the burden differs. Andhra Pradesh carries a heavier fiscal load. Its total outstanding debt is projected to reach approximately ₹5,64,488 crore by the end of 2024-25 (Revised Estimates). Telangana's fiscal health, while superior to its neighbour, is also under scrutiny due to the rapid accumulation of liabilities. The state's public debt is projected to cross ₹5 lakh crore by the end of 2025-26.

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vices concentrated around Hyderabad. The Industrial sector contributed around 18.5%, with Agriculture and Allied sectors making up the remaining 15.8%. This structure gives Telangana high economic efficiency and resilience but also makes it highly dependent on global service demand and its capital city.

### 2. Andhra Pradesh-The agrarian base:

Andhra Pradesh presents a more balanced, albeit traditional, economic structure. The state is a major agricultural and aquaculture powerhouse. For 2024-25, the agriculture and allied sector is projected for a robust growth of 10.70 per cent (constant prices), making it a crucial source of growth. The services sector is also growing strongly, estimated at 8.53 per cent growth, while the industry sector is expected to grow at 6.58 per cent. AP's strength in food processing, fisheries (being

the country's largest shrimp producer), and horticulture provides a broad base but often leads to lower productivity and higher vulnerability to climatic shocks compared to a purely service-based economy.

### PCI and standard of living:

The sectoral divergence directly impacts the living standards of the residents, clearly favoring the state with greater services density.

Telangana boasts a significantly higher Per Capita Income (PCI), estimated at approximately ₹3,47,299 for 2023-24. This figure is way above the national average and reflects the high-paying jobs generated by the IT and pharma industries.

Andhra Pradesh, while showing strong improvement, has a lower estimated PCI of ₹2,68,653 for 2024-25. Although this is also higher than the national average, the difference of nearly ₹79,000 compared to Telangana highlights a struc-

tural gap in economic opportunities and wealth creation, largely stemming from its reliance on lower-value primary sectors.

### Fiscal health: The debt burden:

A significant common challenge for both states is the rising public debt, though the intensity of the burden differs. Andhra Pradesh carries a heavier fiscal load. Its total outstanding debt is projected to reach approximately ₹5,64,488 crore by the end of 2024-25 (Revised Estimates). Crucially, the state's Debt-to-GSDP ratio is estimated at a high 35.15% for the same period. This high ratio is a source of concern, as it limits the government's ability to undertake large-scale capital expenditure, with a substantial portion of revenue receipts being diverted towards interest payments.

Telangana's fiscal health, while superior to its neighbour, is also under scrutiny due to the rapid accumulation of liabilities. The state's public debt is projected to cross ₹5 lakh crore by the end of 2025-26. However, its Debt-to-GSDP ratio remains fiscally healthier, estimated at approximately 28.1% of GSDP for the 2025-26 budget estimates. The challenge for Telangana's new government is balancing massive new welfare spend-

ing commitments with fiscal prudence and ensuring that borrowed funds are directed towards asset creation rather than pure consumption.

### Outlook:

The economic journey of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana showcases two successful, yet contrasting, models of development. Telangana, the "Deccan Tiger," thrives on its established services ecosystem, delivering high PCI but facing the political imperative of expanding development beyond Hyderabad and managing its debt growth. Andhra Pradesh, the "Coastal Growth Engine," is leaning on its agrarian and industrial potential, achieving commendable real growth, particularly in its primary sector, but burdened by a higher debt-to-GSDP ratio and the persistent need to increase high-value manufacturing and service jobs to boost its PCI. For both states, the next few critical years will hinge on fiscal discipline, improving the ease of doing business to attract capital investment, and channeling resources into capital expenditure—the investments that drive long-term, sustainable growth rather than simply increasing consumption.

(The writer is a former OSD to former Union Civil Aviation Minister)