

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

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Scan the internal dimension on the road to 2024

As India rejoices over the success of its moon mission, and is set to host the G-20 summit, it might be useful for its leaders to heed lessons from the Chandrayaan mission, viz., that “instead of focussing on achieving success, we [ISRO] focussed on eliminating failures”. This is a pre-election year and it is more important for policymakers not to sweep uncomfortable aspects under the carpet, or remain content with an apparent surface calm that can oftentimes be illusory. Several disparate developments – not all of them healthy – are currently taking place across the Indian landmass. Several have the potential to cause serious trouble now and in the future. It is essential and important that these are properly assessed, lest any of the situations go out of control. All events have a life of their own. If quite a few, or even if some of them were to coalesce as elections approach, the nation could face a difficult situation.

Manipur, a microcosm of the northeast
Manipur, in India's northeast and which abuts Myanmar is a test case. This State has been on the boil for several weeks now, and as policymakers endlessly debate the reasons for the Manipur imbroglio, area experts by now recognise that it indeed has the potential to engulf the entire northeast region. The preponderance of different tribes with distinct affiliations across the northeast, makes it essential that the situation is controlled at the earliest for, if matters were to get out of hand still more, they might well provoke a 'prairie fire'.

Manipur may be seen by the uninitiated as a minor blip on India's security horizon, but it does in many ways reflect the microcosm of problems that affect the entire northeast. Lasting solutions for many of them have evaded successive administrations. An intricate web of tribal affiliations, for instance, bind the Mizos of Mizoram with the Kukis and Zomis of Manipur, apart from the Chins of Myanmar and the Kuki-Chins of Bangladesh. The Nagas of Nagaland have their separate set of affiliations, some across the border in Myanmar. What should not be lost sight of all the more is that the intrinsic potential of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) to create trouble has by no means been curbed to any significant extent.

Assam falls in a separate and different category. While the United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent and Bodo youth are currently quiescent, they remain active just below the surface. Weapons and firearms are plenty across the entire region, which should be a



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The focus must be on several disparate developments that are happening across India, which could escalate in the run-up to the general election next year

cause for concern. The short point is that periods of calm in the northeast often obscure the undercurrents of tension just below the surface.

Other threats, need for vigil

What applies to militant contestations in the northeast may not apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the situation existing in the hinterland, but vigilance should be the watchword. The nature and content of the threats posed may be different, but they often tend to be more intense. The Maoists, for instance, whom many across India appear to have written off as a threat in the absence of spectacular attacks such as the Dantewada massacre (in 2010), Chhattisgarh (in 2013) and Sukma (in 2017 and 2021), a reduction in their areas of operations, and a lull in activities since 2007, are still a threat. It is not for nothing that analysts worldwide categorise the CPI (Maoists) as one of the top terrorist groups in the world. These experts do not accept the thesis that the threat the Maoists pose has been eliminated.

Since late 2020, the movement has been in a resurgence mode. The movement may no longer resemble 'the Spring Thunder over India' (of the late 1960s and early 1970s), but it remains a legatee of the ideological movement launched over half a century ago. A selective process of mergers and demergers and a new leadership pattern have altered their priorities, but they do claim far greater support for their ideas in urban areas. Their claim to have become 'influencers of public opinion' in urban areas does not lack credibility as many of the uninitiated tend to think. As the country moves toward the general election next year, the Naxalites will, thus, remain a potential threat.

There are several other factors at play today that could impact the ground situation. A potent issue is that of right-wing terror. Geo-politics often influences the course of right-wing terror, and given the state of the world today, India needs to be on its guard. The Islamic State (IS) which was believed to be in decline (since 2019) is showing signs of a major resurgence. It has overcome its leadership issues and has a new Caliph in Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Quraishi. It has also established regular supply lines to obtain state-of-the-art weapons, including North Atlantic Treaty Organization-calibre weapons.

Hence, India's false sense of security created by the absence of a major terror attack for quite some time now will need to be revisited. Such an attitude would be contrary to current trends across the world, with experts repeatedly affirming that right-wing terror is witnessing a resurgence. Experts also aver that of the

countries in Asia, it is India and Indonesia that are in the crosshairs of the IS. Some reduction in the levels of violence in Jammu and Kashmir of late must not lead to an erroneous belief that the terror threat has reduced; in many newer regions, including the South, terror networks are being established. When and where the attacks could develop will necessarily demand good intelligence and anticipation.

On polarisation

A further unfortunate trend that has manifested itself of late, and which could escalate in a pre-election year, is the re-emergence of communal violence and communal riots in the country. This is attributed to increasing polarisation along religious lines. Several pockets of communal tension have all of a sudden emerged across the country. These are not confined to one particular State or pocket, although very serious violence has manifested itself recently in Haryana and Maharashtra.

Forensic analysis of what took place in Nuh and Gurugram recently, and the earlier incidents in Maharashtra and some other regions, also reveal certain very disturbing aspects – that quite a few instances of riots were deliberate. Also, that the divide between the Hindu and Muslim communities is growing apace. Communal violence has also been spreading to areas hitherto perceived to be relatively free of such problems. The nature apart from the content of the violence does not bode well for the country, specially so in a pre-election year. Hence, all this will need detailed attention. India has to be careful to ensure that polarisation along communal lines does not lead to a situation where India's current image as a bastion of democratic virtues is sullied.

India's well-earned reputation for holding peaceful elections, notwithstanding the odds, calls for far greater vigilance. Peace cannot be taken for granted. The truth is that India faces many threats, quite a few of which have remained dormant for some time now, but which have not been eliminated. Beginning with the Manipur cauldron to the latest communal violence in Nuh, apart from the intrinsic threat of right-wing terror and Naxalite violence, there exists a broad band of incipient problems that could coalesce into something more frightening. Hence, the political establishment and security and police agencies need to exercise utmost care and caution. While eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, eternal vigilance is also needed to ensure that the world's largest democracy successfully concludes yet another general election. Only this will demonstrate India's true strength and worth.

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At Delhi summit, demonstrate climate leadership

The G-20 members emit most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and produce the bulk of its fossil fuels. But, most of them have also pledged to be "net-zero", cutting back on emissions and fossil fuel use. It is time for the G-20 to act as a united group that drives its own collective climate ambition through collaboration, coordination and competition. The G-20 summit in New Delhi (September 9-10) is a crucial moment to show leadership ahead of the UN Secretary General's Climate Ambition Summit and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP28.

Recently, G-20 members have shown a degree of commitment to shift towards clean energy: renewable energy sources provided 29% of their energy mix in 2021, an increase from 19% in 2010.

India has made significant steps in the last decade to become the world's third largest producer of renewable energy and setting targets to continue the expansion of installed renewables to account for 50% of energy production by 2030. But, governments need to create a bigger shift as demand increases and the world's carbon budget is shrinking faster than previously thought.

Ensure clear governance structures

They will need to focus on three action areas:

First, at the national and local levels, G-20 countries need to improve their governance processes for just energy transitions.

Governments should establish clear governance structures to ensure that the transition process is inclusive and the results equitable, and avoid siloed working. This includes clarifying responsibilities and mandates between ministries and across government levels with the goal of having coherent delivery plans that can attract investment. Progress indicators should go beyond the traditional ones such as net job creation, diversity of manufacturing and regional economic growth to include metrics on the kinds of jobs created, who has access to them, and levels of broader community resilience and

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The G-20 Summit must strongly commit to collective action to combat climate change

Innovation. Depending on the country context, G-20 countries could establish a multi-ministerial task force or joint working groups between government and non-government actors to coordinate just energy transition efforts. For example, South Africa has developed a just transition framework that was led by the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC). Other G-20 members can learn from this approach, to accelerate their own just energy transitions by developing concrete frameworks, road maps, or action plans.

Aiding decarbonisation

Second, as the Indian G-20 presidency has acknowledged, the G-20 should see this transition as a way to diversify G-20 member economies to ensure long-term economic stability, livelihoods and public revenue streams. International financial institutions have a critical role to play by aligning their investments and risk-taking to rapidly deploy vast amounts of renewable energy and grid infrastructure, and to target support to energy efficiency and very low-carbon industrial technologies.

For example, the global increase in demand for and production of green steel necessitates the immediate transition to low carbon steel production pathways.

The G-20 countries, representing 90% of global steel production and 80% of consumption, have a pivotal role in advancing global low-carbon steel production. By setting clear mandates for international financial institutions, such as multilateral development banks and international climate finance, they can drive investments in green steel transitions within developing and emerging economies.

A collective commitment by the G-20 to Green Public Procurement would also accelerate the decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors such as steel and cement. However, collaboration within and among G-20 nations is necessary for effective and ambitious reform in public purchasing. Governments must implement effective

monitoring, create clear mandates for low-carbon procurement, "upskill" procurement officers, and set time-bound targets to harness the full potential of Green Public Procurement.

Need for transparency

Third, the G-20 should take a lead in streamlining international efforts to achieve just energy transitions. These efforts will be aided by radically improved transparency and accountability, for example by setting up disclosure mechanisms on energy transitions-related data through existing mechanisms, such as the G-20 Energy Transitions and Sustainable Finance Working Groups, and the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JET-Ps). The G-20 should also encourage fossil-fuel producing countries to provide current, comparable and reliable information about their plans and projects for oil, gas and coal production, and how these align with international as well as national climate goals.

The race to deploy clean energy for all, to decarbonise industry and to achieve a just and inclusive transition cannot be run alone. By taking a lead in these three action areas, the G-20 can ensure this is a relay race that is won together – not at the expense of some countries and communities.

The outcome document of July's G-20 Energy Transition Ministers' meeting called for "Just, Affordable, and Inclusive Energy Transition Pathways". But for countries to get onto such pathways, the G-20 must act together, collaborating and coordinating steps to achieve net-zero ambitions, while competing to achieve them.

The G-20 summit in New Delhi is a crucial moment for the Heads of State and Government present at the meeting to adopt a strong leader's declaration, committing to collective ambition to combat climate change. In the past few months, the devastating effects of climate change have been clearly shown. There is simply no more time to waste.

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