

Course correction-Death of a terrorist: On Baghdadadi's killing

Baghdadi is dead, but the conditions that gave rise to the Islamic State still remain

The death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founder-leader of the Islamic State, is a major setback to the dreaded terrorist organisation. Baghdadi, who rose to international notoriety in July 2014 when he appeared in the pulpit of Mosul's grand al-Nuri mosque as the leader of the new 'Caliphate' announced by his group, "died like a dog", according to U.S. President Donald Trump. He was hiding in a village in Idlib, the Syrian province controlled by al-Qaeda-linked jihadists and pro-Turkey rebels, when U.S. Special Forces launched an operation on Saturday. Mr. Trump says Baghdadi blew himself up in a tunnel while he was surrounded, killing himself and three of his sons. At the height of its power in 2014, the Caliphate established by Baghdadi controlled territories as large as Great Britain straddling the Iraqi-Syria border. Spread from Deir Ezzor in eastern Syria to Mosul in northern Iraq and with Raqqa its de facto capital, the Caliphate drew in radicalised young Muslims world-wide into its fold, fought the Syrian and Iraqi national armies as well as rebel groups in Syria, and unleashed violence against anyone who disagreed with its version of Islam and against minority groups in Islam and non-Muslims. Baghdadi presided over the rise of his group as a death cult, bringing back memories of medieval religious conflicts.

But the Caliphate was a short-lived phenomenon. The cities the IS once ruled were liberated. Its jihadists are on the run. Now that Baghdadi is also gone, the IS is at the weakest point of its short history. But it does not mean the group is defeated. The IS, like its peers in global jihadism such as al-Qaeda, is not a completely leader-dependent organisation. It is fundamentally an insurgency comprising ideologically linked autonomous cells and loyal to one leadership. So Baghdadi's death, while a blow to the organisation and its propaganda, does not mean that IS operations are over. Second, the geopolitical conditions that led to the IS's creation have not changed much. When Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed by the U.S in 2006, it was a setback to the al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the organisation that he led. After his death, Sunnis in northern Iraq rose against the AQI, which, along with a surge in U.S. troops in Iraq, pushed the group to retreat from the cities and towns. But it did not finish the AQI off. When Syria began plunging into chaos in the early days of the civil war in 2011, the AQI, under Baghdadi's leadership, morphed into a bigger, more powerful terrorist machinery — the IS. What happened to the IS now is similar to what happened to the AQI then. With the IS's double loss, the focus should now be on stabilising Iraq and Syria and ending the conditions that led to the rise of the AQI and the IS. Otherwise, Baghdadi's death would not mean much for the global fight against terrorism.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **give rise to** (phrase) – cause, bring about, produce, lead to, result in.
- **setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue.
- **dreaded** (adjective) – terrible/awful, frightening, alarming, terrifying.
- **notoriety** (noun) – infamy, bad name, bad reputation.
- **pulpit** (noun) – stand, platform, stage.
- **caliphate** (noun) – an Islamic state.
- **jihadist** (noun) – an Islamic militant. (in Islam) a person who is with radical views & supports jihad (jihad literally means "effort" in Arab; Jihad also means struggling or striving and it allows the use of force if there is no peaceful alternative).

- **blow up** (phrasal verb) – lose one’s temper, become furious, go berserk, flare up, lose one’s cool.
- **straddle** (verb) – extend across, be situated on both sides of.
- **de facto** (adjective) – Latin, literally ‘of fact’; existing, actual, effective.
- **draw** (verb) – attract, capture, catch the eye of, lure.
- **radicalise** (verb) – to cause to follow radical (extreme) ways particularly in politics (& society).
- **fold** (noun) – group, community.
- **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
- **preside over** (phrase) – be in charge of, be responsible for, be accountable for.
- **death cult** (noun) – a fringe religious group that is obsessed with death (or worships death).
- **medieval** (adjective) – Relating to the Middle Ages (lasted from the 5th to the 15th century).
- **short-lived** (adjective) – brief, short, short-term, temporary.
- **on the run** (phrase) – running away, fleeing, in flight, fugitive.
- **phenomenon** (noun) – occurrence, event, happening.
- **peer** (noun) – equal, fellow, match, like.
- **insurgency** (noun) – uprising, revolt, rebellion.
- **autonomous** (adjective) – self-governing/ruling, independent, sovereign.
- **blow** (noun) – a sudden shock, surprise, disappointment.
- **propaganda** (noun) – information, promotion, publicity/advocacy.
- **geopolitical** (adjective) – relating to (the study of) the effects of geography (human and physical) on politics and international relations.
- **surge** (noun) – sudden increase, rise, growth.
- **retreat** (noun) – withdrawal, pull back, retraction.
- **plunge into** (verb) – push, thrust, force.
- **chaos** (noun) – disorder, turmoil, mayhem/disruption.
- **morph** (verb) – change; gradually change something (image) into another one.

Course correction – **Limits of hype: On Haryana government formation**

While retaining power via a post-poll tie-up, BJP will have to recognise the mandate’s nature

By winning the support of the JJP to form a government in Haryana, the BJP has surmounted its failure in the recent Assembly election to win a clear majority from the people directly for a second term. All non-BJP parties in the State, and most independents, campaigned on an anti-BJP plank and it would be reasonable to assume that the BJP that won 40 of the 90 seats in the State did not get a clear mandate. As the single largest party, its claim to form a government was legitimate, and also reinforced by the support of the JJP that has 10 MLAs. All seven independents and Haryana Lokhit Party’s Gopal Kanda have also offered support to the government, which could be a stable one. The BJP’s numerical advantage allows it to forgo the support of Mr. Kanda, a controversial politician accused of abetting the suicide of a woman. The JJP and the BJP stridently campaigned against each other, but with their alliance, the BJP got a foothold among the Jat community that overwhelmingly voted against the party. As for the JJP, it could now claim a share of power for the community which is its core base.

The results and the nature of the coalition mark an interruption in the BJP's winning streak since the 2014 Parliament election, save its defeats in a few States to the Congress in 2017-18. The BJP's Hindutva plank combined with the rhetoric of development has paid it dividends, emboldening it to sidestep or even trample over regional allies. By falling back on a largely caste-based regional outfit for retaining power in a heartland State, Hindutva has exposed its limits, at least in the electoral field. The combination of religious sentiments and anti-Pakistan diatribe may still mobilise its core constituency, but that alone cannot guarantee victory all the time. It would be premature to conclude that people voted entirely on material issues or development, but those factors that the BJP desperately tried to shut out of the public discourse did matter. Particular identities of regional pride and caste dynamics that the Prime Minister's politics had largely rendered ineffective also appear to have made a comeback. The BJP's new alliance also blunts the party's claims about being the champion of probity. It may have rescued itself from the ignominy of taking Mr. Kanda's support, but the JJP's legacy is far from being unblemished. Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala's father and grandfather are serving sentences as convicts in a case of appointing teachers in exchange for bribes. That his father got a furlough from jail soon after the BJP-JJP agreement is too much of a coincidence. The opportunism of the JJP and the BJP, however, does not wipe out the issues that have come to the fore in the Assembly election. And therein lies a glimmer of hope for the country's democracy, as a demonstration of the limits of hype.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **surmount** (verb) – overcome, triumph over, get over (a difficulty or obstacle).
- **plank** (noun) – a fundamental & important point/principle on which something (political program, policy, etc) is based on.
- **legitimate** (adjective) – permissible, allowable, admissible.
- **reinforce** (verb) – strengthen, fortify, bolster up.
- **abet** (verb) – to encourage/help someone to do something wrong/illegal.
- **stridently** (adverb) – strictly, firmly, in a tough/stiff way.
- **foothold** (noun) – support, grip/anchorage, secure position.
- **overwhelmingly** (adverb) – with a great majority.
- **streak** (noun) – period, spell, stretch/time.
- **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- **dividend** (noun) – benefit, gain, advantage.
- **embolden** (verb) – give courage, encourage, strengthen/fortify.
- **sidestep** (verb) – avoid, evade, dodge, escape.
- **trample over** (verb) – treat with contempt, disregard/take for granted, encroach on.
- **ally** (noun) – partner, supporter, accomplice/confederate.
- **fall back on** (phrasal verb) – resort/turn to, use, employ.
- **outfit** (noun) – organization, group, party.
- **heartland** (noun) – the most important part of a field of activity; the central part of something.
- **diatribe** (noun) – tirade, verbal onslaught, rant.
- **mobilise** (verb) – organize, call up, bring into play/generate.
- **constituency** (noun) – a group of voters in a specified area.
- **premature** (noun) – untimely, early, too soon/too early.
- **material** (adjective) – significant, major, important; relevant, applicable.
- **desperately** (adverb) – seriously/urgently, pressingly, intensely.
- **shut out** (phrasal verb) – block, halt, stop.
- **dynamics** (noun) – basic/fundamental cause or force which triggers change within a system.
- **blunt** (adjective) – diminish, decrease, weaken.
- **champion** (noun) – advocate, proponent, promoter, supporter.
- **probity** (noun) – integrity, honesty/decency, truthfulness.

- **rescue** (verb) – save, retrieve, recover.
- **ignominy** (noun) – shame, disgrace, humiliation/embarrassment.
- **legacy** (noun) – footprint, effect/outcome (something received from a predecessor or from the past).
- **far from** (phrase) – not, not at all, nowhere near
- **unblemished** (adjective) – clean, spotless, without fault.
- **convict** (noun) – prisoner, inmate.
- **furlough** (noun) – involuntary break/temporary leave.
- **opportunism** (noun) – expediency/exploitation, taking advantage, pragmatism.
- **wipe out** (phrasal verb) – destroy, annihilate, eradicate.
- **to the fore** (phrase) – to a leading position.
- **therein** (adverb) – in that respect.
- **glimmer** (noun) – (a faint) sign, trace/ray, hint (of light/hope)

Course correction – **Cutting risk: On India's anti-polio drive**

Though India has excellent polio immunisation coverage, there is no room for complacency

The world polio day on October 24 marked an important milestone in the war against polio when the Global Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication officially declared that wild poliovirus type 3 has been eradicated. The last case of wild poliovirus type 3 was seen in northern Nigeria in 2012. This is the second wild poliovirus to be declared eliminated — the first was in 2015 when type 2 wild poliovirus was declared as eliminated. With two of the three wild polioviruses eliminated, only type 1 wild poliovirus is still in circulation and is restricted to just two countries — Afghanistan and Pakistan. As on October 23, there were 18 cases of polio caused by wild virus type 1 in Afghanistan and 76 polio cases in Pakistan this year. While the number of cases reported this year from Afghanistan is quite close to the 21 reported last year, there has been over six-fold increase in the number of cases in Pakistan. Though India has excellent polio immunisation coverage and measures have been put in place to prevent the spread from polio-endemic countries, there is no room for complacency.

What does the official declaration of wild type 3 poliovirus elimination mean in the war against polio? Put simply, it opens up the possibility of switching from the currently used bivalent oral polio vaccine containing type 1 and type 3 to a monovalent vaccine containing only type 1. The globally synchronised switch in April 2016 from a vaccine containing all the three types (trivalent) to a bivalent vaccine was done to reduce the number of vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDVP) cases. Until 2015, the type 2 strain in the trivalent oral vaccine accounted for over 90% of VDVP cases globally. While the type 3 poliovirus in the vaccine is the least likely to cause vaccine-derived polio, it has the greatest propensity to cause vaccine-associated paralytic polio (VAPP). Though the risk of VAPP is small, it is caused when the live, weakened virus used in the vaccine turns virulent in the intestine of the vaccinated child or spreads to close contacts who have not been immunised. VAPP can be greatly reduced if there is a switch from the bivalent to a monovalent vaccine containing only type 1. Alternatively, the risk of VAPP can be reduced 80-90% if every child receives the bivalent vaccine and one dose of inactivated polio vaccine injection. Though India does not count VAPP cases, a 2002 paper and a communication indicated that India had

181, 129 and 109 cases in 1999, 2000 and 2001, respectively. A recent paper suggests that post 2016, India might have 75 VAPP cases annually due to global IPV vaccine shortage and "delay in IPV implementation in India's national immunisation programme".

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **drive** (verb) – campaign, crusade, movement, effort.
- **immunisation** (noun) – the process whereby a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine. Vaccines stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against subsequent infection or disease.
- **complacency** (noun) – self-satisfaction, self-approval, self-admiration.
- **poliomyelitis** (noun) – it (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children.
- **eradication** (noun) – elimination, destruction, removal.
- **eradicate** (verb) – eliminate, remove, get rid of.
- **put in place** (phrase) – initiate, usher in, bring in.
- **endemic** (adjective) – widespread, prevailing, common/ubiquitous.
- **open up** (phrasal verb) – start to develop.
- **switch** (noun) – change, move, shift.
- **bivalent** (adjective) – (of homologous chromosomes) associated in pairs.
- **monovalent** (adjective) – having a valency of one.
- **vaccine** (noun) – a biological preparation that improves immunity to a particular disease.
- **synchronized** (adjective) – concurrent, coinciding, happening/done at the same time.
- **trivalent** (adjective) – having a valency of three.
- **strain** (noun) – variety, kind, type.
- **account for** (phrasal verb) – constitute, make up, comprise, form.
- **propensity** (noun) – (natural) tendency, inclination, predisposition.
- **vaccine-associated paralytic polio (VAPP)** – it is caused by a strain of poliovirus that has genetically changed in the intestine from the original attenuated vaccine strain contained in OPV. The oral polio vaccine (OPV) is an extremely safe and effective tool for immunizing children against polio.
- **virulent** (adjective) – resentful, hostile/harsh, devastating.
- **vaccinate** (verb) – immunize, protect from, safeguard from, shield from.

Course correction – **A delayed imperative: On BSNL-MTNL merger**

The move to revive BSNL and MTNL and merge them comes at a crucial time for the industry

The Cabinet's approval this week for a plan to revive the loss-making public sector telecommunications providers Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) has come not a moment too soon. From having been monopoly providers of telephone connectivity, the state-run telcos have had to contend with sweeping change since the opening up of the industry to private players and entry of wireless telephony in the 1990s. In just over two decades, the mobile phone revolution has catapulted India to the second rank in terms of wireless subscribers, with only China ahead. But the

radical transformation of the industry landscape — wrought by the runaway growth in user numbers, rapid technological advances, and bruising competition — has come at a substantial price. The private sector saw the relatively older, large firms using mergers and acquisitions to consolidate as smaller rivals found themselves unable to cope with bitter tariff wars and the capital costs of bidding for spectrum and upgrading their technologies. BSNL, for its part, was saddled with the legacy of having been a large-scale provider of jobs as well as state-mandated connectivity to remote corners of the country. It is in the fulfilment of the state's social objectives that the public sector enterprises (PSEs) racked up substantial costs, which the Centre's revival plan aims to help address.

The proposal includes the allotment of critical spectrum to the two PSEs for offering fourth-generation wireless services, including broadband. The Centre will fund the spectrum's cost through an infusion of Rs. 20,140 crore of capital while also bearing the related GST levy of Rs. 3,674 crore. And besides providing a sovereign guarantee on Rs. 15,000 crore of long-term bonds, which would help the firms restructure debt and partly fund expenses, the government will extend budgetary support of Rs. 17,169 crore for ex-gratia payments on a crucial voluntary retirement scheme. A lot will hinge on this VRS plan given that BSNL's workforce of over 1,65,000 employees end up cornering about 75% of the telco's total income. The Cabinet has also given an 'in-principle' nod for the two PSEs to merge, a move that would add market heft to the merged entity. A successful revival of BSNL will have far-reaching implications for the industry, this at a time when two of the three surviving private players are faced with not only sliding market share but a government bill of about Rs. 75,000 crore following the loss of a legal challenge. The reach of its network, especially in remote parts, makes BSNL a "strategic asset" that has national security implications given its role in serving the armed forces and responding to natural disasters. The revival plan, even if years late, is a clear recognition by the government of this indisputable fact.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **imperative** (noun) – necessary condition, precondition, condition, essential requirement.
- **revive** (verb) – recover, bring back, revitalize.
- **not a moment too soon** (phrase) – just in time, almost too late, at the critical moment.
- **monopoly** (noun) – exclusive/complete control of something by a person/organisation.
- **contend with** (phrasal verb) – cope with, face, grapple/deal with.
- **sweeping** (adjective) – decisive, thorough, complete/total.
- **open up** (phrasal verb) – disclose, reveal, be transparent.
- **catapult** (verb) – propel, launch, move suddenly.
- **radical** (adjective) – fundamental, basic, essential; thorough, complete, total.
- **landscape** (noun) – the distinctive features of a field of activity.
- **wrought** (verb) – (old) past and past participle of **work**. cause, effect.
- **runaway** (modifier) – easy, effortless; out of control,/uncontrolled.
- **bruising** (adjective) – stressful, demanding/taxing, painful.
- **relatively** (adverb) – quite, comparatively/proportionately.
- **acquisition** (noun) – acquiring, collection/procurement, appropriation.
- **consolidate** (verb) – strengthen, reinforce, fortify.
- **trade/tariff war** (noun) – a condition in which a country increase tariffs on foreign goods and impose quota restrictions to restrict other countries' trade.
- **spectrum** (noun) – range, gamut, sweep; a wide range of positions, opinions, etc. between two extreme points.
- **saddle with** (verb) – burden, hamper; inflict something on.
- **legacy** (noun) – footprint, effect/outcome (something received from a predecessor or from the past).

- **rack up** (phrasal verb) – accumulate, achieve something.
- **revival** (noun) – improvement, re-establishment; restoration/comeback.
- **infusion** (noun) – the introduction/ instilling/imbuing of a new thing.
- **bear** (verb) – carry, support, absorb, take on.
- **sovereign** (adjective) – independent, self-governing, autonomous.
- **debt** (noun) – liability, financial obligation, borrowed capital.
- **budgetary** (adjective) – relating to an estimate of income & spending.
- **ex gratia** (adjective) – Latin, literally 'from favour'. An ex gratia payment is one that is given as a favour or gift instead of legal obligation/liability.
- **hinge on** (phrasal verb) – rely on, be depend on, resort to.
- **in principle** (phrase) – generally, by and large; theoretically.
- **nod** (noun) – approval, acknowledgement, endorsement.
- **heft** (noun) – ability, influence; weight/strength.
- **far-reaching** (adjective) – important, major, significant.
- **implications** (noun) – consequence/outcome, ramification, repercussion.
- **slide** (verb) – sink, fall, drop, plunge/decline.
- **indisputable** (adjective) – undeniable, unquestionable, unarguable.

Course correction – **Good report card: On ease of doing business**

The States must do their bit in improving the ease of doing business in India

For an economy starved of good news, the news of a rise in India's ranking by 14 places to 63 in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2020 survey is a positive development. India also figures in the top ten most improved countries in the world for the third consecutive year. From being ranked 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2020, it has been a significant upward journey for the country in a rank list that is an important input in the plans of global investors. The latest improvement has come on the back of the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). India's rank has improved from 108 to 52 in the "resolving insolvency" category with the overall recovery rate for lenders moving up from 26.5 cents to 71.6 cents to the dollar according to the World Bank. This is despite the IBC process being bogged down in courts as interested parties attempt to delay eventual resolution that may work against their interests. The reforms in trade procedures and paperwork as a result of India signing the Trade Facilitation Agreement at the World Trade Organisation are beginning to show. The country's ranking in the "Trading across borders" category jumped 12 places from 80 to 68 signifying the abatement of paperwork in favour of electronic filing of documents and single-window customs procedures. Interestingly, there has been improvement in a parameter that most industrialists would consider as a problem even now: "Dealing with construction permits". The country's ranking has improved by 25 places from 52 to 27.

While the improvements are impressive and the rise in overall rankings in the last few years is noteworthy, the fact is that India is still below its competitors for global capital, particularly China, which at rank 31 is one level above France. The country lags in key metrics such as "Starting a business", "Enforcing contracts" and "Registering property". It should also be borne in mind that the rankings are

based on samples and audits done in Mumbai and Delhi only (the World Bank has said it would be covering Bengaluru and Kolkata too from next year). Starting, running or shutting down a business may be easier in Delhi and Mumbai compared to Coimbatore or Hyderabad where it is probably more difficult. Admittedly, it is not easy to streamline processes across the country given India's federal set up where States have a big say in several parameters that go into the ranking such as securing building permits, land approvals, electricity connections, registering assets etc. Yet, this is the ideal that the country should be striving for. The easier part is now done and rise in rankings from hereon will depend on how much the Centre is able to convince the States to reform their systems.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **do one's bit** (phrase) – to make a useful contribution.
- **starve** of (verb) – divest/strip/dispossess of something necessary.
- **on the back of** (phrase) – as a result of, after/subsequent; in support of.
- **insolvency** (noun) – a condition in which the financial difficulties of an individual or organisation are such it is unable to pay its debts.
- **bankruptcy** (noun) – legal state of insolvency. An individual or organisation is declared bankrupt if a court judges that the party involved can no longer meet debt payments to creditors. it is defined as the outcome of a legal procedure.
- **(get) bogged down** (phrasal verb) – prevent, entangle, restrict/be stuck.
- **facilitation** (noun) – aid, assistance, advancement.
- **abatement** (noun) – lessening, decrease, decline.
- **noteworthy** (adjective) – significant, notable, important.
- **borne in mind** past participle of **bear in mind** (phrase) – take into account, be mindful, remember/consider.
- **run down** (phrasal verb) – reduce, decrease, downsize.
- **shut down** (phrasal verb) – close down, discontinue, cease operation.
- **probably** (adverb) – most likely, no doubt, all things considered.
- **admittedly** (adverb) – actually, truly/verily, indeed.
- **streamline** (verb) – make something efficient/smooth-running/well organized.
- **federalism/federal framework/system/set up** (noun) – a system of government in which establishments such as states or provinces share power with a national government.
- **say** (noun) – influence, sway, weight, authority.
- **hereon** (adverb) – hereupon, after this, as a result of this.

☞ "SUCCESS IS THE SUM OF SMALL EFFORTS REPEATED DAY IN AND DAY OUT" ☞