



## The numbers game

In spite of the risks it poses, the climate crisis is yet to get political resonance in India

The 26th United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow, Scotland may not have a significant outcome as yet in sight. Prior to the summit, there was a frantic attempt by leaders of western countries, particularly the United States and summit host the United Kingdom, to have most countries agree on a mid-century net zero goal, or when emissions dip to near zero or are balanced out by taking out an equivalent from the atmosphere. This put China and India, both major greenhouse gas emitters, on the defensive, and they dug in their heels more strongly on issues such as climate equity and justice. Their argument, that the climate crisis is largely due to the West because of over a century of unmitigated carbon dioxide emissions, and so those countries must bear the lion's share of reparations in the form of finance and access to clean technologies, is an old one, enshrined over the years in earlier COP deliberations. While China has indicated a 2060 net zero year, India surprisingly agreed to a net zero year of 2070 as well as more initiatives by 2030 to move towards having a significantly larger share of its energy needs met by renewable energy.

The target year 2070 is far from 2050, by when scientific consensus says, emissions must decline to zero for earth to have a fighting chance to keep temperatures at manageable levels. So India, now the third highest emitter of carbon dioxide, giving itself a 50-year deadline will unlikely help prevent temperatures from rising beyond the danger mark. However, India has also indicated that for its 2030 goals, it needs a trillion dollars, by 2030, from developed countries. India, it must be remembered, is a \$2 trillion economy and expects to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 – though the novel coronavirus pandemic has made it unlikely – and close to \$10 trillion by 2030. Developing countries were collectively promised, nearly a decade ago, \$100 billion annually until 2020 and only a small fraction has been realised. Even the Glasgow summit has shown how hotly contested every dollar is. The conundrum of global warming is that irrespective of how irrefutable the evidence is, it is unlikely that elected representatives of developed countries will impose punitive taxation on their citizens for climate reparations. However, a quicker transition to renewable energy sources may be made by enabling greater sharing of technology and at fora where countries discuss tariff barriers that impede better, cleaner technology from being adopted faster than they should be. In spite of the risks it poses, the climate crisis is yet to get political resonance in India. Unless it appears on electoral platforms, the push away from fossil fuel will not happen; and India might not have a realistic chance at adapting to disasters at minimal cost.

## Focus on full vaccination

With the increased supply of doses, the inoculation pace should not slacken

Even as a small uptick in daily fresh cases has been reported in November, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) has said no new variants of interest or concern have been seen in India. And variants other than the Delta one are now "negligible in sequencing data from India". AY4.2, a Delta variant sublineage, which is slowly increasing in proportion to reported cases in the U.K., is, it says, "very infrequent" in India. In other words, the Delta variant, first reported in India last year and responsible for the staggering number of daily cases and deaths this year, is still the dominant variant. According to WHO's weekly epidemiological update of November 9, the Delta variant has become globally predominant and "out-competed other variants" in most countries; 99.6% of genome sequences posted on the global database are Delta. Even as the daily fresh cases have been on an overall downward trend since a peak in early May, the pace of vaccination has slowed down sharply since hitting a peak in September. The average daily doses administered in November have been just four million, the lowest since mid-July, despite vaccine availability.

A greater concern is that only 38% have been fully vaccinated though nearly 80% of all eligible adults have received the first dose. Since full protection is achieved only with two doses, State governments need to pull out all the stops to increase the percentage of the fully vaccinated even while relentlessly increasing coverage. With Covishield accounting for about 90% of vaccines administered, the rate of administration of the second dose after the mandatory gap between two doses has always been very low. Despite people over 60 years and everyone above 45 being one of the priority groups included back in March owing to an increased risk of progressing to severe disease and even dying, nearly 43% of people aged 45-59 years and over 37% of those above 60 are yet to receive the second dose. Worse, about 10% of health-care workers are yet to receive the second dose nearly 10 months after the start of the vaccination programme on January 16. One reason could be complacency, particularly since daily fresh cases, hospitalisation and deaths have been dropping since the second wave peaked. The nearly month-long door-to-door vaccination campaign across the country this month to reach out to people who have been unable to access vaccines is, therefore, a welcome step. As proven in the universal immunisation programme for children to deliver polio vaccine, outreach programmes have a greater rate of success immunising the target population and in overcoming hesitancy and complacency. All proven and innovative methods need to be deployed to drastically increase vaccine uptake if India is serious in vaccinating everyone above 18 years by the end of the year and before a new variant emerges.

# The enduring relevance of Nehru's legacy

That each day, Indians govern themselves in a pluralist democracy is testimony to his deeds and words



SHASHI THAROOR

Four men embodied the vision of free India in the 1940s – Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Ambedkar. Gandhi's moral rectitude, allied to Jawaharlal Nehru's political passion, fashioned both the strategy and tactics for the struggle against British rule. Sardar Patel's firm hand on the administration integrated the nation and established peace and stability. Ambedkar's erudition and legal acumen helped translate the dreams of a generation into a working legal document that laid the foundations for an enduring democracy.

### Setting the way

While the world was disintegrating into fascism, violence, and war, Gandhi taught the virtues of truth, non-violence, and peace. While the nation reeled from bloodshed and communal carnage, Ambedkar preached the values of constitutionalism and the rule of law. While parochial ambitions threatened national unity, Patel led the nation to a vision of unity and common purpose. While mobs marched the streets baying for revenge, Nehru's humane and non-sectarian vision inspired India to yearn again for the glory that had once been hers.

Of the four, Gandhi and Nehru stood out. Despite differences over both tactics (Nehru wanted independence immediately whereas Gandhi believed Indians had to be made ready for their own freedom) and philosophy (the agnostic Nehru had little patience for the Mahatma's spirituality), the two men proved a formidable combination. Gandhi guided Nehru to his political pinnacle; Nehru in

turn proved an inspirational campaigner as President of the Indian National Congress, electrifying the nation with his speeches and tireless travel.

### Keeper of the flame

Upon the Mahatma's assassination in 1948, just five months after Independence, Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister, became the keeper of the national flame, the most visible embodiment of India's struggle for freedom. Gandhi's death could have led Nehru to assume untrammelled power. Instead, he spent a lifetime immersed in the democratic values Ambedkar had codified, trying to instill the habits of democracy in his people – a disdain for dictators, a respect for parliamentary procedures, an abiding faith in the constitutional system. Till the end of the decade, his staunch ally Patel provided the firm hand on the tiller without which India might yet have split asunder.

For the first 17 years of India's Independence, the paradox-ridden Nehru – a moody, idealist intellectual who felt an almost mystical empathy with the toiling peasant masses; an aristocrat, accustomed to privilege, who had passionate socialist convictions; an Anglicized product of Harrow and Cambridge who spent over 10 years in British jails; an agnostic radical who became an unlikely protégé of the saintly Mahatma Gandhi – was India. Incorruptible, visionary, ecumenical, a politician above politics, Nehru's stature was so great that the country he led seemed inconceivable without him. A year before his death a leading American journalist, Welles Hangen, published a book entitled *After Nehru, Who?* the unspoken question around the world was: "after Nehru, what?"

Today, looking back on his 132nd birthday and nearly six decades after his death, we have something of an answer to the latter question. As an India still seeming-



THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

ly clad in many of the trappings of Nehruvianism steps out into the 21st century, a good deal of Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy appears intact – and yet hotly contested. India has moved away from much of Nehru's beliefs, and so (in different ways) has the rest of the developing world for which Nehruvianism once spoke. As India nears its 75th anniversary of Independence from the British Raj, a transformation – still incomplete – has taken place that, in its essentials, has changed the basic Nehruvian assumptions of postcolonial nationhood. Nehru himself, as a man with an open and questing mind, would have allowed his practical thinking to evolve with the times, even while remaining anchored to his core beliefs.

### The pillars of his imprint

In my 2003 biography, *Nehru: The Invention of India*, I sought to examine this great figure of 20th-century nationalism from the vantage point of the beginning of the 21st. Jawaharlal Nehru's life is a fascinating story in its own right, and I tried to tell it whole, because the privileged child, the unremarkable youth, the posturing young nationalist, and the heroic fighter for independence are all inextricable from the unchallengeable Prime Minister and peerless global statesman. At the same time, I sought to analyse critically the four principal pillars of Nehru's legacy to India – democratic institution-

building, staunch pan-Indian secularism, socialist economics at home, and a foreign policy of non-alignment – all of which were integral to a vision of Indianness that is fundamentally challenged today.

Of these, it is the edifice of democracy that Nehru constructed that remains the most indispensable pillar of his contributions to India.

It was by no means axiomatic that a country like India, riven by so many internal differences and diversities, beset by acute poverty and torn apart by Partition, would be or remain democratic. Many developing countries found themselves turning in the opposite direction soon after Independence, arguing that a firm hand was necessary to promote national unity and guide development. With Gandhi's death, Nehru could have very well assumed unlimited power within the country. And yet, he himself was such a convinced democrat, profoundly wary of the risks of autocracy, that, at the crest of his rise, he authored an anonymous article warning Indians of the dangers of giving dictatorial temptations to Jawaharlal Nehru. "He must be checked," he wrote of himself. "We want no Caesars." And indeed, his practice when challenged within his own party was to offer his resignation; he usually got his way, but it was hardly the instinct of a Caesar.

### A deference to the system

As Prime Minister, Nehru carefully nurtured the country's infant democratic institutions. He paid deference to the country's ceremonial presidency and even to its largely otiose vice-presidency; he never let the public forget that these notables outranked him in protocol terms. He wrote regular letters to the Chief Ministers of the States, explaining his policies and seeking their feedback. He subjected himself and his government to cross-examination in Parliament by the small, fractious but un-

doubtedly talented Opposition, allowing them an importance out of all proportion to their numerical strength, because he was convinced that a strong Opposition was essential for a healthy democracy. He took care not to interfere with the judicial system; on the one occasion that he publicly criticised a judge, he apologised the next day and wrote an abject letter to the Chief Justice, regretting having slighted the judiciary. And he never forgot that he derived his authority from the people of India; not only was he astonishingly accessible for a person in his position, but he started the practice of offering a daily *darshan* at home for an hour each morning to anyone coming in off the street without an appointment, a practice that continued until the dictates of security finally overcame the populism of his successors.

It was Nehru who, by his scrupulous regard for both the form and the substance of democracy, instilled democratic habits in our country. His respect for Parliament, his regard for the independence of the judiciary, his courtesy to those of different political convictions, his commitment to free elections, and his deference to institutions over individuals, all left us a precious legacy of freedom.

The American editor, Norman Cousins, once asked Nehru what he hoped his legacy to India would be. "Four hundred million people capable of governing themselves," Nehru replied. The numbers have grown, but the very fact that each day over a billion Indians govern themselves in a pluralist democracy is testimony to the deeds and words of the man whose birthday we commemorate tomorrow.

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## NAM at 60 marks an age of Indian alignment

The ideological moorings of India's non-alignment faded along with Jawaharlal Nehru's idealism



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

The birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru this month and the 60th anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement prompt reflection on Nehru's major contribution to the field of international relations. The concept of not aligning a country's policy with others can be traced to the Congress of Vienna of (1814-15) when the neutrality of Switzerland, by which that country would keep out of others' conflicts, was recognised.

### One world and free India

Mahatma Gandhi, icon of Indian Independence, believed in non-violent solutions and spirituality, with India having a civilising mission for mankind which accorded well with Nehru's desire to innovate in world politics and his conception of modernity. In 1946, six days after Nehru formed the national government, he stated, "we propose... to keep away from the power politics of groups aligned against one another... it is for One World that free India will work." Nehru, the theoretician, saw world problems as interlinked; not a binary of right and wrong, but as

a practical person, his instructions to delegates at international meetings were to consider India's interests first, even before the merits of the case; this was the paradox of a moral orientation in foreign policy and the compulsions of the real world.

In essence, Indian non-alignment's ideological moorings began, lived and died along with Nehru's idealism, though some features that characterised his foreign policy were retained to sustain diplomatic flexibility and promote India while its economic situation improved sufficiently to be described as an 'emerging' power. Nehru was opposed to the conformity required by both sides in the Cold War, and his opposition to alliances was justified by American weapons to Pakistan from 1954 and the creation of western-led military blocs in Asia. Non-alignment was the least costly policy for promoting India's diplomatic presence, a sensible approach when India was weak and looked at askance by both blocs, and the best means of securing economic assistance from abroad. India played a lone hand against colonialism and racism until many African states achieved independence after 1960.

India played a surprisingly prominent role as facilitator at the 1954 Geneva Peace Conference on Indochina, whereafter non-alignment appeared to have come of



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age. The difficulty was always to find a definition of this policy, which caused a credibility gap between theory and practice. In the early years, there was economic dependence on donor countries who were nearly all members of western military pacts. Indian equidistance to both Koreas and both Vietnams was shown by India recognising neither; yet it recognised one party in the two Chinas and two Germanies, and the Treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation between India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 1971, fashioned with the liberation war of Bangladesh in view, came dangerously close to a military alliance.

### NAM's failures

When Yugoslavia and Egypt became non-aligned by defying the great powers and convened the first Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, Nehru, who never endorsed con-

frontational methods, became a third but hesitant co-sponsor, because in theory, a coalition or movement of non-aligned nations was a contradiction in terms. According to then Defence Minister Krishna Menon's epigram, true non-alignment was to be non-aligned towards the non-aligned. Nehru's misgivings were confirmed when only two members, Cyprus and Ethiopia, of the conference supported India in the war with China. Among the Non-Aligned Movement's members was a plenitude of varying alignments, a weakness aggravated by not internalising their own precepts of human rights and peaceful settlement of disputes on the grounds of not violating the sacred principle of sovereign domestic jurisdiction. Other failures were lack of collective action and collective self-reliance, and the non-establishment of an equitable international economic or information order. The Movement could not dent, let alone break, the prevailing world order.

The years following Nehru's death saw the atrophy of his idealism, and non-alignment during his successors moved from pragmatism under Indira Gandhi and opportunism after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, to the semi-alignment of today. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, by ideology, inclination and threat perception, is inclined to greater

alignment with the United States whether under the nebulous rubric of the Indo-Pacific or otherwise.

### Longevity of organisations

The Centre for Policy Research produced a document in 2012 titled 'Non-alignment Mark 2.0' which left no trace; the same body's paper, 'A rethink of foreign policy', this year elides it altogether. Every international organisation has a shelf life, though many survive for years in semi-neglect. The League of Nations was given the coup de grace after seven years of inactivity only in 1946, even after the United Nations had come into being. The Commonwealth will last only as long as the British find it useful. It is hard to see any future for Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) or its various institutional offspring, given the state of India-China relations. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has faded into oblivion. Few among even our serving diplomats could tell what transpired at the last Non-aligned Conference or where the next will be held, while the symbolic anniversary, unanimously agreed upon in 1981 of 'The First September, Day of Non-alignment', has come and gone unnoticed.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### India's green plan

After the Prime Minister's 'proclamation' of India committing to the year 2070 as the targeted date for zero net emission, the revelation that the 'pledge' came with a pre-condition from India seeking \$1 trillion in climate finance to meet the target has given a new twist to a fairy tale. One may infer that such riders to an issue of global concern would create doubts about the country's sincerity of purpose. The periodical meets on climate change have emphasised the point that the international community should address the long-term challenge of climate change, collectively and comprehensively. The fact that China and Russia,

significant contributors to gas emissions, did not attend the COP26 meet underlines the lack of seriousness even among major nations in addressing an alarming matter. India, on its part, should prepare an updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) so that the document could chart our course of action with a definitive objective. India, with its size and population, has a lot to benefit for itself and also aid the global community, even if it walks alone in this matter.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

■ The OpEd page article, "Does India have a right to burn fossil fuels?" (November 11), is a lucid

exposition of what India as a nation should do with regard to climate change. International measures to cope with a hotter planet are not a diplomatic tussle to see who comes out on top. These are not like arms control or trade agreements. Humanity sinks or swims together. It is utterly pointless to talk about legacy emissions or the right to pollute by poorer countries, particularly when the rich nations have moved so much of 'dirty' manufacturing to the Third World. It would be far better for India to move to cleaner fuels and climate-adaptive technologies, since what is good for the planet will be good for us too. One worrying aspect of India's climate negotiations is that it seems to be entirely decided

by bureaucrats and does not include climate experts and other scientists in formulating policy.

MAHO DANIEL,  
Chennai

### N. Natarajan

In the passing of senior and eminent lawyer N. Natarajan, the Bar has lost a distinguished expert in criminal law (Tamil Nadu, "Senior criminal lawyer N. Natarajan dead", November 12). His knowledge of law, both theory and practice, was amazing. His arguments were persuasive, and in important cases, were simple and down to earth too. As Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, I had the privilege of interacting with him for several years. His assistance to me in the

Bombay blast case and Bofors was invaluable.

R.K. RAGHAVAN,  
Chennai

### Remarks on freedom

The controversial statement by a high-profile actor on India's freedom only denigrates the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters. She has only strengthened the perception of where her 'connections' are by stating that the nation attained real freedom only in 2014, when the government of the day came to power. Hers is an atrocious outburst and it is shocking that she is a recipient of a national award – which only seems to be awarded nowadays in recognition of a person's political leanings rather than on their real merit. The

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President of India should immediately revoke the award conferred on her and restore the honour attached to the prestigious award.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,  
Chennai

■ The actor needs to exercise restraint over her controversial utterances which seem to be made from time to time to keep herself in the limelight. Her remarks only expose her immature way of thinking and crude expression of thoughts. She has insulted lakhs of freedom fighters and their sacrifices. She must apologise and explain the reasons for such obtuse statements.

GOVARDHANA MYNEEDU,  
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh