

KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

We, the Indians, have a great knack of making a celebration out of even the most sombre situations. Kargil Vijay Diwas (anniversary), which commemorates the sacrifices of Indian soldiers in the war that was triggered by Pakistan’s obsession with Kashmir and in this case General Pervaz Musharraf’s sinister plot of occupying strategic peaks in Kargil in 1999, is an example of this. The Indian military detected the presence of Pakistanis with the advent of spring and then began the conflict which showed Pakistan as a fragmented state and some of its leaders as pure evils. Indians military lost no time in bringing the situation under control and in the process, a lot of bravehearts made supreme sacrifices. Today, on the anniversary of Kargil war’s end we pay tributes to the martyrs of Kargil. The solemn function is held at the Drass Kargil war memorial while across the country people try to commemorate the day their own way, mostly bordering on celebration. It’s a celebration of the lives laid down in the line of duty and Indian forces defeating the Pakistani side – both in propaganda and in the sense of military victory. Celebration of a war victory is important for morale of a nation but equally important is to focus on the families of the martyrs. Instead of evenry being in a celebration mode, the governments could organize functions to honour the memories of the martyrs from their respective states and also involve their families in it. Wars leave a lot of human sufferings behind even when these are won. The most affected are the families of men and officers who have made supreme sacrifice while defending the country’s territorial integrity. The society and authorities must never let these families feel alone and should find occasions and way to support them.

Andy Burnham: Will the new prime minister finally change Britain

Surjit Singh Flora

Britain has a replacement prime minister, but there hasn’t been enough patience for another false start in the country. On July 20, Andy Burnham became the United Kingdom’s seventh prime minister in a decade after Keir Starmer resigned. The high turnover has rendered political change routine, even if the problems confronting households have become difficult to ignore.

Now the former mayor of Greater Manchester heads both the Labour Party and the government. His first message was blunt: ease pressure on households, restore public trust, stop Westminster politics running amok. That’s a reasonable agenda, but it also raises the bar. Voters have heard pledges of rebirth before.

The transfer of power was swift. The test of power will not be.

Keir Starmer announced his resignation on June 22 after losing support among Labour MPs. He stayed on as caretaker prime minister while the party selected a successor, a period that gave Burnham time to prepare but offered little relief from the uncertainty already surrounding the government.

Burnham had returned to the House of Commons by winning the Makerfield byelection. He was sworn in as the constituency’s MP on the same day Starmer announced he would step down. His return gave him a parliamentary base just as the Labour leadership contest began.

That contest was barely a contest. Burnham won unopposed on July 17 after receiving 379 nominations, more than 94 per cent of Labour MPs. With Labour holding 403 of the Commons’ 650 seats, those numbers gave him a commanding mandate inside Parliament. They also removed one immediate obstacle, leaving him responsible for meeting expectations that his uncontested victory had raised. On Monday, Burnham met King Charles III at Buckingham Palace and accepted the monarch’s invitation to form a government. That constitutional step made him prime minister.

He then arrived at 10 Downing Street with his wife, Marie-France van Heel, to a welcome from staff and supporters. Burnham had spent nine years as Greater Man-



chester mayor, from 2017 to 2026. He built a national reputation as the “King of the North,” a title rooted in his criticism of London-centered decision-making. He must now prove that his regional politics can guide the whole country.

Outside No. 10, Burnham said Britain needs stability, hope, and public trust. The appeal was aimed at voters worn down by leadership churn and political fights that rarely improve daily life. Yet trust won’t return because a new prime minister uses calmer language. It will depend on whether the government can make decisions that people can see in their wages, housing costs, local services, and household bills. History

Burnham promised immediate action on the cost of living. The broad target is clear: families need relief from inflation and high bills before they’ll believe another long-term plan. Any early measures will face a difficult test, since public spending is already under pressure and large promises require money that the Treasury doesn’t have in unlimited supply.

“Seven prime ministers. Ten years.” Burnham’s first speech treated that record as a warning, not a talking point. The figure captures the public’s frustration with a political system that has repeatedly promised stability while producing another leadership crisis. Burnham also attacked a system he said had taken wrong turns since the 1980s. He called for a “circuit breaker” after decades of privatization, weakened local government, and public services under strain. That argument will appeal to

voters who believe the state has withdrawn from too many parts of daily life. It will also face resistance from those who fear a larger public sector without firm controls on spending. His answer is a detailed 10-year national plan, due by the end of 2026. It is expected to cover industrial renewal, British businesses, jobs for younger people, education, affordable essentials, and stronger public services. The language is ambitious, but the details now matter more than the announcement. A plan of that length needs clear annual targets, reliable funding, and ministers willing to defend it when short-term political pressure rises.

Burnham has separated immediate relief from the bigger repair job. The first is about easing cost-of-living pressure. The second is about rebuilding an economy that has delivered weak growth and limited prospects for too many workers. The two goals are connected, but they won’t be achieved on the same timetable. Families need help now, while economic restructuring takes years and often produces political costs before it produces results.

He inherits high public debt, expensive public services, housing shortages, and inflation that still cuts into family budgets. None of those problems has a quick fix. A government can announce new spending in a day, but it takes far longer to build homes, train workers, expand services, or raise productivity.

The 10-year plan could put industrial policy back at the center of government. Burnham wants more British production

and better routes into work for young people. However, the plan is still a promise, not a finished program. Its credibility will rest on funding, timelines, and whether ministers can protect it from the annual demands of crisis management. Government

Burnham’s other defining pledge is to shift power out of Westminster and Whitehall. Regions, councils, and local communities would get a greater say over spending and public decisions. Supporters view that as a correction to decades of centralized government. Critics will ask whether local bodies have enough money and administrative capacity to take on more responsibility. That argument comes directly from Greater Manchester. As mayor, Burnham built his political identity around the claim that local leaders understand local needs better than distant departments. A bigger devolution settlement could affect transport, regional investment, public services, and local economic plans. It would also test whether central government is willing to give up control when local priorities clash with national ones.

Burnham has made ending rough sleeping one of his first priorities. His proposed approach includes more council homes, stable housing for people without a home, and stronger mental health support. The policy is more serious than a single housing pledge because street homelessness also involves addiction treatment, benefits, social care, local government funding, and routes into work.

The promise will be watched closely because it carries personal history. As Greater Manchester mayor, Burnham set a goal of ending rough sleeping by 2020. The target wasn’t fully met. That failure doesn’t make the national pledge meaningless, but it makes the standard harder to defend. A national government has greater resources than a mayoral authority, yet it also faces wider causes and more complicated delivery systems.

Burnham’s pledge gives his government a clear early measure of success. It also exposes the gap between a speech and a functioning system. If ministers announce housing without providing support services, the most vulnerable people may move repeatedly between temporary accommodation, shelters, hospitals, and the street.

VIKSIT BHARAT NEEDS SKILLED INDIA, NOT JUST CERTIFIED INDIA

Brajesh Kumar Tiwari

India today faces a striking paradox. Educated youth are struggling to find meaningful work, while firms are struggling to find job-ready technicians, mechanics, electricians, machine operators, repair workers and supervisors. This is not merely an unemployment problem; it is a capability mismatch. Degrees have expanded faster than usable workplace skills, and certificates have often grown faster than employer confidence. As Skill India completes eleven years on July 15, 2026, the central question is no longer whether India can train at scale. It is whether training can translate into productivity, wages, dignity and real bargaining power in the labour market.

Skill India’s most visible achievement has been its large scale. Under PMKVY, from 2015 to 31 December 2025, 1.64 crore candidates were trained or oriented, while 1.29 crore were certified. Women’s participation has also been notable, with 74.29 lakh women trained by 30 June 2025, accounting for nearly 45 per cent of total candidates. In the first three phases, where placement tracking was linked mainly to

the Short-Term Training component, 56.89 lakh candidates were certified and 24.3 lakh were reported placed, reflecting a placement rate of about 42.8 per cent. PMKVY 4.0 has moved beyond basic placement reporting towards wider career pathways, including self-employment, wage employment, on-the-job training and digital linkages. By 31 December 2025, it had trained 27.09 lakh candidates and certified 18.79 lakh. Its focus on future skills is visible through over 600 industry-aligned courses in AI, 5G, cyber security, green hydrogen and drones.

Yet the core criticism has become sharper: Skill India did better in mobilising candidates, issuing certificates and building scheme visibility than in transforming the labour market. PLFS 2025 shows why. Only 4.2 per cent of Indians aged 15-59 had received or were receiving formal vocational or technical training; among 15-29-year-olds, the share was just 5.0 per cent. The Economic Survey, using PLFS 2023-24, also noted that 65.3 per cent of the workforce had no vocational training, while only 4.1 per cent had formal training. The skilling architecture expanded, but its real penetration into the workforce

remains shallow.

Quality has been an equally serious concern. The 2025 CAG audit of PMKVY found that 6.54 lakh certified candidates across 705 job roles did not meet the minimum entry age at the start of training. Many others were certified despite not meeting educational or technical eligibility norms. Field inspections found closed training centres, weak attendance compliance, and gaps in placement strategy, monitoring and recognition-of-prior-learning certification. The larger message was clear: India created a large certification system without fully protecting the credibility of certification.

Employer linkage remains the weakest link. NITI Aayog found that 94 per cent of surveyed employers were willing to hire more PMKVY-trained candidates, and IIPA reported that 70.5 per cent of surveyed candidates were placed in their desired skill sector. Yet placement tracking was mainly linked to PMKVY’s first three phases, not PMKVY 4.0. When tracking weakens, accountability also weakens. This is worrying for MSMEs, which need trusted hiring signals and easy apprenticeship routes, not just more course comple-

tions. The rural-urban divide also persists. PLFS 2025 shows youth unemployment at 8.3 per cent in rural India and 13.6 per cent in urban India. Secondary education attainment was 61.9 per cent in rural areas and 79.7 per cent in urban areas. Skill India has widened access, but structural gaps in schooling, connectivity, migration networks and local employer density remain unresolved. India’s skilling strategy should not be based on a single model viewed only through the lens of a foreign system. Germany shows the importance of tying classroom instruction to practical workplace training. Almost 89 per cent of vocational upper-secondary students participate in programmes that blend school-based learning with on-the-job experience. In this way, some 94 per cent of recent vocational graduates get a job within two years. South Korea, meanwhile, demonstrates how robust academic rigour, institutional rigour and competent quality assurance can enhance results, even when vocational education attracts comparatively fewer students. CorporateTraining

Another key lesson from Singapore is to not see vocational education as a lesser or second choice.

Dear youth, how about a real revolution?

Acharya Prashant

You have been wronged. A leaked paper is theft of your years. This time the theft has taken young lives. No honest voice can speak of these weeks without first bowing to the dead. Let that be said first, because it is true.

And let a second thing be said just as plainly, so that nobody twists this article later. I am not against protesting on the streets. The street has its place in a democracy. A day may come when I myself say: now march. This article has only one condition, and it is the condition every examination hall enforces: first prove you are fit to sit the paper. What follows is not a prohibition. It is a fitness test. And a fitness test is not a purity or perfection test. I am not asking you to become a perfect saint before you raise a slogan. Perfection is not needed; inner honesty is. The fitness demanded here is not perfection; it is direction.

And let a third thing be said, so

that this article cannot be used as anyone’s shield. The state stands indicted. An administration under which question papers travel faster than justice has failed its first duty. The syndicates that sell children’s futures for cash deserve the harshest prosecution the law can build, and the agencies that let them flourish deserve the deepest audit. Nothing that follows dilutes that verdict by one drop." Placing the state’s indictment in the opening, before any demolition of the protestor begins, structurally forecloses the "he’s absolving the government. SocialIssues & Advocacy

Now allow one simple observation. In every act of injustice there are two things, not one. First, the action. Second, your understanding of the action and response to it. The action was done to you. The response is being done by you, right now, live. You have chosen protest as your response. Very well. You are examining the minister with full ruthlessness. Now extend the same examination to the exam-

iner. If the test is fair, why should anyone be exempt? Including you.

Every day the messages pour in by the thousands. The country is burning. Do something. Please, please do something. Fine. Before the doing, one small test.

The paper leaked. Somebody sold it. So somebody also bought it. Now show me one buyer of the paper in the march. Show me one young man who bought the leaked paper, took his advantage from it, and is on the road today shouting that the system is rotten. Can you find him? No, because he does not exist. Then is this protest really against leakage? Ask yourself, in the privacy of your own head: the students whom the next leak reaches in time, will they be marching or memorising the leaked paper? Only your own honesty can answer that.

And tell me this. Is it not the ego’s oldest trick to shout about the action so that the actor is never discussed? "Do something,

do something!" The louder the chant of doing, the safer the doer sits inside. Unexamined. Unwashed. Untouched. Always listen to what is not being said. Nobody on any stage, placard, or hashtag is saying: let us look at the one who acts. Because the moment you look there, the game is up.

Understand a simple thing. The universe is a well-run place. No forest demands reform. No river files a petition. Only man’s world keeps begging for correction. Why? Because man acts from a corrupt centre. And no rearrangement of actions has ever cleaned a centre. The outside never improves until the spoiler inside is stopped. The spoiler inside needs stopping. Correction is not a new action. Correction is the cleaning of the centre of the old one. That is all this article asks of you. Not that you leave the street, but that you clean the one who walks on it.

The race, or only the referee? Look at what your placards demand. A fair examination. An ac-

countable minister. In other words, a cleaner race. Not one placard in the whole capital asks the prior question: is this race so important that a young person takes his life for it? Educational-Resources

More than 2.27 million aspirants sat this year’s medical entrance exam. Then it was cancelled outright, once the leak was confirmed. Now see the deeper numbers. They answer a question nobody is asking. In 2022, this country recorded 13,999 student suicides. That is a rise of more than eighty percent since 2011. In 2021, over fifteen hundred young people under thirty ended their lives with "failure in examination" written as the reason. One coaching town alone counted twenty-six such deaths in a single recent year. Now mark the dates. No paper had leaked in those years. The exams were clean. The children still died anyway.

So the leak did not build the machine that equates a rank with a life. The leak only exposed it.

For years, a whole civilisation has told its seventeen-year-olds that their self-worth is tied to their scorecards and entrance-exam-ranks. And the seventeen-year-olds believed it, because nobody offered them a deeper account of who they are. The ego stakes its whole existence on a result. When the result collapses, the young person concludes that he has collapsed. That conclusion is the real killer. A movement that wins a resignation but leaves this machine untouched is preparing for the next round of casualties. If you truly mourn the dead, mourn them at the root.

A monkey entered the house. It emptied the fridge, smashed the crockery, wrecked the room. Terrible monkey, no argument. Now the mother returns. Whom does she slap? The monkey, or the child who left the door open? Let the monkey be caught, caged, and prosecuted. Full support. The monkey’s trial and the door’s inquiry are not rivals. Both must run. I am only asking why one of them has ten million investiga-

tors and the other has none.

You are running a very energetic anti-monkey movement. I am asking a quieter question. Who opened the door? And please get me right: catching the monkey and examining the door are not rival activities. Both must happen. One does not cancel the other.

This is a democracy. No divinely appointed ruler sits over you. The people you now want to drag from their chairs were carried to those chairs by you. In daylight. With music. Today you vote for a man. In two years you march against him. In five, you will garland his replacement, and then march against the replacement. Before demanding answers from the government, answer one question yourself. What exactly were you doing in the polling booth? And the inquiry will not stop there. If that one choice was blind, why trust the others? The course chosen for the salary. The friendships kept for use. The marriage negotiated like a tender.