

# India Will not lower China guard

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s decision to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in China on August 31 is not just another multilateral engagement. It is a bold statement of intent—India is willing to engage, but never at the cost of sovereignty, dignity, or strategic clarity. The fact that Modi is setting foot in China after a seven-year gap speaks volumes about the gravity of the moment. Since the bloody Galwan clashes of 2020, relations between New Delhi and Beijing have remained frozen in hostility. Thousands of troops remain deployed across the icy heights of Ladakh, and the trust deficit runs deep. India has been clear: until there is full disengagement at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and a restoration of peace, the relationship cannot return to business as usual. This visit, therefore, is not a concession—it is a test. If Beijing imagines that symbolism alone can erase its record of aggression, it is gravely mistaken. The Galwan Valley will not be forgotten, nor will India ignore China’s designs in the Indo-Pacific, its expansionist Belt and Road Initiative, or its military collusion with Pakistan. A photograph of Modi and Xi shaking hands may dominate headlines, but New Delhi’s calculus is far sharper: trust will have to be earned, not gifted. The timing of this engagement is equally telling. With trade tensions flaring with Washington—President Trump’s punitive tariffs on Indian goods and crude imports making headlines—New Delhi is signalling its strategic autonomy. India will not be a pawn in any superpower’s game. By standing tall at the SCO, Modi is underlining that India has the will to engage with all, but the courage to be dictated by none. China, for its part, must decide what it truly wants. If it seeks a cooperative relationship, it must prove it by respecting the LAC, easing military deployments, and stopping its proxy hostility through Pakistan. If it continues its duplicity—talking peace while preparing for confrontation—then India will have no hesitation in responding with strength. Operation Sindoor was a recent reminder of India’s military resolve; Beijing would be wise not to test it. For India, this summit is not about chasing photo opportunities or soft resets. It is about drawing red lines—clear, firm, and non-negotiable. Engagement with China can only move forward if there is tangible change on the ground. Otherwise, India’s strategy of vigilance, deterrence, and diversified partnerships will remain the order of the day. Modi’s message in Tianjin will thus be unambiguous: India is ready to talk, but never to compromise. Friendship is welcome, but not at the cost of sovereignty. China must choose—either genuine partnership or continued confrontation.

# The Tawi’s Rage: How 629.4mm of Rain in Udhampur Led to Catastrophe in Jammu

■ RAVISH HANDOO

The deluge that descended upon Udhampur and Jammu was not merely rain; it was a reckoning. To see 629.4 millimetres of water fall on Udhampur and a record-breaking 380 mm on Jammu in the single 24-hour period between Tuesday and Wednesday morning is no less than a calamity. This was not the gentle, life-giving monsoon that has nourished the terraced fields and forested slopes of the Shivaliks for millennia. This was something else entirely—a furious, unyielding torrent that shattered all historical records and, with them, our sense of security and predictability. The numbers themselves are staggering, dwarfing previous all-time highs, but to focus solely on the statistics is to miss the profound and terrifying message being delivered by our environment. The roaring floodwaters of the Tawi river, which has its catchment in the battered hills of Udhampur, that carved new paths through our towns, the collapse of the vital fourth bridge connecting Bhagwati Nagar and the warehouse area in Jammu are not isolated incidents of misfortune. They are the latest, most violent sentence in a conversation that our planet has been trying to have with us for decades. What we saw in Jammu and Udhampur is the tangible, devastating consequence of a world thrown out of balance by global warming. This is the new language of our climate, and it speaks in absolutes. To understand the ferocity of this event, we must first appreciate the unique geography of our home. The Himalayas have always been arbiters of our weather. They are the great wall against which moisture-laden winds finally exhaust themselves. According to the meteorological department, the immediate trigger for this disaster was a potent and dangerous interaction: a strong stream of a Western Disturbance colliding with moisture-rich monsoon winds flowing in from the Bay of Bengal, right over North India. This clash of systems turned our skies into a battlefield.

The process of orographic lift, where warm, wet air is forced to rise up the mountain slopes, cool, and release its moisture, is the fundamental reason for rain in the region. But we have fundamentally altered the mechanics of this engine. The primary culprit is the heat that our industrialised world continues to pump into the atmosphere. The science is unequivocal: for every degree Celsius of warming, the atmosphere can hold approximately seven percent more moisture. The Jammu and Kashmir region is warming at a rate faster than the Indian average, meaning our atmosphere is becoming a supercharged sponge, soaking up unprecedented amounts of water. When a powerful weather interaction finally triggers its release, it is no longer a shower or a downpour; it is a deluge, a vertical flood from the heavens. The rain that fell was the result of a system overloaded with moisture, a direct consequence of the excess heat trapped in our global climate system. This warming trend has also warped the behaviour of other critical weather phenomena, including the Western Disturbances themselves. These storm systems, born in the distant Mediterranean, have historically been the bearers of winter precipitation. However, climate change is making them more erratic and powerful. As they travel eastward, they now pass over a warmer Arabian Sea, picking up additional moisture and energy. This has led to them appearing with greater intensity and outside their traditional season, often interacting explosively with the summer monsoon, as we have just witnessed. The record-breaking rainfall was the product of this deadly atmospheric collision. Our mountains became the theatre for this conflict, and the communities nestled within them, particularly in the low-lying areas of Jammu which saw widespread flooding as the Tawi overflowed, paid the price. We are caught in a climatic pincer movement, where the very systems that once defined our seasons are now being weaponised against us by rising global temperatures. Every tonne of

carbon emitted in a distant continent contributes to the loading of this atmospheric weapon, which is then fired upon the fragile and vulnerable ecosystems of the Himalayas. Yet, the rain, however extreme, is only one part of this terrifying equation. The other critical factor is the state of the mountains themselves. The Himalayas, often called the "Third Pole," are home to the largest reserves of ice and snow outside the polar regions. These glaciers are not just magnificent natural wonders; they are the water towers of Asia, the regulators of our great rivers, including the Tawi. For decades, scientists have been issuing stark warnings about the accelerated melting of these glaciers, a direct result of rising temperatures. This rapid melt does more than just signal a future water crisis; it creates immediate and present dangers that multiply the destructive power of extreme rainfall. As glaciers recede, they leave behind vast, unstable lakes dammed by loose walls of rock and debris known as moraines. These are, in effect, ticking time bombs. An intense rainfall event can rapidly fill these lakes, putting immense pressure on their fragile dams, leading to catastrophic Glacial Lake Outburst Floods. Even without a full-scale GLOF, the persistent glacial melt has already primed our river systems for disaster. The constant, elevated runoff from melting ice means that our rivers are already swollen and carrying a higher volume of water long before the monsoon begins. They have lost their capacity to absorb sudden shocks. When a record-breaking deluge occurs, the rainwater is not falling into a stable river system; it is being dumped into one that is already at or near its breaking point, as evidenced by the dramatic rise of the Tawi beyond the danger mark. This is why the floods were so immediate and so widespread, inundating low-lying areas and leading to devastating outcomes like the bridge collapse. The water had nowhere to go. The combination of rainfall from the sky and meltwater from the high peaks

creates a compound event of terrifying destructive potential. Furthermore, the retreat of glaciers exposes steep, unstable slopes that were once buttressed by ice. These bare slopes are highly susceptible to erosion, and when pounded by relentless rain, they collapse, leading to the massive landslides that have severed our roads and buried homes. The disaster in Udhampur and Jammu was therefore not just a flood; it was the convergence of a water-logged atmosphere and a destabilised landscape, two parallel symptoms of the same planetary fever. In the face of this overwhelming evidence, it is a dangerous fallacy to continue speaking of these events as "natural disasters." There is nothing natural about the speed and intensity with which our climate is changing. While our own local actions—unplanned urbanisation, deforestation on vulnerable slopes, and the encroachment upon natural floodplains—have certainly increased our vulnerability, they are not the root cause. These actions are like leaving the windows open during a hurricane; foolish, yes, but not the cause of the hurricane itself. The storm is being brewed on a global scale. The tragedy of the Himalayan region, from Leh to Jammu, is that we are on the front lines of a crisis for which we bear little historical responsibility. We are being forced to adapt to a reality forged in the industrial centres of the world. The time for incremental adjustments and half-measures is long past. We must fundamentally rethink our approach to development, infrastructure, and disaster management. Our policies can no longer be based on the climate of the past, for that climate is gone forever. We must build for a future of higher flood levels, more frequent landslides, and greater weather volatility. This requires not just engineering and investment but a profound shift in mindset, an acceptance of our new, more dangerous reality, and the political will to act on it with urgency and conviction. The deluge of Jammu and Udhampur was a warning, written in water and mud. To ignore it is to invite a future where such tragedies become not the exception, but the norm.

# 130th Const Amend Bill: Targets Oppn ministers?

■ DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

The 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill has raised a hue and cry among the Opposition. Tabled just two days before the conclusion of Parliament’s monsoon session, its members were completely caught off guard. The new Bill which seeks to remove ministers facing corruption or serious offence charges came in for severe criticism and MPs protested by tearing copies of the Bill in the well of Lok Sabha. Opposition’s main contention is that since both Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate are controlled by Union Home Ministry, it’s feared that ministers in Opposition ruled states would be easily targeted. The Bill, which has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee, states: “A Minister, who for any period of thirty consecutive days during holding the office as such, is arrested and detained in custody, on allegation of committing an offence under any law for the time being in force, which is punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years or more, shall be removed from his office, by the President on the advice of the Chief Minister to be tendered by the thirty-first day, after being taken in such custody: Provided that if the advice of the Chief Minister, for the removal of such Minister is not tendered to the President by the thirty-first day, he shall cease to be a Minister, with effect from the day falling thereafter...” In his response, Prime Minister Modi justified the laws proposed by his government to remove chief ministers and other ministers and dismissed the charges of the Opposition. “They think if they go to jail, then all their dreams will be shattered. They are so rattled

that they are opposing a proposed law which is in public interest”, he said and sought to use the example of government employees getting suspended after being arrested to justify a similar treatment for politicians. However, Opposition charges can’t be termed baseless and merit serious consideration. Past experience suggests that destabilising Opposition-ruled states by bringing up a fabricated charge against the state chief minister or other ministers is not unusual. In fact, many governors, instead of taking advice from respective state cabinet, appear to obey instructions from the Centre. Additionally, it’s contended that law and order is being steadily taken out of state jurisdiction by bringing it surreptitiously under Central purview and allowing unelected agencies to decide on the fate of elected leaders. Experts opine that the goalpost has shifted from conviction to custody as the bills propose. As current provisions stand, they seem to skirt around the idea of due process. Yes, there is a justified argument that those accused of serious crimes should resign anyway. The provision rests on the fact of detention rather than conviction. A hallmark of our legal system is that an accused is innocent until proven guilty. Recent history demonstrates how Opposition leaders have been arrested and held in custody for extended periods, only to be discharged later for want of evidence. Removal from constitutional office based on detention alone not only carries a significant political cost but also risks misuse of investigative agencies. But a law that makes dismissal contingent upon a month’s incarceration doesn’t account for the utmost importance accorded to the will of the people – those elected can be found to hold office only after conviction. JPC should

concentrate on this point and recommend necessary amendments. Meanwhile, one may refer to senior advocate, Indira Jaising, commenting on the amendment bill observed: “In a county where criminal law is used for persecution, not prosecution, and as a tool for eliminating all Opposition parties, the proposed constitutional amendment is also weaponising the Constitution itself. When the ED and the CBI are under the direct control of the central government, federalism gets destroyed. Law and order are taken out of the State List and given to the Centre.” She said that except the ministers of the ruling party all others will be behind bars. Echoing the same viewpoint, DMK Rajya Sabha member, P. Wilson stated this bill is clearly part of “a diabolical plan to turn India into a dictatorship.” He further pointed out: “Out of 193 cases registered by the ED against political rivals of the BJP, only two have ended in conviction, proving that 191 cases are false and foisted for political reasons. He referred to the case of AAP leader, Satyendra Jain, who was arrested by the CBI and subsequently the case was closed against him. In another report, as stated by government to Parliament last month, statistics reveal that under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, only eight or 0.1 percent of 5892 cases filed by the Enforcement Directorate between January 2015 to end June 2025 have led to convictions. Analysing further, such an amendment that can lead to the removal of a state minister, directly impacts state autonomy and the federal principle. It creates a mechanism where Centre’s law enforcement agencies control could, in theory, destabilise an elected state government. The constitutional validity of such an amendment, according to legal experts, can be challenged before the Supreme

Court. The judiciary through its pronouncements has declared federalism as a part of the Constitution’s ‘basic structure’, an unamendable power. However, relying solely on judiciary to be the ultimate arbiter of federalism is precarious for any democratic government. It needs to be pointed out that courts can strike down an unconstitutional law but they cannot rewrite the constitutional framework to create a more balanced federal structure. At this juncture, it would be prudent to rethink our federal arrangement, which would be to expand the list of entrenched provisions in Article 368 to include all matters that directly impact legislative and executive powers of the states. With federalism being under threat, the vindictiveness of the ruling dispensation also cannot be ruled out against parties that do not support it. In the garb of tackling criminalisation amongst elected representatives, the present attempt has been designed so that in theory the objective cannot be questioned. While admitting that criminalisation in politics has been on the rise but that covers many political parties, not excluding the BJP. But the most important question is who will act against the ruling ministers at the Centre and in the states? The basic idea of controlling or controlling criminalisation in politics is indeed a very novel idea. But the onus of this cannot be on a government controlled by a political party; some other mechanism must be found. It could be that former that a committee comprising say two former chief justices of India and a serving Supreme Court judge could constitute that committee, presided over by the President or Vice President of India. Independence and neutrality are very important and there should be no bias towards any political interests.---INFA

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