



MODI'S U.S. VISIT YIELDS MANY VITAL AGREEMENTS



Stronger bond: Narendra Modi and Joe and Jill Biden during a welcome ceremony for the Prime Minister at the White House. AFP

PM and Biden announce deals on jet engine tech transfers, drones, health and space cooperation; democracy is in our veins, says Modi, maintaining that there is no discrimination in India

India and the U.S. on Thursday announced a number of agreements on defence cooperation, critical and emerging technologies, health, environment, visas and space — including a deal which could pave the way for an unprecedented transfer of jet engine technology — as Prime Minister Narendra Modi met U.S. President Joseph Biden as part of his first state visit to the United States.

The two leaders, who hailed the strengthening of the strategic partnership with the visit, met at the White House and made the point that both countries share democratic values, while addressing a gathering of officials and thousands of members of the Indian-American diaspora.

Mr. Modi and Mr. Biden marked what they have described as a new stage in the India-U.S. relationship as the Prime Minister was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the White House South Lawn by the President and First Lady Jill Biden on a drizzly Thursday morning.

Both leaders addressed a press conference after their bilateral meeting. Mr. Modi answered two questions — one on democracy in India from the American press corps and another on climate change from the Indian media.

Mr. Modi agreed with Mr. Biden that democracy was in the DNA of India and the U.S. "Democracy runs in our veins," Mr. Modi said, maintaining that there was no discrimination in India.

The Prime Minister and the President discussed the war in Ukraine during their bilateral meeting.

"We are completely ready to contribute in any way we can to restore peace," Mr. Modi told the press conference.

The address on the South Lawn saw a number of people chanting "Modi, Modi", even as protesters met further away from the White House to demand that the U.S. President raise human rights issues with the PM.

More than 75 lawmakers had signed a letter urging Mr. Biden to express concerns over the situation in India "publicly", while a number of members of Congress announced on Thursday that they would "boycott" Mr. Modi's address to the joint session of the U.S. Congress.

Mr. Biden, who embraced Mr. Modi many times during the welcoming

ceremony, had clearly set aside the protests. "I've long believed that the relationship between the United States and India will be one of the defining relationships of the 21st century," he said.

Cabinet officials on both sides and a few thousand diaspora members, some of whom chanting "Modi, Modi" were in attendance.

It was not just pomp and ceremony though — the two sides announced a long list of deliverables spanning defence, critical and emerging technology, health, energy and mobility. Mr. Biden characterised this as a "next generation partnership".

"After becoming the Prime Minister, I have come here many times, but today for the first time the doors of the White House have been opened for the Indian American community in such large numbers," Mr. Modi said.

Also palpable in Washington were concerns around Mr. Modi's past, when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat, as well as concerns about democratic backsliding in India.

'We the people'

"... As democracies, we can better tap into the full talent of all of our people and attract investments ... with our ...greatest export being the power of our example: equity under the law, freedom of expression, religious, pluralism and diversity of our people," Mr. Biden said in his welcome speech on the South Lawn. Both leaders referred to the countries' Constitutions beginning with the phrase "We the people".

"Both of our countries take pride in their diversity. Both of us believe in the fundamental principle of in the interest of all for the welfare of all," Mr. Modi said as per a translated version of his speech. "Our strong strategic partnership is a clear proof of the power of democracy," he added.

"The decisions we make today are going to determine our future for decades to come," Mr. Biden added.

Jet engine tech transfer

Earlier in the day, General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited announced they had signed a big-ticket MoU to jointly produce GE 414 jet engines in India for the Tejas Mk2 light combat aircraft. U.S. officials who briefed journalists before the announcement appeared to be patting themselves on the back for the deal, with one official describing the Indian side as being "surprised and thrilled by the steps" the American side has been able to take to overcome bureaucratic roadblocks to the deal. India's purchase of armed drones is also likely to be announced on Thursday.

The Defence Ministries of the two countries also launched the inaugural session of an innovation platform — INDUS-X — in Washington DC on June 21, hosted by the U.S. India Business Council, to foster defence industrial collaboration. Among the big private sector deals coinciding with the visit was U.S. semiconductor and chip maker Micron Technology, Inc's announcement that it would invest up to \$825 million in a new chip assembly and test facility in Gujarat, which would be bolstered by investment from the Indian and Gujarat governments, totalling \$2.75 billion.

In space cooperation, India is signing on to a framework of 25 countries for space exploration and cooperation. The two countries have agreed on a mission to the International Space Station in 2024.

After years of pandemic-induced visa slowdowns, the U.S. is announcing a pilot programme to renew visas domestically — which means that applicants do not have to travel outside the U.S. to get their renewal stamps — for certain petition-based temporary workers. This programme could expand to cover H1B and L-1 skilled visas by 2024 and to other categories eventually. (With inputs from Suhasini Haider in New Delhi)

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

GOVERNOR HOLDS POLL PANEL ACCOUNTABLE FOR BENGAL VIOLENCE

West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose on Thursday blamed the State Election Commission (SEC) for the violence during the ongoing panchayat poll process in the State, and held it accountable for every drop of human blood that is shed in the field.

"People are disappointed by the apparent inaction from the Election Commission. People are in a state of fear. There is violence, but of course I will not say there is violence all over. But there is violence, and the fact that there is violence cannot be denied," the Governor said.

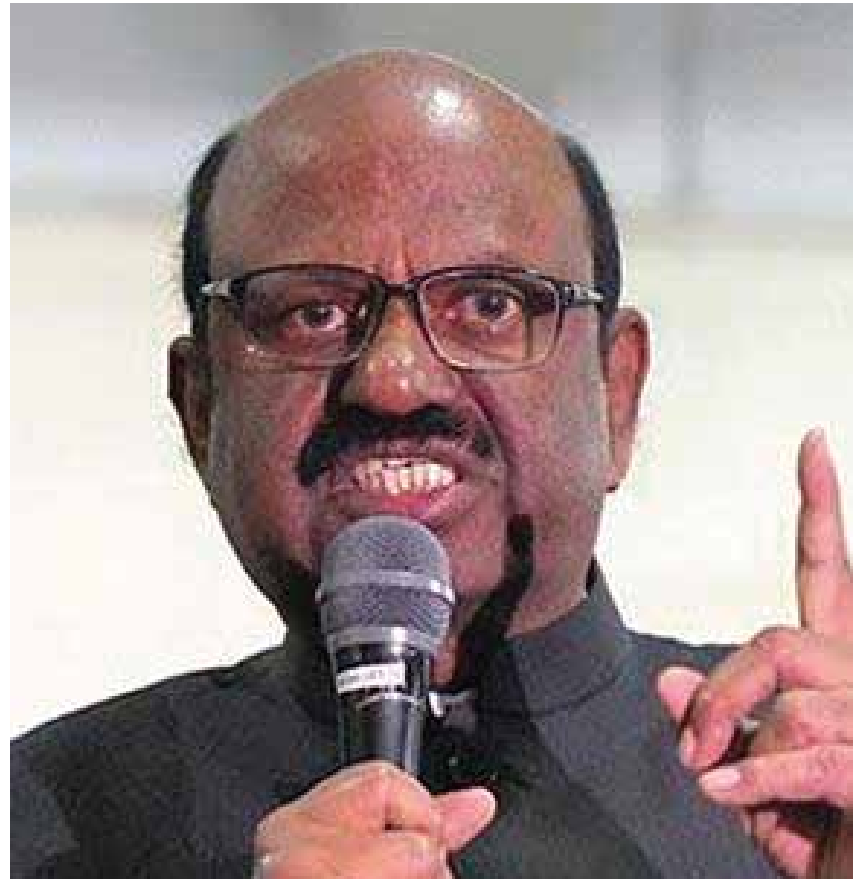
On Thursday, the SEC requisitioned 800 companies of Central forces to be deployed in the State during the panchayat polls, in accordance with the Calcutta High Court's directions, though the BJP said this was also insufficient.

Bose vs Sinha

Mr. Bose said that he had appointed Rajiva Sinha as the State Election Commissioner, trusting that he would conduct the election process in a free and fair manner. He added that during the election, the Commissioner has power over the police and magistrates.

"The Election Commission should not only be impartial but should also be perceived to be impartial. Caesar's wife must be above suspicion," Mr. Bose added. The Governor's remarks came a day after he returned Mr. Sinha's joining report to the State government on Wednesday. The development has not only triggered a fresh controversy, but also a constitutional crisis, with questions being raised as to what will be the fate of the Commissioner if the Governor sticks to his stand. Sources say since the poll process has already started, the State may request the Governor again to complete the formalities of the appointment.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ruled out the possibility of removing the SEC, calling it a "cumbersome process", which must be done through impeachment. She said that SEC was appointed as per procedure with the Governor's approval, and could not be removed at the drop of a hat.



MANIPUR INVOKES RBI'S RIOT PROVISIONS TO AID BORROWERS

The Manipur government has declared that the whole State has been affected by riots and violence, impacting the economic activities and livelihood of the public.

To provide relief, the State government has invoked a rarely used Reserve Bank of India (RBI) provision pertaining to restructuring and rescheduling of loans. It provides relief to borrowers when economic activity comes to a halt and offers moratorium on repayment of loans. The guidelines have been mostly invoked in areas affected by natural calamities and not for a law and order situation.

Since Wednesday, three incidents of firing and a car-bomb explosion have been reported in the State.

In a June 21 order, Vineet Joshi, Chief Secretary of Manipur, said that

reports were received from several Deputy Commissioners that many properties and businesses of residents have been affected due to the law and order situation. "The borrowers who had taken loans are not in a position to repay them and requested SLBC [State Level Bankers' Committee] to extend relief to the affected persons," it said. The SLBC discussed the matter on June 9.

The order also said chapter No. 7 of the "Reserve Bank of India (Relief Measures by Banks in Areas Affected by Natural Calamities) Directions, 2018" applies to the State.

"Therefore, the Governor of Manipur hereby declares that the whole State of Manipur is being affected by violences/riots leading to economic activities and livelihood of the public being affected," and relief measures may be taken up under the RBI's guidelines, the order said.

NASHEED QUILTS RULING MDP MONTHS AHEAD OF ELECTION



Parliamentary Speaker and former President of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed has quit the ruling party, he said on Wednesday, amid growing speculation that he might run against incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in September from a newly floated party.

In a tweet put out late on Wednesday, Mr. Nasheed shared his resignation letter that said: "After taking into account how things are in the country at the moment, I don't think it is the best course of action for me to remain in this party".

Mr. Nasheed's decision to quit the MDP — he is a founding member — comes amid a deepening political struggle between him and his party colleague Mr. Solih over several issues.

Mr. Solih won the MDP primary earlier this year and became the party's candidate for the September presidential polls. Soon after, Mr. Nasheed launched his own campaign, mobilising supporters to "reclaim" the party that, he said, was violating democratic principles. Last month, a dozen MPs from the MDP, now supporting Mr. Nasheed, launched a new party called The Democrats.

Although Mr. Nasheed is yet to make any formal announcement, it is widely expected that the leader will emerge the incumbent's main rival in the coming presidential race.

Meanwhile, the recent political developments in the Indian Ocean Archipelago have left the People's Majlis or Parliament of the Maldives in a deadlock, with two pending trust votes against Speaker Nasheed, and his deputy Eva Abdulla. The MDP on Thursday sought extraordinary sittings after Mr. Nasheed ignored repeated requests to extend the current session, local media reported.

NO SURVIVORS FROM MISSING SUBMERSIBLE, SAYS OCEANGATE

The five people aboard a missing submersible are thought to be dead, according to the company that owns the vessel, bringing a grim end on Thursday to the massive search for the vessel that was lost during a voyage to the Titanic. "These men were true explorers who shared a distinct spirit of adventure, and a deep passion for exploring and protecting the world's oceans," OceanGate Expeditions said in a statement. "Our hearts are with these five souls and every member of their families during this tragic time."

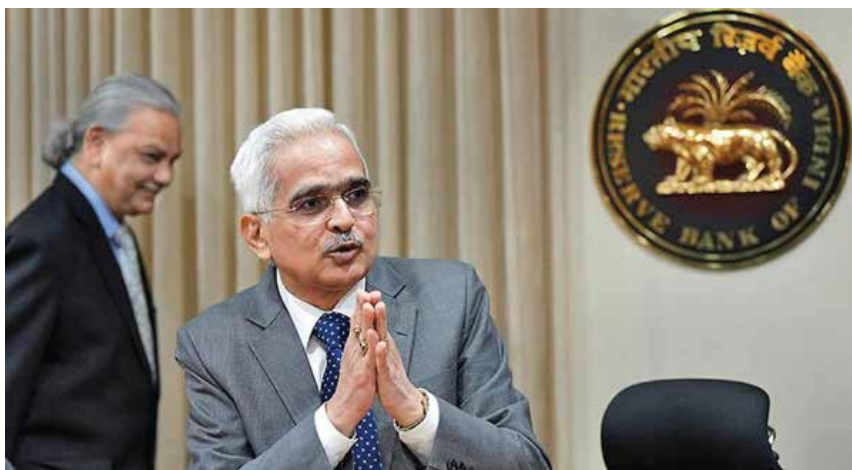
An unmanned deep-sea robot deployed from a Canadian ship discovered a "debris field" near where the century-old wreck is located, 4 km below the surface, the U.S. Coast Guard said earlier on Twitter. The agency has scheduled a press conference for 1900 GMT to discuss the findings.

Rescue teams from several countries have spent days searching thousands of square kilometres of open seas with planes and ships for any sign of the 6.7-metre Titan, operated by U.S.-based OceanGate Expeditions.

The submersible lost contact on Sunday morning with its support ship about an hour and 45 minutes into what should have been a two-hour descent.

The five people aboard included the British billionaire and explorer Hamish Harding, 58; Pakistani-born business magnate Shahzada Dawood, 48, and his 19-year-old son, Suleman, both British citizens; French oceanographer and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet, 77, who had visited the wreck dozens of times; and Stockton Rush, the American founder and chief executive of OceanGate, who was piloting the submersible.

MPC STRESSES NEED FOR INFLATION VIGIL



Fickle nature: Adverse climate events had the potential to quickly change the direction of inflation trajectory, says Mr. Das. pt1

RBI Governor Das says 'job is only half done with the fight against inflation not yet over'; Deputy Governor Patra stresses policy needs to remain in 'brace' mode to ensure shocks from supply-demand mismatches leave no scars on the economy

The Monetary Policy Committee's job was only half done in having brought inflation within the target band, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das wrote in his statement, signalling the need for policymakers to

remain vigilant on price stability, the minutes of the June 6-8 meeting of the MPC released by the RBI on Thursday show.

"Our fight against inflation is not yet over," Mr. Das wrote. "We need to undertake forward-looking assessment of the evolving inflation-growth outlook and stand ready to act," he observed.

The MPC this month left interest rates unchanged for a second straight meeting, opting to 'assess the cumulative impact of the 250 basis points rate increases implemented over the past year' before taking any further monetary measures to align inflation to the target of 4%.

Observing that 'uncertainties on the inflation outlook had not abated with the spatial and temporal distribution of monsoon rainfall needing to be closely watched in the backdrop of a likely El Nino weather pattern', Mr. Das emphasised that 'adverse climate events had the potential to quickly change the direction of the inflation trajectory'.

"Given the prevailing uncertainties, it is difficult to give any definitive forward guidance about our future course of action in a rate tightening cycle," the RBI Governor added.

Cautioning that 'pressure points from specific supply-demand mismatches could impart upward pressure to the momentum of prices beyond the first quarter', Deputy Governor Michael D. Patra stressed that monetary policy needed to remain in 'brace' mode to ensure any shocks did not leave scars on the economy'.

Jayanth R. Varma, one of the three external MPC members and a voice of dissent at past meetings, asserted 'there remained significant risks to inflation and growth, and that the process of bringing inflation under control was still work in progress'.

FITCH UPGRADES INDIA GDP GROWTH TO 6.3%, EXPECTS RATE CUTS EARLY NEXT YEAR

Fitch Ratings on Thursday raised its forecast for India's economic growth to 6.3% for 2023-24 from 6% it had predicted previously, citing broad-based strength seen in the economy in metrics such as credit growth and auto sales in recent months.

The global rating major also said it now expects the Reserve Bank of India to maintain its pause on interest rate increases and start cutting rates early next year, shifting from its earlier forecast of at least another 0.25% rise in rates.

"India's economy has been showing broad-based strength--with GDP up by a higher than expected 6.1% year on year in Q1 of 2023 and auto sales, PMI [Purchasing Managers' Indices] surveys and credit growth remaining robust in recent months--and we have raised our forecast for the fiscal year ending in March 2024 by 0.3 percentage points to 6.3%," Fitch said in its latest Global Economic Outlook that also upgraded global GDP growth forecasts for 2023 to 2.4% from 2% predicted in March.

Fitch also took note of an uptick in power consumption in the Indian economy, which "continues to benefit from high infrastructure spending" and said the estimated 6.3% GDP growth this fiscal will be "one of the highest growth rates in the world".

"India's economy will be affected to an extent by slowing global trade. Domestically the full impact of 250bps (basis points) of monetary tightening is still to be felt. Consumers have also experienced a drop in purchasing power as inflation increased sharply in 2022 and household balance sheets have also been weakened through the pandemic," the outlook cautioned. One basis point equals 0.01%.

"At the same time, the government's push on increased capital expenditure, moderation in commodity prices and robust credit growth are expected to support investment," it underlined.



EVIDEN BAGS \$100 MN SUPERCOMPUTER ORDER FROM NCMRWF

Eviden, an Atos Group business, said it has been awarded a \$100 million contract by the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) on behalf of the India Ministry of Earth Sciences, to build two new supercomputers dedicated to weather modelling and climate research for the Indian Institute of Technology–Madras and NCMRWF.

The NCMRWF supercomputer, to be located in Noida, would have an 8.3-Petaflop computing capacity for weather and climate modelling to support advanced numerical weather research, said Eviden in a statement.

‘Augmenting capacity’

Dr. M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said “weather and climate research requires massive computing power. This partnership with Atos Group will augment our current capacity to increase resolutions and accuracy of weather forecasts.”

These two new supercomputers, based on Eviden’s BullSequana XH2000, would have a combined capacity of up to 21.3 Petaflops, the French firm further said.

TELECOM FIRMS SET SIGHTS ON CONTESTED 6GHz SPECTRUM

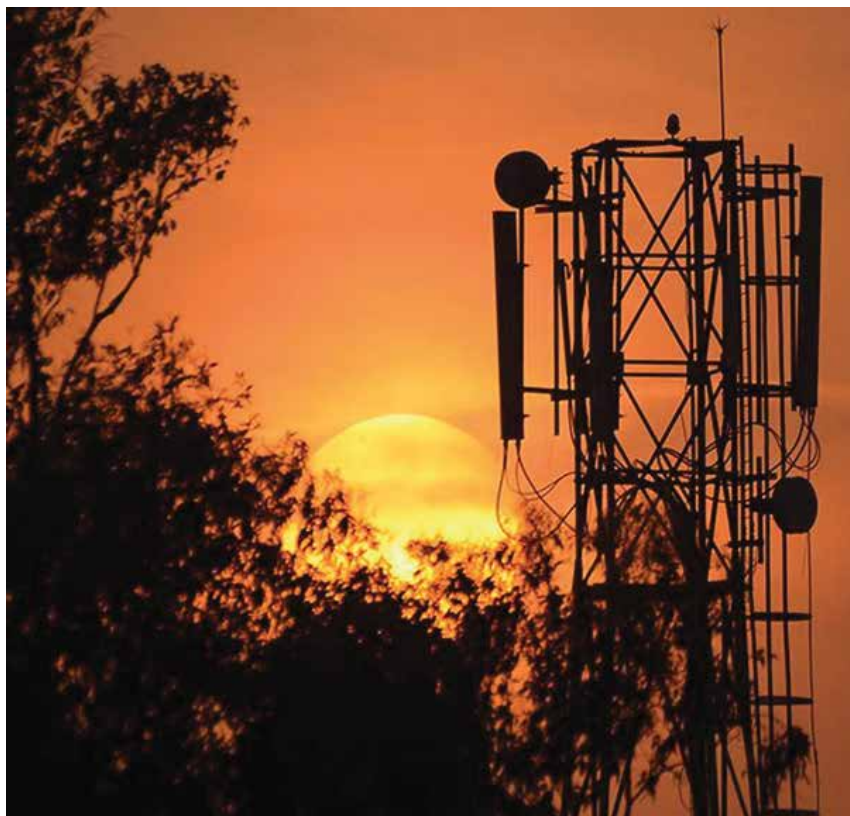
Even as lakhs of 5G base stations around the country remain unused, the telecom industry is laying the groundwork to secure more spectrum in the 6 gigahertz (GHz) band, a demand that will play out over the coming years and pit telecom operators against technology firms.

The latter argue, as The Hindu had reported, spectrum in the 6GHz band should be freed up for Wi-Fi, as current technologies — which largely run on 2.4GHz and 5GHz frequencies — can get clogged by the huge number of devices in use, even if data usage by connected devices was not that high. Wi-Fi on 6GHz does not face this problem. However, the government is yet to delicense or sell spectrum on the band.

The tech industry, through the Broadband India Forum, argued in April for delicensing, which would open up the spectrum’s use for Wi-Fi. Government officials at the event cautiously struck a balance between the competing interests, at one point indicating that middle ground may have to be found on the issue.

“5G offers better speeds than Wi-Fi [and] will be [the] preferred option for consumers, as it offers mobility with high speed and capacity, compared to the stationary service of Wi-Fi,” Cellular Operators Association of India DG S. P. Kochhar said in a slide.

“India, which is already starved of spectrum and facing challenges to meet the continually-rising demand for data services, cannot afford to experiment with such a valuable commodity to satisfy the wishes of select segments,” the COAI official added.



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UNEDIFYING ROW

Shadow of poll violence justifies court orders on central forces in West Bengal

The controversy in West Bengal in the matter of deployment of central paramilitary forces ahead of the panchayat elections to be held on July 8 is quite unedifying. The State Election Commission (SEC) initially appeared reluctant to heed calls by Opposition parties to bring in central forces to boost security arrangements. A perceived delay in identifying sensitive areas resulted in the Calcutta High Court ordering the poll body to ask for and deploy central forces. In the ordinary course, the deployment of central forces during local body elections, conducted under the watch of the SEC, would be at the State government’s discretion. However, it is an unfortunate reality that West Bengal frequently witnesses poll-related violence. Even in the current poll process, eight people have died, and there are reports of prospective candidates being prevented from filing their nominations for some panchayats. In these circumstances, it would have been in the fitness of things for the SEC to requisition central forces on its own, even if the State government had some grievance over its discretion being overruled by the High Court order. However, the SEC, which ought to have had no misgivings about it, joined the government in approaching the Supreme Court of India against the order. The Court affirmed the High Court’s directives, noting that the core issue was free and fair elections.

Moreover, the whole State was going to vote on a single day for nearly 74,000 seats, and that given the high number of seats and polling booths, the directions were justified.

In yet another unfortunate turn, the SEC responded to the apex court’s order by requisitioning central forces in 22 districts (one company each), in a move that showed pique and resentment rather than compliance. The High Court has once again intervened, noting that the requisitioned number was thoroughly inadequate and directed that more forces, not less than the size of the forces used during the 2013 panchayat polls be sought, when as many as 1.05 lakh police personnel and 82,000 central personnel were deployed. The controversy flags the issue of political violence, which is quite endemic to West Bengal. Each election sets off a round of violence and demands for central forces. The federal principle that law and order is under the State’s domain is often strained and tested at such times. The High Court had ordered a CBI investigation into incidents of serious violence after the last Assembly election in 2021. A truly independent election watchdog and a sense of responsibility among all political parties are necessary to preserve the purity of the election process.

SPIRALLING VIOLENCE

An Israeli raid in Jenin with combat helicopters that killed seven Palestinians; a gun attack by two Palestinians at an Israeli settlement in Eli that killed four; and a rampage of an Arab village by Israeli settlers in which one Palestinian was killed and several others injured — the occupied West Bank witnessed a sharp escalation in violence this week that is reminiscent of the

waves of attacks and counter-attacks during the second Intifada. As Israel tightens its grip over the West Bank, where Jewish settlements have gradually mushroomed, new, local Palestinian resistance groups such as the Jenin Brigade have emerged, carrying out attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers using home-made weapons and low-tech bombs. Jenin, in the northern West Bank,

has emerged as a hotbed of violent Palestinian resistance. Israel carries out raids in the region almost on a daily basis, causing casualties on the Palestinian side. According to the UN, Israel has killed at least 114 Palestinians, including civilians and militants, this year (as of June 12) in the West Bank, while at least 19 Israelis have fallen to Palestinian attacks. Tuesday's raid was carried out a day after the Israeli cabinet approved plans to build new settlements in the West Bank. After the Eli attack by Palestinian gunmen, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to build 1,000 new settler homes.

The West Bank has been burning for quite some time. Israel, which has established checkpoints that criss-cross the occupied territories, has managed to prevent, so far, the rise of another organised resistance after the second Intifada even while deepening the occupation. As hopes for a political solution waned, Palestinians began launching isolated, often suicidal, knife attacks against Israeli

soldiers (in what some call the 'knife intifada'). But in the latest phase of violence, local Palestinian groups are carrying out bigger attacks and in retaliation, Israel would rain fire on Palestinian villages and demolish the houses of the attackers, with impunity. The Palestinians are divided, with Fatah controlling the West Bank and Islamist Hamas ruling Gaza. The Arab world, which once supported the Palestinian aspiration for nationhood, is now focused on improving ties with Israel. The U.S. and Europe, who are sending billions of dollars and some of their most advanced weapons to help it fight Russia, hardly raise a voice when Israeli troops are killing Palestinians in the occupied territories every day. The status quo in the West Bank and Gaza (blockaded by Israel for over a decade) is a recipe for disaster. Unless there are genuine efforts to freeze the Israeli settlements and open a dialogue between the two sides, the cycle of violence will continue endlessly.

AN ORGANISED COUNTER TO ORGANISED HATE

The communal disturbances in Maharashtra, the performative religiosity in the new Parliament's inauguration and The Kerala Story are all intrinsic to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-Bharatiya Janata Party (RSS-BJP)'s larger cultural war. Vitiating mass consciousness, such issues typically pit Hindus against Muslims, elite establishmentarians against grounded 'nationalists' and constitutional values against 'traditional' values. Despite this war's profound impact on India's social fabric, little attention has been devoted to analysing why atavistic tendencies acquire a social base. If most Indians live by the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, nothing could make them communal, xenophobic, casteist, patriarchal or racist. Yet, studies show that India has become radicalised and socially conservative. To reverse the flames engulfing India (and other nations, as reports suggest in the context of the Leicester riots), dissecting the black box of hate is critical.

The anatomy of organised hate

There are broadly three types of hatred today — organised, inherited and absorbed hate. The first is methodically spearheaded by organisations like the RSS-BJP, invariably for partisan ends. Inherited hate is generationally passed down (usually caste, communal and gender prejudices), which is fertile soil for the champions of organised hate. Finally, absorbed hate is a disease afflicting the silent majority. The Sangh Parivar systematically targets both these constituencies, for short-term goals (influencing voting behaviour, consensus on key issues and fundraising) and to convert permanently.

Progressive forces invariably counter the visible champions of organised hate, including party spokespersons, aligned influencers and organisations, as well as troll armies. They also resort to debunking misinformation or cornering regressive stances/action. Unfortunately, the RSS-BJP cannot be shamed, for they are unhinged from constitutional or institutional norms. Furthermore, their propaganda is complemented by a vast network of socio-cultural and religious organisations that subterraneously spearhead ideological projects. In stark contrast, by striving only to shape public discourse, progressives put the onus of psychological consonance on the people. They assume that people will organically be swayed to progressive positions. Both empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that this tactic is failing. Moreover, this strategy inadvertently oxygenates those historical-cultural issues that the Sangh deploys to frame every state policy and election as an existential war.

Unfortunately, there is no organised programmatic counter to hatred today. Bulldozers raze brazenly, mobs lynch with impunity, processions/films disrupt harmony and economic boycotts are organised with tactical precision, while the State maintains a studied indifference. Sadly, progressive parties avoid interventions against the forces of hate, as Karnataka's Bajrang Dal and Maharashtra's Kolhapur episodes suggest. This is partly because the Sangh can easily instigate retaliatory conflagrations, that invariably benefit the BJP electorally. However, given the BJP's insatiable electoral greed, it is near-impossible for progressive parties to limit the impact area of any disturbance. But there are also structural reasons for this programmatic inertia. Most parties do not plan and execute programmes on ideological issues, remaining excessively dependent on the State. They have forgotten the Congress movement's lessons, which functioned independently of state machineries.

Structurally combating hate

Whole communities have shrivelled in the face of the hatred engulfing India. Given this, there are both moral and pragmatic considerations to frontally tackle the fear that breeds regressive attitudes. First, we progressives need to acknowledge pre-existing societal fears of losing out on economic and political opportunities, and redress them. Not doing so enables the BJP to exploit those faultlines. For example, even though unemployment is a national problem, in the

absence of a comprehensive strategy from progressives, the BJP successfully spins mass unemployment as a consequence of Muslim over-population (that is, jobs meant for Hindus are being 'stolen' by Muslims). Similarly, shrinking public sector jobs and educational opportunities are cynically blamed on reservations (indirectly holding Dalits, Adivasis and backward communities responsible), and not on the fire sale of public sector assets or on policies that make education inaccessible. Given this, progressives need to carefully assuage such fears. A first step could be posing an inspiring alternative agenda that enthuses India. Only then can we wean away the silent majority from the claws of hatred.

But progressive parties also need to put boots on the ground. In that spirit, they must actively collaborate with civil society, which transcends electoral exigencies. Serving as a complementary system, this could become both a response mechanism to conflagrations, and a network of progressive ideological projects. This would facilitate the forging of fresh relationships with new constituencies. One such constituency must be religious leaders/organisations, which progressives inexplicably avoid (thereby giving the RSS-BJP a blank cheque to assert that they represent all Hindus). Such a system would undoubtedly delegitimise atavistic causes.

Furthermore, progressive parties can substantively constrict regressive activities when in office, as the recently elected Karnataka government is doing. Just to cite some obvious examples, organisations frequently showcase movies to vitiate public discourse, conduct processions and sansads to disrupt the peace. While states can ban such organisations, this is only a stopgap since they invariably remerge in a new avatar. A more sustainable solution would be to spearhead out-of-the-box solutions that include shanti senas inculcating societal harmony, promoting films that espouse liberal, secular and democratic values, aggressively disseminating a constitutional narrative through alternative media, and ideological projects.

Fourth, progressives also need to check benefactors of regressive causes. A conflagration is sometimes a smokescreen to promote narrow economic interests. For example, the attack on abattoirs was both ideologically motivated and backed by economic competitors. Similarly, select diaspora groups support regressive projects for preferential treatment in commercial ventures in India. Mapping this financial infrastructure of hate would enable targeted counters using state instruments. A body blow can be delivered if the taps that empower regressive organisations can be closed. But this would need to be complemented by also addressing the non-partisan concerns of interest groups, satyagrahas against benefactors (who can be shamed), ensuring foreign funding does not foment hatred in India (which the compliance rules of most nations prohibit), and organised legal retribution. Ideological and political commitment

India does not deserve ideological malleability or unprincipled politics (as witnessed during the Delhi riots in 2020). In this context, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's spirited fight against communalism offers a toolkit. Apart from making it a central theme in the 1951-52 general election, he tirelessly campaigned against hatred through public/parliamentary speeches, radio broadcasts, as well as letters to Chief Ministers and party units. Urging the Congress Party to "live up to our ideals and declarations" and "not let India be slaughtered at the altar of bigotry", he ensured the party "(fought) it in houses, in fields and in market places... (and) in the council chambers and the streets" (Letters to Chief Ministers, Volume 1, pp 479 and 487; and Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches, Vol. 2, p.175). Today, more than ever, India needs an organised, programmatic and political counter to hate. We do not have the luxury to wait for an organic mass psychological realignment. The only question is: can we transcend narrow interests, and work collaboratively in the national interest?

A DOORWAY TO AN ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY

New knowledge is always the result of interactions between disparate or competing disciplines. Whenever diverse players from different endeavours come together, institutions and organisations make gains because these joint ventures lead to the creation of a whole new body/ bodies of knowledge.

University systems have always seen this. The modern university system, which is a result of large efforts to institutionalise and scale up research and study in many disciplines, keeps evolving.

Over the years, multidisciplinary studies have seen new disciplines such as biochemistry and computing science, which in turn are spawning dozens of new sub-disciplines including the current rage, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI.

While the modern university system has accelerated the growth and the rise of new disciplines across the globe, innovations that bring together academic and industrial research work are creating economic and intellectual value for universities.

A new phase

This joint enterprise of academia and industry, for creating innovations that lead to new products, services, platforms and patents, is entering a new phase. This brings us to the next possible evolution of universities, namely, the entrepreneurial university. Of course, this is a provocative idea. One school of academia maintains that universities should be the fount of new knowledge and research, and any attempt at a commercialisation of this vision should not be allowed. But, globally, the thinking among new-age universities, and 'educational entrepreneurs' is to ensure a fine balance between education and enterprise, where learners pay an optimal price of attaining knowledge, gaining employable skills, or pursuing serious research.

While we need not get into a debate among these competing ideas, there is a definite need to create instruments and pathways that foster research and lead to a commercialisation of research output, so that the university system can capitalise the intellectual value of a new product or processes.

The UGC's push

In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC)'s initiative to institutionalise the concept of 'Professor of Practice' is perhaps a right pointer towards an entrepreneurial university.

The UGC's move clearly shows how universities are best positioned to foster innovation, simply because of the flow of new sets of bright minds every year, seeking to push the frontiers of knowledge further.

The UGC has said: "The objective behind introducing [the] Professor of Practice (PoP) is to enhance the quality of higher education by bringing practitioners, policymakers, skilled professionals, etc. into [the] higher education system."

The initiative wants to bring industry and other professional expertise into academic institutions through a new category of positions viz. PoP. This will help take real world practices and experiences into classrooms and also augment faculty resources in higher education institutions. In turn, industry and society will benefit from trained graduates who are equipped with the relevant skills.

A PoP is typically an individual with significant experience in their industry, appointed to a faculty position at a university to share his/her practical knowledge and skills with students. Unlike traditional academic professors, PoPs are often hired from outside academia, and may not be required to have a PhD or other advanced research degree. Based on their expertise and experience in a specific profession or industry, they are expected to bring real-world insights and perspectives to the classroom. PoPs can be found in fields that include business, engineering, law, journalism, and the arts.

In the field of engineering, for example, a PoP can teach courses that focus on practical, real-world applications and share their insights in applied learning. They can serve as mentors for student projects; develop new courses that are more aligned to industry trends; collaborate with other faculty on research projects and point to ways of converting patents into commercial products (which they do regularly in the industry).

Innovation is the next pillar

PoPs can serve as ambassadors for their universities, building relationships with industry partners and helping to connect students with internship and job opportunities. They can also participate in professional organisations and conferences to stay up-to-date on industry trends and best practices. Thus, PoPs can reshape a university's commercial thinking and energise the actions that add vividness to a university's culture. Teaching and research were the foundational pillars of a university in the industrial era. In today's post-knowledge societies, innovation is the third pillar in universities. This should also be a continuous activity.

When this innovative culture sets in strongly, every academic will be able to synthesise ideas and spin out start-up enterprises. These university-based start-ups would not only incubate ideas but also convert ideas into patents and transform patents into commercial products. The more such ideas grow, the better the idea of an entrepreneurial university gains ground. Its fruition would be a full convergence of research, industry work and academia. The sum of this coalition will be much more than the individual parts.

Perhaps, one day, PoPs will lead to a new generation of 'entrepreneurs in residence', showing the way for bright students to create the next Google on campus.

THE UPROAR OVER THE NEW COP28 PRESIDENT

The story so far:

Almost a week after the United Nations' crucial climate meetings in Bonn, Germany from June 5 to 15, which are considered the halfway mark to the COP (Conference of Parties) climate summit in November, questions over the COP28 Presidency of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Industry Minister Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber still remain. Each year, the host country for the COP summit nominates a president to helm the climate negotiations with almost 200 countries. The UAE announced Mr. al-Jaber, the State oil company CEO, as its pick in January, a move that received immense backlash from Western lawmakers, leaders of some countries, as well as civil society groups.

Who is Sultan al-Jaber?

Mr. al-Jaber, the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) since 2016, was appointed as UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology in 2020, a new department established that year. The leader, who has a chemical engineering and economics background, was serving as a Minister of State in the UAE government since 2013. Also in 2020, he was for the second time appointed as the UAE's special envoy for climate change, a role previously held by him from 2010 to 2016.

He was also serving in a contrasting role, as the Chairman of Masdar, a renewable energy firm in Abu Dhabi, which he helped start in 2006. According to the BBC, Masdar is now active in more than 40 countries and has invested in mainly solar and wind power projects of a total capacity of 15 gigawatts, which is capable of displacing more than 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

In July Mr. al-Jaber was also appointed Chairman of the Emirates Development Bank, which according to his Ministry's website, provides financial services for the sustainable economic and social development of the UAE.



Controversial appointment: Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber speaks at a event at the Bonn Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany on June 8. Getty Images

Who is Sultan al-Jaber? What is his role as the COP28 UAE President? What are his strategies to tackle climate change? Why did his advocacy of carbon capture receive criticism? What are the countries supporting al-Jaber's appointment?

The Guardian reported late last month that Mr. al-Jaber's team was being accused of attempting to "greenwash" his image. It emerged that members of

his team had edited Wikipedia pages that talked about his role as CEO of ADNOC; they were accused of inserting a quote from a Bloomberg editorial that said he was “precisely the kind of ally the climate movement needs.”

Why is Sultan al-Jaber's appointment facing criticism?

Climate campaigners and groups have been voicing their discontent with the appointment of an oil executive to head a summit responsible for brokering global partner negotiations to mitigate climate change and build a framework to meet the countries' pledge at the 2015 summit in Paris to limit global warming to 1.5 °C as against pre-industrial levels.

Scientists are unanimous on the fact that carbon emissions need to be halved by 2030 and 'net zero' emissions reached mid-century if the goal has to be achieved.

Another agreement within the scientific community and many world leaders is that reducing the production and use of fossil fuel resources— coal, oil and gas— is the way to meeting the promises of the Paris Agreement.

The UAE leader who was present at Bonn, did say that COP28 was going to be “inclusive” and deliver a “game-changing outcome” to tackle climate change, but he did not talk about a concrete plan to phase out fossil fuels or address his links to the fossil fuel industry. However, as CEO of the state oil firm ADNOC, Mr. al-Jaber's 2030 strategy is to build a more “profitable upstream, more valuable downstream and more sustainable and economic gas supply,” which essentially means more fossil fuels.

Critics, like Michael Bloss, a German member of the European Parliament and one of the 133 lawmakers who signed the open letter, argue that the appointment was “a scandal” and a “perfect example of a conflict of interest.” The member of the German Green Party says, “It's like putting the tobacco industry in charge of ending smoking.”

“The decision to name as president of COP28 the chief executive of one of the world's largest oil and gas companies—a company that has recently announced plans to add 7.6 billion barrels of oil to its production in the coming years, representing the fifth largest increase in the world— risks undermining the negotiations,” says the letter by lawmakers to U.S. President Joe Biden and European Commission president Ursula Von der Leyen. The signatories also include the likes of U.S. senator Bernie Sanders, veteran Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, among others.

The letter pointed out how “at least 636 lobbyists from the oil and gas industries registered to attend last year's COP—an increase of more than 25% over the previous year.”

While the number of attendees representing the fossil fuel industry was large last year, there are concerns about increased space for such interests at the upcoming summit, considering the new leadership.

According to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), ADNOC pumped 2.7 million barrels of oil per day in 2021 and has ambitious plans. It is vying to nearly double its daily output to five million barrels by 2027 — a deadline which was moved forward from 2030 this year by Mr. al-Jaber.

“We are an emerging upstream company... with a mandate to stay focused on exploring the UAE's undeveloped oil and gas potential,” the official website of ADNOC reads.

Experts also highlight that it is in the UAE's national interest to continue the production of fossil fuels as the 10th largest oil producer in the world and as a historic member of the influential OPEC+ oil cartel of countries.

Why has Mr. al-Jaber's advocacy of carbon capture been criticised?

On climate goals, some world leaders have been pushing for a phaseout of fossil fuels as the way to go while others insist on oil and gas continuing to play a role in the future, provided their emissions are somehow curbed. Mr. al-Jaber belongs to the latter school of thought.

Climate campaigners and scientists have expressed caution that technologies proposed so far to capture fossil fuel emissions have not been

tested at scale. They also argue that such responses do not hit at the root cause of the problem and look at post facto containment once emissions are released, pointing out that they could also divert attention and resources from effective alternatives such as renewable energy.

Mr. al-Jaber has talked about the need to tackle fossil fuel emissions, a stand that observers say mark his inclination to industry interest. He has said that the goal should be a global system “free of unabated fossil fuels.” The term ‘abated’ relates to approaches used in reducing or capturing greenhouse gas emissions that result from the burning of fossil fuels.

At the Bonn talks this week, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock emphasised that the proposal to tackle emissions shouldn't take away from the need to drastically cut fossil fuel use, a position shared by other European nations and vulnerable island states where sea levels are rising making them extremely vulnerable to climate impacts.

Stakeholders like Denmark's climate minister, Dan Jørgensen, say that carbon capture and storage technologies his country is testing in the North Sea should only be restricted to sectors where cutting emissions is extremely hard, such as the cement industry.

Meanwhile, the UAE, while having backed the idea of significantly boosting wind and solar power, has made clear that it wants to keep fossil fuels as an option for the foreseeable future. Mr. al-Jaber said his country wants “a comprehensive, holistic approach to an energy transition that included all sources of energy.”

“We know that fossil fuel will continue to play a role in the foreseeable future, helping meet global requirements so our aim should be a focus on ensuring that we phase out emissions from all sectors whether it's oil and gas or high emitting industries,” he said. “In parallel, we should assert all effort and all investments in renewable energy and clean technology space.”

He did, however, say that the phase down of fossil fuels was “inevitable” while stopping short of advocating a complete ban.

More than 80 countries backed efforts to put oil and gas, not just coal, on notice at the last UN climate summit in Egypt. These are countries in Europe and small and vulnerable island nations which are at risk of sinking and have adopted strict climate action policies. Meanwhile, the U.S and the U.K. have backed Mr. al-Jaber's Presidency.

Many stakeholders argue that having all voices at the table, including a decisive figure from the oil industry, can make negotiations more concrete and realistic. Developing nations like Bangladesh and the Maldives have also said that fossil fuel-dependent economies are critical to climate negotiation and mitigation efforts, and that they have a more difficult task defining their energy transition strategy.

They are banking on Mr. al-Jaber to help secure climate investments supported by sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks. They argue that for the poorer and developing countries, curtailing economic growth is not an option while the rich and developed countries continue to pollute. India, which has been an advocate of climate justice, has also supported Mr. al-Jaber's appointment.

What plans has Mr. al-Jaber highlighted to tackle climate change? Mr. al-Jaber has reiterated the need to double down on renewables. He said in a speech this year that “reaching net zero will deliver the biggest market transformation, greatest economic and human promise since the first Industrial Revolution,” adding that this could be done by tapping into the renewables market.

Supporting the idea that developing nations, while vulnerable to climate change, have their economic and development priorities fulfil, Mr. al-Jaber said one of the important focuses of the negotiations would be to get funds from bigger nations and multilateral development banks, institutions, and to activate already existing corpus funds to which nations have pledged.

UN OFFICIAL FLAGS ‘DEFICIT OF ACCOUNTABILITY’ IN SRI LANKA

Accountability remains the “fundamental gap” in Sri Lanka's attempts to deal with the past, a senior UN official has said while warning that “as long as impunity prevails, Sri Lanka will achieve neither genuine reconciliation nor sustainable peace.”

Referring to the Sri Lankan government's plans to set up a Truth Commission, to probe allegations of war crimes and grave human rights violations during the country's civil war, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif noted that Sri Lanka has “witnessed too many ad

hoc commissions” in the past that failed to ensure accountability.

“What is needed is a coherent plan that connects the different elements of truth, redress, memorialisation, accountability and creates the right enabling environment for a successful and sustainable transitional justice process,” she said, in an oral update to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Wednesday.

While it is fundamentally the Sri Lankan authorities' responsibility to directly acknowledge past violations and undertake credible investigations and



Pursuit of peace: Ranil Wickremesinghe speaking to his supporters in Colombo, Sri Lanka. File Photo

The island nation will achieve neither genuine reconciliation nor sustainable peace as long as impunity prevails, says Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

prosecutions the international community can — and should — play complementary roles in the process until the “accountability deficit” remains, Ms. Al-Nashif said, amid known resistance within Sri Lanka’s Sinhala-majority to any international participation.

Further, pointing to recent arrests of a stand-up comedian and a Tamil legislator, the UN official said the past months witnessed “the old reflex of using draconian laws to curtail opposition and control civic space, with a heavy-handed approach to protests far too often”.

Dialogue with parties

While “encouraging” President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s dialogue with Tamil political parties, and “welcoming” his promise to stop land acquisition for archaeological, forestry or security purposes, the UN official underscored the need for new laws, policies and practices that will “make good on these promises and bring about tangible changes”.

Commenting on the island’s persisting economic crisis, the Deputy Chief of Human Rights observed that it continues to severely impact the “rights and well-being of many Sri Lankans”. Terming the International Monetary Fund’s \$2.9 billion support an “important first step”, she called for “robust safety nets and social protection measures”, in order to ensure that “the burden of reforms does not further compound inequalities.”

Referring to last year’s historic people’s uprising in the island nation, that ousted former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Ms. Al-Nashif noted that the “full potential for the historic transformation that would address long-standing challenges has yet to be realised.”

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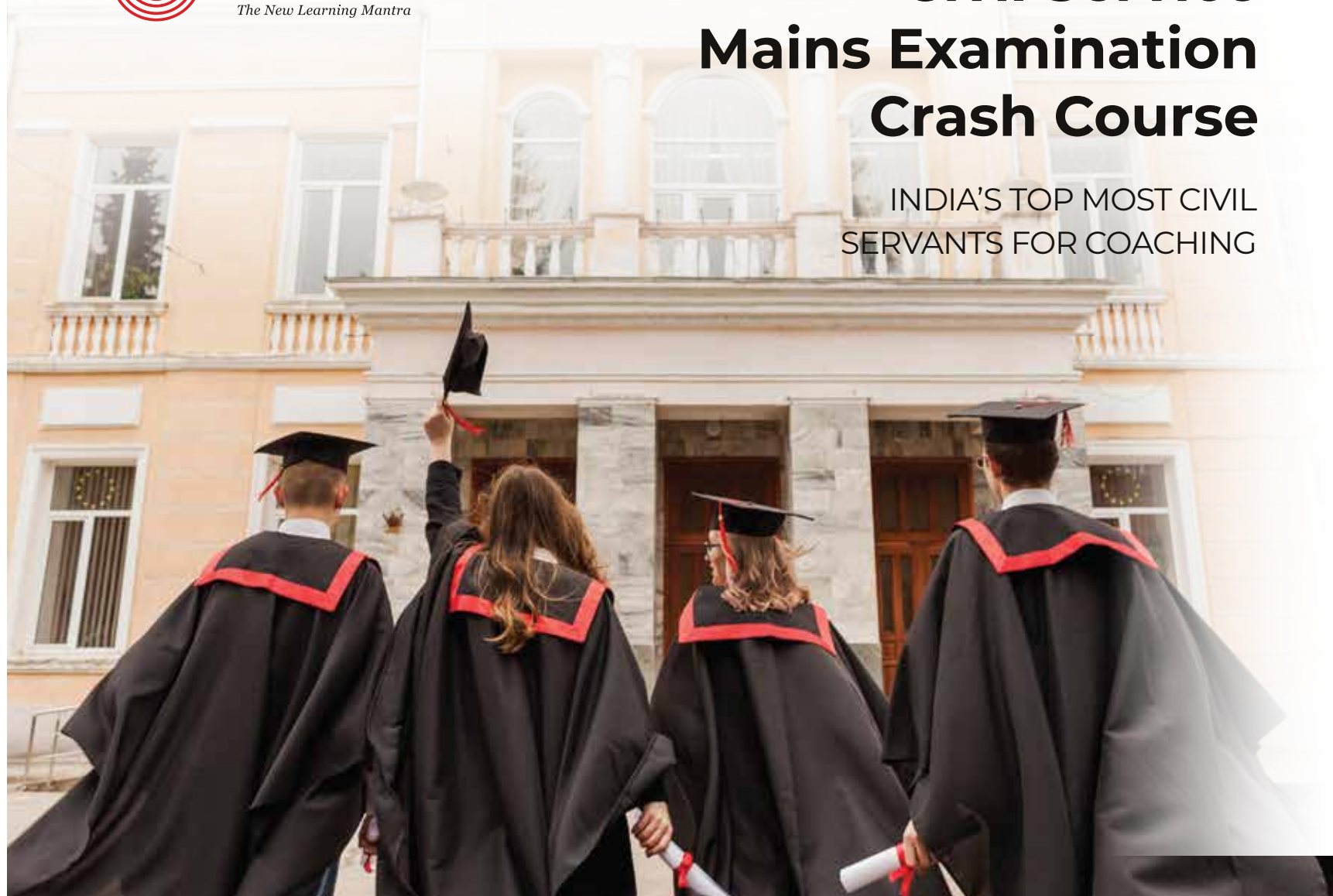
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