THE EDITORIAL PAGE

JUSTICE AFTER 37 YEARS

Justice after 37 years may sound like injustice in another form, but in the context of Kashmir's three decades of terrorism and insurgency, it has a meaning. The SIA's filing a 373-page charge sheet against the JKLF militants including the group leader Yasin Malik in the killing of SKIMS nurse Sarla Bhat in 1990 has opened a new chapter in J&K. For the first time, the state has taken cognizance of the targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits for delivery of justice. Sarla Bhat was a 27 year old nurse discharging her responsibilities least knowing that her hospital is a den of JKLF back then. She had no idea that she would be hand-picked for torture and murdering because the JKLF wanted to send message across the Hindus that they must leave the Valley or join what they called the movement (for affiliation with Pakistan). Her killing sent shockwaves among the Hindus and forced them to leave their homes and hearts for safety.

OPERATION AMISTAD

India's Operation Amistad (friendship in Spanish) has started showing impact on the ground in the quake-hit Venezuela. As pictures and videos from the South American country are surfacing, India comes out as one of the initial responder and an effective force. The Indian army has set up field hospital in capital Caracas where officers are treating people in the disaster zone 24X7. The country minister for health visited the field hospital and expressed his gratitude to India. India's quick response to natural disasters anywhere is the world is the way to live up to its belief in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning the earth is one family. India has been unwavering in following this be it a calamity or a man-made COVID-19 pandemic. We help others because we believe it's our responsibility to help fellow humans irrespective of their political or religious affiliations.

Leaders come and go institutions endure

Bhopinder Singh

Six Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom have left office in the last ten years (2016-2026). Only one-Rishi Sunak-departed as a result of electoral defeat. The other five-David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and now Keir Starmer-left office primarily due to internal party pressure, perceived failure to deliver, or loss of parliamentary confidence. Many observers have prematurely interpreted this phenomenon-the "revolving door" at 10 Downing Street-as evidence of institutional decline or systemic instability within British democracy. But does such turnover necessarily produce persistent policy paralysis? Does it automatically indicate weak leadership legitimacy or strategic drift?

While frequent leadership change can certainly create short-term uncertainty, policy discontinuity, and even public fatigue, it would be an overstatement to assume that the United Kingdom is uniquely unstable in this respect. Other advanced parliamentary democracies with similarly episodic leadership turnover-such as Japan, Australia, and Belgium-have not experienced existential threats to democratic continuity or governance itself. Conversely, countries with comparatively stable leadership tenures can still suffer democratic erosion if the institutions responsible for scrutinising executive power weaken over time. Stability in leadership, therefore, is not synonymous with democratic health.

An alternative interpretation is that frequent leadership change may reflect a form of internal democratic responsiveness rather than systemic breakdown. In the UK context, it can be seen as an expression of robust parliamentary control over the executive. Leaders can be removed swiftly when they lose the confidence of their party or Parliament, allowing for rapid correction of perceived governance failures. This mechanism avoids prolonged dysfunction and reduces the risk of entrenched ineffective leadership. Unlike systems where leadership change requires fixed electoral cycles or extraordinary constitutional procedures, the Westminster model enables relatively immediate adjustment when political consensus collapses.

Crucially, this form of accountability can remove failing leadership without destabilising the state itself. It does not require constitutional rupture, military intervention, or prolonged administrative paralysis. Instead, it operates through established parliamentary conventions, preserving continuity in governance even as individuals at the top change. In this sense, accountability becomes real-time rather than episodic, discouraging complacency and reinforcing performance-based legitimacy.

Moreover, the British political system structurally discourages long-standing personality cults and hereditary political dominance. Leadership is not derived from personal mandate alone but is continuously contingent on parliamentary support. While charismatic leaders certainly exist, their authority remains institutionally constrained. The electorate chooses a Parliament, not a Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister serves only so long as they command the confidence of the House of Commons. This principle is often summarised in the constitutional logic that the executive is accountable to the legislature rather than directly insulated by a fixed term.

As Winston Churchill famously observed, "The Prime Minister is the servant, not the master, of the House of Commons." This principle is not merely rhetorical; it is embedded in the operational logic of the system. Churchill himself became Prime Minister in 1940 without a general election following the resignation of Neville Chamberlain, and he later made way for Anthony Eden in 1955, again without a direct electoral contest for the premiership. These transitions established a core tenet of Westminster governance: leadership may change when parliamentary confidence shifts, but the continuity of the state remains intact, and electoral legitimacy resides in the legislature rather than the individual officeholder.

Within this framework, leadership transitions are often treated as constitutional normality rather than political rupture. This helps explain why figures such as Keir Starmer could frame resignation as an acceptance of parliamentary judgment rather than a personal or ideological defeat. As he noted in his resignation speech: "My party has asked whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election. I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question, and I accept that answer with good grace." This reflects a political culture in which leadership change is institutionalised rather than personalised, and where resignation is often interpreted as procedural rather than adversarial. Similarly, the post-office trajectories of former prime ministers illustrate a relatively non-confrontational political culture. David Cameron briefly returned as Foreign Secretary under Rishi Sunak.

Theresa May now serves in the House of Lords as a senior stateswoman. Boris Johnson remains an active public commentator. Liz Truss participates in political discourse outside formal office. Rishi Sunak continues as a Member of Parliament while engaging in private-sector advisory roles. While disagreements certainly persist, there is comparatively limited evidence of prolonged factional rupture or personalised political vendettas following departure from office.

However, frequent turnover is not without cost. Repeated leadership changes can lead to policy inconsistency, disruption in long-term planning, and uncertainty among international partners and domestic stakeholders. Governments are ultimately responsible for decisions, and effective decision-making often requires continuity, coherence, and time. Excessive volatility at the top may therefore undermine strategic clarity, even if institutional stability remains intact.

At the same time, there is a countervailing temptation to prioritise continuity at the expense of responsiveness, potentially weakening democratic accountability. The challenge lies in balancing stability with adaptability. As Churchill also famously remarked, "Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." This acknowledgment captures the inherent imperfections of democratic systems, including those that permit frequent leadership turnover.

THE CHILD BEHIND THE DISABILITY

Sharmila Vaidya

As an educator for over 26 years, I have worn many different hats. I have worked with children, both with and without disabilities, conducted assessments and served as part of diagnostic teams. Each one had its own challenges and rewards. But my most meaningful responsibility was working with the parents or care givers of children with disabilities. By helping them recognise and understand and navigating them through their emotional turmoil in the years that followed was not an easy task. No textbook had prepared me with the knowledge and expertise for this challenge.

Decades ago, many children with disabilities were educated separately, institutionalised, or simply not diagnosed. Fortunately, today we have come a long way in determining, understanding and accepting these disabilities. There are accommodations often provided by schools, work places and public institutions to help support individuals to participate fully in everyday life. Parents and children are less embarrassed and more willing to discuss it openly. The stigma that was once attached to these disabilities has now gradually diminished.

A person with physical impairments, mobility challenges and facial differences are easier to spot and easy for us to offer assistance. They receive special services in their daily living, for example at airports, public parking, public facilities, workplaces, etc. However, disabilities such as Autism, ADHD, OCD, learning disabilities and anxiety disorders are less apparent, hence easily overlooked. They do not receive the same immediate attention and treatment. It is only when one interacts with such individuals and their families that one becomes familiar with their daily challenges.

I remember a conference with a parent who was concerned as to how their son would cope with school. Although there was no formal diagnosis made, doctors suspected he might have autism and might face challenges in life, but it was too early to know for certain.

heart went out to them when I saw tears in their eyes. The fear of uncertainty was overwhelming and devastating for them. I assured them that every effort would be made to accommodate their son's needs and for him to be included in a regular classroom setting.

Schools usually conduct their own evaluation, observe them in a classroom setting and then chalk out an individualised education plan that meets the needs of that individual. Teachers work closely with parents and the information and documents are available only to staff members who work directly with the student. The parents left that meeting feeling hopeful and reassured. Since then, I have participated in many such conferences. Each of these meetings has reminded me that not everything can be learned in classrooms or in textbooks. The gratitude and trust shown by these families has been immensely rewarding and the understanding that empathy and compassion go a long way.

Fortunately, there has been tremendous technological advancement in determining the early onset and continued support for individuals who cannot walk, talk or see. to be included in society. There are advanced wheelchairs, voice activated devices, sign language, hearing aids, braille technology and software have opened doors that were not possible in the past. For conditions like, Autism, ADHD, Down syndrome, Dyslexia, Cerebral Palsy, and OCD there is early diagnosis and new medications, counseling services, continued research, grants, technological advancements, media and general awareness in society are more prevalent than a decade ago.After all these years I have come to realise that when people are different and don't fit in a box of normalcy or within the normal spectrum, we view them with sympathy. While knowledge makes us understand the disability, it is compassion and empathy that helps us understand the child.

Gen Z and shifting workforce preferences

Deepika Kumar

Recent news points to the fact that, of late, skilled plumbers earn more than entry-level engineers in tech firms such as Infosys and TCS(Link). In another post, Abhiraj Singh Bahl, co-founder and CEO of Urban Company highlighted that some of the skilled service professionals on the platform earn in excess of `40,000 per month, which often exceeds the starting salaries in several IT roles in India. It is an interesting anomaly to what we've studied in economics around sectoral evolution of economies. What does this imply for Gen-Z and Alpha workforces as they enter and adapt to new workforce shifts and dynamics?

As per Morgan Stanley Research report "Asia Faces Rising Youth Unemployment Challenge"- India has ~17 per cent youth unemployment in the age group of 16-24, closely followed by Indonesia and China. Part of this is being attributed to the massive explosion in AI across the world, that has taken away entry-level jobs. The remainder is being shaped by geopolitical turmoil and tensions, leading to cost-cutting and localisation of labour supply as time passes by.

In addition, India also faces a special challenge of underemployment (lower productivity) in primary sector jobs especially agriculture and mining, where more people are employed for a relatively lesser GDP contribution from the sector (high labour factor productivity ratio).

A case study of China Gen Z workers in China are finding new ways to tackle an absence of jobs (which also, partly includes the problem of absence of meaningful employment). A lot of them are resorting to blue-collared jobs, in the absence of white-collared jobs.

The story of Zhang Weibo, who graduated from NTU (Nanyang Technical University) and decided to take up a blue collared job after leaving a white collared one, is an interesting case in point here. A sense of disillusionment with his white collared job, the feeling of restrictive-ness and a communal sense of discontent shared with others who join him in his cleaning efforts, provide impetus and strength to his decision.

Link Another social movement that has emerged in China is "Tongping" which means to lay flat - do the bare minimum - no work, no family, no home, no kids. A life of minimalism. Choosing what one wishes to do. Originally started as a movement against corporate slavery, the movement has now grown to accommodate (or rather, de-accommodate all forms of work). People who take this philosophy to the extreme, are choosing to go homeless, sleep-in restaurants and cafeterias than work to pay rent.

Link This one's my favourite now - there's a concept of "full-time children" where children continue to stay with parents long after they have graduated/post-graduated, and take care of domestic chores (cleaning, cooking, feeding) and earn a salary from their own parents.

Meanwhile, in South Korea, a report by Korean Employment Information Service (KEIS) highlights that, in the 15-29 age group, about 18% were NEETs in 2024 ("Not in employment, education or training"). While partly driven by the need for mandatory military service, especially for male members of society, overall population numbers have been on the higher side, and the category of "non-seeking" population has grown even more in this case - spelling troublesome long-term unemployment trends.

A survey by Intelligent.com, a career advisory platform, highlights that "1 in 6 companies are hesitant to hire recent college graduates" and cite several reasons - including a lack of motivation, professionalism, inability to articulate and communicate well, and a poor work ethic, amidst others. In other words, employers are not particularly excited to hire an "anti-hustle" generation that seeks to work on its own terms, from anywhere, and for whatever amount of time.

Coming back to the problem at hand in India, the global trends point towards economic frictions and geopolitical tensions that cause similar challenges across regions, especially in Asia, a booming demographic. In India however, the challenge is even more layered, as education (and as a consequence, a job) is not entirely an independent choice but driven by societal and family norms. A lot of the so-called manual labour jobs (plumbing, cleaning, delivery) are looked down upon in most families, which believe that doing this would be a waste of a college degree that the society has collectively invested in. People choose to endlessly spend time preparing for exams, sitting idle and doing nothing over finding a money-making job, merely to live upto social standards.

In India, work is not just a means of survival, to earn bread and butter, but a huge part of social identity. Indian society, historically, was structured around a division based on occupation - an occupational dictionary was written up in the Manusmriti and used to divide society. Centuries later, we still run with archaic occupational dictionary that continues to reward intellectual labour over manual labour.

Except, unfortunately, as times and realities change, circumstances change, is there perhaps a need to update how we view work fundamentally in its myriad shapes and forms? Another challenge that persists now is, that unlike major economies of the world, India grew on the backbone of soft industries, in other words, tertiary and service sectors which are plateauing (or perhaps reaching the cusp of a new S-curve that'll be driven by AI). Whether that'll lead to more jobs or less, and of what kind, remains to be seen. But it clearly means a reconfiguration of job needs, requirements, and job descriptions - one that doesn't exist. A lot of traditional need for STEM graduates is also going to change.