

## TOURISM BOOMING

Tourism is booming in Kashmir, once again. Almost a year after the Pahalgam terrorist attack saw the sudden flight of tourists from the Valley and the subsequent Operation Sindoor against Pakistan and its terrorist infrastructure, hotels, shikaras, lodges and homestays across the Valley are overflowing with tourists from all over India. This is the power of Indian middle class and also the resilience of the Indian society. If Pakistan thinks it can derail life in Kashmir for good or create a permanent wedge between the locals and the rest of Indians by staging terrorist strikes, it needs to think again. With Narendra Modi government in place in Delhi, Pakistan has no chance to play its dirty games in Kashmir or any other parts of India. Tourism is not only a mainstay of local economy in Kashmir it's also a feel good phenomenon. Unless Srinagar's Boulevard Road is seen swarmed by tourists it doesn't feel good.

## SOORYAVANSHI EPISODE

Sri Lanka is a formidable cricket team with highly talented players. However, when some of the team members entered into a verbal spat border on physical assault with the world's youngest international cricket player Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, it left a bad impression about them. The Teen sensation of India also entered into a heated argument on the field but he can be given a concession given his age. Vaisbhav's stellar performances in the domestic season have probably unnerved many international players about playing against him. Was he deliberately targeted? IN fact many senior Lankan players are in favour of their team offering an apology on this episode. Vaibhav has always shown exemplary behaviour on and off the field and he doesn't have a reputation of picking quarrels. Also he is not given to fits of rage. Was he provoked deliberately? Cricketers must not spoil the game.

Hardeep Singh Puri

**On 10 June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi becomes the longest continuously serving democratically elected Prime Minister in our history. Having served the Indian state across much of the journey in between, I can say the achievement is not the length of the tenure. It is what the office has been made to do.**

On 10 June 2026, Modi ji completes his 4,399th consecutive day in office, one more than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru served from his first elected government in 1952 until his death in 1964. The qualifier is worth keeping, because Pandit Nehru, measured from 1947, still holds the record for the longest unbroken tenure. What Modi ji has surpassed is the mark for the longest continuous tenure of an elected head of government in the Republic's history. I have spent my working life inside the state that lies between those two dates, and the milestone interests me less for its arithmetic than for what it allows one to measure. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya taught that a government should be judged by what reaches the last person in the line, by Antyodaya. The distance from Pandit Nehru's India to Modi ji's Bharat is the distance the last person has travelled.

A fair account begins with what Pandit Nehru inherited. He inherited a partitioned subcontinent scarred by the largest forced migration in history, an economy drained by two centuries of colonial extraction, a people of whom fewer than one in five could read, and a life expectancy in the early thirties. From that inheritance he built a constitutional democracy that held, while one newly free nation after another fell to the general or the strongman. The Planning Commission set the direction, the public sector held the commanding heights, and a system of licences decided



who might produce what. The universities, the laboratories, the atomic and space programmes, the steel towns: the institutional spine of independent India was laid in those years. I joined the Foreign Service in 1974, and the India I represented was a serious country that had chosen to manage scarcity with as much dignity as its machinery allowed.

The cost of that settlement became visible by the time I was a mid-career officer. The state had learned to allocate, but it had not learned to deliver. The distance between a scheme announced in Delhi and a benefit received in a village was where the money vanished. A former prime minister's own admission, that fifteen paise of every rupee reached the poor, was a verdict on the model itself. The state could plan. It could not reach.

Modi ji's inheritance in 2014 deserves the same honest accounting. He took charge of an economy the markets had filed among the Fragile Five, weighed down by stalled projects, double-digit inflation fresh in memory, and corruption that had corroded public faith in the state itself. His answer was a different machine altogether. The Planning Commission gave way to the NITI Aayog, which convenes the states rather than instructs them. Identity, a bank account, and a mobile phone were joined into one layer, and the government began to pay citizens directly instead of through intermediaries who had taken their cut for four decades. Direct Benefit Transfer is a plain phrase for a decisive instrument. It moved the test

of governance from intention to receipt.

What followed was the reconception of the state as a platform. India built public digital rails, an identity system that works at the scale of a continent, and a payments network the world now studies. More than fifty crore Jan Dhan accounts opened formal banking to families it had never reached. In the same decade, by NITI Aayog's estimate, nearly twenty-five crore Indians moved out of multidimensional poverty, and the economy the markets had written off now grows faster than any other major economy. The state that once stood between the citizen and the thing the citizen needed now builds the road and stands aside. That is the substance behind the word Bharat.

I can speak to one corner of this from the office I hold. In 2014, ethanol blending in our petrol stood at 1.53 per cent. This year we have reached twenty per cent, a target once set for 2030 and met half a decade early, and the money that once left the country to buy crude now reaches the farmer, who is now an Urjadata, a provider of energy, alongside the Annadata who feeds us. In the same years, the Ujjwala Yojana carried cooking gas into more than ten crore poor households for the first time, with the subsidy paid into the beneficiary's own account, beyond any middleman's reach. This is Antyodaya rendered in litres and cylinders. The last person is no longer the one the scheme forgets. She is the one it is built around.

The same ledger runs through brick and steel. Close to four crore pucca homes have been built under the Awas Yojana for families that had never owned one. The metro, which ran in five cities in 2014, runs in more than twenty today. The number of airports has roughly doubled, and UDAN has put air travel within reach of towns that had only watched aircraft pass overhead. The railways have been electrified almost end to end and run their first indigenously built semi-high-speed trains. None of this is abstraction. Each entry is a queue that no longer forms, a journey that no longer consumes a day, a roof that does

not leak.

The fiscal architecture moved with the rest. The Goods and Services Tax, for all its early friction, gave the country the single national market that had defeated every government which pursued it for two decades, and the Centre and the states now compete on the ease of doing business and the quality of delivery, a healthier contest than the older one over allocations.

The same confidence reshaped how India carries itself abroad, and here I claim some standing from my years representing the country. Pandit Nehru's non-alignment was the prudent stance of a poor and new state that could not afford to choose a side. The present doctrine of multi-alignment is the stance of a country that intends to be courted by every side. India carried its Group of Twenty presidency to every state of the Union rather than confining it to the capital, and the framing of India as a voice of the Global South turned an old developmental weakness into a claim to leadership. A state confident of its delivery at home speaks differently in the world.

A record of this scale invites scrutiny, and a democracy as argumentative as ours will supply it. But the question the office is asked has plainly changed, and that is the measure of the distance travelled. Pandit Nehru's India asked what the state could allocate. Modi ji's Bharat asks what the state can deliver, and insists on showing the receipt.

That is why 10 June is worth marking, and why the count of days is the least of it. Pandit Nehru built the Indian state. Modi ji has required it to reach the citizen in whose name it was built. I have served the state in both its incarnations, and I know which transformation the last person in the line will remember. The promise that once had to be taken on trust somewhere upstream now arrives, traceably, in her own hand. That is the Viksit Bharat we have been asked to build by 2047, and it begins, as Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya said it must, with her.

(The writer is Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.)

## THE UNVANQUISHED STATESMAN: NARENDRA MODI

Arvind Mohan Singh

Twelve years is a long time in politics. In that span, leaders come and go, parties form and disappear, and slogans are made and forgotten. Sometimes, though, a leader stands out and becomes the main focus. Now that Narendra Modi's government has completed 12 years at the Centre, it is worth looking back at what this period has meant.

Over these years, Modi's supporters have praised him for many qualities, while his critics have made many accusations. People have often predicted his fall, and there have been many campaigns against him in India and abroad. Still, one thing has not changed: Narendra Modi has stayed at the centre of Indian politics, and he is still there today.

In the last decade, a clear pattern has appeared. Politicians who focused only on opposing Modi have slowly become irrelevant. Those who expected him to fail have been let down. People who tried to get close to him for personal gain were pushed aside, and those who used flattery to gain influence had to look elsewhere.

In a nation as vast, diverse, and complex as India, with numerous languages, castes, faiths, and regions, there are many languages, castes, religions, and regional interests. Yet Narendra Modi remains the main figure in national politics. After winning three elections in a row, he is more than

just a party leader; he is the main reference point in Indian politics. Both his supporters and opponents plan their strategies around him. The opposition may have slogans against Modi, but they lack a strong alternative to his wide reach. This is why the belief that any group can capture political power merely through street mobilisation reflects a misunderstanding of both India and the Indian state.

If this approach were effective, movements such as the anti-CAA protests or the farmers' agitation would have fundamentally transformed the political landscape. However, Modi retained his position, while many of these movements became entangled in internal contradictions and failed to overcome him.

The principal error of the opposition lies in attempting to challenge Modi without first understanding his political strategies. Occupying public spaces, raising slogans, and fostering unrest can compel the government to retreat. However, empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Modi's most significant political asset is his consistent refusal to react, while his opponents depend on a reaction he withholds.

Opponents and protest groups often expect the government to respond. When that does not happen, many protesters lose focus, cross the line, and reveal their own weaknesses. The public then sees who stays calm and who is driven by chaos. People who wonder why the government

does not crack down often miss a key point: in politics, the worst outcome is not jail, but becoming irrelevant.

When the public stops taking an opponent's accusations seriously and loses interest, that is a major political defeat. Modi has often managed to do this by being patient and steady. Some people see his restraint as weakness, but governments often hold back because they know that waiting can work in their favour.

Those who question the strength of the Indian state may consider recent operations against Left-wing extremism. Anyone who doubts the strength of the Indian state should look at recent actions against Left-wing extremism. Groups that once challenged the government in large forest areas had to come to the table when the government acted firmly. The message is clear: when the Indian state is determined, it can take strong action. Whether considering Khalistan-influenced elements within the farmers' agitation or protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, Indian society ultimately rendered its own judgment. Those seeking to reshape national politics through demonstrations alone discovered that street power does not necessarily equate to public legitimacy.

This distinction highlights how Modi's political style differs from that of many of his opponents. While his rivals often want quick results and focus on today's news, Modi looks ahead, thinking about the fu-

ture and staying connected with voters. His primary challenge is not limited to electoral defeats; rather, it lies in his persistent inability to comprehend the reasons behind Modi's continued success. Consequently, the opposition often shifts focus from substantive political engagement to questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process, revealing its weakness more than Modi's.

At various times, reliance has been placed on foreign opinion, international pressure, media narratives, or street mobilisation. However, at times, people have depended on foreign opinions, international pressure, media stories, or street protests. But Indian democracy is not shaped by other countries, NGOs, the media, or social media trends. It is built on the trust and participation of hundreds of millions of Indian voters. Douglas Macgregor recently asserted, in the context of the Iran crisis, that the United States should consider Narendra Modi as a credible mediator. Macgregor's rationale is that India maintains working relationships with Israel, Iran, the United States, and China. He contends that India's stature, influence, and strategic importance are expanding, and that this development should be regarded as an opportunity rather than a challenge. Such assessments reflect not only recognition of Narendra Modi but also acknowledgement of India's growing global standing.

## Swasth Bharat, Sashakt Bharat: 12 years of health care development

Anupriya Patel

Stronger health systems lead to higher economic productivity, greater workforce participation, and sustained long-term growth. Good health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset — the foundation upon which human potential is built and national strength is measured. Health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset, and every rupee invested in it is an investment in the nation's people.

Thus, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) — ensuring that all people, regardless of socio-economic status, can access the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship — is not only a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030 but also a health priority.

India's National Health Policy 2017 (NHP 2017) is aligned with the goal of achieving Universal

Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG 3, guided by a simple but powerful belief — healthcare should be within reach of every person. Its four pillars — Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, and Availability — translate that belief into action, anchoring a comprehensive continuum of care across all stages of life. Aligning with the goals, National Health Mission supports States in delivering an integrated three-tier model of health systems with a two-way referral linkage across rural and urban areas, including vulnerable populations.

At the primary level, Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) provides comprehensive preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care health care services. eSanjeevani telemedicine platform ensures the availability of specialists connecting the community to the specialist through these AAM. And, a special Tele-MANAS platform, which has reached a cumulative 38.93 lakh contacts as on

date.

Connecting from AAM are the secondary facilities at the Community Health Centre (CHC)/First Referral Unit (FRU) and District Hospital (DH) that serve as the first point of referral to provide in-person specialist and hospitalisation care, with tertiary institutions including medical colleges serving on the top of the apex to more complex and super-specialist service's needs.

This three-tier system is supported by escalation in Government health budget, with National Health Mission spending growing by 168 per cent over the past decade, reflecting government's commitment to health as a national priority.

The journey of Ayushman Arogya Mandir represents a significant expansion of comprehensive primary healthcare and the much-needed transition from a reactive to proactive care. The expansion from 6 to 12 comprehensive health packages is a structural response to India's changing

demographic and epidemiological profile. As we navigate the dual challenge of ageing population with a rising tide of non-communicable diseases, the expanded scope covers Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), mental health, elderly care, emergency services, and eye, ENT, and oral health, along with yoga and health promotion — reflecting a system designed for the population India is becoming. As of May 2026, more than 1.8 lakh AAM are operationalised across country to provide doorstep healthcare services and the scale of this expansion is visible through more than 120 crore OPD consultations at AAM, more than 70 crore eSanjeevani teleconsultations, and more than 46.1 crore wellness sessions promotion good health and well-being.

At the primary care level, population-based screening for diabetes, hypertension, and common cancers oral, breast, and cervical targets all adults above

30 years, making early detection a routine. This screening is an integral component of service delivery under Ayushman Arogya Mandir, integrating NCD prevention into comprehensive primary healthcare. The expansion of NCD services is a multi-layered approach to early detection, prevention, management, and treatment. Dedicated NCD clinics, Day Care Cancer Centres, Tertiary Care Cancer Centres, and State Cancer Institute's decentralised advanced oncology services and bring specialist care closer to the patient.

Also, whole-of-government approach is applied for preventive activities. FSSAI promotes healthy eating habits; the Fit India Movement drives physical activity; and the Ministry of AYUSH advances yoga and wellness. Sustained public awareness campaigns and Health Day observances reinforce these efforts. Prime Minister Modi's personal appeal to reduce edible oil consumption by 10 per cent under-

scores a simple but powerful conviction: that the fight against NCDs is won as much in households as in hospitals. To support the primary care expansion, a new cadre of Community Health Officers were introduced at the AAM level, bringing clinical and public health competence closer to the community. This expansion was mirrored at the doorstep, where the frontline network grew to over 10 lakh ASHAs — linking the community with the health systems.

Alongside expansion, India took on the harder challenge of transforming the standard of care itself. The National Quality Assurance Standards, indigenously developed and internationally certified, turned quality from an aspiration into an accountability. Over 65,000 public health facilities, including 54,926 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, are now NQAS-certified. Further, laboratory standards for IPHLs embedded rigour into the system. What made NQAS work was

not the standard alone, but the ecosystem built around it — LaQshya for maternal and newborn care, Kayakalp for cleanliness and infection control, and MusQan for child health. Together, they have made quality a baseline rather than a benchmark. The result is a system that does not just treat more people — it treats them better.

If primary care is the system's first promise, targeted interventions like National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme further reflects Governments commitment to reducing the OOPe across the country, with a cumulative savings of more than Rs 10,102 crore to families who would otherwise have borne that burden alone.

Putting people's health into people's hands, India strengthened its community platforms — a deliberate, decentralised architecture that puts planning, monitoring, and accountability in local hands.