

TANTRUMS OF BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is refusing to learn from its history while trying to rake up issues of least consequences with New Delhi. Its Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is unlikely to visit Delhi for the BRICS Summit where India has invited him as observer. Dhaka continues to rake up the issue of extradition of former PM Shaikh Hasina, knowing well that India will never betray its friend and also in a situation where she faces threat to her life back in her country. Though Rahman extended a hand of friendship to India after being elected, he is unable to stem the tide of Pakistan inspired and Jamat-e-Islami-led radicalization of his country. Today Islamic fundamentalist are dominating the streets of Bangladesh, a country which was carved out of Pakistan on the basis of culture and language. Half a decade later, the demonic forces which divided India, supporter massacre of Bengalis in East Pakistan and heaped atrocities on Hindus of Bangladesh continue to call the shots.

Rahman may be testing the patience of India, a country that offered sacrifices of its soldiers to free Bengalis from the reign of terror of Pakistani Army, despite following the same religion. India has offered all support and even beyond to Dhaka for maintaining good relations while taking care of securing its borders. Bangladesh is highly dependent on India for various things and New Delhi has always treated its eastern neighbor with generosity. India has never done anything to harm Bangladesh. So Tarique Rahman can ill afford to throw tantrum to India. Today’s India is prepared to defend itself like it was at no other time. Dhaka must remember that Delhi helped Bengalis at a time when we were struggling with poverty and growth and theirs’ was among the poorest populations in the world. Bangladesh leaders must keep their national interest of growth and economic prosperity as a priority. They also need to be told that while India is hosting Dalai Lama as a political refugee, it has not meant that China will threaten it. Bangladesh needs to grow up!

Maps matter, but people matter more

Sabir Nishat

India has put another marker on the map in its long-running contest with China over Arunachal Pradesh. The latest Survey of India map formally identifies 27 locations in the state by their Indian names, including mountain passes, settlements, a lake and places associated with the 1962 India-China war. It is an important assertion of sovereignty at a time when Beijing continues to insist that Arunachal Pradesh is part of China and repeatedly attempts to impose its own names on places across the state.

But maps, however important, cannot by themselves hold a frontier. During a recent visit to Arunachal Pradesh in the monsoon, I was struck by something far more consequential than the disputed names appearing on competing maps. Valley after valley close to the China border appeared largely uninhabited. In many remote stretches, the most visible signs of India’s presence were the personnel of the Indian Army and the Border Roads Organisation.

That stark landscape raises a difficult question: can India effectively counter China’s cartographic and territorial claims if large portions of its frontier remain without a permanent civilian population?

China’s claims go beyond changing names. China’s claim over Arunachal Pradesh is neither new nor limited to the periodic renaming of places. Beijing describes the state as ‘Zangnan’, or southern Tibet, and lays claim to a large part of its territory. Since 2017, it has repeatedly announced what it describes as standardised Chinese names for places in Arunachal Pradesh. Each such exercise is intended to reinforce the impression that these are Chinese territories awaiting recognition rather than Indian lands under an established system of administration.

This is not merely a linguistic exercise. Place names are instruments of territorial politics. Repeatedly naming a mountain, river, village or pass in official documents, maps and public communication creates an alternative geographical narrative.



The strategy is part of a larger Chinese approach in which maps, infrastructure, settlements and administrative structures work together. The objective is to establish a sustained presence and make territorial claims appear increasingly normal and irreversible.

India’s response, therefore, cannot stop at rejecting Chinese names. Worldnews coverage

The memory of 1962 remains powerful. The new Indian map’s emphasis on locations associated with the 1962 war carries particular significance. Longju, Thag La and other places in the eastern Himalayas are not simply dots on a military map. They are reminders of a conflict that shaped India’s understanding of its northern and eastern frontiers.

The 1962 war remains one of the defining moments in the history of independent India. Indian forces fought under extraordinarily difficult circumstances in Arunachal’s unforgiving terrain. Memorials such as Jaswant Garh have since become symbols of that resistance and sacrifice.

The significance of recalling 1962 today is not to reopen an old conflict, but to underline a historical reality: India’s relationship with this frontier did not begin with the latest roads, mil-

itary posts or cartographic exercises. The region has been administered as part of India for decades, and its people have their own distinct histories, cultures and connections to the land. The memory of the war also demonstrates why the frontier cannot be viewed purely through the lens of military deployment. Empty valley is a serious strategic concern

This is where India’s border policy faces its most difficult test. The Indian Army can guard a remote post. The BRO can carve a road through mountains. New bridges and tunnels can reduce distances that once took days to cover. But neither soldiers nor infrastructure can substitute permanently for communities.

An inhabited frontier is a lived assertion of sovereignty.

The government has recognised this through initiatives such as the Vibrant Villages Programme, aimed at improving connectivity, housing, electricity, communications, education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities in settlements along the border. Such programmes are strategically important because the future of the frontier depends as much on whether families choose to remain there as on whether soldiers are deployed there. Yet development cannot mean merely

constructing roads to villages that people eventually leave.

Security must include livelihoods. The communities of Arunachal Pradesh have lived with the mountains, forests and rivers of the frontier for generations. Their knowledge of the terrain is itself a strategic asset. Their presence provides a human network that no military installation can replicate. If young people are compelled to leave because there are no schools, healthcare facilities, employment opportunities or reliable communications, the resulting depopulation weakens the frontier in ways that may not be immediately visible. China understands the importance of population and infrastructure in border regions. Its approach has increasingly combined roads, settlements, administrative structures and military infrastructure. India must therefore think of border security in broader terms. A schoolteacher in a remote village, a health worker, a shopkeeper, a farmer, a tourism entrepreneur or a young family building a home near the frontier can contribute to national security in ways that rarely appear in defence statistics. Worldnews coverage

The strongest map is a living frontier. India is right to respond to China’s cartographic assertions. Naming its own places, documenting its history and marking the locations where Indian soldiers fought and died are important acts of national assertion. But the ultimate contest will not be decided by whose map contains more names. It will be decided by whose presence on the ground is stronger, more permanent and more deeply rooted. When I travelled through Arunachal’s frontier areas during the monsoon, the empty valleys left a stronger impression than any disputed map. The Army was there. The BRO was there. But in several places, ordinary civilian life seemed conspicuously absent. That should concern policymakers. China may continue to manufacture names for Indian places. India can - and should - answer with its own maps, history and administrative records.

But the most convincing response to any territorial claim is a thriving village, a functioning school, a working road, a local economy and families that have no reason to leave.

THE RIGHT TREE, IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Mahesh Kumar Dadhich |Gaurav Kumar sharma

A tree planted today may live for decades. Where it is planted, which species is chosen, how it is cared for - all of this shapes a landscape long after the people who planted it are gone. This is worth remembering as India urbanises. Rising temperatures, air pollution, water stress and biodiversity loss make the case for greener landscapes urgent. Trees give shade, cool the air, support biodiversity, protect soil and improve our well-being. Trees

So what do we actually mean by afforestation? Is it just putting saplings in the ground? Or is it about building living landscapes, where the right trees grow in the right places and become part of a working ecosystem?

Indian tradition has an answer, of sorts. Trees have never been merely trees in our imagination. They are witnesses to stories, shelter for travellers, sources of food and medicine, symbols of life itself. The forests of the Ramayana, especially Panchavati, are not empty wilderness - they are full of trees, rivers, animals, birds, people. The Skanda Purana celebrates the planting of Ashvattha, Neem, Banyan, Tamarind, Kapiththa, Bilva, Amla and Mango. This thread runs through our festivals, literature, songs and cinema,



where trees appear again and again - not as scenery, but as memory, shelter, spirit, livelihood. Our culture has always known that nature isn’t separate from us. Ecology now gives us the vocabulary to explain why. A tree is never really alone. Its roots work with soil and microorganisms; its canopy shapes the microclimate around it; its flowers and fruit feed insects and birds; its fallen leaves return nutrients to the ground. So plantation can’t just mean picking a fast-growing species and sticking it wherever there’s

space. Soil, rainfall, temperature, groundwater, root behaviour, surrounding vegetation, maintenance - all of it matters. A tree that thrives in a park may not belong on a narrow road. A tree with a wide canopy under power lines becomes a problem waiting to happen. A thirsty species has no place in a water-stressed landscape.

Consider Conocarpus erectus. It grew fast, stayed green year-round, and became a favourite for urban and roadside planting - until its ecological and infra-

structural costs became clear, and several states pulled back. The lesson isn’t “native good, exotic bad.” It’s simpler: right tree, right place, and right ecosystem.

We also need to stop measuring success by numbers. Saplings planted, hectares covered - these tell us about effort, not outcome. What matters is survival, growth, whether the tree actually does its job in the ecosystem. Schools can adopt and monitor trees. Resident associations can keep neighbourhood tree registers. Panchayats can protect old groves and mature trees. Geotagging and survival audits can track what actually lives. Because planting without follow-up care means nothing. A photograph of a sapling is not an outcome. Our traditions carry a relationship with nature that has lasted generations. It’s time to turn that into everyday practice. The tree planted today might shade a child we’ll never meet, shelter a bird decade from now, hold soil and water long after today’s headlines are forgotten. So afforestation shouldn’t stop at planting more - it should mean planting more of the right species, in the right place. The next plantation drive should start with three questions: Which tree does this land need? What ecosystem will it support? Who will look after it in the years ahead? India’s green future depends on planting more - but planting wisely - and on caring faithfully for what grows.

Are we fair to the young of India?

JS Rajput

There are occasions in the life of every nation when generational transition suddenly attracts far greater attention than it usually receives. People tend to take the growing up of the next generation as a routine process, overlooking the fact that this process is profoundly influenced by the rapid changes in knowledge and technology, which in turn affect the psyche of every human being. The transition of a child from innocence to a fully developed personality depends significantly on the external socio-cultural environment, which, too, is changing dramatically and continuously.

The beginning of the academic year 2026-27 has not been disturbed in several ways. One is not referring only to the agitations witnessed at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi and in Ranchi, Jharkhand. There are also reports from several places of school students protesting against the absence of basic amenities such as functional toilets and drinking water, as well as the shortage of teachers. One often wonders whether the Right to Education Act has truly delivered what it promised to the children of India.

Needless to repeat, it is the quality of

school education that ultimately determines the quality and level of excellence in higher education. Education systems that nurture students’ ideas and imagination — the two divine gifts that every child receives at birth — are obviously destined to excel in innovation. If the power of ideas and imagination is not impeded by the uncritical pursuit of routine, outdated pedagogies and assessment systems, and is not further weakened by inadequacies in basic support structures, creativity would become evident everywhere and in every field.

Such an environment would also provide fertile ground for curiosity, which is again a common human possession.

It serves no professional or academic purpose if the establishment simply blames “outsiders” for agitations such as those witnessed at Jantar Mantar and Ranchi.

It is a hard fact that external elements sometimes intrude with borrowed agendas of disruption and sabotage, often with political support from those who have been ousted from power and are eager to return. They attempt to push their own hidden agendas into otherwise genuine movements. The presence of politicians and known disruptors in large numbers at Jantar Mantar was evident to everyone.

The general perception is that the presence of antisocial elements and political proxies contributed to the escalation of the situation and the subsequent use of force and unacceptable violence. The young students and ideologically unconstrained citizens have also noticed how some of the most vocal politicians and intellectuals have maintained silence over the student agitation in Jharkhand.

Over the years, agitations, demonstrations and protests in India have often followed a familiar pattern. There is sufficient evidence from numerous instances of external elements intruding into movements and attempting to destroy their original purpose, even when the cause is entirely genuine.

An agitation may begin with sincerity of purpose and raise an issue that deserves the serious attention of those in power and of the nation at large. Yet the intrusion of politicians — particularly unscrupulous politicians seeking to score political points — sometimes assisted by criminal elements, can deprive a genuine agitation of its positive intent.

In a democratic system, there is no need to convert every protest into a political tug-of-war between the Government and the Opposition. When this happens, the original goal is gradually lost.

This appears to be what happened

during the Delhi agitation. The Education Minister resigned. But so what? Was the resignation the only goal identified by the students? Certainly not. The political class may naturally have been pleased with the development, but the criticality of the issues raised by the students was lost in the political contest.

Such political manipulation leaves young students in a state of confusion and dilemma. The ghosts of paper leaks and the cancellation of examinations continue to keep future aspirants on tenterhooks. The role of the coaching mafia is not unknown.

It is extremely depressing to observe that teachers and paper-setters — the very people entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the integrity of examinations — have, in some cases, been charge-sheeted for betraying the confidence reposed in them by the nation. The details of how such operations were allegedly planned and executed are indeed chilling. If these allegations are proved true, will they not make every teacher — including me — feel ashamed?

One must repeatedly recall the observations of the late Chief Justice of India, Justice J. S. Verma, made in 2012 and subsequently cited in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, paragraph 15.2: “...a majority of stand-alone TEIs

[Teacher Education Institutions] — over 10,000 in number — are not even attempting serious teacher education but are essentially selling degrees for a price.”

This observation was made fourteen years ago by one of the most distinguished legal minds of contemporary India. Sadly, however, not only public perception but also the view among many concerned academics remains clear: nothing substantial has changed.

The truth is that India is going to be seriously affected by the deterioration in the quality of education at practically every stage. The learners cannot be blamed. The systems of policy formulation, implementation and resource allocation must accept responsibility for permitting such a situation to develop.

Those who matter in decision-making on such issues rarely send their own children to government schools. For them, there are private schools offering what they consider high-quality education. Subsequently, the children of fortunate families have access to foreign universities.

If this were not so, media reports would not have appeared around the celebrations of the 80th Independence Day indicating that, in one state, five government-established universities reportedly

had not a single regular faculty member. Will such a situation not make the hearts of investors in higher education flutter with the prospect of an obvious increase in their dividends?

The greatest damage being inflicted on future generations is the failure to provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and spirit to tackle the challenges of their working lives.

I can put this on record on the basis of my personal interactions extending over six decades with children in schools, young people in colleges and universities, and those being trained to become school teachers: the fear of an uncertain future has gripped a majority of our learners — exceptions apart — across the country.

The anxiety and tension cast their dark clouds painfully over parents and families as well.

The political class, particularly those who have been ousted from power, often focuses almost entirely on collecting political brownie points without offering alternative strategies for setting things right. Those in power, on the other hand, sometimes take solace in recalling similar mishaps of the past, when their political adversaries were in power.

One wonders: how does this help the nation or the aggrieved young people?