



Chaos has reigned over massive swathes of India during the last few days, as much of the northern part of the country outside of major urban centers has been without power. [The New York Times has excellent spot coverage](#), but a deeper analysis comes from John Elliott's invaluable blog, [Riding the Elephant](#).

The government has blamed individual states' demand for power, which (it claims) has led to an overload of the entire national grid. [Nonsense, says Elliott:](#)

These shutdowns and disasters are the result of chronic failure of India's government, which has been in power since 2004, to tackle infrastructure problems that have been building for many years. The failure stems from Manmohan Singh, the prime minister, who has been restricted in what he can do on economic reforms both by Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party .and the governing coalition, and by coalition partners.

And this problem pales in comparison to incompetent ministers, most prominently Minister of Power Sushilkumar Shinde, who has just been *promoted* to the Home Affairs Ministry despite the debacle. In fairness, Elliott notes, the whole thing isn't Shinde's fault "because power supplies are managed by individual states and form part of an [overall energy crisis](#). Power generation has been seriously hit by coal shortages from badly-run government-owned Coal India that have led to some power stations cutting output and shutting down. Management of coal production has also been disrupted by corrupt mining licences." Elliott also notes that Railway Minister Mukul Roy, who doesn't even care about his portfolio and spends most of his time politicking in his home state of West Bengal.

That's life in a coalition government: the Prime Minister can't sack bad ministers if their political support is necessary for the government's survival. And that does provide a data in favor of an American-style Presidential system: if a Cabinet Secretary botches something, the President can fire her.

Incompetence on this scale is one more indication that the current Congress-led government is not long for this world: even if it lasts out the current parliament, voters are unlikely to return it to power. (Score one for parliamentarism: in a parliamentary system, when something gets screwed up, people know whom to blame. No pointing fingers between the President and Congress).

It also strongly [boosts the political prospects](#) of the current Chief Minister of Gujarat state, [Narendra Modi](#), who has well-deserved reputation for attacking corruption and conducting an efficient government. He also has a well-deserved reputation for being a religious bigot who played a role in the brutal anti-Muslim pogroms that occurred in Gujarat several years ago. In 2005, he couldn't get a visa to enter the United States because the Immigration and Nationality Act bars granting one to foreign officials who are responsible for, or "directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom".

What would happen if the Prime Minister of India could not get a visa to visit the United States? We may soon find out.

Another good report can be found from the India Business Insider [here](#) (h/t Sullivan).