

PM MODI, MAKER OF 21ST CENTURY INDIA

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the longest serving elected PM of India on June 10, 2026, with 4,399 days in office, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's 4,398 days. This supplement explores this remarkable achievement.

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PM Narendra Modi interacts with a winner of PM Bal Puraskar 2025, in New Delhi on 26 December 2025. Photo courtesy: PMO

THE TRANSFORMATION

From Pandit Nehru's India to Modi-ji's Bharat

Pandit Nehru's India asked what the state could allocate. Modi-ji's Bharat asks what the state can deliver, and insists on showing the receipt.



HARDEEP SINGH PURI

On 10 June 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed his 4,399th consecutive day in office, one more than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru served from his first elected government in 1952 until his death in 1964. The qualifier is worth keeping, because Pandit Nehru, measured from 1947, still holds the record for the longest unbroken tenure. What Modi-ji has surpassed is the mark for the longest continuous tenure of an elected head of government in the Republic's history. I have spent my working life inside the state that lies between those two dates, and the milestone interests me less for its arithmetic than for what it allows one to measure. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya taught that a government should be judged by what reaches the last person in the line, by Antyodaya. The distance from Pandit Nehru's India to Modi-ji's Bharat is the distance the last person has travelled.

A fair account begins with what Pandit Nehru inherited. He inherited a partitioned sub-continent scarred by the largest forced migration in history, an economy drained by



4,399 DAYS

THE ARCHITECT OF VIKSIT BHARAT

Democracies do not celebrate longevity for its own sake. They celebrate leadership that converts public trust into national transformation.

On 10 June 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed 4,399 days in office, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's record of 4,398 days and becoming India's longest-serving democratically elected Prime Minister. However, to view this merely as a numerical milestone would be to miss its deeper significance.

Democracies do not celebrate longevity for its own sake. They celebrate leadership that converts public trust into national transformation. They celebrate governments that leave nations stronger, institutions more capable and citizens more empowered than they inherited them. By that measure, 10 June is an occasion to assess



KARTIKEYA SHARMA

one of the most consequential periods of governance in independent India's history. The election of 2014 marked far more than a change of government. It brought to an end an era in which coalition compulsions constrained decision-making. For the first time in three decades, India elected a government with a clear majority and a leader with a decisive national mandate. Equally important was the continuity that followed. Prime Minister Modi is the first non-Congress leader to secure three consecutive

mandates from the Indian electorate. This continuity provided the stability to pursue a long-term reform agenda across multiple terms. The Modi years can be understood through three distinct phases of nation-building, each laying the foundation for the next.

The first phase, from 2014 to 2019, focused on building the foundations of a modern state. The emphasis was on basic infrastructure, financial inclusion and digital connectivity. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, more than 11 crore toilets were con-

structed, addressing a long-neglected challenge of sanitation, dignity and public health. Simultaneously, the government undertook one of the largest financial inclusion exercises in human history. More than 55 crore Jan Dhan accounts were opened and the architecture of the world's largest digital public infrastructure ecosystem was also built around the JAM trinity—Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile—bringing millions into the formal banking system. The introduction of UPI transformed digital payments, growing from virtually zero transactions in 2016 to more than 23 billion transactions every month today. These developments created the foundations upon which future reforms would rest.

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OF NATIONAL MINDSET

The rise of a confident nation

History may eventually judge the Modi years as a period of significant military and strategic transition.



SYED ATA HASNAIN

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi surpasses Jawaharlal Nehru's record as India's longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister, the moment invites reflection on India's journey over the past seven decades. The significance of this milestone lies not merely in longevity but in the transformation of India's aspirations, capabilities and global standing. The Modi era has been marked by an effort to accelerate national transformation in a rapidly changing world.

FROM INSTITUTION BUILDING TO NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

If the first decades after Independence were devoted to building the institutions of the Republic, the challenge today is to maximise their effectiveness in an era of intense global competition. The Modi era has focused on a different

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SOVEREIGN STRENGTH

THE MODI ERA: REIMAGINING GOVERNANCE AND CIVILIZATIONAL RESOLVE

The internal stability and civilizational vitality mirror directly onto the global stage. Having had the honour of representing India in major international capitals, I have witnessed first-hand a profound transformation in how our country is perceived by the international community.



TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU

On June 10, 2026, India crossed a historic democratic milestone as Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed 4,399 consecutive days in office. With this, he surpassed the record set by independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who served 4,398 uninterrupted days following the landmark 1952 general elections. This moment is far more than a statistical achievement or a milestone of political longevity. It represents a profound era of political and policy stability—a critical anchor that has allowed the Indian state to undergo a structural and civilizational evolution. For a nation of 1.4 billion people, this continuity of leadership has provided the steady foundation required to transition from an era of passive, scarcity-driven administration to a highly confident, modern republic that proudly asserts its identity as Bharat on the world stage.

This internal stability and civilizational vitality, mirror directly onto the global stage. Having had the honour of representing India in major international capitals, including serving as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and Ambassador to the United States, I have witnessed first-hand a profound transformation in how our country is perceived by the international community. Today, India is no longer viewed through a lens of defensive hesitation, systemic vulnerability, or passive non-alignment. Instead, the global community recognizes Bharat as a self-assured, modern power—a trusted strategic and economic partner, a pioneer in digital delivery of public welfare, and an indispensable anchor of international stability. From driving global conversations on supply chain resilience and green energy to acting as a powerful, constructive voice for the Global South, Bharat en-

gages with the world from a position of deep civilizational confidence. Our successful G20 presidency, guided by the timeless ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), showcased a country capable of bridging deep geopolitical divides and championing a model of human-centric development.

This global respect, however, is not a product of diplomacy alone; it is anchored in a nation's absolute sovereignty and unwavering resolve. A key pillar of this domestic transformation has been the visible evolution of India's national security posture. Historically, the state's response to cross-border security challenges was bounded by traditional diplomatic assumptions and a doctrine of strategic restraint. Over the past decade, this has been replaced by an assertive security paradigm that balances defence preparedness with proactive deterrence, sending a clear, unequivocal message that dialogue and terror cannot coexist.

The 2016 surgical strikes across the Line of Control and the 2019 Balakot airstrikes marked a paradigm shift. India demonstrated its willingness to conduct targeted,



A September 2023 photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi holding hands with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, US President Joe Biden and World Bank President Ajay Banga during the G20 Leaders' Summit, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. ANI

calibrated counter-terror operations, dismantling hostile infrastructure without being constrained by outdated geographical parameters. This uncompromising posture was further demonstrated during Operation Sindoor. In its aftermath, I had the privilege of joining a multi-party parliamentary delegation to the Americas. Engaging with leading strategic thinkers, lawmakers, and opinion makers across the continents, what stood out was a growing international appreciation of India's stance—a recognition that state-sponsored terror

must be confronted with systemic resolve and can never be rationalized. Crucially, this operational resolve is reinforced by massive investments in border infrastructure. The rapid construction of all-weather roads, strategic tunnels, and forward airfields, has integrated our northern and western frontiers into the national developmental grid. Regions once viewed strictly through a security prism, have now been transformed into corridors of economic opportunity and strategic resilience.

This integration of the pe-

riphery highlights a broader philosophy of modern Indian statecraft: using physical and digital infrastructure to unify the country and empower its citizens. At the heart of this domestic transformation is the strategic utilization of technology to rewrite the rules of public service delivery. Over the last decade, India has evolved from being a net consumer of global technologies to a leading innovator of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). By integrating Aadhaar-enabled financial services, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and platforms like CoWIN, the state has built a transparent, efficient ecosystem that completely bypasses bureaucratic bottlenecks and eliminates corruption. Today, this digital framework handles billions of transactions seamlessly, offering an inclusion model that developed nations are actively studying. It has transformed the relationship between the citizen and the state, replacing patronage with direct, transparent empowerment as a matter of right.

The tangible impact of this digital leap is most visible in the unprecedented scale of grassroots financial inclusion. For decades, a vast

portion of the population remained excluded from the formal banking system, limiting their economic mobility. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, this divide was bridged through the opening of more than 56 crore Jan Dhan accounts, creating the largest financial inclusion framework in the world. Crucially, more than half of these accounts belong to women, initiating a quiet social revolution by expanding household financial autonomy and economic dignity. Alongside this financial mainstreaming, the rapid expansion of essential services—ranging from sanitation, healthcare, and electricity to clean drinking water and affordable housing—has bridged the historic gap between rural and urban India. Infrastructure is no longer treated as a distant developmental milestone; it has become the fundamental bedrock for individual competitiveness and national growth.

In 2014, when Prime Minister Modi took over, the challenges involved modernizing, streamlining, and aligning existing straining systems, with the hyper-aspirational energy of a population of 1.4 billion in an increasingly

interconnected world. This transition from an era of post-colonial administrative consolidation to one of proactive, citizen-centric empowerment represents the true civilizational shift from a young post-colonial state to a confident, modern Bharat.

Ultimately, the Modi era has redefined the limits of what India can dream, build, and achieve. The continuity and stability of the past decade provide a rare, solid platform for long-term policy implementation as we march towards Viksit Bharat 2047—the vision of a fully developed, inclusive, and globally influential nation by the centenary of our independence. While a vibrant democracy will always engage in healthy debate over specific policies and programs, the overarching shift is undeniable. The Indian state has become more responsive, technology has become an instrument of mass dignity, and a nation of 1.4 billion citizens stands deeply confident of its sovereign strength and its rightful place in the world.

* Taranjit Singh Sandhu is the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. He is a retired diplomat and served as India's ambassador to the United States.

4,399 DAYS

The architect of Viksit Bharat



KARTIKEYA SHARMA

CONTINUED FROM P1 In the second phase, from 2019 to 2024, focus on expanding the reach of welfare delivery, completing long-pending constitutional integration and ushering in a new era of cultural renaissance converged to produce some of the most consequential decisions in independent India's history. Ayushman Bharat emerged as the world's largest government-funded health insurance programme, providing health coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family and extending healthcare security to hundreds of millions of citizens. The abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir completed the constitutional integration of the region with the rest of India. The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya following the Supreme Court's verdict ensured restoration of a long-denied cultural pride for millions of citizens.

One of the defining features of this period was also the government's approach to women's empowerment. Prime Minister Modi shifted the discourse from "development for women" to "women-led development." While welfare initiatives improved access to sanitation, healthcare and financial inclusion, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 addressed a deeper democratic imbalance by guaranteeing reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures. By combining welfare-driven empowerment with institutional political representa-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a Guard of Honour prior to hoisting the National Flag at Red Fort on 79th Independence Day, in New Delhi on 15 August 2025. ANI

tion, the government sought to ensure that women would not only benefit from public policy but also participate in shaping it.

The third phase, beginning in 2024, has coincided with the emergence of artificial intelligence, semiconductor competition and frontier technologies as defining drivers of national power. Rather than merely responding to these changes, Prime Minister Modi has sought to position India at the forefront of this technological transformation. The IndiaAI Mission and investments in computing infrastructure re-

flect this ambition. NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang has publicly praised Prime Minister Modi's understanding of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, observing that few world leaders grasp their transformative potential as clearly. Such endorsements reflect a broader reality: India is no longer merely consuming technology; it is increasingly shaping the future of technology.

The same strategic thinking is visible in semiconductor projects. Today, five major semiconductor facilities are

under implementation under the India Semiconductor Mission. Partnerships with global technology leaders and engagement with countries such as the Netherlands, Japan and the United States, led by the Prime Minister himself, are helping build a domestic semiconductor ecosystem that was unimaginable a decade ago.

These achievements have unfolded against a backdrop of extraordinary geopolitical turbulence. When Jawaharlal Nehru led India, the international system was largely defined by the Cold War and the competition between two

clearly identifiable blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union. The strategic landscape of today is far more complex and unpredictable. The contemporary world is characterised by simultaneous competition among multiple power centres, an intensifying US-China rivalry, ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, disruptions in global supply chains, energy insecurity and the growing strategic importance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and semiconductors. In such an environment, nations are required to constantly balance competing interests across economic, technological, security and diplomatic domains.

The ability of India to navigate this uncertainty while preserving strategic autonomy and expanding its global influence has been one of the defining features of the Modi era. Under the leadership of PM Modi, India's diplomatic stature on the global stage has undergone a remarkable transformation. The respect accorded to India's leadership is reflected in the 32 international honours and state decorations conferred upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi by foreign governments—the highest received by any serving Indian Prime Minister. He has also addressed the Parliaments of 18 countries, more than the combined total addressed by Congress Prime Ministers before him. These honours are not merely recognitions of an individual leader; they are acknowledgements of India's growing weight in global affairs and its emergence as a consequential voice in shaping the international order.

The Indian electorate placed its trust in the Congress for six decades after Independence. In 1984, it handed Rajiv Gandhi one of the largest mandates in Indian history, hoping that a young and modern leader would transform India into a technologically advanced and economically dynamic nation. Those expectations were squandered. Decades of Congress rule left India burdened by policy paralysis, weak infrastructure, limited state capacity and an economy that consistently underperformed its potential. In contrast, the past 12 years have demonstrated what decisive leadership, political stability and a clear sense of national purpose can achieve. What Congress could not accomplish despite six decades in power, Prime Minister Modi has set in motion within just 12 years.

The coming decade will be shaped by intense geopolitical rivalries, global economic shocks, technological disruption and persistent security challenges along India's borders. Navigating such an environment requires not only vision but also consistency in execution. The transformation of a nation of 1.4 billion people into a developed country requires sustained political commitment, institutional continuity and decisive leadership. For this reason, the continuity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership over the next 10 years is a strategic necessity for maintaining the reform momentum and steering India through one of the most consequential periods of modern history.

* Kartikeya Sharma is an Independent Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

PM Speaks

“Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, aur Sabka Prayas.” (Together with all, development for all, trust of all, and efforts of all).

“Come, make in India. Sell the products anywhere in the world but manufacture here.”

“My philosophy is to use the stones hurled at me to make a bridge for myself; I believe in proving my critics wrong through my work.”

“Let us create a future defined not by power but by partnership, not by dominance but by dialogue, not by exclusion but by equity.”

“We are determined to do so, guided by our ancient belief that people and planet are inseparable. We represent a culture that calls our planet Mother Earth.”

“The Indian community does not settle abroad to enter into politics or take a seat in global politics. Wherever they go, they think and act towards the benefit of society.”

“Reform, perform, and transform.”

TWO PRIME MINISTERS

FROM NEHRU TO MODI: TWO ERAS, TWO VISIONS

If Nehru's era was defined by a Nehruvian consensus, the Modi era will be defined not by consensus, but by decisiveness.



**AISHWARYA
PANDIT SHARMA**

The symbolism of being the longest continuous serving elected Prime Minister of India is significant since Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India held office for 4,398 days and Narendra Modi has surpassed that on 10 June 2026. As historians studying history, people and societies, a question must be asked: is it the number of days or the impact that must be evaluated? The number of days reveals that the Bharatiya Janata Party under Modi has been transformed into an electoral machine, winning three general elections from 2014-2024, but the impact tells us that Narendra Modi has crafted a legacy which will be felt by generations of Indians for decades. If Nehru's era was defined by what we call a Nehruvian

consensus, a middle path that brought together both sides of ideological currents to form the Congress party, the Modi era will be defined not by consensus, but by decisiveness in governance and his own party. Benjamin Zachariah, in his work on Nehru argues that "if Nehru was to have his own way in a party dominated by the right, he had to use the Gandhian form of blackmail with his colleagues, i.e. threaten to resign," which he often did especially on the eve of the election of P.D. Tandon as the Congress president. That was Nehru using his personal prestige and popularity to bulldoze and remove a president who had been elected in his own party and defy inner party democracy much to the frustration of his colleagues.

Narendra Modi is different in many respects, though he is often compared to former Prime Ministers Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi. Herein lies the problem, but gives us some perspective and context. India in 1947 was a highly fractured polity caused by partition and migration of millions of people on both sides of the border. Accompanying violence and riots brought with it its own set of challenges for Nehru, which required restraint and rebuilding. Similarly, Narendra Modi inherited a country that had lost faith in governance due to the policy paralysis and corruption of UPA-II and opposition on all sides of the political spectrum, something which Nehru was spared. The first opposition to Modi was on a personal level, where many opposed Modi as an individual, not only as the Prime Minister. International opinion and narratives are stacked against Modi to this day, Nehru didn't face those problems as he inherited relationships of his father



AI generated image.

within the Congress party and friends he had cultivated during his student years. Narendra Modi needed to make his own connections, chart out his own path and make friends globally in a highly volatile world. To his credit, something which his critics are happy to ignore, he cultivated relationships with world leaders exten-

sively, often going out of his way when the interest of the country were paramount. Modi has managed disension within his own party, especially at a time when many discreetly opposed his elevation as the BJP Prime Ministerial candidate in 2013. That itself was a huge challenge for Narendra Modi. Many admirers of Nehru

don't want to compare Modi and Nehru, but comparison is inevitable since it is after years of coalition politics, sectarian strife, that people are reposing faith in one individual i.e. Narendra Modi. The vote is for Modi, during the Nehru years the vote was for the Congress party, the vote was for Gandhian ideals which the Congress has left

behind for some time now. If successes belong to Modi, the opposition has ensured that setbacks are also attributed to Modi, something he has taken in his stride. As a historian, the number of days are a reminder of consistency, and stability of the government and the leader heading it, but impact is something that needs to be looked at equal measure. If one were to think of Modi's actions and to try and find a parallel with Nehru, it would be very difficult to find parallels. Modi has never threatened to resign, Nehru threatened to resign when he didn't like things or decisions within his party and government. Modi has not subordinated his party—the BJP—to the BJP government at the Centre, something that was the case during Nehru years when the Congress party was subordinated to the Congress government, leading to party decline over the years with partymen scrambling for posts within the party and government. Nehru had cultivated an in-

heritor of his legacy, Modi's overarching legacy is that there is no inheritor. He has made the concept of inheritor redundant, and has made positions dependent on party work, discipline and service and less to do with a DNA. He has pushed aside the troubling concept of dynasty, pushed aside the idea that only a few individuals can lead the country and pushed the democratic boundaries further to infuse the idea that anyone can lead the country. With this he has allowed his own partymen and women to dream and aspire to lead the country and set a template that would be difficult to alter or replicate. It is a moment to celebrate his service and record and to sit back and imagine the idea of India that the founding fathers envisaged. Many may agree or disagree with the politics of Narendra Modi but his contribution to the nation will be remembered. *Dr Aishwarya Pandit Sharma is Professor at Jindal Global Law School.

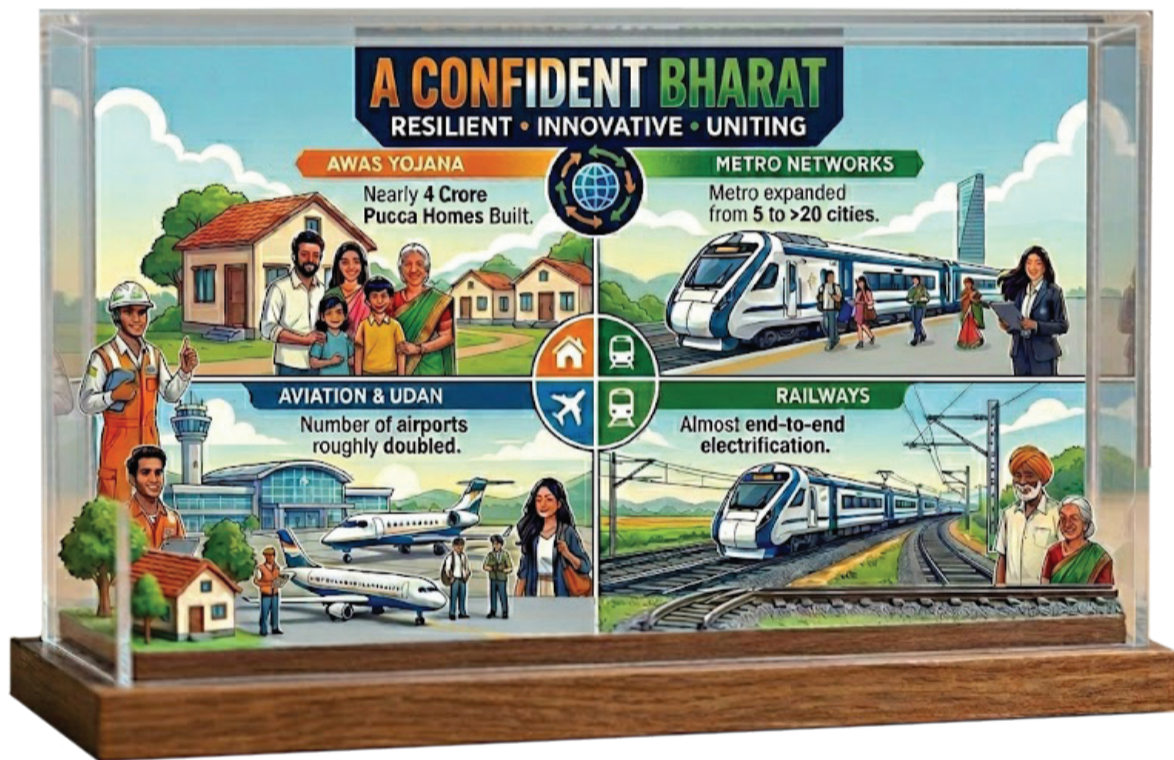
THE TRANSFORMATION

From Pandit Nehru's India to Modi-ji's Bharat



**HARDEEP
SINGH PURI**

CONTINUED FROM P1 two centuries of colonial extraction, a people of whom fewer than one in five could read, and a life expectancy in the early thirties. From that inheritance he built a constitutional democracy that held, while one newly free nation after another fell to the general or the strongman. The Planning Commission set the direction, the public sector held the commanding heights, and a system of licences decided who might produce what. The universities, the laboratories, the atomic and space programmes, the steel towns: the institutional spine of independent India was laid in those years. I joined the Foreign Service in 1974, and the India I represented was a serious country that had chosen to manage scarcity with as much dignity as its machinery allowed. The cost of that settlement became visible by the time I was a mid-career officer. The state had learned to allocate, but it had not learned to deliver. The distance between a scheme announced in Delhi and a benefit received in a village was where the money vanished. A former Prime Minister's own admission, that 15 paise of every rupee reached the poor, was a verdict on the model itself. The state could plan. It could not reach. Modi-ji's inheritance in 2014 deserves the same honest accounting. He took charge of an economy the markets had fled among the Fragile Five, weighed down by stalled projects, double-digit inflation fresh in memory, and corruption that had corroded public faith in the state itself. His answer was a different machine altogether. The Planning Commission gave way to the NITI Aayog, which convenes the states rather than instructs them. Identity, a bank account, and a mobile phone were joined into one layer, and the government began



AI generated image.

to pay citizens directly instead of through intermediaries who had taken their cut for four decades. Direct Benefit Transfer is a plain phrase for a decisive instrument. It moved the test of governance from intention to receipt. What followed was the reconception of the state as a platform. India built public digital rails, an identity system that works at the scale of a continent, and a payments network the world now studies. More than 50 crore Jan Dhan accounts opened formal banking to families it had never reached. In the same decade, by NITI Aayog's estimate, nearly 25 crore Indians moved out of multidimensional poverty, and the economy the markets had written off now grows faster than any other major economy. The state that once stood between the citizen and the thing the citizen needed now builds the road and stands aside. That is the substance behind the word Bharat. I can speak to one corner of this from the office I hold. In 2014, ethanol blending in our petrol stood at 1.53%. This year we have reached 20%, a target once set for

2030 and met half a decade early, and the money that once left the country to buy crude now reaches the farmer, who is now an Urjadata, a provider of energy, alongside the Anadada who feeds us. In the same years, the Ujjwala Yojana carried cooking gas into more than ten crore poor households for the first time, with the subsidy paid into the beneficiary's own account, beyond any middleman's reach. This is Antyodaya rendered in litres and cylinders. The last person is no longer the one the scheme forgets. She is the one it is built around. The same ledger runs through brick and steel. Close to four crore pucca homes have been built under the Awas Yojana for families that had never owned one. The Metro, which ran in five cities in 2014, runs in more than 20 today. The number of airports has roughly doubled, and UDAN has put air travel within reach of towns that had only watched aircraft pass overhead. The railways have been electrified almost end to end and run their first indigenously built semi-high-speed trains. None of this is abstraction.

Each entry is a queue that no longer forms, a journey that no longer consumes a day, a roof that does not leak. The fiscal architecture moved with the rest. The Goods and Services Tax, for all its early friction, gave the country the single national market that had defeated every government which pursued it for two decades, and the Centre and the states now compete on the ease of doing business and the quality of delivery, a healthier contest than the older one over allocations. The same confidence reshaped how India carries itself abroad, and here I claim some standing from my years representing the country. Pandit Nehru's non-alignment was the prudent stance of a poor and new state that could not afford to choose a side. The present doctrine of multi-alignment is the stance of a country that intends to be courted by every side. India carried its Group of Twenty presidency to every state of the Union rather than confining it to the capital, and the framing of India as a voice of the Global South turned an old developmental weakness into a claim to

leadership. A state confident of its delivery at home speaks differently in the world. A record of this scale invites scrutiny, and a democracy as argumentative as ours will supply it. But the question the office is asked has plainly changed, and that is the measure of the distance travelled. Pandit Nehru's India asked what the state could allocate. Modi-ji's Bharat asks what the state can deliver, and insists on showing the receipt. That is why 10 June is worth marking, and why the count of days is the least of it. Pandit Nehru built the Indian state. Modi-ji has re-wired it to reach the citizen in whose name it was built. I have served the state in both its incarnations, and I know which transformation the last person in the line will remember. The promise that once had to be taken on trust somewhere upstream now arrives, traceably, in her own hand. That is the Viksit Bharat we have been asked to build by 2047, and it begins, as Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya said it must, with her. *The writer is Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

LETTER TO NARENDRA

CONGRATULATIONS, MATE



**SCOTT
MORRISON**

G'day, Scott Morrison here. I served as Australia's Prime Minister from 2018 to 2022 when I had the great privilege to serve alongside Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I want to congratulate you, Narendra, on reaching this incredibly important historical milestone, becoming the longest serving Indian Prime Minister. But Narendra, it hasn't just been the length of your service which has been extraordinary, it has been the nature of that service. During your time as Prime Minister, you have transformed the Indian economy. It has become a powerhouse of the Indo-Pacific. But importantly, you've extended economic opportunity right across your population, drawing countless numbers out of poverty. As you've modernised your economy, you've digitised your economy, you've reformed your tax system and you have promoted India around the world with a passion and a zest which few can match. I also want to congratulate you for how you stepped up on the world stage and it was a great privilege to serve with you in those years, particularly during COVID. During that time, you have been a powerful voice, not just for Indian national interest, where you have maintained India's great legacy of independence, but you've also been a great champion of the Global South for developing economies. Not only have you argued their case, but in your own stewardship of India, you have shown them a positive economic model for how they can transform their own economies. And so you have demonstrated



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with then Australian PM Scott Morrison, in Glasgow on November 1, 2021. ANI

both in word and in deed, just how much of a champion you are for the developing world. Of course, the thing that rings most true for us here in Australia and for me personally, is how we were able to elevate our own partnership to its highest level ever, completing our comprehensive strategic partnership in the midst of COVID and then going on to form our first ever free trade agreement. This took both the personal connection between us both and my predecessors, as well as your great commitment to the Australian relationship, which I know endures. As a result, we have a relationship which remains in outstanding shape. And we continue to work closely together as we secure the security of the Indo-Pacific, and in particular, the broader economic security where we are both firmly engaged. As we look into the future, I'm full of confidence for India. I'm full of confidence for the India that you have helped build with your many important ministers, particularly Minister Jaishankar, who I think has been an extraordinary support to your work around the world.

So I look forward to even better things about India. We will still have our great rivalries when it comes to our shared love of cricket and all of these types of things. But beyond that, there is, I think, a very deep connection. India is now the single largest source of immigration to Australia. And Indian nationals who have come to our country have made an extraordinary contribution and are greatly valued. And I hope that will continue to be the case. I have no doubt it will be. And you've reached out to that diaspora, whether it is here in Australia or throughout the world. And you've made those Indian nationals who've made home somewhere else, you've enabled them to feel connected with their homeland in a very special way. And I think you in particular deserve great credit for that. And so I hope you enjoy reaching this milestone. You're not someone who tends to reflect on these things for terribly long, because I know you remain pragmatic and busy and focused on the task at hand. But do take a moment to enjoy it. It is an extraordinary achievement. You have brought peace and stability to our region. You have brought prosperity to your own country. And you've improved the Indian sense of self-reliance and independence in a way few have ever had. During my time as Prime Minister, I had the privilege to serve alongside some great leaders, our dear friend, the late Shinzo Abe being one of them. And Narendra, you occupy that special place as well. I wish you every success for the future. And I look forward to seeing you again soon. All the best, mate. Congratulations. *Scott Morrison was the 30th Prime Minister of Australia

OF BELONGING

THE PRIME MINISTER WHO BROUGHT DELHI CLOSER TO ASSAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's most lasting contribution to Assam and the Northeast may well be that he narrowed the psychological gap between the region and the national capital. He did so not only through policy, but through gesture and presence.



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

A generation in Assam grew up with a quiet but persistent sense of alienation. It was taught, by experience as much as by politics, to believe that Delhi looked upon Assam and the Northeast with indifference. This was not entirely an imagined grievance. History gave it substance; policy often reinforced it. For decades, many in Assam felt that the region was remembered only in moments of crisis and forgotten in moments of national planning.

I belong to that generation. From my early years in public life, I had seen how deeply this feeling ran in Assam's collective mind. It shaped conversations, sharpened agitations and influenced aspirations. The belief that Delhi looked at Assam through the eyes of a stepmother had become part of our political vocabulary. It was not merely rhetoric; it was the emotional expression of a historical condition.

That is why the change of the last decade must be seen not only as a developmental

shift, but as a civilisational correction.

When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, something fundamental began to change in the relationship between Delhi and the Northeast. He did not treat the region as a remote frontier. He brought it into the centre of the national imagination. He spoke of the Northeast as *Ashtalaksbmi*. He repeatedly emphasised Assam's strategic and cultural significance. More importantly, he translated this recognition into action.

And that has altered not only infrastructure, but mindset.

The generation that once internalised alienation has now witnessed engagement. The generation that followed has grown up with a different confidence. Young people in Assam today no longer instinctively assume that Delhi is distant or apathetic. They see their state as part of India's growth story, as a space of opportunity and as a region whose aspirations matter. This psychological

shift may, in fact, be one of the Prime Minister's greatest contributions to Assam.

The development story that followed must be read against this backdrop.

There was a time when Assam had to agitate simply to ensure that its own crude oil was refined within the state. The memory of the refinery movement remains alive in our political consciousness. For long, Assam's resources flowed outward while local value addition remained limited. Today, that story is being rewritten. The Numaligarh Refinery expansion is moving ahead at full pace. Once completed, its annual refining capacity will rise from 3 million metric tonnes to 9 million metric tonnes. A new pipeline from Paradip to Numaligarh is nearing completion and fresh energy infrastructure is strengthening Assam's industrial capacity. What was once a symbol of extraction is becoming a symbol of transformation.

The same is true of industrial revival. Jagiroad once stood as a reminder of decline. The silent Nagaon Paper Mill, the deserted quarters and the fading memory of industrial employment had all become part of Assam's landscape of disappointment. But history can turn. On that very soil, Tata Electronics is now



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu at Lachit Ghat, Guwahati, on February 14, 2026. @narendramodi/ANI

building a semiconductor facility with an investment of Rs. 27,000 crore. Assam, which once saw its industrial dreams rust away, is now entering the global semiconductor map. Few stories capture the journey from neglect to aspiration more vividly than this.

Peace, too, has been central to this new chapter.

There was a time when violence cast a long and fearful shadow over Assam. Insur-

gency, bomb blasts, kidnappings and gunfire had made uncertainty part of daily life. In such an atmosphere, tourism and investment were impossible to imagine. But the peace accords signed in recent years—with Bodo groups, ULFA through the 2023 tripartite agreement and Karbi, Adivasi, Dimasa and other organisations—have changed that reality. These agreements have not merely ended old conflicts; they have

opened the door to new confidence. Peace has restored possibility.

And possibility has brought investment.

Advantage Assam 2.0, with participation from 75 countries, received investment commitments worth Rs. 5.18 lakh crore. Leading groups such as Reliance, Adani, Tata, Vedanta and Jindal are now looking at Assam with seriousness and optimism. This would have seemed improbable not very long ago. Today, it is becoming routine. Assam is no longer waiting to be discovered; it is asserting itself as a destination.

Infrastructure tells the same story in concrete form.

For decades after Independence, the mighty Brahmaputra—Assam's lifeline and defining geography—was crossed by too few bridges.

For nearly 70 years, there were only three bridges over it. In recent years, that picture has changed rapidly. New bridges have been completed, more are under construction and the geography of connectivity is being redrawn. The recently inaugurated Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu is one such milestone. Projects like the Dhubri-Phulbari bridge, the Jorhat Majuli bridge and the third Saraighat bridge speak of an Assam that is being physically integrated

with unprecedented speed.

Healthcare has seen an equally important transformation. Assam, which once had to struggle for institutions of national importance, now hosts AIIMS Guwahati. Medical colleges have expanded sharply, from seven in 2021 to 14 now, with more under construction. The state has moved from scarcity to expansion, from dependency to capacity-building. In transport too, railway doubling, electrification, new Guwahati airport terminal, the upcoming tunnel under the Brahmaputra, the Kaziranga elevated corridor and the Guwahati Ring Road reflect a new scale of ambition.

But beyond these bridges, airports, factories and refineries lies a subtler change—the change in emotional distance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's most lasting contribution to Assam and the Northeast may well be that he narrowed the psychological gap between the region and the national capital. He did so not only through policy, but through gesture and presence. When he wears Assam's *gamosa*, it is not a routine courtesy. When he stays in Kaziranga, becoming the first Prime Minister to do so, it carries meaning. When he visits the Northeast repeat-

edly—more than 75 times—it sends a message that the region is not peripheral to India's destiny.

That message has been heard.

Today, Assam stands more confident, more connected and more hopeful. The old language of abandonment is steadily giving way to the language of opportunity. The emotional arc has shifted—from grievance to participation, from distance to belonging.

On 10 June, Narendra Modi created history by becoming the longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister of India, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's record. This is a moment of national significance. For Assam, it is also deeply personal. It is an occasion to acknowledge a leader under whose tenure the state has not only seen material progress, but also experienced a restoration of confidence in its place within the Indian Union.

I offer him my heartfelt congratulations on this historic milestone. I also pray to the Almighty to bless him with good health, long life and continued strength so that he may go on serving the nation with the same vision, conviction and dedication.

* Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma is the Chief Minister of Assam.

OF NATIONAL MINDSET

The rise of a confident nation



SYED ATA HASNAIN

CONTINUED FROM P1

imperative—enhancing state capacity and accelerating national transformation. Governance has increasingly become outcome-oriented, measured less by policy announcements and more by delivery.

Through financial inclusion, direct benefit transfers, digital governance and large-scale infrastructure and welfare programmes, Narendra Modi has sought to deliver governance directly to citizens. Enabled by the integration of digital identity, banking and mobile connectivity, this approach has transformed the citizen-state relationship, reducing leakages, improving efficiency and enhancing public confidence in governance.

THE EMERGENCE OF STRATEGIC CONFIDENCE

Perhaps the most important change of the last decade has been psychological.

For much of independent India's history, public discourse was shaped by scarcity, caution and the management of limitations. The Modi years have sought to replace this with ambition, aspiration and confidence. This shift reflects a leadership style that has consistently encouraged India to think at scale, set ambitious national goals and pursue them with determination.

The language of governance itself has changed.



Representational photo: Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrating Diwali with naval personnel on INS Vikrant, in Goa on 20 October 2025. @narendramodi X/ANI

Large-scale infrastructure, indigenous manufacturing, digital innovation, space exploration, renewable energy, semiconductor capability and the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 all reflect a nation increasingly willing to think big and act decisively.

This confidence has also found expression in India's external engagement.

FOREIGN POLICY IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Foreign policy has emerged as one of the defining strengths of Prime Minister Modi's leadership. At a time when the global order is undergoing significant realignment, India has succeeded in maintaining strategic autonomy while simultaneously expanding partnerships across competing geopolitical blocs.

India today enjoys unprecedented engagement with the US while preserving independent decision-making. It remains an active member of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) while deepening partnerships across Europe, West Asia, Africa and the Indo-Pacific. It has emerged as an influential voice of the Global South while simultaneously seeking a larger role in global governance institutions.

At its core, India's foreign policy reflects a Nalanda Approach; engaging all major centres of power, avoiding exclusive alignments and preserving strategic autonomy. It is an approach particularly suited to a multipolar and contested world. This balancing act is not accidental. It reflects a sophisticated un-

derstanding that India's rise depends on engagement with all major centres of power while avoiding excessive dependence on any single one.

Periodic diplomatic fluctuations should not be mistaken for shifts in the regional balance of power. Strategic influence ultimately rests on comprehensive national power—economic strength, technological capability, military capacity, human capital and international partnerships. By these measures, India today occupies a position of unprecedented strength in its post-independence journey.

The rise of nations is judged over decades, not by diplomatic news cycles; by that measure India's strategic trajectory remains among the most consequential developments of the 21st century.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE TRANSFORMATION

As a student of national security, I believe history may eventually judge the Modi years as a period of significant military and strategic transition.

The character of warfare is changing rapidly. Traditional military challenges now coexist with cyber warfare, information warfare, space competition, artificial intelligence and autonomous systems. Future conflicts will increasingly be multi-domain in nature.

Recognising this shift, the government has initiated important reforms. The creation of the Chief of Defence Staff, the drive towards jointness and theatre commands,

changes in defence procurement and the emphasis on technological modernisation have sought to prepare India's armed forces for emerging realities.

Military transformation is inevitably a long-term process. Yet the direction of change has been clear and purposeful.

Equally important has been the push towards Atmanirbharta in defence. For decades, India's security architecture depended heavily on imported platforms and systems. Today, indigenous production, private sector participation and defence exports have become important pillars of national strategy.

Strategic autonomy in the 21st century cannot rest solely upon diplomatic independence; it must be underwritten by technological and industrial capability. The effort to build that foundation may prove one of the most enduring contributions of the Modi era.

Having observed India's strategic journey over four decades in uniform and public life, I have rarely seen national security receive such sustained political attention. The Modi administrations recognised early the imperatives of strategic transformation and pursued them comprehensively, creating a culture in which national security and strategic issues occupy the centre rather than the periphery of decision-making.

The challenges posed by China's growing assertiveness tested India's resilience. From Doklam to Eastern Ladakh, India demonstrated

both political resolve and military preparedness. The rapid mobilisation and sustained deployment along the Line of Actual Control during the difficult period of 2020 reflected a national determination that surprised many international observers.

Similarly, India's calibrated responses to cross-border terrorism established an important principle—that the nation possesses both the capability and political will to defend its interests while remaining mindful of the broader strategic objective of regional stability and economic growth.

CRISIS LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE

No assessment of the last decade would be complete without acknowledging the challenge of COVID-19. The pandemic tested governments across the world in unprecedented ways. India's response involved managing public health, maintaining social stability, ensuring economic recovery and executing one of the largest vaccination programmes in human history. The crisis reinforced the importance of state capacity, technological innovation and societal resilience. It also demonstrated the advantages of political continuity during periods of national emergency.

THE CIVILISATIONAL DIMENSION

Beyond governance, economics and security lies another dimension of the Modi era—the reassertion of civilisational confidence. Through cultural diplomacy,

heritage conservation and the articulation of India's role in global affairs, there has been a conscious effort to present India not merely as a nation-state but as a civilisation with a distinctive voice and contribution. This has resonated strongly with a generation seeking both modernity and rootedness.

THE LEGACY OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL ERA

History will continue to debate individual policies, decisions and outcomes. Such debate is natural and necessary in a vibrant democracy. Yet viewed from a broader strategic perspective, alongside the many achievements in governance, development, diplomacy and national security, Narendra Modi's enduring contribution may well be the transformation of India's national mindset.

The foundations of the Republic were laid in the years after independence. The task before contemporary India is to realise its full potential in a rapidly changing world. In that larger journey, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure will likely be remembered as the period during which India began to think and act with the confidence of a nation conscious of its capabilities, its interests and its destiny.

That confidence, more than any political milestone or longevity record, may prove to be the defining hallmark of the Modi era.

* The writer is Governor Bihar and the former Commander of the Indian Army's Srinagar-based Chinara Corps.

THE FIRST PM

INDIA NEEDS A REDISCOVERY OF NEHRU

Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy remains deeply embedded in the soul of India, its people, rivers and mountains, over which by his wish, his ashes were sprinkled to mix with the dust.



SALMAN KHURSHID

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is claimed, broke Jawaharlal Nehru's record of India's longest-continuously serving democratically elected Prime Minister. Assuming office on May 26, 2014, Modi crossed Nehru's uninterrupted elected tenure of 4,398 days after the 1952 general election. However, Nehru remains the longest-serving head of government overall (serving 16 years from 1947 to 1964). The celebration by the BJP of the event can hardly be objected to, yet its flavour smacks of the hurry of the establishment to overwhelm the recent past ably assisted by its camp followers cherry picking facts and giving them twisted interpretations to suit their perception of history. Surely, we all know that Nehru served for an impressive 16-year tenure, and what is more important, left a beautiful India to succeeding generations. For people in power who publicly swear by democracy and the Constitution, their every word of disparagement of Nehru's historic accomplishments is a hypocritical repudiation

of the avowed commitment to the two centrepieces of modern India that Nehru propagated, preserved and protected, indeed became a personification of.

There is enormous material to describe Nehru but before that let us look at an essay he wrote in 1937 entitled "Rashtrapati," under the pseudonym Chanakya.

"Men like Jawaharlal, with all their capacity for great and good work, are unsafe in democracy. He calls himself a democrat and a socialist, and no doubt he does so in all earnestness, but every psychologist knows that the mind is ultimately a slave to the heart and logic can always be made to fit in with the desires and irrepressible urges of a person. A little twist and Jawaharlal might turn a dictator sweeping aside the paraphernalia of a slow-moving democracy. He might still use the language and slogans of democracy and socialism, but we all know how fascism has fattened on this language and then cast it away as useless lumber.

"Jawaharlal is certainly not a fascist, not only by conviction but by tempera-

ment. He is far too much of an aristocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism. His very face and voice tell us that:

"Private faces in public places

"are better and nicer than "public faces in private places."

Are there leaders today who dare to reflect on human frailty so objectively?

Was Nehru warning himself or indeed was he warning the multitudes who saw salvation and future in his charismatic personality? More than that think of what PM Modi might say in a similar situation. Nehru was loved by those whose life he touched; PM Modi may inspire awe. The question is not about what Nehru had and what Modi has, rather it is about what India needs most desperately: a unifier, not an enforcer. The latter has a majoritarian feel, a quest for uniformity in belief and conduct. Religious identity is the most convenient and persuasive platform for such uniformity. Cultural commonality follows; so dress, language, eating habits have to be aligned. The problem with that is that proverbial argumentative Indian can seldom agree on any dimension of social existence, not to mention the many diverse interpretations of the majority religion itself.



Jawaharlal Nehru delivering his "Tryst with Destiny" speech at the "stroke of the midnight hour" on 15 August 1947.

Conforming to preferred conduct by targeting the "other" works admirably in electoral contests but does not hold indefinitely beyond the lure of monopolising opportunity. The remarkable electoral victories of the BJP and its allies from 2014, pushed by majoritarian energy, are beginning to appear fatigued, although they can claim the spurts of dying embers in the results of West Bengal and Assam. All in all, we are told of In-

dia's rapid strides towards becoming the third largest economy, with a seat at the high table of G-20, BRICS, Quad, et al; expansion of transport infrastructure. But on ease of doing business and freedom of press index we remain lower than most comparable countries. Institutional integrity has become a matter of controversy. On the world stage, despite the economic and development strides India seems to have lost the con-

spicuous voice it traditionally had. We spoke forcefully for the Global South and NAM. We were heard on Korea, Vietnam, Poland and non-proliferation much beyond our punching weight.

Newly independent India that Nehru steered combined contradictions with dreams.

He once spoke of the challenge of leading a modern, secular country populated by deeply religious people. His "stroke of the midnight hour" speech stirred the young nation to redeem the pledges to destiny. India stepped into the world with confidence and determination, celebrating its own emancipation from colonial subjugation but committed to untiring endeavour to seek freedom for all oppressed, colonised people of the world. The world discovered India through Gandhi and Nehru; Indians saw themselves as the midnight children walking in the footsteps of Nehru, the dreamer and builder. In his personality we saw the emergence of our collective and individual personalities. Steeped in the syncretic culture of plural India in repudiation of the Partition mentality Nehru became the touchstone of modern, secular India. The closest India's leadership profile has displayed philosophical attributes was when Nehru

addressed the fascinated masses on ideas like Bhakra dam being the temples of new India and Bharat Mata imagined thus:

"Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: Bharat Mata ki Jai—Victory to Mother India. I would ask them unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this Bharat Mata, Mother India, whose victory they wanted? My question would amuse them and surprise them, and then, not knowing exactly what to answer, they would look at each other and at me. I persisted in my questioning. At last a vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the dharti, the good earth of India, that they meant. What earth? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them all about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was much more. The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me, who were

spread out all over this vast land. Bharat Mata, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of this Bharat Mata, I told them, you are in a manner yourselves Bharat Mata, and as this idea slowly soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery."

It is not just the years we were fortunate to have been blessed by the leadership so refined and intellectual. Sadly, time passed too soon and he was gone. But the legacy remains deeply embedded in the soul of India, its people, rivers and mountains, over which by his wish, his ashes were sprinkled to mix with the dust. The legacy, the public sector factories, the IITs, the State institutions, the resonant voice of young India and an ancient civilisation, all flash in the hearts and minds of millions of Indians. From the Discovery of India we have to move to the Rediscovery of Nehru in an age inexplicably determined to obfuscate his memory. Physical memory fades and can be erased but the soul of India cannot be altered.

* Salman Khurshid is former Minister of External Affairs of India and a member of the Indian National Congress.

SPEEDED UP

India's fast-track to a developed future

During the last decade, India has witnessed unprecedented growth in the network of highways and expressways, ports and road corridors, along with improved logistics, high-speed intercity rail.



AJAY DUA

Starting 2014-15, except for the two years of Covid-19, India has kept up its impressive record of economic growth. Despite the base for measuring being substantially larger than before, and a host of domestic and international challenges including the recent years of global reordering, it has averaged an annual GDP increment of 7% plus. Under the stewardship of a mature Mr Narendra Modi, who has now become the longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister of India, its economy has attained significant macroeconomic stability. For several years, inflation stands reined and self-reliance in food and other essentials has been palpably improving. The annual fiscal deficit has been on a downward trajectory while foreign exchange reserves have been rising. Such positioning accompanied by a several-fold expansion in infrastructure building, augurs well for ensuring that the nation of 1.45 bn remains equipped to join the ranks of the developed nations in not too distant a future.

India's recent economic track record has earned it the sobriquet of being the fastest growing large nation. It also finds itself in the happy situation of ex-

periencing a demographic transition with the population now stabilizing. The total fertility rate is declining, and may soon go below the replacement value of 2, whereafter the overall number of mouths to feed would naturally start reducing. The much-touted parameter of per capita income should then see a tick-up as the GDP rises while the population in the denominator decreases.

Such positive momentum has moved India up to the high table of nations of global reckoning. The overseas impact of this economic progress has heightened under the experienced and forward-looking Prime Minister Modi. Besides his persona, the readiness to periodically engage with world leaders of consequence on issues of global concern, both immediate and futuristic, has noticeably raised the stature of India. His eagerness to assimilate modern technology into all fields of production, distribution, and governance has facilitated the flow of advanced know-how without the nation having to pay the royalties and fees. Take for instance that Apple and Samsung which are now assembling their state-of-

the-art mobile handsets in India, and exporting from here globally, including to the USA. Several other giant electronic, IT, and tech-companies have drawn inspiration and committed to follow suit. Almost a dozen large data centres of reputed global firms, entailing an investment of over US\$100 bn and thousands of well paid jobs are currently under construction in India.

In the last couple of years, about a dozen bilateral trade and investment deals have been negotiated. These include the pacts signed with the UAE, EAEU, Australia and Oman. The deals with the UK, EU, and New Zealand should come into force soon. Russia, the ever-friendly partner of India, is keen to cement its relationship in advanced defence equipment, including nuclear energy. France, Brazil, Italy, Spain, and Germany are no longer reluctant to set up production bases in India for military as well as other hi-tech products. Even China, currently experiencing the impact of labour shortage, has begun to talk about the need for thawing in relations, and offered to co-operate with India in selected fields of manufacturing.

During the last decade, India has witnessed unprecedented growth in the network of highways and expressways, ports and road corridors, along with improved logistics, high-



AI generated

speed intercity rail. About a thousand kilometre long metro rail systems built jointly with the state governments are now operating in major cities. 74 new airports in different pockets have been added to the existing 72. Through securitization of publicly owned and already-created physical transportation assets, vast amounts of private capital and construction-cum-operational private skills have been attracted into such infrastructure creation.

Associating private enterprises has been successful in the generation of renewable power, especially solar-based. The additional 75 GW viz 75,000 MW of such solar-based capacity coming into being in the

last five years, has brought about a virtual transformation, with the ever-persisting shortage of electricity getting drastically reduced. The Rural Electrification Corporation has taken distribution lines to the most distant settlements. India is now the third largest generator of solar electricity. With the addition of more storage capacity in the transmission systems, the desirable changeover of renewables replacing the conventional and less clean modes, would gather pace.

Geographically, the higher and consistent economic growth has been well spread out and the progress has not been confined to the Southern or Western regions. The six BIMARU states of the North and the

East have, in the last decade, progressed on most counts. In recent years, Bihar—hitherto one of the more laggard provinces—has experienced record double-digit rates of GDP growth. Uttar Pradesh, a state with a population of 130 million, and equally backward particularly in pockets contiguous to Bihar, is also on a recovery path.

The infusion of a strong dose of financial support from the Union government, particularly to build the multiple networks of roads, rail, and corridors, has partially helped overcome the structural rigidity in farm productivity. In addition, extending support to the various means of optimizing the use of

scarce water, subsidies have been enhanced on buying chemical fertilizers particularly the new micronutrients. Increasing milk production, popularizing horticulture especially growing of vegetables, and gradually changing the traditional crop patterns have provided a degree of compensation to the farmers otherwise not seeing their crop yields rise appreciably. Farmers growing the staples like paddy, wheat, maize, and sugarcane, are being gradually persuaded to include the greater value added pulses, cereals, soya and other edible oils.

While striving for such structural shifts, a host of centrally funded welfare schemes such as outright cash subsidies to farmers and their workers, free food distribution to over half of the population, and state-supported direct transfers to adult women in several states—have served to address extreme poverty alleviation. Direct bank transfers of cash subsidies have ensured foolproof and instant delivery, while the linking of bank accounts with new digital payment modes has improved the efficacy of welfare measures. At last count, the number of people below the defined poverty line was below 10% of the population, a remarkable shot in the arm for the NDA government, considering that over a decade ago, it was almost double that.

While there is recogni-

tion of the efforts to boost the economy, as reflected in the results of frequent elections at different tiers of governance, the measures already initiated undoubtedly would need to be strengthened along the way. The creation of more jobs, especially for youth and women, remains a key priority. Keeping the re-emerging inflation in check because of the uncertainty in the cost and availability of oil and gas coming through the Middle East (and their second-order effects on other fuels, fertilizers, and food which have not yet fully surfaced) will demand concerted action with the states and infusion of more central resources.

A pragmatic approach for securing and retaining foreign investment, both direct and portfolio was recently demonstrated by combining the Union government's fiscal measures with RBI's monetary moves to attract and retain foreign capital. Their well-conceived and coordinated actions has put an end to the discussion whether the rupee be allowed to float or its value be managed. Such bold acts make it evident that the Modi led government is involved and capable of dealing effectively with both the transient glitches as well as the basic issues confronting the Indian economy.

* Dr Dua, an ex-Union Secretary, Commerce & Industry, is a development economist by training.

BEING SANATANI

HOW MODI RECONNECTED BHARAT WITH ITS CIVILIZATIONAL SOUL

Unlike Nehru, Prime Minister Modi's political vision has drawn inspiration from Swami Vivekananda, particularly the principle of 'elevation of the masses without injuring their religion.' In this vision, unlike the Nehruvian paradigm, religion, or more precisely, Dharma has emerged as a source of ethical, cultural, and national regeneration.



**J.
NANDAKUMAR**

Soon after India attained Independence, the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a wicked model of secularism that sought to minimize the role of India's civilizational and spiritual heritage in public life. The controversy surrounding the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple is frequently cited as a landmark of this ideological conflict. While leaders such as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and K.M. Munshi upheld national pride and argued that the state should support the rebuilding of the temple, Nehru expressed strong reservations about state involvement in the reconstruction and the participation of the Head of State in its inauguration. This was merely the beginning of a long chain of incidents that added secular insults to the injuries inflicted upon the national psyche during British rule.

The 2014 election results and the successive re-elections of a nationalist government heralded a new era in Bharat, marking the country's decolonization after seven decades of Independence. Unlike Nehru, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's political vision has drawn inspiration from Swami Vivekananda, particularly the principle of "elevation of the masses without injuring their religion." In this vision, unlike the Nehruvian paradigm, religion, or more precisely, Dharma has emerged as a source of ethical, cultural, and national regeneration.

REVIVAL OF BHARAT'S SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONHEADS

Under Narendra Modi, unprecedented attention has been directed toward major pilgrimage centres and Bharat's sacred geography. The reconstruction of the Bhavya Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, the expansion and modernization of Mahakal Lok, the reconstruction of the Kedarnath Temple precincts following the 2013 disaster, and the promotion of pilgrimage to the 12 Jyotirlingas have revitalized Bharat's spiritual landscape and strengthened national unity. Various infrastructure projects connecting these pilgrimage destinations across

Bharat have been presented not merely as tourism initiatives but as efforts to restore India's sacred geography and civilizational memory.

REIMAGINING THE PURUSHARTHAS

The pursuit and fulfilment of the Purusharthas as the ultimate goal of life is a unique and fundamental idea of Sanatana Dharma. In the Bharatiya way of life, every individual is encouraged to strive for the attainment of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Our forefathers also linked these ideals to the life of the nation.

The Shri Ram Mandir at Ayodhya has traditionally been viewed as a symbol of Dharma. The Somnath Temple is regarded as a symbol of resilience, prosperity, and Artha. Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura may be associated with Sri Krishna's philosophy of life, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Kama, while the Kashi Vishwanath Temple represents Moksha, the supreme goal of spirituality and liberation.

When the natives became oblivious to these great ideals, the invaders who sought to destroy the very soul of this nation appeared to be fully aware of this civilizational design. They ensured that these four pillars of the spiritual nation remained shattered. If their destruction symbolized the nation's decline, their reconstruction



Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs aarti on the occasion of Somnath Amrut Mahotsav, celebrating 75 years of the inauguration of the restored Somnath temple, in Gir Somnath on May 11. PMO/ANI

and revival have come to symbolize national regeneration, a civilizational agenda that Narendra Modi has sought to advance.

SPIRITUAL DIPLOMACY

Apart from promoting spiritual democracy, Modi has placed spirituality at the centre of several aspects of Bharat's renewed foreign policy, using civilizational links as instruments of diplomacy. The international recognition of the International Day of Yoga, the promotion of Buddhist diplomacy through the Buddhist Circuit, and engagement with Buddhist-majority nations are visible examples of this approach.

Other nations have reciprocated by supporting the construction, preservation,

or restoration of Hindu temples within their territories. This has not only redefined India's image on the world stage but has also enhanced the self-esteem of Bharatiyas and the Indian diaspora abroad.

YOGA AND THE YOGIC WAY OF LIFE

Narendra Modi has consistently promoted yoga not merely as a form of physical exercise but as a holistic philosophy integrating body, mind, society, and nature. The global observance of the International Day of Yoga transformed what was once primarily an Indian spiritual practice into a worldwide cultural phenomenon. Supporters regard this as one of India's most successful examples of soft power.

KUMBH MELA AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: RECLAIMING GANDHI'S LEGACY

Perhaps it was Mahatma Gandhi who first recognized the potential of the Kumbh Mela as a platform for national unity. Following his return to Bharat from abroad, Gandhiji used two consecutive Kumbh Melas as opportunities to understand Bharat more deeply and to engage directly with the Bharatiya people. Instead of exhibiting the secular distance often associated with many of his predecessors in power, Shri Narendra Modi sought to reclaim the Gandhiji's legacy by embracing the Kumbh tradition and giving it a new dimension.

As a result, recent Kumbh Melas have witnessed unprecedented participation, particularly among the youth. Beyond being a religious gathering, the Kumbh has increasingly come to be seen as a mechanism of national integration—bringing together people from every region, language, caste, and social background into a shared civilizational experience.

REINTRODUCING SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY INTO PUBLIC LIFE

Not only through his actions but also through his words, Modi regularly employs spiritual concepts such as

Dharma, Seva, Tapasya, Tyaga, Sankalp, and Kartavya. These concepts rooted in Sanatana Dharma occupy an important place in his public speeches, often interpreted in ways that resonate with younger generations. This subtle mode of spiritual communication has helped restore moral and spiritual vocabulary to public discourse.

VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM: THE CIVILIZATIONAL MESSAGE

Prime Minister Modi has further elevated his spiritual vision to the international arena by centring it around the timeless ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, "the world is one family."

Instead of contributing to further divisions in an already polarized world through the framework of Nehruvian Non-Alignment, Modi has advanced the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, asserting that Bharat's civilizational mission is neither domination nor isolation but the offering of spiritual, ethical, and cultural resources to humanity.

This represents, according to its proponents, a paradigm shift from state-centred secular nationalism to a civilizational nationalism that seeks to harmonize development, culture, spirituality, and global responsibility under the banner of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

As Swami Vivekananda observed in his Reply to the Address of Welcome at Madras: "Here in India, it is religion that forms the very core of the national heart. It is the backbone, the bed-rock, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built. Politics, power, and even intellect form a secondary consideration here."

By negating the spirit of the nation, no government can take this country to its highest potential. Recognizing this enduring truth and framing policies and developmental roadmaps accordingly may hold the key to building a developed Bharat. Modi listened to the heartbeats of this great nation and sought to follow them, while others ignored them altogether. That's how the Modi magic has captivated the billions of people. As Maharshi Sri Aurobindo stated: "This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it, it moves and with it, it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism."

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STELLAR

No full stops for Narendra Modi, India's longest serving Constitutional Prime Minister

Prior to crossing Nehru's 4,398 record, in July last year Modi had surpassed Indira Gandhi's 4,077 days, clocked over two tenures—1966-77 and 1980-84.



**SHUBHABRATA
BHATTACHARYA**

Hamne jaakar dekh liya hai bud-e-nazar ke aagey bhi Rabguzar hi rabguzar hain, rabguzar ke aagey bhi. Har manzil par pabunch ke hamne aksar yeh mehsos kiya Aur zara bam chal kar dekhen apne safar se aage bhi

(I have traversed beyond the horizon; the roads are unending; often, having reached my destination, I felt that I need to travel further than my itinerary...on these unending roads.)

These lines penned by an anonymous poet, which a friend recited when I was a student five decades ago, continued to perplex me till I observed the functioning of Narendra Modi—his unending quest for seeking reform beyond reform; perfection ahead of perfection is unparalleled.

As I write these lines, Modi is setting yet another record—of being the longest serving Constitutional Prime Minister of India. On 10 June he completed 4,399 days since taking over as Prime Minister on 26 May 2014 (one day before 50th anniversary of

the death of India's First Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru). This surpasses the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru, spanning 13 May 1952 to 27 May 1964 as India's Prime Minister elected under the provisions of the Constitution of India.

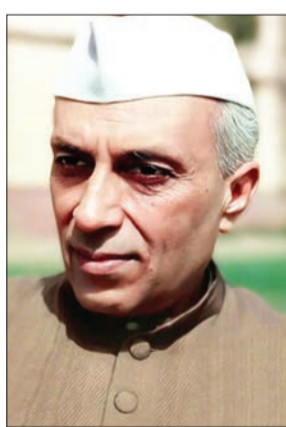
(Nehru's tenure in effect was for 6,131 days, beginning as Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council, deemed interim Prime Minister, from 2 September 1946 to 14 August 1947; as Prime Minister of Dominion of India: 15 August 1947 to 25 January 1950 and Prime Minister of Republic of India prior to First General Election on 26 January 1950 to 12 May 1952, and Constitutionally elected Prime Minister of India from 13 May 1952.)

The significance of the 10 June 2024 milestone is immense—hopefully, instability which marked the last decade prior to the millennium will not revisit our Republic in future. And there would emerge in years to come stable governance, stage for which has been set in the past 12 years, and

the Modi milestone will be crossed by a future popular ruler of Republic of India. Modi sets benchmarks and 4,399 days and counting is bound to set a magnificent record.

The tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister (including interim Prime Minister) was not insignificant though. After the visit of the Cabinet Mission in 1945, Viceroy Lord Wavell announced elections in Indian provinces. As 536 Princely states were under Indian rulers who were merged into Union of India due to the assiduous effort of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel post-Independence, the geography covered by these polls was small. And as property and income were essential prerequisite for qualifying as a voter, less than 10% of the populace of pre-partition India could participate. As in 1937, in 1946 too Congress polled 90% of the "Hindu and general" votes, while 87% of "Muslim" constituency votes went to Muslim League (thus accentuating the demand for Pakistan, which had been gaining currency since 1940).

The Provincial Assemblies elected the Constituent Assembly which was tasked with framing Constitution for Free India (in August



Former PM Jawaharlal Nehru

1947 the members from the geographies constituting East and West Pakistan started sitting in Karachi while Constitution of India was drafted in New Delhi).

Thus, successful drafting of the Constitution of India, holding of first General Election (an unprecedented task) and putting in place the edifice of Republic of India was achieved in the 1,733 days when Nehru was Prime Minister without the sanction of popular ballot box. If democracy has survived and thrived in India the role of these 1,733 days (which surpasses the tenures of Prime Ministers Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, V.P. Singh, Chandrashekar, H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral) is not insignificant.

Prior to crossing Nehru's 4,398 record, in July last year Modi had surpassed



PM Narendra Modi

Indira Gandhi's 4,077 days, clocked over two tenures—1966-77 and 1980-84. In March this year, Modi had surpassed the record of 8,930 days of unbroken tenure as a Chief Minister held by Sikkim's Pawan Chamling when his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat and Prime Minister put together counted 8,931.

These numbers are significant. But where Modi has carved an abiding niche is the way he ascended on the Chief Minister's chair in Gujarat without having been an MLA and similarly coming to Parliament as MP straight to become Prime Minister. He thus never carried past baggage. His tenure has been nascent and dewy. Hence Modi's 4,399

also compares well with Nehru's 1,733 initial days, when a de novo approach

was the credo.

Where Modi surpasses all his predecessors and overwhelms his contemporaries is his never say die spirit—his no full stops approach. Whether it is fulfilling the Sangh agenda (after all BJP agenda stems from the task promised under Shyama Prasad Mukherjee by Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1952) or upholding BJP promises, he has one by one gone ahead nonchalantly.

Ram Mandir at Ayodhya was not Jan Sangh agenda. It emerged as BJP programme at Palampur in 1988. Successive regimes since Rajiv Gandhi days, including the BJP-led Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime floundered. In Modi's tenure the matter was negotiated through courts and the city located on the banks of Sarayu has now emerged as "Ayodhya Dham". Revamp of Kashi, Ujjain, Vindhyavasini and many Hindu pilgrimage points have given a new paradigm to religious tourism, creating economic opportunity.

Abrogation of Article 370 and new approach to Jammu & Kashmir has been a major milestone. News of agitation in POK—the territory under Pakistan occupation shows the efficacy of the policy. J&K is peaceful while POK is boil-

ing. Statehood for J&K and popular rule in Ladakh, if implemented, will give a cutting edge to the fallout of abrogation of Article 370.

Reams can be written on the economic programmes and reform. 58.15 crore Jan Dhan accounts, launched in 2014, have changed rural economy and empowered women. UPI transactions worth Rs 23,000 million a month have created a robust digital economy. Vande Bharat trains have transformed rail travel. Railway capex, which was Rs 65,000 crore in 2014 now stands at Rs 2.95 lakh crore. Defence exports have pole vaulted from Rs 686 crore to Rs 38,424 crores. Ten crore Ujjwala LPG connections, Ayushman Bharat health coverage, 16 crore households provided tap water connections, nearly three crore houses built for the rural poor—the statistics are daunting.

However, there are signs which call for vigil. Indian economy, which had risen to be 4th in the world has recently been rated as 6th by World Bank. Our market cap has been overtaken by Taiwan and South Korea and we have yielded the 5th position to be ranked 7th. The examination imbroglio does not reflect well on a vibrant nation. The petro-

leum crisis today is reminiscent of the situation in 1973 when Indira Gandhi, basking in the glory of Bangladesh War, suddenly faced unrest. It began in Gujarat—Navnirman movement began with high mess bills. The recent fire incident in Delhi's Malviya Nagar has underscored the peril of a simple spark which flew from the kitchen.

Narendra Modi's reform-oriented approach has to be supplemented by reform in the way common people in general and those tasked with implementation, especially think. In 1972 coal mines were nationalised, as private owners were unscientifically exploiting a vital resource—it has now been denationalised, as the effect of the reform delivered result. Mohan Kumaramangalam, the minister who carried out the transformation, was once confronted by media which pointed out lapses in implementation. In response Kumaramangalam had lamented, "Apparently while nationalising mines we failed to nationalise minds."

Mindset needs reform. The government alone cannot transform—private sector and people's participation can provide much needed sinews to our economy.

TOWARDS VIKSIT BHARAT

THE MODI YEARS: A LEGACY OF TRANSFORMATION

Set these dozen years of Narendra Modi's tenure against that of our first Prime Minister, and a stark contrast emerges. It is not a difference of party but of temperament, resolve and unflinching focus.



BAIJAYANT 'JAY' PANDA

Time in office is democracy's rarest currency. Most leaders get too little of it to leave behind anything lasting. A very few are blessed by voters with enough time to leave a lasting legacy. This week Narendra Modi became India's longest continuously serving democratically elected Prime Minister in India's history, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru.

Counting his 12 and a half years as Chief Minister of Gujarat, he is nearing an uninterrupted quarter century as a head of government. It is worth examining the legacy he is creating from this unique positioning.

Let us begin with where India was in 2014. It carried, first, a wound that few in Delhi liked to name. Left-wing extremism had built a parallel state across the Red Corridor, a belt of forest and tribal land stretching from Pashupatinath to Tirupati. The decade ending in 2014 saw nearly 18,000 incidents of violence, with close to 7,000 deaths, and

126 districts in the insurgency's grip. Dantewada, where more than 76 personnel were killed in a single ambush, told the country what its state had ceased to control.

Terrorism told the same story from another direction: over 7,000 incidents in that decade, from 26/11 to the blasts in Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, absorbed largely in silence. And in the Northeast, an alphabet of insurgencies and a permanent AFSPA footprint kept an entire region at arm's length from the national mainstream.

Second, in the decade of 2014, India's economy was in an open crisis. Growth had slumped to 4.5%. Food inflation peaked at 20%. The world had filed India among the "Fragile Five". Corruption was not an aberration but a rhythm, beating steadily from Bofors through the Commonwealth Games to the Coalgate scams. And the poor, as ever, paid the bill: one in five Indians below the poverty line, nearly half of all

young children stunted, less than half of households with a toilet, and barely a quarter cooking on clean fuel.

That was the inheritance. Now turn the page to the Bharat of today. The internal wounds have closed to a degree few thought possible. Against the Naxals, the approach finally went to the root: relentless security pressure, yes, but joined to financial strangulation under the PMLA and UAPA, and 12,000 kilometres of roads pushed into forests the state had once abandoned. The insurgency that held 126 districts in 2014 now teeters at two. Its leadership has been neutralised.

Separately, the doctrine on terrorism was rewritten altogether, from weak-willed restraint to strategic resolve, and demonstrated at every rung of escalation: Uri in 2016, Balakot in 2019, and Operation Sindoor in 2025. Civilian deaths related to terror have fallen by 81%. And the Northeast was not conquered but persuaded: the Bodo, Bru-Reang, Karbi Anglong and ULFA accords brought more than 8,000 insurgents back into the mainstream, and AFSPA has been withdrawn entirely from Tripura and Meghalaya. Three different battlefields, one common change.



Representational photo: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting with economists at NITI Aayog, in New Delhi on December 30, 2025. PMO/ANI

A state that had learned to flinch relearned how to act. The economic repair was just as structural. Corruption was fought not with sermons but with architecture: the JAM Trinity and Direct Benefit Transfer deleted millions of ghost beneficiaries. This has already saved the nation over Rs 3 lakh crore in leakages, and the 2018 Prevention of Corruption Act amendment finally criminalised bribe-giving itself. The proof of the design is its record: no major scam since 2014. With the leaks plugged, delivery became possible on a scale India had never imagined possible, let alone attempted. Four crore plus homes built

for the poor. Ten crore plus gas connections. Eleven crore plus toilets. And on those foundations, around 25 crore Indians lifted out of multidimensional poverty. Meanwhile, the formerly fragile economy doubled, from two trillion dollars to four, growing at the fastest pace of any major economy for years on end. The country once mocked for jobless growth now runs the world's third-largest startup ecosystem and has overtaken China as the largest smartphone exporter to the United States.

Set these dozen years of Narendra Modi's tenure against that of our first Prime Minister, and a stark contrast emerges. It is not

a difference of party but of temperament, resolve and unflinching focus.

Take Kashmir, for example. Nehru took Kashmir to the United Nations in 1948 and played a major role in instituting Article 370, inviting seven decades of outside intercession. But with unprecedented resolve, that decades-long temporary article was abrogated in 2019. Four years later, India hosted a G20 meeting in Srinagar, the first major multilateral gathering there in living memory. Nehru's India strung unfenced posts across the Himalayas in 1962 and lost a war and Aksai Chin in 32 days. Modi's resolve checked Doklam, answered Galwan,

and disengaged eastern Ladhak without concession.

In terms of the economy, the Nehruvian doctrine foisted the licence-permit Raj on the nation like an albatross and shackled Indian enterprise for decades. The Modi government, on the other hand, works on the principle of less government and more governance, with dramatic results. Once known as the epitome of "3rd world" conditions, India is increasingly notable for adding world-class infrastructure at a rapid pace.

Besides the world-beating economic growth, there is also the quiet but supremely important achievement of containing the fiscal deficit and inflation far better than most developed nations, let alone peers, in an era of war, pandemics, and other global challenges. All this has come about with the development of robust state capacity. While there are many examples to substantiate this, perhaps the most famous is the nation's new ability to secure the safety and evacuation of huge numbers of its diaspora from far-flung, war-torn parts of the globe.

On the civilisational and cultural front, Nehru stayed away from the consecration of the Somnath temple and asked others to do the same.

Modi saw the Ram Mandir consecrated at Ayodhya with dignity and national pride, a modern republic finally conscious of and at ease with its own antiquity. Non-Alignment and the G77 might have given Nehru's India moral leadership of the "Third World," but they severely limited our leverage over the rules of trade, finance or technology. But under Prime Minister Modi, India has moved decisively toward a policy of multi-alignment, engaging with multiple power centres while preserving its strategic autonomy. This approach has delivered notable successes, including India's G20 presidency, which produced the only consensus communiqué since the Ukraine war began and secured the African Union's permanent membership in the G20.

None of this is to dwell on the past for its own sake. It is to insist that longevity, by itself, proves nothing; India has had long tenures that left it weaker. What matters is the ledger, and this one has achieved a turnaround so momentous that our civilisational nation has rarely seen anything like it, let alone our modern republic.

* *Baijayant 'Jay' Panda is the national vice president of the Bharatiya Janata Party.*

THE CONTRASTS

Civilizational turn under Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The significance of this moment is in the consequential question of whether Modi's tenure has altered how India understands itself.



SANTISHREE DHULIPUDI PANDIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emergence as the longest-serving Prime Minister in India's democratic history is undoubtedly a political milestone. It surpasses a record previously held by the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has officially become the longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister in India's history. He surpassed the previous record held by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (which stood at 4,398 days), marking a significant milestone in Indian political history. In 2026, his combined tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat (2001-2014) and Prime Minister of India (2014-Present) made him India's longest-serving head of an elected government, exceeding 8,930 days in office. Along with being the first and only non-Congress Prime Minister to complete two full terms, he became only the second leader in independent India's history to win three consecutive national elections.

But the significance of this moment lies in the consequential question of whether Modi's tenure has altered how India understands itself. The answer is yes with many different reasons. While comparing

two leaders at such distinct periods of history is untenable, the contrast still emerges over their respective national imagination. In 2014, when he came to power, PM Modi faced a host of issues and lingering challenges that persist today, including economic ones. To put it colloquially, he had a lot on his plate. Yet, despite these economic, administrative, and logistical challenges before him, he never faltered on an agenda that his predecessors had conveniently either avoided or overlooked. And that was the civilisational question. This runs deeper into the philosophy of India as a modern state, because at some point we must ask whether India would continue to view itself primarily as a post-colonial nation born in 1947 or whether it would rediscover itself as a civilisation whose story stretches back millennia. This distinction lies at the heart of the transformation witnessed over the last decade.

For generations, Indians—students and the public alike—often encountered their civilisation in fragmented ways. Ancient India was taught, but usually as a distant historical period rather than a living intel-

lectual tradition. India's contributions to mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, linguistics, governance, and aesthetics remained peripheral to mainstream academic discourse.

At its core, this represents a shift in educational philosophy. Knowledge is no longer viewed solely as something to be imported from elsewhere. India is increasingly encouraged to see itself not merely as a consumer of knowledge but also as a producer of knowledge over the centuries. This rediscovery extends beyond science and philosophy into political thought. For decades, discussions on democracy often began with European milestones such as the Magna Carta. Today, greater attention is being paid to indigenous traditions of participatory governance. The Chola inscriptions from Uttaramerur reveal sophisticated systems of local administration and representation. Basavanna's Anubhava Mantapa is increasingly recognised as an important experiment in deliberative dialogue and social equality. Ancient republics and Buddhist sanghas demonstrate that traditions of consultation and collective decision-making existed in India long before the arrival of colonial institutions.

A similar broadening has occurred in historical memory. The story of India is no longer being narrated through a narrow



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the revered Adheenam saints of Tamil Nadu during the inaugural ceremony of the Kashi Tamil Sangam in Varanasi on 19 November 2022. ANI

set of political figures and imperial capitals. Instead, forgotten regions, communities, and personalities are being brought back into national consciousness. The revival of civilisational heritage through the Tamil Sangam is perhaps another striking example. Through initiatives such as the Kashi-Tamil Sangam, greater public attention has been drawn to the deep cultural connections that bind different regions of India. Sangam literature is increasingly celebrated not as a regional legacy but as part of India's civilisational inheritance. The Cholas, once largely confined to specialist historical discussions, have re-entered national discourse. Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola are now widely recognised as rulers who projected Indian influence across the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia centuries before European colonial expansion.

This has also encouraged a rediscovery of In-

dia's maritime identity. For much of the post-Independence period, India tended to view itself primarily through a continental lens. The Modi era has revived interest in India's maritime past, from the naval expeditions of Rajendra Chola and the seafaring traditions of the western coast to the maritime vision of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The recognition of figures such as Lachit Borphan in the northeast and Marthanda Varma in the south further reflects a broader effort to create a more geographically representative understanding of India's history. A similar pattern of women's emergence in Indian history. Women are now recognised as Nari Shakti, not helpless vessels of their male counterparts. They no longer remain invisible or second-class citizens. Ahilyabai Holkar, Rudramma Devi, Rani Abbakka, Velu Nachiyar, and numerous others are increasingly acknowledged

as central actors in the civilisational narrative rather than peripheral figures. This expansion of historical memory has helped create a richer and more inclusive understanding of India's past.

Likewise, the recovery of India's Buddhist heritage is another important dimension of this shift. Nalanda is no longer viewed merely as an archaeological site but as a symbol of India's historic role as a global centre of learning. Philosophers such as Nagarjuna and Dharmakirti are receiving renewed attention. India's Buddhist connections with Southeast and East Asia have become an important element of both cultural diplomacy and intellectual rediscovery. Equally visible has been the restoration of India's sacred geography. The redevelopment of Kashi Vishwanath, the reconstruction of Kedarnath, the transformation of Mahakal Lok, and the development of Ayodhya represent more than infrastructure projects. They reflect an effort to reconnect sacred spaces with contemporary society. The objective has been to modernise access while preserving civilisational continuity, creating a bridge between tradition and modernity rather than presenting them as opposites.

The civilisational turn is more tangible and perceptible when one looks at India's recovery of stolen heritage under PM Modi. Since

coming to power in 2014, more than 650 antiquities have been repatriated to India from across the world, compared to only 13 between 1976 and 2013. The recent return of the 11th-century Anaimangalam Copper Plates from the Netherlands illustrates the significance of this effort. These inscriptions, associated with the Chola Empire and containing valuable information about governance, administration, and cultural exchanges, had remained outside India for more than a century. Their return symbolises more than the recovery of artefacts. They symbolise the recovery of historical memory itself. Similarly, the return of Chola bronzes, temple idols, Buddhist artefacts, Jain sculptures, and countless other treasures from the US, Australia, Canada, Italy, and elsewhere. These efforts have transformed cultural diplomacy into an instrument of civilisational restoration.

Critics may debate individual policies, political strategies, or ideological orientations. Such debates are natural in a democracy. But regardless of where one stands politically, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the larger transformation that has occurred. The language through which India speaks about itself has changed. Its educational priorities have changed. And as a consequence, its

relationship with heritage has changed. For centuries, India endured invasions, colonial domination, cultural disruptions, and intellectual distortions. By the time Independence arrived, much of the civilisational confidence that had once animated the subcontinent had been weakened. The newly independent state understandably focused on development and institution-building. Yet the larger project of civilisational recovery remained incomplete.

And at the end of the day, the true measure of civilisational leadership is rarely visible in the present, but its consequences are often felt decades later. In that sense, PM Modi's most enduring legacy may not be any single policy, programme, or specific political victory. It is how he helped Indians rediscover a sense of civilisational continuity and cultural self-belief after generations of uncertainty. By drawing upon the wisdom of the past to shape the possibilities of the future, he has attempted to anchor modern India within the deeper civilisational ethos of Bharat. The contemporary political debates will fade, yet the contribution he made to cultural and civilisational heritage of Bharat would likely be the most enduring of his whole legacy.

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STANDING OUT, OUTSTANDING

THE DOZEN MODI YEARS MADE THE WORLD READ INDIA DIFFERENTLY

He has proved a crisis manager par excellence. Only his steely resolve, courage and meticulous action could have carried 1.4 billion Indians through the once-in-a-century calamity of the pandemic and made it an opportunity. He now steers India through the perilous upending of the geopolitical and geoeconomic order.



LAKSHMI PURI

Last week Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the longest continuously serving Prime Minister India has elected. The milestone is his, and it is India's: no one has governed this democracy longer at a stretch, none through three consecutive wins amid politics this competitive. Beyond the record, what matters is what he did: every "unforgiving minute" filled for India with "sixty seconds' worth of distance run", each of those dozen years marked by 365 days of milestones, and the new, dynamic India the world now reads in the making.

I spent my working life in the field, in capitals, in board and conference rooms, and at the United Nations, where the world's opinion of nations is made. The change this past decade is the most pronounced I have seen: condensation has given way to competitive attention and the

wish to learn, in awe at India's shift from conscientious objector and system-taker to system-shaper, all multivector engagement and strategic assertiveness, wielding both the power of advocacy and the advocacy of power.

The world reads the man accurately: not handed his authority, he reached the highest office of the world's largest democracy from a childhood on a railway platform, without a family name; one who traversed India understanding its people, breaking the humble chapati with them, sharing joys and sorrows, building a political life from the ground up. To a world weary of inherited power and entitled succession, a leader authored rather than anointed carries particular credibility. He is the first Indian Prime Minister to wear the country's civilisational self as his identity rather than apologise for it or play the impostor in foreign garb.

The measures of global opinion agree: for years Modi has topped the Morning Consult ranking of democratic leaders, above two-thirds, far ahead of the West. Pew finds eight in ten Indians view him favourably, more satisfied with their country's direction than most mature democracies. Governments concur: 19 foreign parliaments addressed, some 30 state honours, several their nations' highest.

To his people he speaks directly, baring his mind and heart in Mann Ki Baat each month; to other leaders, a charm holding Washington and Moscow, the Gulf and Europe, with remarkable alchemy.

India now exports models rather than importing them. Its digital public infrastructure carries nearly half the world's real-time payments and moves welfare to hundreds of millions of accounts. 250 million have risen from poverty in a decade on the official measure: Antyodaya, the state's operating principle, not a slogan, leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, as the UN's Agenda 2030 urged. If

any leader has truly governed by that maxim, it is PM Modi. In the pandemic it administered over 2 billion vaccine doses, fed 800 million free, supplied vaccines to nearly a 100 countries and medicines to 150. The UN named him a Champion of the Earth, the Gates Foundation its Global Goalkeeper of the Sustainable Development Goals, for measurable progress on poverty, hunger, health, gender equality, energy and climate; UNICEF and UN Women have lauded his championing of women and girls, from Beti Bachao Beti Padhao to the women's parliamentary quota.

His targeted and transversal programmes have engineered a structural shift for women and girls, from home to college, kiosk to corporation, local government to Parliament. He has driven women-led development as a moral and social justice imperative, indispensable to mobilising half the nation's capacity. No nation rises without its empowered women; India now acts on that truth at the scale of a continent.

He has restored to Indians the pride of being Indian,

within the country as much as in the 35 million diaspora—largest in the world. The nation has moved as one: in the pandemic's collective resolve, behind the armed forces after Operation Sindoor, and at the Maha Kumbh, where over 600 million pilgrims formed humanity's largest gathering. The symbols reach for what binds: a tribal woman in Rashtrapati Bhavan; the turban, cap or tribal headdress he dons region by region in respect and affection; village Indians made heroes in Mann Ki Baat or the Padma awards; 200 million homes under the Tricolour for Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav; Vande Mataram in its 150th year; Swachh Bharat's 110 million toilets, a people's movement; one India, diversity knitted together, every region respected.

Modi is the first Prime Minister to articulate the ambition of India as a leading power and act on it: military and economic strength, nuclear and space capabilities, a defining role and normative weight in global systems, a critical mass of diplomatic, R&D and technological resources, built purposefully and successfully, while pro-

jecting its soft power as never before. On terrorism, the doctrine is zero tolerance, from Uri to Operation Sindoor, even as globally he remains a votary of peace and security through dialogue.

Above all, he has proved a crisis manager par excellence. Only his steely resolve, courage and meticulous action could have carried 1.4 billion Indians through the once-in-a-century calamity of the pandemic and made it an opportunity; I shudder to think what would have happened had he not been at the helm. He now steers India through the perilous upending of the geopolitical and geoeconomic order, two major wars and the narcissistic stances of leading powers, holding it to calm and stability, safeguarding its energy security, the fastest-growing major economy.

The miracle is that he dares to transform the most populous, youth-rich, complex, federal and self-contesting democracy, rife with veto wielders, vested interests and myopic, anti-national opposition leaders who plot anarchy, invite Foreign Information Manipulation and

Interference, and block vital reform.

Globally, the change is in posture as much as in standing. India convenes where it once attended, and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world as one family, has become a record of delivery rather than a slogan. India is at once microcosm and macrocosm of the world: what it solves for itself it proves for everyone, and offers as global public goods. Its digital public infrastructure is shared in the Global South and North; its G20 presidency made the African Union a permanent member; it leads the International Solar Alliance; its Panchamrit climate pledges are clothed with Mission LiFE in the soul of Indian heritage. It hosted the developing world's first global AI summit; in the fourth industrial revolution, as on the Moon, it no longer plays catch-up but leads, deploying for all.

What distinguishes the period most is that India has named its ambition aloud: this, he tells India and the world, is to be India's century. The economy has climbed from the world's tenth largest to its fourth; the destination

is declared: Viksit Bharat, developed by 2047, the centenary of independence, modernity and heritage one inheritance, not rival claims. The restoration of civilisation sites, the recovery of its antiquities, the reclamation of the name Bharat: these are not nostalgia. They assert that a civilisation over 5,000 years old need not borrow its self-respect and greatness from anyone.

The world I spent my career observing measured India against its own unfulfilled promise. It has begun, this decade, to measure itself against destination India instead. The strongest case for this leadership is ahead: India is the vastest laboratory of human development, endeavour and perfectibility on earth, its work immense and unfinished, which is why a country this vast needs such leadership. He has stood the longest; he stands out; the record is outstanding. What remains is the mandate of the India century.

* Lakshmi Puri, Former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and former Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

IDENTICAL MISSION

Nehru, Modi: Contrasting personalities who shouldn't be compared

Nehru and Modi are poles apart in their styles and thinking. But their mission is identical. Country first. It is unfair to make comparisons between different eras.



PANKAJ VOHRA

Without doubt Narendra Modi is the tallest leader of current times, and it is of immense significant consequence if he has become the longest serving Prime Minister of the country (technically), beating Jawaharlal Nehru's days spent in office following the first general elections in 1952. But it is extremely unfair to draw comparisons between different people of different eras, and besides generating any unnecessary debate, the exercise serves no real purpose. There shall always be historians who would contest the claim since Nehru served as Prime Minister of Independent India since Independence and was the head of the government for nearly 17 years.

Modi and Nehru had contrasting styles and both should be viewed for their contributions during the time they led the country. Sachin Tendulkar is regarded by many people as the greatest batsman of the country, but cricket purists still swear by Sunil Gavaskar, who laid the keel for

the renaissance of Indian cricket, when he became a legend of the game by overcoming the fiercest bowling attacks of all times, without any protective gear but by sheer grit, technique and determination.

Mohammad Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar, Shankar Jai-kishen, Sachin Dev Burman and so many others have left their imprint in the music world, and their melodies continue to entertain the people, years after they passed away physically. But there are music icons of present times, who are admired by the new generation of music lovers and have to pass the test of time if they have to become a part of any such exceptional group.

Nehru was a visionary who laid the foundations of building a modern India. He had served prison time during freedom struggle and being the primary leader of the Congress party, he had his plans ready for taking the country forward. He was well read, educated, suave, classy and understood the

pulse of his people. His politics was inclusive, forward looking and inspired by the success of democracies throughout the world.

He personally understood foreign policy and on such matters was better versed than all his contemporaries globally. He was a brilliant communicator and loved to connect with the common people through close interactions to receive their feedback. He understood the multiple limitations and the challenges posed after Independence and thus gave shape to the five-year plans to begin with, and laid the foundation for the establishment of the five IITs, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the IIMs, the Science and Technology programmes and worked hard for setting up of huge public sector enterprises while encouraging industrial development all around.

He was a champion of democratic values and merit. He was conscious of the fact that India needed a strong Opposition in Parliament and in states, to keep the ruling dispensation on its toes. He functioned in a political environment where most of the leaders were his fellow travellers during the freedom struggle, and on many occasions could take positions different from his



Narendra Modi taking oath as the 15th Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014. (File photo)

own. President Rajendra Prasad and he had their differences but respected each other and worked for the common objective of taking the country forward.

Nehru encouraged Opposition to have its say in debates. In case of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he backed him to make his points during Parliament discussions and tried to understand his logic and political ideology. The Congress and Bharatiya Jana Sangh were on the opposite sides of the ideological divide, but Nehru did not mind the attacks he was subjected to. He

had tolerance and appreciated and enjoyed the political cartoons critical of him published in various newspapers and the Shankar's Weekly, in particular.

Nehru was a die-hard defender of Indian sovereignty and though he existed during the Cold war era internationally, he helped in co-founding the Non-Aligned Movement along with Nasser and Tito. His Cabinet and advisers as also the bureaucrats who served in his government were brilliant in every sense of the word. His notings on official files underlined how well he

was acquainted with running the affairs of the country. He is often criticized for failing to read the Chinese correctly but that perhaps served as a wake-up call for preparing the armed forces for being better equipped.

His legacy has served to keep the country on the path of progress. He was like an opening batsman who ensured that those who followed him knew that they had to contribute in order to build the score. He was like the first runner in a relay, who while passing the baton had taken the lead, leaving his successors

to finish the race, which is always a long one.

Narendra Modi is the most popular leader of the country and took over when India was already self-reliant in many key areas and its food needs were taken care of and its economy was stable. He had served as the Chief Minister of his state for 13 years and was conversant with governance. He was willing to take the risks and give India a new direction. His primary challenge was to first bring his party to power on its own strength and this he achieved in his first Parliamentary election itself.

Modi's politics was divisive, even though the "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" is a political slogan which has its nuances and is open to interpretations. He is the modern-day icon and is a go-getter. He has plans which he gets implemented in no time and his success story hinges on the promises he has delivered to the common man, making their life better. His critics may have whatever negative opinion about him they wish, but he has achieved what many of his predecessors could never have.

He has inspired the youth and women, two segments

which are his greatest strengths in politics, because he is viewed as someone who can deliver and do what he says. Politics apart, his commitment to nationalism is total and his slogan of Hindutva and the way he has used it as a political instrument has made him the number one leader of the entire Sangh Parivar. He has completed 12 years in office and may have many more years ahead of him. He understands that his place in history is ensured but he has to do much more than what he has done. He has passed the test of the people on several occasions and it would be premature to judge him since there are a lot of things that he plans to do, and he is still on the crease scoring runs.

Nehru and Modi are poles apart in their styles and thinking. But their mission is identical. Country first. And as stated earlier, it is unfair to make comparisons between different eras and everything from 1947 to now has inter-linkages which have helped India evolve and progress both on the domestic and international front. The debate should be viewed through proper contexts and not through the ideological prism which separates Congress and the BJP.

"I can promise you. If you work 12 hours, I will work 13. If you work 14 hours, I will work 15 hours. Why? Because I am not a Pradhan Mantri, but a Pradhan Sevak."

-PM MODI IN HIS INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH ON 15 AUGUST 2014

THE RESEMBLANCE

HOW MODI HAS CONTINUED NEHRU'S LEGACY

Despite strong ideological differences, there is a lot that unites two of India's most influential PMs.



RASHEED KIDWAI

On June 10, 2026, a historic political crossing took place. Narendra Modi, the leader who built much of his national appeal by challenging the Nehruvian order, moved past Jawaharlal Nehru's post-1952 record for uninterrupted elected Prime Ministerial tenure.

As Modi completes 12 years at the helm of national politics, the question is no longer whether he stands in opposition to Nehru. He does. The more complex debate is whether, in the grammar of power, he has also begun to resemble him.

The irony is rich. Modi's politics has drawn much of its force from its opposition to Nehruvianism. He has challenged its secular vocabulary, its elite cultural tone, its suspicion of cultural majoritarianism, its planned-economy memory, its English-speaking comfort with power, and its claim to define the Republic's moral centre.

Yet the deeper one looks, the more striking the paradox becomes. Modi may be the first Prime Minister after Nehru to operate in a truly Nehru-like dimension: not ideologically, but structurally; not in what he believes, but in how he dominates.

At the Red Fort in 2025,

speaking of the makers of the Constitution, Modi placed "Pandit Nehru" among those who "played a vital role" in giving direction to the country. Yet just a few months before that, in Parliament, Modi also cited Nehru's alleged remark that "If the Constitution comes in our way, then it must be changed at any cost," calling it a shocking disregard for constitutional sanctity. In these two Modi sentences lies the unresolved argument of contemporary India: Nehru must be acknowledged as founder, but attacked as inheritor.

THE PRIME MINISTER AS NATIONAL NARRATOR

Nehru was the aristocratic modernist who spoke of scientific temper, non-alignment, and secular nation-building. Modi is the organisational man who speaks of civilisational pride, welfare delivery, national confidence, and cultural correction. They belong to different Indias. But both understood that in this country, the Prime Ministership is not merely an office. It can become the emotional theatre of the nation.

Nehru's relationship with India was pedagogical. He wrote, spoke, explained, and

imagined aloud. His famous letters to Chief Ministers, written fortnightly from 1947 until shortly before his death, were a continuing tutorial in nation-building, ranging from citizenship and law and order to corruption, war, peace, and India's place in the world.

Modi's relationship with India is more performative and direct. His communication bypasses old intermediaries. Radio, television, social media, rallies, apps, slogans, welfare certificates, and digital dashboards all become part of one continuous political conversation.

The difference is obvious. Nehru addressed a newly independent people and sought to educate democratic citizenship. Modi addresses an impatient, aspirational society and seeks to energise national self-belief. Nehru's idiom was idealistic. Modi's is mobilisational.

But the structure is familiar. Both men made themselves the principal narrator of the Indian story. Opponents could attack them, mock them, dispute them, even counter them in particular regions. But they could not ignore them. They had to respond to the Prime Minister's language. The language of dominance.

THE VOCABULARY OF AN ERA

Every long political era creates its own dictionary. Nehru's words were secularism, socialism, planning, dams, laboratories, public sector, scientific temper, non-align-

ment, democracy, and unity in diversity. His India was to be modern, rational, and postcolonial, held together by institutions and a constitutional imagination.

Modi's dictionary is different: vikas, nationalism, Digital India, self-reliance, welfare saturation, civilisational confidence, global stature, start-ups, Ram Mandir, UPI, and Vishwaguru.

One may admire or deplore this transformation. But one cannot deny its scale, or the fact that Modi has changed the grammar of public life.



Jawaharlal Nehru

His supporters see him as the leader who freed India from the hesitations of elite consensus. His critics see him as the leader who weakened liberal institutions and normalised majoritarian politics. Both readings agree on one thing: the centre of gravity has shifted.

This is where the comparison with Nehru becomes most revealing. Nehru's critics in his time also complained that he occupied too much of the national mind.

The Jana Sangh, socialists, Swatantra liberals, and sections of the Congress right could oppose him, but they did so in relation to him. Modi has recreated that condition. The opposition often appears not as the author of an alternative narrative, but as the respondent to his.

Rajni Kothari famously described India's early post-Independence order as the "Congress system", a condition of one-party dominance that still allowed factions, bargaining, and competition within the larger umbrella.



Narendra Modi

Contemporary scholars have increasingly spoken of a BJP-dominant system, in which even after the 2024 setback, the BJP remains the principal axis of national politics.

This is not identical to Nehru's Congress dominance. The ideological content, institutional style, and social coalitions differ sharply. But the structural echo is hard to miss: one party, and above all, one leader, setting the terms on which others must compete.

IMAGINING INDIA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Foreign policy is another site where the contrast conceals continuity. Nehru wanted India to be more than a poor postcolonial state. Through Bandung, Afro-Asian solidarity, and non-alignment, he tried to make India a moral voice in a world divided by Cold War blocs.

Modi's foreign policy is less moralistic and more transactional, less Bandung and more strategic multi-alignment. He is comfortable with the United States, Russia, the Gulf, Israel, Europe, and the Global South, often at the same time. But like Nehru, he understands that foreign policy is also domestic image-making.

Nehru's global stature told Indians that their newly independent country mattered. Modi's diaspora rallies and summitry tell Indians that their rising country is respected. Madison Square Garden in 2014, where Modi addressed over 18,000 Indian Americans and spoke of making the India of their dreams, was not only a diplomatic event. It was a political theatre carried across oceans and beamed back home.

This is a distinctly Indian phenomenon. International recognition becomes domestic validation. The leader abroad becomes the nation's self-image at home. Nehru did it in the age of decolonisation. Modi does it in the age of diaspora, digital broadcast, and geopolitical branding.

CULTURE, SPECTACLE, AND THE AURA OF POWER

Both Nehru and Modi also understood that political legitimacy in India is strengthened by cultural legitimacy. Nehru's comfort with writers, artists, film personalities, and cultural delegations was part of his soft-power imagination. He used the appeal of Indian cinema in diplomacy and drew figures such as K.A. Abbas, Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor, and Nargis into cultural outreach abroad.

Modi's relationship with the cultural world is different, more choreographed, and more politically charged. The Bollywood selfie, the celebrity meeting, the film delegation, the temple visual, the meditation photograph, the carefully framed public moment—all of these belong to an era in which politics is image, and image is power.

Nehru's culture was modernist and elite. Modi's is mass, visual, and majoritarian-inflected. Yet both recognised the same truth: India does not separate politics from spectacle. A leader must be seen as well as heard.

SAME REPUBLIC, DIFFERENT SOUL

The central contradiction remains. Modi rose by rejecting the Nehruvian consensus. But he inherited, and in some ways perfected, the Nehruvian grammar of supremacy: direct mass connection, narrative control, leader-driven diplomacy,

cultural symbolism, and a Prime Ministerial office that towers above party and cabinet—a first with no equals.

There are differences that must not be blurred. Nehru enlarged institutions even when he dominated politics. Modi has centralised politics even while invoking efficiency. Nehru's idea of India was pluralist in instinct and rationalist in aspiration. Modi's is civilisational, majoritarian in tone, and impatient with old liberal pieties. Nehru trusted history to vindicate him. Modi insists on visible vindication in the present.

But history's mischief lies in resemblance. The anti-Nehru has not escaped Nehru's Republic. He has occupied its most powerful chair, inherited its mass democratic imagination, and refashioned its emotional centre around himself.

If Nehru was the architect of India's first political era, Modi is the defining figure of another. Different ideologies. Different vocabularies. Different Indias. But perhaps the same instinctive lesson: in India, enduring power belongs not merely to those who administer the state, or even those who command a party. It belongs to the leader who becomes, for supporters and adversaries alike, the personality through which the nation understands itself.

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NEHRU TO MODI

A governance transformation across seven decades

Nehru sought to shape a modern republic emerging from colonialism. Modi seeks to redefine that republic through the language of civilisation, identity, and scale.



GURU PRAKASH PASWAN

When Narendra Modi completed his tenure this June as India's longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's uninterrupted 16 years and 286 days in office, the moment is more than symbolic. It offers an opportunity to examine how the nature, philosophy, and practice of governance have changed across seven decades of the republic.

The contrast between these two dominant political figures is not merely personal. It is institutional, ideological, and civilisational.

Nehru built the foundations of a modern state using influences drawn from Fabian socialism, Soviet planning, Westminster democracy, and secular nationalism shaped by his education and intellectual environment. Modi, who rose from Vadnagar without a political lineage, has spent much of his political career reshaping those foundations. For supporters, that process represents a correction of long-standing structural distortions and inherited limitations. What remains difficult to dispute is the scale of change itself.

THE ECONOMIC

MODEL, FROM COMMANDING HEIGHTS TO COMPETITIVE MARKETS

Nehru's economic vision rested on a central assumption. The state had to control the commanding heights of the economy. That approach produced the Licence Raj, a dense regulatory structure that restricted private enterprise, created chronic shortages, and favoured those with access to bureaucratic systems.

Per capita income growth remained modest through much of independent India's early decades. The Planning Commission, one of Nehru's signature institutions, became associated with centralised allocation through five-year plans that often struggled to reflect local realities.

Modi abolished the Planning Commission in 2014 and replaced it with NITI Aayog, designed as an advisory institution rather than a command structure. GST created a unified market framework across states. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code introduced new mechanisms for credit discipline. Infrastructure expansion across roads, ports, railways, and digital systems has accelerated significantly, alongside

continuing debates over distribution and inclusion.

India's economy today exceeds \$3.5 trillion. The central question is no longer whether growth occurred, but how widely its benefits have been distributed.

FOREIGN POLICY, FROM NON-ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Nehru's doctrine of non-alignment was among independent India's most original diplomatic contributions. It sought strategic space for newly decolonised nations during the Cold War.

In practice, critics argue that India often leaned toward the Soviet Union while maintaining rhetorical distance from the West. The 1962 war with China exposed weaknesses in translating idealism into hard security.

Modi's foreign policy has operated with fewer explicit ideological constraints. India buys defence equipment from Russia, deepens partnerships with the United States through the Quad, negotiates with Europe, and simultaneously expands engagement with Gulf states.

The Neighbourhood First approach reflects a more transactional and security-driven understanding of regional interests, even as implementation challenges remain. Modi's extensive leader-level diplomacy has raised India's visibility internationally. How these relationships evolve insti-



PM Narendra Modi during the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, in January 2023. ANI

tutionally will shape India's long-term strategic position.

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE, BUILDING A DIFFERENT STATE ARCHITECTURE

Perhaps the most significant structural shift since the Nehru era has been digital governance.

Nehru's vision of national development relied on large institutions such as IITs, AIIMS, and public sector industrial projects. These institutions shaped elite capacity and state-building.

Modi's approach has focused on scale and direct engagement with citizens. JAM architecture, UPI, CoWIN, ONDC, and DiGiLocker reflect a different theory of governance, where technology becomes the delivery mechanism.

Aadhaar has enrolled more than 1.3 billion residents and enabled large-scale direct benefit transfers. The government estimates savings of roughly Rs 2.7 lakh crore through reduced leakage.

The shift is not simply technological. It changes the relationship between

citizen, state, and intermediary institutions.

INDIA VS BHARAT, THE CIVILISATIONAL DEBATE

No comparison between the two eras generates more political disagreement than culture and identity.

Nehru's public philosophy emphasised secular citizenship and composite nationalism. His conception of India highlighted pluralism and sought distance from overt religious mobilisation.

Modi's political project consciously invokes civilisational language. The Ram Mandir consecration in Ayodhya in January 2024 became one of the clearest expressions of this approach. Supporters describe it as cultural restoration and civilisational reaffirmation, while critics view the shift differently.

Changes in historical narratives, institutional language, and symbolic politics suggest an attempt to reshape how India understands itself. Whether this expands or narrows civic identity remains central to contemporary political debate.

FEDERAL STRUCTURE, COMPETITIVE FEDERALISM OR CENTRALISATION?

Nehru's federal structure often operated through central dominance. Chief ministers frequently depended on party high command decisions, and Arti-

cle 356 became a recurring political tool.

At the same time, the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 remains one of independent India's most consequential federal reforms.

Modi has advanced the language of competitive federalism, using rankings, incentives, and performance-linked frameworks to shape state behaviour.

This approach has produced visible competition among states. Critics argue incentive-based systems could favour stronger states, though supporters say competition improves governance outcomes. Debates over delimitation, new criminal codes, and the role of governors suggest that tensions between state and Centre continue regardless of ideology.

SOCIAL WELFARE, FROM INSTITUTION-BUILDING TO DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Nehru's welfare legacy centred on constitutional rights and institution-building. Yet access gaps remained large for decades after Independence.

The Modi government has prioritised large-scale delivery systems. Welfare expansion has included free ration programmes, Ujjwala connections, piped water schemes, housing initiatives, and expanded financial inclusion.

Debates continue around implementation and usage, though the scale of welfare expansion is widely

acknowledged. Welfare increasingly targets households directly instead of relying heavily on layered administrative structures.

The PM Jan Arogya Yojana has become one of the world's largest publicly funded health insurance programmes by enrolment. Nehru focused on building institutions. Modi has prioritised expansion at scale.

THE MILESTONE AND ITS MEANING

Surpassing Nehru's tenure is numerically significant. Politically, it carries greater symbolism because much of Modi's project has positioned itself against the Nehruvian framework.

The comparison also reveals similarities. Both leaders centralised authority around the Prime Minister's Office. Both pursued ambitious national projects. Both confronted the limitations of governing a country of continental scale and social complexity.

The difference lies less in duration and more in political imagination. Nehru sought to shape a modern republic emerging from colonialism. Modi seeks to redefine that republic through the language of civilisation, identity, and scale.

The debate between those competing visions will continue to shape India's political trajectory beyond individual tenures.

** The writer is National Spokesperson of the BJP.*

THE BENCHMARK

THE PRIME MINISTERIAL QUESTION

The question can be Nehru or Modi? But the answer always has to be: Nehru and Modi.



PRIYA SAHGAL

The BJP, which is always looking for benchmarks to celebrate the Narendra Modi government, hit a notable marker recently. On 10 June this year, Prime Minister Modi completed 4,399 days in office, crossing former Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru's record of 4,398 days in office as an "elected" Prime Minister. The distinction here is that the BJP is not taking into account the first five years from 15 August 1947 to 21 February 1952 because during this stint Nehru had occupied the PM's chair without facing a Lok Sabha election.

That nuance aside, it is still a notable feat. Modi is the first non-Congress Prime Minister to serve a consecutive 12 years in office. And counting. For at the rate he is going, Modi will probably cross Nehru's record of 17 years in office as well. That is not the catch. The catch is that here is a party that misses no opportunity to denigrate Jawaharlal Nehru. All the ills of the past (and present) are blamed on him. Then why is the BJP spending so much time and effort celebrating this first past the Nehruvian post moment? If Nehru was such a failure why pitch yourself against his track record? The answer is purely political. Doing so will invite comparisons; and the BJP will get another chance to bench a Congress benchmark and course-correct the Nehruvian narrative.

if there was one leader who played a dominant role in Indian politics it was Nehru. And today that record has been successfully broken by Prime Minister Modi".

The comparisons are not just restricted to the longevity of office but also their governance styles and respective legacies. While comparing the two, BJP leaders begin by pointing out how Nehru lived a life of privilege vis-à-vis Modi's chai-wala background. The Congress rebuts this by saying that struggle is not always measured against a poverty index. Was not Nehru part of our freedom struggle against the British? Did not Nehru fight against the very colonial rule that Modi is now waging war against by demonizing Lutyens Delhi? Did not Nehru spend 3,259 days imprisoned in British jail? As former Rajya Sabha MP, Pavan Varma once remarked, you don't have to be a Nehruite but a patriotic Indian to appreciate him.

Similarly, you don't have to be a Modi Bhakt to acknowledge that Narendra Modi is



Jawaharlal Nehru

India's tallest leader today. During the Nehruvian era there were other leaders who could have just as easily become Prime Minister had not Gandhi pushed Nehru's name. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel immediately comes to mind, for it was he, not Nehru, who was the Congress party's first choice. However, in the Modi era one cannot think of another name to counter the current Prime Minister. Both within the BJP and outside, he remains India's tallest leader. To win three consecutive general elections is no mean



Narendra Modi

feat (and here Modi crosses Indira Gandhi's record as well). Numerically, the BJP today does not have an outright majority on its own. Yet Modi's political clout far exceeds his numerical mandate. The Opposition may have come together to oppose the NDA but the I.N.D.I.A bloc has not been able to convert its numbers into electoral wins. There is only one reason for this: the persona of Narendra Modi. It is not as if the opposition lacks issues to take on the government. What it lacks is a credible

leader to voice these issues. Therein lies the vacuum, or as they say—mind the gap.

Here we see another stark difference between Nehru and Modi. At no point during his 17 years in office did Nehru's Congress have less than 40% of the popular vote. In the 1952 elections, the Congress won 364 out of 489 seats, in 1957 it won 371 seats and in 1962 it won 361. But that did not stop Nehru from engaging the opposition and making it a part of his governance model. He even singled out opposition leaders for praise, a young A.B. Vajpayee being one of them. The only opposition leader whom Modi has lavishly praised is Shashi Tharoor, mainly for his diplomatic prowess, but also partly because the PM knows this would irk Rahul Gandhi no end.

Every text has a context. Both Modi and Nehru occupy two very different moments in India's story. In hindsight it is easy to criticise Nehru's model of socialism or his outreach to Muslims who did not cross the border. In a freshly

partitioned India, Nehru's instincts veered towards integration. But did he over-compensate? One could say that Modi's brand of Hindutva is a reaction to the appeasement policies of Nehruvian secularism. You only have to listen to the chatter on WhatsApp groups post 2014. It is not just the Sangh Parivar but even the liberal parivars whose progenies study at Modern School and play tennis at Delhi Gymkhana Club that saw Modi's arrival as a *carte blanche* to speak up, type and forward. All the untapped resentment came pouring out against the Congress for making the majority community feel like second class citizens in their own country. (In hindsight, Amit Malviya did not have to work all that hard.) These were not saffron-clad bhakts but Prada wearing, London trotting Indians who could finally voice their frustration that Lord Ram did not have a resting place in His own janmabhoomi. And when the temple was built at Ayodhya, the verdict was clear. Nehru may

have built our nation but it was Modi who did the pran-prathistha of her soul.

Modi may be right-wing in his politics but his economics are left of centre. Whether it is Modi's welfare schemes or Nehru's very Russian socialist model, the goal is the same: inclusive growth that reaches the poorest of the poor. BJP leaders who are so good at quoting statistics forget that in an India ravaged by the British, as many as 90% of Indians lived below the poverty line. At the time, Nehru adopted the path he thought best suited for the times. Unfortunately, he did not have the hindsight of his critics to help him in his choices.

The question can be Nehru or Modi? But the answer always has to be: Nehru and Modi. Both have achieved greatness in a paradigm that is uniquely his own. It is the tragedy of India that is Bharat, that we cannot celebrate one without denigrating the other. You may call it a Nehru jacket or a Modi jacket, but don't forget, it is made of the same swadeshi cloth. With or without a rose.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Prime Minister Modi helped India rediscover Bharat

India is the Constitutional name of the Republic. Bharat is the civilisational soul that predates Constitutions, empires and modern political boundaries.



SAVIO RODRIGUES

There are leaders who govern nations. There are leaders who manage economies. And then there are leaders who alter the civilisational direction of a people. Narendra Modi belongs to the third category.

For decades after Independence, India often appeared comfortable with being viewed through the lens of colonial definitions. We were called a developing nation, a poor nation, a nation of immense potential but limited execution. We spoke confidently about our ancient heritage but hesitated when it came to asserting our contemporary identity.

What Narendra Modi has attempted since 2014 is not merely economic reform or political governance. He has sought to transform India into Bharat—a nation conscious of its civilisational roots while simultaneously aspiring to become a global power.

The distinction is important.

India is the Constitutional name of the Republic. Bharat is the civilisational soul that predates Constitutions, empires and modern political boundaries. Bharat represents continuity, confidence and cultural self-awareness.

When Narendra Modi speaks about India's future,

he does so through the vocabulary of Bharat.

The numbers tell a remarkable story.

In 2014, India was the world's tenth-largest economy with a GDP of approximately \$2 trillion. Today, India has crossed the \$4 trillion mark and emerged as the world's fourth-largest economy, overtaking several developed nations. The country is projected to become the third-largest economy within the next few years.

Yet Modi's vision was never limited to GDP statistics. Infrastructure became the foundation upon which the new Bharat would rise.

India's national highway network expanded dramatically from around 91,000 kilometres in 2014 to over 1.46 lakh kilometres. Expressways now connect regions that previously remained isolated from economic opportunity.

The Metro rail network grew from just 248 kilometres in 2014 to more than 1,155 kilometres by 2026, making India home to the world's third-largest metro system. Cities once plagued by traffic paralysis now possess modern urban mobility networks comparable to global standards.

Railway modernisation accelerated at an unprec-

KEY WELFARE MEASURES	
Scheme / Initiative	Key Achievement
Swachh Bharat Mission	More than 12 crore toilets constructed
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)	Over 10 crore LPG connections provided
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)	Millions of houses sanctioned
Rural Electrification	Electricity reached villages once considered too remote or economically unviable
Jal Jeevan Mission	Tap water connectivity expanded dramatically

edented pace. Nearly the entire broad-gauge railway network has been electrified. Dedicated freight corridors are reshaping logistics. Vande Bharat trains have become symbols of a nation determined to move faster.

Civil aviation witnessed an equally dramatic transformation. Operational airports increased from 74 in 2014 to 165 by 2026. Through the UDAN scheme, air travel ceased being an elite privilege and became accessible to ordinary citizens in smaller towns and cities.

This is not merely infrastructure. It is national integration through connectivity.

The Bharat envisioned by Modi is one where a young entrepreneur from a small town enjoys access to opportunities previously available only in metropolitan centres.

Digital transformation provides another example.

A decade ago, government services were often synonymous with paperwork, bureaucracy and delays. Today, India operates one of the world's most sophisticated digital public infra-

structures.

UPI has revolutionised financial transactions. Monthly digital transactions now run into billions. Street vendors, vegetable sellers and small shopkeepers routinely accept digital payments.

The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile ecosystem has enabled direct transfer of benefits to citizens, eliminating countless intermediaries and reducing leakages.

More than 55 crore Jan Dhan accounts have brought millions into the formal banking system. This represents empowerment at scale.

For decades, welfare delivery depended upon layers of bureaucracy. Today, benefits move directly from government accounts to beneficiaries.

The poor no longer need to seek favour. They receive entitlement.

This subtle shift is transformational.

Perhaps nowhere is Modi's Bharat vision more visible than in social welfare.

More than 12 crore toilets have been constructed under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Over 10 crore LPG connections have been provided through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.

Millions of houses have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

Electricity has reached villages once considered too remote or economically unviable.

Tap water connectivity has expanded dramatically under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Critics may dismiss these as welfare statistics.

They are not. They represent dignity.

A woman no longer cooking on a smoky chulha experiences freedom. A family receiving a permanent home experiences security. A child drinking clean water experiences opportunity.

The rise of Bharat is measured not merely through stock market indices but through improvements in everyday life.

National security has also undergone a profound transformation. For years, India often appeared reactive to external threats. Modi altered that perception. Whether through surgical strikes, the Balakot

airstrike, enhanced border infrastructure or defence modernisation, India demonstrated a willingness to protect its interests proactively.

The defence sector itself has witnessed a major shift towards self-reliance. India has reduced dependence on imports while encouraging domestic manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

From fighter aircraft components to naval platforms and missile systems, indigenous capabilities continue expanding.

The message is clear. Bharat must possess the capacity to defend itself.

Foreign policy under Modi has similarly reflected a more confident national posture.

India today maintains strategic partnerships across competing geopolitical blocs while preserving independent decision-making.

The country's global stature has risen considerably.

The successful hosting of the G20 Summit showcased India's diplomatic influence and organisational capability.

The African Union's inclusion in the G20 reflected India's commitment to representing the Global South.

For perhaps the first time since Independence, many Indians feel that the world is listening to them.

That confidence matters.

Civilisations decline when they lose confidence in themselves.

Civilisations rise when they rediscover it.

Critics argue that economic challenges remain. They are correct.

Unemployment remains a concern. Agricultural reforms require continued attention. Income disparities persist. Urbanisation presents complex challenges.

No serious observer should ignore these realities.

But leadership must be judged not only by existing problems but by the direction in which a nation is moving.

The trajectory matters. And India's trajectory today differs significantly from where it stood in 2014.

Most importantly, Modi has attempted to restore pride in India's civilisational identity.

The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the revival of Kashi Vishwanath, the redevelopment of Mahakal Lok and numerous cultural initiatives reflect a broader effort to reconnect modern India with its historical consciousness.

This is not about religious politics alone, as critics often suggest. It is about civilisational continuity.

Nations that celebrate their history confidently are better positioned to shape their future.

France honours its heritage. Britain honours its heritage. Japan honours its heritage. Why should Bharat be expected to apologise for its own?

Narendra Modi's greatest political achievement may ultimately be psychological rather than economic.

He persuaded millions of Indians to believe that they belong to a nation capable of greatness. Present greatness.

That belief influences entrepreneurship, innovation, diplomacy, defence and governance. It influences how citizens perceive themselves.

History will debate individual policies. Economists will analyse growth rates. Political scientists will examine electoral strategies. But future generations may conclude that Narendra Modi's defining contribution was larger.

He helped India rediscover Bharat.

A Bharat that is technologically modern yet culturally rooted.

A Bharat that builds airports and temples.

A Bharat that launches satellites while celebrating civilisation.

A Bharat that seeks prosperity without surrendering identity.

The journey remains unfinished. Every national transformation is. But there can be little doubt that since 2014, the conversation has changed.

India no longer speaks merely about survival. It speaks about leadership. It no longer seeks validation. It seeks partnership. And increasingly, it no longer introduces itself simply as India. It carries itself as Bharat.

* Savio Rodrigues is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Goa Chronicle.

“Terrorism is most serious challenge to open & pluralistic societies. Combating it requires collective effort. We need to target not only the terrorists, but also their entire supporting ecosystem.”

-PM MODI AT THE 11TH EAST ASIA SUMMIT

“For me, the public itself is God (Janata Janardan); I have come to seek their blessings. I have always viewed public service as a form of spiritual devotion, or sadhana.”

-PM MODI

FROM 2014

THE LEADER WHO REAWAKENED INDIA: NARENDRA DAMODARDAS MODI

Narendra Damodardas Modi's journey, from a humble background to the leadership of the world's largest democracy, is ultimately the story of a man who reawakened the faith of a nation in itself.



**REKHA
GUPTA**

The fate of a nation is intertwined with the fate of its leaders. Nations grow and prosper under strong, decisive leadership; they decay under feeble, indecisive, corrupt leadership. People are the life energy of a nation, but the leaders are the one who channelizes the mass energy into the right, productive direction. One cannot imagine nations without their founding fathers, their leaders. When we think of the United States, the names of its prominent leaders like Thomas Jefferson, Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, F.D. Roosevelt come to our minds. Similarly, the Indian nation was built upon the vision of its great founding fathers like Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, and Veer Savarkar.

Strong leadership plays a vital role in uplifting the spirits of the people; wise leaders nudge the nation on the path to prosperity and glory. Leadership matters the most at the time of a national crisis, like Matsya Avtara of Lord Vishnu, who steered and rescued the great ship of Manu Maharaj during the pralaya. Leaders

steer and rescue the nation during hours of crisis. Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi took centre stage in Indian politics during such a time of crisis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi emerged on the national stage at a juncture when Indian politics had reached a low, an era in which a nominal Prime Minister was being imposed upon the people of India. The government was struck with policy paralysis. Corruption had become deeply entrenched in the national political system, scams like Coalgate, 2G spectrum, Commonwealth Games had become a recurring phenomenon. Media, businessmen, and politicians formed an unholy nexus and were siphoning public money with impunity. Entrepreneurs, industrialists, and academia were drowned in pessimism; their trust started eroding in the Indian state. Common people felt ashamed of their cultural legacy.

At that pivotal moment, Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi entered the national stage with a clear, resounding vision. He inspired the youth, women,

and veterans alike. PM Modi reinstated hope, faith, and trust back again towards the leadership and the political system, PM Modi revitalised the economic machinery, entrepreneurship, and industry, and re-energised the bureaucracy. Being himself from a humble background, PM Modi possessed within him a deep understanding of society, and being an RSS pracharak, he had a profound understanding of Indian culture.

Being one of the longest-serving CMs in India came with an impeccable administrative and electoral record. PM Modi brought with him the mantra of "minimum government and maximum governance". PM Modi, through the rapid digitalization of government services, reduced the inertia in governance and brought government to the fingertips of the common citizens. At the very beginning of his tenure, he replaced the requirement of attestation of documents by gazetted officers with self-attestation by the common citizens. Such is his minute understanding of the bureaucratic impediments that the progress of a common citizen. Due to reform measures initiated by him, India's rank in the international business indicators improved. PM Modi has demonstrated a strong will to an efficient,

transparent, and accountable government. Rules and policies are now formed among people, not in closed AC chambers. PM Modi, since his ascension, has worked tirelessly to transform the Indian economy into a manufacturing hub and make it Atmanirbhar Bharat. PM Modi launched initiatives like Skill India, Startup India, and Production Linked Incentives (PLIs). For strengthening the supply chain, PM Modi sanctioned greenfield expressways, airports, shipping ports, and sped up the construction of brownfield expressways, airports and stations. PM Modi expanded India's premier higher education



After winning the Lok Sabha elections on May 16 2014, Prime Minister-elect Narendra Modi reached Delhi from Gujarat. Standing at the door of his SUV, he waved the victory sign to the cheering crowds, on May 17, 2014. (File Photo)

infrastructure by establishing new IITs and IIMs.

PM Modi restored faith in the underprivileged section through his mantra of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" in the Indian government. Such is his sensitivity that he launched the PM Ujjwala Yojana as he was aware of the discomfort caused to our mothers and sisters due to the smoke of the traditional gas chulha.

PM Modi brought cleanliness and sanitation to the daily discourse through the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan. Through the toilets built under the scheme, PM Modi provided a dignified life to our mothers and sisters. Due to the Bhaagirathi

Prayas of PM Narendra Modi, Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam was passed for the political empowerment of the women of India.

A nationalist to the core, PM Modi led a cultural renaissance of the nation. Remnants of the colonial legacy, the Indian Penal Code and CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure) were scrapped, and Bhartiya Nyay Samhita was born. PM Modi is rebuilding our sacred *tirths* incessantly. Due to his efforts, our cultural and spiritual centres of Ayodhya and Kashi were reclaimed. PM Modi has promoted our indigenous knowledge of Ayurveda as a brand ambassador, formulated policies to establish

national mission. History remembers those leaders who rise to the occasion when their nation needs them the most, leaders who not only govern their times but shape the destiny of generations.

Narendra Damodardas Modi's journey, from a humble background to the leadership of the world's largest democracy, is ultimately the story of a man who reawakened the faith of a nation in itself. The foundations of a stronger, more confident, and more aspirational India have been laid. The task before the nation now is to carry forward this momentum and transform the dream of a Viksit Bharat into reality.

As India stands at the threshold of even greater possibilities, the words of Robert Frost resonate with renewed meaning, "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep."

For India, those promises are to its people, to its civilization, and to future generations. The achievements of the past twelve years are the foundation. The journey continues, and the miles ahead are filled not with uncertainty but with opportunity, purpose, and the promise of a Viksit Bharat.

As India marches towards the centenary of its Independence in 2047, the vision of a Viksit Bharat is no longer a distant aspiration; it has become a collective

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* Rekha Gupta is the Chief Minister of Delhi.

RISE OF HOPE

Modi Era India displays geopolitical acumen

The massive positive changes in India during the Modi Era may not be fully understood in the think-tanks in DC, but they have been noticed by Beijing.



**CLEO
PASKAL**

Geopolitically, one of the deftest accomplishments of the Modi Era has been that India has shifted from being seen (rightly or wrongly) in places like Washington D.C. as a potentially obstructionist behemoth to an India that is so constantly and seamlessly part of trade, innovation, defence, etc., that its presence is taken for granted.

India has gone from being the elephant in the room of geopolitics, to myriad smaller elephants on shelves, tables, in picture frames—it is such a part of the room, it is often overlooked.

This is a tremendously clever and complex achievement. At times like this, it is better not to be front and centre. It takes maturity, patience and focus—especially as the policies of others change, wars are started, insults hurled. It doesn't happen by accident. It is the result

of a cohesion of purpose, discipline and geopolitical acumen.

Is India supposed to buy Russian oil now or not? I've lost track. Which is the point. India has stood its ground but also managed its response quietly, avoiding headlines in foreign capitals that can be used to drive wedges.

INDIA MASTERS NAVIGATING ON TROUBLED WATERS

This approach may not garner attention, but it bears results. Some examples:

Prime Minister Modi was one of the few world leaders who managed the 2016 election of President Trump with effectiveness and grace, building on it to strengthen ties and reinforce the role of the diaspora, including through major events like Howdy Modi (Houston, 2019).

During and after Galwan in 2020, India's military and strategic communities

showed the depth of their commitment to defending India against kinetic and political warfare attacks by, first, getting the better of the People's Liberation Army and then quickly, and without fanfare, moving to defend the cognitive and economic battlespace by (among other things) banning scores of Chinese apps—including TikTok (something the U.S., after years of debate and legislation, still hasn't managed to do).

India quietly managed the catastrophic 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan—including the abandonment of Bagram Airfield and the leaving behind of tens of billions of dollars worth of military equipment in the hands of the Taliban—with resourcefulness and determination, resulting in limiting the detrimental effect to domestic Indian security.

In 2022, India used diplomatic skill and personal relationships to get its students (and the students of other countries) safely out of Ukraine at the start of the war.

Since the attack on Israel in 2023, India has made

careful efforts to keep lines open with the Arab world and providing humanitarian relief while, at the same time, deepening ties with Israel on issues of broader defence and security. A remarkable diplomatic feat.

2024 brought the re-election of President Trump and, by 2025, there were issues involving perceptions and tariffs that had the potential to do serious damage to the relationship. Again, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) didn't rise to the bait and instead did its best to dampen fires (some set accidentally, some maliciously) and protect India's interests, while less visible ties with the U.S. continued. Eventually, tensions started to ease when the new U.S. Ambassador (who chose India as a post and has the ear of the President) arrived. Needless to say, the hurt continues, but India did an admirable job at limiting the damage during the tensest times.

These are a few of the countless events and incidents (none initiated by India) since Prime Minister Modi was first elected that could have negatively

affected India if it had less determined and seasoned leadership.

Not only has India weathered those storms, it is posting growth that is the envy of most other countries, while societal indicators like literacy, access to sanitation, access to clean water and more have dramatically improved.

Which brings us to today. Modi Era India, like a duck on a turbulent river, has been paddling hard beneath the surface to reach its goals, while working to look unremarkable on top of the water. In most of the world, that has worked. You'd be amazed how much the DC/Western think-tank community doesn't think about India.

But you know who has noticed? China. India's success is an existential threat to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) because it is a real-world example that undermines so many of Beijing's justifications for its (as the Filipinos describe it) illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive behaviour.

THUCYDIDES TRAP FAILS 'INDIA TEST'

I found this out recently when, after the Trump visit to China, I went on a U.S. talk show to discuss Chairman Xi's comment: "Can China and the U.S. overcome the so-called 'Thucydides Trap' and create a new paradigm of major-country relations?"

It was Xi's way of trying to normalize—to the point of inevitability—that a rising power was necessarily going to build a military and seek to overtake and destroy an established power.

The only problem is, that conceptualization fails the "India test"—in which you compare a CCP statement of "fact" about why China acts the way it does with the way India acts. India is also a rising power—and it has a larger population than China, higher growth, better demographics and more. And yet India isn't trying to destroy anyone—it is trying to build, including the neighbourhood through MAHASAGAR and more.

The same is true for CCP statements about how its "century of humiliation" during colonialism means it is understandable if it is

aggressive towards others. If colonization is the timeline, India had three or four centuries of "humiliation", but it doesn't use that narrative for attempted subjugation of others, but instead for fighting for broader liberty.

China uses the Opium Wars to justify pumping fentanyl into other countries ("they did it to us so it's understandable if we do it to them")—ignoring that the U.S. was not the primary driver of the Opium Wars, and that two wrongs don't make a right). Meanwhile, the India state wouldn't even consider doing that, in fact instead of exporting death, it is exporting health-giving low-cost pharmaceuticals.

The online reaction by China's 50c army to the "India test" was massive and vicious. It clearly hit a nerve, because it is true. The India of today can reshape the world of tomorrow. Instead of a closed, corrupt system based on illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities, as we can see flowing out of China and into West Philippines Sea and Pacific Islands, Modi Era India is an

essential pillar supporting a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific (and beyond).

The massive positive changes in India during the Modi Era may not be fully understood in the think-tanks in DC, but they have been noticed by Beijing. The fact China finds them so threatening is a testament to their power. Everywhere Beijing turns in the geopolitical room, it can see the elephant, quiet, powerful and determined. China will lash out, try to break things, but what is being built by India is durable, and essential.

Anyway, this isn't about China. This is about India. Since May 26, 2014, India has grown, adapted, learned and nurtured the herd.

There is still much to do, domestically and internationally, but what has already been accomplished has changed India—and the world. And given that most valuable, motivating gift, hope.

* Cleo Paskal is Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and columnist with The Sunday Guardian.

"Whenever we come across 'Viklang' person, our attention goes towards their disability but we do not notice the immense capabilities and strength they have to accomplish a task. And, that is why I urge everyone to use the word 'Divyang' instead of 'Viklang'."

—PM MODI AT SAMAJIK ADHIKAARITA SHIVIR, NAVSARI, GUJARAT

INDIA THAT IS BHARAT

'THE LAST TWELVE YEARS ARE THE FIRST TWELVE YEARS OF MODERN INDIA'

The greatest achievement of Prime Minister Modi has been the liberation of India—liberation of India from hunger. Equally important is the emancipation and empowerment of the poor, says M.J. Akbar in a conversation with *The Sunday Guardian*.

JOYEETA BASU

Former Minister of State for External Affairs, historian and journalist, M.J. Akbar spoke to *The Sunday Guardian* on Prime Minister Narendra Modi surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's record as the longest serving elected Prime Minister of India, on June 10 2026, with 4,399 days in office. One of M.J. Akbar's books is "Nehru: The Making of India" (1988). Here are the edited excerpts from the interview:

Q: Are we witnessing a transition from Nehru's India to Modi's Bharat? As a historian, how do you see this transition?

A: That is an artificial distance between India and Bharat, for the opening sentence of the Constitution says: "India, that is Bharat."

So both terms are very much part of the identity and idea of India. And Bharat resonates with the ancient name of our country. While India/Hind is a word that derives from rather more recent history, which means about the last 1,200 years or so. When the Persians termed the land across the Indus as the land of Hind, from there emerged Hindu, and from there Hindustan. So Bharat is still the ancient name. We now recognise both names as part of our identity. I do not think there is any need to see any contradiction between the two.

Q: Would you say there has been a transition from the way Mr Nehru was looking at India or Bharat and Mr Modi's way of looking at this nation?

A: Yes, I think there are very significant approaches to two forms of development. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted development as the first Prime Minister, but his way of looking at development was dependent too much on the theory of a leftist approach that he had learnt and picked up during his graduate days in England, and which was then strengthened by the fashionable ideology of the time—a combination of Marxism and Fabianism, which led to a complete hotch-potch in the evolution of our policy, which became neither left nor right, but which straddled in between. And then the bureaucracy turned it into a stagnant pool, with the result that the Indian economy got cramped into something that was literally immovable in the 1960s and 1970s in particular, until it was released from the trap in the 1980s and 1990s.

But let us look at it from what I consider the most significant achievement of Prime Minister Modi. If Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Min-

ister at the making of India, Prime Minister Modi can be justifiably called, and will go down in history, I believe, as the architect of modern India.

One of the greatest failures of the first 30 years of our freedom—there were many successes, I do not want to decry that, Nehru had successes in the formation of national policies, the meaning of independence—but one of the great failures up to the 1970s and even the 1980s was the inability to feed our country. It is one of the most shocking facts. We associate famine with the British, which is true. The British created famine in order to fatten the pockets of the East India Company, and famine remained a fact of life till 1943, till the end of British rule. But while our Constitution promised—it was a miraculous Constitution, a wonderful Constitution that gave us freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of faith... but it did not give us freedom from hunger.

And it might shock people to know that when we first entered journalism in the 1970s, in the *Illustrated Weekly*, I was doing cover stories on famine in 1971, 1972. In the 1960s, the Americans humiliated us virtually when they sent aid as part of PL-480. And we as a nation accepted it—it was a humiliation, because we had not... There were many economies in 1947 which were far worse than ours. Japan was smashed. Countries like Korea and China were literally levelled and razed by internal wars. We had our sufferings, of course, but we did not (do anything about eradicating hunger).

The greatest achievement of Prime Minister Modi in these years has been the liberation of India—liberation of India from hunger. But equally important is the emancipation and empowerment of the poor. He empowered the poor in ways that were unthinkable in 2014. He empowered, he trusted the poor with technology when technology was considered the preserve of the educated and the middle classes, when nobody associated technology with the poor.

I remember the opposition parties—and I feel very strongly about it, that anger of mine has not gone away—when PM Modi promised banking, when he promised technology and such systems to the poor, when he introduced technology at the basic level, the opposition said opening bank accounts for the poor who had no money. Those laughs and screaming



Representational photo: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inaugural event of AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on 16 February. DPR PMO/ANI



Representational photo: Indian Navy personnel stand on the INS Nilgiri, which was commissioned to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 15, at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. ANI

and screeching on television were led by opposition leaders who are still around. Look at what has happened—the liberation of women and empowering them, giving them means of self-employment. I was born in a mohalla called Telinipara in West Bengal. We ourselves were not poor. I should not romanticise this element. But we lived in a street in which the workers ate rice with water—they had no money for *daal*.

Today, for the first time in the history of our nation, for the first time, every single mother in India sleeps at night knowing that her child has had a meal.

For those who do not understand it, this transforma-

tion will remain inexplicable. I find very often even serious people say: "Oh, but look at the cost of these welfare schemes." They do not realise that food is a fundamental right in a civilised society. There is no cost which can ever put to the elimination of hunger. And now the World Bank has recognised this. When our freedom started, 78% of India was living under harsh poverty. But now for the first time, last year, the World Bank issued statistics according to which only 1.5% of Indians are considered to be living in deep poverty. That is a revolution.

If you want to compare this even with the recent past, I remember in the previous

government, just before Prime Minister Modi took over, there was a great debate, maybe in 2011 or thereabouts. A very prominent World Bank type pontificator then in government, said: "Rs 32 per day is enough." For a family of four, Rs 900 a month was enough? I remember writing at the time that each blade of grass in his bungalow was probably worth more than Rs 32.

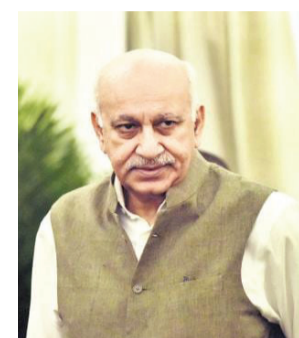
That was the kind of contempt we had for the poor.

Prime Minister Modi made freedom from hunger, made sanitation, made shelter, made the well-being of the poor, fundamental rights. These are historic achievements. The welfare of India

begins with the welfare of the poor. There is still a long way to go. There is still an enormous amount to do. But within these 12 years, so much has been done. When history is written properly, this will definitely be recognised.

The second thing that will be recognised is that he understands the health of the nation: that the well-being and the security of the nation can only come about when both arms are strong. We cannot have one arm which is weak. The two arms are security and the military.

It was famously said of the defence minister before Prime Minister Modi took



M.J. Akbar

over that not a single file had been signed in 10 years. That was maybe not a purely apocryphal story. There was some merit in that story.

And today for the first time we have added to our military strength which has not only built a security perimeter in the west and in the north—Pakistan and China—but it has also taken our security perimeter from the Hormuz—literally from Aden—right up to Malacca. And the building of a naval security and sea security in the Andamans and in Nicobar is what will be recognised, too, as one of his significant achievements of modern India. And the strategic repositioning of India as a power of the seas.

India has always been seen as a land south of the mountains. Under Prime Minister Modi, it has also become a land north of the waters.

Q: PM Jawaharlal Nehru onwards, we have had this policy of non-alignment. Now we are talking about multi-alignment. How exactly has foreign policy changed over the years, specifically under PM Modi?

A: Prime Minister Nehru should be given special credit for understanding one thing: that freedom and independence are not the same. Many countries have freedom; they do not have independence. We do not need to stress that there are neighbours who do not understand the difference. In fact, they surrendered their freedom and they surrendered their independence in order to protect some notion of freedom, which is really freedom of the ruling class.

But from the beginning, our policy of non-alignment understood that if you do not protect and project your independence, then your freedom will be at the mercy of some superpowers. Jawaharlal Nehru's great mistake was that he did not back up ideological independence and a commitment of policy to independence. Independence cannot be protected only by words. Independence has to be protected by defence capability, by security capability. And that, I am afraid, Jawaharlal Nehru lost sight of, including

with the bad advice that was given by defence ministers like Krishna Menon. That led to the great catastrophe which destroyed Jawaharlal Nehru's prime ministership, and that was the catastrophe of the Chinese war in October-November 1962.

But Prime Minister Modi, even in his early days, when he was challenged by the Chinese, the way in which he stood firm...because he was rapidly building up defence capability, and any insider will tell you that the change has been phenomenal. The change in our capability has been phenomenal.

Of course, security is a continuing challenge. You cannot pause the security build-up. But this is a second and a very important achievement.

I often say that you do not have to exercise independence from enemies. Very often, you have to exercise independence from friends, when friends expect you to become, not partners, but obeisant in the name of friendship. And that is why when Prime Minister Modi stood up to President Trump on the tariffs, it was another important and a very vital moment in telling the world that India would always be ready to be a friend of every country. We are not enemies of any country, but never at the cost of our independence, never at the cost of our national interests, never at the cost of what we consider to be the primary objective of policy, which is the advancement of the interests of the Indian people.

We are in the age of the nation-state. We believe today in mutually beneficial nationalism. We become a benevolent power in our relationship with the rest of the world. We have no wish to attack anyone. We have never attacked anyone. We have been victims of aggression for a long time.

Our defence is what it is, which means a defensive defence. It is not offensive one.

The rise of India as a major benevolent power—but a benevolent power which indeed is muscular in the defence of its interests, is a very major foreign policy achievement of Prime Minister Modi.

Q: In one sentence, how would you describe the last 12 years Prime Minister Modi's governance?

A: The last 12 years are the first 12 years of modern India.

* Joyeeta Basu is the Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*. This interview will be available on *The Sunday Guardian's* YouTube channel.

BEING GLOBAL

India is now a major player in a multipolar world



VILLE SKINNARI

Congratulations, India. Congratulations, Prime Minister Modi. Mr Modi has now become one of the longest

serving leaders of India, surpassing Indira Gandhi and joining the ranks of leaders, such as Nehru. This

is ultimately a testament of trust from the Indian people, and tells about the strength of Indian democracy. Only very few democratic leaders in the world have secured three consecutive national mandates on this scale.

Secondly, India has risen from emerging power to global power. During mod-

ern times, India has transformed from being viewed as emerging economy into one of the central pillars of the global growth. India is now amongst the world's largest economies, and a leader in digital public infrastructure, innovation, space technology, manufacturing, and entrepre-

neurship, and the world increasingly looks to India not only as a market but as a strategic partner and as a source of solutions.

Thirdly, India is a major player in the new multipolar world. We are living through the most significant geopolitical transition since the end of the Cold

War, and India's voice has become increasingly important in G20, in the UN, at global discussions on economic development, climate, technology, and security. Furthermore, India has demonstrated an ability to engage with all the major regions and powers while maintaining its stra-

tegic autonomy. We must work on the institutions. It's increasingly difficult to discuss the future of global governance without recognizing India's role and importance.

Therefore, India's contribution to UN to peacemaking, development policies, climate action, and interna-

tional cooperation has been substantial.

A stronger Indian voice in global institutions is not only in India's interest, but also in the interest of a more representative international system.

* Ville Skinnari is a Member of Parliament, Finland

NEHRU AND MODI

There is a simple way of understanding the inevitable comparison between the terms of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the incumbent. Nehru began with the idea of “discovering India”, and proclaiming its moral greatness to the world. Modi, on the other hand, started having discovered India, and proceeded to re-build its material strength.

The tidy partisan instinct is to treat Nehru and Modi as antitheses, as if to honour one is to repudiate the other. However, this is what is known as a “category error”. They are better understood as two movements of a single composition, as sequence rather than split.

The British governed India on a single audacious premise: that there was no India to govern. “There is not, and never was an India,” wrote the colonial administrator John Strachey; it was, in Churchill’s later sneer, in Churchill’s later sneer, no more a nation than the Equator—a mere geographical expression, a subcontinent of warring peoples held together only by the conqueror’s sword. Every serious Indian who came after had first to answer this charge, and so the founding act of the Indian mind in the 20th century was not the writing of a Constitution but the assertion of a civilisation: the claim that India was ancient, continuous, and coherent.

On this, Jawaharlal Nehru and Narendra Modi entirely agree. Whatever else divides them, both are civilisational nationalists who think in civilisational time, who regard India not as a state that happens to be ancient but as an ancient civilisation that has lately acquired a state. The central argument of the Indian republic has never been whether India is a civilisation. It has been *which* civilisation it is. The First Republic answered one way; the Second answers another. To understand the country, one must understand both the

THE FIRST REPUBLIC AND THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The tidy partisan instinct is to treat Nehru and Modi as antitheses, as if to honour one is to repudiate the other. However, this is what is known as a ‘category error’. They are better understood as two movements of a single composition, as sequence rather than split.



HINDOL SENGUPTA

ground they share and the chasm that runs through it.

THE SHARED INHERITANCE

Begin with what they hold in common, because it is more than partisans of either will admit. Both Nehru and Modi believe India is among the oldest living civilisations on earth, and both take fierce pride in its antiquity—its mathematics and astronomy, its philosophy and grammar, its contribution to the common inheritance of humanity. Read *The Discovery of India*, written by Nehru in a colonial prison, and you find a man almost intoxicated by the depth of the Indian past, cataloguing its sciences and its sages with the same wonder a Hindutva pamphlet musters today. The supposed revivalist are, on the sheer fact of civilisational greatness, in complete accord.

Both also believe India is meant to teach. Nehru’s India would instruct the world in tolerance, non-violence and the moral conduct of nations; Modi’s India would offer yoga, *Ayurveda*, and the ethic of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the world as one family, which became the

motto of India’s G20 presidency. The vocabulary differs; the conviction is identical: that this civilisation possesses something the rest of mankind needs. Both, finally, narrate independence and renewal as a civilisational *awakening*—Nehru’s “soul of a nation, long suppressed,” finding utterance at the midnight hour; Modi’s *Amrit Kaal*, the reclamation of a destiny that foreign rule had interrupted. They are closer in method than most analysts understand.

SYNTHESIS OR ESSENCE

But there is indeed a key difference. The deepest difference between the two men is not about policy but about what kind of thing Indian civilisation fundamentally *is* and here their readings are almost opposite.

For Nehru, India is a *synthesis*. His master-image, in “*The Discovery of India*”, is the palimpsest: a manuscript written over again and again, on which no later inscription ever wholly erases the earlier, so that the whole is the sum of every layer at once. Aryan and Dravidian, Greek and Scythian, Arab and Turk and Mughal and



Briton, each had entered India and each had been absorbed, altered and made Indian. The genius of the civilisation, in this view, is precisely its appetite for difference: India is not a thing but a process, a permanent act of assimilation, defined by its capacity to take in the foreign and dissolve the boundary. Its unity is a unity *in* diversity, and the diversity is not a flaw to be overcome but the very substance of the nation.

For Modi and the civilisational tradition he speaks for, India is an *essence*. Bharat is not the running sum of its invasions but a continuous dharmic self, rooted in *Sanatana Dharma*, that long predates and underlies every later layer. Where Nehru sees accretion, this vision sees a core, older, deeper, and indigenous, that conquest obscured but never extinguished. The task of the present is therefore not further synthesis but *recovery*: the clearing away of

what was imposed so that the original self may stand revealed again. One man defines the civilisation by what it has absorbed; the other by what it has always been. Almost everything else follows from this single divergence.

THE ARGUMENT

Nowhere does the divergence cut deeper than over the thousand years of Islamic and then European rule. For Nehru, the Indo-Islamic encounter produced a genuine *synthesis*—the composite culture of language, music, architecture and manners that he regarded as fully Indian, not foreign residue. Akbar was a national hero; the Mughal centuries were a layer of the palimpsest, written into the page for good. The colonial period he condemned as exploitation, but even Western liberalism and science he folded, characteristically, into the ongoing Indian project.

The civilisational reading Modi represents treats the

same millennium very differently—less as synthesis than as *rupture*: a long subjugation in which temples were broken, wealth extracted, and a confident civilisation taught to be ashamed of itself. From this flows the politics of reclamation that has defined his era—the rebuilding and consecration of the temple at Ayodhya, the restoration of sacred geography at Kashi and elsewhere, the call to shed what he names the *ghulamī ki mansikta*, the slave mentality bequeathed by foreign rule. To some this is overdue civilisational self-respect. To others it goes against the composite settlement Nehru held vital. The argument between these two responses is, in the end, an argument about whether the second millennium was something India *did* or something done *to* it.

DISCOVERY AND ASSERTION

The two visions even feel different. Nehru’s is a civilisation in the key of *discovery*—tentative, self-questioning, a little melancholy, a rationalist’s India that honours the past but reserves the right to outgrow its superstitions, and that keeps faith and state at a deliberate distance. He titled his book *Discovery*, as though India was something he had to search for and was never quite sure he had found. Modi’s is a

civilisation in the key of *assertion*—confident, proud, a Bharat to be proclaimed rather than excavated, in which dharmic symbol and national power appear unembarrassed on the same stage, whether at the United Nations on the International Day of Yoga or at the consecration of a temple by a sitting head of government. The first mood produces humility and, its critics say, apology; the second produces pride and, its critics say, majoritarian swagger. Each carries the defect of its quality.

THE SAME WOUND, TWO CURES

Strip away the quarrel and what remains is a usually neglected kinship remains: both men are addressing the same wound. Each is answering the colonial amputation: the lie that India was never a nation and had nothing of its own. Each loves the civilisation and stakes his political life on its greatness. They do not differ in devotion but in diagnosis. Nehru believes the civilisation is healthiest when it is most capacious, when it defines itself by what it can include; Modi’s tradition believes it is healthiest when it is most rooted, when it remembers what it essentially is. One fears that an India of fixed essence will fracture along the very lines it tries to sup-

press, while the other is concerned that an India of endless synthesis will dissolve into having no self at all.

Here is the hard truth that the Second Republic was built to confront: the world respects the moral, but it bows only to the material. A civilisation that wishes to *shape* the international order, rather than merely appeal to its better angels, must possess the capacity to act and to be felt. This is the recognition, long delayed, partly begun by the reformers of 1991, that Narendra Modi has placed at the centre of his project. If the First Republic asked whether India deserved to exist and be heard, the Second asks whether India can act and be reckoned with.

This is not a disagreement that admits of easy reconciliation, and it would be dishonest to pretend otherwise. It is the deepest fault line of the republic, and the country’s future turns on it: whether these two readings of the civilisation can be held in some productive tension—as perhaps they must be, since a great civilisation is surely both continuous *and* capacious—or whether one must finally defeat the other. Nehru gave India the confidence to believe it was a civilisation. Modi has given it the confidence to argue, loudly and without apology, over what that civilisation means. That the argument exists at all is the strange, shared achievement of the First Republic and the Second.

Every republic is born twice—once in law, and once in imagination. The distance, and the closeness, between those two ambitions, between moral stature and material capability, is the truest narrative of independent India.

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FOR GOOD OF WORLD

India should take its rightful place on the world stage

While India has always viewed itself as a paragon of international law and a proponent of strong, multilateral international organizations, this too often leads India to punch below its weight on the global stage.



MICHAEL RUBIN

On June 10, 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi became India’s longest serving elected Prime Minister, overtaking Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for length of tenure. Historians will acknowledge how consequential both men’s legacies have been. Nehru solidified India’s democracy, a stunning achievement given how quickly other newly-independent countries from the period—most notably Pakistan—backslid into dictatorship and economic morass. Nehru also charted India into non-alignment, making it the leader of Global South for decades in the 20th century.

Modi’s achievements are as momentous. He has infused new pride into Indians and promoted their civilizational legacy. Economically, he has overcome decades of bureaucratic stagnation to ensure India

has an infrastructure befitting a 21st century superpower. It is no coincidence and should be no surprise that India may soon surpass Germany as the world’s third largest economy. The caricatures of India that persisted outside the country for years today reflect racism rather than reality and reflect more on those who would lecture or dismiss India.

For too long, however, India’s power abroad has failed to match its progress at home. India’s Ministry of External Affairs remains sclerotic. Old guard officials resent and impede reforms and remain too often trapped in a Cold War mindset that favours relitigating the struggles of the 20th century over positioning India to lead in the 21st century.

Indian diplomacy certainly remains valuable as

a force to raise the voice of those too often ignored on the global stage. Africans, for example, appreciate India’s support for helping the African Union join the G20. But while Africa deserves a seat, the episode also reinforces some of the problems in India’s global outlook. Just as Arabs mock the Arab League for ineffectiveness, so too do Africans criticize the African Union for its inefficiencies. South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa, Nigeria’s Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Kenya’s William Ruto, and even host nation Ethiopia’s Abiy Ahmed will never subordinate their own egos and ambitions to African Union diktats.

While India has always viewed itself as a paragon of international law and a proponent of strong, multilateral international organizations, this too often leads India to punch below its weight on the global stage. Influence and conformity to international law need not be mutually exclusive but, when advocating for international law, India must recognize that the United Nations is both a legacy of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Prime Minister of Sweden Ulf Kristersson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in Gothenburg on May 17, 2026. DPR PMO/ANI

the immediate post-World War II-era. The United Kingdom has a permanent Security Council seat because it still maintained an empire that included India and spanned the globe. Today, India’s population is 21 times that of the United Kingdom and its economy is now slightly larger in terms of gross domestic product, though New Delhi will likely broaden the gap over the next decade. By any objective standard, India deserves the Security Council seat, not the United Kingdom. At a minimum,

the British seat should be transformed into a seat for the Commonwealth with veto power but a rotating leadership.

Debates about the power of the Security Council over the General Assembly and the composition of the Security Council are important, but India must go beyond them. For decades, Western states dominated the leadership of UN agencies such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, the

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Only over the past 25 years did the People’s Republic of China begin to compete for these slots, not only for prestige but also for influence. Both during the SARS bird flu epidemic and Covid-19, Beijing leveraged its influence to institutionalize its hostility to Taiwan or prevent diplomatic embarrassment. India has held a few minor deputy director positions but deserves much more.

India’s influence should go beyond the United Nations, though. The post-World War II liberal system is in flux as revisionist states challenge the global order. Here, too, India faces a choice: It can figuratively stand on the sidelines, wringing its hands and tut-tut those who violate the rules, or it can help shape the new order.

This will mean a far greater willingness to project force. Military action has historical baggage in India,

especially after the 1987 Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka. But while India participates in UN peacekeeping operations, these bring salaries and remittances but do not necessarily further specific Indian interests. While many Indians ideologically resist unilateralism, Indians should consider if they do not lead, China might fill the gap and how that could undermine India’s broader agenda and interests. This might mean, in the future, Indian peacekeeping forces in Bangladesh or Myanmar.

While India has begun setting a broader footprint in the Indian Ocean Basin, it should be more forthcoming regarding non-UN deployments overseas. Seven countries, including China and the United States, have bases in Djibouti; India might consider nearby Somaliland, where the United Arab Emirates and Israel use the Berbera airfield. U.S. Marines maintain a small base in Darwin, Australia, precisely because it is out-of-range of Chinese aircraft. India might consider do-

ing likewise on a bilateral basis, even if the Quad is not a military alliance. The multilateral Exercises Malabar and Pacific Reach are important for Indian Navy interoperability with allies in the Indo-Pacific; IBSAMAR naval exercises with South Africa and Brazil give the Indian Navy broader reach. But these should become the tip of the iceberg. The Indian Navy should be a global presence, perhaps negotiating broader docking rights alongside U.S. facilities in Guam or Guantanamo.

Narendra Modi is already setting a growing figure on the world stage. India has transformed itself, but its external footprint has not kept pace. Just as Nehru became an international giant and made India a diplomatic heavyweight, growing India’s presence will be a benefit not only to Indians, but to the broader democratic world as well.

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“One Earth, One Family, One Future.”

-PM MODI AT G20 SUMMIT, 2023

FOR GOOD HEALTH

HEALTHCARE: SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS MADE, BUT SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES REMAIN

Ensuring that healthcare is available, accessible, and affordable for every citizen, regardless of location or income, must remain a national priority.



**DR HEMANT
MADAN**

India's healthcare system has evolved into a distinctive public-private partnership. The government shapes public health policy and delivers much of the country's preventive and community healthcare, the private sector plays a dominant role in service delivery. But today, about 70% of primary healthcare consultations take place in the private sector, while nearly half of tertiary and highly specialized services are provided by private hospitals. This coexistence defines the Indian healthcare landscape and presents both opportunities and challenges in achieving universal healthcare.

DIFFICULTIES IN UNIFORM DELIVERY OF HEALTHCARE IN INDIA

Providing healthcare uniformly across a nation of more than 1.4 billion people is an immense challenge. India's diversity, one of its greatest strengths, also creates barriers to equitable healthcare delivery.

The first challenge is education and health literacy. Many people still have limited understanding of disease prevention, early diagnosis,

medication adherence, and lifestyle changes. This often leads to delayed treatment, poor compliance, and preventable complications.

The second challenge is geography. From the Himalayan regions and mountainous terrain of the north to forests, deserts, islands, and remote tribal areas, access to healthcare is often limited by distance and inadequate infrastructure. Delivering timely medical care in these regions requires substantial logistical effort and sustained investment.

The third challenge is economic disparity. India is a country where extreme poverty exists alongside immense wealth. While some citizens can access the most advanced treatments available globally, millions struggle with the costs of transportation, diagnostics, and long-term care. Bridging this gap remains a critical healthcare priority.

Perhaps the most complex challenge is social perception and prejudice. Healthcare outcomes are shaped not only by service availability but also by attitudes toward disease, gender, mental health, vaccination, disability, and preventive care. Misconcep-

tions, stigma, and cultural barriers can delay treatment and reduce acceptance of evidence-based interventions. Whether it is reluctance to seek mental health support, delayed care for women, vaccine hesitancy, or persistent myths about chronic diseases, social attitudes continue to influence healthcare utilization. Addressing these issues requires not only medical infrastructure but also education, community engagement, and sustained public awareness.

WHERE DO WE STAND TODAY?

Despite these challenges, India's healthcare achievements are significant. The country's doctors, nurses, technicians, and healthcare workers are respected worldwide for their competence, adaptability, and dedication. Indian medical professionals hold leadership roles in hospitals, universities, research institutions, and healthcare systems across the globe.

A defining feature of Indian healthcare is the ability of its professionals to perform under demanding conditions. Whether in overcrowded urban hospitals or resource-constrained rural facilities, healthcare workers routinely manage large patient volumes while maintaining high standards of care.

India is also known for cost-effective healthcare delivery. Advanced procedures such



A senior citizen receives her Ayushman Vaya Vandana card, under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), in New Delhi on 28 April 2025. (ANI)

as cardiac interventions, cancer treatments, organ transplants, and complex surgeries are often available at lower costs than in many developed countries while maintaining high standards. This combination of expertise and value has made India a leading destination for medical care.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST DECADE OR SO?

Over the past 10 to 12 years, India's healthcare landscape has undergone substantial transformation through public health initiatives focused on access, affordability, and prevention.

Ayushman Bharat has emerged as one of the most significant reforms, providing financial protection to economically vulnerable families and enabling millions to access hospitalization and advanced medical care. It has also strengthened collaboration between public

and private providers.

The expansion of Jan Aushadhi Kendras has reduced the burden of medication costs by making quality generic medicines available at affordable prices, particularly benefiting patients with chronic illnesses.

Another important initiative has been the development of Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, formerly known as Health and Wellness Centres. These centres emphasize preventive and primary healthcare through screening, early diagnosis, maternal and child health services, and chronic disease management.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has also contributed significantly to public health by improving sanitation, expanding toilet coverage, and promoting hygiene awareness, thereby helping reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

Together, these initiatives reflect a broader shift from

treating illness to preventing disease, reducing financial hardship, and improving overall quality of life.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND INDIA'S RESPONSE

The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the greatest public health challenges of modern times. For a nation of India's size and complexity, the task was especially demanding. The initial response in our country—like elsewhere in the world—was one of shock and confusion. A definite direction for action, as well as motivation to keep the chin up, during this never-seen-before crisis came from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 22 March 2020. In his televised address to the nation, he exhorted all citizens to stay united and motivated with an aim to tackle the pandemic.

India soon responded by strengthening healthcare infrastructure and fostering cooperation between public and private healthcare systems. Hospitals, laboratories, healthcare professionals, and government agencies worked together to expand testing, treatment capacity, oxygen availability, and critical care services.

A major achievement was the development, production, and deployment of vaccines on a massive scale. India conducted one of the world's largest vaccination

programmes, administering billions of doses across urban and rural regions. The country also supplied vaccines internationally, demonstrating both scientific capability and global responsibility. The pandemic highlighted the resilience and adaptability of India's healthcare ecosystem.

MAKE IN INDIA AND MEDICAL DEVICES

The Make in India initiative has strengthened healthcare self-reliance. Historically dependent on imports for many medical devices, India has expanded domestic manufacturing capacity significantly.

Today, a wide range of medical devices and healthcare technologies are produced within the country. Indigenous innovation has reduced import dependence while improving affordability and accessibility. The growth of the medical device industry supports both healthcare security and economic development.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Despite substantial progress, significant challenges remain. Ensuring that healthcare is available, accessible, and affordable for every citizen, regardless of location or income, must remain a national priority.

Future strategies must address emerging health

threats. Lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular disease are rising rapidly. Pollution-related illnesses continue to affect millions, while mental health disorders require greater attention, resources, and public awareness.

India stands at a pivotal moment. The foundations of a stronger healthcare system have been laid, but the journey is far from complete. Continued progress will require close cooperation between government institutions and private healthcare providers. Future health challenges will demand a unified response.

The story of Indian healthcare is one of aspiration, resilience, and progress. Much has been achieved, yet much remains to be done. As we look ahead, we are reminded of the timeless words of Robert Frost: "And miles to go before I sleep." India has come a long way on its healthcare journey, but there are still miles to go before the promise of health for every citizen is fully realized. For this, the government and private sector must not only co-exist but cooperate and collaborate actively to achieve concordance in our overarching aim of "health for all."

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ALTERNATE ENERGY

Time to gain freedom from fossil fuels and supply chain uncertainties

Petroleum-based solvents and detergents can be replaced by highly effective, low-toxicity, environment friendly, bio-derived, and mineral-based renewables.



**DR P.S.
VENKATESH RAO**

78 years after Independence, we are still dependent on crude and gas from the Gulf region, a major strategic, economic and health vulnerability to the Strait of Hormuz choke point. Global pollution from smoke, microplastics, and oil spills, to consequences of climate change, is all due to unsustainable dependence on fossil fuels. With 17.7% (slightly more than a sixth) of the world's population, we should lead the world in transition to sustainable energy, fertilizer, and recyclable biopolymer alternatives. The Solar Alliance, the shift towards green hydrogen, biofuels, biofertilizers, and thorium-based nuclear energy with nuclear waste recycling are all commendable, but we need a major push from our reform-minded, progress-oriented, mission-mode government, with active private participation.

ENERGY TRANSITION

Energy security is our most important immediate target. We are making efforts to massively increase non-fossil sources of energy, but need to focus our research efforts on:

Synthetic fuels: Green hydrogen is being adapted for

heavy transportation and power grid balancing. By capturing industrial carbon emissions and CO₂ from air and combining them with green hydrogen, replacements for traditional gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel are being developed. Green Hydrogen is ideal for high-heat industrial processes like cement, steel, ceramics, and glass manufacturing.

Biofuels: The massive push to decarbonize aviation and marine transport is driving biodiesel and renewable diesel consumption. India crossed a historic 20% national average ethanol blending rate (E20) and introduced a mandatory Compressed Biogas (CBG) blending initiative starting at 1% and aiming for 5%. Conversion of agricultural waste into biofuel and gas will also permanently solve the air pollution caused by its open burning. Conversion of solid organic municipal waste into biocrude will similarly solve pollution problems at landfills and improve public hygiene. AI integration into bioreactor designs helps automatically adjust metabolic conditions for maximized fuel yields.

Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) from the breakdown of agricultural or organic

waste, or sewage in an anaerobic digester, can replace piped natural gas (PNG) in existing gas grids. Compressed Biogas (CBG) as a substitute for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is already in use for vehicles.

Advanced biofuel technologies: Custom enzymes have drastically optimized breakdown speeds and yields for cellulose ethanol. Alcohol-to-Jet (ATJ) and hydro-processed esters/fatty acids (HEFA) are helping airlines meet strict decarbonization pledges. Heavy shipping lines are steadily testing biomethanol and unrefined bio-oils as alternatives to traditional bunker fuels. Genetically Modified (GM) algae strains in wastewater bodies capture carbon dioxide and synthesize heavy concentrations of biofuel.

HYDRO AND GEOTHERMAL ENERGY: CAPACITY NEEDS TO BE INCREASED.

Energy storage technologies: Solar and wind energy are unavailable 24/7 and hence need to be stored when available and transmitted when required. The rapid development/improvement of these technologies and their commercialization need a concerted government-private effort. Key emerging and under-development technologies include Sodium-Ion and Freewy Hybrid Battery technologies, Solid-State Batteries (SSBs), Gravity Energy Storage, Advanced



Compressed Air Energy Storage (CAES), Thermal storage, and Flow batteries. SSBs offer higher energy density (500 Wh/Kg), fast charging (80% in 15 min), efficiency over wider temperature ranges -30° to 100° C, longer life, and elimination of thermal runaway risk of flammable liquid electrolyte, lower energy density, lithium-ion batteries.

Energy transmission technologies: Energy transmission challenges primarily stem from grid congestion, line losses, and the difficulties of integrating renewable energy. Bottlenecks cause delayed projects, wasted power, and higher consumer costs. Modern solutions include upgrading to high-voltage lines, decentralized energy generation and usage, and smart grid tech.

Nuclear Energy: After the recent success of the second-stage fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam, we

need to scale it up and complete the Thorium nuclear cycle by constructing the Advanced Heavy Water Reactors (AHWRs) to convert non-fissile Thorium-232 into Uranium-233, creating a sustainable, closed-loop fuel cycle. While the design and experimental validations for AHWR units have been largely completed, final regulatory clearances, projected site selection, and the official operational date are awaited. As a global first, the plutonium 'nuclear waste' from the first stage gets converted in the second stage to fuel the third stage, thus using up the hazardous plutonium waste produced by nuclear energy plants worldwide. Simultaneously, it solves our dependence on imported uranium, as we have the world's largest thorium reserves. Other nuclear options are Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and efforts at sustained controlled nuclear fusion to rep-

licate the sun inside a reactor.

Perovskite-silicon technology promises to significantly increase the efficiency of solar panels.

FROM PETROCHEMICALS TO RENEWABLE FEEDSTOCK

Biomanufacturing, synthetic biology, and advanced recycling are rapidly scaling to replace fossil fuels as raw materials in manufacturing plastics, fibres, and industrial chemicals, yielding identical, everyday materials.

Bioconversion of biomass: Microorganisms have been engineered to turn plants, grasses, marine biomass (fast-growing algae and seaweed), and agricultural residues (like bagasse or corn stalks) into base chemicals like bio-BDO (used in spandex and polyurethanes) and ethylene (the foundational block for plastics) and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API). Polylactic Acid (PLA),

PHA, Polyethylene from bioethanol can replace naphtha and ethane used for ethylene and propylene production, used to manufacture plastics, synthetic fibres, synthetic rubbers, and packaging materials.

Chemical conversion of biomass: Because biomass is typically hydrogen-poor and oxygen-rich, engineers are actively integrating green hydrogen into biomass conversion pathways to maximize the carbon yield and create high-value chemicals without greenhouse gas emissions. Processes are under development to turn seaweed-derived sugars into polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHAs), a type of biodegradable polyester that decomposes naturally in both home compost and marine environments.

Advanced chemical recycling: Using pyrolysis or gasification, old plastics and mixed municipal waste are converted into pyrolysis oils or synthetic syngas. These can be fed directly back into existing steam crackers to create virgin-quality plastics without needing to drill for new fossil fuels.

Urea and fertilizers: Urea is synthesised from hydrogen in fossil fuels and nitrogen from the air. Green hydrogen can entirely replace the use of fossil fuels for urea production. Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN) is a less volatile and more effective fertiliser than urea. Nitrogen-fixing crops, aquatic ferns, microalgae, oil cakes,

compost, treated sewage solids, and manure are natural and sustainable alternative fertilizers that also improve soil microbiology.

OTHER PETROLEUM ALTERNATIVES

Petroleum-based solvents and detergents can be replaced by highly effective, low-toxicity (volatile organic compounds-free), environment friendly, bio-derived, and mineral-based renewables, like citrus terpenes and alkyl polyglucosides.

Petroleum-based lubricants, engine oils, and electrical insulating oil can be substituted with bio-lubricants and synthetic esters.

Asphalt binders used in road construction and waterproofing sealants and coatings can be replaced by "bio-asphalt" (lignin and tall oil discarded by paper mills, and microalgae) and sustainable polymer mixes.

Paraffin wax has many renewable, plant-based, and animal-based alternatives like soy wax, beeswax, carnauba wax (from palm leaves), and candelilla wax (from shrubs).

For a secure, healthy, and wealthy Viksit Bharat and to be Vishwaguru in sustainable living, we need freedom from fossil fuels and supply chain uncertainties at the earliest.

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INDIA IN THE WORLD

GETTING THE INDIA-U.S. RELATIONSHIP BACK ON TRACK

But is the India-US really off the track? Even if it's currently in a 'down' moment, look back 40 years and things still look pretty good. First, the US ambassador to India is a lot better than his predecessor.



GRANT NEWSHAM

I've read that the Indian commentariat and foreign policy establishment is more wary of the United States than anytime this century.

Maybe so. But 26 years is not a particularly long time, and it often seems that there's a "manic" aspect on the Indian side when considering the bilateral relationship.

Perhaps people get a little too excited when things are going well, and a little too depressed when the occasional hiccups happen.

But is the India-US really off the track?

Even if it's currently in a "down" moment, look back 40 years and things still look pretty good.

Here are a few things to consider:

First, the US ambassador to India is a lot better than his predecessor. Ambassador Sergio Goro chose India out of any number of possible postings—or positions within the Trump administration. He's not in India for a three-year holiday. Even more, Ambassador Goro can call the White House and President Trump will answer. Very few ambassadors can do this.

Second, it's not as if the US has forgotten about India or is giving the cold shoulder. Notice Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited last month. He didn't choose India at random. And Rubio

is not only the most consequential Secretary of State since George Schultz, he's also the National Security Advisor. His visit is a gauge of the importance the Trump administration assigns to India.

Third, the India-US military-to-military prelateship is stronger than ever. The two forces conduct frequent exercises, India has become a maintenance and logistics hub for the US Navy, and arms sales are robust.

India also gets a degree of special treatment regarding technology exports—although there is room for improvement.

As for trade? A bilateral trade deal is in the works, which might assuage the shock felt by many countries of having blanket tariffs imposed on them.

Yes, it would have been nice if tariffs had been applied more carefully, but the Trump administration was dealing with a problem that had built up over many decades, and felt a sledgehammer was needed to shift things in the right direction.

India's resentment is understandable, but it's not unique.

Indeed, Japan could feel even more aggrieved—given its 70 years as a loyal treaty ally and the deep military and economic ties with America—and the consis-

tent political support it has provided.

Instead, Tokyo bit its tongue—ensuring that resentment didn't get the better of strategic interests.

"Biting one's tongue" is perhaps sometimes the better part of statesmanship—provided one reckons the relationship is valuable enough.

And at the end of the day, Indian and American strategic interests align—as the world enters a struggle between free, consensually governed nations and expansionist totalitarian ones.

Yes, it's China that I'm mostly talking about.

India in fact recognized the "China threat" far earlier than did the United States—which has belatedly woken up.

Regardless, by their very existence India and the United States are a rebuttal of China's dictatorship and repression.

However, from some Indian quarters its claimed President Trump doesn't see China as a threat and is aiming to "sell out" to the PRC.

Mr Trump's maneuvering room is constrained by US dependence on China for critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, and manufactured goods. But the President has no illusions about the People's Republic of China as a rival, if not an enemy, and Xi Jinping is clearly unhappy about US policies towards the PRC.

But isn't Trump "transactional"—as often said as an insult?

I should hope so. And Trump isn't unique in this regard.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump shake hands, at the White House in Washington, DC on 13 February 2025. ANI

Every President, and one might suggest every world leader, including Prime Minister Modi is "transactional". They all expect some benefit for whatever they do, and their citizens do as well.

WHAT ABOUT THE US AND PAKISTAN?

I understand why India is irked—though this issue has existed in the India-US relationship for many years, even while the India-US relationship improved over the last couple decades.

The Pakistanis played a double game against the United States from the beginning of our time in Afghanistan. And Pakistan is too close to China for comfort, and indeed is effectively a PRC proxy state. Even more, the evidence is conclusive that Pakistan has and does sponsor and direct terrorism against India.

Perhaps keep in mind that while it's not a perfect comparison, in some respects India's ties with Russia are similarly exasperating to the United States.

US CHALLENGE TO INDIA'S 'STRATEGIC AUTONOMY'?

This expression is used a lot, and all nations want to have "strategic autonomy", but sometimes it seems more an excuse for India to avoid doing anything it doesn't want to do—even if it should do it. The Japanese use "the Constitution" in a similar fashion to beg off complying with US requests when it suits themselves.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

Make yourself "useful"—and distinguish yourself from the crowd.

Do this no matter who is in the White House. President

Trump is just more likely than his predecessors to openly ask what a particular country has done for the US.

India already has one huge selling point for the Trump administration: it is serious about its defence and is willing to fight—indeed, it is fighting—to defend itself.

This is almost a litmus test with the Trump administration and India has passed it. Few other countries have. Remind the Americans of this—repeatedly.

India might also help out in the Indian Ocean. The US is finally paying closer attention to the region, having woken up in recent months when the British attempted to hand over Diego Garcia and its strategic military base (America's only one in the region) to Mauritius.

The US has few good options from a basing and access perspective in the re-

gion. Give it some.

India might even get the Americans to pay for it—including Indian port refurbishments.

And keep the Quad going. This writer doesn't believe that head-of-state "Quad" meetings are essential. Rather, solid continuous ties at lower and working levels and actually accomplishing things, matter more than get-togethers between the Quad's top dogs.

India's recent agreement with Australia on maritime security is a good one, as are deepening Indian defence ties with Japan. Not everything has to be a "four-way" effort.

Perhaps consider moving ahead with increased "Quad" use of the Andaman Islands for maritime patrol and security, and anti-submarine warfare operations.

The Americans would also appreciate India's help in the Pacific Islands that are currently facing sustained Chinese political warfare. India can make useful contributions in areas such as medical, tourism, education, scholarships, and investment.

And help the US break the Chinese stranglehold on rare earth minerals and pharmaceuticals—while diversifying energy sources. In other words, buy more US oil and gas—and less from Russia.

SELL INDIA

If you want to get noticed by the Trump administration, explain yourself—and not just to the DC think-tank crowd. Have the Ambassador and his staff regularly

head out to "flyover country" outside Washington and explain why India matters to Americans.

This advice applies just as much to more longstanding allies such as Japan, Great Britain, and Australia, though they seldom follow it.

A FEW FINAL NOTES

This piece is written as a US perspective of what India ought to do to improve the India-US relationship. This is of course a two-way street.

The writer believes most Indians in the commentariat and official class can rattle off a dozen things America must do to fix the relationship.

The American side's perspective may not get heard so often.

And some final advice to any foreigner (and even other Americans) when it comes to President Trump:

Always remember that Mr Trump is a New Yorker, on top of being a real estate man.

I am from Virginia. And even we have to brace ourselves when dealing with New Yorkers. And grow an extra layer of skin. It's nothing personal on their part.

Remember this and you can avoid getting wrapped up in resentments—even if not entirely avoiding them.

* Grant Newsham is a retired U.S. Marine officer and former U.S. diplomat. He was the first Marine liaison officer to the Japan Self Defense Force, and is a fellow at the Center for Security Policy and the Yorktown Institute. He is the author of the book, "When China Attacks: A Warning To America."

12 YEARS IN NUMBERS

STATISTICS

RESOLVE FOR A DEVELOPED INDIA

12 YEARS – 12 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1 **25+ CRORE** PEOPLE LIFTED OUT OF POVERTY
- 2 **4+ CRORE** PUCCA HOUSES BUILT
- 3 **60+ CRORE** COVERED UNDER AYUSHMAN BHARAT
- 4 **3+ CRORE** LAKHPATI DIDIS EMPOWERING WOMEN
- 5 **57+ CRORE** MUDRA LOANS DRIVING SELF-EMPLOYMENT
- 6 **12+ CRORE** TOILETS ENSURING DIGNITY & SANITATION
- 7 **₹79 LAKH CRORE** OF RECORD EXPORTS
- 8 **SOCIAL SECURITY** COVERAGE MORE THAN **TRIPLED**
- 9 **RECORD DEFENCE EXPORTS** OF **₹38,400 CRORE**
- 10 **WORLD-CLASS CONNECTIVITY** RRTS
- 11 **UPI TRANSACTIONS UP 12,000x** **₹314 LAKH CRORE** IN DIGITAL PAYMENTS
- 12 **RED CORRIDOR** NOW **GREEN GROWTH ZONE** TOWARDS A **NAXAL-FREE INDIA**

Eradication of Poverty

25+ crore People lifted out of poverty (after 2014)



81+ crore Free food grains under PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

4+ crore Pucca houses built – PM Awas Yojana

Women Empowerment — 12 years of transformation

Sex ratio at birth improved from **918** to **929** (per 1,000)

Institutional deliveries increased from **68%** to **98%** (per 1,000)

Women officers in security forces increased from **3000** to **11000+**

Paid maternity leave increased from **12** to **26 weeks**

• India has the world's largest youth population — New National Education Policy implemented

• Rs 33.5 lakh crore — total valuation of 120 major startups

• Rs 1.60 lakh crore — investment under the Semiconductor Mission

Middle Class — A New Ascent

Income tax exemption limit increased **Rs 12.75 Lakh** (6x from Rs 2 lakh) to

Rising from Rs 86,000 — Per capita annual income crossed **Rs 2+ Lakh**

PM Surya Ghar rooftop solar installations targeted for free electricity 1 crore+ **Rs 1 Crore+**

PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries — skill and loan support for traditional artisans **30 Lakh**

• Shri Anna (millets) gained global recognition — India among top 10 agricultural exporters

• e-NAM digital platform empowered farmers from seed to market

• Agriculture Infrastructure Fund strengthened modern farming infrastructure

Farmers' Welfare

Rs 4.3 Rs 4.3 lakh crore transferred directly to farmers' accounts under PM-KISAN

90% subsidy urea available at Rs 266 per bag

63% beneficiaries under PM Fasal Bima Yojana are SC/ST/OBC farmers

71% increase in Foodgrain production — record 12,000+ lakh metric tonnes



THE WORLD WISHES PM MODI

Parliamentarians from across the world congratulate PM Modi on becoming the longest serving elected Prime Minister of India. Here are edited excerpts from their congratulatory messages.

GREETINGS FROM SRI LANKA HARSHANA RAJAKARUNA

HARSHANA RAJAKARUNA



Greetings from Sri Lanka. As a close neighbour and a long-standing friend, Sri Lanka has watched India's progress with great interest and admiration. Our two countries have deep historical, cultural and people-to-people ties and we value the strong partnership that continues to grow between our two nations. Prime Minister Modi's journey to this historic milestone demonstrates the strength of democratic governance and the importance of public trust. Regardless of political views, achievements of this nature deserve recognition because they represent the voice and the mandate of millions of citizens. History remembers leaders not only for how long they serve, but for the impact they leave behind. Prime Minister Modi's contribution has already become an important chapter in India's modern history and his legacy will continue to be studied and discussed for many years to come.

**Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka*

HUMILITY, HUMANITY DEFINE PM MODI

ALAN BEESLEY



Alan Beesley
I'd like to congratulate Prime Minister Modi of India for being the longest serving Prime Minister in India's history. It is a remarkable achievement. I was fortunate enough to listen to Prime Minister Modi speak in India earlier this year when I attended the NXT 2026 conference, and there were two things that struck me about Prime Minister Modi—his humanity and his humility. These two attributes are so lacking in other leaders around the world. It's just been incredible to witness and see the transformation in India as a whole under Prime Minister Modi's leadership—there's been incredible economic growth. There's been massive social welfare programs and outreach. There's been massive, incredible infrastructure development. My fellow South African MPs and I look forward to learning more from Prime Minister Modi's leadership, and the way that India has been able to transform.

South African MP representing ActionSA in National Assembly

INDIA'S ERA OF TRANSFORMATION

DR AMORNSAK KITTHANANAN



India's democracy has reached a historic milestone. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the longest continuously serving democratically elected Prime Minister in the nation's history. This is not just a testament of longevity, it reflects the profound strength and maturity of India's democratic institutions driven by the enduring trust of its 1.4 billion citizens. Over the past 12 years, Prime Minister Modi's tenure has been defined by an ambitious blueprint for national transformation. Through the Digital India initiative, technology was democratized, closing the digital divide and connecting the remotest corners of the nation. The Make in India program reenergized the manufacturing sector, fostering unprecedented spirit of democratic entrepreneurship. The Jan Dhan Yojana brought formal financial inclusion to hundreds of millions of households, while the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan mobilized an entire nation around public health and sanitation under his leadership. The rapid expansion of critical infrastructure from clean water and electricity to housing and world-class transport networks has visibly uplifted daily life. Ultimately, this milestone represents more than continuity of governance or political stability. It mirrors the evolving confident aspirations of modern India. This chapter stands as a definitive maker of how vision execution and democratic method can shape the destination of a nation.

**Member of Senate of Thailand*

INDIA-EUROPE TIES STRENGTHENED

PIER FERDINANDO CASINI



Congratulations to Narendra Modi for his long service in favour of the people of India. India and Europe are implementing our respective relationship and in the past, the recent past has done one important agreement for the future. For us, the relationship with India is strategic because India has an important role in the world. The world now is very difficult to live in. The fights are a lot, too many, and we want to work to create a new balance between different states, between the East and the West, and we also want to strengthen our parliamentary relationship. We are working on this dimension. Narendra Modi has a fantastic relationship with our Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. We are happy to see that the chiefs of our country are working together. And I want to say to Mr Modi, good luck for his future and for the future of the great people of India.

**Member of the Senate of the Republic of Italy*

GLOBALLY, PERCEPTION OF INDIA HAS BECOME BETTER

HIMANSHU GULATI



Just a few weeks back Honourable Prime Minister Modi visited Norway, the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years, but when I had the pleasure of meeting him, I told him that it felt like the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister to the country ever, because the India of today is a very different India than even just 15 years back. It's India that is self-confident and visible on the global geopolitical stage, it is an economic superpower and it is a much more self-confident India than earlier. I think that this transformation, which is probably the biggest transformation in the country's history, is a lot due to the great leadership that Prime Minister Modi has shown, and that this decade of growth for India is a testament to his leadership. As someone of Indian origin, living abroad, I can really sense and feel how the perception of India and Indians has changed over the past few years. No matter what jobs people are in abroad, somebody of Indian origin, whether they're driving a taxi or they're leading a multinational company, I think we see a pride in the people, which was not there just a few years ago, and it's at large a result of the great leadership, the great economic transformation that has been created under the great leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

**Member of Norwegian Parliament*

INDIA HAS BECOME A GLOBAL SUPERPOWER

JEPPE SOE



Since 2014, Prime Minister Modi has changed how the world sees India. Under his leadership, India's foreign policy has become strong and clear, and he has built bridges to all parts of the world. Today, India is not just a big country. India is a global superpower and a necessary voice in the world's politics. This is because of his vision and his hard work over more than a decade. The relationship between India and Denmark has also grown very strong under Prime Minister Modi. We have a unique green strategic partnership. Together, our two countries work for a better and greener future. Recently, Prime Minister Modi met with Nordic leaders at the Indo-Nordic Summit. The bilateral meeting between our leaders showed great mutual respect. It proved that even though India is very big and Denmark so small that we could fit perfectly in a suburb of Delhi, we share the same important values about the future of our people. On a personal note, I had the honour of meeting Prime Minister Modi myself at the NXT conference in Delhi. Before you meet a leader of over 1 billion people, you expect someone distant. But Prime Minister Modi surprised me. He's a wonderful and very down-to-earth man. He's a leader who truly has his values in the right place.

**Former MP, Denmark*

GLOBAL TRADE HAS BEEN ADVANCED

MALCOLM BYRNE



Ireland and India share many connections—historical, educational, cultural and, of course, in the area of trade, and the recent signing of the trade deal between the European Union and India presents real opportunities for the world's largest country, India, and the world's largest economic trading bloc, the European Union. Prime Minister Modi has provided real leadership in this area, and it is important that the work to promote open and fair trade globally will continue, and I look forward as an Irish politician to continuing to work with my colleagues in India to follow in the leadership provided by Prime Minister Modi and to be able to ensure that all of our citizens can benefit from the opportunities that these new relationships present.

**Teachta Dála Of Ireland*

PM MODI'S WISDOM MATTERS

MIHAI RAZVAN UNGUREANU

When mentioning the India-EU FTA, Prime Minister Modi's involvement in reaching the end of the negotiations and signing the first draft of the agreement was extremely important. He is a personality that in the past couple of decades has contributed to shaping the general environment, may be economically, or geostrategic. And his wisdom—a wisdom that comes from his experience and his fantastic perception of a dynamic reality—contributes a lot to this. I look forward to seeing Prime Minister Modi paying a visit to Bucharest as well.

**Former Prime Minister of Romania*



INDIA-EU ECONOMIC TIES STRONGER

MARGARETA CEDERFELT



There has been a meeting in Sweden between India's Prime Minister Modi and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Ulf Kristersson, and the High Commissioner of European Union, Ursula Von Der Leyen related to the trade agreement between European Union and Sweden. I would like to congratulate India for this trade agreement. With this trade agreement, there will be a lot of opportunities for trade for new business to grow, both for India and for Sweden, and I would say that this is excellent. Prime Minister Modi has served as Prime Minister for a very long time in India, and I would like to thank him for this. He is very important for this trade agreement, and I look forward when it's fully in place because both India and Europe, including my country Sweden, will benefit from it.

**Member of Riksdag*

INDIA'S REMARKABLE PROGRESS

STUART SMITH



We've noticed how much India is advancing towards lifting its average standard of living up to a much higher level and we applaud that in New Zealand. And we very much celebrate a strong relationship we have with India and its people. I think our free trade agreement with India is testament to how much we value our relationship with India. Prime Minister Modi's relationship with our Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is really well valued by the whole population of New Zealand. And we look forward to a much warmer and more fruitful relationship for both countries. This free trade agreement actually bears fruit in the next few years. So, once again a big congratulations to Prime Minister Modi and a big thanks from New Zealand to the Indian people for building such a great relationship between our two nations.

**Member of New Zealand Parliament.*

CONGRATULATIONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

DARREN BERGMAN



Namaste, Prime Minister Modi. It is indeed an honour to be sending you a message from South Africa. My name is Darren Bergman, and I am a Member of Parliament, and it has actually been a few weeks since you and I have shared a platform at that exciting NXT conference, as well as being in close proximity in South Africa at the G20 conference, which you were attending. It has been very intriguing and interesting to watch the close relationship between South Africa and India getting closer as two emerging countries that have a lot of technology and a lot of products to share with each other—both emerging economies, the one bigger than the other. But both that can share a lot in terms of information in terms of industries that we need that you have and no doubt that we have and that you need, but on this momentous occasion I just want to congratulate you and wish you well, Sir.

**Member of National Assembly, South Africa*

BHUTAN FOR BHARAT; BHARAT FOR BHUTAN

SANGAY KHANDU

PM Modi's is a remarkable milestone that reflects the trust and confidence of the people of India in his leadership. Prime Minister Modi's tenure has been marked by transformative governance, economic ambition, and a strong vision for India's place in the world. Under his leadership, India has emerged as a major global voice on issues ranging from climate change and sustainable development to digital innovation, global health and geopolitical stability. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has strengthened its position as an influential global power. His active diplomacy and visionary leadership have enhanced India's role in international affairs, transforming India to a real "Naya Bharat", a new India, a Bharat that is an active player in the global stage today. For Bhutan, Prime Minister Modi has consistently demonstrated the importance India places on the close and historic friendship between our two countries. His first foreign visit to Bhutan in 2014 as a newly elected Prime Minister of India and his subsequent visits in 2024 and 2025 were a strong reflection of special ties between Bhutan and India. I would like to quote the Prime Minister's speech then, B for B—Bhutan for Bharat and Bharat for Bhutan—itself summarizes the unique and special friendship between the two countries.

**Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan*



INDIA-SWEDEN RELATIONSHIP SET TO PROSPER

CECILIA WIDEGREN



Let me extend my sincere congratulations to Prime Minister Modi on becoming the longest serving Prime Minister in India's history. Regardless of political perspective, this is a remarkable democratic achievement in a nation of more than 1.5 billion people, the world's largest populated country. Winning election is one thing, getting re-elected, you have to win the citizens' trust, and you need to do it long

term. I know because I talk with three decades of experience of winning the trust of the people in eight elections. During PM Modi's leadership, India has strengthened its position in one of the world's most influential nations. India has become one of the leading voices of the Global South, a major economic power, and a technology hub and an increasingly important actor in international diplomacy. Through initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, infrastructure development and strategic partnerships across the world, India has demonstrated a capacity for growth and transformation. PM Modi recently visited Gothenburg,

the largest port in the northern Europe, with export hub for businesses. It's in West Sweden, and it was therefore highly significant. It reflected not only on the strong relationship between India and Sweden, but also the growing importance of innovation, technology, sustainability, and industrial cooperation, shaping our common future. Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson from Sweden and PM Modi evaluated their relationship between our two countries and made sure that it's now a strategic partnership, creating an ambitious roadmap up until year 2030.

**Vice President of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*

PM MODI AN INSPIRATION FOR SRI LANKA

ARJUNA SUJEEWA SENASINGHE



We have to commend Prime Minister Modi for his style of administration, vision, leadership and what I most admire in Modi-ji is his perseverance and the fact that he is a finisher. Once he starts a job, he makes sure that he finishes that. So because of that, India has gone forward, developed tremendously, especially during Modi-ji's time. India has almost become the third largest economy in the world. It's getting there—it's getting there very fast. His simplicity and style of administration, it's commendable. Coming from a Sri Lankan, I am a bit envious seeing India having a great leader, a steady leader with a steady political background. We want to achieve what PM Modi has achieved in India and we want to emulate that in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is actually a great country where we can develop this country. It's a small country and it's of great pride for us that India is developing in this region and India has taken the Asian region to the rest of the world through their development. So it's going to be very beneficial for Sri Lanka also. A powerful, inspirational, great country, being guided by Modiji and hope he has a wonderful and a great career. Whatever he wishes would come true.

**Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka*