

A ROOF OVER THE HEAD

As part of the empowerment of the marginalized people, the center is planning to build houses for 5 lakh homeless people in the Union Territory. Honestly the announcement by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during his visit came as a pleasant surprise to all, perhaps, because in J&K we are not used to such developments. Before 2019, the common people had no idea that the government has a plethora of schemes for poor and the marginalized all over the country. In J&K, a good government was one that ensured quality ration supply and a good supply of electric power. The pre-2019 set up was elitists and the common masses has no expectations from the Government, least of the all a free house and dignity for the homeless people. Occasionally, the authorities gave some doles to the poor but one never imagined it to take up the life changing schemes for public. This scheme is not just on the paper, As Chouhan said the identification of the beneficiaries has been completed and the work of construction will begin as soon as the names are verified through biometrics cards like Aadhar etc. It's through such schemes that the Modi government has uplifted a record number of Indians from extreme poverty, a fact that is acknowledged by the world bodies like the United Nations and World Bank. In J&K we have another fad – to deny the existence of poverty. Everyone in J&K does not live in Srinagar's Raj Bagh or Jammu's Gandhi Nagar; there is urban poverty everywhere. Slums have come up in Srinagar and other cities of Kashmir. Same is the case with Jammu region. The welfare schemes of the center have changed millions of lives; it's the turn of J&K people. In the series of programmes to empower the communities marginalized due to political factors, the homeless too will benefitted with a house and above all dignity.

A grand celebration, a sobering reckoning

Santhosh Mathew

On July 4, 2025, the United States turns 250—a semiquincentennial that marks a remarkable journey from a colonial rebellion to a global superpower. As Americans gather with fireworks, parades, and nostalgic anthems to mark the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the occasion invites not just celebration but introspection.

For this birthday is more than spectacle; it is a moment of reckoning—with ideals pursued, promises broken, and the uncertain road ahead. At its birth, America dared to proclaim that “all men are created equal,” launching a revolutionary political experiment in representative democracy.

From those founding words, it grew into the world's oldest continuous democratic republic. The passage of the Bill of Rights in 1791 enshrined key freedoms: of speech, religion, and assembly.

The Civil War tested and reshaped the Union, while Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address echoed across generations with its solemn promise that “Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

Through the 20th century, the US ascended the global stage by fusing its liberal values with geopolitical ambition. At Bretton Woods in 1944, American leadership birthed the IMF and World Bank to stabilise postwar finance. A year later, it spearheaded the United Nations, laying the foundation for a new multilateral order.

With New York as the new diplomatic hub, America leaned into liberal internationalism, promoting democracy in a world emerging from fascist devastation. Yet American history has always been a study in contradiction. The nation that spoke of liberty denied it to millions. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments abolished slavery and laid the groundwork for civil rights, but true justice remained elusive. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X emerged to challenge the nation's conscience. King with his soaring moral vision of integration, Malcolm with his demand for dignity and self-determination.



Their competing voices helped frame the American experiment not just in political terms but moral ones, pushing the country toward an ever-expanding definition of freedom. The American presidency, from Washington to Roosevelt, Kennedy to Reagan, has served as both compass and mirror. Washington's refusal to become king set a lasting precedent.

FDR's New Deal remade the social contract. Eisenhower warned of the growing might of the military-industrial complex. Kennedy's idealism and Nixon's cynicism pulled the country in opposite directions. In more recent decades, Barack Obama's rise symbolised progress, while Donald Trump's presidency marked a pivot toward nationalism and populism. His slogan — “Make America Great Again” — tapped into nostalgia, economic grievance, and cultural unease. Trump's unapologetic “America First” doctrine marked a break from postwar multilateralism, fueling debates about the nation's role in an increasingly multipolar world.

The Trump era also underscored the growing influence of non-elected power centres in American life. Powerful lobbying groups like the Zionist American organisations, the National Rifle Association (NRA), and pharmaceutical and defence lobbies have shaped policy well beyond the ballot box.

The NRA, in particular, has stymied gun control reforms even amid rising gun violence. Meanwhile, influential think tanks such as the RAND Corporation, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Brookings Institution play an outsized role in shaping foreign policy narratives, often serving as the intellectual fuel behind defence spending, geopolitical posturing, and trade frameworks. These institutions, while contributing to policy discourse, are often funded by vested interests, blurring the line between objective research and ideological agenda. American innovation remains unparalleled.

The Apollo moon landing, the internet revolution, and the tech giants of Silicon Valley — Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, and Google — have reshaped the global economy. America's universities continue to draw the brightest minds, and its cultural output—from Hollywood to hip-hop—extends its soft power across borders. Yet this innovation has come with ethical dilemmas: surveillance capitalism, misinformation, job displacement by AI, and widening economic inequality.

America's military might, once justified as a safeguard of global stability, is increasingly scrutinised. From Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan, its interventions have left deep scars and unresolved legacies. The post-9/11 world order saw the

rise of the Bush Doctrine and a militarised foreign policy under the banner of counter-terrorism and regime change. The burden of being the world's “indispensable nation” has often been accompanied by charges of overreach and imperial arrogance.

Within its borders, the republic is deeply polarised. Debates over immigration, racial justice, climate change, and gun control remain bitterly divisive. The Capitol riot of January 6, 2021, revealed a dangerous fragility in democratic institutions. Partisan media ecosystems, rising distrust in electoral systems, and the proliferation of conspiracy theories have cast long shadows over civic life. Despite this, American patriotism endures—often in complex, contradictory forms. For some, patriotism means saluting the flag; for others, it means kneeling before it in protest. To love America, for many, is to challenge it. From debates over Confederate monuments to conversations around reparations and historical memory, the struggle over who gets to define the American story continues. The 250th anniversary has spurred national projects like the Garden of American Heroes and public exhibitions on democracy and dissent, signalling an ongoing contest over the meaning of freedom and the figures who represent it. On the world stage, the United States now faces rising powers like China and India, as well as a resurgent Russia.

The European Union offers an alternative model of regional governance. The challenges ahead—climate crises, AI regulation, pandemics, and mass migration—require cooperation, not confrontation. As power becomes more diffuse, America's leadership must adapt—with humility, innovation, and a renewed moral compass. Henry Kissinger once observed, “It may be dangerous to be America's enemy, but to be America's friend is fatal”—a blunt reminder that the line between idealism and self-interest has always defined the United States. At 250, the nation remains a paradox: powerful yet insecure, visionary yet flawed, a republic born in revolution still struggling to live up to its revolutionary promise.

A CALL FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL WELL-BEING

Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj Ji

The world we live in today is caught up in a vicious circle, which none of us would deny, because most of the problems it faces are interlinked and each one of them feeds the fires of others. One of the reasons why we cannot solve or lessen the severity of these problems is that we do not apply or do not have a solution that attacks all the problems simultaneously.

In other words, our approach to our problems is not holistic: it is piecemeal. We try to make use of solutions for each problem separately, and the result is that, in the meantime, other problems increase and bring back the problem that we are already trying to tackle! Secondly, we have an infatuation with the old theories.

Little do we realise that our present problems have been caused, directly or indirectly, by such socio-economic, psychological and political theories and concepts that gained currency during the past about three hundred years or a little more. We should have thought that these theories have proved not

only ineffective in the long run but have also given rise to new problems or have aggravated our old problems. We should, therefore, have discarded them as outdated, for the world scene has changed tremendously since then. We should have known by now that something is wrong with our very approach to the problems of elimination or alleviation of sufferings in the world, and our paradigm of a better world is erroneous. Our main emphasis, in our present approach and model, has been on economic development. We have been measuring, and we still measure, the advancement of a nation by its GDP and its per capita income.

Our major concern is to see whether this paradigm of development has been able to raise the economic standard of living of the people. This has been based on the assumption that greater enjoyment of material goods leads to greater happiness. It has thus given us a wrong model of development. Our assumption has been wrong because man does not live by bread alone. He needs mental and cultural development, and he needs peace of mind.

Our goal should, therefore, be the well-being of man rather than material wealth. There is now a need for a paradigm shift and a shift in our emphasis. We have to work for the holistic development of everyone rather than the mere economic development of a few.

Presently, the disparity between techno-scientific and psycho-spiritual development has grown tremendously. This has resulted in great imbalances and also social, cultural and moral distortions.

The critical situation we face today has been brought about by the deterioration in morals and an overemphasis on the physical and material. This has led to fixing up of wrong priorities, wrong imperatives, wrong attitudes and wrong goals. We find that our knowledge of Nature and its forces has tremendously increased during the past few centuries, but our moral and spiritual development has not kept pace with it. As a result, our relations at the inter-personal, inter-communal and international levels have greatly degenerated.

If we cannot solve the problems of

nuclear race or poverty today, it is because our relationships today, at all levels, are not based on goodwill, friendship, love and co-operation. The present crisis is, therefore, mainly a moral crisis. All our current problems arise from a lack of moral and spiritual strength and the absence or lack of co-operation.

If, therefore, we wish to reduce sufferings in the world or eliminate them, or, in other words, if we wish to build a better world, then we have to create the necessary moral climate and build up goodwill and co-operation on a global scale.

The belief that there can be a world without sufferings and the problems we have today is not a utopian belief. It seems utopian when we use the current assumptions and paradigms. The paradigm shift would make it look quite feasible.

Let us, therefore, follow the moral imperative if we wish to have a better world to live in. Let us have world welfare and not mere economic welfare as our aim. It is only then that we will have the co-operation of all.

Monsoon 2025: How much is too much for Indian agriculture and economy?

BK Jha

The southwest monsoon, a lifeline for Indian agriculture, has ushered in a promising 2025 season with forecasts of above-normal rainfall at 106 per cent \pm 4 per cent of the long period average (LPA), as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD). This bountiful monsoon, critical for the Kharif cropping season from June to September, supports the livelihoods of 42.3 per cent of India's population and contributes 18.2 per cent to the nation's GDP. With agriculture serving as the backbone of rural economies, the anticipated robust rainfall is poised to enhance crop yields, stabilise food prices, and stimulate economic growth. However, challenges such as uneven rainfall distribution and the risk of excessive precipitation loom large. The monsoon is the lifeblood of Indian agriculture, particularly for Kharif crops such as rice, maize, cotton, sugarcane, pulses, and oilseeds, which rely heavily on seasonal rains. Approximately 50 per cent of India's arable land depends on monsoon irrigation, making timely and adequate rainfall critical for sowing and crop growth. The 2025 forecast of above-normal rainfall, par-

ticularly in June at 108 per cent of LPA, promises an early onset that supports timely Kharif sowing.

This is a marked improvement over last year's extended monsoon, which led to flooding and crop damage in several regions. Beyond irrigation, the monsoon replenishes groundwater reserves, essential for both Kharif and Rabi seasons. Adequate groundwater levels reduce reliance on expensive irrigation systems, lowering costs for farmers. The IMD's prediction of normal to above-normal rainfall across most regions, except parts of peninsular and northeast India, augurs well for groundwater recharge and sustained agricultural productivity. A robust monsoon directly impacts India's economy through increased agricultural output, which stabilises food prices and curbs inflation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported in April 2025 that headline CPI inflation moderated to a six-year low of 3.2 per cent, driven by declining food inflation for six consecutive months. The expected bumper Kharif harvest, supported by record wheat production and higher yields of key pulses in the Rabi season, should further ease inflationary pressures.



This stability aligns with the RBI's goal of maintaining inflation near its target, providing room for monetary policy flexibility, as evidenced by the recent 50-basis-point repo rate cut to 5.50 per cent on June 6, 2025. Higher agricultural productivity also boosts rural incomes, driving demand for goods and services. ICRA projects agriculture, forestry, and fishing GVA growth at 3.5-4.0 per cent for FY2026, following a 4.6 per cent expansion in FY2025. This growth fuels rural consumption, benefiting sectors like cement, tractors, two-wheelers, edible oils, and sugar. For instance, the cement sector, with 35-37 per cent of demand tied to rural hous-

ing, is expected to see 6-7 per cent volume growth in FY2026, driven by monsoon-induced rural prosperity. Similarly, the tractor industry anticipates 4-7 per cent volume growth, reflecting improved farm cash flows. India's position as the world's largest rice exporter is set to strengthen with surplus production, enabling increased exports of rice, sugar, and onions while reducing edible oil imports. It is obvious that above-average rains for the second consecutive year will support India's export ambitions, enhance foreign exchange earnings and bolster the trade balance. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has reinforced agricultural

optimism by announcing significant Minimum Support Price (MSP) hikes for Kharif crops in the 2025-26 marketing season. The Government has ensured remunerative prices to the growers for their produce. The highest absolute increase in MSP over the previous year has been recommended for nigerseed (₹ 820 per quintal), followed by Ragi (₹ 596 per quintal), Cotton (₹ 589 per quintal) and Sesamum (₹ 579 per quintal). These hikes, exceeding April 2025 mandi prices, incentivise farmers to expand sowing, particularly for oilseeds and pulses, which saw MSP growth of 6-9 per cent.

However, the effectiveness of MSP hikes depends on rainfall distribution. Uneven or excessive rainfall could disrupt sowing, negating the benefits of higher prices. The Government's proactive measures, including investments in irrigation and crop insurance, aim to mitigate these risks, ensuring farmers can leverage the monsoon's potential.

Despite the optimistic forecast, monsoon variability poses significant challenges. Excessive rainfall, while beneficial for water supply, can lead to waterlogging, soil erosion, and crop damage, particularly during the ripening

stage. Last year's extended monsoon caused flooding that damaged crops in several regions, underscoring the risks of concentrated heavy rains. The IMD's forecast indicates potential below-normal rainfall in parts of northwest and northeast India, which could affect regional crop yields and exacerbate disparities in agricultural productivity. Uneven spatial and temporal rainfall distribution remains a critical concern. An even distribution is paramount to maximising crop yields and supporting rural demand. Episodes of heavy rainfall could disrupt sowing schedules, damage young crops, or lead to post-harvest losses. Climate change further complicates monsoon predictability. While neutral El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are expected to persist in 2025, long-term climate trends could introduce volatility, affecting agricultural planning. Investments in climate-resilient crops, improved weather forecasting, and robust irrigation infrastructure are essential to address these challenges. Expanding crop insurance schemes and improving access to credit will empower farmers to mitigate risks and invest in high-yield crops.