



Mayhem in Myanmar

India, China and countries in ASEAN should pressure the junta to restore democracy.

Highlights:

1. The violence and the prolonged crisis seem to have triggered a stronger response from several capitals, including New Delhi. There is a growing international appeal for ending the bloodshed, but the junta seems unperturbed.
2. When the regime resorted to violence, it may have calculated that swift repression would extinguish the fire for freedoms, like in 1988 and 2007. But there is a fundamental difference this time.
3. If in the past the protests erupted against the continuing military rule, in February, the military usurped power from an elected government after a decade of partial democracy.

Wider civil conflict than just street protest:

1. Those who enjoyed at least limited freedoms, first under the transition government and then under Aung San Suu Kyi, have built a stronger resistance to the junta this time. Street protests are not the only challenge the Generals are facing.
2. The banking system is on the brink of collapse with most staff on strike. Cash is scarce and prices of essential goods are rocketing. Industrial workers are also on strike, bringing the pandemic-battered economy to its knees. The Generals' efforts to bring bank and government employees and port and industrial workers back to work have been unsuccessful so far.
3. Worse still, armed insurgent groups have thrown their weight behind the protesters, triggering fears of a wider civil conflict.

Indian responsibility

The Generals are unlikely to give up power on their own. They should be nudged to end the violence and make concessions. Initially, India and China, both vying for influence in Myanmar, were ambivalent in condemning the junta's violence because they did not want to antagonise the Generals. But an unstable Myanmar is not in the interest of any country. India, China and other countries in ASEAN



should heap pressure on the junta and work towards restoring democracy in Myanmar, which is the only way forward.

Reworking net-zero for climate justice

Along with comparable levels of commitments there need to be equally comparable metrics for well-being.

Climate Justice and Development

Global transformation is affecting the planet. But there is no uniform transformation across the world. The global temperature increased sharply only after 1981 with little contribution from the developing countries as their industrialisation and urbanisation had yet to begin.

Climate change and Sustainable Development

1. In 2015, at the UN General Assembly when the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 was adopted and at the Paris Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed a reframing of climate change to climate justice, arguing that just when countries such as India were becoming major industrial and middle-class nations, they should not pay the price for the pollution caused by the West.
2. The Paris Agreement, explicitly recognises that peaking will take longer for such countries and is to be achieved in the context of “sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”.

Net-Zero emission target

1. This balance is now being upset for a common target and timetable, with non-governmental organisations (mostly foreign-funded) in support and negotiators (mostly public servants) opposing the pressure.
2. India will meet its Paris Agreement target for 2030, its per-capita emissions are a third of the global average, and it will in future remain within its share of ecological space. The pressure arises from the way the agenda has been set.



Treaty's inequity: Historical cumulative emission versus Current annual emission

1. First, inequity is built into the Climate Treaty. Annual emissions make India the fourth largest emitter, even though the climate is impacted by cumulative emissions, with India contributing a mere 3% compared with 26% for the United States and 13% for China.
2. According to the United Nations, while the richest 1% of the global population emits more than two times the emissions of the bottom 50%, India has just half its population in the middle class and per capita emissions are an eighth of those in the U.S. and less than a third of those of China.
3. Second, the diplomatic history of climate negotiations shows that long term goals without the strategy to achieve them, as in the case of finance and technology transfer, solve a political problem and not the problem itself.
4. The current framework considers symptoms, emissions of carbon dioxide, and was forced onto developing countries to keep the discussion away from the causes of the problem, the earlier excessive use of energy for high levels of well-being.
5. Third, models on which global policy recommendations for developing countries are based consider achieving 'reasonable', not 'comparable' levels of well-being to show that early capping of energy use will not affect their growth ignoring costs on the poor.
6. The different means to achieve the goals are not on the agenda because the rising prosperity of the world's poor does not endanger the planet and the challenge is to change wasteful behaviour in the West.

New framework

1. The vaguely worded 'net zero' emissions, balancing emissions and removals, could be disastrous for development latecomers like India because the current frame fails to recognise that more than half the global cumulative emissions arose from infrastructure, essential for urban well-being.
2. A global goal-shaping national strategy requires a new understanding. India must highlight unique national circumstances with respect to the food, energy and transportation systems that have to change. For example, consumption of

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meat contributes to a third of global emissions. Indians eat just 4 kg a year compared with around 68 kg per person for the European Union and twice that in the U.S. where a third of the food is wasted by households.

Ushering Climate Justice:

1. In the Paris Agreement, 'climate justice' was relegated to the preamble as a political, not policy, statement. It needs to be fleshed out with a set of 'big ideas'.
2. The first is a reframing of the global concern in terms of sustainable development for countries with per capita emissions below the global average, in line with the Paris Agreement.
3. Second, the verifiable measure should be well-being within ecological limits.
4. Third, international cooperation should centre on sharing technology of electric vehicles and hydrogen as a fuel, as they are the most effective response to climate change.