

Capital campaign: On Delhi Assembly election

Delhi will test the AAP's governance politics against the BJP's strategy of polarisation

The contest between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Delhi Assembly election is worthy of attention for several reasons beyond the fact that it is happening in the national capital. AAP leader and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been successful in constructing a *sui generis* politics, geographically confined though it is. Mr. Kejriwal has narrowed down politics to governance questions developed through his long involvement in the Right to Information and anti-corruption movements. Fired up by an infinite capacity to fight, the AAP founder leader has been a match for the BJP amid the vast ruins of Opposition politics in India. The impressive improvements in the delivery of basic public services such as health and education by his government appear to have reinforced his popularity. Along the way, he has not just forgotten his signature agenda of an anti-corruption ombudsman and decentralised governance, but also concentrated so much power that AAP is synonymous with the leader. Mr. Kejriwal has also shown a remarkable ability to skip the polarising traps that the BJP lay for its opponents. He evades, rather than confronts, the raging debates of our time, such as citizenship; and often outsmarts the BJP in its own game of majoritarianism, like when he cheered as Jammu and Kashmir was stripped of its special status. But, all his skills were not enough for a win in the Lok Sabha elections last year, which saw his party biting the dust for a second time. The endurance of his politics is on test.

If Mr. Kejriwal has painstakingly kept the focus on local governance issues, the BJP's attempt yet again is to raise a façade of emotive, discordant slogans to camouflage an economy that is flaking out. While Mr. Kejriwal walks a tight rope on the ongoing protests in Delhi against the CAA, the BJP has launched a blistering attack on them. Union Minister Anurag Thakur has led party workers in calling for the shooting of "traitors", while a BJP Member of Parliament has equated the protesters with rapists and looters. Such statements are not merely condoned, but appear to enjoy positive encouragement from the top brass, as Home Minister Amit Shah himself has made protesters the target of his ire. Unable to offer an inspiring message of progress, the BJP hopes it can tackle Mr. Kejriwal's popularity by raising the bogey of 'traitors at the door'. The Congress has been trying to invoke the memories of its 15 years in government marked by a spurt in infrastructure development and economic growth in the State, but its ability to make the contest triangular remains suspect. There is a trend of voters making a distinction between parliamentary and State elections. If Delhi makes that distinction yet again, political parties will also have to write that into their respective electoral strategies.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **polarisation** (noun) – separation of two contrasting groups (based on different opinions/beliefs).
- **sui generis** (adjective) – Latin, literally 'of its own kind'; unique, individual, special.
- **confine** (verb) – restrict, limit.
- **narrow down** (phrasal verb) – reduce, lessen, decrease.
- **fire up** (phrasal verb) – arouse, energize, activate, motivate.
- **match** (noun) – equal, rival, equivalent.
- **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
- **ruins** (noun) – remains, fragments, remainder, wreckage.

- **reinforce** (verb) – strengthen, fortify, bolster up.
- **signature** (adjective) – distinctive, unique, individual/special.
- **ombudsman** (noun) – watchdog, defender, preserver.
- **decentralized** (adjective) – relating to the authority/power/control transferred to the states from central (government).
- **synonymous with** (adjective) – closely associated with.
- **lay (for)** (verb) – prepare (a trap) for someone.
- **evade** (verb) – avoid, dodge, escape.
- **raging** (adjective) – furious, enraged, incensed.
- **outsmart** (verb) – outwit, outplay, out-think.
- **majoritarianism** (noun) – a philosophy that states that a majority (sometimes categorized by religion, language, social class, or some other identifying factor) of the population is entitled to a certain degree of primacy (priority) in society, and has the right to make decisions that affect the society.
- **cheer** (verb) – praise, congratulate, give support to.
- **strip of** (verb) – dispossess, deprive, relieve.
- **bite the dust** (phrase) – fail, be unsuccessful, be defeated.
- **endurance** (noun) – lasting power, permanence, longevity; durability.
- **painstakingly** (adverb) – with great care & thoroughness.
- **facade** (noun) – outward appearance, false display, pretence.
- **emotive** (adjective) – sensitive, emotional, delicate.
- **discordant** (adjective) – at variance, inharmonious, divergent, disagreeing.
- **camouflage** (verb) – hide, conceal, cover.
- **flake out** (phrasal verb) – collapse, break down.
- **walk a tight rope** (phrase) – to deal with a difficult situation in which a very small error could have very bad outcomes.
- **blistering** (adjective) – intense, strong, fierce.
- **traitor** (noun) – betrayer, double-dealer, defector.
- **condone** (verb) – deliberately ignore, not take into consideration, disregard.
- **top brass** (noun) – very important/famous people in authority.
- **ire** (noun) – anger, rage, fury, wrath.
- **bogey** (noun) – nightmare/anathema, curse, bane.
- **at the door** (phrase) – on access/entry to an event.
- **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to; bring forth, evoke.
- **spurt** (noun) – sudden increase, rise, surge.
- **distinction** (noun) – difference, variation.

Planned injustice: On Donald Trump's peace plan for Israel and Palestine

Trump's plan will validate Israeli annexation of Palestinian areas without bringing peace

For any peace process to be successful, the first step is to take all conflicting parties into confidence. By that standard, U.S. President Donald Trump's peace plan for Israel and Palestine is a failure from the start as the Palestinians rejected it even before the proposals were unveiled. The Palestinians believe that Mr. Trump, whose administration recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017, is not an impartial negotiator between the two sides. And the plan Mr. Trump unveiled on Tuesday in the White House seems to be confirming Palestinian concerns. Mr. Trump has thrown his weight behind the two-state solution. But to achieve the solution, the plan overly favours the Israeli positions and demands excessive concessions from the Palestinians. According to the plan, Israel can annex the Jordan Valley as well as the Jewish settlements on the West Bank. It also recognises Jerusalem as the "undivided capital" of Israel, while the Palestinian capital could come up in the eastern outskirts of the city. It proposes to enlarge Gaza and swap the Arab-populated towns in southeast Israel with Palestine for parts of the West Bank. In effect, the Palestinians would lose roughly 30% of the West Bank, their claim to Jerusalem and the right to return of refugees. In return, they will get an independent state in a shrunken West Bank and an enlarged Gaza connected through a tunnel that would practically be encircled by Israel.

Explained | Trump's Israel-Palestine peace plan

It is true that the Palestinians' negotiation powers are at their weakest point. Their leadership is divided and the support they once enjoyed in Arab nations is also eroding. Representatives of the UAE, Bahrain and Oman were present at the event in Washington in which Mr. Trump unveiled the plan. Egypt also offered its support, while Saudi Arabia cautiously welcomed talks between Israel and Palestine. But on what conditions? It's hard to overlook the injustice in demanding that the Palestinians accept further annexation of the West Bank. Issues such as the status of Jerusalem and the right to return of refugees, an internationally accepted right, and the final borders should be resolved through talks, not by dictating terms to one party. Even to achieve statehood under the proposed conditions, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is required to crack down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad (which is practically impossible as both operate from Gaza and the PA runs only West Bank territories), stop supporting families of those jailed or killed by Israel and stop challenging Israeli actions on international fora. It is virtually impossible for any Palestinian leader to sell these proposals to a people who have been resisting Israel's occupation for decades. Under the current conditions, it looks more like a plan for further annexation of territories by Israel than one that seeks constructive and lasting peace.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **annexation** (noun) – occupation, takeover, appropriation.
- **take someone into one's confidence** (phrase) – to tell someone a secret information with the understanding that the secret information will not be made public.
- **unveil** (verb) – present, announce, disclose/make public.
- **impartial** (adjective) – unbiased, unprejudiced, neutral, fair.
- **throw one's weight behind** (phrase) – to use one's influence to support something.
- **overly** (adverb) – unduly, inordinately, immoderately, excessively.
- **concession** (noun) – grant of privilege/right (to use a piece of land).
- **annex** (verb) – add, attach, join.
- **settlement** (noun) – an uninhabited place where people established a community/colony.
- **come up** (phrasal verb) – come about, occur, happen.
- **outskirts** (plural noun) – surrounding/outlying areas, suburbs.
- **Gaza Strip** (proper noun) – simply Gaza, is a self-governing Palestinian territory surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, Israel and Egypt.

- **swap** (verb) – exchange, interchange.
- **in effect** (phrase) – really, in reality, practically.
- **refugee** (noun) – displaced person, asylum seeker, escapee/exile.
- **shrink** (verb) – lessen, reduce, decrease.
- **erode** (verb) – (gradually) deteriorate, destroy, spoil.
- **overlook** (verb) – miss, fail to notice; disregard, neglect/ignore.
- **statehood** (noun) – the condition of being an independent nation/state/country.
- **crack down on** (phrasal verb) – clampdown on, get tough/severe measures, suppress.
- **jihad** (noun) – 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. It does also mean a fight against enemies of Islam.
- **fora** plural form of **forum** (noun) – assembly, gathering, conference.
- **sell** (verb) – persuade someone to accept, convince someone of the merits of, talk someone into.
- **constructive** (adjective) – useful/helpful, productive, practical/effective/beneficial.
- **lasting** (adjective) – long-lasting, long-term, permanent.

Theological thicket: On SC's hearing in Sabarimala temple case

SC must mark limits of religious freedom, against which legality of practices can be tested

The opening hearing before a nine-judge Supreme Court Bench, constituted to give an authoritative pronouncement on the nature of religious freedom under the Constitution, has revealed the conceptual confusion over the reference made to it. The Bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India, S.A. Bobde, has asked lawyers to "re-frame" the issues, or add to them, following submissions that the questions framed by a Bench of five judges were too broad. Further, the CJI has clarified that the Court will not be deciding the petitions seeking a review of the verdict in the Sabarimala temple case. Instead, it would limit itself to "larger questions" such as the interplay between freedom of religion and other fundamental rights; and the extent to which courts can probe whether a particular practice is essential to that religion or not. At the same time, he has said, "We will decide questions of law on women's entry into mosques/temples, genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras, entry of Parsi women who marry outside the community into the fire temple. We will not decide the individual facts of each case." It would be prudent if this approach means that the Bench would set out the limits of the freedom of religion, against which such practices can be tested and their legality determined. However, it would be unwise if the examination of every discriminatory practice becomes a fresh treatise on Articles 25 and 26, instead of being subjected to a simple test whether the particular practice is protected by the freedom of religion, or can be curbed on the grounds of "public order, morality and health".

A signal flaw in the reference is that it did not emanate from Benches before which these matters were pending. Normally, such issues are referred to a larger Bench only if the Court is faced with apparently contradictory precedents, or feels that the settled law requires reconsideration. A five-

judge Bench, while hearing the Sabarimala review petitions, had referred a set of questions to a larger Bench. But two dissenting judges had pointed out that it was up to Benches before which such cases came up to decide whether they should go by existing precedent, or refer the matter to larger Benches for fresh consideration. That the strength of the Bench was fixed at nine may indicate that the court is leaving scope for revisiting the 1954 seven-judge Bench decision in the Shirur Mutt case, holding that religious denominations had the autonomy to decide what religious practices were essential to them. A reconsideration of this "essentiality doctrine" will be useful only if it is a means to rid the court of the burden of entering the theological thicket. However, even without revisiting the judgment, courts have often given verdicts that protect individual rights, and uphold equality and dignity over regressive religious practices.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **theological** (adjective) – religious, scriptural, doctrinal.
- **thicket** (noun) – dense growth of something (particularly small trees/bushes close together).
- **authoritative pronouncement** (noun) – a formal declaration of opinion sanctioned by established authority.
- **submission** (noun) – argument, assertion/contention, claim.
- **interplay** (noun) – interaction, interchange, compromises, cooperation.
- **female genital mutilation** (FGM) (noun) – it comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female *genitalia*, or other injury to the female *genital* organs for non-medical reasons. (Courtesy: WHO).
- **prudent** (adjective) – wise, sensible, well judged.
- **set out** (phrasal verb) – present, describe, set forth, detail.
- **discriminatory** (adjective) – prejudicial, biased, unfair, inequitable.
- **treatise** (noun) – discourse, thesis, critique, written work.
- **be subjected to** (verb) – put through, undergo, experience; bring under jurisdiction.
- **curb** (verb) – restrain, control, contain, stifle, check.
- **grounds** (noun) – factors, reason, cause, basis.
- **morality** (noun) – ethics, rights and wrongs, correctness/propriety.
- **signal** (adjective) – notable, obvious, significant, striking.
- **flaw** (noun) – mistake, defect, blemish, fault, imperfection.
- **emanate from** (verb) – emerge, originate, start.
- **apparently** (adjective) – seemingly, evidently, it appears that.
- **precedent** (noun) – model, exemplar, example, pattern; previous example/instance, prior instance.
- **dissenting** (adjective) – disagreeing, opposing, arguing.
- **up to** (phrase) – the choice of (someone).
- **go by** (phrasal verb) – to follow/accept something.
- **scope** (noun) – opportunity, latitude, leeway (to do or deal with something).
- **hold** (verb) – believe, think, consider, feel.
- **autonomy** (noun) – self-determination, freedom, independence (from external control/influence).
- **denomination** (noun) – (religious) faith, belief, doctrine, theology; a branch of any religion.
- **doctrine** (noun) – principle, belief, rule.
- **means** (noun) – method, way, manner.
- **rid** (verb) – clear, make free, relieve.

- **uphold** (verb) – support, endorse, validate, justify.
- **regressive** (adjective) – unprogressive, negative, retrograde.

Maharaja on sale: on move to sell 100% stake in Air India

The only way to save Air India is by selling it on the best possible terms

Almost two years since the first attempt which failed to enthruse buyers, Air India is back on sale. Call it the government's desperation to exit the troubled airline that is devouring tax-payer money or call it smart learning from the last failed attempt, but the terms this time are exceptionally favourable and clearly appear to be tailored based on feedback from prospective buyers. As per the document inviting Expression of Interest (EOI), the government will sell 100% equity in the national carrier and Air India Express Ltd. and its 50% holding in AISATS, the joint venture with SATS Ltd., Singapore; the debt that the buyer will assume has been whittled down to Rs. 23,286.50 crore to match the written down value of its assets; the net worth of prospective bidders is reduced to Rs. 3,500 crore and bidding consortium members can have as low a stake as 10% only. It almost appears as if the terms are designed with specific bidders in mind. But there is one catch. The government has not addressed a prime hurdle to the stake sale — the fate of 17,984 employees of Air India and Air India Express, 9,617 of whom are permanent. Of the three troublesome factors that put off bidders the last time round — the government's insistence on holding a 24% stake in the airline post-privatisation, the large debt that it was expecting the buyer to assume and employee issues — the first two have been addressed but not the last one.

Apart from the huge employee base, the successful bidder will also have to deal with pension liability for the airline's retired employees and their perks such as free/rebated tickets. All that the EOI document says is that contingent liabilities due to retired employees will be clarified at the Request for Proposal stage. If there is one weak spot on which the sale attempt could falter it is this. There is no escaping the fact that whoever buys the airline will have to shed surplus labour. A turnaround will not be possible without pruning employee costs. Maybe the government is hoping to negotiate with short-listed bidders on this sensitive issue that could have the airline's unions up in arms. Yet, lack of upfront clarity on this may put off prospective bidders. The government ought to have gone the whole hog and clearly stated its intent. Maybe a moratorium for a specified period on forced attrition could have been spelt out. This would have helped bidders make up their minds. There has been criticism that a "nationalist" government is selling off the national airline. But such criticism has to take into account that precious taxpayer money has been washed down the drain trying to save the airline. A whopping Rs.30,500 crore has been sunk into Air India since 2012 despite which it has been posting losses. The best way to save the airline, its jobs and the national exchequer is to sell it. And sell it on the best possible terms with minimum compromise on employee interests.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **stake** (noun) – equity, share, investment.
- **enthruse** (verb) – motivate, spur/stimulate, encourage.
- **desperation** (noun) – riskiness, audacity, boldness.

- **devour** (verb) – consume, engulf, wipe out/destroy.
- **exceptionally** (adverb) – extraordinarily, unexpectedly, unusually.
- **tailor** (verb) – customize, adapt, adjust, modify, change.
- **prospective** (adjective) – potential, possible, aspiring.
- **Expression of Interest (EOI)** (noun) – EOI is one of the initial transaction documents. It indicates a serious interest from the buyer that their company would be interested to pay a certain valuation and acquire the seller's company through a formal offer.
- **carrier** (noun) – an aircraft carrier.
- **debt** (noun) – liability, financial obligation, borrowed capital.
- **whittle down** (verb) – reduce, cut down, lessen, decrease.
- **write down** value (noun) – a reduction in the calculated/estimated value of something (the book value of an asset).
- **consortium** (noun) – union, league, syndicate/corporation. Consortia is a plural form of consortium.
- **catch** (noun) – disadvantage, drawback, difficulty.
- **address** (verb) – attend to, tackle, deal with.
- **put off** (phrasal verb) – postpone, defer, delay.
- **insistence** (noun) – demand, compulsion, requirement.
- **privatisation** (noun) – transfer of a business, industry, or service from public to private ownership and control.
- **perk** (noun) – a benefit (perquisite/bonus/gratuity/reward/extra) someone gets from the job (apart from regular wages/salary).
- **rebated** (adjective) – refunded, repaid, deducted.
- **contingent** (adjective) – unexpected, unpredicted, possible/unforeseen.
- **falter** (verb) – hesitate, delay, be undecided, be irresolute.
- **there is no escaping the fact that** (phrase) – it means that something is certain/true.
- **shed** (verb) – discard, get rid of, do away with, abandon.
- **turnaround** (noun) – an unexpected change.
- **prune** (verb) – reduce, cut/trim, decrease.
- **up in arms** (phrase) – irritated, annoyed, displeased, aggrieved.
- **upfront** (adverb) – made in advance, beforehand.
- **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- **go whole hog** (phrase) – to do something entirely/completely (without stopping/delaying it).
- **moratorium** (noun) – a temporary suspension of something; embargo, ban, prohibition.
- **attrition** (noun) – gradual reduction of a workforce (employees).
- **spell out** (phrasal verb) – explain, make clear, elucidate/clarify.
- **make up one's mind** (phrase) – decide, come to a decision, make a decision.
- **take into account** (phrase) – consider, respect, take account of.
- **down the drain** (phrase) – being lost, wasted, spoiled, misspend (completely).
- **whopping** (adjective) – huge, massive, very large.
- **sink into** (phrasal verb) – invest something in, put money into something.
- **exchequer** (noun) – funds/resources/finances, treasury, coffers.
- **compromise** (noun) – agreement, understanding, settlement.

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
Bang about	Move in a place making a lot of noise.	He's BANGING ABOUT in the kitchen.
Bang around	Move in a place making a lot of noise.	I can hear him BANGING ABOUT upstairs.
Bang on	Talk at great length.	He BANGED ON for half an hour but no one was listening.
Bang on about	Keep talking about something.	He's always BANGING ON ABOUT football.
Bang out	Play a musical instrument loudly.	She BANGED the tune OUT on the piano.
Bang up	Put someone in prison.	The judge BANGED him UP for eight years.
Bang up	Damage badly.	He BANGED his car UP last night.
Bank on	Count or rely on.	I'm BANKING ON your help; I can't do it alone.
Bargain down	Persuade someone to drop the price of something they're selling.	I BARGAINED her DOWN to half what she originally wanted.
Bargain for	Expect something to happen (usually negative).	I hadn't BARGAINED FOR so many people coming.
Bargain on	Expect something to happen (usually negative).	I hadn't BARGAINED ON him coming.
Barge in	Enter a place and interrupt.	He keeps BARGING IN and asking stupid questions when I'm trying to work.
Barge into	Enter a place and interrupt people rudely.	They BARGED INTO my office without knocking and started talking even though I was on the phone.
Bash about	Mistreat physically.	If you BASH your monitor ABOUT like that, it won't last long.
Bash in	Break, damage or injure by hitting.	The burglars BASHED the door IN to enter the house.
Bash out	Write something quickly without much preparation.	I BASHED the essay OUT the night before I had to hand it in.
Bash up	Break, damage or hurt by hitting.	They BASHED him UP in the fight in the pub last week and he had to go to hospital.
Bawl out	Scold, shout at someone.	She BAWLED me OUT for coming home drunk.
Bawl out	Scold.	She BAWLED Raj OUT for getting there late.
Bawl out	Sing or shout unpleasantly loudly.	He BAWLED OUT our names at the top of his voice.
Be after	Try to find or get.	The police ARE AFTER him because of the theft.
Be along	Arrive.	The next bus should BE ALONG in the next quarter of an hour or so.
Be away	Be elsewhere; on holiday, etc..	She's AWAY on business for three weeks.

“LUXURY AND LIES HAVE HUGE MAINTENANCE COSTS.
 BUT...
 TRUTH AND SIMPLICITY ARE SELF MAINTAINED WITHOUT ANY COST.”