

## Tragic trek: on unauthorised expeditions

### *Trekking clubs have exploited ignorance of regulations to lead adventurers to their deaths*

Venturing into forests for a trek without certified guides is akin to walking into a death trap with one's eyes closed. Many cases of trekkers being fatally attacked by wild animals, often elephants, and other accidents such as falling off cliffs in the Western and Eastern Ghats bear testimony to this. In the latest incident, on Sunday, a 40-year-old woman, who reportedly went trekking in a reserve forest in Coimbatore, with her husband and friends, was trampled by an elephant. In 2018, 23 people, most of them youngsters, perished in a forest fire while on an unauthorised expedition in south Tamil Nadu's Kurangani hills. The hike was organised by a private trekking club without Forest Department permission. There have been numerous instances of lost trekkers being eventually rescued by forest personnel or locals. Not all are fortunate though. In 2014, a budding Tamil film art director vanished while on an unauthorised trek in Coimbatore's Vellingiri hills. Far from being sensitised by these tragedies about the dangers of unfamiliar terrain and wild animals, trekkers continue to put themselves in harm's way.

To an extent, ignorance of laws governing forest entry contributes to this. Private adventure clubs, most of them online entities, continue to entice youngsters by promising an adventurous experience in the wild. They conceal information on whether they are authorised to conduct such expeditions. In the wake of the Kurangani tragedy, the Tamil Nadu government made it mandatory for trekkers to apply for permission from the competent authority to trek on a linear route in reserve forests, and by paying a fee. Many States also promote eco-tourism by conducting organised treks along safe designated routes and escorted by persons familiar with the terrain. Such treks follow a certain rule of thumb prescribing the right clothing and footwear, highlighting the need to be inconspicuous, and maintaining a safe distance from wildlife. There is a need to publicise trekking rules and also the availability of State-run eco-tourism projects so that nature and adventure enthusiasts are not misled by touts. Using technology, the Forest Department must strengthen its surveillance mechanism to prevent the illegal entry of trekkers. As the Atulya Misra Committee, which probed the Kurangani fire tragedy, recommended, the government must fund acquisition of more unmanned, high-technology aerial vehicles, which would aid the Forest Department that is short on manpower. Laws need to be tightened to deal with violators, who are now merely fined for trespassing into reserve forests. The authorities must also monitor advertisements by private adventure clubs, both offline and online, to ensure they do not conduct unauthorised treks.

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

- **trek** (noun) – a form of walking, undertaken with the specific purpose of exploring and enjoying the scenery; a long journey on foot, walk.
- **expedition** (noun) – trip, excursion, outing, journey.
- **exploit** (verb) – take advantage of, make use of, utilize.
- **ignorance** (noun) – unawareness, inexperience, lack of knowledge/information.
- **venture** (verb) – undertake a risky journey; dare to do something.
- **akin** (adjective) – similar, related, equivalent.

- **fatally** (adverb) – deadly, lethally, catastrophically.
- **cliff** (noun) – a high steep or overhanging face of rock, often on a coast; rock face, ridge, precipice, overhang.
- **bear** (verb) – have, show, display.
- **testimony** (noun) – evidence, proof, attestation/witness.
- **trample** (verb) – walk on someone/something to damage/spoil; walk over, crush by walking on.
- **perish** (verb) – die, expire, be killed suddenly (particularly in an accident).
- **personnel** (noun) – staff, employees, workforce.
- **budding** (adjective) – aspiring, future, prospective, rising.
- **far from** (phrase) – not, not at all, nowhere near.
- **sensitise** (verb) – responsive to, make sensitive to, reactive to.
- **terrain** (noun) – area, domain, territory.
- **put in harm's way** (phrase) – in a dangerous place or situation.
- **entice** (verb) – attract, tempt, induce.
- **in the wake of** (phrase) – aftermath, as a result of, as a consequence of.
- **competent** (adjective) – suitable, appropriate; qualified.
- **linear** (adjective) – direct, undeviating, unbending.
- **eco-tourism** (noun) – it is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education".
- **escort** (verb) – guide, lead, conduct.
- **rule of thumb** (phrase) – a principle with broad application that is not intended to be strictly accurate or reliable for every situation.
- **inconspicuous** (adjective) – unnoticeable, unremarkable, hidden.
- **tout** (noun) – illegal salesman.
- **acquisition** (noun) – acquiring, collection/procurement.
- **trespass** (verb) – impinge on, intrude on, infringe.

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## **Needless fracas: On Governors vs Kerala and West Bengal governments**

### ***Governors must not push boundaries of their limited powers to check elected governments***

The endless squabbles between the Governors and respective State governments in Kerala and West Bengal are disconcerting. Arif Mohammad Khan and Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governors of Kerala and West Bengal, respectively, have arrogated to themselves an activist role, which is at the heart of the tensions. Mr. Khan has made repeated public statements on controversial questions such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019; he has even said that it was his duty to defend the laws made by the Centre. It is a dubious claim to make, and at any rate, there is no discernible precedent as such. His view that his office is not a rubber stamp is true, but he must also be mindful that the Constitution envisages the execution of popular will through an elected government. Mr. Dhankhar has placed himself at the centre of several controversies, and often appears eager for the next spectacular

showdown with the State government. Kerala's Left Democratic Front has been more restrained than the combative resistance by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, but parties barring the BJP in both States are agitated over the proactive, and often provocative roles of their respective Governors. The boisterous profiles of these Governors are symptomatic of a larger malaise of degrading relations between the Centre and States ruled by parties opposed to the BJP, aggravated by an insatiable yearning of the former for centralisation of power.

The Constitution seeks to bolster centripetal forces in this vast and diverse country, and the Centre's power to appoint Governors is one such. The Governor's constitutional role has been debated and interpreted through several cases, but ingenious occupants of the office have managed to push the boundaries with unprecedented moves. Sagacious occupants have used the Governor's office to promote national integration. Many others have merely acted as agents of the ruling party at the Centre. Using a pliant Governor to undermine a State government or engineer a legislative majority is an old and secular trick used by all parties at the Centre. State government-Governor conflicts have hence not been rare, but what makes the current situation extraordinary is the political context. No other government in the past has sought to construct a centralising narrative for the nation as the current one at the Centre; and no government in the past has been as intolerant towards its diversity. In this schema, the Governor appears to have a critical, instrumental role. The ignominious role played by the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in ending its special constitutional status last year is instructive. The Governor's role as a link between the State and the Centre shall not be an imperial one. The office of the Governor must be a dialogic and consultative one. The combative posturing in Kerala and West Bengal will bring more disarray, no unity. The Centre must treat State governments with the respect that democratically elected governments deserve.

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

- **fracas** (noun) – disturbance, quarrel, scuffle.
- **check** (verb) – restrain, contain, control.
- **squabble** (noun) – argument, fight, dispute.
- **disconcerting** (adjective) – discomfiting, unsettling, disturbing.
- **arrogate** (verb) – assume, take over, acquire/claim (something without justification).
- **activist** (adjective) – relating to a person who supports a political or societal change/cause.
- **at the heart of** (phrase) – to be the most important part of something, primarily.
- **dubious** (adjective) – suspicious, questionable, unreliable.
- **at any rate** (phrase) – in any case, regardless, anyway.
- **discernible** (adjective) – noticeable, perceptible, recognizable.
- **precedent** (noun) – model, exemplar, example, pattern; previous example/instance, prior instance.
- **rubber stamp** (noun) – a person or organisation that gives automatic approval without consideration.
- **envisage** (verb) – foresee, predict, forecast.
- **execution** (noun) – implementation, enforcement, discharge.
- **showdown** (noun) – confrontation, face-off, clash.
- **restrained** (adjective) – self-controlled, thoughtful, unemotional, undemonstrative.
- **combative** (adjective) – aggressive, belligerent, warlike.
- **resistance** (noun) – opposition to, refusal to accept, unwillingness/disinclination/reluctance to accept.

- **barring** (preposition) – except for, with the exception of, apart from, other than, excluding.
- **provocative** (adjective) – annoying, irritating, inflammatory.
- **boisterous** (adjective) – lively, active, energetic; unrestrained/uncontrolled.
- **profile** (noun) – the extent to which a person/organization attracts public notice.
- **symptomatic** (adjective) – indicative, signalling, warning.
- **malaise** (noun) – trouble, unease, unhappiness/depression.
- **degrade** (verb) – cheapen, devalue, reduce/deteriorate.
- **aggravate** (verb) – make worse, exacerbate, inflame, compound.
- **insatiable** (adjective) – unappeasable, uncontrollable, never satisfied/impossible to satisfy.
- **yearning** (noun) – longing, need/urge, craving, desire.
- **centralisation** (noun) – the process of having functions, powers, people or things only in a central location or authority.
- **bolster** (verb) – strengthen, support, reinforce/buttress.
- **centripetal** (adjective) – moving towards a centre.
- **interpret** (verb) – explain, clarify, make clear.
- **ingenious** (adjective) – intelligent, talented, clever.
- **occupant** (noun) – incumbent, holder; inhabitant.
- **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
- **sagacious** (adjective) – clever, intelligent, showing great knowledge.
- **integration** (noun) – integrity/unification, unity/union, oneness/harmony.
- **pliant** (adjective) – compliant, controllable, responsive.
- **undermine** (verb) – reduce, spoil, damage.
- **engineer** (verb) – bring about, cause, arrange, pull off (something skillfully).
- **secular** (adjective) – (a trend) happening over an indefinitely long period.
- **extraordinary** (adjective) – unusual, strange/odd, uncommon.
- **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
- **intolerant** (adjective) – prejudiced, discriminatory, biased.
- **schema** (noun) – scheme, plan, framework/structure.
- **ignominious** (adjective) – humiliating, undignified, embarrassing, shameful.
- **instructive** (adjective) – revealing, explanatory, telling, informative.
- **imperial** (adjective) – monarchical, authoritative, high-handed/domineering.
- **dialogic** (adjective) – relating to the form of dialogue.
- **consultative** (adjective) – aimed to provide advice.
- **posturing** (noun) – behaviour, attitude, position/stand.
- **disarray** (noun) – disorder, confusion, disorganization.

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## Fighting radicalisation: On CDS Bipin Rawat's comments

### Deradicalisation of Kashmir's Islamist youth is essential, but not through segregation camps

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat has a curious habit of saying things that raise the hackles of those who are concerned about military propriety and also officers in uniform speaking about civilian matters. Addressing a panel on countering terrorism at the Raisina dialogue organised by

the Ministry of External Affairs and Observer Research Foundation at New Delhi, he argued that there has been a significant increase in radicalisation among young people in Kashmir — “girls and boys as young as 10-12”, included. He suggested that youth should be “isolated from radicalisation in a gradual way” and to be “taken out separately and possibly taken into some deradicalisation camps”. He also revealed that such camps existed in the country. There is no doubt that radicalisation must be countered at all levels, whether in Kashmir or elsewhere. But the government should reveal the nature of these camps that the CDS claims are functioning as they raise questions about their legal status and the identity of the youth there. In the last few years, there has been a rise in protests and violence in the Kashmir Valley, besides disaffection that has peaked following the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir’s special status and its conversion into a Union Territory. This is unlike a decade ago, when terrorism and violence had reduced drastically when compared to the 1990s, and there was a spurt in participation in democratic processes, besides a gradual diminishing of the Valley’s radical voice. Today, however, with political representatives, this includes those from among the mainstream polity, either facing curbs or under detention, the ground has become fertile for the revival of radicalism, which has been expressed either as a shrill form of separatism or invoked as extremist Islamist ideology.

However, while deradicalisation is certainly an imperative, Gen. Rawat’s solution is way off the mark. Segregation of youth and individuals from family and community — many could be juveniles — is a recipe for further alienation and public revulsion and also plainly illegal. It is not the job of the Army or security forces to undertake what is a mandate for the agencies of the civilian State. Deradicalisation is best achieved through effective teaching and incorporation of civic studies in the school curriculum for children who are getting radicalised due to the prevailing circumstances in the Valley. Besides this, there has to be an administrative outreach to the citizenry not to give in to radical demands and the rhetoric of extremists. More importantly, the reversal of repressive conditions such as limited Net access and the detention of political representatives is a must. Winning Kashmiri hearts and minds is a long battle; short-sighted and illiberal measures from an authoritarian playbook could prove counter-productive.

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

- **radicalisation** (noun) – the process of causing someone to follow radical ways particularly in politics (& society).
- **deradicalization** (noun) – the action/process of making someone become less radical (extreme) in their political or religious beliefs.
- **segregation** (noun) – separation, setting apart, sorting out (of different racial groups in a country).
- **curious** (adjective) – strange/unusual, unconventional, surprising.
- **raise one’s hackles** (phrase) – make someone very angry, upset, irritate, annoy.
- **propriety** (noun) – decorum, correctness, good manners.
- **address** (verb) – talk to, give a talk to, speak to, give a lecture to.
- **disaffection** (noun) – dissatisfaction, disgruntlement, discontent/hostility.
- **abrogation** (noun) – abolition, repeal, cancellation (of a law/agreement).
- **unlike** (adjective) – different from, dissimilar to.
- **spurt** (noun) – sudden increase, rise, surge.
- **radical** (adjective) – extremist, fanatical, militant.
- **curb** (noun) – restraint, restriction, control.
- **detention** (noun) – confinement/incarceration, captivity, custody.

- **fertile** (adjective) – productive, high-yielding, rich/generative.
- **revival** (noun) – comeback, reintroduction, reappearance.
- **radicalism** (noun) – actions/beliefs having extreme political/religious views. extremism, fanaticism, dogmatism.
- **shrill** (adjective) – loud/strong, high-pitched, ear-piercing, harsh.
- **separatism** (noun) – dissension, nonconformity, dissent/faction.
- **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to, adduce.
- **extremist** (noun) – fundamentalist, activist, militant.
- **ideology** (noun) – beliefs, ideas/opinions, principles.
- **imperative** (adjective) – vitally important, crucial/critical, essential.
- **way** (adverb) – extremely, very, particularly.
- **off the mark** (phrase) – inaccurate, incorrect, wrong.
- **juvenile** (adjective) – young, teenage, underage.
- **recipe** (noun) – process, means, way (of achieving).
- **alienation** (noun) – isolation, detachment, estrangement/separation.
- **revulsion** (noun) – disgust, repulsion, aversion/hatred/dislike.
- **civic studies** (noun) – an interdisciplinary, emerging field that practically investigates civic engagement, civic education, and civil society.
- **curriculum** (noun) – syllabus, subjects, programme of studies.
- **radicalise** (verb) – to cause to follow radical (extreme) ways particularly in politics (& society).
- **prevailing** (adjective) – existing; current.
- **outreach** (noun) – the level of reaching out/activity/effort; involvement.
- **citizenry** (noun) – all the people/citizens (of a place/country considered as a whole).
- **give in** (phrasal verb) – surrender, yield, submit; succumb, comply.
- **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- **repressive** (adjective) – oppressive, dominating/coercive, authoritarian/draconian.
- **hearts and minds** (phrase) – used in reference to emotional and intellectual support.
- **short-sighted** (adjective) – narrow-minded, unwise, thoughtless.
- **illiberal** (adjective) – intolerant, narrow-minded, unenlightened.
- **authoritarian** (adjective) – oppressive, dictatorial, totalitarian.
- **playbook** (noun) – strategies.
- **counter-productive** (adjective) – harmful, damaging, dangerous/destructive.

## Talking of Kashmir: on China raising Kashmir issue again at UNSC

### While opposing internationalising of the Kashmir dispute, India must engage Pakistan

For the second time since the government's decision on Article 370 in August last year, China raised the issue of Kashmir at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Wednesday, prompting a protest from New Delhi. In its response, the government said that Beijing should "refrain" from bringing a bilateral issue into the UNSC, and accused China of working at Pakistan's behest. New Delhi's response also pointed to the "overwhelming majority" of Security Council members being opposed to the Chinese reference on conditions in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), which resulted in a lack of consensus for any kind of statement at the end of the meeting. India's case rests on the 1972 Shimla accord, where India and Pakistan agreed to resolve the Kashmir issue bilaterally. China's repeated raising of Kashmir since last



August, which includes an aborted attempt in December, is unconstructive and will impact the India-China bilateral relationship if it continues. It is also unlikely to push the government, which has already defied several international calls from friendly countries, into lifting restrictions or rolling back its measures in Kashmir. Given that New Delhi has refrained from raising similar issues over Tibet, Xinjiang or Hong Kong, it is unfair on the part of Beijing to take its concerns to the international stage, especially since President Xi Jinping didn't officially raise such concerns while visiting India in October.

While China's move may be unwarranted, it is yet another reason for New Delhi to take heed of the continuing and unprecedented criticism of its actions in Kashmir. Prior to August, the last time Kashmir was raised at the UNSC format was in 1971; it has since been raised twice within a period of five months. China may have found no takers for a statement, but the fact that it was allowed to raise the issue at the UNSC cannot be brushed away. Nor can India maintain the duality of insisting, on the one hand, that Kashmir is a bilateral issue and, on the other hand, rejecting all bilateral talks with Pakistan. At some point, the government must push for normalisation of ties with Pakistan as well as for the lifting of restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir. In the past few days, it seems the government has decided to review some of its decisions taken in August: it has released political prisoners and restored 2G connectivity to select places; it has also taken one group of envoys to Srinagar and Jammu, and is making plans for 36 Cabinet Ministers, who have not visited the region yet, to travel there. These measures, however, must not come in dribs and drabs, but must be comprehensive. Only when all communications are restored, all political prisoners freed and added security restrictions removed can the real task of healing in J&K even begin.

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

- **prompt** (verb) – give rise to, bring about, cause, trigger.
- **refrain** (verb) – stop oneself, abstain, desist from, hold back.
- **bilateral** (adjective) – involving two groups or countries.
- **behest** (noun) – instruction, requirement, demand, wish/desire.
- **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
- **overwhelming** (adjective) – massive/huge, sweeping/decisive, absolute.
- **reference** (noun) – mention, remark, comment.
- **consensus** (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group. agreement, concurrence.
- **rest on** (verb) – be based on, depend on, rely on.
- **accord** (noun) – agreement, treaty, pact.
- **aborted** (adjective) – failed, flopped.
- **unconstructive** (adjective) – making difficulties, unhelpful, uncooperative, negative.
- **unlikely** (adjective) – not likely, doubtful, implausible, questionable.
- **roll back** (phrasal verb) – reverse, cancel, repeal/rescind.
- **unwarranted** (adjective) – unjustified, unnecessary, unreasonable, unjust.
- **heed** (noun) – attention, notice, consideration.
- **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
- **taker** (noun) – a person who accepts something.
- **brush away** (phrasal verb) – ignore, dismiss, disregard, shrug off.
- **duality** (noun) – a situation in which two opposite/contrasting ideas or feelings exist at the same time.
- **push for** (verb) – insist on, ask for, call for.
- **normalisation** (noun) – the process of bringing something back to a normal condition.
- **envoy** (noun) – representative, delegate, messenger/spokesperson (on a diplomatic mission).

- **drips and drabs** (phrase) – in small sporadic amounts, bit by bit, little by little (quantities). (**sporadic** means infrequent, irregular, patchy).
- **comprehensive** (adjective) – all-inclusive, complete, full.
- **can** (verb) – have the opportunity to; have the possibility to.

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| Phrasal Verb       | Meaning   | Example  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <b>Back out of</b> | Fail to keep an agreement, arrangement.           | She <b>BACKED OUT OF</b> the agreement at the last minute.   |
| <b>Back out of</b> | Exit a parking area in reverse gear.              | She <b>BACKED</b> the Rolls <b>OUT OF</b> its parking space.   |
| <b>Back up</b>     | Make a copy of computer data.                     | You should always <b>BACK UP</b> important files and documents so that you won't lose all your work if something goes wrong with the hardware. |
| <b>Back up</b>     | Support.  | The rest of the staff <b>BACKED</b> her <b>UP</b> when she complained about working conditions.  |
| <b>Back up</b>     | Drive a vehicle backwards.                        | Tom <b>BACKED UP</b> without looking and ran over his laptop.  |
| <b>Bag out</b>     | Criticise.  | Don't bag out <b>BAG OUT</b> Australian English.   |
| <b>Bail out</b>    | Save, rescue.                                     | The government had to <b>BAIL OUT</b> the airline because it was losing so much money.   |
| <b>Bail out</b>    | Remove water from something that is flooded.      | The boat was leaking so they had to <b>BAIL</b> it <b>OUT</b> .  |
| <b>Bail out</b>    | Jump out of a plane because it is going to crash. | The pilot <b>BAILED OUT</b> when he saw that the engines had failed.   |
| <b>Bail out of</b> | Pay a bond to release someone from jail.          | I must <b>BAIL</b> my drunken brother <b>OUT OF</b> jail.  |
| <b>Bail out on</b> | Stop supporting someone when they are in trouble. | Everybody <b>BAILED OUT ON</b> him when the scandal broke.   |
| <b>Bail up</b>     | Talk to someone and delay them.                   | I was late because he <b>BAILED</b> me <b>UP</b> on the phone and wouldn't shut up.  |
| <b>Bail up</b>     | Rob someone at gunpoint.                          | He was <b>BAILED UP</b> by a couple of muggers as he came out of the bank.   |
| <b>Ball up</b>     | Confuse or make things complicated.               | The new project has <b>BALLED</b> me <b>UP</b> - I have no idea what to do.  |
| <b>Ball up</b>     | Roll or form into a round shape.                  | He <b>BALLED UP</b> his napkin when he had finished eating.  |
| <b>Balls up</b>    | Spoil, ruin.                                      | He <b>BALLSED</b> the presentation <b>UP</b> .   |

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☞ "IN ORDER TO SUCCEED, YOUR DESIRE FOR SUCCESS SHOULD BE GREATER THAN YOUR FEAR OF FAILURE." ☞