

## Course Correction – Listen to the unspoken: On Kashmir lockdown

### *The continuing communication restrictions in Kashmir have only deepened alienation*

Exactly a month ago, Jammu and Kashmir lost its special constitutional status, and its status as a State, through a dubious and hurried process. Ahead of that decision that could rankle for years to come, the region, particularly the Kashmir Valley was put under a lockdown with all communication cut and movement of people severely restricted. One month on, the Valley continues to be under severe restrictions; the death of a teenage protester on Wednesday who was injured earlier may further delay the administration's plans to withdraw the clampdown. Communication networks in the Jammu region of the newly created Union Territory have been substantially restored and the Ladakh UT, carved out of the erstwhile State, has not seen disruptions. Prominent newspapers published from Srinagar, discontinued for several days, have resumed publication. Mobile phones and the Internet are not back in operation and schools, though reopened, have sparse attendance in Kashmir. It took a while before the Kashmiris learned about the lightning changes that had been imposed upon them. But a mood of triumphalism is evident across the country, which is resistant to an informed and tempered national discussion on the changed status of J&K. Reports of protests and police action from the Valley have largely been dismissed by the Centre.

The revocation of the special status of J&K has the support of the majority of the political community outside the Valley, although the decision is under judicial review. The government and other supporters of the move continue to argue that the people in Kashmir have been freed from the political families that held power at their cost, that investments will flow in, jobs will multiply, women will get equal status as men in terms of inheritance and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will benefit from nationally mandated reservation. Unfortunately, discussions on these points in the last one month have been going on with little or no representation by the people of Kashmir who are the supposed beneficiaries. That they were not taken into confidence before the decision was made was bad enough, but what is worse is the continuing restrictions on free speech. The elected Mayor of Srinagar and a doctor who spoke out about the risk to lives due to restrictions were promptly detained. The reports that emanate from the Valley in recent days, patchy as they continue to be, point towards increasing alienation among the residents. Ironically, the most disappointed are those who believed that Kashmir's future would be secure within India. The Centre needs to reassure them that the change of status is not to the detriment of the people of Kashmir.

#### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **unspoken** (adjective) – unstated, unexpressed, voiceless.
- **lockdown** (noun) – confinement, restraint, encirclement.
- **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, escalate.
- **alienation** (noun) – isolation, detachment, estrangement/separation.
- **dubious** (adjective) – suspicious, questionable, unreliable.
- **hurried** (adjective) – rushed, hasty, quick.; unconsidered.
- **rankle** (verb) – annoy, upset/irritate; continue to be painful/fester.
- **clampdown** (noun) – crackdown, suppression, prevention/restriction; restraint.
- **substantially** (adverb) – considerably, significantly, largely.
- **carve out** (phrasal verb) – create, establish (something with effort).
- **erstwhile** (adjective) – old, previous, former.

- **sparse** (adjective) – infrequent, scattered, sporadic, slight/limited.
- **lightning** (adjective) – quick, fast, swift.
- **impose upon** (verb) – force, thrust, inflict.
- **triumphalism** (noun) – an attitude or a belief that a particular doctrine, religion, culture, social system is superior to and should triumph all over others.
- **informed** (adjective) – knowledgeable, enlightened, cultured.
- **tempered** (adjective) – strengthened, toughened, fortified.
- **revocation** (noun) – cancellation, abandonment, calling off/recall.
- **inheritance** (noun) – legacy/heritage, tradition/history/culture.
- **beneficiary** (noun) – inheritor, receiver, assignee.
- **speak out** (phrasal verb) – speak publicly.
- **promptly** (adverb) – quickly, swiftly, rapidly.
- **detain** (verb) – hold, take into custody, arrest.
- **emanate from** (verb) – emerge, originate, start.
- **patchy** (adjective) – uneven, irregular; insufficient, inadequate .
- **ironically** (adverb) – paradoxically, unexpectedly, strangely.
- **detriment** (noun) – disadvantage, damage, loss.

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## Course Correction – **Brexit brinkmanship: On a defiant Boris Johnson**

### ***Boris Johnson is firm on leaving by October 31, but a last-minute breakthrough looks remote***

The recently enacted law to stop Britain from leaving the European Union (EU) without an agreement has brought little certainty that a cliff-edge exit will be avoided. Despite failing to block that legislation and twice losing his bid to hold a general election, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is defiant that the country must leave on October 31. His refusal to seek a further three-month extension from the EU has raised concerns that the government could be held in contempt of parliament. With other hardline eurosceptics, Mr. Johnson has long resisted calls to take no deal off the table, adamant that without such a threat, the government could not strike a bargain in its EU negotiations. Opposition parties and several rebel Tories have stressed the fact that the 2016 referendum merely asked Britons whether they would stay in, or leave the bloc. Moreover, as the agreement still on the table has been rejected repeatedly by Conservative MPs, it was the entire legislature's responsibility to determine the precise terms of the historic exit. With the many controversial manoeuvres thwarted, the government has been forced to renew its efforts to find fresh terms to reach an agreement with Brussels. Ahead of a meeting with his Irish counterpart on Monday, Mr. Johnson proposed aligning Northern Ireland with the EU single market solely for agricultural products. Dublin has said that the idea could not go far since agribusiness forms a small proportion of its trade with Belfast. There is also a move to bring Northern Ireland under the regulatory framework of the EU single market, mooted in 2017 by the EU. This was rejected subsequently by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Theresa May as potentially detrimental to the U.K.'s sovereignty, unity and integrity. Such an arrangement would entail erecting border checkpoints between Northern Ireland and Britain.

The alternative is the now famous Irish backstop, which would keep the U.K. in an EU Customs union, but strip London of room to make trade deals with third countries. That has already been voted down thrice by Parliament under Ms. May and dismissed by Mr. Johnson and other eurosceptics. But the

DUP's support has little relevance to the Conservative government, which is already without a majority after Mr. Johnson sacked 21 MPs for backing the 'stop no deal' legislation. There is speculation that the government could revive the proposal on retaining only Northern Ireland's status, notwithstanding Mr. Johnson's assurances to the DUP leader. The latter option affords the only chance there is of an agreement at the October summit of EU leaders and Britain leaving with a deal at the end of the month. Should an accord with the bloc prove elusive, Mr. Johnson is under legal obligation to seek an extension. But he and his advisers are believed to be exploring options that will spare him from making another request.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **Brexit** (noun) – a term used for the (supposed) departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union.
- **brinkmanship** (noun) – the practice of trying to achieve an advantageous results by engaging in a dangerous issue or event to the edge of safety, especially in politics, by pushing dangerous events.
- **defiant** (adjective) – aggressive, belligerent/bellicose; uncooperative, non-compliant.
- **breakthrough** (noun) – success; progress/development, advancement.
- **remote** (adjective) – unlikely, improbable, implausible, doubtful.
- **cliff-edge** (phrase) – relating to a difficult situation.
- **bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, endeavour/try.
- **seek** (verb) – ask for, request, appeal for; try, attempt, aim.
- **hold in contempt** (phrase) – to regard someone with disdain or disrespect.
- **contempt** (noun) – disrespect, disregard, neglect.
- **hardline** (adjective) – relating to a group/a political party with people who support a strict ideas and they are extreme & uncompromising.
- **euro sceptic** (noun) – a person who is opposing to increase the powers of the European Union.
- **off the table** (phrase) – to be withdrawn and no longer available for consideration.
- **strike a deal/bargain** (phrase) – to come to an agreement.
- **Tory** (noun) – a member/supporter of a Conservative Party in the UK; right-winger, reactionary, rightist.
- **stress** (verb) – emphasize, draw attention to, highlight.
- **referendum** (noun) – public vote; a direct vote in which people cast ballots to decide on a specific issue or policy.
- **bloc** (noun) – alliance, association, union.
- **manoeuvre** (noun) – operation, action, activity.
- **thwart** (verb) – stop, prevent, check/obstruct/impede.
- **Brussels** (noun) – The headquarters of the European Union. Brussels is a **metonym** of the European Union.
- **counterpart** (noun) – a person/thing that serves the same job/function but in a different location; equivalent.
- **solely** (adverb) – only, simply, merely.
- **align with** (verb) – combine with, link up with, join.
- **regulatory** (adjective) – organizational, governmental.
- **moot** (verb) – propose, suggest, introduce.
- **detrimental** (adjective) – damaging, inimical, dangerous.
- **sovereignty** (noun) – supremacy, dominion, power.
- **integrity** (noun) – unity, solidarity, coherence/togetherness.
- **entail** (verb) – cause, result in, produce.
- **erect** (verb) – create, establish, form/set up.

- **Irish backstop** (noun) – a position of last resort, to maintain an open border on the island of Ireland in the event that the UK leaves the EU without securing an all-encompassing deal.
- **vote down** (verb) – reject, stop, block.
- **relevance** (noun) – significance, importance, appropriateness.
- **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.
- **speculation** (noun) – assumption, supposition/feeling, guesswork/postulation.
- **revive** (verb) – recover, bring back, revitalize.
- **notwithstanding** (adverb) – nonetheless, even so, all the same, after everything.
- **accord** (noun) – agreement, settlement, deal.
- **elusive** (adjective) – difficult to find; subtle, indistinct/intangible.
- **spare** (verb) – pardon, excuse/forgive, leave unpunished.

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## Course Correction – **Lynching, not murder: On Tabrez Ansari killing**

### ***Suspicion that the Ansari case is being diluted underscores need for anti-lynching law***

The decision of the Jharkhand police that the killing of Tabrez Ansari, 24, in June did not amount to murder is quite debatable. They have chosen to charge the 11 men arrested for his lynching with culpable homicide that does not amount to murder. To the layman, it would seem strange that those who labelled Ansari a thief, tied him to a pole and assaulted him for hours at night, are not going to be prosecuted for murder. It is not clear if the police are going to include accounts that claim he was forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'. This aspect may help establish a clear sectarian motive on the part of the crowd to turn into a lynch mob and attack him. It is known that it was only the arrival of the police that ended the assault on him. That the police have chosen to prosecute them for culpable homicide shows that the causal link between the assault on his person and his death has been established. It is true that the line between culpable homicide and murder is thin. It is the courts that usually assess the circumstances in which a homicide took place and decide whether it amounted to murder or not. Murder is punishable under Section 302 with death or life imprisonment, while forms of culpable homicide attract either a life term or 10 years in prison under Section 304 of the IPC.

The official explanation for concluding that it was not murder is unconvincing. The two-pronged argument is that the medical report gave the cause of death as 'cardiac arrest due to stress', and the fact that the victim did not die immediately, but succumbed some days later. The police also say a second opinion from forensic experts was that the death was caused due to a combination of heart attack and the injuries he suffered. It is quite obvious that merely attributing death to a heart attack is meaningless without referring to the trauma caused by the physical assault. It may not make a legal difference to the prosecution whether the accused are given a life term for murder or mere culpable homicide not amounting to murder. However, invoking only the offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder may make it easier for the defence to claim that their offence lacked premeditation or intention. Instead, they could claim that they were deprived of their self-control by the "provocation" given by the victim. The narrative in recent lynching incidents that it was the victim who was at fault may come in for needless reiteration unless the prosecution resolutely makes a case of murder. The suspicion that the charge is being diluted underscores the need for a special anti-lynching law. Such a law could cover acts of group violence, whether spontaneous or planned, so that those who join lynch mobs do not gain from any ambiguity about their intentions.

**Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **lynching** (noun) – an act of punishing/killing someone by hanging for claimed offence by the group of people without legal trail.
- **suspicion** (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, scepticism.
- **dilute** (verb) – weaken, modify, moderate.
- **underscore** (verb) – underline, emphasize, highlight.
- **amount to** (verb) – be regarded as, be equivalent/equal to, be tantamount to.
- **quite** (adverb) – in every respect, in all respects, without exception.
- **debatable** (adjective) – questionable, arguable, disputable.
- **culpable** (adjective) – offending, guilty, misbehaving, blameworthy.
- **homicide** (noun) – murder, killing.
- **layman** (noun) – non-professional, non-specialist, amateur/enthusiast.
- **strange** (adjective) – unusual, odd, peculiar.
- **prosecute** (verb) – charge with, accuse of, indict.
- **sectarian** (adjective) – denoting a sect (a group of people); factional, partisan.
- **mob** (noun) – a large, disorganized, and often violent crowd of people.
- **imprisonment** (noun) – incarceration, confinement, captivity.
- **two-pronged** (adjective) – having two different aspects.
- **succumb** (verb) – die from, die of, pass away as a result of.
- **forensic** (noun) – the application of scientific knowledge & methods to legal problems and legal proceeding.
- **attribute** (verb) – ascribe, assign, accredit.
- **trauma** (noun) – torment, distress, suffering.
- **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to, adduce.
- **premeditation** (noun) – pre-planning, deliberation, intent.
- **deprive** (verb) – dispossess, strip, divest, relieve.
- **provocation** (noun) – prompting, inducement, incitement.
- **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
- **reiteration** (noun) – the process of repeating something (some action) for clarity/emphasis.
- **resolutely** (adverb) – firmly, determinedly, purposefully.
- **spontaneous** (adjective) – unconstrained, voluntary, unprompted.
- **ambiguity** (noun) – inexactness, doubtfulness, obscurity/opacity.

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## Course Correction – **Factoring in safety: on stronger worker safety law**

### ***Major industrial accidents point to the need for a stronger worker safety law***

India's record in promoting occupational and industrial safety remains weak even with years of robust economic growth. Making work environments safer is a low priority, although the productivity benefits of such investments have always been clear. The consequences are frequently seen in the form of a large number of fatalities and injuries, but in a market that has a steady supply of labour, policymakers tend to ignore the wider impact of such losses. It will be no surprise, therefore, if the deaths of four people, including a senior officer, in a fire at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation gas facility in Navi Mumbai, or the tragedy that killed nearly two dozen people at a firecracker factory in Batala, Punjab are

quickly forgotten. Such incidents make it imperative that the Central government abandon its reductionist approach to the challenge, and engage in serious reform. There is not much evidence, however, of progressive moves. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019, introduced in the Lok Sabha in July to combine 13 existing laws relating to mines, factories, dock workers, building and construction, transport workers, inter-State migrant labour and so on, pays little attention to the sector-specific requirements of workers. One of its major shortcomings is that formation of safety committees and appointment of safety officers, the latter in the case of establishments with 500 workers, is left to the discretion of State governments. Evidently, the narrow stipulation on safety officers confines it to a small fraction of industries. On the other hand, the Factories Act currently mandates appointment of a bipartite committee in units that employ hazardous processes or substances, with exemptions being the exception. This provision clearly requires retention in the new Code.

A safe work environment is a basic right, and India's recent decades of high growth should have ushered in a framework of guarantees. Unfortunately, successive governments have not felt it necessary to ratify many fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) covering organised and unorganised sector workers' safety, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981. Those ILO instruments cover several areas of activity that the NDA government's occupational safety Code now seeks to amalgamate, but without the systemic reform that is necessary to empower workers. It is essential, therefore, that the new Code go back to the drawing board for careful scrutiny by experienced parliamentarians, aided by fresh inputs from employees, employers and experts. Industries that use hazardous processes and chemicals deserve particular attention, and the Code must have clear definitions, specifying limits of exposure for workers. Compromising on safety can lead to extreme consequences that go beyond factories, and leave something that is etched in the nation's memory as in the case of the Bhopal gas disaster.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **factor** in (verb) – include something (as a relevant element).
- **point** (verb) – indicate, suggest, signal/signify.
- **robust** (adjective) – strong, powerful.
- **fatality** (noun) – death, casualty, mortality/loss.
- **tend to** (verb) – look after, take care of, care for.
- **imperative** (adjective) – vitally important, critical, crucial.
- **reductionist** (adjective) – relating to an approach where you break the system down to its pieces to reason about it from the properties of these pieces.
- **dock** (noun) – a platform for loading lorries or goods trains.
- **inter-** (prefix) – between.
- **pay attention to** (phrase) – concentrate on, take notice of, listen to/heed.
- **shortcoming** (noun) – fault, flaw, imperfection/defect.
- **discretion** (noun) – choice, judgement, preference.
- **evidently** (adverb) – seemingly, apparently, on the face of it.
- **stipulation** (noun) – condition, requirement, provision.
- **bipartite** (adjective) – made by or involving two separate parties.
- **hazardous** (adjective) – dangerous, risky, unsafe.
- **with the exception of** (phrase) – except, excluding, not including.
- **retention** (noun) – the continued possession & use of something.
- **usher in** (phrasal verb) – herald/signal, start/, begin, announce/initiate.
- **ratify** (verb) – justify, approve, confirm.
- **convention** (noun) – practice, rule, observance, ordinance.

- **unorganised sector** (noun) – unorganized sector means an enterprise owned by individuals or self-employed workers and engaged in the production or sale of goods or providing service of any kind whatsoever, and where the enterprise employs workers, the number of such workers is less than ten (Courtesy: Ministry of Labour and Employment, India).
- **amalgamate** (verb) – combine, merge, unite/consolidate.
- **systemic** (adjective) – constructional, organizational, constitutional.
- **empower** (verb) – authorize, allow, entitle.
- **back to the drawing board** (phrase) – used to indicate a new idea/plan has to be formed as the old one is not working well.
- **scrutiny** (noun) – observation, inspection, examination.
- **be etched in** (verb) – be permanently fixed in someone’s memory.

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## Course Correction - **Content management: On Aadhaar-social media linkage**

### ***Courts must let government work out a balanced regulatory regime for online content***

The submissions in the Supreme Court on behalf of the Tamil Nadu government in support of linking social media profiles of registered users with their Aadhaar numbers are not well-founded in the law as it now stands. It is noteworthy that a Division Bench of the Madras High Court, which is hearing two writ petitions on this matter, did not see merit in the idea. The Bench had during the hearings observed that following the Supreme Court’s decision in the Aadhaar case, the unique 12-digit-number can be used only for subsidies and welfare benefits; and pointed out that Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act has been struck down to the extent that it authorised body corporate and individuals to use the number to establish someone’s identity. The petitioners had approached the High Court with such a prayer on the ground that many people got away with inflammatory posts on social media because of the lack of traceability. However, the Bench has since then expanded the writ petitions’ scope to examine the adequacy of the legal framework on cybercrimes and the responsibilities of intermediaries who provide telecommunication and online services. The State government is battling for better assistance from intermediaries and social media companies to trace offending messages. As two other High Courts are also hearing similar matters, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have sought a transfer of all these cases to the apex court so that there are no conflicting judgments.

While the Supreme Court will decide the question of transferring these cases to itself, the Madras High Court will continue its hearing. A word of caution. The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology notified new draft rules for intermediaries last year and called for public comments. The proposed rules envisage new obligations for service providers. One of the changes proposed is that intermediaries should help identify originators of offensive content. This has created some understandable misgivings at a time when there is widespread suspicion about online surveillance. Technology companies that use end-to-end encryption have pleaded inability to open a back door for identifying originators. The issue concerns the global policy of these companies as well as the wider public interest of millions of registered users. After the *K.S. Puttaswamy* decision (2017) in the ‘privacy’ case, any state intervention in the regulation of online content has to pass the test of proportionality laid down by the court. It will be desirable if courts do not impart needless urgency to the process of introducing a balanced regulatory regime to curb content that promotes undesirable activities such as

child pornography, sectarian conflict and mob violence, without affecting individual privacy. The balance must be right between protecting privacy and allowing the state leeway to curb crime.

**Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **submission** (noun) – argument, assertion, contention, statement.
- **profile** (noun) – a person’s summary of their personal details or current situation.
- **well-founded** (adjective) – acceptable, supportable, valid.
- **as it stands** (phrase) – In its present condition.
- **noteworthy** (adjective) – significant, notable, important.
- **writ petition** (noun) – an application to a court for a writ (a formal written order) when when any of the fundamental rights are violated.
- **merit** (noun) – strong point, advantage, value.
- **point out** (phrasal verb) – indicate, mention, call attention to.
- **strike down** (phrasal verb) – abolish, annul, nullify (a law or regulation).
- **on the ground** (phrase) – in a situation/place where things are happening really/practically.
- **get away with** (phrasal verb) – escape blame/punishment for.
- **inflammatory** (adjective) – provocative, provoking, agitating, fomenting.
- **adequacy** (noun) – acceptability, reasonableness, fairness.
- **(internet) intermediary** (noun) – it refers to a company that facilitates the use of the Internet.
- **sought** past and past participle of **seek** (verb) – ask for, request, call on.
- **call for** (phrasal verb) – require, need, necessitate/demand.
- **misgiving** (noun) – qualm, doubt, suspicion/apprehension.
- **envisage** (verb) – foresee, predict, forecast.
- **suspicion** (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, scepticism.
- **surveillance** (noun) – observation, scrutiny, inspection.
- **encryption** (noun) – the process of encoding a message or information to protect from unauthorized person.
- **plead** (verb) – claim, argue, state.
- **back door** (noun) – against the rules, out of order, unethical.
- **lay down** (phrasal verb) – formulate, stipulate, frame.
- **impart** (verb) – communicate, pass on, convey, transmit.
- **curb** (verb) – restrain, restrict, control.
- **pornography** (noun) – obscene or indecent digital material (movies, pictures, magazines, etc.,) that show or describe sexual matters in order to cause sexual excitement.
- **sectarian** (adjective) – denoting a sect (a group of people); factional, partisan.
- **mob** (noun) – a large, disorganized, and often violent crowd of people
- **leeway** (noun) – freedom, a free hand, licence.

☞ **“MISTAKES INCREASES YOUR EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENCES DECREASES YOUR MISTAKES. IF YOU LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES, THEN OTHERS LEARN FROM YOUR SUCCESS.”** ☞