

## INDIA IN MALDIVES

How does India remain neutral in situations which tend to divide the rest of the world? Well, someone wanting to understand it must look at Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ongoing visit to Maldives. Modi is in a country that two years ago was reeling under a feverish campaign against India. The campaign leader was none other than today’s President Mohammad Muizzu, who was seen hugging and welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Male. How does India manage to win over the self-proclaimed enemies? This is a method in diplomacy and good neighbourerly relations that many countries would gain by picking it up from India. India is a status quoits state; it has no eyes on any other country’s land and resources. It therefore doesn’t threaten any other country through posturing, war doctrine or its policies. So when smaller countries like Maldives which has been the beneficiary of India’s neighbourhood policy, try to show hate towards India for no reason and under the manipulations by other countries, India remains unruffled. Though citizens felt angry at the Maldivian leaders calling India names for no apparent reason, and boycotted it for travel and tourism, the government remained quiet and confident, almost amused at Maldives’ new leadership. Today when PM Modi is visiting the country on a bilateral, he has been accorded all protocol and warmth like a true friend. During the visit, the two countries signed a plethora of agreements on trade, business, people to people cooperation, and released a postal stamp to commemorate the friendship. Indi has always been generous to its neighbor. It helped Sri Lanka at a crucial time when its economy had tanked and extricated it from a very difficult situation. As PM Modi says India doesn’t have the policy of bullying or bossing over smaller countries and treats them as equals. Also, India believes in cultivating friendships and not having transactional relationship.

## War without end: Global conflicts rise, humanitarian aid falters

Achana Datta

In the uneasy aftermath of a 12-day armed confrontation between Iran and Israel — marked by unprecedented military exchanges and US involvement — a fragile and unsustainable “ceasefire” continues to hang by a thread. Rather than restoring calm, it has added another layer to an already combustible global security landscape. The year 2024 proved to be one of the most violent in recent memory, with the highest number of armed conflicts since the Second World War. According to the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, 61 state-based conflicts erupted across 36 countries, affecting nearly one-fourth of the global population.

The violence has grown not only in scale but also in intensity. Fatalities from these conflicts surged by 37 per cent between July 2023 and June 2024, while the average number of deaths per violent event rose by 17 per cent, highlighting an alarming increase in lethality, as per the Armed Conflict Survey 2024. The human cost has been devastating. Civilian casualties jumped by 40 per cent in 2024, with one person killed every 12 minutes — bringing the annual death toll close to 200,000, according to Humanity & Inclusion UK. Yet, as violence intensified, the response from the international community became increasingly inadequate. The Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) reported that 186.5 million people across 77 countries required humanitar-



ian aid in 2024. However, of the \$49 billion needed, only \$22.58 billion — less than half — was raised, leaving a gaping \$26.42 billion shortfall. This was compounded by a sharp drop in global humanitarian assistance, which fell from \$37.5 billion in 2023 to \$33.9 billion in 2024. Key donors, including the US, Germany, EU institutions, Canada, Norway, and France, all significantly slashed their contributions. Canada, for instance, reduced its aid by 40 per cent, and Germany by 23 per cent. While the funding to support victims declined, global military spending soared to unprecedented levels. In 2024, the world spent \$2.718 trillion on defence — roughly 2.5 per cent of global GDP — with more than 100 countries increasing their military budgets. The United States alone spent \$997 billion, making up 66 per cent of NATO’s total and 37 per cent of global

military expenditure. NATO as a whole spent \$1.506 trillion, with 18 of its member states meeting or exceeding the 2 per cent GDP target for defence — the highest number since 2014. Looking ahead, NATO has announced plans to raise defence spending further, targeting 5 per cent of GDP annually by 2035 to counter perceived threats from Russia and terrorism. Critics argue that such an aggressive militarisation push will mainly benefit arms manufacturers, intensify the security dilemma, and worsen the climate crisis. Russia, meanwhile, spent an estimated \$149 billion on its military in 2024 — 7.1 per cent of its GDP — while Ukraine’s defence spending rose to \$64.7 billion, consuming a staggering 34 per cent of its national income, the highest in the world.

Israel also drastically ramped up its military spending by 65 per cent, reaching

\$46.5 billion, or 8.8 per cent of its GDP — the second highest globally. Iran, constrained by sanctions, was forced to reduce its military budget by 10 per cent to \$7.9 billion, despite its continued involvement in regional conflicts. China, the second-largest military spender, increased its defence budget by 7 per cent to \$314 billion, accounting for half of all military spending in Asia and Oceania. India’s military budget rose modestly by 1.6 per cent to \$86.1 billion, while Pakistan allocated \$10.2 billion to defence.

This lopsided prioritisation — more spending on arms and less on aid — underscores the weakening of global cooperation and the fraying of multilateral institutions designed to ensure peace. The Global Cooperation Barometer 2025, jointly published by the World Economic Forum and McKinsey, warned that the world’s

collective security framework is under “severe pressure.” Multilateral platforms created to resolve disputes have largely failed to act decisively in the last decade.

According to the Multilateralism Index by the International Peace Institute and the Institute for Economics and Peace, international cooperation on peace and security saw its steepest decline between 2013 and 2023. The UN Security Council has not authorised a single new peacekeeping mission since 2014, as geopolitical rivalries among major powers have eroded the very consensus needed to uphold peace. In this bleak context, the UN80 Initiative — launched to mark 80 years since the adoption of the UN Charter — offers a glimmer of hope. It seeks to reinvigorate multilateralism and strengthen the capacity of global institutions to manage conflicts and humanitarian crises. Despite its many flaws, the United Nations remains the most inclusive and representative global body. Its founding principles — rooted in preventing the recurrence of global war — are more relevant today than ever.

As the world teeters on the edge of deeper conflict and humanitarian collapse, the urgent task before nations is to renew their commitment to global cooperation and peace. Militarisation without diplomacy cannot secure the future. A return to the principles of the UN Charter is essential — not just to prevent the next war, but to preserve what remains of our shared humanity.

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## HINDI VS MARATHI: FROM HARMONY TO DISCORD

Ramakant Chaudhary

The politics of language has long been a contentious issue in India, often manipulated by vested interests to stoke regional sentiments for electoral gains and political self-aggrandisement. In Maharashtra — a state whose very name derives from the Hindi word *rashtra* (nation) — linguistic divisions are being weaponised to fuel social unrest, especially as elections approach. The recent spate of violent incidents targeting Hindi-speaking migrant workers, who are integral to the state’s economic fabric, has cast a shadow over Maharashtra’s image as a progressive and inclusive hub.

These attacks, often carried out by fringe elements associated with parties like Raj Thackeray’s Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and Uddhav Thackeray’s Shiv Sena (UBT), expose a troubling surge of linguistic chauvinism — one that undermines the country’s cherished motto of “unity in diversity” and threatens India’s global image, especially as it champions the vision of One Earth, One Family, One Future. Home to Mumbai — India’s financial capital — and Pune, a major industrial hub, Ma-

harashtra owes much of its economic prowess to migrant labour. These workers, many of whom come from Hindi-speaking states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, are the backbone of key sectors including construction, manufacturing, and services. Estimates suggest that migrant workers contribute nearly 10 per cent to India’s GDP, with a substantial share stemming from their labour in Maharashtra. Yet, these very individuals — who toil to build the state’s infrastructure and fuel its growth — are increasingly being targeted for their lack of fluency in Marathi. These incidents, often orchestrated for political mileage, have provoked national outrage. What is more alarming is the apparent inaction by law enforcement agencies, which seems to have emboldened such elements further. This lack of accountability not only shields the perpetrators but also risks denting India’s image as a progressive, inclusive nation — particularly when the country is actively branding itself as Viksit Bharat. With the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections on the horizon, linguistic agitations have taken centre stage in Maharashtra’s political discourse. Parties like the MNS and Shiv Sena (UBT), desperate to reclaim rele-

vance in the state’s shifting political terrain, appear to be resorting to divisive tactics to rally their voter base. By targeting Hindi-speaking workers, they aim to inflame regional pride and position themselves as protectors of the Marathi Manus (Marathi people). Yet this brand of politics reeks of opportunism and stands in stark contradiction to the inclusive ethos that has long defined Maharashtra. The Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli’s assertion that “politics has no relation to morals” seems particularly apt. These political actors relentlessly target vulnerable migrant workers while remaining conspicuously silent about high-profile figures — Bollywood celebrities, corporate tycoons, and politicians — who have built their careers and fortunes in Maharashtra despite lacking proficiency in Marathi.

Historical Ties, Shared Heritage  
The narrative of linguistic exclusivity promoted by certain political groups sits uneasily with Maharashtra’s rich historical and cultural legacy. Icons of Marathi pride — Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his son Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj — embodied an inclusive spirit that transcended linguistic barriers. Historical accounts record that Hindi-

speaking communities played a critical role in aiding Shivaji’s daring escape from Mughal custody in 1666. A priest from Kashi, in a Hindi-speaking region, conducted his coronation in 1674, bestowing upon him the title of Chhatrapati. Sambhaji, celebrated for his valour, was also a scholar of Hindi, credited with authoring three significant literary works in the language — *Saatshtak*, *Nakshikha*, and *Nayikabhed*. His court welcomed Hindi poets such as Kavi Kalash, a trusted confidant and advisor. These historical instances reaffirm the deep cultural and linguistic bonds between Marathi and Hindi-speaking communities — a legacy of coexistence starkly at odds with today’s divisive rhetoric. Prominent pre-independence Maharashtra leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Kaka Kalelkar recognised Hindi’s potential as a unifying force in India’s diverse linguistic landscape. They advocated Hindi as a link language, capable of bridging regional divides without eroding local identities. Many Marathi poets, authors, and journalists have also enriched Hindi literature, further underscoring the shared linguistic heritage between the two languages, which share nearly 80 per cent of their vocabulary.

## India Pays as the West Neglects: The Price of Global Warming

Acharya Prashant

We hear news at regular intervals about burning wildfires, shrinking glaciers, drowning cities and farms turning to dust. It should be very obvious that climate change no longer remains a distant threat; it’s here, undoubtedly. Each season, we are seeing climate excesses. The signs are clear, the science undeniable, yet for some reason we keep looking away.

The recent floods in Texas didn’t come out of nowhere. The Gulf waters had been warming quietly for months, feeding storms with unusual strength. At the same time, cities kept expanding, pouring concrete over wetlands and choking the land’s natural breathing space.

Drains were rerouted, soft earth was buried, and when the rains finally came, the water had nowhere left to go. Streets turned to rivers, homes vanished, and life came to a standstill. This wasn’t nature acting blindly; it was nature responding, almost patiently, to years of human excess. Yet even now, as the connection between our ways and these disasters grows clearer, the world’s most powerful nations continue to choose convenience over con-

science, just when wisdom is most needed.

The restart of the US presidency earlier this year began with a withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, signalling a step back from global climate efforts. It wasn’t just a policy shift; it sent a clear message: the planet could wait if politics or profit got in the way. Digging deeper for oil and gas took precedence over lower emission alternatives.

One of the most vulnerable areas of the planet, the Arctic, was not exempt. Short-term gain took precedence at a time when the world needed direction and care, which exacerbated the crisis.

The US holds just 4 per cent of the world’s population but is behind around 25 per cent of excess carbon in the atmosphere. When a nation with that kind of power turns to a wrong direction, the whole world feels it. And it’s not just the US, nations like China, Russia, Gulf Countries and many European countries too are emitting far more per capita than they should.

When these powerful nations step back from responsibility, climate change becomes an even greater crisis. And the danger isn’t just rising temperatures from regular indus-

trial activity.

As nations chase control of territory over ecological balance, climate breakdown and wars begin to feed each other. War harms the planet too; two weeks of conflict can emit a year’s worth of carbon. In such a world, climate goals become distant, and global warming moves faster than we can keep up.

Powerful nations refuse to act. Even with the facts of such disproportionate emissions being clear, the powerful nations often turn a blind eye to this disparity. This silence is not ignorance; it is calculation. We often assume that people at the top don’t act because they don’t understand. But that’s rarely the case.

They understand, perhaps even better than most, but their interests are tied to the very structures that fuel the crisis. Climate change today is not just a planetary emergency; it’s also an economy, a career path, and an institution.

Massive funds are channelled into both climate action and denial, and entire industries survive on keeping things just the way they are either by promising high-tech solutions or by denying there’s a problem at all. When you try to speak truth into

such a world, it often feels like no one is listening. But it’s not that they can’t hear, it’s that they’ve chosen not to. Because to truly listen would mean letting go of the very things they’re clinging to. And the weight of this denial by the rich nations is mostly carried by the poor ones.

India’s Climate Struggle  
In India too, climate change isn’t a distant worry; it’s happening now. Heatwaves last for weeks during summers, and lives are lost every year. Rain, once predictable, has lost its rhythm.

Sometimes it all comes at once, flooding fields and sometimes it doesn’t come at all. Farmers now gaze at the sky with uncertainty, unsure when to plant or harvest. By the coast, families who’ve spent lifetimes by the sea are quietly preparing to leave as the water inches closer.

Up north, the glaciers shrink quietly, changing the flow of rivers that once sustained millions. And in our cities, the air grows heavier, the weather harder to read. What was rare has become routine, and somewhere deep down, we’ve begun to accept it. The land, the climate, and the people, they’re all being re-

shaped, not slowly, but abruptly.

What makes this even harder is a simple truth: India isn’t the one driving it. The carbon burden causing today’s crisis comes mostly from richer nations with long industrial pasts.

On average, the world emits 4.8 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per person each year. The US emits almost 14 tons, while India with more than 4 times the population of the US emits just 2 tonnes. Yet we face some of the harshest impacts of climate change. India’s deep economic divide makes the crisis harder still. The top 1 per cent hold over 40 per cent of the wealth — enough to stock up on water, run air conditioners, or quietly relocate if needed.

But for the farmer in the sun or the family in a crowded slum, there’s no buffer. This isn’t about numbers, it’s about people.

It’s about the widening gap between those who can protect themselves and those who cannot. If this gap keeps growing, climate change won’t just shift the weather, it will quietly begin deciding who survives and who doesn’t.

Beyond Carbon: The Crisis Within

While we’ve rightly questioned

powerful nations, and their Governments, perhaps it’s now time to turn the focus inward. This crisis didn’t begin only in policy rooms; it began with our belief that fulfillment lies somewhere outside.

We keep reaching for more things to own, consume and achieve, hoping it will fill some void within us. We consume not because we need to, but because we’ve grown used to the chase. We hardly pause to question the chase. And in that restless search, the planet has silently borne the cost.

We often frame the climate crisis as something ‘caused by human activity’. But the truth runs even deeper: humans themselves are the crisis. The real crisis is our restless need to consume without pausing to understand. Until we begin to look at that inner hunger, no policy or global agreement will truly be enough.

Hence the solution isn’t just about using clean technology or using ‘eco-friendly’ products. Real change begins with an inner shift within us and our awareness of the inner void that drives us to consume. Without this awareness, we will keep taking more from a planet that’s already stretched thin.