

## Mumbai Marooned:

Despite past experience, the metropolis remains unprepared for the monsoon

Mumbai once again struggled to stay afloat after the first heavy spell of rain this year, bringing back memories of the July 2005 flood. Each massive rainfall event is making it evident that the city is putting on a brave front and projecting resilience, but the failure of the Maharashtra government to upgrade its tattered infrastructure is taking a heavy toll and weighing down on the financial capital. A single day of rain has killed 22 people in a wall collapse in north Mumbai, while many more died in Pune and elsewhere. In Ratnagiri, a dam gave way creating a catastrophe; flights have been cancelled and normal life is affected. Clearly, the State government should have regarded the 94 cm of rain that paralysed Mumbai in one day 14 years ago as the baseline disaster to prepare for. That it could not manage 37 cm in 24 hours, that too after incurring a massive expenditure on management projects, shows a lack of resolve among political leaders, rampant inefficiency and lack of integrity in the administrative machinery. As one of the wettest metropolises in India getting about 210 cm of rain annually, it should have been a top order priority to restore rivers and canals to manage floods. The government of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis needs to explain why Mumbai is yet unprepared to cope, especially when rainfall is projected to become erratic in coming years, and when scientific insights point to intense rainfall in a short span of time, driven by warmer oceans and hotter cities.

In a recent report, the Comptroller and Auditor General identified prolonged delays in the upgrading of storm water drain infrastructure in Mumbai. On the other hand, after the deluge of 2005, the consensus was for the flood-carrying capacity of the Mithi river in the city to be increased. But the choked and polluted river was again overflowing this year. Beyond the sclerotic management of flood waters that relies on storm drains in Mumbai, and several other Indian cities, there is a need for a new urban paradigm. For one thing, Mumbai, Thane, Ratnagiri and Raigad have, during the last century, displayed a high seasonality index, indicating a relatively small monsoon window bringing a lot of rain. This is in contrast to steady, prolonged rain in the central districts in Maharashtra. So a new climate change-influenced normal could mean fewer days of torrential rain and erratic monsoons. Managing them calls for a new approach that is ecological, and makes restoration of existing urban wetlands and creation of reservoirs and water channels a high priority. The water question is the biggest challenge for Indian cities today, as both drought and flood are common. State governments should give it priority and address it by making urban planning people-centric. A strong framework is needed to manage water, starting with Mumbai.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Maroon		strand, abandon, leave behind, cast away
Afloat		floating, above, water
Tattered		ragged, scrapped, shredded, ribboned
Disaster		catastrophe, calamity, cataclysm, tragedy
Resolve		settle, sort out, solve, find a solution
Incur		attract, invite, earn, arouse
Rampant		controlled, unrestrained, unchecked, unbridled
Integrity		honesty, probity, rectitude, honour
Erratic		irregular, ehcppy
Prolonged		continuous, continuing for a long time
Sclerotic		rigid, unresponsive
Paradigm		model, pattern, example, exemplar
Torrential		copious, heavy, relentless, violent
Drought		lack of rain, shortage of water

## THE VISIBLE HAND

BJP must not stake claim to form a Ministry in Karnataka without an absolute majority

The political crisis in Karnataka that has been brewing for months has boiled over, threatening the congress-Janta Dal (S) coalition government. With 13 of its MLAs resigning from the Assembly in phases, and one independent withdrawing his support, the coalition's original strength of 118 in the 224-seat House appears to have come down to 104. If all the resignations are found valid and accepted by the speaker, the halfway mark will drop from 113 to 106. The BJP has 105 MLAs and the support of independent MLA Nagesh, who has resigned as a Minister. All the congress and JD (S) Ministers have resigned to allow the leadership the space to lure back the dissidents. With allegations of bribery, and abduction and confinement of lawmakers, what is unfolding is a mockery of democracy of lawmakers, what is unfolding is a mockery of democracy and a shameful disregard for the 2018 verdict. Though there are contradictions in the coalition and both parties had fought last year's election separately, post-poll coalitions are a legitimate and honourable route to the formation of a government in a hung Assembly. The legislators driven by nothing more than their greed are not setting a good example. Even if the congress and the JD (S) manage to quell the rebellion and save the government, the truce will be dubious and tainted.

The BJP's hand in the crisis is not invisible. In fact, its imprimatur is unmistakable in the turmoil. The party, which emerged as the single largest in the election but short of a majority, has not been able to accept the verdict and play the role of a responsible Opposition. The BJP's maximalist approach of seizing power by all means and in all places may have served it well in terms of expanding its footprint. But this approach does not conform to its claimed adherence to democracy. In Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, the BJP had acted on its philosophy that the pursuit of power justified all means. In Karnataka, the party has used the strategy of engineering resignations of MLAs to force by-elections several times over the last decade, given this pattern, and considering the BJP state unit's relentless attempts to destabilise the coalition from the word go, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's protestations in Parliament on Monday that the BJP had nothing to do with the current crisis in Karnataka carries little credibility. The party has meanwhile said that it would seek to form an alternative government, should the coalition crumble. The BJP must resist that temptation and instead wait for the results of the by-elections caused by the resignations. If the coalition collapses under its own weight, any alternative arrangement that is short of an absolute majority of the total strength of the House will be shaky and lacking in political legitimacy. That situation is best avoided.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Brew		develop, loom, impend, be imminent
Bail over		uncontrolled
Threaten		menace, frighten, intimidate, cow down coalition, alliance, union, partnership, bloc
Lure		attract, woo, lurate, court
Dissident		objector, dissenter, protestor, rebel
Allegation		claim, charge, accusation, contention
Bribery		suborination
Abduction		kidnapping, carrying off, seizure
Mockery		ridicule, derision, jeering, contempt
Shameful		disgraceful, deplorable, despicable
Contradiction		conflict, disagreement, opposition, inconsistency
Legitimate		legal, lawful, according to law
Quell		suppress, censor, putdown, bottle up
Rebellion		mutiny, revolution, contumacious, insurgent
Truce		ceasefire, armistia, peace
Dubious		doubtful, uncertain, unsure, hesitant
Tainted		traced, suggested, hinted
Turmoil		mayhem, disorder, turbulence, walkout
Adherent		follower, supporter, upholder, defender, advocate

Pursuit	striving towards, search for, quest after
Engineer (v)	organize
Relentless	continuous, prolonged, incessant, perpetual
Protestation	declaration, announcement profession.
Credibility	believability, plausibility, tenability
Crumble	dis-integrate, fall apart, fall to pieces
Avoid	circumvent, shun, abstain, evade, refrain
Seize	appropriate, confiscate, impound, commander
Crisis	difficult, fis, light, muddle, predicament
Greed	avarice, cupidity, acquisitiveness
Absolute	complete, total, utter, out and out