

Net loss: on Citizenship Amendment Act protests

Disruption of connectivity should be resorted to only in the face of specific threats

The shutting down of the Internet in Delhi and several States as a response to growing protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, is unsophisticated and deeply damaging to social life and the economy. Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh were entirely cut off, and parts of Assam, West Bengal, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh were deprived of Internet access, in clumsy attempts to quell demonstrations. Such ham-handed interventions have won for India a place at the head of the table among intolerant countries that routinely shut down the Internet to block criticism of the government. Jammu and Kashmir is now acknowledged globally as a dark spot on the Internet, with service there blocked since August 4. After protests against the CAA began, other States are also experiencing shutdowns, and the fate of connectivity is being decided by officers empowered by the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017 under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, or Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. A disruption is an extreme measure, and should be countenanced only for a specific threat, and as an interim measure as official communications fill the information vacuum. A case in point is the spreading of rumours on child lifters on social media, which resulted in several lynchings. The net blackout of the kind being witnessed now, however, has little to do with rumours, and is clearly aimed at muzzling the protests.

The Prime Minister, who has fashioned himself as a digital first leader, issued a Twitter appeal to people in Assam on the CAA, but they did not get it as they had no net. The NDA government should also be aware that the connectivity chokehold applied on J&K is proving lethal to entrepreneurship, crippling a new generation running start-ups and promoting women's employment. A disrupted Internet is dealing a blow to digital financial transactions across several States, to e-governance initiatives, and economic productivity. It affects education and skill-building, as the Kerala High Court affirmed in an order holding access to the net a fundamental right that could not be denied arbitrarily. The court pointed out that the apprehension of a gadget being misused is not a legitimate ground for denial of service, and the government should act on specific complaints. Yet, since 2015, shutdowns have been rising — 134 in 2018 — and the NDA seems unwilling to change course. It seems to matter little that blunt interventions make the ambitious goal of growing into a \$5-trillion economy even more unrealistic, or that India is losing face as a democracy because it chooses to sit with authoritarian regimes. That is the wrong road to take. Reform and progress vitally need the net.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **resort to** (verb) – use, utilize, turn to.
- **in the face of** (phrase) – when confronted with; despite, notwithstanding, regardless of.
- **unsophisticated** (adjective) – undeveloped, basic, primitive.
- **deprive** (verb) – prevent, dispossess, strip, divest.
- **clumsy** (adjective) – awkward, uncoordinated, insensitive/thoughtless.

- **quell** (verb) – defeat, beat, stifle, suppress.
- **ham-handed** (adjective) – ham-fisted, inefficient, unskilful/awkward.
- **at the head of** (phrase) – managing, supervising, administering.
- **intolerant** (adjective) – prejudiced, discriminatory, biased.
- **acknowledged** (adjective) – recognized, admitted, accepted (as true/legitimate).
- **empowered** (adjective) – authorized, allowed, entitled.
- **countenance** (verb) – tolerate, agree to, admit as acceptable.
- **interim** (adjective) – provisional, transitional, temporary.
- **vacuum** (noun) – empty space, emptiness, void, nothingness.
- **case in point** (phrase) – example, instance, sample.
- **lynching** (noun) – an act of punishing/killing someone by hanging for claimed offence by the group of people without legal trail.
- **blackout** (noun) – suppression, cut-off, silence.
- **have nothing to do with** (phrase) – steer clear of, avoid/shun, keep away from.
- **muzzle** (verb) – silence, suppress, stifle.
- **fashion** (verb) – create, form, build.
- **chokehold** (noun) – an act of putting one’s hands around someone’s neck tightly to restrict/control him.
- **lethal** (adjective) – fatal, deadly, life-threatening.
- **entrepreneurship** (noun) – the process/activity of setting up a business.
- **crippling** (adjective) – weakening, impairing, paralyzing.
- **deal a blow** (phrase) – to hit (someone or something) so as to cause harm.
- **arbitrarily** (adverb) – with random choice or personal whim; unpredictably, unreasonably, illogically.
- **apprehension** (noun) – understanding, comprehension, realization.
- **ground** (noun) – reason, factor, basis.
- **blunt** (adjective) – straightforward, direct, simple, abrupt.
- **ambitious** (adjective) – difficult, exacting, formidable/challenging.
- **lose face** (phrase) – be extremely embarrassed, be humiliated.
- **authoritarian** (adjective) – oppressive, dictatorial, totalitarian.
- **vitality** (adverb) – essentially, necessarily.

Whither Amaravati?: on three capital cities for Andhra Pradesh

There was a time for the idea for three capitals in Andhra Pradesh, but it is long past

Sometimes ideas can sound good, but when it comes to implementation they need to be tested for feasibility and, importantly, timing. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy hinted on Tuesday that the South African model of three capitals was best suited in his State and that his government would work towards this. In South Africa, the administrative capital is in Pretoria, its national legislature in Cape Town and its judicial capital in Bloemfontein. Mr. Reddy’s idea seems to stem from the reasoning that a distribution of executive, legislative and judicial governance across

Visakhapatnam, Amaravati (the current capital) and Kurnool would allow for “a decentralised development of the State”. The location choices are in the upper, central and lower geographical regions. Such an arrangement follows the recommendations of the expert committee appointed by the Home Affairs Ministry in 2014 to study alternatives for a new capital. Chaired by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan, the panel had argued against the need for a greenfield capital city and to instead focus on distributing locations of governance beyond the Vijayawada-Guntur-Tenali-Mangalagiri urban area, while utilising the time period of 10 years to continue functions from Hyderabad after bifurcation. The Chief Minister’s idea has got support from the government-appointed G.N. Rao committee; it has recommended that the Assembly’s location be retained at Amaravati, with the Secretariat and High Court moved to Visakhapatnam and Kurnool, respectively.

Despite the expert committee’s recommendations, the A.P. government led by the Telugu Desam Party had decided to build a grand capital in Amaravati, and had acquired large parcels of land from farmers. The Secretariat and Legislative Assembly were shifted to Amaravati in 2016, while the High Court began functioning in the beginning of 2019. Amaravati, which still requires significant development, has become a functioning State capital for all purposes now. But it is no surprise that many farmers, who had agreed to give up fertile land for the expansion of the capital as part of a land pooling scheme and were to have received residential and commercial plots among other forms of compensation, have protested the decision to decentralise capital functions. If the government limits Amaravati to hosting only the Assembly, it must take into account the concerns of affected farmers. That said, the fact that considerable work has been completed in Amaravati to utilise the fledgling city as a functioning capital must be taken into account before embarking upon the “decentralisation” idea, which was best served before the works in Amaravati began. Abandoning the plan that is already in place will render the grand city an unviable one. As in politics, in governance, timing is everything.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **whither** (interrogative adverb) – what is the likely future of.
- **sound** (verb) – appear, look, seem.
- **feasibility** (noun) – practicality, viability, achievability.
- **stem from** (phrasal verb) – originate from, arise from, come from.
- **the executive** (noun) – the executive is a branch of government which enforces the law as written by the legislature and interpreted by the judiciary.
- **decentralised** (adjective) – relating to transfer of the power/control of a department/government from a single place to other locations.
- **greenfield** (adjective) – new facility; relating to the new (production) facility that has never been used for any development (whereas brownfield means existing facility).
- **bifurcation** (noun) – division of something into two branches or parts.
- **it is no surprise** (phrase) – as expected, as anticipated, as predicted.
- **give up** (phrasal verb) – forgo, abandon, renounce.
- **fertile** (adjective) – productive, high-yielding, rich/generative.
- **pool** (verb) – combine, put together, merge/join.
- **decentralise** (verb) – transfer of the power/control (of a department/organisation/government) from a single place to other locations.
- **take into account** (phrase) – consider, bear in mind, heed/note.
- **that said** (phrase) – in spite of everything, in spite of that, nonetheless, even so, however.
- **fledgling** (adjective) – emerging, beginning, developing.

- **embark upon** (phrasal verb) – start, begin, initiate/commence.
- **decentralisation** (noun) – the process of distributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things away from a central location or authority.
- **in place** (phrase) – ready, set up, established/arranged.
- **render** (verb) – depict, portray, represent.
- **unviable** (adjective) – not capable/feasible.
- **timing** (noun) – a particular period of time when something happens.

Humpy reigns: On Koneru Humpy's world title

In winning the rapids, Koneru Humpy is slowly rising up to her full potential in world chess

On Saturday night in Moscow, Koneru Humpy finally won a World title in senior chess. She was expected to win one long ago, given her talent, single-mindedness and the ability to work hard. Her triumph at the women's World rapid championship is the biggest achievement by an Indian after Viswanathan Anand's many World titles and it makes India as one among the few countries to have produced both male and female World rapid champions. Even more importantly, the World rapid title could be a big boost to her bid to win the classical World chess championship. The classical format is rightly considered the real thing in chess: it is a bit like Test cricket, while rapid and blitz segments are more like One Day Internationals and T20. The classical variant gives enough time for a player before making a move, to minimise chances of error and fortune. Humpy herself prefers it to the shorter formats, so this title is all the more commendable. In Moscow she displayed nerves of steel in the tie-break games against China's Lei Tingjie as she emerged the champion after coming from behind.

The 32-year-old had begun the tournament as the 13th seed, but her victory shouldn't be too much of a surprise, given the quality of her chess and her form, having done exceedingly well at the FIDE Women's Grand Prix in Russia and Monaco. She is now leading the Grand Prix — part of the cycle for the next World championship. The World rapid title in Moscow is great, but only when she wins the classical World title would she have lived up to her true potential. Right from the time she first made headlines winning the World Under-10 championship in 1997, she has been busy proving she was India's best bet in chess after Anand. Winning the World junior (under-20) championship at 14, an Asian boys' Under-12 championship — women are free to compete with men — and becoming the second woman in history to cross the magical 2600 mark in Elo points are only some of her achievements in one of the truly remarkable careers in Indian sport. Somehow, winning the World (classical) chess championship has eluded her. She played the World title match once and the semifinals of the World championship three times. Her best chance came in the 2011 World title match, but she was beaten by Hou Yifan, despite being seeded above the Chinese. Humpy has every reason to believe that she can cross the final frontier, too. Now though is the time to celebrate the greatest moment of the year for Indian sport after P.V. Sindhu won the badminton World Championship four months ago.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **reign** (verb) – rule, be in power, be queen, hold sway.
- **reach one's full potential** (phrase) – to become the best one can be.

- **single-mindedness** (noun) – full of determination.
- **triumph** (noun) – victory, win, success.
- **bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, endeavour/try.
- **a bit** (noun) – somewhat; to some extent.
- **blitz** (noun) – a type of chess in which moves must be made at very short intervals.
- **variant** (noun) – form, version, variation.
- **fortune** (noun) – circumstances (the success or failure of someone), state of affairs, conditions.
- **commendable** (adjective) – admirable, praiseworthy, laudable.
- **(have) nerves of steel** (phrase) – to be very brave and fearless.
- **come from behind** (phrase) – win after being in a losing position.
- **exceedingly** (adverb) – extremely, immensely, especially.
- **live up to** (phrasal verb) – equal, satisfy, achieve.
- **bet** (noun) – candidate, choice, alternative.
- **somehow** (adverb) – in some way, in one way or another, by any means.
- **elude** (verb) – (of an achievement) fail to be attained by (someone).
- **seed** (verb) – give (a competitor) the status of seed in a tournament.
- **final frontier** (noun) – the final limit of achievement in a specific field of activity.

Challenge in Jharkhand: On Hemant Soren's government

Hemant Soren's government should reorient the welfare and development model

As Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was sworn-in on Sunday for his second term as State Chief Minister in a function attended by an array of leaders from nationwide Opposition parties, the symbolism was unmistakable. Following the heavy losses in the 2019 Lok Sabha election that cemented the Bharatiya Janata Party as the hegemonic force in Indian politics, there have been three major State Assembly elections, in Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand. While the BJP fell short of a majority in Haryana and was denied a return to power in Maharashtra due to its pre-election ally, the Shiv Sena, changing coalitions, it was in Jharkhand that the party faced a decisive defeat. The JMM-Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal coalition bagged 47 of the 81 Assembly seats largely due to a clear mandate against the Raghubar Das-led BJP, especially from the State's tribal and rural voters even as some urban voters also switched allegiance to the former. The previous regime had earned itself unpopularity by trying to tweak tenancy and land-holding laws, raising fears among tribals of land displacement. It is noteworthy that the first decision of Mr. Soren's cabinet was to drop all cases registered against those who were involved in protests in 2017 — termed the Pathalgadi movement — over these pieces of legislation. This was clearly a nod to those voters who had registered their dissent with the previous regime by voting against it.

Mr. Soren and his cabinet face a humongous task in addressing socio-economic concerns in the State which suffers from high rates of poverty and unemployment. Jharkhand has the dubious distinction of registering starvation deaths in recent years, with food production and scarcity a major concern. The

failure in welfare delivery by the previous regime was largely due to its focus on streamlining welfare by weeding out fake beneficiaries through the flawed use of the Aadhaar biometrics rather than universalising and expanding the Public Distribution System and ensuring that schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Services and mid-day meals for children are better implemented. Without a thoroughgoing emphasis on rural and tribal welfare, Jharkhand will not attain its developmental goals. The coalition government can take lessons from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh in the north and the southern States in using welfare models to improve development indices. Its other challenge is that the State is among those in the country which have low GSDP growth (especially in employment-intensive sectors) and high government debt ratios. With a rich mineral base, governments have been tempted in the past to utilise this for development but have ended up being wracked by corruption, rent seeking and poor resource capacities. The JMM-led coalition should reorient itself to the original premise of the movement that led to the formation of Jharkhand in the first place — bringing in a sustainable development model that benefits the people rather than being saddled by the resource curse.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **reorient** (verb) – change the focus on.
- **swear in** (phrasal verb) – admit into office, inaugurate, introduce (into office).
- **array** (noun) – line-up, assembling, range.
- **symbolism** (noun) – symbolic meaning to something (facts).
- **unmistakable** (adjective) – well defined, clear, obvious.
- **cement** (verb) – connect, attach, join.
- **hegemonic** (adjective) – dominant in a context.
- **fall short of** (phrase) – be deficient/inadequate/insufficient; fail to meet/reach.
- **decisive** (adjective) – deciding, conclusive, determining.
- **bag** (verb) – secure, obtain, acquire.
- **allegiance** (noun) – loyalty, faithfulness, devotion.
- **tweak** (verb) – adjust, modify, alter.
- **tenancy** (noun) – occupancy, possession, holding.
- **noteworthy** (adjective) – significant, notable, important.
- **nod** (noun) – approval, acknowledgement, endorsement.
- **dissent** (noun) – disagreement, disapproval, opposition.
- **humongous** (adjective) – huge, enormous, substantial/massive.
- **address** (verb) – attend to, tackle, deal with.
- **dubious** (adjective) – suspicious, questionable, unreliable.
- **distinction** (noun) – importance, significance, reputation/status.
- **starvation** (noun) – extreme hunger, lack of food, famine, undernourishment/malnourishment.
- **scarcity** (noun) – shortage, undersupply, dearth/lack, rarity.
- **streamline** (verb) – make something efficient/smooth-running/well organized.
- **weed out** (phrasal verb) – isolate, separate out, filter out.
- **flawed** (adjective) – defective, faulty, distorted, inaccurate.
- **biometrics** (noun) – the metrics with human (physical & behavioural) characteristics used for identification and access control.
- **universalise** (verb) – make (something) available for all.
- **thoroughgoing** (adjective) – extensive, widespread, detailed.
- **attain** (verb) – achieve, accomplish, reach.

- **indices** plural of **index** (noun) – measure; guide, indication.
- **debt** (noun) – liability, financial obligation, borrowed capital.
- **tempt** (verb) – entice, attract, lure.
- **wrack** a variant of **rack** (verb) – torment, afflict, torture/pain.
- **rent seeking** (noun) – a behaviour which does not create economic gains for society, instead it helps a company/organisation/individual using their resources to get economic gain.
- **premise** (noun) – thesis, presupposition, belief, thought.
- **sustainable** (adjective) – valid, legitimate/reasonable, reliable, trustworthy.
- **saddle** (verb) – burden, hamper; inflict something on.
- **resource curse** (noun) – ‘Dutch disease’; it explains why countries that are richer in natural resources are poorer, have less economic growth and are less democratic.

Cracks in the relic: on U.S.-Turkey relations

The downturn in Turkey’s relations with the U.S. holds implications for the future of NATO

Rising tensions in U.S.-Turkey relations are threatening to upset North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) unity. In the latest of a series of incidents, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened to shut down two U.S. bases in retaliation for the proposed American sanctions on Ankara over purchasing Russian weapons. The U.S. and Turkey are the largest and second largest standing armies of NATO, respectively. There are U.S. nuclear warheads in the Incirlik airbase, a critical facility for American operations in West Asia. Mr. Erdoğan has warned that Incirlik and the Kurecik radar base would be shut if there are sanctions. U.S.-Turkey ties began slumping in recent years after Washington’s refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen, a U.S.-based Turkish Islamic preacher who is accused by Ankara of orchestrating the failed 2016 coup against Mr. Erdoğan. The U.S. decision to arm and assist Kurdish rebels in Syria against the Islamic State was another blow. Ankara sees the People’s Protection Units, the main Syrian Kurdish militia that became an American ally in the anti-IS war, as an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers Party, the Kurdish militia on the Turkish side. In return, Turkey moved closer towards Russia, now trying to raise its regional profile, and invaded Kurdish-held towns in northern Syria earlier this year. Turkey’s decision to purchase the Russian S-400 missile system despite U.S.-NATO opposition, was the tipping point.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, NATO — founded as a Soviet counterweight — remained as a vehicle of western military might and continued to expand to Russia’s borders, creating tensions between Russia and the West in the recent past. But with the resurgence of populist, nationalist leaders in several western countries, the NATO’s relevance has been called into question several times; U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron have used the words “obsolete” and “brain death”, respectively. Fast-deteriorating ties between the U.S. and **Turkey** is adding to the crisis. The Trump administration has already suspended Turkey from the F-35 programme, citing concerns over Russia spying on the fighter jet’s capabilities using the S-400 system’s radar. Earlier this month, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a Bill seeking sanctions on Turkey over the S-400 purchase and the Syria offensive. But Ankara seems determined to go ahead with the S-400 deal and even buy advanced Russian aircraft if the U.S. does not deliver the F-35s. And with threats to shut down Incirlik and Kurecik bases, it is now clear that the cracks are wide open. The question the Atlantic alliance faces in this hour of crisis is not just whether the U.S. and Turkey would manage to resolve their

differences, but also whether NATO, a Cold War relic, could stay relevant in a post-Cold War era where bilateral ties are fast-changing.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **relic** (noun) – historical/ancient thing which is outmoded/still remaining now.
- **downturn** (noun) – setback, upset/blow, decline (in business activity).
- **implications** (noun) – consequence/outcome, ramification, repercussion.
- **retaliation** (noun) – revenge, vengeance, counter-attack.
- **sanctions** (noun) – action taken, or an order given to force a country to obey international laws by limiting or stopping trade with that country, by not allowing economic aid for that country, etc (Courtesy: VOA Learning English).
- **warhead** (noun) – The explosive head of a missile.
- **slump** (verb) – decline, degenerate, worsen.
- **extradite** (verb) – to surrender a fugitive (a person who has escaped from being confined/accused of crime) from one jurisdiction to another by mutual agreements between the two countries.
- **orchestrate** (verb) – organize/mastermind, plan, choreograph.
- **coup** (noun) – a sudden and violent regime change, seizure of power, (illegal) takeover of power.
- **blow** (noun) – setback, upset, misfortune.
- **militia** (noun) – armed forces, military unit, soldiery (from the civil population to support main forces).
- **affiliate** (noun) – associate, partner, confederate.
- **profile** (noun) – The extent to which a person/organization attracts public notice.
- **invade** (verb) – assail, attack, take over.
- **tipping point** (noun) – the point in a condition at which a small development/change causes major & unstoppable changes.
- **counterweight** (noun) – counterbalance, stabilizer.
- **vehicle** (noun) – mechanism, organ, medium.
- **might** (noun) – strength, force, power.
- **resurgence** (noun) – revival, re-emergence, rejuvenation.
- **populist** (noun) – relating to the politicians who claim that they are representing the common/ordinary people.
- **relevance** (noun) – significance, importance, appropriateness.
- **call into question** (phrase) – doubt, distrust, suspect.
- **obsolete** (adjective) – out of date, discontinued, old.
- **deteriorate** (verb) – get worse, decline, degrade.
- **add to** (verb) – increase, aggravate, worsen/deepen.
- **offensive** (noun) – attack, assault, drive.
- **difference** (noun) – disagreement, difference of opinion, misunderstanding, dispute.
- **Cold War** (noun) – The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc and powers in the Eastern Bloc.
- **bilateral** (adjective) – involving two groups or countries.

☞“I AM NOT TELLING YOU IT’S GOING TO BE EASY.
I’M TELING YOU IT’S GOING TO BE WORTH IT.”☞