

## Course correction – China's block: on not listing Azhar as global terrorist

### Its decision on Masood Azhar is shocking — but India must keep up persuasive diplomacy

China's decision to block the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UN Security Council is both a setback to India's post-Pulwama diplomatic strategy and a reality check on ties with China at present. After the February 14 attack, claimed by the JeM, the government had made the listing of Azhar a focus in its diplomatic efforts. It reached out to several governments, and shared a dossier on Azhar with each member of the Security Council, who are all members of the 1267 ISIL and al-Qaeda sanctions committee. A special effort was made with Beijing, which has blocked the Azhar listing in the past, including just after the 2008 Mumbai attacks. From 2016 to 2018, India's proposals to list Azhar, with evidence of JeM involvement in the Pathankot airbase attack, were also foiled by China, which placed holds on the listing, and then vetoed it. The vetoes came despite the fact that the JeM is banned, and in the UNSC listing it is noted that Azhar, as its leader and founder, accepted funds from Osama bin Laden. China, as the one country that has refused to allow Azhar's name on the list, is well aware of the evidence against him, but is not ready to withdraw its objections. It is clear that despite India-China relations improving after the Wuhan summit in April 2018, China is unwilling to align itself with India on its concerns on cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

China's stand is regrettable and condemnable, and it has been consistent on this issue. New Delhi must now consider whether it wishes to accept this as a *fait accompli*, or confront Beijing to try to persuade it to change its stand by means of incentives or coercion. This is a challenge, as any kind of concerted international pressure from the Western countries in this regard has in the past only served to be counterproductive. It is also unlikely that the suggestions being offered by some political groups, of cutting imports from China and other punitive actions, will yield much. The government may be more successful if it identifies the incentives it can offer China in the next few months to review its position. While some of those incentives would be bilateral, the Chinese spokesperson's hint that dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad, and even possible "triangular" talks including Beijing, is indicative of China's thinking. The government must also not lose sight of the bigger picture: that the UNSC cannot enforce its own listings, and other leaders who have been sanctioned in the past remain free and unencumbered. While listing Azhar at the UNSC is an unfinished task, the larger issue remains: to ensure that Pakistan takes substantive action against Azhar, the JeM and other terror groups that are threatening India. China, with its economic and strategic leverage with Pakistan, may be better-placed to help in this matter.

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

- **Keep up** - to continue to do something
- **Persuasive** - good at making people agree to do or believe what you want them to
- **Diplomacy** - the profession or skill of preserving or creating friendly relationships between countries
- **Setback** - a problem that delays or that stops progress or makes a situation worse
- **Reality check** - an occasion that causes you to consider the facts about a situation and not your opinions, ideas, or beliefs
- **Dossier** - a set of documents about a person or situation

- **Sanction** - an official order to stop communication, trade, etc with a country that has broken international law
- **Airbase** - a military airport
- **Foil** - to prevent someone from doing something that they are trying to do
- **Veto** - to officially refuse to approve or allow something
- **Despite** - used for saying that something happens even though something else might have prevented it
- **Summit** - a meeting or series of meetings between leaders of two or more countries
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Cross-border** - going across a border between two countries
- **Emanate** - to come from a particular place
- **Regrettable** - making you feel sad or sorry because something happened that you wish had not happened
- **Condemn** - to say publicly that you think someone or something is bad or wrong
- **Consistent** - not changing in behaviour, attitudes, or qualities
- **Fait accompli** - something that has already been done and cannot be changed
- **Coercion** - the use of force or threats to make someone do something
- **Concerted** - involving a lot of people or organizations working together in a determined way
- **Counterproductive** - having the opposite result to the one you intended
- **Unlikely** - not likely to happen
- **Import** - a product from another country, that is bought with money from your country
- **Punitive** - relating to or causing punishment or great difficulty
- **Yield** - to produce something useful such as information or evidence
- **Bilateral** - a bilateral agreement or activity is one that involves two groups or countries
- **Spokesperson** - someone whose job is to officially represent an organization, for example in dealing with journalists
- **Dialogue** - a process in which two people or groups have discussions in order to solve problems
- **Bigger picture** - a whole or complete situation, including all the things that it affects, not just one part of it
- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- **Unencumbered** - without responsibilities or problems
- **Substantive** - important or serious, or referring to the most important or serious issues
- **Threatening** - showing or saying that someone is likely to do something that will harm you
- **Leverage** - the power to make someone do what you want

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## Course correction – **Horror in Pollachi: on sexual assault case** **Cases of sexual assault and blackmail must be pursued swiftly and the guilty brought to book**

The Tamil Nadu government's decision to transfer the 'Pollachi sexual abuse case' to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) gives the case rightful priority, and the agency must swiftly unravel the sexual assault and blackmail racket that has victimised a number of young women. The case had its origins in a complaint of sexual harassment, assault and robbery in a town in Coimbatore district. While the arrest of the accused was made in end-February, the case created a storm early this week when a leaked video found its way into the public sphere. Sourced from the phones of those who were arrested, it had a woman piteously pleading with her abusers to

leave her alone. In fact, what has been uncovered so far might be the mere tip of the iceberg, as initial investigation has indicated that the scale of the operations of the four young men in Pollachi might be much larger than is obvious now. Among the accused was a member of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (who has since been removed from the party's membership), and Opposition parties allege that the case involves those much higher in the State's ruling party leadership.

The public outrage that ensued had the government first ordering that the case be transferred to the Crime Branch-CID, and then in just a day, to the CBI. Given the timing, with the Lok Sabha polls and critical Assembly by-elections around the corner, the political glow on the case is likely to be accentuated. But it is important that even as the **investigation** proceeds to nail the guilty and establish the scale of the abuse and blackmail crimes, the women's identity and their privacy be strictly protected. The State Women's Commission has promised that it will conduct an investigation into the matter, providing telephone numbers that victims can call to lodge complaints with complete confidentiality. The National Commission for Women has expressed serious concern over the safety of women in Tamil Nadu. In a letter to the State DGP, its Chairperson has asked that appropriate action be taken, and sought an action taken report. For its part, the government cannot wash its hands of the matter with the transfer of the case to the CBI. It must allow and assist in a free and fair probe into the incidents to bring justice to the victims, and to ensure their dignity and anonymity are maintained. In this election season, the ruling and Opposition parties must summon their political morality by articulating the gravity of the crime and refraining from trying to make political capital out of this heinous crime. Sexual assault and blackmail are dark crimes — the guilty must be brought to book. And the women and their families must be assured of justice and confidentiality.

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

- **Horror** - a very strong feeling of shock, fear or disgust caused by something extremely unpleasant
- **Assault** - a physical attack on someone, or the crime of physically attacking someone
- **Blackmail** - to make someone give you money or do what you want by threatening to tell people embarrassing information about them
- **Pursue** - to follow a course of activity
- **Swiftly** - quickly or immediately
- **Guilty** - someone who is guilty has committed a crime
- **Bring someone to book** - to punish someone, or to make them explain their behaviour publicly when they have done something wrong
- **Rightful** - officially or legally accepted as right or correct
- **Swiftly** - quickly or immediately
- **Unravel** - to understand something complicated by thinking about it for a long time
- **Racket** - an illegal activity that makes money
- **Victimise** - to treat someone in a deliberately unfair way
- **Sexual harassment** - the offensive or threatening behaviour of a person who regularly makes sexual comments or touches someone in a sexual way
- **Accused** - a specific person that is accused of a crime in a court of law
- **Piteous** - a piteous sound, expression, or situation makes you feel sympathy for someone or something
- **Abuser** - someone who treats another person in a cruel, violent, or unfair way
- **Uncover** - to find out about something that has been hidden or kept secret
- **Mere** - only / just
- **Tip of the iceberg** - a problem or difficult situation that shows that a much more serious problem exists

- **Obvious** - clear to almost anyone
- **Allege** - to say that something is true or that someone has done something wrong or illegal, even though this has not been proved
- **Outrage** - a strong feeling of anger and shock at something that you feel is wrong or unfair
- **Ensue** - to happen after something else, often as a result of it
- **By-elections** - an election in one particular area to choose a new representative in parliament or on a council, or to replace someone who has died or left the job
- **Around the corner** - coming very soon
- **Accentuate** - to emphasize something, or to make it more noticeable
- **Privacy** - the freedom to do things without other people watching you or knowing what you are doing
- **Victim** - someone who has been harmed, injured, or killed as the result of a crime
- **Confidentiality** - a situation in which important information must be kept secret
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Wash your hands of** - to say or show that you do not want to be involved with someone or something and that you are not responsible for them
- **Probe** - an attempt to find out the truth about an issue, problem, or accident, made by an official group or by a newspaper, television programme etc
- **Anonymity** - a situation in which the name of a person who does something such as write a book or give information is not known or is kept secret
- **Morality** - principles of right or wrong behaviour
- **Articulate** - to express thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively
- **Gravity** - the seriousness or importance of something
- **Refrain from** - to stop yourself from doing something. This word is often used in official announcements or signs
- **Heinous** - a heinous act or crime is extremely evil
- **Confidentiality** - a situation in which important information must be kept secret

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## Course correction – **A fresh warning: what GEO-6 means for India** **India must recognise the human cost of poorly enforced environment laws**

The sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook from the UN Environment Programme has come as another stark warning: the world is unsustainably extracting resources and producing unmanageable quantities of waste. The linear model of economic growth depends on the extraction of ever-higher quantities of materials, leading to chemicals flowing into air, water and land. This causes ill-health and premature mortality, and affects the quality of life, particularly for those unable to insulate themselves from these effects. The UN report, GEO-6, on the theme "Healthy Planet, Healthy People," has some sharp pointers for India. It notes that East and South Asia have the highest number of deaths due to air pollution; by one estimate, it killed about 1.24 million in India in 2017. As India's population grows, it must worry that agricultural yields are coming under stress due to increase in average temperature and erratic monsoons. The implications of these forecasts for food security and health are all too evident, more so for the 148 million people living in severe weather 'hotspots'. Evidently, the task before India is to recognise the human cost of poorly enforced environment laws and demonstrate the political will necessary to end business-as-usual policies. That would mean curbing the use of fossil fuels and toxic chemicals across the spectrum of economic activity.

There are some targeted interventions that only require the resolve to reduce air and water pollution, and which in turn promise early population-level benefits. Aggressive monitoring of air quality in cities through scaled-up facilities would bring about a consensus on cutting emissions of greenhouse gases, and provide the impetus to shift to cleaner sources of energy. It is significant that GEO-6 estimates that the top 10% of populations globally, in terms of wealth, are responsible for 45% of GHG emissions, and the bottom 50% for only 13%. Pollution impacts are, however, borne more by the poorer citizens. Combating air pollution would, therefore, require all older coal-based power plants in India to conform to emission norms at the earliest, or to be shut down in favour of renewable energy sources. Transport emissions are a growing source of urban pollution, and a quick transition to green mobility is needed. In the case of water, the imperative is to stop the contamination of surface supplies by chemicals, sewage and municipal waste. As the leading extractor of groundwater, India needs to make water part of a circular economy in which it is treated as a resource that is recovered, treated and reused. But water protection gets low priority, and State governments show no urgency in augmenting rainwater harvesting. New storage areas act as a supply source when monsoons fail, and help manage floods when there is excess rainfall.

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

- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- **Outlook** - an idea about what a situation will be like in the future
- **Stark** - used for describing an unpleasant fact or situation that is very obvious or impossible to avoid
- **Unsustainable** - not capable of continuing at the same rate or level
- **Extract** - to remove something from a particular place
- **Unmanageable** - extremely difficult to control or organize
- **Linear** - involving ideas or events that are directly connected and follow one after the other
- **Premature** - happening too soon or before the usual time
- **Mortality** - death
- **Insulate** - to protect someone or something from harmful experiences or influences
- **Pointer** - a piece of advice or information
- **Erratic** - changing often or not following a regular pattern, so that it is difficult to know what will happen next
- **Monsoon** - a period of heavy rain in India and Southeast Asia
- **Implication** - a possible effect or result
- **Forecast** - a statement about what is likely to happen, based on available information and usually relating to the weather, business, or the economy
- **Evident** - easy to see, notice, or understand
- **Hotspot** - a place where there is often a lot of violence or fighting
- **Evidently** - used for saying that something is obvious
- **Business-as-usual** - used for describing a situation in which everything happens normally, especially after a period of time when things happen in a different way
- **Fossil fuel** - a fuel such as coal or oil, made from decayed material from animals or plants that lived many thousands of years ago
- **Toxic** - poisonous and harmful to people, animals, or the environment
- **Interventions** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Aggressive** - behaving in an angry or rude way that shows you want to fight, attack, or argue with someone
- **Monitor** - to regularly check something or watch someone in order to find out what is happening

- **Scale-up** - to make something larger in size, amount etc than it used to be
- **Consensus** - agreement among all the people involved
- **Emission** - a substance, especially a gas, that goes into the air
- **Impetus** - a force that helps something to happen or develop more quickly
- **Significant** - very important
- **Impact** - an effect, or an influence
- **Renewable** - renewable energy and natural materials replace themselves by natural processes, so that they are never completely used up
- **Transition** - the process of changing from one situation, form, or state to another
- **Imperative** - extremely important and urgent
- **Contamination** - the process of making something dirty, polluted, or poisonous by adding a chemical, waste, or infection
- **Sewage** - waste substances, especially waste from people's bodies, removed from houses and other buildings by a system of large underground pipes called sewers
- **Extractor** - a piece of equipment or system that can remove something from another thing
- **Augment** - to increase the size, amount, or value of something
- **Harvest** - to collect or obtain something

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## Course correction – **Softer, slower: on Brexit vote**

### **Parliamentary votes give the British PM hope that a hard Brexit can be avoided**

With the overwhelming vote on Thursday to seek a delay to the exit from the EU, Britain's Parliament might have actually given Prime Minister Theresa May another chance to push her existing deal for Brexit. A day earlier, a majority of the MPs decided to rule out, under all circumstances, Britain's crashing out of the EU without an agreement. With the catastrophic consequences of a hard Brexit option thus foreclosed, from Britain's perspective at least, there is good reason to think that the worst is over for the U.K., although there is no clue yet to the direction of the exit. Both these proposals had been rejected as part of earlier amendments to the draft withdrawal bill, and the votes this week reflect a significant shift in Parliament's stance. Yet, a delay to the March 29 deadline to leave the EU can only bring a temporary respite from uncertainty. For one thing, Ms. May's controversial withdrawal agreement was on Tuesday emphatically rejected by the House of Commons for the second time in as many months. But a silver lining for her, despite the setback, was the smaller margin of defeat this time. Some die-hard Brexiters who voted down her deal in January have since grown increasingly concerned about the prospect of a delayed Brexit or no Brexit at all, and chose to endorse it this week. The shift has encouraged Ms. May to seek a third vote on her deal next week. The calculation in Downing Street is that with the hardliners' preferred option of a 'no deal' Brexit virtually eliminated and a looming indefinite delay, more Tories will rally behind her proposals. The group to especially watch is Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, which props up Ms. May's minority government.

Should Ms. May's gambit next week succeed, the government intends to seek from Brussels an extension, until June, to complete the exit formalities. Conversely, another failure would risk a delay in the U.K.'s ultimate withdrawal by months. The U.K. would then have to hold polls in May to elect new Members of the European Parliament. For EU leaders, the duration of the extension is less of a concern than the potential for a concrete outcome, given the differences within and between the main U.K. parties. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, is on

record that he would recommend a longer extension, to the other 27 heads of EU governments when they meet next week. Developments this week have dealt a huge blow to hardline eurosceptics in the U.K., whose narrow nationalist delusions have made them impervious to the economic cost of disengagement from the world's largest single market. The harm they have already inflicted on the polity and society must be contained. It would be unwise of them to impede the efforts to avoid a hard Brexit.

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

- **Brexit** - an exit (= act of leaving) by the United Kingdom from the European Union (short for "British exit")
- **Overwhelming** - much larger, stronger, more important etc than anything else in a situation
- **Majority** - most of the people or things in a group
- **Rule out** - to stop considering something as a possibility
- **Circumstance** - a fact or condition that affects a situation
- **Crash out** - to be badly defeated so that you have to leave a competition
- **Catastrophic** - causing a lot of damage, or making a lot of people suffer
- **Consequence** - a result or effect of something
- **Foreclose** - to prevent something from being considered as a possibility in the future
- **Perspective** - a way of thinking about something
- **Amendment** - a change made to a law or agreement
- **Stance** - an attitude or view about an issue that you state clearly
- **Respite** - a short period of rest from having to deal with a difficult or unpleasant situation
- **Uncertainty** - a nervous feeling that you have because you think bad things might happen
- **Controversial** - a controversial subject, opinion, or decision is one that people disagree about or do not approve of
- **Emphatically** - very firmly and clearly
- **House of Commons** - the part of the parliament in the UK or Canada that consists of politicians who have been elected by the people
- **Silver lining** - good aspect of a bad situation
- **Despite** - used for saying that something happens even though something else might have prevented it
- **Setback** - a problem that delays or that stops progress or makes a situation worse
- **Die-hard** - someone who is unwilling to change or give up their ideas or ways of behaving, even when there are good reasons to do so
- **Vote down** - to stop or end something as the result of a vote
- **Endorse** - to express support for someone or something, especially in public

- **Hardliner** - someone, especially in politics, who is very severe, for example in refusing to allow something or to reduce or change their demands in any way
- **Looming** - (of something unwanted or unpleasant) about to happen soon and causing worry
- **Indefinite** - continuing into the future with no fixed end
- **Tory** - someone who supports or is a member of the Conservative Party in the UK
- **Gambit** - something that you say or do in an attempt to gain an advantage
- **Conversely** - used for introducing a sentence, or part of a sentence, which says something that is the opposite of the other part
- **Concrete** - practical
- **Euro sceptic** - someone, especially a politician, who thinks that their country should not be part of the European Union
- **Delusion** - an idea or belief that is not true
- **Impervious** - not affected by something or not seeming to notice it
- **Disengage** - to become physically separated from something, or to make two things become physically separated
- **Inflict** - to cause something unpleasant to happen
- **Impede** - to make it more difficult for someone to do something or more difficult for something to happen

☞ " **PATIENCE IS A KEY ELEMENT OF SUCCESS** " ☞