Quotable

"Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway."
—Earl Nightingale

Troubling signs from our prisons

Prisons are meant to be places of custody, discipline and order. They exist to ensure that those accused or convicted of crimes remain within the bounds of the law while the justice system takes its course. When incidents inside these facilities begin to multiply, it raises serious questions about oversight, preparedness and control. Recent developments in Jammu and Kashmir's prisons are therefore deeply concerning. In less than a month, three separate incidents have emerged from three different districts of the Jammu region. Each of them may appear isolated at first glance. But together, they paint a troubling picture that authorities cannot afford to ignore. The most alarming incident occurred on February 16 in RS Pura, where three inmates escaped from a juvenile observation home after allegedly firing at policemen posted on duty. Two security personnel were injured in the attack. Even more disturbing was the fact that two of the escapees were Pakistani nationals who had earlier crossed the border. That such individuals could not only obtain a weapon but also mount an armed assault within a detention facility is a matter that demands serious introspection. Barely weeks later, another incident unfolded inside the district jail in Rajouri. What reportedly began as a heated argument between two inmates quickly escalated into a clash involving several prisoners. Stones were allegedly hurled at prison guards, leaving at least twelve people injured, including four members of the security staff. Such scenes inside a jail are deeply unsettling. Prisons cannot be allowed to turn into arenas of chaos where order collapses at the slightest provocation. On the very same day, authorities in Doda foiled an attempt to smuggle two mobile phones to an inmate through a parcel sent to the district jail. While the attempt was detected in time, the episode again raises uncomfortable questions. How frequently are such attempts made? And how many manage to slip through unnoticed? Taken together, these incidents are not good signs. They indicate cracks in the prison management system that require immediate attention. The issue is not merely administrative. Jammu and Kashmir is a sensitive and strategically important region. Maintaining strict discipline within detention facilities is therefore critical, not only for law enforcement but also for public safety. Prisons house individuals involved in a wide range of offences, including organised crime and cross-border activities. Any lapse in supervision can have consequences far beyond prison walls. Weapons finding their way inside, clashes among inmates and attempts to smuggle communication devices are all warning signals that the system needs tightening. What is required now is not merely routine inquiries after each incident. The need of the hour is a comprehensive review of prison security across the region. Surveillance systems, staffing levels, monitoring of parcels and visitor protocols must all be examined with fresh seriousness. Accountability must follow wherever negligence is established. Equally important is the culture of discipline within prisons. Guards and administrators must be empowered and trained to respond swiftly to potential flashpoints. Technology can help, but vigilance remains the most effective safeguard. The rising frequency of such incidents should serve as a wake-up call. Prisons cannot become weak links in the security chain of a region as sensitive as Jammu and Kashmir. Firm action, stronger oversight and a renewed focus on discipline are essential.

Towards Green Energy

GULF CRISIS SEEKS STRATEGY

DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

In the wake of the Middle East crisis, the need for acceleration of green energy in India assumes great significance more so because the country has committed to net-zero emissions by 2070. Agreeably, rapid strides are manifest in cultivating clean energy, but more concerted efforts are needed.

Let's start with current oil crisis. The Hormuz Strait carries 20% of the global oil supply as there is no alternative to compensate for the loss of supplies on this scale. India depends upon nearly 50% of its oil imports on countries in this region. Since February, there has been an increase of $4.54 per barrel in the price of Brent crude and since the war broke out, this has further risen. Just a one dollar increase in crude oil can result in an increase of India's annual crude import bill by Rs 14,000 crore. With US permission to India to purchase Russian oil vide a 30-date waiver, India has swiftly procured more than 10 million barrels of Russian crude while around 15 million barrels are currently on tankers in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal and another 7 million barrels are idling near Singapore.

Gas is, however, an area of concern as India imports LNG requirements from Qatar and the UAE which lie inside the Hormuz Strait. Qatar, which accounts for 40% of India's LNG import, has stopped its production and export. This has resulted in the spot price of Asian LNG tripling from $10.73 to $35 per MMBtu. Regarding LPG, India imports 60% from West Asia and the longer the war lasts, households are expected to suffer. Right now, it's important to tap other sources like Australia and Canada but, in the long-term, there is a need to scale up biogas production in the country.

A recent Niti Aayog report reiterated that reliable, affordable and progressively cleaner electricity is essential to improve living standards, raise productivity and unlock a low-carbon transition across transport, buildings and industry. With nearly 258GW of renewable energy capacity installed by December 2025, India has emerged as the world's fourth largest renewable energy. However, the country's coal consumption could more than double by mid-century before plunging sharply as the country shifts towards cleaner energy, as indicated.

In 2025, India achieved a major milestone with 50% of the installed power generation capacity now coming from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target under the December 2015 Paris Agreement. The world's fastest growing economy now has a total installed generation capacity of around 510GW, comprising 247GW of fossil fuel sources and 262GW non-fossil fuel, including 254GW from renewable energy sources. India is expected to add around 50GW of renewable energy capacity this year, backed by investments of nearly Rs 2 lakh crore, taking its total non-fossil fuel capacity to about 262GW. Governments expect to sustain similar pace of capacity addition in 2026, even as challenges related to land acquisition and delays in signing power purchase agreements continue to constrain fresh projects.

The sector has already added a whopping 44.5GW of new capacity, including the large hydro capacity during the 11-month period of 2025, led by the solar power segment. India's clean energy capacity continues to be driven by solar power, which added 35GW across all solar segments to the grid during the period compared with 25GW added in 2024. Top states in solar power installed capacity include Rajasthan (36GW), Gujarat (25GW), Maharashtra (17GW) and Tamil Nadu (12GW).

However, the passage of Shanti Acthas thrown open doors of nuclear energy to private parties. As is known, nuclear operates continuously, requires minimal land and provides the stable baseload power that modern economies need. The government's target of 100GW of nuclear capacity by 2047 represents roughly 12 times its current capacity, which at present doesn't appear an easy target. While India did not commit to tripling nuclear capacity at COP28 in Dubai, the Shanti Act shows commitment through concrete legislative action. But it's welcome that sensitive activities like enrichment and reprocessing remain State monopolies, appropriately balancing commercial opportunity with proliferation concerns.

The Rs 3000 crore liability threshold would be grossly insufficient in a worst-case event. The new Act hinges on private investors committing substantial capital – this is questionable given global evidence of nuclear projects running 2-3 times over budget. Nuclear projects require 30-year payback periods, far exceeding private sector horizons of 10 years-odd. Whether venture capital would be forthcoming and the Act be a watershed movement in the realm of green energy, time will tell. Experts suggest designing financial mechanisms that make private nuclear investment viable, accelerating indigenous SMR development to prevent technology lock-in and ensuring liability provisions.

As India is fast developing, it can't do without fossil fuel, and its effects and those on environment needs to be understood. Doctors opine the most direct impact of such fuel is on the respiratory system. Toxic air pollution directly affects the human body, increasing risk of dangerous infections like pneumonia, cancers and chronic respiratory conditions. Evidence has shown air pollution increases cardiovascular diseases, risk of strokes and dementia among other neurological conditions.

Children are particularly at risk because their organs are still developing and, as they grow, they are exposed to these toxins that generate long-term impacts. Several countries subsidised fossil fuels for one trillion dollars last year and over one trillion the year before. Yet, the enormous public funds subsidising fossil fuels should be directed to support improved health, better access to clean energy and making new infrastructure that benefits well-being. Experts believe that though India's usage of fossil fuel led to huge economic development at the same time, it must be acknowledged this is now doing more harm than good.

Numerous questions arise while maintaining balance between rapid development and implementation of clean energy. A section feels government is steadily moving towards green energy while another, including environmentalists, opine it's lagging in addressing environmental concerns, which plague primarily the poor. For a country geared to a faster development trajectory, it's impossible to abandon fossil fuels.

What should government strategy be? While balancing power needs, it's vital to ensure pollution in all forms is controlled with an iron hand to check the looming environmental threat. Industrial fumes, emission-emitting vehicles we see on roads and highways should immediately be banned and other steps taken to ensure that deterioration of air and water pollution is kept at bare minimum. Reports indicate that authorities are surprisingly lenient in such matters as bribery does play a part.

Meanwhile, though globally efforts are on to shift to renewable energy, the US decision to pull-out from all major climate-linked global bodies, including India headquartered International Solar Alliance (ISA) and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is a setback. However, most nations are determined to curb emission though stronger initiatives. India must do its bit.---INFA

A recent Niti Aayog report reiterated that reliable, affordable and progressively cleaner electricity is essential to improve living standards, raise productivity and unlock a low-carbon transition across transport, buildings and industry. With nearly 258GW of renewable energy capacity installed by December 2025, India has emerged as the world's fourth largest renewable energy. However, the country's coal consumption could more than double by mid-century before plunging sharply as the country shifts towards cleaner energy, as indicated. In 2025, India achieved a major milestone with 50% of the installed power generation capacity now coming from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target under the December 2015 Paris Agreement. The world's fastest growing economy now has a total installed generation capacity of around 510GW, comprising 247GW of fossil fuel sources and 262GW non-fossil fuel, including 254GW from renewable energy sources. India is expected to add around 50GW of renewable energy capacity this year, backed by investments of nearly Rs 2 lakh crore, taking its total non-fossil fuel capacity to about 262GW. Governments expect to sustain similar pace of capacity addition in 2026, even as challenges related to land acquisition and delays in signing power purchase agreements continue to constrain fresh projects. The sector has already added a whopping 44.5GW of new capacity, including the large hydro capacity during the 11-month period of 2025, led by the solar power segment. India's clean energy capacity continues to be driven by solar power, which added 35GW across all solar segments to the grid during the period compared with 25GW added in 2024. Top states in solar power installed capacity include Rajasthan (36GW), Gujarat (25GW), Maharashtra (17GW) and Tamil Nadu (12GW).

Life is bigger than one exam: Questioning the mindset surrounding the UPSC exam

DR SATYAVAN SAURABH

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) results were recently announced. Like every year, the stories of successful candidates are making headlines. The interviews of the toppers, their strategies, their hard work, and their struggles are being discussed across the country. This is natural. The achievements of the young people who succeed in this exam after years of rigorous preparation are certainly worthy of praise.

But amidst all this celebration, there's another aspect that's less frequently discussed. It's the mindset that's forming in our society around the UPSC, which has transformed this exam into not just an opportunity but the ultimate measure of success.

Gradually, the belief that the ultimate goal of education is the UPSC has become deeply ingrained in our social environment. In homes, among relatives, and even in school and college settings, the message often echoes: true success lies in passing this exam. If a young man or woman in a household is selected for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or Indian Police Service (IPS), it becomes a matter of pride for the entire family and neighborhood. This pride is natural, but it also carries an unspoken message: those who fail to clear this exam are perhaps not as successful.

This mindset often creates unnecessary pressure on the minds of millions of young people. At the age of 18 or 19, when a student is contemplating their future, the UPSC is often presented as the ultimate goal. Interestingly, very few of these young people actually pursue this path, understanding the complexities of governance, policymaking, or public service. Often, this decision is driven more by the desire for social prestige than by motivation.

This trend has intensified in the age of social media. Short video clips, images of officers in uniform, and popular portrayals like "Collector Sahib" or "Supercop" create an attractive image in the minds of young people. But the reality behind these images—long working hours, administrative complexities, constant responsibility during natural disasters, political pressure, and the difficulties of decision-making—is rarely mentioned.

Another important issue related to this exam is that of language. Over the past few years, the representation of Hindi-medium candidates in UPSC results has been steadily declining. This is not just a language issue, but also an issue of equality of opportunity. Many students from smaller cities and towns across the country prepare for this exam with limited resources. They face challenges with the English language, a lack of study materials, and expensive coaching facilities.

Ironically, the officials who must work with the country's diverse population often think and speak in their local languages. Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Awadhi, or other Indian languages are not just a medium of communication but also an expression of social experiences. If the experience of linguistic inequality increases in the selection process, it should be a matter of concern.

At the same time, we must recognize that a nation isn't built solely by administrative services. Today, the contributions of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, and technical experts are equally important to India's progress. Thousands of young people working in information technology are strengthening the country's digital infrastructure. New ideas in the startup world are finding solutions to the problems of farmers, small businesses, and ordinary citizens.

Yet these professions rarely enjoy the social prestige that civil service commands. This imbalance also impacts young people's career choices. Many talented students, simply due to societal expectations, spend years preparing for the UPSC, even though their potential could contribute significantly in other fields.

It's also a harsh reality that out of millions of candidates, only a few hundred ultimately succeed in this exam. For the remaining candidates, the process can often prove lengthy and mentally demanding. Some students persevere for five or six years, during which their age, financial resources, and sometimes even personal relationships are compromised. In the event of failure, they are left feeling as if their struggle was in vain.

In fact, this attitude is the biggest problem. Success or failure in an exam cannot determine a person's full potential or worth. The UPSC is certainly an important exam, but it is not the door to life's possibilities.

As a society, we must understand that there are many paths to success. If we encourage young people to pursue only one path as supreme, we will inadvertently limit their potential.

The need today is that while we respect exams like the UPSC, we shouldn't let them become the sole goal of life. Young people must be assured that their hard work, their talent, and their contributions are not diminished by any single result.

Every profession has its own dignity, and every responsibility has its own importance in society. If we can develop this balanced approach, it will not only reduce unnecessary pressure on young people but also provide the country with talented and dedicated citizens in diverse fields.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that the result of any exam determines only an opportunity, not a person's worth. Life's possibilities are much broader than that—and it is these possibilities that are the true strength of a society.

(Dr. Satyawan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

THE EARTH NEWS

SHIVANG SATYA GUPTA
Owner, Printer, Publisher and Editor in Chief:
earthnewsinbox@gmail.com

Editorial Team
Devender Padha
Sahil Rasgotra
Akhil Mahajan

Neeraj Singh
Advt. Manager. 99062-19474

Corporate Office:
ESPA Vertex, F-30,
Exchange Road, Jammu

Published at:
106, New Rehari, Jammu

Printed at: JK Printing and Publications, Near Matador Stand, Sunjwan, Jammu.

Phone No: 6005458604, 9419650048, 9419171888

e-mails: shivangsatyapal@gmail.com
editor.earthnews@gmail.com,
earthnewsladakh@gmail.com