

BENCHMARKS **LIVE****Sensex** 80,029.38 **816.85**

FEATURED FUNDS

★★★★★

5Y RETURN

Canara Robeco ELSS Ta...**22.73 %****INVEST NOW**

Search Stock Quotes, News, Mutual Funds and more

THE ECONOMIC TIMES | PoliticsEnglish Edition ▾ | **Today's ePaper**

My Watchlist

Subscribe

A ▾

BIG Price Drop Offer: 40% OFF!

Home ETPrime Markets Market Data

News Industry SME Politics Wealth MF Tech AI Careers Opinion NRI Panache ⋮India IPL 2025 ▾ Web Stories Economy ▾ **Politics** Newsblogs Elections ▾ Defence ▾ More ▾

Business News ▸ News ▸ Politics ▸ View: Will India ever learn to speak loudly? The signs, so far, are dismal

View: Will India ever learn to speak loudly? The signs, so far, are dismal

By Chaitanya Kalbag, ET CONTRIBUTORS Last Updated: Nov 15, 2018, 02:17:00 PM IST



40

FOLLOW US SHARE FONT SIZE SAVE PRINT COMMENT

Synopsis

The world is fast moving ahead, while India is trundling along with its own brand of intellectual jugaad.



PM Modi is a tireless traveller and de facto foreign minister, but has it changed anything for India's position in the global order?

Earlier this month the United Nations issued its first set of **'diya' postage stamps** to mark Diwali and the triumph of good over evil. It was a nice gesture (and I possess a sheet of the stamps) but a reminder of the continuing conundrum of why **India** punches far below its weight in the world's arena.

The **Narendra Modi** government has worked to keep India's flag flying on a number of issues: global terrorism, climate change, and renewable energy. The prime minister is a tireless traveler and the de facto foreign minister and never misses an opportunity to attend a major international conference.

Has the fastest growing economy and second most populous country become the indisputable world leader on anything beyond the International Yoga Day and the International Solar Alliance?

Videos

Trump confident of EU deal but in 'no rush'



ECB cuts interest rates again by 25bps



Despite talk about our commitment to a more equitable world order, we are content with cheerleading from the sidelines. Meanwhile, India's desire for a permanent seat on the Security Council is increasingly becoming irrelevant, alongside hackneyed definitions of multilateralism.

As an aside, we do poorly at winning more committed friends: India does not have diplomatic missions in 70 of its fellow 192 UN member countries. Three years after an impressive summit in New Delhi attended by all 54 African leaders, we have missions in only 29 of them (China has missions in 50 African countries).

Although migration is an international crisis, India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and so does not have a clearly defined asylum policy although it shelters migrants from some neighbours. It recently broke its good record of *non-refoulement* (the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers to return to a country in which they are liable to be subjected to persecution) by repatriating seven Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

Collaboration and cooperation are at their lowest ebb since the end of the Cold War. "The domains of maritime, outer space and cyberspace are the principal channels of flow of goods, capital, data, people and ideas – all of which are key factors in our interconnectedness," our Ambassador to the UN Syed Akbaruddin told the Security Council last week.

Glacial Pace in 2018

How prepared are we for the warp speed at which the world economy is changing? Are we able to anticipate the future of work, the blurring concept of mobility and the seamlessness of enterprise? Do we have eyes and ears around the world feeding a giant resolve to be the most fleet-footed and sharp-edged 'emerged' nation?

The answer is a dismal 'no'. We continue to trundle along with our own brand of intellectual *jugaad*. We have hoary but not hefty institutions. We will be

Latest from ET

1. Banks turn up heat on Rs 250 cr+ loans with stricter scrutiny
2. Skoda India halts plans to launch imported cars
3. Two more independent directors resign from Gensol

racing to adapt and adopt, and we will be hard put to innovate and be world leaders in areas like artificial intelligence and robotics if we remain insular and inward-looking. We cannot just conjure up a vast army of hungry raptors on the prowl.

Let's look at multilateralism, the bedrock on which post-World War Two political and economic stability was built. We started off brilliantly in the post-colonial world with initiatives like the Asian Relations Meeting in New Delhi in 1947 and the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955. But with the Non-Aligned Movement a Cold War relic, and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) a dysfunctional gaggle, we are consigned to lightweight presence at meetings of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation). China has outflanked us with its Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), although we are trying gamely to counter with the clunkily named BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

Could we at least try and reinvent diplomacy for our century? Perish the thought. The Indian Foreign Service (IFS) is miniscule for a nation our size. Japan's external publicity budget is larger than the entire budget of India's Ministry of External Affairs.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee [listed 19 recommendations](#) in August 2016 to expand our diplomatic corps through lateral entry from other government ministries, the recruitment of academic and domain experts on competitively-paid long-term contracts, and the expansion of training in skills and foreign languages. It noted with alarm that against a 'sanctioned strength' of 912 there were only 770 IFS officers, and rapped the government on its knuckles for not even undertaking a mandated two-yearly review of resources over the previous 12 years.

In January this year, the committee noted in an [Action Taken Report](#) that the government had accepted only eight of its 19 recommendations; it rejected the government's replies on seven points; and it was absent the ministry's replies on four.

Watching the World Go By

The world is not waiting for us. Denmark, for example, has set up an Innovation Centre in Silicon Valley to "build bridges between companies, research institutions and capital" in the two countries. Switzerland's swissnex, with offices in the technology and innovation hubs of Boston, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai and Bangalore, is managed by the country's foreign ministry. It runs on a public-private collaboration and funding model that

POLITICS TRENDING TERMS

Oscars 2025 Live News Update

Maharashtra Election Result 2024 Live Updates

Donald Trump U.S Election

Election Results Haryana Live

» **Wealth Edition:** Latest Edition of weekly money management guide is out now.

Popular in Politics

1. Karnataka: Governor sends Muslim quota bill to President days after PM's comments
2. BJP holds meet to discuss organisational reshuffle; Presidential polls after April 20
3. National Herald: What exactly is the ED case against the Gandhis?
4. 'Judiciary cannot direct President of India, act as 'super Parliament': Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar
5. "I have been misquoted, my book is full of praise for Farooq Abdullah, there is nothing against him": Former RAW chief AS Dulat



links research and science and technology education to 20 S&T offices and counselors in its embassies.

When are we going to get up off our hands?

(You can now subscribe to our [Economic Times WhatsApp channel](#))

(Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this column are that of the writer. The facts and opinions expressed here do not reflect the views of [www.economictimes.com](#).)

READ MORE NEWS ON

- Modi
- India China
- Narendra Modi
- Silk Road
- Indian Diplomacy
- Belt & Road
- Xi Jinping
- India

(Catch all the [Business News](#), [Breaking News](#), [Budget 2025](#) Events and [La ...more](#)

[VIEW 40 COMMENTS](#) ON THIS STORY


Prime Exclusives

Investment Ideas


Stock Report Plus

ePaper


Wealth Edition




Market share at 0.1%, Trump wants to make US...



10 wilful defaults of INR10,000 crore that broke the bac...



Trade gap: Can India do a Trump to China?



Do Gen IndusI corpora?

[View all Stories»](#)

ET

Search News, Stock Quotes & NAV

Hot On Web

Jio Financial Q4 Results | HDFC Life Q4 Results FY25 | Infosys Q4 Results FY25 Live Updates | [MORE](#)

In Case You Missed It

Oscars 2025 Live News Update | Maharashtra Election Result Live Updates | Haryana Election Results 2024 Live | [MORE](#)

Top Searched Companies

IRFC share price | Suzlon share price | IREDA share price | TATA Motors share price | Yes bank share price | [MORE](#)

Top Calculators

Standard Deviation Calculator | Income Tax Calculator | Age Calculator | SIP Calculator | Time Calculator | [MORE](#)