

PM MODI'S TRIP TO SLOVAKIA: EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

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Modi's landmark trip to Slovakia serves as a strategic indication that India's involvement with the global community is expanding, deepening, and significantly more intentional. When Prime Minister Modi disembarked in Bratislava, the event represented much more than

simply exchanging niceties at a negotiation table. It was about outlining a vision - of an India that is subtly yet deliberately integrating itself into the fabric of European geopolitics, not through attention-grabbing statements, but through the modest yet crucial efforts of constructing frameworks, forming alliances, and discovering shared interests. Elevating India-Slovakia relations to a "Comprehensive Partnership" may seem ordinary. It isn't. For thirty years, the two nations sustained a connection that was entirely agreeable and

largely inconspicuous. The Bratislava summit accomplished a significant change in that relationship, substituting courteous distance with intentional closeness. Defense collaboration, anti-terrorism, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, digital infrastructure, energy, and workforce migration - the range of agreements signed speaks volumes. The choice to create an ICCR Chair in Artificial Intelligence at the Technical University of Košice, the first initiative of its kind globally, likely represents the most explic-

it indication of all: this collaboration is focused squarely on the future. The timing is extremely important.

The visit followed the significant India-EU trade agreement, and both parties were open about their desire to take advantage of it. Modi's recognition that he would pursue the "earliest implementation" of the agreement indicates India's commitment to this partnership. The automotive, electronics, and advanced manufacturing industries have been recognized as fields ready for partnership.

Can we truly understand another generation?

BY SHARMILA VAIDYA

I often heard terms like Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, etc. used in everyday conversations, especially by younger people. To be honest, I did not know much about these terms or pay much attention to them. One day, out of curiosity, I decided to look into them.

I discovered that these labels refer to groups of people born within a span of roughly 15 to 18 years. Each of these periods, or generations, is associated with similar social trends, value systems, technology, culture and other characteristics unique to that period of time. Baby Boomers were people born between 1946 and 1964. They grew up in the post-World War II period and witnessed significant political unrest, as well as economic and social change.

Gen X, born between 1965 and 1980, served as a bridge between the traditional world of their parents and the digital world of their children. Similarly, all the other generations had their own unique trends and changes that defined them, whether Millennials, Gen Z or the latest one, Gen Alpha.

I also found that these categorisations originated in the United States and later spread throughout the world because of social media, technology and globalisation.

As I explored these generations, I began to wonder whether these labels were truly meaningful. To find out, I conducted an informal survey targeting both older and younger adults. It was interesting to note that most people over sixty saw these groups as stereotypes that failed to recognise individuality. Some felt it made more sense to divide time into broad periods such as the World War era, the age of computers, mobile phones and AI, or even into decades such as the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The younger generation, however, was more accepting of these labels. There was a general consensus that grouping

people into different generations was important. It helped explain how people from one generation differed from those of another with respect to education, technology, lifestyle and social values.

According to these labels, I would be classified as Gen X. Looking back, some of the major events that influenced my life were the war with Pakistan, the Emergency period and the assassination of our then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. I also witnessed the arrival of computers, cable television and later smartphones.

Life seemed simpler, yet it was also a period of rapid social and technological change. I remember the excitement of watching television and the thrill of flying for the first time. The impact of those experiences shaped my value system and influenced the person I am today.

However, the main question is whether these categorisations are meaningful and useful in helping us understand people better. Do the events and changes people experience during their formative years help shape their outlook on life? As parents, can we truly comprehend the experiences and struggles our children face today?

Can we appreciate the pressures of social media, the demands of a rapidly changing world and the emotional stresses they encounter daily? As we counsel and advise them based on our own experiences, are we helping them or unintentionally adding to their struggles? Can we truly stand in their shoes and see the world through their eyes?

Maybe these labels are worthwhile after all. They not only define generations but also offer a glimpse into the world that shaped them. If they help us better understand the experiences, pressures and struggles faced by our children, they may also encourage us to listen more and judge less quickly. Only then can we truly appreciate the challenges faced by each generation.

The Soldier Who Stopped Time: Remembering Brigadier Rajinder Singh, MVC

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Most Indians remain unfamiliar with the name Brigadier Rajinder Singh; nevertheless, few figures in contemporary history have exerted such a significant influence on a nation's territorial configuration. Born on June 14th, he served as Chief of Staff of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces. During the concluding days of October 1947, his decisions ultimately determined whether Kashmir would integrate into India or become permanently beyond its grasp.

A Strategy Older Than Partition

To comprehend the events in Kashmir in October 1947, it is essential to look beyond the immediate chaos of Partition and consider a much older pattern of British strategic planning known as the "Great Game," a prolonged contest for influence over the approaches to Central Asia. Kashmir's geographical position, bordering Afghanistan, the Soviet frontier, and western China, has rendered it a sought-after asset of lasting interest to imperial strategists for many generations.

When British rule ended, this geographic logic didn't just vanish. A Pakistan-aligned Kashmir would have kept this

sensitive frontier area within a sphere of influence shaped by departing British interests. While princely states were officially free to choose their own paths after the end of paramountcy, the invasion of Kashmir on October 22, 1947, seemed more like the result of careful planning rather than spontaneous tribal unrest. Organised columns, military-grade weapons, and involvement by current Pakistani army personnel all moved with a shared goal: to reach Srinagar and its airfield before India could respond.

Against this backdrop, the actions of Brigadier Rajinder Singh assume their full significance.

A Defence Measured in Days and Kilometres

The distance from Muzaffarabad to Srinagar is a mere 80 kilometres, a span that an advancing armed column could cover within a few hours. This represented the entire stretch separating the invading force from the Kashmir Valley and its strategic airstrip.

The route was obstructed by Brigadier Rajinder Singh, who commanded a force of approximately 100 personnel near Uri. The circumstances were markedly unfavourable: a modest State Forces unit confronting a substantial, momentum-driven invading force, with no reinforcements or air support evident.

Instead of giving up and letting the valley fall without a fight, Rajinder Singh decided to stand his ground and delay the enemy. His brave men blew up the bridge at Uri to halt the advance, then carefully with-



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drew, fighting every step of the way, pushing back against the invasion and slowing it at each point. Rajinder Singh was seriously wounded during this intense fight and sadly passed away from his injuries at 0200 hours on October 27, 1947. However, the delay caused by his small but determined force lasted for about five days, and those five days made a huge difference.

The Window That Saved the Valley

During the five days covered by Rajinder Singh's stand, two important events unfolded. On October 26, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, officially integrating Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union and granting New Delhi the legal authority to send in troops. Just a day later, on October 27, soldiers from the 1 Sikh Regiment were quickly flown into Srinagar, landing at an airfield that, quite remarkably, had not yet been overtaken by the advancing raiders.

Had the invading force arrived even a day or two earlier, the airfield would have been lost before the accession was

signed and before any Indian military response could have been mounted. There would have been no legal instrument to justify intervention, and no airstrip through which to deliver it. The century-old strategic objective behind the Great Game would have been achieved not through formal conquest, but through a rapid, irreversible fact on the ground.

A Recognition Long Overdue

Brigadier Rajinder Singh's stand has drawn comparisons to history's most famous last-ditch defences, in which small forces hold critical ground against impossible odds to alter the course of larger events. And yet, despite the scale of what was achieved, he has never received the Param Vir Chakra, and his name has never been formally proposed for the Bharat Ratna.

India often calls Kashmir its crown, its Mukut. If that is true, then it is worth asking who ensured that the crown remained on India's head in the autumn of 1947. The answer is Brigadier Rajinder Singh and the hundred men who stood beside him on the road from Uri.

His birthday on June 14th should not pass as a forgotten date on the calendar. It should be remembered as the birthday of the man whose five days of resistance stood between Srinagar and a future in which Kashmir was never India's to lose.

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BY CHAITANYA K PRASAD

Media and the future of geostrategic communication

As narratives increasingly shape international perceptions, the most powerful voices will not necessarily be the loudest. Rather, enduring influence will belong to those that are credible, consistent and anchored in public confidence.

Conversations as part of narrative-building exercises in the geostrategic space are influenced by complex factors, identities and tools. In this day and age of instant communication, where ideas and views are churned out on a 24x7 basis, narrative-building and perception management suffer within the

overall framework of consistency, authenticity and transparency. This is particularly relevant to the dissemination of information and messaging. Narrative-building today is viewed as a stepping stone for agenda management and power equations between nations, stakeholders and entities. The challenge before narrative-building in the geostrategic space is to wean itself off coercion disguised as influence through content, values, non-state stakeholders and compelling yet resonant tools and ideas.

A critical element in the ecosystem is the integration and interconnection between ideas, perception, storytelling, engagement and strategic messaging, and its relationship with the role of AI in driving the narrative ecosystem. In this algorithmic age, where

tools drive and assess sentiments, moods and perceptions, narrative discourse has become increasingly obsessed with technology-driven ideas, integrated with complex and diverse stakeholders and the intense push of data-driven communication. As a consequence, the geostrategic communication space today is witnessing narrative manipulation to suit particular nations, blocs, entities and national interests. The contours of the media space emerging from this narrative conflict reflect a tug of war between ideas, opinions, perspectives and algorithms, leading to a confusing media literacy environment within the communication space. As opinions change instantly, thanks to the information blitz, it is critical that the foundations of media liter-

acy remain sound, deep, robust and stable. The ability to evaluate content objectively and access information through the prism of accuracy, credibility and trust must become central to the communication ecosystem. The media literacy ecosystem should distinguish information through facts, credible sources, responsible tools and strong media support structures. The media literacy architecture is influenced by multiple narratives and instruments of information dissemination that shape the language and angles of public debate, views and perceptions. Today, media literacy is subject to multiple influences and perspectives. It must constantly contend with the power of ideas and concepts that continue to flow from stakeholders at all levels.

Today, in the geopolitical space, there is an urgent need to balance communication contests that are taking place at different levels and serving several purposes. The challenge within the media literacy framework is to create proactive "communication understanding" between stakeholders, communication instruments, national priorities, audience perceptions, national image and identity, and emerging communication interpretations. One needs to understand that the communication order operates in a borderless world, wherein narrative-building techniques are strategically positioned to influence viewpoints, communication outreach, resources, campaigns, and emerging collaborations and partnerships. Hence, in 2026, it is critical that media lit-

eracy frameworks reinforce the foundations of communication coherence, understanding and appeal. At the same time, the idea of national image has become far more layered than before.

It is no longer shaped only by official statements, diplomatic exchanges, press briefings or institutional communication. It is also shaped by clips, memes, influencers, explainers, podcasts, digital campaigns and citizen-led conversations. A single image, phrase, headline or edited video can travel faster than a formal clarification. This has made strategic communication more immediate, but also more vulnerable. In the geostrategic space, perception often moves ahead of policy explanations. Therefore, communication systems must not merely react to narratives after they have gained momentum.