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BIREN ASKS MIZORAM CM TO PROTECT MEITEIS; MLAS IN NEW DELHI TO MEET PM



Call for peace: Women participate in a human chain in Imphal in protest against the ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur. PTI

Mizoram has populations of both Meiteis and Kukis and now also offers refuge to 10,000 displaced Kukis from Manipur; Zoramthanga says people of Mizoram are empathetic to Meiteis

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh called Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga on Sunday, asking him to take measures to ensure the security of the Meitei community in the neighbouring State. Mizoram has a sizeable population of Meiteis and Kukis settled in the State, and 10,000 people from the Kuki community displaced in the violence in Manipur have found refuge there as well.

The call to ensure the security of Meiteis in Mizoram came as dozens of BJP legislators from the Meitei community in Manipur arrived in the national capital over the past couple of days to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Manipur Chief Minister is expected in Delhi during the week.

Protesting PM's silence

On Sunday, scores of people in Imphal West protested against Mr. Modi's monthly radio show Mann ki Baat and questioned his silence on the Manipur situation. Protesters broke radio transistors and shouted, "No Mann ki Baat, yes to Manipur ki Baat."

In a tweet, the Mizoram CM said that he had spoken to his counterpart in Manipur over the phone at half past noon on Sunday regarding the ongoing violence in Manipur. Mr. Zoramthanga said that Mr. Singh had asked for his help in resolving the issue, with a hope that henceforth there would be a "peaceful coexistence".

"Furthermore, the request is to take means and measures for the Mizoram Meitei to settle peacefully," he said. "I also apprised the Chief Minister of Manipur that we the people of Mizoram are empathetic towards the Meitei and that the government and the NGOs have taken measures for peace and security. Therefore, for the Meitei who are residing in Mizoram, they have nothing to fear as long as they are in Mizoram. We shall go on to promote safety and security for them," he said.

His tweet also said that the Mizoram government "bemoans the ongoing violence" and has taken certain steps and measures to abate it. "I further stated that we are supportive of the steps taken by the Govt. Of Manipur and the Central Govt," he added.

Meanwhile, Rajkumar Imo Singh, a legislator from Manipur, said that 25 MLAs were now in Delhi. "A team of almost 25 MLAs have reached Delhi. We are meeting various Senior Central Leaders starting tomorrow to discuss in depth the current situation in Manipur and ensure that there is peace everywhere in the State. More stringent measures needs to be taken up to stop the ongoing conflict/violence and bring normalcy in the State," he said in a tweet.

More than 50,000 people have been displaced in the ethnic violence between the Kuki and Meitei communities that erupted in Manipur on May 3. Of these, about 10,000 displaced Kukis have fled to Mizoram. The Chin-Kuki-Zo communities, with shared ethnic ties, are settled across Mizoram and the hill areas of Manipur, as well as across the border in Bangladesh and Myanmar. A sizeable number of Meitei also live in Mizoram.

INDIAN DRUGS UNDER LENS IN SRI LANKA OVER ADVERSE EVENTS

Imported Indian drugs are at the centre of a medical storm in Sri Lanka following cases of complications and fatalities, reportedly after patients were administered medicines sourced from India.

On Friday, local media reported the death of a patient undergoing treatment at the Peradeniya Teaching Hospital, in Kandy district, after being given the Indian-manufactured anaesthetic Bupivacaine. The news sparked concern among local people, especially since the incident came less than two months after a pregnant woman was reported dead at the hospital, after being given an Indian anaesthetic drug.

Following the April incident, the Health Ministry suspended the use of that drug.

Unregistered suppliers

Even before these incidents, Transparency International Sri Lanka had filed a fundamental rights petition in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court, challenging the decision of the Cabinet and health authorities to procure drugs from unregistered suppliers.

The petition further questioned the national drug regulator's role in providing a waiver of registration to allow for the swift import of essential drugs. Gujarat-based Savorite Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd. and Chennai-based Kausikh Therapeutics were named as respondents.

Early in April, the Supreme Court granted leave to proceed in the case



Hard-hit: Sri Lanka's 'weak' regulatory system is said to be the 'main problem' behind the poor quality of medicines. REUTERS

and suspended imports from these companies. Indian drugs made the news yet again in May 2023, when doctors at the general hospital in Nuwara Eliya, in Sri Lanka's Central Province, reported complaints of visual impairment among 10 patients who were administered Indian medicines after eye surgery. The doctors cited the "presence of germs" in the eye medication as the reason for their patients' condition. Health authorities initiated an inquiry and withdrew the drug to prevent further use.

The series of incidents have brought Indian drugs under sharp scrutiny within Sri Lanka, including in the local media, which has urged the authorities to "nip a possible national-level health threat in the bud". Some highlighted the cases of the Gambia and Uzbekistan, where Indian-made cough syrups were recently linked to the deaths of dozens of children.

For years, India has been Sri Lanka's top source of medical supplies, accounting for nearly half of its pharmaceutical imports that in 2022 totalled about \$450 million. The trading link became more crucial in the wake of Sri Lanka's unprecedented economic meltdown last year, that led to critical shortages, including medicines. The crisis-hit country continued procuring essential medical supplies from India, through the credit line offered by the Government of India, as part of its nearly \$4 billion assistance to the island nation.

The death reported at the Sri Lankan hospital last week has brought

the quality of imported drugs, as well as the responsibility of Sri Lanka's national drug regulator, back to the national headlines.

When contacted, Minister of Health Keheliya Rambukwella said that authorities were conducting tests, adding that a report was expected soon. Sri Lanka has been importing eye medication from the same Indian supplier for seven years, well before the Indian credit line came into effect, he said. "Sometimes, there could be a quality failure in a particular batch, or a problem with storage or transportation. Sometimes, patients may not be aware of their allergy to a drug. We have withdrawn the drugs for now, and have also sought compensation from the Indian manufacturers," he told The Hindu.

Vinya Ariyaratne, president of the Sri Lanka Medical Association, said these recent cases reflect a larger "two-fold" crisis facing Sri Lanka's health sector: the persistent shortage of drugs on the one hand, and the serious concerns being raised about the quality of available drugs on the other.

The situation is "a national health emergency" requiring attention from the "highest levels", he told The Hindu. Despite the government importing medicines through the Indian credit line, shortages continue to affect Sri Lanka's public health care system. Several drugs administered for routine medication, as well as vital drugs prescribed for patients affected by cancer and kidney ailments, are in short supply across government hospitals, forcing low-income families to buy them from private pharmacies.

PREPAREDNESS PAYS OFF

India escaped the fury of the cyclone because of early warnings from the IMD

A potent cyclonic storm, Biparjoy, swept through Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan last week and while it did cause noticeable destruction to the infrastructure, scores of injuries and cattle deaths, there have been only two reported casualties. The India Meteorological Department began issuing its first reports on the cyclone's trajectory as early as June 8, and by June 11, the agency first indicated that the storm would not bypass India, as previously estimated, but would likely sharply swing towards coastal Saurashtra, Gujarat. The storm was also categorised as falling in the 'very severe' category — average wind speeds of over 115 kmph. The four days of lead time and an estimate of its strength gave enough time for district authorities in Gujarat to begin evacuating people — nearly 1,00,000 people in the coastal regions of the States were moved to shelters and close to 30 central and State disaster relief teams were kept ready. The railways cancelled several trains and fishermen too received advance warnings of the cyclone's impact, that kept them away from the sea.

There were power outages in 1,092 villages, about 5,120 electricity poles were knocked down and an estimated 186 transformers and 2,502 feeders were damaged in the Saurashtra-Kutch region. While shops and

establishments have reportedly re-opened, a full return to normalcy is still awaited. Experience from recent years shows that cyclones, whether in the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea, and their expected impact can be precisely gauged only 36-60 hours ahead. While a greater lead time should in theory mean more time for preparation, the nature of coastal infrastructure, inefficient communication networks and livelihood patterns, combined with the natural fury that cyclones bring about, mean that there are limits to precautionary measures. A cyclone in 1998, that struck Gujarat, reportedly killed nearly 3,000 people, and it can be safely said that India has moved beyond that era. However, there are newer threats on the horizon. Several studies warn that the Arabian Sea, thanks to the effects of global warming, is likely to be the fountainhead of many more severe cyclones. Frequent evacuation cannot be implemented as a permanent policy intervention and efforts must be made to ensure that coastal-regulation-zone norms that prescribe the kind of structures permissible at specific distances from the shoreline must be strictly implemented. The dwellings of rural, coastal inhabitants must be strengthened and natural bulwarks such as mangroves at wetlands must be buttressed for improved resilience.

MASSACRE OF INNOCENTS

Uganda and Congo must do more against Islamist militants

The killing of at least 41 people, including 38 students, in an attack on a school on the Uganda-Congo border by suspected Islamist militants is yet another cruel reminder of the worsening security situation in Africa. In recent years, Islamist and militant violence have picked up across the continent, from North Africa to Somalia, as governments look increasingly weaker. The border region between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo is no stranger to militancy. Ugandan authorities have blamed the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamist militant group that largely operates from the Congo, for the attack. According to the police, a group attacked the Lhubirha secondary school, located just two kilometres from the Congolese border, with machetes and grenades on Friday. Students were hacked, some them kidnapped. The dormitory set on fire and the school looted. In 1998, the ADF had attacked another school on the Congolese border, where some 80 students were burnt to death. The outfit, which declared its allegiance to the Islamic State terrorist entity, in 2016, utilises such attacks for their shock value and to use kidnapped students as child soldiers.

The ADF was formed in the 1990s by a number of militant groups opposed to the rule of Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni. Founded by a former catholic who had converted to Islam, the ADF's main recruiting plank was that

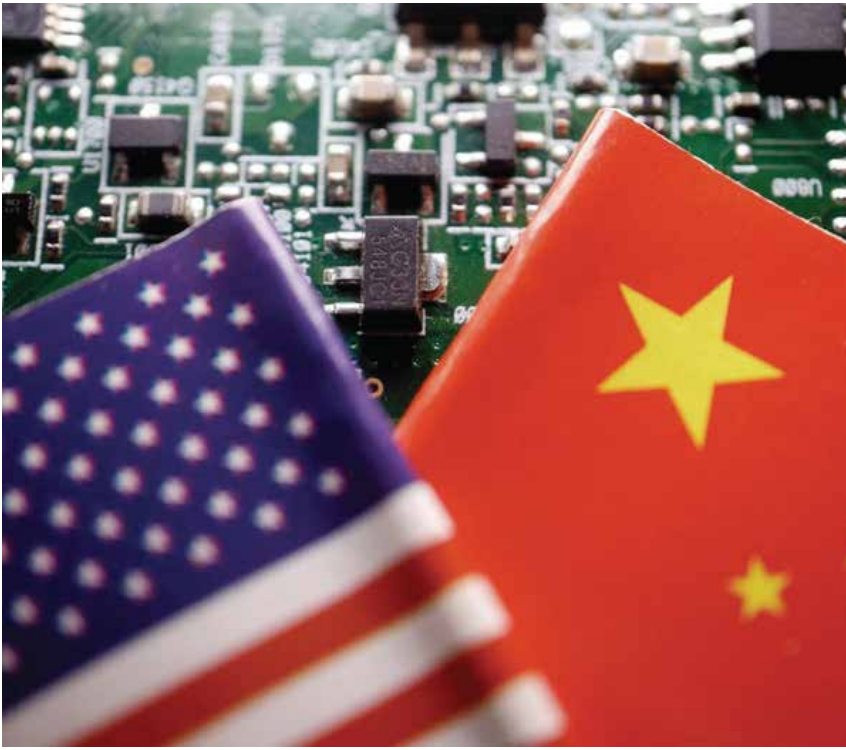
Muslims, who make up some 14% of Uganda's population (official figures), are being discriminated against under Mr. Museveni's rule. After the 1998 school attack, the Ugandan and Congolese armies launched a joint operation, which forced the ADF to relocate to the jungles of eastern DR Congo. The group became active again in recent years as different al Qaeda and Islamic State-linked outfits emerged stronger in Africa, particularly after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization invasion of Libya that brought down the regime of Muammar Qadhafi, caused a civil war and triggered a proliferation of weapons in the hands of militant groups across the continent. The situation in Uganda is particularly grave. Under Mr. Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, the country has never been stable or peaceful. He has presented himself as an ally in the war against terror, while at the same time, turning his regime more repressive at home. In neighbouring Congo, another civil strife-hit country, the vast expanses of lawless eastern parts are a safe haven for militant extremists. Uganda and the Congo say they are committed to fighting militants including the ADF, but those words are written in sand unless the regimes take urgent measures to improve the quality of governance, implement law and order and launch joint operations, with help from international actors, against the growing networks of militants in the region.

CHINA'S 'DEVELOPMENTAL' SECURITY APPROACH

The story so far:

Late in May this year, the Cyberspace Administration of China announced that the U.S. chip giant Micron, which had been under investigation

by the Cyber security Review Office, failed to obtain a security clearance, and that its products posed a threat to national security. Consequently, business operators tied to critical information infrastructure were advised not to procure



Why the Chinese authorities are cracking down on U.S. based companies and domestic firms dealing with overseas clients? Is the U.S.- China rivalry at the root of these aggressions? How is China trying to balance development and security concerns? What is the view from India?

Micron products. This is the latest incident in a series of crackdowns by the Chinese government against American consultancies and domestic firms dealing with overseas clients.

What are the other instances?

Two weeks before the Micron announcement, the Chinese authorities had raided the offices of Capvision, a Shanghai-based consultancy firm that connects lakhs of China-based experts with backgrounds in defence, military, finance, high tech, trade, energy, and medicine among others, to mostly overseas clients. Capvision was charged by Chinese security authorities with using economic inducements to steal state secrets and facilitating the transfer of sensitive information sourced from its experts, to its foreign clients. In the process, the company was found guilty of violating several laws relating to national security.

Before that, in April this year, the offices of American consultancy firm Bain and Co. were raided and its employees in China questioned. While no employee was detained, the authorities seized computers and phones from its offices. In March too, Chinese authorities raided another American firm called Mintz, and detained some of its employees, forcing the firm to shut its two offices in Beijing. Meanwhile, the Chinese government has been stalling several mergers and acquisition applications involving foreign entities, which has, in turn, led to mounting operational costs for foreign businesses.

Why is the Chinese government cracking down on such firms?

In October 2022, the U.S. tightened export controls which would make it harder for China to obtain and manufacture advanced computing chips and supercomputers. Therefore, at the outset, the actions by Chinese authorities appear motivated by vengeance against the U.S.-led efforts to constrain China's tech advancement, as has been widely reported in the Western media. By heckling American firms and restricting their access to the vast Chinese market, Beijing seeks to capitalise on the divergence that exists between the U.S. administration and the American business community over the former's China policy. Observers felt vindicated when Nvidia's founder and CEO, Jensen Huang, expressed his reservations over U.S.'s export control measures against China. He feared a fallout on Nvidia's revenues as China contributes to around 11% of its global earnings. In his statement to the Financial Times, Jensen even called China more valuable than Taiwan, owing to its irreplaceability as a large market. The crackdown on consultancy and due diligence firms is likely to have ripple effects across all overseas businesses operating in China. Businesses rely on consultancy firms to navigate the regulatory environment which may prove to be challenging, especially in a country like China where regulatory unpredictability and uncertainty have been a norm in the last few years.

However, the above perspective amounts to a limited understanding of the motives of the Chinese authorities. There is a domestic component to these decisions that is different from the one that has largely been featured by mainstream media.

Why has security come to the forefront in Chinese politics?

Beijing has justified each of the above-discussed actions using national security concerns. However rhetorical as it may sound, the reality is that threat to security has become a ubiquitous concern in all aspects of governance in China.

Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese discourse on national security has repeatedly underlined that the idea of 'development' cannot be isolated from that of 'security'. On numerous occasions, including at the 20th Party Congress last year and the Two Sessions (the annual plenary sessions of the National People's Congress and of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) this year, Mr. Xi emphasised the need to balance development with security. At the recently concluded meeting of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC), Mr. Xi said, "it is necessary to ensure the new development pattern with the new security pattern, actively shape a favourable external security environment for China in order to better safeguard its opening up and push for a deep integration of development and security." It is fairly evident that Mr. Xi wants the developmental agenda to be qualified by security.

China's incessant attempt to securitise its development has meant that non-traditional security issues have acquired greater significance in its developmental narrative. And among all the non-traditional security issues, cybersecurity and data/information security seem to concern Chinese authorities the most. This is apparent in their recent attempts to strengthen cybersecurity and counter-espionage laws.

The recently amended Counter-Espionage Law that will come into effect from July 1, 2023, aims to treat all "documents, data, materials, and items relating to national security and interests," at par with state secrets, thus, broadening the scope of espionage. It also expands the definition of espionage to include cyberattacks against state organs or critical information infrastructure. The revised law also empowers authorities to seize data, electronic equipment, information on personal property, and even ban border crossing. Following up on the above amendments, China also unveiled in late May its position paper on Global Digital Governance that calls upon States to "respect the sovereignty, jurisdiction and governance of data of other States," and to "not obtain data located in other States through companies or individuals without other States' permission." A combined reading of these documents with the Comprehensive National Security concept, first floated in 2014, suggests that the concept of national security has permeated each and every aspect of governance and developmental strategy during Mr. Xi's reign.

The recent crackdowns are thus reflective of this approach to 'developmental' security. The existing view within the Chinese administration is that several foreign businesses operating in China are indulging in espionage. The suspicion is that due diligence firms and consultancies are leveraging their vast networks to extract sensitive data under the garb of free exchange of information. The authorities also suspect the installation of backdoors by U.S. tech companies at the behest of their government.

What next?

China now, finds itself in an odd spot where development and security are applying diametrically opposing forces, thereby creating a regulatory dilemma. While development requires "reform and opening up," and creating a business-friendly environment as the Party says, the need to balance development with security warrants enforcing restrictive measures which impinge upon free economic activity. The victims of the recent crackdowns not only have the U.S.-China competition to blame but also China's evolving national security discourse. The fact that Chinese authorities clarified that their actions against Micron are an isolated case and all foreign businesses are welcome so long as they comply with domestic regulations, supports this idea. Nevertheless, the blurring of lines between development and security are likely to hurt foreign business sentiment in the long run.

However, from India's perspective, one cannot help but notice the outright contradiction that China's discourse presents when it comes to its relationship with New Delhi. While Beijing insists on the need to hyphenate development with security, it calls on India to keep the border issue (security) at its proper place and not let it derail the overall relationship (economics and development) with China.

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NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTION RISES 11.2% TO ₹3.8 LAKH CRORE, SAYS FINANCE MINISTRY

Net direct tax collections have risen 11.2% in the first two-and-a-half months of this financial year, with advance tax inflows for the first quarter of 2023-24 increasing 13.7%, the Finance Ministry said on Sunday.

As of June 17, the gross direct tax kitty had grown 12.7% over the corresponding period last year to cross ₹4.19 lakh crore. Of the gross collections so far, advance tax accounted for ₹1,16,776 crore, while tax deducted at source was ₹2,71,849 crore. Inflows from self-assessment tax stood at ₹18,128 crore, while regular assessment yielded ₹9,977 crore.

Tax refund

With refunds of over ₹39,500 crore made to taxpayers, the net tax kitty since April 1 stood at almost ₹3.8 lakh crore. Notably, the tax refunds so far this fiscal are 30.1% higher than the corresponding period of 2022-23.

"The net direct tax collection of ₹3,79,760 crore includes corporation tax (CIT) at ₹1,56,949 crore (net of refund) and personal income tax (PIT), including securities transaction tax (STT) at ₹2,22,196 crore (net of refund)," the Ministry said.

Within the advance tax revenues, CIT accounted for ₹92,784 crore, while PIT payers paid in ₹23,991 crore.

CORPORATE MINISTRY TO CONSULT PRACTITIONERS ON MCA-21 GLITCHES

With the critical Corporate Affairs Ministry portal, MCA-21, still ridden with glitches, hampering everything from registration of new firms to routine filings by existing firms, the Ministry has decided to hold parleys on the challenges faced by industry.

"Stakeholders' consultations" on the issues related to the MCA-21 Version-3 portal will be steered by the Ministry's top official, Secretary Manoj Govil, with compliance practitioners in Chennai on Tuesday and Hyderabad on

Wednesday.

A team from LTI Mindtree, the IT vendor responsible for developing the portal, will also be part of the meetings, where members of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and The Institute of Company Secretaries of India are expected to flag the functionalities that are deterring smooth filing of corporate reports.

BLINKEN ARRIVES IN BEIJING AS U.S. AND CHINA LOOK TO MEND FRACTURED TIES



Ties reset: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing on Sunday. REUTERS

Both sides emphasise the importance of maintaining open channels of communication; Beijing calls for more exchanges including mutual visits by students, businesspeople; it describes Taiwan as the most pronounced risk in their relationship

Antony Blinken landed in Beijing on Sunday in the first visit by a U.S. Secretary of State in five years, as the world's two biggest powers attempt to manage an increasingly fractious relationship.

Mr. Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang held talks on

Sunday for several hours before a working dinner. Mr. Blinken said following the talks that both sides "discussed how we can responsibly manage the relationship between our two countries through open channels of communication". They emphasised "the importance of diplomacy and maintaining open channels of communication across the full range of issues to reduce the risk of misperception and miscalculation," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

A Chinese statement said that an agreement was reached on encouraging more exchanges, including on increasing passenger flights, and more mutual visits by students, scholars and businesspeople. "Both sides agreed to jointly implement the important common understandings reached by the two Presidents in Bali, effectively manage differences, and advance dialogue, exchanges and cooperation," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, adding that "both sides agreed to maintain high-level interactions" and Mr. Blinken invited the Chinese Foreign Minister to the U.S.

Taiwan question

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Mr. Qin also "expounded on China's firm position and raised clear demands on the Taiwan question and other core interests and major concerns" describing the Taiwan issue as "the most consequential issue and the most pronounced risk in the China-U.S. relationship".

A breakthrough is not expected in any of the key issues recently straining ties, from Taiwan and trade to the South China Sea and human rights. That the visit is taking place is, in of itself, being seen by both sides as a sign of much-needed progress.

A meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping could take place on Monday which could pave the way for U.S. President Joe Biden to meet with the Chinese President later this year. The G-20 Summit in New Delhi in September could provide the platform for their first meeting since Bali.

ISRAEL'S NETANYAHU TO MOVE AHEAD WITH JUDICIAL REFORMS



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday he would pursue "active steps" on a contested judicial overhaul this week after what he described as months of wasteful compromise talks with the political Opposition.

Mr. Netanyahu's televised remarks to his Cabinet were spare on detail and come after Opposition leaders last week suspended negotiations pending the formation of a key panel for selecting judges.

Unveiled soon after Mr. Netanyahu's religious-nationalist coalition took power in late December, the sweeping reforms would roll back some Supreme Court powers and give the government more control over appointments to the Bench. The proposed legislation had set off unprecedented street protests earlier this year.

"We gave a month and then another month and then another month — three months. Their (Opposition)

representatives did not agree to the most basic understandings. The intention was just to waste time," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"We will meet this week and commence active steps ... in a way commensurate with the mandate we were given," he said.

Lapid's remarks

WHAT INDIANS SHOULD BE SAYING TO THE U.S. ON JUNE 21

When this April India surpassed China as the world's most populous nation, commentators were quick to declare this the "Indian Century", a plaudit primarily reflecting the so-called "demographic dividend". By 2030, the ratio of India's working-age population to its total population will reach 70%, the highest of any large economy in the world. This is a workforce of extraordinary magnitude — fully one quarter of the globe's — and a consumer class of equally extraordinary potential.

A powerhouse of the world

There have been other Indian centuries, however — prior to the colonial depredations suffered before regaining independence in 1947. For a millennium before the arrival of the British, India, along with China, was a powerhouse; by the 1600s it is estimated to have possessed up to a quarter of the world's production capacity. The imperial capital in Delhi was the destination of ambassadors, from the court of King James I to that of the Ayutthaya emperor of today's Thailand; of poets and painters and musicians from across central and west Asia, and of craftsmen from as far afield as Italy, who brought with them the pietra dura artistry that adorns the Taj Mahal.

That century was only the last of many marked by breathtaking achievements. How even to begin an inventory? The invention of zero, making possible algebra and calculus and eventually the computer; the perfection of linguistics, matched by the West only in the 20th century; a language landscape vastly unlike Rome's or China's, which saw writers in dozens of languages producing works of transcendent beauty; weavers who clothed the world as far as Africa and beyond; metallurgists who made corrosion-resistant iron 2,000 years ago. And farmers who sent new cereals and cumin, cardamom, and other cultivars into the world — who also demonstrated how to live in harmony with animals hunted to extinction everywhere else.

Colonialism eroded most of the traditions that made India great, but after four decades of the most creative mobilisation for freedom in history, the country began in 1947 to reclaim its patrimony. Although the democratic constitution of independent India may have been written by an Indian who had studied at Columbia University, B.R. Ambedkar, the republican practices and federalism inherent in it have much deeper roots in the country; and while independent India's self-description, "unity in diversity," may have become a mere slogan today, it was exemplified throughout the long historical record of India's pluralism. The remarkable achievements of India's distant and more recent past, above all, its singular achievement of learning to live with religious and cultural differences, are now at risk, under the government of Narendra Modi. From the moment he became Prime Minister in 2014 (after a youth spent in the ranks of a paramilitary organisation avowing Hindu nationalism, and then a long stint as Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat, where he was accused — and is still suspected by many despite his acquittal by courts — in the mass killing of Muslim citizens in 2002, Mr. Modi initiated a practice of intrusive state power and majoritarian nationalism that is unlike anything India has ever seen, while destroying much of what made India great.

A systematic campaign

Last year, watchdog groups (including Genocide Watch, echoed by a Georgetown University study) issued warnings about the organised oppression of India's Muslims (14% of the population, nearly 200 million). It cited, in particular, the 2019 revocation of the special autonomous status of Kashmir, ending seven decades of protection; the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens, together aimed at expelling Muslim refugees from Bangladesh but also reducing to second-class citizenship, millions of Indian Muslims, who lacked documents that many Indians lack; and anti-conversion laws, which the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has found to be inconsistent with human rights.

And this is to say nothing of daily arrests and detention of Muslims on no lawful grounds, and repeated beatings and lynchings of Muslim shopkeepers and tradesmen. In a word, Mr. Modi's government persecutes Muslims both by the construction of laws and governmental practices that violate human rights, while maintaining silence over the atrocities committed against them by the lethal energies its own religious nationalism has unleashed.

Under Mr. Modi, the government has pursued a systematic campaign to destroy civil society, outlawing non-governmental organisations (NGOs),

But Opposition leader Yair Lapid suggested Mr. Netanyahu could not be certain of a majority, after some members of the coalition voted in a secret ballot last week in favour of an Opposition lawmaker joining the Judicial Appointments Committee.

undermining universities, think tanks, and research centres, and harassing the independent press.

Last winter in its documentary, 'India: the Modi Question', the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reviewed a British government document from 2002 that found Mr. Modi "directly responsible" for the slaughter of Muslims during the Gujarat riots, and that the violence had "all the hallmarks of genocide". Two months later, the Mumbai and New Delhi offices of the BBC were raided by the Central Board of Direct Taxes, citing "irregularities and discrepancies" in the broadcaster's taxes.

Comparable tactics have been used against environmental groups, including Oxfam India, Environics Trust, and the Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), whose director, the lawyer Ritwick Dutta, has been persecuted by the Central Bureau of Investigation, as well as against the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), India's leading public policy think tank. In each case, their foreign contribution licence was cancelled, effectively ending their capacity to function.

There has been a concentrated attack to undermine the intellectual and administrative autonomy of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, the most distinguished institution of higher education in the country, and research institutes such as the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta, long admired for their intellectual freedom, have suddenly had their budgets slashed by the central government.

The independent press has virtually been silenced. "Press Freedom Violations in India" (a report from the International Press Institute) identified 83 violations between April and September, 2022. "Over the past eight years, the Modi government and BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] supporters have attempted to silence independent media through attacks and repressive laws.... At least 18 journalists faced physical attacks and violence during this monitoring period, with cases involving both state and non-state actors."

The Adani Saga

Some of these abuses and assaults have targeted legitimate opposition to the activities of one company: Adani Enterprises, whose director is a Modi intimate.

This global conglomerate, headquartered in India, has been much in the news. In November, The New York Times reported that the company's president, Gautam Adani, was named the richest man in Asia. Soon thereafter a New York financial research firm demonstrated that he had been running "the largest con in corporate history". What should also have been making news are Mr. Adani's coal mines, and his close ties to Mr. Modi.

NGOs have been investigating Mr. Adani's staggering environmental destruction — including the devastation of some of the most biodiverse regions of the world, in eastern India and the wholesale elimination of villages and indigenous lifeways — in his pursuit of some of the world's dirtiest coal. Yet, it is Mr. Adani's critics whom the government has punished, as The Washington Post has reported, not the con that he perpetrated, nor the Prime Minister, who has strenuously helped him secure the lucrative coal deals.

The religious persecution, the attacks on NGOs, independent research centres, and the press are bad enough. The furthering of environmental chaos, of potentially global proportions but particularly catastrophic for India itself — Mr. Adani has been named by Oxfam as the third most culpable carbon billionaire in the world — shows the true scope of the problem.

As Chief Minister, Mr. Modi was denied a visa to the United States in 2005 because of his perceived involvement in the Gujarat pogrom. This week he arrives on a state visit to the United States, despite the fact that his human rights and civil liberties record since being elected Prime Minister in 2014 is in many ways worse. The plain fact is that this record has been totally ignored by Presidents Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden. If, as the White House has said, the Indian leader will be visiting in order to "strengthen our two countries' shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific", America's leaders must start talking seriously about what freedom and openness now mean in India. India will only inaugurate an 'Indian century' if its great traditions of pluralism and respect for diversity can be recovered.

RESPONSIBILITY AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

Over the last few weeks, there has been an increasingly vocal campaign to unseat the President-Designate of COP28, Minister Sultan Al Jaber of the host nation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This includes a recent letter from United States and European parliamentarians calling for his removal on the grounds that he is CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. As representatives of developing countries in the climate change front line, i.e., Bangladesh and the Maldives, and as leaders of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, a group of 58 of the world's most climate vulnerable countries hosting 1.5 billion of the world's poorest people, we know only too well the urgency of the climate challenge. We have endured climate-related economic losses of \$500 billion in the last two decades alone.

This is a journey of unity

However, we also recognise that this journey, towards a clean energy future, is one we must embark on together. Fossil fuel-dependent economies are critical to these efforts, and they clearly have a more difficult task defining their energy transition strategy. It is important to avoid division and we must continue to engage our fellow parties at COP28 and elsewhere on the best way forward for their economies and for the planet.



Sultan Al-Jaber has led Masdar, the renewable energy company which has made huge investments in solar and wind projects. The UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant, which was recently opened, generates 6 gigawatts (5.6 or 5.8?) of clean power. Masdar and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) recently signed an agreement aiming to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030. This is leadership of our global clean energy future, in the most

practical sense.

Finance will be crucial for COP28. Our programme of Climate Prosperity Plans, including the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan adopted in Bangladesh, seeks to generate inward investment of tens of trillions of dollars in building clean energy infrastructure. This climate prosperity agenda recognises that economic growth for the poorest countries is non-negotiable, and that our prospects should not be curtailed so that the rich countries can keep on polluting.

Luckily we do not seek coal, oil and gas; we seek electricity, transport and industry, all of which can now be increasingly delivered with clean energy. We seek the UAE's leadership in helping secure investments supported by sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks which can deliver the huge boost in climate prosperity we need.

Debt is a barrier

Many of our nations are also crippled by unsustainable debts, including debts which are becoming unpayable due to climate damages largely caused by emissions elsewhere. Rather than going one by one over the financial cliff, we urgently need a collective approach which recognises the debt problem and the barrier it now poses to clean energy investment and climate adaptation. Sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks (MDBs) could assist in de-risking restructured debts and insuring re-issued climate bonds, as Sultan Al-Jaber has suggested. Sultan Al-Jaber can now demonstrate to Europe and North America what leadership really means by explicitly signalling to sovereign wealth funds and MDBs that he wants to see their full participation. We further call on the UAE leadership for a clean energy target starting in 2025, transforming the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company into the Abu Dhabi Clean Energy and Grid Company by 2030, and towards global financial reform including of the International Monetary Fund.

Thus, finance continues to be central to the COP outcome. The Loss and Damage fund that was secured last year in Sharm El-Sheikh must not be just be another empty bank account, and fossil fuels-dependent economies can demonstrate their commitment to a shared future by making subscriptions to support funding for climate damages in the most vulnerable countries, well in advance of the COP.

There are no winners and losers in a global climate breakdown, the oil industry included. As representatives of the most climate vulnerable developing nations, we call on American and European parliamentarians to reconsider their position. Instead of seeking to exclude relevant parties and stakeholders, we believe everyone should participate in decisions with such important ramifications.

Holding COP28 in the UAE, and with Sultan Al-Jaber as COP President-Designate, may well be an opportunity to engage the fossil fuels industry to make some significant and quantifiable commitments to emissions cuts and climate action in general. Time is running out, and we all need to work together to save the 1.5°C Paris target before it is too late.

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