

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **bane** (noun) – scourge, torment, distress/hardship; death, plague.
2. **menace** (noun) – threat/danger, risk/peril, intimidation.
3. **pervasive** (adjective) – prevalent, extensive, ubiquitous, omnipresent.
4. **functionary** (noun) – official, administrator, bureaucrat.
5. **off-balance** (adjective) – uneven, unevenly balanced, out of line.
6. **exaggerated** (adjective) – enlarged, overblown, magnified/overstated/inflated.
7. **hapless** (adjective) – unfortunate, unlucky, ill-fated.
8. **civic** (adjective) – municipal.
9. **neglect** (noun) – negligence, dereliction of duty, carelessness/unconcern.
10. **indifference** (noun) – unconcern about, apathy about, disregard.
11. **exaggerated** (adjective) – excessive, overemphasized, amplified/overdone.
12. **at the cost of** (phrase) – at the expense of, sacrifice, at the loss of.
13. **electrocute** (verb) – kill (someone) by electric shock.
14. **ramshackle** (adjective) – in bad condition; (of a house) badly & poorly made and certain to fall to pieces.
15. **hue** (noun) – character, aspect, appearance.
16. **motley** (adjective) – diverse, sundry, disparate.
17. **restraint** (noun) – constraint, check/control, restriction.
18. **endanger** (verb) – imperil, jeopardize, risk.
19. **evidently** (adverb) – seemingly, apparently, on the face of it.
20. **persuade** (verb) – convince, influence, make certain.
21. **implead** (verb) – take to court, charge, indict, bring legal proceedings against.
22. **accountability** (noun) – responsibility, liability, answerability.
23. **the executive** (noun) – the executive is a branch of government which enforces the law as written by the legislature and interpreted by the judiciary.
24. **reluctance** (noun) – unwillingness, disinclination, hesitation.
25. **abut** (verb) – neighbouring, adjacent, adjoining.
26. **pedestrian** (noun) – walker, person on foot, wayfarer.
27. **compliance** with (noun) – adherence to, conformity to, accordance with.
28. **recalcitrant** (adjective) – wilful, uncooperative, obstinately disobedient.
29. **lumpen** (adjective) – the unthinking, stupid, foolish/idiotic lower orders of society who are unorganized & unpolitical.
30. **fealty** (noun) – allegiance/adherence, faithfulness, obedience/loyalty.

Bane of banners: On the menace of illegal hoardings

Illegal hoardings put up by politicians have become a threat to road users

The pervasive lack of governance in India's cities has claimed the life of another citizen, this time in **Chennai**. A banner put up on a road divider by a functionary of the AIADMK to celebrate a wedding fell on a young woman riding a two-wheeler, sending her off-balance and under a tanker

lorry. Subasri, 22, joins the list of hapless citizens whose lives were ended by civic neglect, police indifference, and, in Tamil Nadu especially, a political culture that dominates public spaces through exaggerated displays of cutouts, crude arches and flags at the cost of safety. Only two years ago, Raghu, a young engineer, died under similar circumstances in Coimbatore and another youth, Babu, was electrocuted in Udthagamandalam when he touched a party flag that was in contact with a wire; both instances involved ramshackle structures placed along roads. That political parties of all hues and motley groups see no need for restraint, even after many directions from the Madras High Court to stop endangering public safety goes to show that there are no serious consequences. Evidently, they are not persuaded by the orders issued in February this year by a division bench, impleading 11 political parties and reminding them of its many earlier orders that prohibit threats to public safety through banners and boards. The government must fix accountability and make individual members of the executive liable for lack of public safety.

There are disturbing aspects to the official response to the incident in Chennai, and the inquiry must go into the reported reluctance of the police to proceed against the AIADMK member who was responsible for the banners being put up. The Revenue Department and the local body must explain their failure to prohibit the dangerous structures, when there are clear orders in force, and acts of omission and commission should attract strong action. Even two years ago, the Madras High Court had ruled in a case that “the erection of arches, placards and display boards, banners with poles, etc., abutting into public streets and pavements, which obstruct free and safe movement of traffic or free and safe movement of pedestrians or obstructs visibility of drivers is patently illegal.” It is clear, therefore, that even where limited permissions could be given, the structures cannot affect public safety. Considering the long history of illegal political banners and religious displays, often involving theft of electricity, the court can bring about compliance with the law through a special panel, similar to the Supreme Court’s committee on **road safety** headed by a retired judge. Strong action is needed against recalcitrant politicians and lumpen groups who use banners as displays of power or fealty.