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Battleground Electric Vehicles By Group Captain Praveer Purohit (retd)	01
India-China Ties at a Crossroads By Srikanth Kondapalli	02
Struggle of PLA with Cadet Recruitments: By N C Bipindra	04
Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics: By Dr. Santhosh Mathew	05
Charting A New Narrative: By Dr. Dhruvajyoti Bhattacharjee	07
India at the UN Futures Summit: By Lakshmi Puri	08
India is Proud of: Banta Singh Sanghwal	10

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Battleground Electric Vehicles

By Group Captain Praveer Purohit (retd)

Author served in the IAF for over three decades. He writes about geopolitics, defence matters, and international relations

The struggle for power and dominance has been a distinctive feature in global affairs for over a century. The shape, form, and tools nations employ in this 'power game' have evolved. While military power remains a major tool and arguably the ultimate measure of power, other forms of non-military warfare, such as economic warfare, have seen increased use. Non-tariff barriers and additional duties on imports seek not only to protect domestic industry and/or agriculture but also shape the behaviour of the targeted country. A nation that leads in trade and technology generates immense influence and power for itself. While responsible nations use this power for the larger good of society and humanity, revisionist and irresponsible powers use their capability to coerce, intimidate, and dominate other nations. China is a classic example of the latter.

The U.S. led pushback against China, post-COVID, has now enlarged in scope. Initially, it included areas such as semiconductors (chips) and other such hi-tech equipment. One of the latest inclusions is Electric Vehicles (EVs), of which China has become a major exporter. One may wonder why Chinese EVs should be targeted, especially if they contribute to a greener planet. The answers lie in China's unfair trade practices, theft of intellectual property rights (IPR), over-capacity, heavy subsidies, and use of technology in commercial EVs for espionage.

Until recently, the U.S. levied a 25% import duty on EVs from China. Its longstanding apprehension about China's unfair trade practices prompted an increase in the duty from 25% to 100%, which became effective on 27 September this year. Canada followed suit and announced a 100% import duty, up from the 6.1% it charged earlier. In October last year, the European Commission launched an anti-subsidy investigation into European Union (EU) imports of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) from China. The investigation aimed to establish whether the Chinese BEV exporters' competitive edge was genuine or artificial and whether EV imports from China could threaten the EU's upscaling of the embryonic EV industry. A few days ago, on 04 October, the European Commission voted to increase import duties on EVs manufactured in China to up to 45%. Germany opposed the move due to its peculiar links to the Chinese EV industry.

Predictably, China retaliated against these measures by increasing duties on imports from the EU and the U.S. It also accused these entities of starting an ‘economic cold war.’ However, the façade of bravado cannot hide China’s concerns. According to data from UN Comtrade, China’s exports of EVs to the EU comprised 30% of its global exports of EVs from 2021 to 2023. The import duty of 100% by the U.S. and Canada meant a loss of these markets for Chinese EVs. That leaves EU as the main market. However, this possibility now appears far-fetched due to the increased duties imposed by the EU. China supposedly has a spare capacity of three million EVs per year (double the EU market), finding a market for which will be a tall order outside the U.S., Canada and the EU.

The Indian government has embarked upon an ambitious endeavour to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels in the transport sector. Understandably, it implies embracing clean technologies and enhancing the penetration of EVs. However, the EV manufacturing sector in India is still relatively nascent, although there are expansion plans. The market for EVs in India is forecast to expand from US\$ 3.21 billion in 2022 to US\$ 113.99 billion by 2029. These factors suggest that imports of EVs in India would steadily increase. Presently, Germany ranks first amongst countries that export EVs to India. Prima facie, this may seem fine. But the devil is in the detail. Several prominent German brands producing EVs are now under Chinese ownership or have significant Chinese investments. Geely, China’s second-largest automaker by sales, has owned Volvo since 2010, and MG is owned by SAIC Motor Corporation of China. Geely acquired a significant stake in Mercedes-Benz’s parent company, Daimler, in 2018. Hence, China controls a sizable percentage of the value chain that India imports from Germany. In March this year, the govt released an EV policy to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs. The policy permitted the import of EVs with duty concessions from any country, including China, subject to certain conditions. Fears have been raised in some quarters that the policy would facilitate a large-scale entry of Chinese auto firms into our domestic market. Chinese EV manufacturer BYD has a foothold in the Indian market and plans to cover 90 % of the market this year. China’s SAIC Motor, has a joint venture (JV) with JSW to fast-track the growth of MG Motors in India.

But it is not just in the economic arena that Chinese EVs pose a challenge. There is an ominous threat that these pose in the cybersecurity realm. Independent findings in the U.S., the U.K., Australia and the EU have concluded that Chinese EVs threaten their national security. The EU is debating whether to allow its military personnel and government officials to drive Chinese EVs in and around sensitive areas. Last month, the U.S. proposed prohibiting key Chinese software and hardware in connected vehicles on American roads due to national security concerns, effectively barring Chinese cars and trucks from the U.S. market. A new legislation titled ‘Countering Adversary Reconnaissance (CAR) Act of 2024’ has been introduced in the U.S. by prohibiting connected vehicles produced in China near U.S. military bases and other federal installations.

India’s EV transition is necessary but requires careful calibration. The mantra should be to source from trusted and reliable entities. Our EV import policy must be nimble and alive to the economic and security threats Chinese EVs pose. Indian vulnerability to Chinese cyber warfare has often been laid bare. Chinese EVs add another dimension to it. China has regularly weaponized trade, technology and supply chains. India’s growing dependence on China in the EV sector has adverse strategic implications for us. It is essential that our polity recognizes it and citizens are made aware of the threat that emanates from Chinese EVs. For that is the latest battleground of the Chinese onslaught.

India-China Ties at a Crossroads as Security, Economic Pressures Clash

By Srikanth Kondapalli

Author is Dean of School of International Studies and Professor in Chinese studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

For India to become the third-largest economy, there is an urge to surpass the current \$70 billion in inward investment, to more than a hundred billion, in addition to strengthening the recent interest in the electronics sector.

After more than four years of an armed stalemate on the disputed borders in Ladakh, winds of change are blowing in India-China relations, triggered both by domestic and external stimuli. The security aspect is finding itself subjected to commercial and diplomatic pressures.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval have separately met with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at multilateral fora at Astana, Vientiane and St Petersburg in the last few weeks. While both sides expressed their respective positions for improving relations, Russia's mediatory role between them is a significant development.

Mounting economic pressure, too, seems to be influencing thinking on the China question. In the annual pre-Budget Economic Survey, presented in July this time, the government's Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran proposed promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) from China, instead of further increasing trade that has skewed the balance in favour of China. However, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal denied any change in the government's policies in this regard. Nevertheless, the government approved entry of Shenzhen-based Luxshare Precision, Bhagwati Products (Micromax) and Huaqin Technology in electronics manufacturing. There is also the announcement of resumption of direct flights between the two countries, which had been stopped after the Galwan clashes.

The bilateral relations template has been security-dominated. Two days after the Galwan border clashes in June 2020, Jaishankar had laid down the line that "peace and tranquillity on the borders is essential" for re-commencement of bilateral relations. This line became a "whole-of-government" approach that Home, Defence, Finance and others have followed so far.

However, despite concerted efforts, it has not become a "whole-of-society" approach - the business communities stepped up importing large amounts of goods from China, and India's big industrial houses wanted to import "disciplined" workers from China.

China began working on its ancient dictum "shangren wu zuguo" (businessmen have no motherland) by enticing chambers of commerce, media and think-tanks in India. As a result, China became India's largest trading partner last year, with \$118 billion in bilateral trade, with over \$85 billion in trade surplus.

Cumulatively, China has earned about \$1.6 trillion in trade surpluses from India in the last decade and a half, but it is unwilling to invest even a small percentage of this in India. Indian exporters face non-tariff barriers and other restrictions in the China market, despite Beijing's WTO commitments. China's investments in India are miniscule -- about \$8 billion, coming from a \$18 trillion economy.

China is also under pressure. Its continuing economic problems straddling the real estate sector, local governments' debt, decline in investments, increasing urban unemployment, and stagnating domestic consumption, coupled with Western trade restrictions are a major concern. Tagging with a high-growth area and a burgeoning consumer base in India could elevate China's economy. However, China's military pressure on the civil leadership is intact, and it is unwilling to concede to the Indian demand for "disengagement and de-escalation in all friction points" on the border, which the two defence ministries have announced.

For India to become the third-largest economy, there is an urge to surpass the current \$70 billion in inward investment, to more than a hundred billion, in addition to strengthening the recent interest in the electronics sector. Global uncertainties caused by the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts as well as technological disruptions need to be overcome, and exports and investments enhanced.

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Struggle of PLA with Cadet Recruitments: A Bourgeoning Crisis

By N C Bipindra

Author is Research Fellow at DRaS, has been a journalist for over 20 years specialising on military affairs, aerospace and defence economics, diplomacy, national security and strategic affairs.

China's PLA (People's Liberation Army), under the leadership of the Communist Party, stands as one of the largest military forces globally, comprising approximately one million active personnel and employing around two million individuals. The PLA is currently struggling with the recruitment of youngsters/graduates who increasingly prefer lucrative jobs in the private sector over military service.

As President Xi Jinping aims to modernise the Chinese military by 2035, the PLA is investing significantly in advanced weaponry and technology. However, a critical challenge remains in staffing, where China appears to be struggling. According to an article in the British news magazine, *The Economist*, China is facing difficulties recruiting enough skilled cadets to operate its sophisticated technical weaponry. There are several reasons behind these challenges, despite Xi's persistent promotion of hawkish nationalist rhetoric among the Chinese population.

Ageing Population

For a significant period, China was the world's most populous nation, benefiting from a demographic dividend and maintaining a relatively youthful population. However, between 1979 and 2015, China implemented the controversial one-child policy to limit population growth.

The long-term effects of this policy are evident today, as most Chinese adults now have only one child. Consequently, the pool of young, eligible recruits has been steadily diminishing. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China indicates that the number of individuals aged 16-24, the primary age group for military recruitment, has consistently decreased. This demographic shift directly contributes to the reduced availability of youth for military service.

Additionally, the declining youth population has created a situation where many young Chinese are only children. This "one-child generation" has led to what is often called "Little Emperor Syndrome," where parents, having higher expectations for their only offspring, may be reluctant to see them join the military.

The cultural emphasis on education and economic success compounds this aversion to military service. Military service in China is often viewed as less prestigious than pursuing higher education or securing stable employment in the private sector. Despite the one-child policy being rescinded nine years ago, China's fertility rate remains low, similar to other East Asian nations.

Capitalist Development in a Socialist Country

China upholds socialism as its state ideology yet operates as a market economy. This duality explains why, with the expansion of the market, career-driven youth in China are increasingly reluctant to take on the responsibility of raising children.

While military service may be considered an honourable vocation, the allure of a career in technology, finance, or other lucrative sectors is far stronger for many young Chinese.

The PLA has been challenged to compete with the private sector in matching salaries, benefits, and lifestyle. Although the military provides stable employment and certain educational benefits, these offerings are generally perceived as far less attractive than the opportunities for rapid career progression and higher earnings available in civilian jobs.

Furthermore, the rigorous discipline, extended hours, and potential for deployment in combat zones render military life less appealing to a generation accustomed to the comfort and modern conveniences of urban living. The stark contrast between the reality of military service and the expectations of young recruits has resulted in a further decline in interest in joining the PLA.

Changing Social Norms

China's brand of Communism has consistently been intertwined with nationalism, characterised by the strong ethnic dominance of the Han people and their connection to the legacies of Chinese civilisation.

However, this dynamic is changing, not necessarily due to a shift in Han dominance but due to evolving social values. Previously, Chinese citizens took pride in associating themselves with the Communist Party of China, as this affiliation reduced the likelihood of political persecution. On joining the PLA, older generations from rural areas could achieve upward social mobility and gradually ascend the ranks within the CPC.

This scenario has now shifted. Once regarded as honourable and prestigious, military service was traditionally esteemed as soldiers were highly valued for defending their homeland.

Yet, for modern Chinese individuals, a military career is less appealing than other more glamorous and rewarding career paths. The mass media reinforces this perception by highlighting countless success stories of entrepreneurs, professionals, and celebrities while portraying military service as demanding and less financially rewarding.

Furthermore, the decline in rural-to-urban migration has impacted military recruitment. Historically, a major chunk of PLA recruits were drawn from rural areas, where young men viewed military service as a means to escape poverty and climb the social ladder.

However, with the rapid development of rural areas and improved local economic opportunities, fewer youths from these regions are inclined to enlist in the military.

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Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics: India's Unfair Ranking in the Global Hunger Index

By Dr Santhosh Mathew

The Author is associate Professor in Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences Pondicherry Central University

The recent Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, which places India at a dismal 105th position out of 127 countries, has raised eyebrows and sparked considerable debate. While hunger and malnutrition remain pressing global issues, the methodology and conclusions of the GHI, co-authored by two non-governmental organizations—Irish-based Concern Worldwide and German Welthungerhilfe—have drawn criticism, particularly from the Indian government and sections of society. There is a growing concern that such reports may not just reflect statistics but also carry political and geopolitical undertones aimed at tarnishing India's image on the world stage. The GHI is based on four key indicators: the prevalence of undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality. The scores from these factors are compiled to place countries on a scale from zero (no hunger) to 100 (extreme hunger), with countries scoring closer to zero seen as having little or no hunger issues. India's score of 27.3 puts it in the "serious" hunger category, alongside 42 other countries.

Critics of the GHI have raised several concerns about the methodology used in calculating India's score. Firstly, the reliance on child mortality and child stunting indicators as primary components of the hunger index is problematic. India is a country with a large population, and while child malnutrition is a valid concern, this issue is not unique to India but rather shared by other developing countries. By focusing heavily on this aspect, the report seems to disproportionately penalize India. Additionally, the GHI report uses outdated data from global sources such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). India, like many countries, has been undergoing significant improvements in food security through government initiatives such as the National Food Security Act, Midday Meal Scheme, and public distribution system reforms. However, these efforts do not seem to be adequately represented in the data used for the GHI. As a result, India's actual progress may be grossly underreported, leading to skewed conclusions.

Many believe that the Global Hunger Index is not just about numbers but also about shaping narratives. By positioning India in such a negative light, the report seems to overshadow the country's genuine achievements. India's economy is among the fastest growing in the world, and its agricultural output has been consistently high. The country's food production is more than sufficient to meet the needs of its population. In fact, India has become a net exporter of food grains and has successfully launched programs to improve access to food for its vast population. Given this backdrop, how can India be ranked lower than countries facing severe internal strife, economic collapse, and war, such as Afghanistan or even smaller nations like Bangladesh and Nepal? India, with its robust democratic system and a growing economy, appears unfairly targeted by the report. It's essential to question the intentions behind these rankings. Are they an honest reflection of hunger, or do they serve other interests?

Reports like the Global Hunger Index can have far-reaching consequences, not just for the countries they assess but also for global perceptions. India has always been a key player in international politics, and its growing stature in global affairs may not sit well with all parties. The fact that the organizations behind the GHI—Concern Worldwide (Irish) and Welthungerhilfe (German)—hail from Western countries has not gone unnoticed. It raises the question of whether the index is truly impartial or if it subtly reflects geopolitical biases. India has made significant strides in addressing hunger and malnutrition, but it seems that these efforts are often ignored or underplayed by such indices. For instance, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provided free food grains to over 80 crore people during the COVID-19 pandemic, is one of the world's largest food security initiatives. The fact that India could provide this level of support during a global crisis contradicts the narrative of widespread hunger and undernourishment.

To deny that hunger exists in India would be dishonest, but the situation is far more complex than a single ranking can capture. Hunger is not a static issue; it is deeply intertwined with poverty, access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The Indian government has been tackling these root causes of hunger through a multi-pronged approach that includes social welfare schemes, employment generation programs like MGNREGA, and nutrition programs targeted at women and children. Programs such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aim to provide supplementary nutrition to millions of pregnant and lactating women, along with children under six years of age. Meanwhile, the Midday Meal Scheme, which serves nutritious meals to school children, has had a significant impact on reducing malnutrition. Despite these efforts, it is undeniable that India still faces challenges. The legacy of poverty, the vast size and population of the country, and regional disparities make it difficult to eliminate hunger overnight. However, the data presented in the GHI report does not reflect the progress that India has made in combating hunger and malnutrition.

Global Hunger Index: A Case of Misrepresentation?

The concerns raised by the Indian government about the Global Hunger Index are not without merit. The index, while claiming to provide an objective measure of hunger, fails to capture the ground realities of individual nations. India, being the second-most populous country in the world, is bound to face issues that smaller nations with more homogeneous populations do not. However, the scale of the problem must be understood in context. By painting India as a country where hunger is rampant, the GHI risks creating a false narrative that undermines the substantial progress made by the country. It also risks discouraging the efforts of those working tirelessly on the ground to ensure that no one goes to bed hungry.

The question of hunger is too important to be mired in controversy. What is needed is not biased rankings or politically motivated reports but genuine collaboration between nations to tackle the global hunger crisis. India's government has already expressed its intent to challenge the GHI's findings and has called for more transparent and accurate methodologies in assessing hunger levels. Moving forward, India must continue to prioritize food security, nutrition, and poverty alleviation, but it must also ensure that the world sees the real picture of its efforts. The country has proven its ability to grow and provide for its people, even in challenging circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic. As we reflect on the Global Hunger Index and its implications, one thing is clear: statistics alone do not tell the whole story. Hunger is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to numbers on a scale. And while India still has a long way to go in ensuring that all its citizens are free from hunger, it deserves to be recognized for the progress it has already made. Lies, damned lies, and statistics may grab headlines, but the truth always emerges in the end.

Charting A New Narrative: Redrawing History and Politics in Bangladesh

By Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharjee

Author is a Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

Abstract: With the August uprising in Bangladesh, a new narrative is being written, history and politics of the nation are being re-drawn. Will this new narrative bring forth a better tomorrow for the people of Bangladesh?

In the past, whenever there has been a change of governance in Bangladesh, the incumbent government made attempts to glorify specific individuals or events, while demonizing others. This has involved changing the name of airports, government policies, buildings and institutions and extracting or including specific narratives in school textbooks. However, Bangladesh today, under the governance of an interim government, is witnessing the redrawing of Bangladeshi history and politics, building a new narrative that might impact the common national identity of the masses and the nation.

From the month of August, some major events have been organised or policies adapted, creating this new narrative. For the first time in independent Bangladesh, the 76th death anniversary of Muhammad Ali Jinnah was commemorated by the Nawab Salimullah Academy at the National Press Club in Dhaka on 11 September 2024. Several speakers emphasised Jinnah's crucial role in the creation of Pakistan and Pakistan's positive role in creating a unique identity for Bangladesh, stating that without Jinnah, "Bangladesh too would not exist". The event saw speakers reciting Urdu poetry and songs, a number of them dedicated to Jinnah. Speakers from the Nagorik Parishad elucidated the crucial role that Jinnah played in the creation of East Pakistan and Bangladesh, enumerating how India remained to be an obstacle and challenge for Bangladesh all through. The event was attended by the Pakistani Deputy High Commissioner.

One of the principal identities of the people of East Bengal, later East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, has been the pride of their Bangla language. From 1948, students in East Pakistan had agitated to protest the omission of the Bengali language from official use. In March 1948, Jinnah faced strong protests during a speech in Dhaka clearly stating that “Urdu, and only Urdu” was the language that embodied the spirit of the Muslim nations and Urdu will remain as the state language. Student protests continued for the recognition of Bangla as the mother tongue in Dhaka, leading to the killing of students on the university campus on 21 February 1952 by armed police forces. This day has been celebrated as the National Martyr’s Day in Bangladesh; the UN recognised 21 February as International Mother’s Language Day from 1999. It is difficult to comprehend how demagogic policies would benefit Bangladesh by glorifying the role of Jinnah, Pakistan and Urdu in Bangladesh, eschewing mention of any positive role of India in the region.

Many governments have come and gone including multiple interim governments from 1971. During such regime changes, incumbent governments made minor changes like changing the name of the international airport or government policies, or amending some policies adopted by the previous government. However, there is an attempt of erasing or re-writing history of the nation presently, which seems unprecedented.

After the Liberation War of 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was universally recognised as the “Father of the Nation”. The residence of Mujib, where he and his family were assassinated in a military coup on 15 August 1975 was turned into a museum on 14 August 1994. During the recent August uprising, the museum was not only vandalized but also set on fire. Such vandalism or desecration was never seen during past regimes. Numerous iconic statues of Mujib have been vandalized and demolished by third-generation protestors, who are either bereft of the narrative and memory of the misery, sacrifice and victory of the common man in gaining independence or only identify such national icons and history as political symbols as the propaganda of the ousted Awami League. Protestors stopped commemoration of the death anniversary of Mujib on 15 August throughout the nation, while some protestors were even found celebrating the killing of Mujib.

In another event, controversial Bangladeshi academic Dr Shahiduzzaman, at a seminar organised by the Retired Armed Forces Officers Welfare Association (RAOWA) in Dhaka on 14 September 2024, made some statements that are noteworthy. In that seminar, which was attended by retired Bangladesh Army officials, he stated that Pakistan and Bangladesh should establish an alliance in the realm of nuclear defence to deter the hegemonic tendencies of its larger neighbour in the region. He further went ahead to state that Pakistan is a “most trusted and reliable partner of Bangladesh”.

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India at the UN Futures Summit: An Advocate for Peace, Global South

By Lakshmi Puri

Author is a former assistant secretary-general at the United Nations and the former deputy executive director of UN Women.

We now have a compass, however imperfect, for guiding us to our one future as one earth, one family. If countries work together, we will be able to right wrongs, survive future shocks and thrive as a people and planet.

India has an unbroken, civilisational heritage of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. This ethos was imprinted on to our G20 presidency by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The country has the largest youth population in the world, it is the largest and most vibrant democracy and is technologically future facing. Intergenerational solidarity is also intrinsic to Indians.

India thus has the greatest stake in any collective, global envisioning of a perfect future for humanity. This is what the Pact for the Future (PFF), the Declaration on Future Generations (DFG) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) adopted at the UN Summit of the Future on September 23 attempts.

PM Modi joined 142 counterparts at the Summit and positioned India as a vishvamitra representing a sixth of humanity. He emphasised India's vision of human-centric development and successes in SDGs, DPI and solar energy, which he offered to share. He brought the message of the G20 New Delhi Declaration (NDLD) and amplified the voice of the Global South. He urged eschewing war and addressing threats from new arenas — terrorism, cyber, maritime and space. Warning that reform is the key to relevance, he pointed to the admission of the African Union to the G20. "Global action must match global ambition" he urged.

The UN Secretary-General admitted the "UN can't build a future for our grandchildren with the institutions of our grandparents" and that the "multilateral system is gridlocked in dysfunction". This crisis contributes to and reflects the emerging world disorder. Global flashpoints such as the NATO-Ukraine/Russia conflict, the West vs China cold war and the war in Gaza are of such intensity that leaders are invoking the unthinkable spectre of a nuclear armageddon and another World War. The UN is unable to prevent, mediate or resolve them, but is caught in the middle or made to pick up the humanitarian pieces.

The international community seems to have taken its eyes off the terrorism ball. A furious rearmament race is on. False narratives and foreign information manipulation and interference around democracy and human rights is being used perversely to bring about regime changes in developing countries. Meanwhile, the world is lagging in 88 per cent of the SDG targets. Extreme weather events are causing devastation due to climate change.

Much-needed financing from donors and unreformed and underfunded Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs), critical green technologies and debt relief have not materialised for developing countries. There is a serious solidarity deficit, undermining multilateralism by resorting to coercive unilateralism, transactional bilateralism, plurilateralism, minilateralism and regionalism.

Against this background, the Summit represented "a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help rebuild trust and bring outdated multilateral institutions and frameworks into line with today's world, based on equity and solidarity."

The PFF's 58 actions partially did this by addressing issues in the global public good areas of conflict prevention, peace making, disarmament and counterterrorism; SDGs, environmental protection and climate action and its financing; human rights and democracy including gender equality; disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, and science, technology, digital revolution and transforming global governance.

The Summit demonstrated the convening, consensus building and norm power of the UN to get governments to come together. It reiterated key earlier principles and pledges, vowed to implement them and assumed some new responsibilities. Countries got to "prevision" the future perils and possibilities to better shape the present. However, sceptics point to the Summit being more about "why" and "what" but not how to operationalise and enforce these "soft law" commitments. For instance, the PFF vowed to "take bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions" to achieve SDGs and climate action. What was missing was the call the NDLD made "to scale up SDG and climate finance for developing countries from billions to trillions" and pin down the amount needed.

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India is Proud of:

Banta Singh Sanghwal (Sangowal)

(1890 – 1915)



Banta Singh, a Ghadar Party revolutionary, was born in the home of Buta Singh in 1890 at Sanghwal (Sangowal) village of Jalandhar (Jullundur) district of Punjab. His father, Buta Singh was a prosperous person who used to lend money to the people. Narrating a childhood account of Banta Singh's life, Dr. Jasbir Kaur Gill, his great-granddaughter said that in childhood, he destroyed the ledgers of his father that contained the accounts of money given to indebted farmers. He considered money lending to be an act of exploitation of poor people.

He migrated to the United States in search of better opportunities. Here, he came under the spell of Ghadar Party leaders and vowed to uproot British rule from India. In 1914, he returned home and built a strong revolutionary center in his village. He was frequently visited by great revolutionaries like Kartar Singh Sarabha, Harnam Singh Tundilat, Munsha Singh Dhukhi, and Maratha revolutionary Vishnu Ganesh Pingley. He undertook a tour of the district countryside distributing Ghadr literature and exhorting people to join the rising to expel the British from India and engage in sabotage, such as tampering with railway lines and cutting telephone wires. When police searched his house, they discovered a large amount of revolutionary literature.

Banta Singh killed informer Zaildar Chanda Singh on 25 April 1915, in Nangal Kalan village, district Hoshiarpur. Zaildar informed the police about the hideout of another Ghadarite, Paira Singh Langeri. Banta Singh was the leader of the group that attacked the Amritsar military guard (Walla Bridge Case). The group killed four men, looted six rifles, and fled to Kapurthala in the early hours of June 12, 1915. On June 25, he was apprehended in Hoshiarpur's Jaura village. On 27 July 1915, the court convicted Banta Singh for killing informer Chanda Singh and the murder of two policemen at Walla Railway Bridge in Amritsar. Judges mentioned his name as 'Banta Singh, "of the golden teeth", (as he filled one of his teeth with gold) as a participant in at least two murders. He joyfully kissed the gallows on 12 August 1915.
