EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

14-11-2026

1. The Hindu

S. No.	Topic / News Headline	Page No.
1	WHO flags funding gaps in prevention, treatment of TB	05
2	To strengthen the Supreme Court, divide it	06
3	The challenge of holding the Quad together	06
4	Critical ban: India needs to create an entire ecosystem for recycling of lithium-ion batteries	06

2. The Indian Express

S. No.	Topic / News Headline	Page No.
1	Our magical thinking on pollution: Do annual rituals, hope you are immune	12
2	Missing in fertility industry: Safeguards that work	12
3	India is eating its way to diabetes, calling it prosperity	12
4	Suez to Hormuz, how chokepoints shape balance of power	13

GS 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE(HEALTH)
THE HINDU PAGE: 05

WHO flags funding gaps in prevention, treatment of TB

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

International donor funding fell by 14%, from $1.1 billion in 2024 to $0.94 billion in 2025, says report

Around 86% of the spending on measures against tuberculosis (TB) in 2025 came from domestic sources, the recently released Global Tuberculosis Report, 2026 by the World Health Organization (WHO) said, even as the reduction in international donor funding to combat the infectious disease remains a cause of concern.

The report notes that $22 billion is needed annually for TB prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care to achieve the global targets agreed on at the 2023 United Nations high-level TB meeting by 2027.

In absolute terms, Brazil, China, India, the Russian Federation, and South Africa accounted for $3.7 billion (65%) of the total of $5.63 billion provided from domestic sources in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Funding gap

The report notes that international donor funding fell by 14%, from $1.1 billion in 2024 to $0.94 billion in 2025, having been relatively stable at $1.1-1.3 billion a year between 2015 and 2024.

Financing for TB research and innovation, at $1.2 billion in 2023, continued to fall far short of the global target of $5 billion a year. Progress to date has been constrained by the overall level of investment, the report said .

"...Over 80% of cases and deaths are in low- and middle-income countries. In 2025, the largest number of new TB cases occurred in the WHO South-East Asia Region (35%)," the report said.

The WHO on Friday called upon countries in the Southeast Asia Region to accelerate action to end TB. The latest TB estimates show the region accounts for 3.6 million people who developed TB in 2025 – 34% of the global total – and 4,00,000 TB-related deaths, or 35% of the global total. "These numbers are a stark reminder that TB remains one of the Region's most pressing public health and development challenges," said Nilesh Buddha, officer in-charge, WHO South-East Asia Region.

GS 2: POLITY
THE HINDU PAGE: 06

To strengthen the Supreme Court, divide it



Pradeep S. Mehta

is the Secretary-General of CUTS International (Consumer Unity and Trust Society)



Vijay L. Kelkar

is the Vice President of the Pune International Centre

In 2016, three judges of the Supreme Court of India paused to ask a question about their own institution: had the apex court, established by the Constitution's framers to safeguard the Republic's foundational document, lost its way, drowning in ordinary appeals while its constitutional work withered? They framed 11 questions and referred it to a larger Bench. A decade later, the reference remains unheard. No emblem of the problem is sharper, nor any case for reform stronger: split the Supreme Court in two.

As 2025 drew to a close, the court carried 92,318 pending cases, its heaviest backlog ever and nearly 10,000 more than a year earlier. The caseload is growing at a pace that no reasonable enlargement of the Bench can outrun. The remedy is simple and not new: a lean Constitutional Court of about 11 judges in Delhi, hearing only constitutional cases and substantial questions of law, with four or five regional Courts of Appeal to handle the appeals that now flood the apex court. The idea is not to shrink the judiciary's reach but to sort its work, so that questions shaping the Republic are not decided in the same queue as those shaping a single case.

Consider how far the court has drifted. In the first half of the 1960s, its Constitution Benches decided an average of 134 cases a year; over the last decade, that has collapsed to fewer than 10. The docket, instead, has been swallowed by Special Leave Petitions, discretionary appeals under Article 136 that were intended to serve as a rare safety valve. By one count, they accounted for 84.6% of the court's admission docket in 2011. A tribunal designed to be the final word on the Constitution has turned itself into a general court of fourth appeal. It has admitted as much: in *Bihar Legal Support Society* (1986), a Constitution Bench under Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati said it was never meant to be an ordinary court of appeal.

Beyond the backlog

The case for splitting the court is not merely that it is overcrowded. A two-tier structure would allow specialisation to achieve what an increase in judicial capacity alone cannot. A dedicated Constitutional Court, hearing a curated stream of cases, could sit in full Benches and deliver consistent, predictable rulings that settle questions once. Regional courts of appeal could specialise in the ordinary caseload and clear it far faster than an apex court. They would also bring the final tier of ordinary justice closer to the citizens who need it. Every large legal system has converged on this pyramid-shaped structure: a final court works best when it decides a few cases carefully, while the tiers below it handle many more quickly.

> Adding judges without sorting the work risks enlarging the same overburdened court. The task is not to move the same work faster, but to sort it

The 229th Law Commission Report (2009) laid out a full blueprint for a Constitution Bench in Delhi with four regional Cassation Benches. In 2023, a Parliamentary Standing Committee recommended regional Benches, which the Union Law Ministry has since accepted. The model is well tested in the very democracies India is compared to.

The U.S. Supreme Court sits atop 13 federal Courts of Appeals, deciding only a sliver of cases. South Africa runs a two-court system: a Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, and a separate Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein for everything else. Germany's Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe hears constitutional matters alone, while specialised federal courts handle other areas of law.

And this is not only a matter of systems built that way from the start: countries have made the very change India now contemplates. Brazil is the closest recent parallel. Its Supreme Federal Tribunal once carried the same double burden as ours, guarding the Constitution while drowning in ordinary federal appeals. The 1988 Constitution created a separate Superior Tribunal of Justice to take over that appellate load.

Brazil, however, also offers a warning: the split alone did not ease the backlog, which declined only after the apex court was given the power to filter out cases it did not need to hear. The tool is familiar from the very courts India admires. The U.S. Supreme Court grants review to roughly one per cent of the 7,000 petitions it receives each year, a discretion held since 1925; Brazil's apex court, after a 2004 reform, hears a constitutional appeal only where the question carries a "general repercussion" beyond the parties. Without such a filter, a Constitutional Court would inherit, in miniature, the very congestion it was built to escape. And the route need not be treacherous: the 229th Report argued Article 130 may permit regional Benches without a constitutional amendment, meaning the first steps could be taken by the court itself, without waiting for Parliamentary approval.

The strongest objection must be stated at full strength, because it is why this reform has stalled for so long, and because it is held by those who know the institution best. The concern, voiced by successive Chief Justices, is that a divided Supreme Court may no longer be a single supreme one: separate the constitutional work from the appellate work, and the regional courts could come to be seen as lesser venues, with litigants pressing to reach the apex court in Delhi, until the authority that flows from having one final court is diffused. There is real force in this. An apex court's power lies partly in its indivisibility: it is the last word, with no higher forum to appeal to and no rival court to be played against it.

Restoring the court

But the concern mistakes the disease for the cure. A single court is only a single voice when it can speak with one, and ours cannot: it already sits in a dozen small Benches that often contradict each other, its constitutional work reduced to a handful of Constitution Benches a year.

The indivisibility being defended is a fiction; the court is already divided, not by design but by sheer volume, into scattered panels whose rulings no one can fully reconcile. Separation would rescue the constitutional core of one that has fractured on its own. When the Bench was expanded to 34 in 2019, pendency stood near 60,000; today it is close to 93,000. In 2025, the court disposed of 65,615 cases and still fell behind, as 75,410 fresh matters arrived. In 2026, Parliament raised the sanctioned strength again, to 38. Adding judges without sorting the work risks enlarging the same overburdened court. The task is not to move the same work faster, but to sort it.

The Supreme Court that gave us the basic structure doctrine, and once stood as the boldest constitutional court in the democratic world, now rarely sits in constitutional judgment at all. No outside hand has diminished it; it has been buried under its own docket. To leave it as it is, out of reverence for a unity that no longer exists, is to mistake sentiment for strength. Splitting the court would let it return to its pristine structure, while a new tier of regional appeals courts would finally give ordinary litigants the swift justice they are owed. That would not be its diminishment, but its restoration.

(With contributions from Anushka Kewlani of CUTS)

GS 02: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
THE HINDU PAGE: 06

The challenge of holding the Quad together



Harsh V. Pant

is Vice-President, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi



Sayantan Haldar

is Associate Fellow, Maritime Studies, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Atlanta, the U.S. Secretary of State announced that the leaders of the four Quad countries – India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. – are expected to meet in Manila in November, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit. The announcement is significant as this would be the first summit-level meeting of the Quad leaders since Donald Trump began his second term as U.S. President. It would also be the first such summit attended by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi since she assumed office. The last Quad Leaders' Summit was held in Wilmington in 2024, when Joe Biden was U.S. President and Fumio Kishida was Japan's Prime Minister.

While India was expected to host the subsequent Quad Leaders' Summit, the grouping underwent a period of intense strategic turbulence in 2025, on account of Washington's shifting geopolitical priorities and changing political dynamics in its bilateral relations with Quad members, especially India. However, this did not result in complete collapse of the grouping. Apart from the leader-level summit, the group has remained successful in continuing its operational synergies in its various initiatives. This was most evident in the elevation of the Quad's Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative to the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration framework, launched in New Delhi in May 2026, following the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Keeping the Quad afloat

Additionally, the foreign ministers of the four Quad countries held multiple meetings across 2025 and 2026, a period characterised as the nadir of the group's political alignment. In 2025, the foreign ministers met twice in Washington, with the first meeting marking Marco Rubio's first engagement as U.S. Secretary of State. In 2026, they met three times, in New Delhi, Manila, and Atlanta. A natural priority area for the agenda of these meetings was to schedule a leader-level summit for the group. For a grouping of this nature, which has neither a permanent bureaucracy nor an institutional framework of its own, such summits serve as crucial platforms to reaffirm its shared purpose and chart its agenda for the months ahead.

The big ticket question confronting the Quad, however, is how President Trump engages with the group and the broader Indo-Pacific geography. This, in many ways, is going to be the first occasion where Mr. Trump could articulate his vision and outlook towards the region for the remainder of this term. It was during his first tenure in the White House that the Quad was revived in 2017, and the Quad bolstered its approach towards the Indo-Pacific by renaming the U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. However, since beginning his second term, Mr. Trump's priorities have been dictated by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Washington's approach towards the transatlantic relationship and NATO, and the war in West Asia. Although the U.S. has not publicly expressed disinterest in the Indo-Pacific, regional partners have remained cautious about the possibility of a fundamental shift in Washington's engagement with the region.

President Trump's insistence that the U.S. expects its partners to enhance burden-sharing within the transatlantic security architecture it is invested in has also caused concern in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. continues to remain a significant security actor in the region, especially in the Pacific, with several like-minded countries embedded in the U.S.-led security architecture. Furthermore, the White House's decision to review AUKUS has heightened concern and uncertainty among other players in the Indo-Pacific. This has prompted various countries to undertake measures to diversify their security policies. For example, Japan, through its One Cooperative Effort Among Nations (OCEAN) framework, has sought to increasingly reshape its post-war security posture by deepening strategic alignment with partner countries. Australia has made efforts to strengthen defence partnerships with India, Japan, Southeast Asian countries, and Pacific Island countries to deter China's growing footprint in the region. India continues to pursue a policy of multi-alignment and diversification of defence and strategic ties with like-minded countries in the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific.

The recent meeting between the Defence Ministers of JAI (Japan-Australia-India) in Cebu also signals a willingness among these countries to further deepen their partnership notwithstanding the nature and character of Washington's role in the region. New entrants in the Indo-Pacific strategic landscape, such as France, have also sought to bolster ties with regional countries to sustain a balanced security environment in the region. Even though Mr. Trump's actions have spurred a rethink on the changing security order in the Indo-Pacific among regional partners, Washington's role remains critical, especially in the face of a worsening maritime security environment prompted by continued expansion of China's footprint. Washington's role in safeguarding the Taiwan Strait, a critical flashpoint in the Indo-Pacific strategic geography, remains significant.

The big ticket question confronting the Quad, however, is how Donald Trump engages with the group and the broader Indo-Pacific geography

A strategic message from Manila

While questions remain about the nature and character of U.S. involvement in the Indo-Pacific, at least for the remainder of President Trump's tenure in White House, the announcement of the imminent leader-level summit of the Quad appears to have breathed new life into the group. Even though India was expected to host the next leader-level summit following the previous meeting in Wilmington in 2024, the Philippines' hosting of the summit also reinforces one of the group's foundational strategic pillars – ASEAN centrality. Arguably, the Philippines remains at the front and centre of Chinese misadventures in the Indo-Pacific, with ongoing tussles over sovereignty issues between Manila and Beijing.

Following the Quad's track record at previous leader-level summits, its leaders are expected to reiterate the importance of respecting sovereignty in the South and East China Seas and condemn attempts by powers to disregard international law in the region. Delivering such a message from Manila would carry the weight of strategic symbolism. For Mr. Trump, the objectives of this Indo-Pacific visit should be dictated by two priorities: resetting American posture in the region and helping assert the Quad's commitment against Chinese belligerence from Manila.

GS 3: ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE HINDU PAGE: 06

Critical ban

India needs to create an entire ecosystem for recycling of lithium-ion batteries

On November 10, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade banned the export of lithium-ion battery black mass by moving it from the "free" to the "prohibited" list of exports. Black mass is an intermediate product when spent batteries and factory scrap are shredded. It contains valuable lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese and graphite. The Commerce Ministry says the ban will ensure feedstock for domestic refiners, lift their capacity utilisation and draw investment. While the recycling of lead-acid batteries end-to-end is an established ecosystem and formalised, too, lithium-ion battery recycling is an emerging segment with only a few dozen licensed operators but has much potential given the scale of use of such batteries in EVs. While the ban will redirect supply it will not automatically create a market and ecosystem. Just banning export without creating an entire ecosystem will only lead to dumping of lithium-ion batteries into landfills if the blackmass has no market. Blackmass production is a largely mechanical process but further downstream processing is more specialised chemical processing requiring larger investment and further policy support. If downstream units are online, their output can directly feed into indigenous lithium-ion battery manufacture.

India depends heavily on imports for critical minerals such as those used in battery inputs. Beyond working on supply aspects, the government must address the price gap to create a robust recycling market. Under the Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022, producers buy extended producer responsibility (EPR) certificates from recyclers but these are undervalued. Cheap certificates reward recycling on paper over investment in high-yield plants. A floor price that covers the full cost of recovery, with digital tracking, would fix that. Rare earths show how recycling remains a missed opportunity for India because of policy gaps. A smartphone can be up to 1% neodymium-iron-boron magnet by weight. That puts its rare earth content at about 3,000 parts per million, comparable to India's monazite beach sands. Extracting it takes less energy than mining. A magnet separated from the phone is about 30% rare earth. Magnets make up as much as 3% of a hard drive, but are usable only if they are removed before the drive is shredded for data destruction. Yet the e-waste rules do not require rare earth separation. Rare earths need a separate EPR category, too. Payment by weight cannot be applied for rare earth minerals.

GS 3: ENVIRONEMNT
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 12

Our magical thinking on pollution: Do annual rituals, hope you are immune



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

AIR POLLUTION is deadly across India. Initially, we thought that the daily question, "What is the AQI today?" would be one step towards creating political pressure on the issue. But Delhi's obsession with the AQI number now hardly seems like a mechanism of accountability. It increasingly feels like it is turning each citizen into an individual monitoring his or her own daily dose of poison. There is the legendary story of King Mithridates, who, apparently as a toxicologist, monitored his own poison intake to develop immunity. But our monitoring of poison is now in the service of accepting a *fait accompli*. It is a measure of how low our expectations of life are: Breathing, walking, basic health, being outdoors no longer matter.

This exhausting feeling is reinforced by the surreal sense that fighting pollution seems more like a ritual incantation. The mist cannon in Delhi sprinkling water, the way you might think Ganga*jal* is purifying our sins. The anti-smog gun that feels more like a grating conch conceding defeat than one announcing battle. The tattered green nets on construction sites, more like a ritual thread than an effective way of keeping dust away. The road vacuum cleaners, few and far between, seem like the ritual sweeping of the sacrificial space. Waste management continues to be a disaster. The ritual tree-planting drive where saplings seem like a single forlorn tulasi plant even as the forest cover blows away. The obsession with Delhi's AQI numbers, as if Delhi was the sacred site, the rest of India be damned.

Then there is the usual hunt for the seasonal disruptors: The farmers, the firecrackers. The state gets to talk about visible, seasonal, short-duration events, without cleaning up the underlying environment. For critics of the state, stubble-burning bans or firecracker bans get to play victim. A public-health measure like a firecracker ban gets converted into another occasion for civilisational victimhood. Rather than asking the question — what would it take to live in an environment where burning firecrackers did not badly affect our health — we think of the ban itself as a kind of curse that will destroy our civilisation. This, too, is an annual ritual.

But the rituals get even more grotesque. India is an appallingly unequal society. This paper reported that a 15-day CAQM ban on construction ahead of Diwali left 70 per cent of daily-wage labourers in places like Gurugram and Manesar without any financial relief; workers who mostly work without any precaution against construction-related dust all year. The ban on small fires and "dirty energy" affects the poor, small businesses and eateries. Every regulation seems to first regulate the survival strategies of the poor. Jay Bhattacharya, director of the National Institutes of Health, US, had, during COVID, coined the resonant phrase "laptop class" to argue that many anti-COVID measures protected the laptop class while exposing ordinary workers to risks and costs. Arguably, this is more severe in the case of "anti-pollution" measures. Work-from-home measures might be designed to reduce the use of vehicles, and some services can indeed be performed from home. But it effectively signals that the disproportionate burden will again fall on the poor. It is curious how much environmentalism is experienced as the policing of the poor. This is perhaps why there is little public support or demand for a lot of environmental measures.

India's anti-pollution measures are not just in the realm of magical thinking or policing the poor. The government has rolled out several major initiatives: Clean energy, transition to EVs, etc. The national clean air programme covers over a hundred cities. Many industries have been converted to cleaner fuels, and polluting industries relocated. There are questions about whether they are scaled up to the task at hand; whether we want to invest in the kind of state capacity that can make these schemes work. Increasingly, federalism is turning out to be a bigger challenge for India's environmental ambitions. Ecological boundaries or airsheds do not coincide with political boundaries, and essentially every jurisdiction wants to externalise the costs to another state or shift blame.

It has also to be said that there is simply no political demand or pressure in most states apart from Delhi for any environmental measures. But you do wonder whether even in Delhi cleaning the air is a priority. One of the more exciting schemes announced was Parivartan, where the government will give subsidies to replace commercial vehicles with BS VI standard vehicles or transition to EVs. But the scheme is confined to the NCR. There is an obvious case for beginning in the NCR, where the crisis is acute. But the lack of national strategy will haunt us. More fundamentally, we still seem to be learning the wrong lesson. Even in areas where pollution is not as severe as in the NCR, we need to price in environmental externalities and think of new designs for transport systems rather than simply dump Delhi's vehicles elsewhere. The transition to cleaner commercial transport should not have to wait for 1,000-plus AQI. We made that mistake once.

As of today, only 56,000 vehicles have been registered under the scheme, and only a few hundred operators have actually availed themselves of the subsidy. Apparently, the subsidy on offer is still insufficient to make the conversion financially viable. This points to a familiar problem, be it stubble burning or old vehicles: Incentives are not scaled to objectives. But here one cannot help noticing the contrast between the assiduousness with which the government has made subsidies work for PLI schemes and its inability to make them work for environmental schemes. Its energy is still on the "production" side; the environment is the afterthought. For breathable air, do the annual rituals, and hope like Mithridates that you are immune to the poison.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

This exhausting feeling is reinforced by the surreal sense that fighting pollution seems more like a ritual incantation. The mist cannon in Delhi sprinkling water. The anti-smog gun that feels more like a grating conch conceding defeat than one announcing battle

GS 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 12

Missing in fertility industry: Safeguards that work



SAROJINI NADIMPALLY

ON OCTOBER 31, Hyderabad police reportedly rescued 43 women from an alleged egg-donation trafficking network. The women were recruited from various states and were promised Rs 20,000-30,000 for each donation cycle. According to the police, the accused were linked to 23 IVF centres in the city. The police also seized Humog HP 150 IU, a prescription drug used for ovarian stimulation, along with two other drugs.

This is not an isolated incident. In 2022, a 16-year-old girl in Erode, Tamil Nadu, alleged that her family had forced her, over four years, to sell her eggs to hospitals in Tamil Nadu and other states. In 2023, four people were arrested in Varanasi for taking a 17-year-old to an IVF centre after tampering with her Aadhaar card and presenting her as a married woman. These cases reveal troubling commonalities: The involvement of brokers, the targeting of economically vulnerable women, the use of falsified documents, and fertility facilities that apparently overlook the circumstances in which women are recruited.

On paper, India protects egg donors well. Under Section 27 of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, only registered ART banks can screen donors and provide them to clinics. Clinics must source gametes only from those registered ART banks (Section 21(b)). A woman may donate only once in her life, only between the ages of 23 and 35, and no more than seven eggs may be retrieved from her.

The law also shuts out middlemen. Section 33 bars medical practitioners from using intermediaries to find donors. A first offence draws a fine of Rs 5-10 lakh, while a repeat offence draws three to eight years in prison and a fine of Rs 10-20 lakh. The law, therefore, does not permit brokers to procure women for egg donation.

Nevertheless, brokers continue to recruit women across state lines for egg donation. One possible reason is the gap between the demand for donor eggs and the limited pool of women legally eligible to donate. Also, the number of registered facilities and the estimated number actually operating vary considerably. As of October 31, the National ART and Surrogacy Registry listed 4,726 registered clinics and 940 banks. This is far below the academic estimate of around 40,000 clinics. How well is the law enforced? The government's own records offer little information. The Department of Health Research's 2025-26 annual report records the number of forms downloaded from the National Registry portal and the permissions granted, including no-objection certificates. But its chapter on assisted reproduction is silent on inspections, violations, or prosecutions. Enforcement appears only in the description of the functions of the Appropriate Authority. Even the system for collecting donor information from clinics and banks has so far only been piloted.

That gap is crucial. ART banks must keep donor records and update the National Registry. A functioning registry should show whether a woman has donated before and stop repeat retrievals, the safeguard that failed in Erode. Yet, little is known publicly about whether the Registry works, how often it is updated, or whether donor details are verified before each procedure.

Accountability also rests with the Boards. Since courts can take cognisance of offences under the Act only on complaints by the National or State Boards or their authorised officers (Section 35), enforcement rests largely with these bodies. Rule 5 of the ART Rules, 2022, requires these Boards to submit annual reports to the government, yet the DHR report includes nothing from the National Board. The Union Health Ministry should publish these reports, and states should disclose details of inspections, suspensions, complaints and violations.

The women recruited through brokers should be treated as witnesses, not accused. They must receive independent medical care, including monitoring for complications arising from hormone injections, as well as the 12-month health insurance coverage that Section 22(1)(b) of the Act requires.

The Hyderabad, Varanasi, and Erode cases came to light through police raids or individual complaints, not routine regulatory inspections. Unless regulators check donor registers and hold clinics accountable, police operations will end with only a few agents in custody, while the institutions facilitating the trade continue to operate.

The writer is a public health researcher working on gender justice, reproductive health, ARTs and surrogacy

On paper, India protects egg donors well. Only registered ART banks can screen donors and provide them to clinics. The law also shuts out middlemen. Nevertheless, brokers continue to recruit women across state lines

GS 2: HEALTH
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 12

India is eating its way to diabetes, calling it prosperity



SHASHANK R JOSHI

STOP THE pretence. India is not merely the diabetes capital of the world. It is the diabetes factory of the world. One hundred and one million Indians have diabetes and 136 million have prediabetes. In our cities, one in three adults is on the road to it. Children of 12 develop fatty liver that their grandfathers developed at 60. Major civilisations warned us about this. We ignored them all.

Vedic India: You are what you digest. *Ahara* was medicine. Agni, the digestive fire, was treated as sacred. Our ancestors ate with the Sun, finished dinner before sunset, and practised *upavasa* as a deliberate sitting near the divine. Food was fresh, seasonal, cooked, shared, and eaten slowly, with attention. We have inverted every rule. We have extinguished Agni and replaced it with acidity, bloating, insulin resistance, and visceral fat.

Greece: Hippocrates wrote that food should be medicine and walking man's best medicine. The Greeks placed gymnasiums beside temples. The body was sacred, gluttony a moral failure. Hippocrates would look at a modern Indian thali of refined flour, fried vegetables, sweetened curd, dessert, and a cola and call it what it is: A prescription for diabetes.

Rome: Rome did not fall only to barbarians. It fell to excess. Banquets became competitions in vomiting and re-eating. The elite grew obese, infertile, diabetic. Juvenal recorded the judgement: "We now suffer the evils of long peace. Luxury, more deadly than war, broods over the city." India is repeating the experiment.

Japan: Japan is one of the oldest and leanest nations. In Okinawa, the rule is *Hara Hachi Bu*: Eat until you are 80 per cent full and stop. India does the opposite. We force-feed guests. Adopt the 80 per cent rule and India would cut diabetes incidence by a third within a decade.

Maya and China: The Maya built a civilisation on maize. When that corn was refined, stripped of fibre, and turned into syrup and soda, it became poison. Their descendants in Mexico record some of the highest diabetes rates. India is replaying the tragedy with rice and wheat. We polished brown rice into white, whole wheat into *maida*, jaggery into refined sugar, and abandoned millets as "poor man's food". Ragi and bajra were discarded. Chinese medicine insists on balance: Too much heat, too much sweet, too much sitting produces disease. Confucius observed that going beyond is as wrong as falling short. Urban India has gone beyond, in sugar, salt, oil, portions and hours seated. A chair is more dangerous than a cigarette for a future diabetic.

We should all adopt simple lifestyle changes for prevention this World Diabetes Day, such as walking after the largest meal (if medically allowed). Leave the table slightly hungry and have millets, dal, sabzi and one fruit daily. Eat vegetables and dal first. Sleep before midnight and get seven hours' sleep. For the state: Screen every Indian over 30 for diabetes and prediabetes, screen every child with obesity, teach nutrition in schools with seriousness and ban junk-food advertising aimed at children.

Change the plate. Change the walk. Change the life. Or we will be remembered not as the land of yoga and ayurveda, but as the civilisation that knew how to live and chose to die eating. Health is the first wealth. Arogya Lakshmi. *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah.*

For the state: Screen every Indian over 30 for diabetes and prediabetes, screen every child with obesity, teach nutrition in schools with seriousness and ban junk-food advertising aimed at children

The writer is an endocrinologist and public health physician based in Mumbai

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 13

Suez to Hormuz, how chokepoints shape balance of power



RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

HISTORY, FROM the fifth-century-BCE Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta to the US-Iran war and the blockade of the Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb straits, stands as testimony to the fact that a few chokepoints — narrow maritime routes that can be controlled by territorial armies — define and regulate the global economy. When the Spartans took control of the Bosporus, the narrow waterway which was the lifeline for food and other supplies, Athens collapsed. Seven centuries later, the Roman emperor Constantine established his capital on the banks of the same waterway, called Constantinople then and Istanbul now. Roman rule lasted for a millennium, till the Ottomans captured the region and controlled the Bosporus until World War I.

The Bosporus is one of the world's chokepoints. Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 and the US-Iran conflict last year, some of these chokepoints have become a nightmare for the world economy. The blockades imposed by various regional powers, like the Iranians in Hormuz and the Houthis in Bab-el-Mandeb, have led to a major energy crisis.

The impact of these developments around chokepoints is not limited to the economy. They can cause tectonic shifts in the global power balance. After World War II, multilateral institutions were created to regulate economic forces. But soon, trade emerged as a new weapon and countries, especially the US, began to use it for coercion. That weaponisation led to the Suez crisis in 1956. President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt decided to nationalise this trade channel from the British and French stakeholders. A brief conflict ensued, but US President Dwight D Eisenhower's intervention led the European powers to back off, and control of the Suez Canal went to Egypt, where it has remained since.

That provided a template for how chokepoints can become weapons of trade. During the 1990s, when the information technology era dawned, and globalisation acquired momentum, some scholars believed that the political control of trade would end. Walter Wriston, an eminent American financier, predicted in his 1992 book *The Twilight of Sovereignty*, that national governments would grow obsolete in the face of the two emerging forces — global finance and information technology. He concluded that as the multinational corporations stitch global supply chains and establish dominance worldwide, "it will become harder and harder for politicians to unscramble the emerging global economy and reassert their declining power". This prediction remained a reality for a couple of decades. However, the political leadership soon found its way back into taking control of the global economy and trade. Chokepoints played a crucial role. The current crisis stands as proof of that.



Such crises change the power pecking order. The Suez crisis resulted in the decline of Britain and France as global powers and the emergence of the US-USSR bipolarity. Something similar would happen as a fallout of the current crisis, too, with new forces emerging and the old fading away.

The Suez crisis had brought Charles de Gaulle back to power in France. He made efforts to save Europe and the world from bipolarity. He rejected the Cold War dominance of Washington, DC, and Moscow and advocated the "Third Force" concept. He envisioned Europe — "from the Atlantic to the Urals" — as a distinct cultural and geographical entity. "Europe des Patries" (Europe of the Fatherlands), and argued that it should have an autonomous voice. He might not have succeeded in his grand vision, but he created an independent foreign policy for France.

Interestingly, at a recent media convention in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about the same issues confronting the world, including the emergence of new powers, new economies and new aspirations and the failure of the existing institutions to adapt to those changing realities. "The challenge is: In a changing world, how do we build an order where new realities find their place, global institutions become more effective, and the spirit of cooperation among nations is reinforced?" he asked, adding, "this is where India's role comes to the fore".

On an earlier G20-related occasion, Modi talked about "a new world order for the collective wellbeing of humankind". De Gaulle attempted and achieved limited success seven decades ago. Given his stature and reputation in the world, Modi can achieve complete success by leading the effort to shape the new world.

The writer is national vice-president, BJP and president, India Foundation