

UNNECESSARY HOLIDAYS

Observing holidays on the birth and death anniversaries of historic figures is not a progressive idea. Do we have holiday on the birthday of Jawahar Lal Nehru, the freedom fighter, first Prime Minister of India and a great man? Or for that matter is Atal behari Vajpayee's death anniversary an official holiday? So, questions arise when there is a renewed clamour for declaring holidays on the anniversaries of Maharaj Hari Singh and Sheikh Abdullah in J&K. This surely seems to aspiration of people and the MLAs have every right to highlight these demands. But the reality is the greatness of leaders is not proportional to the holidays in their name. In J&K such demands end up exposing regional and political fault lines. The National Conference and other parties from Kashmir are pushing the case for S M Abdullah while those from Jammu – the BJP and Congress too would not stay away – are raising the pitch for Maharaj Hari Singh. Emotions are high on both sides of Peerpanjal. Another reality is that both Hari Singh and Abdullah have played specific and important role in history. They ruled J&K for long periods and are responsible for crucial decisions. Hari Singh was a progressive Maharaja and the last from Dogras. He built roads, power stations and promoted women's safety and education. SM Abdullah was behind the bloodless land reforms in J&K and that changed the sociopolitical landscape of J&K. There is certain propaganda against Maharaja in Kashmir based on the 1931 prison riots. Both personalities are loved by their respective followers. In Jammu, there is a growing feeling that the last Dogra King, who was responsible for J&K becoming part of India domain and yet he was given a raw deal at the behest of Kashmiri leadership. However, there are a thousand ways to respect and perpetuate the memory of both these leaders than claim a day off from school and work in their memory.

Santhosh Mathew

September 21 is the International Day of Peace. This year, the message deserves to be heard inside the United Nations itself: the world needs action, not endless speeches. As the 81st session of the UN General Assembly begins in New York, leaders and diplomats will once again take turns at the world's most famous international podium. They will speak about war and peace, security and development, terrorism and climate change, poverty and human rights. The speeches will be important. The question is what happens after the microphones are switched off.

The United Nations was born from the terrible experience of two world wars. Its founding vision was clear: disputes between nations should be addressed through dialogue rather than destruction. Speaking is therefore not a problem at the UN. Dialogue is essential to diplomacy. The problem begins when dialogue turns into repetition, delay and obstruction. When words prevent action, diplomacy loses its purpose.

This is where the idea of filibustering becomes relevant. The word "filibuster" is most closely associ-

ated with the United States Senate. It developed from the Senate's tradition of allowing senators considerable freedom to speak. The word itself has a colourful history, linked to terms meaning freebooter or pirate. In political practice, it came to describe efforts to delay or prevent legislative action through prolonged debate.

The classic picture of a filibuster is a senator continuing to speak while legislation waits. The objective can be to delay a vote, force negotiations or prevent a proposal from moving forward. American political history has produced several famous examples of marathon speeches. The modern Senate has developed procedures, including cloture, to bring extended debate towards a conclusion.

The United Nations is not the US Senate, and the General Assembly does not have an identical filibuster system. Still, the underlying problem can appear in international diplomacy: when the time spent speaking becomes greater than the progress made towards solving the problem.

The UN itself has witnessed extraordinary examples of lengthy diplomatic interventions. India's V. K. Krishna Menon became famous for his marathon intervention on

Harsh Vardhan Shringla

As artificial intelligence raises productivity and changes the skills employers demand, the old model of hiring large numbers of graduates and training them on the job is beginning to lose its relevance. The next phase of India's technology story will therefore depend less on producing more engineers and more on transforming how they are taught, trained and assessed in-diancurrent events

India's technology sector will cross \$315 billion in revenue this financial year, growing at 6.1 per cent. Its workforce will grow at 2.3 per cent. Revenue and headcount, which moved together for three decades, have begun to separate, and that single divergence defines the task before our engineering colleges. India's emergence as a global software powerhouse stands as a defining achievement of the last 25-30 years. The current transition towards AI represents the next phase of this unfolding developmental trajectory. Rather than a departure from our legacy, it challenges the same foresight that anchored the industry's inception.

The industry that built modern Indian IT recruited graduates in bulk and trained them in-house, absorbing the distance between what colleges taught and what clients needed, forming a hand-holding safety net. It employs nearly six million people and carries a generation into the middle class. But that model depended on growth being linear in headcount. As AI raises output per engineer, firms will hire fewer people and expect far more of each one.

Capacity is not our constraint. The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) approved 15.98 lakh engineering seats this year, and enrolment is at an eight-year high. The constraint is capability: by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's estimate, only about 16 per cent of India's IT professionals are AI-skilled. We are not short of engineers. We are short of engineers who can build with these technologies.

According to the Competition Commis-



sion of India, the global AI market has surged from \$103.6 billion in 2020 to nearly \$289 billion today. Buoyed by deliberate policy, India's own AI economy has grown from \$2.97 billion to \$7.63 billion over the same period, on a trajectory to reach \$131.31 billion by 2032 at a 42.2 per cent annual clip. With analysts projecting 2.73 million new technology jobs by 2028, our difficulty is not a scarcity of opportunity either. The `10,371.92-crore IndiaAI Mission has taken national common compute past 38,000 GPUs, available at roughly `65 per GPU-hour, alongside several hundred open datasets. That capacity was built for students and researchers as much as for start-ups. Ensuring that every engineering department knows how to access it is the lowest-cost, highest-return intervention available to us today.

The Prime Minister's announcement on August 15, that one crore youth will be trained in AI skills over the next year sets the right order of ambition. Achieving a target of this magnitude requires a combination of national targeted skilling initiatives and systemic shifts within academia, which must be anchored in a rigorous definition of what AI proficiency entails.

Here is the core of the problem. A student can pass a machine-learning paper and remain unable to solve a real problem with AI. Capability is built in four stages: understanding the concepts, using the tools competently, building applications that work, and finally solving problems no one has pre-solved. Most programmes de-

liver the first two and stop. The economic value sits almost entirely in the last two. Closing that distance is not a curriculum exercise; it is closer to coaching, and it requires students to spend sustained time with practitioners, on messy problems, with the freedom to fail on a project without it wrecking a grade.

Three institutional changes would do most of the work. Curricula must be designed with industry, not merely shown to it. The partners are already at the door: more than 90 per cent of India's leading Global Capability Centres work with universities on talent pipelines and joint research. That relationship should be converted from guest lectures into something structural; practitioners sitting on curriculum committees, sponsored laboratories, live industry problems set as coursework, and engineers from those firms co-evaluating final projects. Where syllabus revision cycles run to several years, they must be shortened. A curriculum that cannot be updated annually cannot teach this subject. Faculty must be kept current, and funded to stay that way. No department can teach beyond the experience of its teachers. Industry immersion, sabbaticals into technology firms and continuous upskilling should be treated as core institutional expenditure and built into approval norms, not left to individual initiative. This is the least glamorous of the three changes and probably the most decisive. Assessment must measure what students can build. Employers have already moved: ap-

proximately 40 per cent now say they prefer demonstrable AI skills or certifications to a degree. Universities should follow, giving formal academic weight to working prototypes, deployed applications, portfolios and research output. Assessment ultimately determines what institutions teach and what students trouble to learn. Reform it, and curriculum and pedagogy follow on their own. At the same time, a monitoring framework must shift from auditing infrastructural inputs-such as enrolment figures or tool availability-to quantifying graduates' demonstrable proficiency in executing AI deployments. We must define success by the substantive results of applied student innovation, ensuring our colleges are measured not by the volume of their recruitment, but by the calibre of their creative output. AI is reshaping manufacturing, electronics, energy, biotechnology and aerospace, and our ambitions in semiconductors, space and clean energy will need engineers who can work across disciplines and niche skills such as designing chips. India, as the Prime Minister has said, "must not merely consume technology but create it". What is needed is another UPI moment, this time with AI. UPI showed that India can drive a technological transition at a national scale by setting a common architecture and a clear direction rather than a uniform template. Engineering education needs precisely that: industry-aligned curricula, practitioner-led teaching, applied projects, real apprenticeships and portfolio-based assessment. Indiancurrent events

The first revolution was built on scale, and India delivered it. The second will be built on capability. An engineering degree takes four years; the demand is here now. The arithmetic leaves us no room for delay. Curricula must be designed with industry, not merely shown to it. The partners are already at the door: more than 90 per cent of India's leading Global Capability Centres work with universities on talent pipelines and joint research

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SPIRITUAL SOLUTION TO MENTAL AND PHYSICAL AILMENTS

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

Recently, a message was forwarded to me about solutions to various ailments and diseases. According to it, diseases are psychosomatic in nature. This means that they are generated in the mind and the result is shown in the body. It was suggested that the body and mind should be studied together to understand the disease phenomenon. We don't have to go into the veracity of this statement in totality, but it is clear that many physical diseases result from stress and worry. The solution suggested was in capital letters: LEARN TO MEDITATE DAILY. This is what caught my attention, because it is the perfect solution to all problems, diseases and otherwise.

How meditation helps can be understood by learning about God, mind, body and diseases. Beginning with God, we know that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. We also know that God is the Creator of what all we see, which includes our body and mind. What most don't realise is that we are souls — parts of God (The Bhagavad-Gita 15.7). This means that there is an eternal relationship between us souls and God — 'Anshi' (the Whole). Surely, God is pre-



pared to accept us whenever we approach Him sincerely (9.30). Not only that, God is prepared to help us tackle all problems, including diseases, if we develop God consciousness (18.58). Presently, we have material consciousness, that is, I am a material body and the subtle mind.

This is where our problem really lies.

Our body is made up of five gross elements, which are earth, water, fire, air and ether (7.4). Then, there is the subtle body made up of mind, intelligence and 'ahankar' (ego) (7.4). The mind is the leader of the eyes, ears, tongue, nose and the sense of touch (15.7 & 8). This mind is very difficult to control (6.34). But it can be controlled by taking shelter of God in

all respects (18.62) by practising meditation. Then only, it acts as a friend; otherwise, it remains an enemy (6.6).

Before I take up meditation, let us understand what diseases are. They are of two types: physical and mental. Medical science is very useful in treating physical diseases through proper investigation and medication. Such diseases are of a temporary nature (2.14) and are the results of punishments for impious acts done in the past.

This brings us to meditation. What is it? To my understanding, it is simply to create a good connection with God, like looking at a manifestation of God and gently chanting His name. Isn't He everything to all intents and purposes, being omniscient and omnipotent? Doesn't God know us inside and out (13.2)? He surely knows what my problem is, diseases included. Isn't He the best to guide and help me? This is exactly what is happening with me in my life in the recent past. I have no idea how this person came up with the perfect solution, but I can vouch for it because it works every time. DownloadInteractive Maps

The writer is a spiritual teacher and columnist; Views presented are personal.

The UN needs peace, not endless speeches



Kashmir before the Security Council in January 1957. His intervention extended across several meetings and lasted more than eight hours. It remains one of the best-known examples of endurance in UN diplomacy.

Krishna Menon's performance belongs to another era and another diplomatic context. It should not be mechanically described as a General Assembly filibuster. Its significance today lies in the question it raises: how much time should international diplomacy spend on speaking when the world is waiting for solutions?

That question is especially rele-

vant when the United Nations discusses war. A ceasefire cannot be achieved by a speech alone. A refugee cannot return home because of a resolution alone. A destroyed city cannot be rebuilt by a statement from the podium. Food cannot reach a starving population through rhetoric. Peace requires negotiation, monitoring, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and political courage.

The General Assembly has rules for managing debate and speaking time. Countries are expected to respect agreed limits during the General Debate, and the President has powers to maintain order and man-

age proceedings. These procedures are not designed to silence countries. They are designed to give every country a fair opportunity to speak.

A good speech should open the door to negotiation. A good diplomatic intervention should identify a problem and suggest a way forward. A good resolution should lead towards implementation. If the same accusations are repeated year after year without producing movement, the UN risks becoming a place where international problems are described more efficiently than they are solved. The world has no shortage of words. It has an abundance of declarations, resolutions,

statements and appeals. What is often missing is implementation. The credibility of the United Nations will increasingly depend on its ability to convert diplomatic language into practical outcomes.

This does not mean that countries should surrender their right to speak. Smaller nations, in particular, depend on the UN platform to make their concerns visible. Countries involved in conflicts need an international forum where their positions can be placed on record. Silence cannot produce peace. Suppressing disagreement cannot produce peace either.

The answer is disciplined diplomacy: speak clearly, listen seriously, negotiate patiently, decide when necessary and implement what has been decided. Embassies & Consulates On the International Day of Peace, this should be the spirit of the UN's 81st session. The world does not need another competition over who can speak the longest. It needs countries willing to spend less diplomatic energy on repeating positions and more energy on finding areas of agreement.

The UN General Assembly remains indispensable because it brings almost the entire international community into one room. That opportunity should not be

wasted. Every speech should be treated as the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one. The great challenge before the UN is not finding more words for peace. The world already has enough words. The challenge is turning those words into ceasefires, negotiations, humanitarian corridors, reconstruction, reconciliation and lasting peace.

From filibustering to action — that should be the message of the International Day of Peace 2026. Let nations speak, let them disagree, let diplomacy remain open. But after the speeches, let action begin. The world is not waiting for another long speech. It is waiting for peace.

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