

Editorial of the Day – 13.02.2026

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1. Why has J&K shelved the Dal Lake restoration plan? (TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Sub Topic- Sustainable Development and Community-based Conservation Models.

Introduction

The Jammu and Kashmir government recently announced the shelving of the 2009 relocation-based Dal Lake restoration plan (initially valued at ₹416.72 crore). In its place, the administration has adopted an in-situ conservation approach. This pivot recognizes the lake dwellers not as encroachers, but as an integral part of the lake's socio-ecological fabric, marking a departure from nearly two decades of failed relocation attempts.

The Failure of the 2009 Relocation Plan

The original plan, approved under the Manmohan Singh government, focused heavily on "clearing" the lake to save it.

Targets vs. Achievement- Aimed to relocate 9,000 families; however, 17 years later, only 1,808 families (roughly 20%) were rehabilitated.

The "Rakh-e-Arth" Issue- Dwellers were moved to a colony in Bemina which was low-lying and flood-prone.

Financial Drain- Huge portions of the budget were consumed by land filling at the relocation site rather than actual lake conservation.

Outcome- The government admitted the plan failed to produce "tangible outcomes," achieving only 27% of its conservation goals.

Ecological Threats to Dal Lake

As per a 2022 SKUAST survey, the "Jewel in the Crown" of Kashmir faces a multi-pronged ecological crisis-

Anthropogenic Pressure- Uncontrolled effluent discharge and population density.

Water Quality- Sharp decline due to untreated sewage from point (pipes) and non-point (runoff) sources.

Physical Changes- Shrinking Lake area, encroachment, and land-use changes in the catchment.

Biological Stress- Nutrient enrichment (Eutrophication) leading to excessive weed growth and altered biodiversity.

Hydrological Blockage- Blocked internal channels and reduced inflows have stagnated water circulation.

The New Paradigm- In-Situ Conservation

The High-Level Committee (2022) proposed a "stay-and-protect" model. The J&K Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) is now drafting a policy based on these pillars-

Human-Centric Ecology

Recognizes residents as stakeholders and a permanent part of the ecosystem. Focuses on upgrading the living conditions of 58 identified hamlets within the lake rather than uprooting them.

Technical Interventions (IIT Roorkee DPR)

A new Detailed Project Report (DPR) costing ₹212.38 crore over five years focuses on-

Sewerage Management- Installing modular Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in internal hamlets.

Hydrological Revival- Dredging interior channels and reviving water circulation to prevent stagnation.

Catchment Treatment- Addressing the root cause by treating inflows before they reach the lake.

Comparison of Approaches

Feature	2009 Plan (Old)	2026 Plan (New)
Philosophy	Relocation-based (Exclusionary)	In-situ (Inclusionary)
Primary Goal	Shifting 9,000 families	Treating sewage & water circulation
Resident Status	Encroachers to be moved	Integral part of the ecosystem
Key Agency	Central/State Govt (2009)	LCMA & IIT Roorkee (Technical Lead)
Financial Focus	Land filling & Compensation	STPs, Dredging & Integrated Management

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jammu-and-kashmir/why-has-jk-shelved-the-dal-lake-restoration-plan-explained/article70623948.ece>

2. The empty chair crisis- Why no-confidence motion against Om Birla exposes deeper constitutional and political issues (IE)

General Studies 2- Governance & Constitution

Topics- Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Sub Topic- Role of the Speaker, Constitutional Accountability, and the Decline of Parliamentary Productivity.

Introduction

The Indian Parliament is currently witnessing a "Crisis of Trust," highlighted by a notice of no-confidence against the Speaker signed by 118 Opposition MPs. This breakdown of consensus over the Motion of Thanks and the use of unpublished materials indicates a departure from the "deliberative democracy" envisioned by the Constituent Assembly, moving toward a state of chronic institutional paralysis.

Constitutional Foundations of Parliamentary Democracy

The legitimacy of the Indian State rests on the functional health of its legislature-

Legislative Supremacy (Articles 79-122)- Parliament is the ultimate representative body for law-making and public will.

Executive Accountability (Article 75)- The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. This accountability is hollow without robust debate and questioning.

Institutional Opposition- While the Constitution doesn't explicitly name "The Opposition," the Leader of Opposition Act (1977) recognizes it as a vital check on executive overreach.

Deliberation vs. Majoritarianism- The founders intended Parliament to be a forum for reasoned discussion, where dissent is not just tolerated but seen as essential for policy refinement.

Manifestations of the Modern Trust Breakdown

The crisis is visible through several unprecedented developments

Targeting the Chair- A no-confidence motion against the Speaker is a rare and serious move, as the Speaker is the "linchpin" of the House's neutrality.

Tactical Disruptions– Frequent adjournments and protests in the "Well of the House" have replaced substantive debate, drastically reducing legislative productivity.

Politicization of Proceedings– Contentious debates on security concerns and conduct within the House have turned into personal allegations rather than policy critiques.

Rhetorical Escalation– Shifting from "Opponents" to "Enemies," where the political other is viewed as an existential threat to the nation or the Constitution.

The Office of the Speaker– Neutrality vs. Perception

Under Article 93, the Speaker must embody impartial authority–

Dual Role– The Speaker is a party member but must act as the Guardian of Privileges and an unbiased adjudicator of the Tenth Schedule (Anti-defection).

The "Moral Authority" Gap– Historically, Speakers used informal "behind-the-scenes" consultations to break deadlocks. A perceived bias erodes this moral capital, making house management impossible.

Transparency– The legitimacy of the House depends on the Speaker being *seen* to be fair to both the Treasury and Opposition benches.

Historical Context– Disruptions Then and Now

Disruptions are not a 21st-century invention, but their nature has changed

Coalition Era (1989–2014)– Disruptions were common due to thin majorities and regional pressures.

The 2011 Lokpal Episode– A low point where a Bill was torn in the Rajya Sabha, yet dialogue eventually resumed.

Presidential Warnings– In 2016, President Pranab Mukherjee famously urged MPs– "*For God's sake, do your job,*" highlighting a long-standing decline in standards.

The Difference– Current disruptions are characterized by a total collapse of communication channels between the government and the opposition.

The "Opponent, Not Enemy" Philosophy

The essence of the Westminster system is an "Adversarial but Cooperative" model

Sushma Swaraj's Legacy– Her 2014 farewell speech serves as a reminder that political actors are rivals in ideas, not enemies in a war.

Constructive Dissent– The Opposition's role is to critique to improve, not to obstruct to destroy.

Civility– The personalization of politics risks turning the temple of democracy into a theatre of antagonism.

Consequences of Parliamentary Dysfunction

A "silent" or "shouting" Parliament has real-world costs–

Reduced Scrutiny– Laws passed in haste lack the "filter" of debate, leading to legal flaws and public protests.

Bypassing Committees– Parliamentary Committees—once "mini-parliaments" for bipartisan consensus—are increasingly sidelined by polarization.

Institutional Erosion– Normalizing disruption as a political tool sets a dangerous precedent for future generations.

Public Disillusionment– If Parliament ceases to solve problems, citizens lose faith in representative democracy itself.

Conclusion

Restoring trust requires a multi-pronged approach– reviving informal dialogue, ensuring the Speaker's visible neutrality, and strengthening the Committee system. As articulated by leaders like Sushma Swaraj, the dignity of the House can only be preserved if both sides agree that while their paths differ, their destination—the national interest—is the same.

Source– <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-empty-chair-crisis-why-no-confidence-motion-against-om-birla-exposes-deeper-constitutional-and-political-issues-10527202/>