

## TOURISM REVAMP

Tourism is crucial for the economy of J&K and a major social connect with the rest of India and the world. Tourists carry back memories that they speak about to others and send positive vibes about the place and the people. However, every activity has a flip side. In the case of tourism, the environment suffers and in the long run, sometimes, there are societal repercussions as well. The ongoing Conclave on Sustainable Tourism Planning – "Designing Tourism for Tomorrow, organised by the Department of Tourism is dealing with all these issues and mainly how to make J&K's tourism flourish without attracting adverse implications. One of the suggestions from none other than the young chief minister Omar Abdullah was that the tourism must shift from numbers driven exercise to the value-based and sustainable model of tourism. This essentially means the tourists spend more in J&K and have better amenities and entertainment component than just come and have a look at scenic splendor. He is probably hinting at developing resorts, Yoga centers, amusement parks, water adventure, etc. Over all he is asking the stakeholders to have policies and planning that will ensure sustainable gains for the people and the environment. Overcrowding at places of tourists' interest leads to abnormal melting of snow at higher altitudes and degradation of environment. However, right now J&K doesn't have high end tourism facilities and it just dependent on tourists who visit a place for its scenic beauty.

Most important is that J&K put in sustainable tourism practices into action. It must ban entry of polluted vehicles, and polythene bags which ultimately go down the drains or water bodies. Today's tourist is willing to spend much more on travel experiences and amenities and this must be kept in mind while formulating the plans. J&K can create resorts for weddings, conclaves and corporate functions to attract quality tourists. As CM Abdullah rightly said it's time for J&K to learn from experiences of other states and UTs and decide whether to make small money from a lot of tourists or more money from less number of tourists.

## The weaponisation of the UN

Manjari Singh

Two developments this week show how readily the great powers and multilateral institutions will settle the fate of another conflict in the Middle East. At Lake Lucerne, the United States and Iran agreed a roadmap to wind down the war in Lebanon and built a mechanism to govern the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, while Israel itself was given no seat at the table.

In Geneva, the UN Human Rights Council received a report accusing Israel of the gravest crimes in international law over its conduct towards the children of Gaza. India holds no stake in either battlefield, yet has reason to watch how this second judgment was reached.

The death of a child is the heaviest sorrow a society can carry, and that it is no lighter for the nationality the child happened to hold. A child killed in Gaza is an irreplaceable world ended; so is a child in Tel Aviv, or on a road in the Kashmir Valley. To ask how a child died, and at whose hand, is the seriousness that might protect the next one.

There is another moral question that deserves reflection in India. The massacres of October 7, in which Israeli civilians, including children, were murdered, kidnapped and brutalised, marked the beginning of this war. Yet many voices that now speak with certainty about Israel's conduct had little or nothing to say when those atrocities occurred. Moral concern cannot be selective. A standard that condemns civilian suffering only after one side responds, while remaining silent when the violence that triggered the conflict is unleashed, diminishes its



own credibility. One may criticise Israel's actions and still recognise that any serious moral accounting of this war must begin with October 7. To omit that starting point is not impartiality; it is incompleteness.

In 2018 and again in 2019, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued reports on Jammu and Kashmir that New Delhi rejected as fallacious, tendentious and motivated. The objection was never that Kashmiri suffering was unreal; no honest Indian would say so. The objection was to the UN system. A UN office had assembled unverified figures, relied on interested testimony, set aside the long history of cross-border terrorism, and pronounced a confident verdict on a place it had no standing to judge. Governments in Delhi of every stripe have held that line since.

That is the lens through which the Gaza report deserves to be read. This Commission is the only standing body in the UN system aimed permanently at a single country, created by a resolution that half the Council de-

clined to support. It rests its conclusions on testimony it cannot independently verify and, in places, on its own previous reports; it reaches determinations on ballistics and military operations for which it has no evident expertise, then dresses them as legal findings, though it is no court and can convict no one. It allowed the accused state ten days to answer a hundred-page document covering three years of war. None of this certifies Israel's account of any single incident. But the report's central claims are precisely the kind an impartial process would treat as contested rather than settled.

Much turns on disputed ground. The Commission's own reports have not kept their ratios of children to combatants consistent. Its treatment of schools and hospitals sets aside a documented pattern of armed groups operating from within civilian sites, the fact that decides whether a strike was a crime or a tragedy of war: weapons recovered from a kindergarten, a tunnel shaft beneath an infant's cot, an attack on the Al-Taba'een site

that the report lists without recording that the building had become a base for militants. The account of the Al-Ahli hospital explosion, attributed to Israel within hours, was later contradicted by American, British and Canadian assessments pointing to a misfired Palestinian rocket.

On starvation, the report passes over the more than a million children vaccinated against polio in coordination with the WHO, and the diversion of humanitarian aid by the armed groups themselves. One need not settle any of these to see the difficulty: Each judgment falls the same way, against the accused, and a tribunal whose every doubt resolves in one direction is not weighing evidence. It is ratifying a verdict it brought with it.

There is also a distinction that should matter to a democracy. A democracy carries the means of its own correction: courts that rule against the government, a free press, an electorate that removes it. Israel, whatever one concludes about its conduct, has these institutions; the armed movements arrayed against it of-

fer their people none.

Candour is owed about the forum doing the judging. The human-rights machinery of the United Nations carries a long and uneven record, having seated serial abusers on its councils and trained a permanent focus on one democracy while openly repressive states drew little notice. Such a body has not earned the authority to pronounce final verdicts on a sovereign nation, and the principle does not bend according to which nation stands in the dock. Accountability imposed from outside, on evidence a state was never allowed to test, only imitates the rule of law.

This is the pattern India must recognise, because it was once turned against India itself. A standing body, insulated from accountability, selects a single sovereign state, assembles a record it does not let that state test, and converts a political campaign into the language of law and its gravest charges. The instrument is the human-rights report; the purpose is the weaponisation of the United Nations against an unfavourable state.

Verdicts handed down from Geneva harden the warring and embolden those who profit from grievance; they have never stopped a war or returned a child to a parent. Peace is made by states willing to talk, and made faster when the world resists anointing permanent villains and victims. India's instinct, shaped by its own experience, has favoured dialogue over denunciation. The children of Gaza and of Tel Aviv need a peace two peoples can be helped to build. That is the cause India should keep in view.

## ELDER CARE IS NOT OPTIONAL, IT IS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Geetanjali Chopra

In India, there was a time when caring for the elderly was not discussed as an option—it was simply a way of life. Respect and regard for ageing parents were not choices, but deeply internalised social norms woven into everyday living. Today, that understanding is steadily weakening. Elder care is increasingly being treated as a matter of choice, shaped by convenience rather than commitment. This shift reflects not just a cultural change, but a deeper gap in how India is preparing for an ageing society.

India is home to nearly 144 million senior citizens, and this number is expected to rise sharply in the coming decades. Yet despite these numbers, programmes focused on improving their living conditions remain strikingly few. As a result, ageing is rarely accompanied by dignity; instead, it is often marked by neglect and invisibility. Equally concerning is the growing proportion of elderly living alone or only with a spouse. These people are more vulnerable to fraud, theft and even violent crime due to limited mobility and predictable routines.

Beyond these visible risks lies a quieter



crisis—elders battling illness without support, spending days without meaningful interaction, and in some cases, passing away unnoticed. These are not isolated incidents, but symptoms of a systemic apathy towards elder care. The reasons behind this shift are well known. Migration, expensive urban housing, demanding work lives and changing priorities have reshaped family structures. At the same time, many elderly individuals choose to remain in familiar surroundings, rooted in their communities. What has emerged is a widening gap between generations—not just physically, but emotionally. India is moving away from informal, family-led elder care, but has not built adequate formal systems to replace it. As a result, a grow-

ing number of seniors are left to navigate ageing largely on their own. India has legal provisions such as the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which obligate children to provide for their parents' basic needs. Additionally, the National Policy on Older Persons and schemes under the Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens aim to provide financial security, healthcare access and shelter. While important, such frameworks address only one part of the problem. Care cannot be reduced to obligation alone. It is not just about financial support, but about presence, attention and dignity. Law can enforce duty, but it cannot create care or emotional security. Many elderly individuals remain unaware of their legal rights, limiting their ability to seek support. At the community level, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) can play a far more structured role by maintaining registries of elderly residents living alone, enabling periodic welfare checks, and creating emergency response systems. Such decentralised mechanisms can significantly reduce both isolation and risk. Similarly, the

role of local police must move beyond symbolic outreach. Old-age homes are an important part of the solution.

They provide shelter, healthcare and companionship. However, their limited reach and affordability prevent them from becoming a universal solution. There is also significant scope for corporate engagement. Elder care can be meaningfully integrated into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly through partnerships with credible non-governmental organisations to build community-based care models. In earlier days, elder care was part of a social fabric that ensured continuity between generations.

Rebuilding this fabric requires more than policy—it demands a conscious effort to restore intergenerational bonds. Families, schools and communities must create spaces where younger generations remain connected to their elders. If ageing is to become one of India's defining realities, elder care must move from being seen as a private concern to a shared social responsibility.

*The writer works for the elderly care and founder of Wishes and Blessings NGO; Views presented are personal.*

## Even Caesar did not send a lie to the Senate

Devender Singh Aswal

The ensuing Monsoon Session of Parliament is bound to be turbulent, as the Congress seeks privilege proceedings against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, alleging that he misled Parliament over Operation Sindoor about the six soldiers who laid their lives in the line of duty. The Speaker, Lok Sabha, may seek the comments of the Minister or refer it to the Committee on Privileges for enquiry and report. The Speaker has the inherent power to close a matter if satisfied with the explanation tendered. The veracity or otherwise of the allegation will be ascertained after due procedural enquiry. However, the central question is what consequences would visit if a minister deliberately misled the Parliament.

The veracity of statements made in the legislature by the members, including ministers, is a fundamental postulate of a deliberative democracy. Ordinarily, it is presumed that the statements made or answers given in Parliament by ministers are sacrosanct, unless proved otherwise. Parliament can function efficiently and effectively as the supreme deliberative body of the nation if accurate and complete information is furnished to it. The Council of Ministers is accountable to the Parliament and the information that they

give to Parliament must be correct and complete, without which the doctrine of accountability would become a myth. Accountability of the executive to the legislature is the linchpin of our parliamentary democracy and therefore, it is incumbent upon the ministers to furnish correct and complete and timely information to Parliament and its Committees.

Truth, honesty and integrity are quite integral to the proper and effective functioning of Parliament. Not only the ministers and the members, even the witnesses deposing before parliamentary committees are deemed to be under oath to speak truth, and complete truth. It is invariably made known to the witnesses that the deposition which they shall make shall be true, that nothing will be concealed and that, no part of their testimony shall be false. Suppression of truth, giving convoluted answers or to mislead Parliament or its committees constitutes a breach of privilege. Therefore, greater responsibility is cast on a minister sworn to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and to discharge his duties faithfully and conscientiously as a Minister for the Union.

An inaccuracy or chance mistake may inadvertently creep in the statements made or replies given by a minister in Parliament. The Rules of Procedure and Directions of

Parliament provide that in case any inaccuracy or mistake is detected in any answer given or statement made by a Minister, the same shall be pointed out as soon as it is detected and the mistake rectified with the permission of the Speaker. There are many instances of the Ministers making the correcting statements, especially of the answers given to questions. But making a misleading statement deliberately or concealing information from Parliament constitutes breach of privilege, unless the Minister invokes the plea of national interest. But making a false or deliberately misleading statement is grossly unethical, against sacrosanct parliamentary conventions and unpardonable. Untruthful or misleading statements undermine parliamentary democracy.

'Satyameva Jayate' and 'Yato dharmata Jayate' are the foremost ideals of India's great civilisational heritage. Many consider India as the mother of Democracy, and justifiably, with reference to Vedic texts and post-Vedic literature. The Indian civilisational texts of great antiquity lay immense stress on truth and righteousness. There are inscriptions in the old Parliament Building taken from the Mahabharata and the Manusmriti reminding that members of the Assembly must speak with righteousness, and the righteousness must be based on

truth, and truth is not truth if it leads to deceit. Further, one must not enter either an assembly hall, or he must speak there with all the righteousness, for one who does not speak or one who speaks falsely does himself in the sin involve equally.

Even in the republics of Ancient Greece and Rome, truth was considered as the cornerstone of the rule of law, justice and public trust. Honest speeches were viewed as necessity of informed decision-making. In the eponymous play of Shakespeare, when the wife of Julius Caesar beseeches and entreats him not to attend the Senate as she fears for his safety and asks him to send a message to the Senate that 'he is sick', Caesar questions, 'Shall Caesar send a lie?' to the Senate. He declines to say that he 'cannot come today' to the Senate as that would be false, and prefers to say 'I will not come today'. Eventually, instead of sending a lie, he prefers to go to the Senate.

There is no Indian instance of a Minister resigning on the ground of misleading the Parliament, though many ministers have resigned earlier on ground of corruption. In the United Kingdom, there are many instances where ministers resigned for misleading the Parliament, once it was so established. In the British parliamentary usage, officials rather use the term 'mislead' instead of 'lied', be-

cause the charge of 'lying' is much serious, as it requires to meet more rigorous test. In the year 2023, Boris Johnson resigned as an MP after learning he faced sanctions. Earlier, he had resigned as PM in 2022 after wide public pressure.

The Privilege Committee of the House of Commons had found that he had deliberately misled Parliament over statements related to Partygate. In 2018, the Home Secretary resigned, admitting that she had unintentionally misled the House over immigration removal targets.

Yet another historical example is of John Profumo, Secretary of State for War, who resigned from the government and Parliament in 1963, as he had misled the House of Commons, first denying that he had scandalous relations with someone but later admitted that his statement was untrue. These instances show that the convention of resignation for misleading the Parliament deliberately is political as well as procedural. The resignations were forced by sensitivity to public pressure, pressure from within the party and the outcry by the media. However, it has become an entrenched and salutary parliamentary convention in the UK that if a minister deliberately misleads the Parliament, he will lose his ministry as well as his membership of Parliament.