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INDIA GETS NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE; PM SAYS IT'S SYMBOL OF ASPIRATIONS

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated India's new Parliament building, and called it a symbol of the "aspirations" of 140-crore citizens and a vehicle that will drive India in the next 25 years towards its goal of becoming a "developed country" to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the nation's Independence.

The thrust of the Prime Minister's 35-minute address was about casting a "new India" that had left behind a "slave mentality" and was moving forward. The word "new" figured more than 40 times in his speech.

"It is not only a building. It is a reflection of the aspirations and dreams of 140 crore Indians. This is the temple of our democracy giving the message of India's determination to the world," he said.

Mr. Modi said there came a time in the history of every country when consciousness was awakened anew; the last such phase was 25 years before India gained Independence.

"In 25 years, India will complete 100 years of its Independence. Together, we have to make India a developed nation in these 25 years. In the next 25 years, the new laws to be made in this new building of Parliament will make India a developed India," he said.

The new Parliament House will be a witness to the rise of an "atmanirbhar bharat" (self-reliant India), he said, adding that the new building was an example of the coexistence of the ancient and the modern.

Elaborate ceremony

The inaugural ceremony was conducted in two phases. In the morning, Mr. Modi — dressed in a dhoti and kurta and accompanied by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla — offered floral tributes to the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the premises.

Then, amid Vedic chants by priests, he performed Ganapati homam. After prostrating before the Sengol, he sought blessings from the high priests of various adheenams in Tamil Nadu with the sceptre in hand. He then carried the Sengol in a procession to the new Parliament building, amid tunes of nadaswaram and chanting of Vedic mantras, and installed it in a special enclosure on the right side of the Speaker's chair in the Lok Sabha chamber.

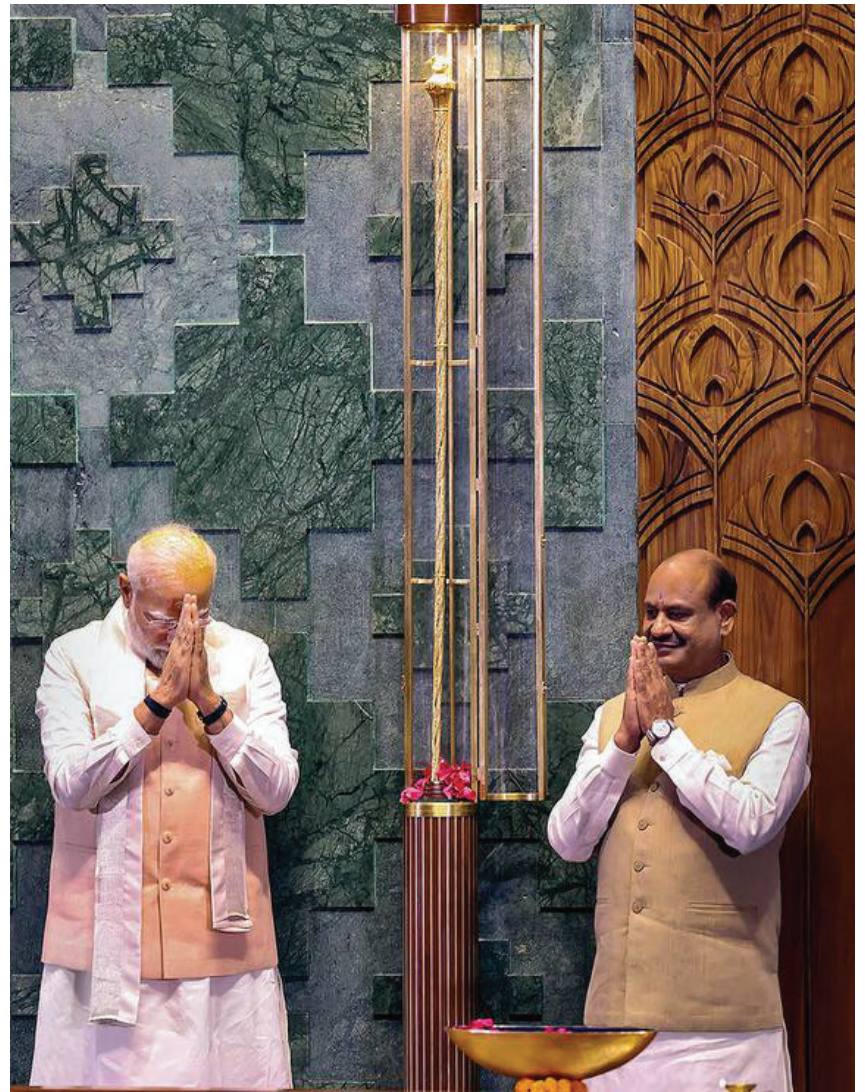
A multi-faith prayer was also held to mark the occasion. Mr. Modi felicitated some of the workers with shawls and souvenirs for their key role in the construction of the building.

The second part of the ceremony began at noon when Mr. Modi, along with Mr. Birla and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, entered the new building.

MPs from 22 Opposition parties were absent. Former President Ram Nath Kovind, Supreme Court judges, Chief Ministers Y.S. Jagan Reddy, Yogi Adityanath, Eknath Shinde and Neiphu Rio and other distinguished guests attended the event.

Mr. Modi recited a Sanskrit shloka to underline that luck runs out for those who stop moving forward but the fate of those who keep moving continues to soar, in an oblique reference to the Opposition leaders who were criticising the construction of the new Parliament. He said the ultramodern complex was the "need of the hour" in view of the expected increase in the number of MPs. Under attack from the Opposition for bringing into Parliament the "monarchical" Sengol and for his alleged autocratic ways, the Prime Minister spent a significant amount of time talking about "democracy". "Democracy is not just a system for us, it is a culture, an idea, a tradition." The Sengol, he said, was considered a symbol of the "kartavya path" (path of duty), "seva path" (path of service) and "rashtra path" (path of the nation).

While President Droupadi Murmu and Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar were not invited to the event, messages from them were read out during the ceremony. Ms. Murmu said, "The architects of our Constitution



Sceptre in place: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Speaker Om Birla after installing the Sengol in the Lok Sabha chamber. PTI

Modi speaks of forging new paths to achieving India's dreams of becoming a developed country; representatives of 22 Opposition parties boycott function; in her message, President says she is happy that PM is inaugurating the building

imagined a nation whose form was constructed on the edifice of legislative discretion of the Parliament made up of democratically elected representatives. I am deeply happy that the symbol of Parliament's trust, Prime Minister is inaugurating the building."

Mr. Dhankhar echoed similar sentiments. "As I always say that Lok Sabha is the north star of democracy. It is the most authentic constitutional forum reflecting the mandate of people. Its decisive role in law making and shaping the destiny of Bharat is inviolable and it is the basic mantra, nectar and essence of democracy," his message read.

Mr. Birla applauded the building's architecture, which he said showcased the excellent and diverse cultural heritage of the whole of India. Mr. Modi also unveiled a commemorative postage stamp and coin on the occasion.

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN RETURNS TO THE HELM IN TURKEY AFTER WINNING RUN-OFF



Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on Sunday. REUTERS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ANKARA

Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won re-election on Sunday, extending his increasingly authoritarian rule into a third decade in a country reeling from high inflation and the aftermath of a devastating earthquake.

With nearly 99% of ballot boxes opened, unofficial results from competing news agencies showed Mr. Erdogan with 52% of the vote, compared with 48% for his challenger, Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

In his first comments since the polls closed, Mr. Erdogan spoke to supporters on a campaign bus outside his home in Istanbul. "I thank each member of our nation for entrusting me with the responsibility to govern this country once again for five years," he said. He ridiculed his challenger for his loss, saying "bye bye bye, Kemal", as supporters booed.

'Winner is Turkey'

"The only winner today is Turkey," Mr. Erdogan said, vowing to work hard for Turkey's second century. The country marks its centennial this year. With another term, he will have an even stronger hand domestically and internationally, and the result will have implications far beyond Ankara. Turkey stands at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and plays a key role in NATO. Mr. Erdogan, who has been at the helm for 20 years, came short of victory in the first round of elections on May 14. It was the first time he failed to win an election outright, but he made up for it on Sunday.

Mr. Kilicdaroglu said the poll was "the most unjust ever", with state resources mobilised for Mr. Erdogan.

A BELLIGERENCE TOWARDS BEIJING THAT IS UNSETTLING

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The intensifying head-to-head clash between the United States and China has set alarm bells ringing. Beginning with a trade war in 2018, U.S. policy towards China has morphed into a draconian technology denial regime aimed at hobbling China's rise. Simultaneously with a view of preventing any Chinese military venture to capture Taiwan, the U.S. has taken major steps across the Indo-Pacific to shore up its military edge.

The belligerence towards Beijing is a bit unsettling. This was a quasi-ally whose friendship cemented the rise of China, but, today, Washington wants to stop it on its tracks. For several years, its own allies such as Japan and the European Union (EU) resisted U.S. pressure to follow its new course, but the war in Ukraine and the very obvious Chinese support for Russia seem to have settled the debate.

A détente is distant

The recent G-7 summit put forward a united West plus Japan view on China. Besides condemning its "economic coercion" and "militarisation activities", it created a new group to deal with hostile economic actions, mainly by China, to coerce nations. On the table was a more draconian measure to review all outbound investment to China on the issue of security.

At the end of the G-7 meeting, U.S. President Joe Biden announced that he expected to soon "see a thaw" but the relationship is hardly heading for any kind of a détente. Both countries are jostling for power and influence across the world. "Extreme competition" over technologies may have initiated the conflict, but their insecurities are increasingly bringing their military and nuclear instruments to the fore.

Mr. Biden is outlining what is called the new Washington Consensus designed to re-establish U.S. hegemony. The old one, which was based on free markets, embraced China with the hope it would, over time, integrate into the American-led liberal international order. But China, in a sense, went rogue. Technology denial to China is one aspect of the strategy. The other is to turn the old Consensus on its head by protectionism and a new industrial policy based on state subsidies. A third element is to reach out to China and claim that all that Washington wants is to "de-risk and diversify" its economy, and guard its key technologies using a "small yard, [with a] high fence".

Just what the U.S. goal is, is not clear. Most experts say that while controls may slow China, it is impossible to prevent it from developing its own technologies. The Russian experience shows too that sanctions are not easy to

work either.

Seeing U.S. export restrictions to over 600 Chinese entities, all in the last couple of years, Beijing does not see much difference between "de-risking" and "containment". Its immediate response to the G-7 was to order its infrastructure companies to stop buying from Micron and dressing down the Japanese Ambassador in Beijing over the G-7 communiqué.

French President Emmanuel Macron's comment on refusing to be a vassal state of the U.S. represents a tip of the iceberg of the worries of Europe and allies such as South Korea. Now, there are signs that resistance is also building up in the U.S. to the strategy of the Biden administration. The chief of Nvidia, world leader in AI computing, has warned that the battle over chips risks "enormous damage" to the U.S. technology industry. He said that China made up roughly one-third of the U.S. industry's market and would be "impossible to replace as both a source of components and an end market for its products". There are more than a dozen companies such as Micron who derive between 25% to 50% of their revenue from China. Almost all the big names in the U.S. have a strong presence there anyway.

A dangerous game of 'chicken'

The U.S. wants China in the new Washington Consensus on its terms, the hardest of which are setting limits as to what China can aspire to in the fields of technology and military. This is something Beijing naturally resents. The two now seem to be involved in what the Americans call a game of "chicken" which comes with a high risk of miscalculation, war or a messy global economic breakdown.

The problem is that where the old Washington Consensus was largely in the area of economics, the new suffers from an overdose of geopolitics which is also feeding into local U.S. politics as well. It is based on the erroneous belief that the U.S. is in a state of decline and that the old Washington Consensus gutted U.S. industry and impoverished its middle and poorer classes. That it vastly enriched its well off is another matter. Instead of dealing with this outcome through effective policy, the Democrats and Republicans fiddled around with their pet policies — one encouraging entitlements and the other tax cuts.

This has created a toxic political atmosphere that both parties, increasingly dominated by their more extreme wings, are seeking to exploit. The one area they seem to agree on is that China is responsible for their alleged ills.

Mr. Biden seeks to introduce nuance into his approach to China. But Republican Hawks in Congress have created a Select Committee on China chaired by China hawk Mike Gallagher who said in its first meeting in March that the competition between China and the U.S. was “an existential struggle over what life will look like in the 21st century”.

In a recent interview, Henry Kissinger warned against misinterpreting Chinese behaviour. China wanted to be powerful, but not necessarily a global hegemon in the American style. The chances of that happening are not high anyway. The U.S. itself is by far the most powerful country in the world, militarily and economically, and current trends suggest that it is likely to remain so. With its allies the EU, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia, it will continue to be ahead of China in every measure.

The issue is China's diplomacy

China has achieved a great deal. It may have stolen IP, and will continue to do so, but it has also put down serious money in developing its tech and education sector.

Where it seems to have lost out is in its diplomacy where it has created significant adversaries through its assertive behaviour, be it in the East Sea,

South China Sea or the mountains of Ladakh.

In their own way, both are privileging security over other issues when it comes to their global outlook. And therein lies the danger to the rest of the world. In this, the U.S., by far more powerful than China, must take the larger share of the blame.

As it is, the U.S. is not the smartest country when it comes to dealing with global geopolitical challenges. Its enormous wealth and power and echo-chamber think tanks make it difficult for it to understand distant countries and cultures. But worse is the American tendency to fight first and ask questions later. Vietnam, and the recent examples of Afghanistan and Iraq are proof of that. Worries are that something of the sort may happen in the case of China as well.

U.S. estrangement with China enhances India's geopolitical value, something the present ruling dispensation is revelling in. But while the Sino-American hostility may bring benefits to India, a breakdown would be catastrophic, for not just India but also the world. New Delhi is not unaware of this and has stepped carefully in its own relationship with China, whether at the global and regional levels or the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.

AT HIROSHIMA, JAPAN'S MOMENT TO REINFORCE PARTNERSHIPS

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The G-7 Hiroshima Summit is the first hosted by Tokyo since the 2008 summit and comes at a time when the world is faced with enervating challenges such as the war in Ukraine, the threat of nuclear proliferation, rapidly transpiring impacts of climate change, economic security, unstable supply chains and the impact and regulation of sensitive technologies. While the agenda for the Summit was expansive and ambitious, the imperative for the G-7 countries, led by Japan, appeared to be centered around the means to consolidate approaches toward the most pressing global issues while walking respective geopolitical tightropes. For Tokyo, the Summit was driven, in large part, by the need to define and devise the means of navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific in order to enable collaborations that would be functional as well as act as bulwarks. It was a moment to reinforce partnerships in a region that has become laden with security risks and is a key theatre for great power competition while simultaneously being the principal geography on which the trajectory of the rest of the world's fortunes depends.

Why the agenda is vital for Japan

Issues that weighed heavily on the agenda of the Hiroshima Summit included Russia's aggression in Ukraine which is now more than a year old and shows little signs of abating; a China that is increasingly on the offensive with an ever-active military and nuclear modernisation plan; China's growing military pressures on Taiwan; and the dangers posed by North Korea's increasingly volatile nuclear posturing and nuclear weapons programme. While all of these issues are of great significance globally, for the Indo-Pacific and for Japan in particular, these are vital given the country's geographical location in close proximity to China, Russia, and North Korea. Concurrently, both in the weeks leading up to the Summit and during it, Tokyo sought to step up collaboration in science and technology and progressed its objective of reinvigorating the country's chip industry.

Security, nevertheless, informed much of the agenda at the Summit. The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on Japan's national security strategy. In the wake of the invasion, Japan has announced a number of changes to its defence policy, including plans to increase its defence spending and acquire new weapons systems. Similarly, China has been rapidly expanding its military power in recent years, and has been increasingly assertive in its territorial claims in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Tokyo is no stranger to the debilitating consequences of a nuclear attack and is quite naturally concerned about the frequent nuclear posturing by Pyongyang with the latter not only conducting a number of missile tests in recent years but also threatening to attack Japan with nuclear weapons. These concerns are also shared by Seoul and Washington and

are a key driving force behind U.S. efforts at strengthening the security architecture of Northeast Asia.

New Delhi-Tokyo partnership is important

Recent years have witnessed steady collaboration between New Delhi and Tokyo, with regular joint military exercises and the progress of agreements on economic cooperation. While Japan has been involved in the South Asian region through its involvement in several infrastructure initiatives, recent years have witnessed India partnering with Japan for advancing the same objective through the development of infrastructure projects in third countries in the Indo-Pacific region. As two of the world's largest democracies, the continued cooperation between India and Japan is an important indicator of what sustained partnerships can achieve in addressing the challenges of the 21st century. The G-7 2023 Summit was another opportunity for Japan and India to further strengthen their partnership and expand the scope of their shared interests.

Two key principles form the central basis for both Japan and India's role in the Indo-Pacific — first, the preservation of a rules-based order; and second, opposition to any unilateral attempt to alter regional order. Both countries reiterated these principles at the Hiroshima Summit, particularly with reference to Russia and China. Closer and stronger ties between India and Japan are significant for boosting middle-power diplomacy in the region.

Advancing Shinzo Abe's legacy

Fumio Kishida, as the current Japanese Prime Minister, is enthusiastically carrying forward the legacy of his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, who was a strong advocate for Japan's active role in the world, and worked determinedly to strengthen the country's ties with its allies. Mr. Kishida's efforts are evident in the strong network building that he has undertaken, and the Hiroshima Summit, which saw the participation of India, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, and Brazil among others, is a further instance of Japan looking to build upon its relationships and transform them into partnerships that would bolster the region. His efforts saw agreements with the United Kingdom, Australia, the U.S., Africa, and the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the U.S.). If Shinzo Abe laid the foundations of a more involved Japanese global presence, Mr. Kishida has advanced Shinzo Abe's work by developing security and diplomatic partnerships across the world including with neighbouring South Korea with which bilateral ties have been historically tenuous. The Hiroshima Summit reinforced Japan's re-emergence as a critical security actor which is increasingly willing to shape the emerging strategic contours of the Indo-Pacific and the wider global order.

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WHY IS THE 1.5 DEGREE CELSIUS TARGET CRITICAL?

RASHMI RAMESH
AKRITI SHARMA
EXPLAINER

The story so far:

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released two reports titled "Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update 2023-2027" and "State of Global Climate 2022." The decadal predictions of the WMO said that the annual mean global surface temperature between 2023 and 2027 will be 1.1-1.8 degree Celsius higher than the baseline temperature of 1850-1900 or pre-industrial levels. In 2022, it was 1.15 degrees above the baseline, and by 2027, the average will exceed 1.5 degrees, a critical point beyond which there may be no return.

What is the 1.5 degree Celsius target?

The 1.5 degree Celsius target is the global climate target that aims to limit warming to said level by 2100, in order to prevent the planet from slipping into further climate crises. For decades, 2 degree was an acceptable level of warming. The idea of 1.5 degree was perceived as unrealistic and unachievable. However, the 2 degree target was unacceptable to small island countries as it implied that their survival was compromised.

In 2010, at the Cancun COP16, countries agreed to limit the global average warming to below 2 degree Celsius. In 2015, the parties to the Paris Agreement pledged to limit the average temperature rise to below 2 degree, while actively aiming for 1.5 degree above pre-industrial levels. This was endorsed as a global target by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018 and since then has been pursued in all climate dialogues.

Why is the 1.5 degree target critical?

In 2018, the IPCC released a special report on the impact of global warming when temperature reaches 1.5 degree Celsius above baseline. It also drew a comparison with the effects of 2 degree Celsius warming. It was estimated that anthropogenic activities would have already caused 1 degree of warming, likely to reach 1.5 degree between 2030 and 2052 at the current rate. Frequent and intense heat waves, droughts, heavy precipitation, an additional 10-centimetre rise in sea level, destruction of ecosystems and mostly irreversible changes can be witnessed at the 2 degree level.

However, discussions on the average temperature rise do not imply that the current warming is uniform across the planet. For example, warming greater than the global average is being experienced in the Arctic, with the term 'polar amplification' gaining more traction. The regional differences and the vulnerability factors spell more urgency for climate action which must limit the average planetary warming to 1.5 degree.

Why are we missing the target?

Historically, developed countries are responsible for a major chunk of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Therefore, they are expected to assume more responsibility and implement climate action. However, the Climate Performance Index over the years has shown otherwise. Countries like Australia, the U.S., Japan, Russia and Canada have made little progress in meeting their pledges. Additionally, polluters like China, Iran and Saudi Arabia rank low in climate performance.

The pandemic pushed the world into a socio-economic crisis. On the road to recovery, countries pledged measures to build-back. However, in most cases there is little to no consideration for building-back in a sustainable manner. The Ukraine conflict has further added to woes and sparked an energy crisis threatening climate goals.

Are extreme weather events linked to the global rise in temperature?

The predictions of the recently released reports point to precipitation anomalies and an increase in marine heat waves as compared to marine cold spells. The El Niño, which is currently brewing, will further strengthen this year, resulting in a 98% possibility of witnessing temperatures higher than 2016 at least in one of the years in the 2023-27 period. The cryosphere is shrinking, and there is a mass loss of glaciers in High-mountain Asia, Western North America, and South America. Due to the alarming rate of warming of the Arctic Ocean, the Greenlandic ice sheet is melting at a faster pace, contributing to the increase in sea level.

Climate risks and hazards impact human population and the ecosystem depending on exposure, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity. It has exacerbated food insecurity, displacement, and deaths. Climate change has been affecting crop yield negatively and the risks posed by agricultural pests and diseases have also increased in the past few years. Countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan are facing acute food shortages resulting in malnutrition and hunger, demanding urgent humanitarian



Intense heat: A man crosses the dry and cracked bed of the Koparli dam in Peth Taluka village, Nashik, Maharashtra on May 26. Getty Images

What do the recent reports by the World Meteorological Organization say about the future of climate change? Why did international climate dialogues switch from the target of 2 degree Celsius above the baseline temperature of pre-industrial levels to 1.5 degree Celsius?

assistance. However, food insecurity in these countries is due to the complex interaction of climate conditions with other factors such as droughts, cyclones, and political and economic instability.

The heatwaves in Pakistan and India in 2022 also resulted in a decline in crop yields. The floods in Pakistan affected croplands in southern and central parts of the country and displaced eight million people within the country.

The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya) has been witnessing extreme drought conditions since 2020, while at the same time, western African countries are seeing floods and heavy rainfall which has pushed millions into acute food insecurity. Such shortage of food has also led to mass displacement within and across borders. In Syria and Yemen, thousands have been displaced owing to the floods, storms, and heavy snowfall.

Aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems have also not been immune to such changes in climate patterns. Phenological shifts and mismatches have been recorded due to climate change. The population of migratory species has declined in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, the warming above 1.5 degree Celsius can prove lethal for coral reefs which are already prone to bleaching. According to the WMO, extreme weather anomalies have caused the deaths of two million people and incurred \$4.3 trillion in economic damages over the past fifty years. In 2020-2021, 22,608 disaster deaths were recorded globally.

How is India impacted?

India has been increasingly facing the brunt of climate change. February 2023 was recorded as the hottest month since record-keeping began in 1901. In 2022, India witnessed extreme weather events for 80% of the days. Indian monsoons were wetter than usual last year after recording extreme heat during the pre-monsoon period, resulting in wildfires in Uttarakhand and acute food shortages.

According to the Climate Change Performance Index 2023, India ranked eighth with a high-performance after Denmark, Sweden, Chile, and Morocco. Being an emerging economy with development needs, it is attempting to balance its development needs with ongoing climate action both at the domestic and international levels. With domestic measures like the Green Hydrogen Mission and the introduction of green bonds, India is performing fairly well despite contributing only a miniscule to cumulative GHG emissions. At the international level, through the International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, India can prove to be a responsible climate player keeping in mind that it has a long way to go in very little time.

The writers are doctoral scholars at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru.

BIDEN, REPUBLICANS ARRIVE AT LAST MINUTE AGREEMENT TO RAISE U.S. DEBT CEILING

Sticking points: Kevin McCarthy, left, said he would consult again with Joe Biden on Sunday about the drafting of the final Bill.AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Top Republican leader Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden announced a deal on Saturday to raise the debt ceiling, dragging the United States from the precipice of default with only a few days left to go.

The Congress will vote on the deal to extend the government borrowing authority on Wednesday, just shy of the June 5 "X-date" when the Treasury estimates the government will no longer be able to pay its bills, plunging the world's biggest economy into turmoil.

"After weeks of negotiations we have come to an agreement in principle," Mr. McCarthy, the Speaker of the Republican-held House of Representatives, said. Mr. McCarthy, who spoke with Mr. Biden on Saturday to close the deal, said he would consult again with the President on Sunday and oversee final drafting of the Bill. The House will "then be voting on it on Wednesday."

Work left

Despite the breakthrough, Mr. McCarthy cautioned there was "still a lot of work to do" in getting Congress to give its backing.

Raising the debt ceiling allows the government to keep borrowing money and remain solvent.



According to U.S. media reports, the outline of the deal includes freeing up the debt ceiling for two years, meaning there will be no need for negotiations in 2024, when the nation is in full presidential election swing.

ALARMING TURN

Normalcy in Manipur requires concerted action by govt., civil society

Violence has flared again in Manipur, merely three weeks after conflagrations resulted in scores of deaths and the displacement of people in Churachandpur and Imphal in particular. Alarming, what began as protests against an order by the High Court of Manipur, on March 27, seeking the inclusion of the Meitei community into the State's Scheduled Tribe list, has taken a grotesque turn, with representatives of the Kuki-Zomi community including BJP MLAs seeking a "separate administration". This situation should never have come to such a pass. While inter-community relations have occasionally led to flare-ups and remained tense for years together, the conflagrations in May mark a degradation in hill-valley relations and a complete failure of the government in curbing violence committed by radicals and miscreants present in the Meitei and Kuki-Zomi communities. Partially, this was a consequence of the inability of the State government led by the BJP Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh, to rise above the fray and to act in a manner that was unbiased against particular communities. The government's so-called anti-poppy cultivation drives that were seen as moves against the Kuki-Zomi hill dwellers, raised their ire, while the High Court's single judge Bench's ill-thought-out order — as the Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, himself observed as being violative of a 23-year-old Constitution

Bench judgment — exacerbated the situation. The government was unable to prevent the spiralling of violence in Churachandpur and Imphal, suggesting the current regime's incompetence.

The State government must get its act together, with the help of the Centre, to bring back normalcy by increasing patrolling of paramilitary and police forces in riot-torn areas, providing relief to displaced people and curtailing the influence of militant sections. A plan to allow the return of those displaced to their homes in the medium term must also be put into order with the help of the security forces. Not doing so only plays into the hands of chauvinists from either side who emphasise differences, disharmony and separation — all of which will be disastrous for the State in the long term. The Union government cannot remain nonchalant about the turn of events. Manipur, like some of the other northeastern States, needs to promote a civic consciousness among its citizens that will allow them to rise above ethnic identities to differentiate themselves. With trust fraying between community leaders and State government representatives, it is incumbent upon civil society members, within and outside Manipur, to take up the cause of rebuilding inter-community ties and not letting chauvinist and militant groups hijack the role of representation.

FROM THE MARGINS

Women in civil service have a challenging, exciting task before them

For the second year in a row, the top three ranks of the Civil Services Examination, 2022, conducted by the Union Public Service Commission have been secured by women. In a spectacular achievement, results announced on Tuesday show that 12 women are in the top 20. The 26-year-old topper, Ishita Kishore, who graduated from Delhi University's Sri Ram College of Commerce and is a resident of Greater Noida, reached the pinnacle in her third attempt. Thanking her family for their support, Ms. Kishore said she read up on current affairs and practised writing at length because the examination process can be draining. The second-rank holder, Garima Lohia, 24, from Buxar and is also a Delhi University graduate, cleared the examination in her second attempt; and Uma Harathi N., 28, who stood third, is an engineering graduate from Telangana and cleared it in her fifth attempt. The young women's reflections on success and failure, the need to persevere against all odds and the importance of an empathetic ecosystem are significant pointers for future students, teachers and parents. For students, especially girls, the courage and commitment of these women is inspiring. One can only hope that teachers and parents will create the right environment for girls to fulfil their dreams; too many girls have had to give up half way in a largely patriarchal society.

This year, 933 candidates, of an approximate 11.5 lakh who took the examination, have been recommended by the UPSC for appointment to the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service and Central Services, Group A and B; 63% (588 candidates) are from the economically weaker sections, Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste categories. This should help fill the gaps in policy in key sectors such as education and health for the needy. For all the success in the classroom, the students will now have to test their strength on the field. In a country as diverse as India, the challenges are different every few kilometres; they may have to contend with hate, violence, prejudice, discrimination and other adverse circumstances. The trail-blazers in the IAS, many of them women, had their first postings, as is the norm, in rural or semi-urban areas, and by keeping their ear to the ground, picked the issues they would campaign for, like the right to education for children, to give just one example. As women civil servants forming the steel framework of the administrative system, they may have to work under pressure, but their service will be vital for the well-being of a young India, especially women who often find themselves on the margins.



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