

POWER GAMES

Has the United States of America changed its stand on Jammu and Kashmir? It seemed so as the US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, during his visit to Kashmir, said that Kashmir (J&K) is an incredibly beautiful and important part of India. He also praised the changes in favour of peace in the UT and promised to review the travel advisory for US citizens against visiting the Valley. How did this come about? Countries like the US understand the language of power and not peace overtures of soft peddling issues with other countries. It's anybody's guess that after Operation Sindoor in which India launched a brief yet decisive action against terrorist sanctuaries and bases and later hit the Military bases inflicting huge damage. Pakistan is shocked, for its rulers always pretend theirs is the most important ally of the US while the reality of Washington has always used Pakistan's territory, leaders to push its interests.

SHAMEFUL BEHAVIOUR

A whole generation should not be labeled for bad behaviour of a few persons. Like the woman whose video has gone viral on social media in which she is seen flaunting her Gen Z label and abusing Army and police for obstructing her way at Minimarg. This old video is worrisome, for she sought to co-opt a generation into her misconduct. Be it any generation, showing disrespect to armed forces or any other functionary on duty, is uncivil and strictly speaking criminal. No generation should flaunt their sense of entitlement and seek instant gratification in difficult situations which are being managed by young soldiers, who too represent Gen Z. The problem with the youth today is availability of everything – food, transport, stationery or just anything – at the click of the button on their phone. The culture has given many a sense of entitlement. This has to be tackled at some level and not tolerated.

Gelephu: Bhutan's bet, India's gain

Parul Chandra

Announced in December 2023 by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the mega Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) project is aimed at creating a transformative economic hub in southern Bhutan. For India, GMC is far more than a neighbouring infrastructure project. Situated close to the border with Assam, the initiative directly intersects with India's regional integration goals, security calculations, and economic ties in the Eastern Himalayas.

This project, under which an autonomous special administrative region (SAR) has been created, is spread over a vast area of 2,600 square km. Its primary objective is to develop the region as an economic hub and forge strong linkages with the global economy while taking care to preserve Bhutan's environment and cultural ethos. India strongly supports the initiative, recognising substantial strategic gains while countering growing Chinese influence in the region. Earlier this month, when the Bhutanese king went for a visit to Gelephu along with Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and Royal Bhutan Army's chief operations officer, Lieutenant General Batoo Tshering, to review the ongoing work, Indian ambassador Sandeep Arya accompanied the delegation.

Key representatives from Indian agencies assisting Bhutan were also present, including the IMTRAT (Indian Military Training Team) commandant and the chief engineer of Dantak -- the overseas arm of India's Border Roads Organisation, which is executing crucial infrastructure projects in Bhutan. For India, the GMC project will enhance physical connectivity with its close neighbour, deepen economic linkages, and boost energy security through hydropower projects expected to come up there. Crucially, it also signals to the world, especially China, how deeply intertwined India and Bhutan's strategic and economic interests remain.

This comes as China continues to press Bhutan, with whom it shares a 477-km-long border, to develop bilateral ties. While Bhutan does not have formal diplomatic relations with China, it frequently faces Bei-



jing's strong-arm tactics on boundary issues, including attempts to grab territory. While Bhutan and China have been holding negotiations since 1984 to settle their boundary dispute, there has been no resolution yet. The Bhutan-China boundary dispute obviously has strategic and security implications for India. China, for instance, lays claim to Bhutan's Doklam plateau, which overlooks India's vulnerable Siliguri corridor connecting its northeast to the mainland. The 73-day military standoff at Doklam in 2017 occurred when Indian troops stepped in to block the People's Liberation Army from extending a motorable track towards the strategic Jampheri Ridge there.

With Bhutan remaining mindful of India's strategic interests, deep cooperation on the Gelephu project is a vital element of its outreach to Thimphu. The initiative will also help further consolidate India's linkages with the Himalayan kingdom that's been gradually working to shed its isolationist past. While India remains its closest partner, Thimphu has been engaging with many more countries in an attempt to broad-base

its foreign relations.

Bhutan's past isolation stemmed not just from its rugged, landlocked mountainous terrain but also from a deliberate desire to preserve its culture, environment and sovereignty. However, modern economic realities in a globalised world and the aspirations of its people, especially the youth, are driving deeper engagement with the outside world. Bhutan now has diplomatic relations with approximately 60 countries, though it remains wary of establishing formal diplomatic ties with the P5 countries. This shift marks a major evolution for a nation that transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a democratic constitutional monarchy only in 2008. While there is an elected government in Bhutan now, the Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) commands immense respect and authority, making his personal backing of the GMC project pivotal.

Bhutan also hopes that the economic growth which will come with the project will create job opportunities for its educated youth, who have been exposed to the outside world via social media, and arrest their migration to other countries. Educated

Bhutanese youth and skilled professionals have been migrating abroad in huge numbers, with Australia being a favoured destination. Many have also moved to the Middle East. For a country with a small population, this large-scale migration threatens long-term demographic stability.

For Bhutan, the project is a huge gamble. If it takes off, the project can be a catalyst for its economic growth, trade and physical connectivity not just with India but even beyond to the Southeast Asian region. It needs India and other countries to help develop it and invest in it. To encourage private businesses to be part of the project, Bhutan has chosen to use Singapore's laws for corporate and commercial matters and Abu Dhabi Global Market regulations for financial services in GMC. Reflecting this broader economic opening, Bhutan also resumed negotiations in July this year to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) after an 18-year hiatus.

With connectivity being important, an international airport is also on the anvil in Gelephu, which will be Bhutan's second such airport after the one in Paro. Simultaneously, India has also already promised assistance to Bhutan for two vital rail links. One will be the 69-km rail link from Gelephu to Kokrajhar in Assam. This is expected to help Bhutan access Indian ports. Signalling its strong backing for the Gelephu project, India has declared this link a special railway project.

The other 17-km rail link will be between Samtse in Bhutan, which is being developed as an industrial hub, and Banarhat in West Bengal.

Ultimately, the GMC project represents a transformative convergence of Bhutan's socio-economic aspirations and India's core strategic imperatives. For Bhutan, it offers a vital path to stem youth migration, modernise its economy, and integrate into global supply chains without compromising its distinct cultural identity. For India, it secures a crucial buffer against growing Chinese influence along the Himalayan frontier while cementing a high-stakes geopolitical alliance rooted in shared growth and regional stability.

NEGLECTING OUR REAL HOME CAN BE QUITE PAINFUL

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

I habitually look out of my window to soak in the surrounding greenery. Recently, I noticed a gate of the house opposite mine being painted. To my surprise, this exercise took more than a week. I wondered what was going on in the mind of the owner all this time, with television, newspapers, the internet, etc. spewing negative news on a continuous basis. Yes, all kinds of dirt are finding a place in our mind all the time. Why is it so harmful will become clear as you read this article.

We, souls, have material bodies. Additionally, we also have a subtle body, comprising three faculties, which are mind, intelligence and 'ahankara' (ego). The faculty of mind has three functions, which are thinking, feeling and willing. The feeling part is very crucial. Whatever emotion we have at any particular time is felt through the mind only. For example, if something nice happens, we will feel happy, unless the mind is already disturbed due to a serious problem. What does this tell us? That the mind must always be peaceful to



have a normal reaction/life.

It may sound startling, but the mind is the real home of a soul; I am referring to us. A brick-and-mortar home is for our material body. Don't we remain in this real home wherever we go? For example, one is sitting in a beautiful park but is lost in thoughts. Does he enjoy the beauty of the park? Similarly, all the comforts and facili-

ties of a house mean nothing if the mind is obsessed with some problem. It gets worse in old age when one has fewer physical engagements. The enforced loneliness hurts more if the mind is allowed to harbour harmful emotions like greed, anger, lust and hate. Peace is lost, and depression, fears, worries and anxieties dominate the mind. A lovely, well-painted

house does not help in getting sound sleep.

All is not lost, though. God can help, and only God can help. This is another reality. The mind is very powerful, as pointed out by Arjuna in verse 6.34 of the Bhagavad-Gita, and confirmed by Lord Krishna in the next verse. Being self-sufficient has limits; this excellent quality does not extend to the control of the mind. It has been tried unsuccessfully over the ages.

Therefore, let us drop our ahankara and take shelter of God and remain there. This means that we must find some ways to connect with God. What better way is there than chanting God's names? Aren't we already used to chanting, yes, our own name by 'mein, mein, mein' (I, I, I)? We just have to switch to the name of God like Krishna, Rama and Shiva. The cleansing of the mind will begin. Gradually, the mind will become peaceful. Surely, one would thank God and be very grateful from the heart for this great mercy of granting the rare peace. Our real home will become very beautiful, better than a well-painted gate.

Choosing India's youth over political acrimony

Pramod Sawant

India's youth are not merely the country's demographic advantage; they are its greatest national asset. Every competitive examination, every innovation, every start-up, every scientific breakthrough and every sporting achievement reflects the aspirations of a generation determined to shape the nation's future. When examination irregularities caused concern among students, that concern was understandable. Those who prepare for years deserve a system that is fair and trustworthy. At demonstrations, including those held at Jantar Mantar, many students voiced legitimate concerns about examination integrity. Yet alongside these genuine voices, some individuals resorted to abusive personal slogans directed at Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji and his family. Slogans advocating confrontation rather than constructive dialogue received media attention, but they did not define the aspirations of India's youth.

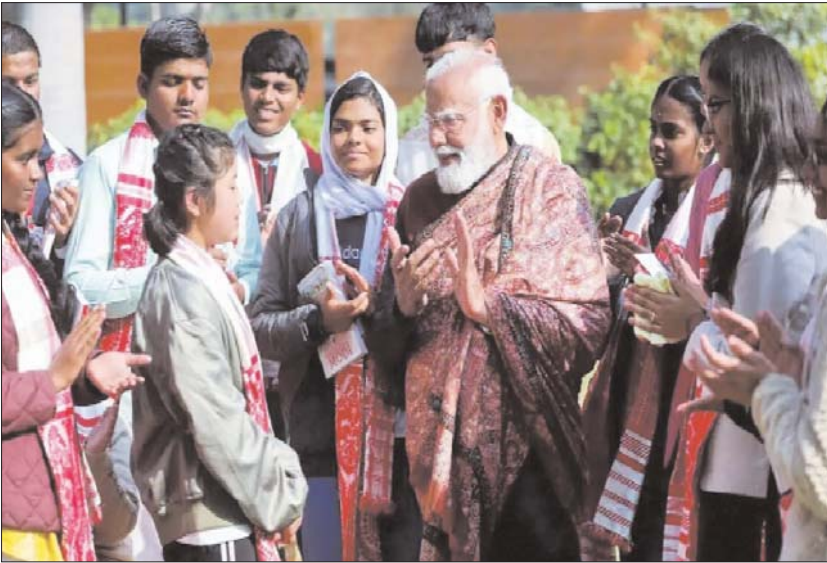
The overwhelming majority of Gen Z Indians were not on the streets hurling insults. They were in libraries, classrooms, coaching centres and homes, preparing for their next examination,

chasing their careers and striving to build their future. They deserve to be recognised as the true face of India's youth. A statesman understands this distinction.

Rather than allowing personal attacks to dominate the national conversation, PM Shri Prime Minister Modi chose to remain focused on the larger issue: the future of India's students.

This ability to absorb criticism without losing sight of governance is what distinguishes political leadership from statesmanship. Democracies will always witness passionate disagreement, and criticism is a natural part of public life. Leadership, however, is ultimately judged by whether

personal attacks are allowed to distract from national priorities. For over a decade, PM Shri Narendra Modi has consistently placed young Indians at the centre of his governance. Through Pariksha Pe Charcha, he has transformed the conversation around examinations, encouraging students to approach them with confidence, curiosity and emotional resilience rather than fear. His interactions extend beyond marks and rankings to mental well-being, time management and self-belief. Similarly,



Mann Ki Baat has become a platform where young achievers find national recognition; student innovators, start-up founders, grassroots inventors, young scientists, sportspersons and social entrepreneurs alike, reinforcing the message that India's future will be shaped by its youth rather than by political division.

The Union Government has also worked to strengthen the ecosystem in

which students compete, introducing structural reforms to strengthen confidence in public examinations. It has enacted a stringent law against unfair practices in public examinations, providing severe penalties for organised paper-leak rackets and those who facilitate examination fraud. It has strengthened coordination among central agencies and examination bodies, enhanced digital surveillance, encryption and the

secure transport of question papers, and tightened cybersecurity for computer-based tests. Firm action against organised cheating networks, middlemen and complicit officials, together with stronger accountability mechanisms, is intended to ensure that future examinations are conducted with greater transparency and credibility.

The Modi Government's vision for youth extends even beyond examinations. The National Education Policy 2020 seeks to equip students with multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking and greater flexibility. Programmes such as PM Gati Shakti envision new economic opportunities through world-class infrastructure, creating jobs and enabling young entrepreneurs to join India's growth story. Digital India, Start-up India, Skill India, semiconductor manufacturing, artificial intelligence, drone technology and space-sector reforms are all designed with the aspirations of Gen Z in mind. The philosophy is consistent: invest in the capabilities of young Indians rather than merely manage their expectations.

The contrast is significant. While a handful of motivated voices may seek attention through provocative slogans, the aspirations of India's youth lie else-

where. They seek quality education, employment opportunities, technological advancement and a nation that rewards merit. Prime Minister Modi's response reflected an understanding of this distinction. Rather than treating every angry slogan as representative of an entire generation, he separated a few disruptive voices from the millions of sincere students pursuing their dreams, demonstrating confidence in India's youth instead of cynicism towards them. History often remembers leaders not for the insults they received but for the restraint they displayed in responding to them. Statesmanship lies not in winning every political argument but in refusing to let personal attacks overshadow national priorities. A leader who continues to engage with students through Pariksha Pe Charcha, celebrates young achievers in Mann Ki Baat, expands educational opportunity through reform and strengthens the integrity of competitive examinations sends a clear message: the future belongs to India's youth, and their aspirations must remain at the centre of governance. That, ultimately, is the measure of leadership, not the ability to answer every provocation, but the willingness to rise above it in service of the nation.