

Common wealth? on Commonwealth leaders' summit

The [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting](#) (CHOGM) held in London came with hopes of a “re-energised Commonwealth”. To begin with, the summit was being held in the U.K., the founder of the grouping of mostly former British colonies, after 32 years. Besides, Queen Elizabeth II, the head of CHOGM, attended the summit, which she has done infrequently in the last few years owing to her health. She opened her homes in Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle for the event, in what was called a “charm offensive” by the hosts, who were looking to revive the 53-nation grouping as Commonwealth 2.0, amidst Britain’s rocky exit from the EU. In India too, the summit was seen to be a promising place to play a leadership role, and Prince Charles’s visit to Delhi to invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi bolstered that belief. Mr. Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to attend CHOGM in a decade, after Manmohan Singh skipped the summits in Australia (2011) and Sri Lanka (2013) over bilateral differences, and Mr. Modi skipped the summit in Malta (2015) out of indifference. So it was widely expected that India would step up to a bigger role, and help chart a future course for the Commonwealth.

Lost opportunities in London

Given the expectations, the outcome of the meet was underwhelming. It was announced Prince Charles would ‘succeed’ his mother as the head of the Commonwealth, ignoring calls for the position to be more democratically shared or rotated. There were substantive statements on the Blue Charter on Ocean Governance and on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment, which could together counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative. But there was little by way of a road map to achieve the goals. Prime Minister Theresa May apologised for her Home Office’s threat to deport thousands of immigrants brought as manual labour in the 1940s on the ship *Empire Windrush* from the Caribbean, but failed to convince most members of the Commonwealth that Britain would reverse its policies on immigration. The U.K.’s hard line on Indian “illegals”, which prevented the signing of a bilateral agreement on immigrant “returns” between Mr. Modi and Ms. May, too indicates that post-Brexit London is likely to welcome trade in goods from the Commonwealth, not services. The Commonwealth remains a great platform for development aid, democratic values and educational opportunities, but its relevance is unlikely to increase unless it adopts a more egalitarian and inclusive attitude to its next generation of Commonwealth citizens, to partake in a prosperity their forefathers built.

Receive the best of The Hindu delivered to your inbox everyday!

Please enter a valid email address.

Attempts to undermine the investigation into a little girl’s rape and murder must be resisted

The revival of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, sans U.S., must buttress the free trade debate

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)