

India cautions US against Pak’s role in promoting terror

INDIA has rightly warned the United States against its growing bonhomie with Pakistan. Speaking at the Asia Society Policy Institute, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, “There are very few countries which have been subjected to the kind of terrorism that we have from a neighbour as part of a deliberate, conscious policy over many, many decades.” Though he didn’t name Pakistan, as such, the reference was obvious, especially because the US itself has suffered because of Pakistan’s dalliance with jihadist terror. It is a well-known fact that Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the political and military capitals of Pakistan, have played both sides of terror; they aided, armed, and abetted jihadists on both its eastern and

western fronts, while feigning to help the American efforts to fight Islamists like Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. “Now, if something which matters so deeply to us, there isn’t enough understanding or appreciation or empathy of that, I think that creates a problem too. That you know if... one of my primary concerns is not fully appreciated by my partner, then clearly there is an impact of that on the relationship,” Jaishankar said, alluding to India-US ties.

He has a point. Washington has been claiming, and rightly so, that Tehran has been promoting jihad in the region; in fact, this is one of the factors resulting in the US-Israel alliance’s attack on Iran. At the same time, President Donald Trump was

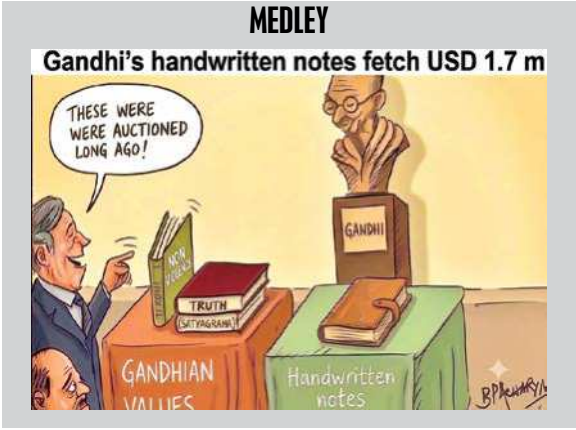
cosying up with Pakistan, especially its Field Marshal Asim Munir, who is the jihadist-in-chief of the notorious ‘terroristan’. Unfortunately, Pakistani leaders’ flattery and shenanigans fooled the world’s most powerful man. The dealings between Trump’s family members and the Pakistani establishment also reportedly cast their shadow on the US-Pakistan ties. While we have unambiguously conveyed our displeasure over the improving US-Pakistan relations, we must not go overboard, which we sometimes do—the recently concluded BRICS Summit in New Delhi being a case in point. Diplomacy is an exercise in balancing interests, not in expressing emotions. The US will pursue its own strategic, economic,

and geopolitical interests, just as India must pursue its own. Washington’s engagement with Islamabad may be uncomfortable for New Delhi, but it does not automatically follow that New Delhi should allow this discomfort to define the entire India-US relationship.

The two countries have substantial convergences in the Indo-Pacific, defence, technology, trade, energy security, and counterterrorism. These interests cannot be wished away because of fluctuations in America’s Pakistan policy. New Delhi should continue to remind Washington of Pakistan’s record of supporting and sheltering terrorist organisations, while avoiding the temptation to view every American-Pakistan in-

teraction as a diplomatic setback for India. At any rate, Americans are not so ignorant as to be unaware of Pakistan’s duplicity. India should also resist the urge to turn every multilateral forum into an arena for settling bilateral scores.

The BRICS Summit demonstrated the pitfalls of allowing geopolitical disagreements to overshadow larger economic and developmental objectives. India’s growing global stature demands strategic composure. One need to react to every move by another power; it must assess that move passionately, protect its core interests, and keep its diplomatic options open. That is the approach New Delhi should adopt towards the renewed US-Pakistan bonhomie.



LETTERS

Mining policy should think of affected communities

With reference to “Centre must pay heed to mineral-rich states” (THI, Sept 30). Mining can generate investment, employment and revenue, but the benefits should not come at the cost of communities living around mineral deposits. States hosting these resources face displacement, environmental degradation and pressure on local infrastructure. Any new mining framework should therefore include stronger safeguards for the affected communities. A defined share of mining-related revenue could be directed towards local health, education, roads and rehabilitation. Environmental clearances must remain rigorous and should not become a mere formality in the interest of faster extraction. The Centre and states should jointly monitor compliance and publish regular reports. A development model that combines mineral extraction with environmental responsibility and local welfare would make mining more sustainable and socially acceptable.

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Govt must spell out future mining arrangements

THIS refers to “Centre must pay heed to mineral-rich states” (THI, Sept 30). The disagreement over the proposed mining law also highlights the importance of policy certainty. Investors need clear rules, and governments must ensure that states are not suddenly deprived of legitimate revenue or decision-making space. Frequent changes in taxation, royalties or regulatory arrangements can create uncertainty for both industry and governments. The Centre should publish a clear framework explaining how existing and future mining arrangements will be treated. A formal consultation mechanism with mineral-producing states could prevent disputes before they reach the courts. Any retrospective financial implications should be handled carefully and transparently. Predictability, fair revenue-sharing and institutional dialogue can provide industry with confidence while respecting the constitutional position of states.

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Protect economic interests first

Regarding “Centre must pay heed to mineral-rich states” (THI, Sept 30), the proposed changes deserve examination from the standpoint of cooperative federalism. Natural resources may have national economic significance, but the states where minerals are extracted deal directly with the consequences of mining. Their participation in policy formulation is therefore essential. The Centre should convene a structured dialogue with mineral-rich states, industry representatives, local bodies and affected communities before implementing major changes. Differences over the law should be resolved through negotiation rather than prolonged political confrontation or litigation. At the same time, states should provide predictable approvals and ensure that regulatory processes remain efficient. A mutually agreed framework can protect national economic interests while giving states adequate fiscal space and communities a fair share of the benefits generated from their natural resources.

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Tech firms must adopt energy-efficient systems

THIS is further to the column “Creativity is destroying the environment” (THI Sept 30). Artificial intelligence is celebrated for the convenience it provides, but its environmental cost remains largely unexamined. Training GPT-3 alone is estimated to have evaporated about seven lakh litres of fresh water, and by 2027 global AI demand could equal the annual water use of 30 to 47 million people. In a country where nearly 60 crore people face severe water shortage, this cannot be ignored. Policymakers and technology companies must adopt energy-efficient systems, responsible water use and transparent disclosure.

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Congress launches Bharat Jodo 2.0 padyatra from Shikaripura

SHIVAMOGGA: The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) on Wednesday launched its ‘Bharat Jodo 2.0’ padyatra from Shikaripura in Shivamogga district, targeting 84 Assembly constituencies where the Congress was defeated in the 2023 Karnataka elections. The padyatra is being led by KPCC president B.K. Hariprasad and is planned as an 84-day programme covering 29 districts. Congress leaders said the initiative is aimed at strengthening the party organisation and increasing direct interaction with people in constituencies where the party lost in the previous Assembly election. The programme was launched from Kittadahalli in Shikaripura taluk. The march proceeded through Mattikote, Hosanagar Cross and Nelavagilu before heading towards Shikaripura town. According to Minister Madhu Bangarappa, around 10 km will be covered during the first day’s padyatra.

Read more at
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com>



TALKING OF MANY THINGS

DR MOHAN KANDA

WHILE many things are needed for people to lead happy and contented lives, food, shelter, and clothing are universally accepted as the basic minimum requirements of human beings. There is in fact this adage in Telugu, which says that to have a home of one’s own and to perform a marriage in the family are the most important challenges in an individual’s life. In what follows, an attempt has been made to understand the role played by a shelter.

A shelter protects living beings from rain, strong winds, extreme climatic conditions, predators, and environmental dangers.

A home, on the other hand, is much more than a mere shelter. It is vital because it provides physical safety, emotional comfort, and a stable foundation for personal and family life. It is also a place of love, acceptance, and deep emotional support and offers a secure environment for all living beings. A home also serves as a central gathering place that binds family members together.

Organisations like Habitat for Humanity work globally to help families secure all lasting benefits in one’s house.

Primitive shelters have

evolved into modern homes through major shifts in materials, permanence, and technology driven by human civilization. Prehistoric humans used natural geological formations, while nomadic groups built lightweight temporary huts using wood branches, animal hides, bones, and grass that were easy to assemble and dismantle. Once humans mastered the art of creating fire, some 400,000 years ago internal hearths transformed shelters into social hubs for cooking, warmth, and art.

After farming led to permanent settlements around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, communities began to use sunbaked mud bricks, clay, and stone to build stronger walls, multi-room layouts, and courtyards for privacy.

In the medieval ages, engineering led to innovations and complex multi-storied concrete structures came up with piped water, and civic planning. Housing later diversified into peasant cottages, urban timber-framed townhouses, and fortified stone castles.

The advent of the industrial and modern eras, marked by industrial mass production, steel, iron, mass-produced brick, and glass was marked by high-density urban housing and skyscrapers.

Functional planning led to the contemporary smart and sustainable homes.

Modern residences use smart technology and green architecture, informed by climate automation, energy management, and high-speed connectivity, with eco-friendly designs using solar power, sustainable composite materials, and green roofs to fight climate change.

Providing concessional

Homemakers are people who manage a household and care for a family as their main daily occupation instead of working for external income. Their responsibilities include raising children, supporting family members, and acting as primary care givers. They also take care of cooking meals, cleaning, organizing spaces, and handling day-to-day operations.

housing loans from banking and financial institutions besides providing subsidised homes for the poor are now important socio-economic priorities for the central and state governments.

The word ‘home’, by itself, or in conjunction with other words, is also used to stand for several other things in different contexts and situations. For example, the stadium where a local, or ‘home’, team plays its matches is known as the ‘home-ground’. Also, idiomatically, an area, environment, or topic that people know very well is called the ‘home’ ground, as they feel secure and in control because they understand the surroundings or the topic. A ‘home run’ in softball is another similar term.

An ‘At Home’ invitation stands for a highly traditional, formal style of invitation used to indicate that the host is holding a social gathering. Historically popular in 19th and 20th century high society, the format has evolved over time. The President of India and the Governors of States traditionally host an At Home, every year on Republic Day.

That expression, incidentally, triggers a somewhat unhappy though amusing memory. It was the 1976 Republic Day, and I was the Secretary to the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Sharda Mukherjee. She was very protocol conscious and fastidious about things needing to look absolutely spic and span on such occasions. Elaborate arrangements were in place for the garden party.

It was time for the Chief Minister to arrive and be received by the Governor, a sudden downpour happened, bringing with it absolute disaster. All the invitees had to rush into Raj Bhavan’s Durbars Hall. Alternative arrangements were made hastily, which, by no means, were up to the standards the Governor had expected. And, the Chief Minister, a person given to wry satire and known never to lose an opportunity to have a dig at others, sarcastically complimented me for lacking the quality of anticipation!

In a similar manner, to be ‘homely’ means to look plain or unattractive in the United States, although it refers to being cozy, comfortable, and unpretentious in the UK. The expression ‘homing instinct’ stands for an animal’s natural, built-in ability to find its way back to its home, nest, or

breeding ground after traveling a long distance away.

Animals do not need a map or prior training, as they possess the innate ability to know how to return to their homes, using natural tools such as the sun, stars, the Earth’s magnetic field, smells, and visual memory, to navigate. Pigeons, for instance, are famous for flying hundreds of miles back to their exact loft, as are salmon fish, which swim across vast oceans and find the exact freshwater stream where they were born. Domesticated cats and dogs are also known to travel considerable distances across unfamiliar places to return to their owners. Yet another example is that of migratory birds, such as swallows and geese, which return to the same nests year after year.

An example of the word ‘home’ being used in conjunction with other words is ‘homework’, which is a set of academic tasks assigned to students by their teachers to be completed outside of regular class hours. And ‘homemade’ refers to anything made at home, on the premises, or through your own personal efforts rather than being mass-produced in a factory or bought from a store.

Homemakers are people who manage a household and care for a family as their main daily occupation instead of working for external income. Their responsibilities include raising children, supporting family members, and acting as primary caregivers. They also take care of cooking meals, cleaning, organizing spaces, and handling day-to-day operations. In addition, they attend to housekeeping chores, such

as shopping for household needs, budgeting, and maintaining the home environment.

In India, the Union ‘Home’ Ministry is a government department responsible for a country’s internal security, domestic law and order, and public safety.

The virtues of a home have often been a favourite subject matter for authors and composers. ‘Home Sweet Home’, for example, is an expression used when someone returns home after being away to show that they are happy to be back. The expression “Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home”, is another example, which originates from the song “Home, Sweet Home!”, written for an opera.

The reference I made earlier in this article to the homing instinct, makes me recall an incident which caused me acute embarrassment when I was on a visit to the wonderful city of Kiel in Germany years ago, in connection with a lecture to be delivered in the University there. I have been blessed with the great virtue of being able to lose my way home, even within the colony where we reside in Hyderabad. And the city of Kiel afforded me a great opportunity to test the power of that trait of mine. In the four days that I spent there, not even on one occasion, out of a hundred or so, did I fail to break out into a nervous sweat, out of fear that I would never find my way back to the hotel where I was staying.

Each time, invariably, I just managed to return to it, having desperately sought directions from at least a dozen passersby!

(The writer was formerly Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

The architecture of inclusion: How Sukumar Sen built a republic of voters

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

“Democracy begins not with the politician. It begins with the voter.”

In 1950, a newly sovereign nation embarked on the most ambitious democratic experiment in human history. India was a vast, deeply diverse landscape recovering from the trauma of Partition, where nearly 85 per cent of the population was illiterate and infrastructure was virtually non-existent. There were no digital databases, no standardised identification cards, no automated networks, and no modern technology.

Into this monumental void stepped Sukumar Sen, an ICS officer appointed as India’s first Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).

Tasked with executing the inaugural general election, Sen did not merely manage a bureaucratic process; he helped build the foundational instinct of Indian democracy. His mission was to radical in its simplicity as it was staggering in its scope: find every citizen, register them,

and give them a voice. Today, as contemporary political discourse grows increasingly obsessed with lists, exclusions, and deletions, returning to Sen’s original vision offers a vital reminder of what it truly takes to sustain a government of the people.

The enrolment epic

The logistics facing Sen and his team were unprecedented. India’s electorate in 1950 spanned over 17 crore voters—a demographic larger than the combined populations of the United States and western Europe at the time. To enroll them, thousands of election workers traveled on foot, by bullock cart, on horseback, and aboard boats. They trekked across the snow-bound valleys of Himachal Pradesh, crossed the arid expanses of Rajasthan, and navigated the dense forests of the Northeast.

They went door to door and village to village to compile the electoral rolls from scratch. When social stigmas prevented many women in northern states from giving

Technology is a powerful amplifier, but it must serve the original ethos established in 1950. A database should be a bridge to participation, never a barrier. When administrative systems prioritise procedural rigidity over universal access, they risk eroding the trust that Sen worked so tirelessly to forge.



Sukumar Sen

of formal education, could cast a secret ballot with dignity and confidence.

Building vs. maintaining- The founding instinct:

Sukumar Sen and the architects of early India did not inherit a functional democracy; they had to construct one out of hope, determination, and civic faith. Because they built it from the ground up, they understood a fundamental truth that often gets lost in modern administration: the strength of a republic is measured by its capacity to include, not its efficiency at weeding out.

The state seeks out the voter

In recent decades, admin-

their individual names to male officials—offering only their relations as “mother of X” or “wife of Y”—Sen refused to accept the compromise. He insisted that every citizen must be recognized in their own right, and delayed registration drive timelines until millions of women were properly named and cataloged on the rolls.

To overcome widespread illiteracy, Sen’s team devised an intuitive visual language. They introduced distinct symbols for political parties—a pair of bullocks, a tree, an elephant—and color-coded ballot boxes so that every individual, regardless

istrative focus has subtly shifted. Where the founding impulse was driven by a relentless urge to expand the circle of participation, modern election machinery is frequently pre-occupied with verification algorithms, identity cross-checks, and purging records. While accurate rolls are essential for integrity, an over-emphasis on deletion risks transforming a welcoming public apparatus into a defensive gatekeeper.

Reclaiming the citizen-centric republic:

When Gyanesh Kumar assumed office as Chief Election Commissioner in 2024, he inherited a sophisticated electoral machinery powered by instant digital verification, advanced satellite communications, and millions of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Yet, despite these vast technological leaps, the central challenge of democracy remains unchanged: ensuring that no legitimate voice is silenced or left behind.

Technology is a powerful amplifier, but it must serve

the original ethos established in 1950. A database should be a bridge to participation, never a barrier. When administrative systems prioritise procedural rigidity over universal access, they risk eroding the trust that Sen worked so tirelessly to forge.

The founders of India understood that politicians do not create democracy; citizens do. The act of placing a mark on a ballot is the primary assertion of human equality in a complex society. As Indian democracy continues to evolve in a digital age, honoring Sukumar Sen’s legacy requires a deliberate return to that original instinct—a commitment to an inclusive republic where the fundamental duty of the state is to seek out every voter and ensure their place in the nation’s story.

“The vote is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society.” — John Lewis

(The writer is a former OSD to the Union Civil Aviation Minister)