

REVAMPED POST OFFICE

The good old post office just got a makeover to cater to the needs of people when nbobody is waiting for letters from home or from job givers and an odd money order. Internet has changed the world. Many key elements of the life relevant till a couple of decades ago and serviced through the post office are redundant today. So, what is the use of such a massive department which at places owns huge premises? The government has reinvented the Post office and its services with making it useful for PAN and Adhar related services. The Post offices also are serving as passport seva klendras. The postmen have been given scootys to ride and now instead of delivering letters and money orders they so doorstep banking and digital pension services. These services are a major hit in the rural areas where banking and financial services are needed. Here is a suggestion. The major post offices can also open the internet cafes for those not having computer or have it handy can also use it for work.

LADAKH TALKS

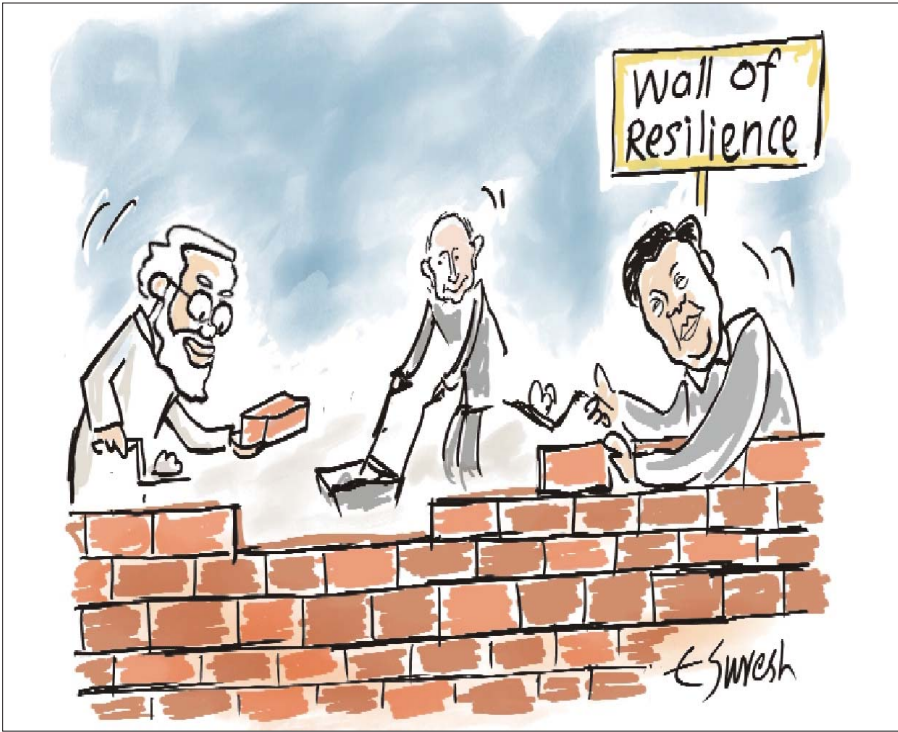
The Talks between representatives of Ladakh's people and the ministry of Home affairs in Delhi are progressing well. Minus the accounts of the pessimists and cynics, who attended the recent meeting with the MHA officials in Delhi, everyone is happy at the progress in talks and the assurances given by the ministry. Those looking at the half glass empty must realize that Ladakh is the smallest UT in the country. It's a sensitive Border area and a ecologically fragile. Its population is sparse and many areas lack development. However, the people of Ladakh are bright, hardworking and deeply attached to their land and culture. They are also discerning who can make out a friends from an enemy. They know their limitations and would not heed to the narratives of the people seeing no moon on a Purnima.

BRICS and the paradox of strategic autonomy

Nilantha Ilangamuwa

Nearly 50 pages of the Delhi Declaration were adopted at the New Delhi BRICS summit last week, while the Houthi advance in the Red Sea and its seizure of major positions around a critical maritime chokepoint were pulling the world's supply chains towards another dangerous rupture. The Trump administration's military intervention in Iran, carried out with Israeli support, has demonstrated how rapidly the language of sovereignty can collide with military power, while the Houthi advance towards Bab el-Mandeb has given Tehran-aligned forces greater leverage over one of the world's most consequential maritime passages. Globalisation has created prosperity by concentrating dependence along a handful of geographical, technological and financial arteries. Once those arteries become instruments of power, economics and geopolitics become inseparable.

The more important question is what kind of multipolarity BRICS is actually trying to construct. The declaration calls for reform of global institutions, condemns unilateral sanctions, demands greater representation for developing countries and promotes resilient supply chains and technological cooperation. But the central weakness of BRICS remains obvious. It is much easier to agree that the existing system is unfair than to agree on what should replace it. Its members can unite against sanctions, Western dominance and technological exclusion, but become considerably less comfortable when the question turns to whose technology, capital, markets and security interests will define the alternative. BRICS invokes strategic autonomy as though it were an established reality, yet its continuing dependence on external markets, technologies, finance and security structures exposes the concept, for now, as more a rhetorical aspiration than genuine collective autonomy. In that sense, BRICS increasingly embodies Broken Rhetoric, Incomplete Collective Strategy, projecting an ambition for strategic autonomy that its members have yet to acquire the collective capacity to realise. The organisation does not function because its members agree. It functions because they have discovered that disagreement need not prevent them from



sitting in the same room.

Xi's offer of cooperation in open-source artificial intelligence, smart manufacturing and advanced technological training was an unmistakable statement about where Beijing believes future influence will come from. Modi's warning about the weaponisation of technology and critical minerals was equally significant. A country can escape dependence on Western finance and still become dependent upon Chinese manufacturing. It can embrace artificial intelligence while remaining dependent on foreign computing infrastructure, semiconductors and technical standards. An alternative order cannot be built on dependence merely because the identity of the dominant supplier has changed.

Developing countries deserve greater representation in institutions such as the United Nations Security Council and the international financial system, but replacing Western predominance with a more dispersed distribution of power does not automatically produce justice. China can challenge Western technological dominance while creating dependencies of its own. Russia can challenge the Western security order while pursuing its own interests. India can advocate for the Global South while pro-

tecting its own priorities. Iran and the UAE can sit inside the same organisation while pursuing sharply different regional strategies. That is why the Iran-UAE contradiction at New Delhi was so revealing. Both had to find language sufficiently broad to coexist within the same declaration, with the call for maximum restraint in the Middle East reflecting the limits of what the organisation could agree upon. BRICS has therefore discovered that its value may lie less in forcing countries to agree than in giving adversaries an institutional space in which they can disagree without walking away.

The same tension is visible in India's own regional position. New Delhi wants to speak for the Global South while China is steadily increasing the economic, technological and strategic choices available to India's neighbours. South Asian states increasingly have more than one external partner from which to seek infrastructure, finance, technology, trade and defence cooperation. India's traditional predominance is therefore being challenged, not necessarily destroyed. The uncomfortable consequence is that the philosophy giving India greater room to manoeuvre internationally also gives its neighbours greater room to manoeuvre around India.

BRICS can condemn unilateral sanctions while its members remain deeply integrated into Western markets. It can demand technological sovereignty while remaining dependent on foreign intellectual property and advanced components. It can advocate resilient supply chains while geopolitical conflict repeatedly exposes their vulnerability. It can speak about peace while containing states engaged in wars or regional confrontation. And it can describe itself as a vehicle of Global South solidarity while the interests of its largest members collide with one another.

American technology, Chinese manufacturing, Russian energy, Gulf capital, Iranian geography, Indian markets, African resources and Asian shipping routes are becoming components of a fragmented system of power. The Houthi advance around Bab el-Mandeb demonstrates that geography can be as consequential as finance or semiconductors. The challenge for the Global South is therefore not simply to oppose the West, but to construct a system in which dependence is reduced without replacing one hierarchy with another. India-Business News

That is the paradox at the heart of BRICS. It was born from the conviction that the world should not be governed by a small group of established powers, yet its members are themselves becoming centres of power capable of producing new dependencies. It promises multipolarity because unipolarity is inadequate, but multipolarity can produce rivalry without justice, fragmentation without freedom and competition without genuine autonomy.

The Global South cannot secure its future merely by choosing which great power to depend upon. The real test is whether it can acquire the capacity to depend less on all of them. That struggle is now being fought in semiconductor factories, currency markets, ports, pipelines, mineral mines, artificial-intelligence laboratories and the narrow waters of Bab el-Mandeb. BRICS represents the Global South's desire to escape dependence while simultaneously revealing how difficult genuine independence has become. That may be the most important truth to emerge from New Delhi. BRICS may not yet be the alternative world order its advocates promise, but it has become the arena in which the struggle over whether such an order is even possible is being fought.

TEACHING CANNOT RUN ON SACRIFICE

Sakshi Sethi

A job where competence is regularly rewarded with greater labour is essentially flawed. The trustworthy instructor will soon be required to oversee challenging classes, fulfil deadlines, plan activities, offer student counselling, deal with parents and step in when necessary. What starts out as extraordinary effort soon turns into a regular expectation. We refer to educators as mentors and nation-builders, yet we keep increasing duties without considering what ought to be eliminated. In the same constrained working day, teaching now faces competition from assessment, documentation, coordination, counselling and continuous digital availability. No one's responsibility is the issue. It is a system that frequently increases

rather than decreases the role of the teacher.

Since practically everything is significant in the schools we have created, teachers are eventually responsible for almost everything. Recently, our Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, called on educators to engage with children's lives rather than just textbooks and curricula. The aspiration is unquestionably valuable. Education cannot be reduced to completing chapters. A teacher should notice the child whose marks are falling because something at home has changed, the adolescent hiding anxiety behind aggression or the student whose silence is asking for help. But noticing requires time. Listening requires mental space. A system cannot expect teachers to remain patient, attentive and emotionally present while keeping them buried in administra-

tive work. Yet when exhaustion begins to show, the response is often to place the burden back on the teacher. We speak of resilience, wellbeing and work-life balance, but these ideas can become substitutes for structural reform. A mindfulness session cannot lighten an excessive workload, and a motivational workshop cannot create more hours in the day.

There is also an uncomfortable economic question at the heart of this debate. If teaching is truly one of society's most important professions, why is 'passion' so often used where other professions would speak of pay, working conditions, autonomy and career growth? These days, schools promise global standards, holistic development, technology-rich classrooms, individualised instruction and emotional well-being. It is reasonable for parents to

anticipate that these commitments will be fulfilled. However, the instructor in front of the classroom is ultimately responsible for all such promises.

How the instructor was treated prior to that moment has a big impact on its quality. Thus, teacher well-being is not a sentimental issue. It is essential to the quality of education. Planning time is lost due to needless paperwork. Attention that could have been given to students is competing with avoidable tasks. When the classroom bell rings, exhaustion does not go away. The message that institutions deliver to their best instructors may be the most detrimental: if you can demonstrate your abilities, you will be expected to do more. Eventually, some depart. Others continue, but they no longer voluntarily put in the extra effort. Institutions then inquire as to the

status of the commitment. What we did with that commitment while we still had it is a better question.

Appreciation needs to go beyond rituals and catchphrases if India wants teaching to become a career of desire. Salary, staffing, reasonable workloads, planning time, professional autonomy and growth possibilities must all demonstrate it. Excellent educators will always go above and beyond the call of duty. However, there is a significant distinction between creating a system that requires continuous sacrifice and appreciating dedication. Sacrifice is no longer a virtue when instructors must make tremendous sacrifices for the school to function normally. It is now the operational model.

*The writer is an educator and councillor; Views presented are personal.*

Bishkek's real test: What the SCO's 25th Summit means for India

Shantesh Kumar Singh

Ten full members, two observers and fourteen dialogue partners under one roof invite an easy reading: another photograph of the world's shifting power balance. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's 25th-anniversary summit in Bishkek, held August 31-September 1, 2026, resists that shorthand. Behind the ceremony sat a real paper trail: the Bishkek Declaration plus 27 companion documents — 28 agreements, including amendments to the SCO's 2002 Charter. The volume alone proves nothing, but it signals ambition: to be judged as more than a security forum.

Scale is why this matters. Together, the SCO's full members, observers and dialogue partners now account for roughly 42 per cent of the world's population, close to a quarter of its land area, and more than a quarter of global GDP. A coalition that size speaks in many registers at once, a tension India has long managed.

For New Delhi, the clearest gain at Bishkek was collective language on

narco-terrorism and organised crime — turning India's terrorism concerns from a bilateral grievance into a cause backed by a bloc spanning Central Asia, Russia, China, Iran and Belarus. It fits India's three-word template for the SCO - Security, Connectivity, Opportunity: security as protection from drug trafficking, cybercrime, extremism and insecure borders, not just armies; connectivity as infrastructure that respects sovereignty rather than substitutes for it; opportunity as trade, investment, energy, technology and people-to-people ties. IndiaLaw Justice Institutionally, Bishkek produced two new instruments: a Universal Centre for Countering Security Challenges and Threats, covering all ten full members and fourteen dialogue partners, and an Executive Committee under the SCO's Anti-Narcotics Centre — backed by a drug-addiction programme, a push against synthetic drugs and precursors (both to 2030), and an information-security plan for 2026-28. None of this proves anything by itself; the test is whether ten states with incompatible intelligence systems can actually share information,

act against terror financing and trafficking, and manage the instability radiating from Afghanistan — still only an observer, but a factor every member must weigh.

India pressed a specific argument: anti-terror cooperation cannot be selective. Speaking in the same room as Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, Narendra Modi rejected double standards on terrorism and called for dismantling its entire support structure — financing, recruitment, radicalisation and safe havens — rather than isolating any single strand.

A second cluster of outcomes sat outside conventional security: a declaration on nuclear and physical nuclear security, a joint statement on energy cooperation, a programme launching the SCO's Green Technology Corridor for 2026-30, a biodiversity initiative for 2026-31, and memoranda on information-sharing, climate, crime and energy efficiency. Together, these read as an organisation positioning itself as a governance forum for the energy transition, not merely a counter-terrorism secretariat.

Connectivity received similar emphasis, with the Declaration calling for stronger north-south and east-west transport corridors, simpler cross-border transit, resilient supply chains and digitised logistics. Here India's interests turn concrete: with overland access through Pakistan effectively closed, Chabahar Port and the International North-South Transport Corridor are its practical workaround — routes into Central Asia, Russia and Europe via Iran. India's pitch is that connectivity comes with conditions: financially sustainable, free of debt traps, respectful of local environments, and careful never to compromise a third country's territorial integrity. Making that case through alternatives, not objection alone, is the more persuasive form of dissent.

The Declaration also carried a message aimed past the region: greater representation for developing economies at the UN and international financial institutions, defence of the multilateral trading system, and opposition to unilateral sanctions, asset freezes and secondary penalties that member states see as inconsistent with

the UN Charter and WTO rules. So did unrestricted missile-defence deployment and any bid to secure one state's safety at others' expense - widely read as a rebuke of Washington's trade posture, even unnamed.

Multipolarity, however, carries its own warning label. If larger states simply inherit the leverage once concentrated in a single power — at the expense of Central Asian republics, dialogue partners like the Maldives and Laos, or observers like Mongolia — the result isn't a fairer order, just a reshuffled one. India's position, consistent with its strategic autonomy, is that a credible multipolar system needs international law, equal sovereignty and transparent institutions, not simply more power centres. The same logic ran through the summit's language on West Asia: alarm at the humanitarian toll, criticism of the six-month campaign against Iran that disrupted energy and transit markets, and a renewed call for a just Palestinian settlement.

None of this erases the bloc's internal friction: distrust between India and China, ongoing India-Pakistan ten-

sion, deepening Russia-China alignment, divergent stakes in Afghanistan and Iran, and wide gaps in economic capacity among the ten full members. Pakistan takes the chair for 2026-27; its future depends less on membership numbers than on whether the Universal Centre and Anti-Narcotics Centre actually cooperate, whether the long-discussed SCO Development Bank becomes genuinely neutral, whether trade and transport barriers actually fall, and whether members treat terrorism as a principle rather than a convenience. IndiaLaw Justice

For India, the SCO is neither a substitute for any power bloc nor a purely ceremonial stage - it's a working channel into Central Asia, energy security, anti-terror cooperation and the larger push to reshape global governance. What it delivers depends on how consistently India stays engaged with its specific initiatives. Bishkek supplied the declarations and the institutional scaffolding; whether it converts into safer borders, functioning trade routes and shared prosperity — not just a more representative order on paper — is the test still ahead.