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12 SPORT

India committed to free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific: Modi

At Quad, PM calls for robust ties for eco prosperity, peace in region

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/TOKYO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India is committed to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and called for robust economic ties between the countries to ensure continued growth, peace and prosperity. Giving this assurance at the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in Tokyo, he also said this mechanism is a declaration of a collective desire to make the Indo-Pacific region an engine of global economic growth. He said the foundation of resilient supply chains must be 3Ts — Trust, Transparency and Timeliness.

These observations came against the backdrop of China adopting an aggressive stance in the region and repeatedly criticising the Quad combine. India, the US, Japan and Australia are part of the Quad.

Ahead of the Quad Summit, Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi on Sunday said the Indo-Pacific strategy of the

US is "bound to fail" as it is vigorously promoted by the US to "contain" Beijing.

The "Indo-Pacific strategy" is causing more and more concern in the international community, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, Wang Yi said at his joint press conference with Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou.

Meanwhile, speaking at the IPEF launch ceremony in the presence of US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida besides leaders of several other countries who virtually took part in the event, Modi said India has historically been at the centre of trade flows in the Indo-Pacific region, having the world's oldest commercial port in Lothal, Gujarat.

He stressed the need for finding common and creative solutions to tackle economic challenges of the Indo-Pacific region. He expressed India's commitment towards working with all countries of the region for an IPEF.

"India is committed to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and believes that deepening economic engagement among partners is crucial for continued growth, peace and prosperity," said Modi.

PM woos Japanese inc, lists ease of doing biz

Modi proposes 'Japan Week' to celebrate business ties

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/TOKYO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday underlined several steps taken for ease of doing business in India and invited Japanese industry to explore more investment opportunities here.

Underlining India's robust economy, he said despite the slowdown in global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), India attracted record FDI of USD 84 billion in the previous financial year.

Terming this a vote of confidence in India's economic potential, Modi invited greater participation by Japanese companies in India and proposed celebrating Japan's contribution to India's



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday fondly interacted with a boy who was waiting outside his hotel here and praised him for his fluency in Hindi and signed him an autograph in his tricolour drawing, in Tokyo on Monday

Mujhe makhani par laakeer karne mein maza nahi aata hai, main pathar par laakeer karta hoon
— PM NARENDRA MODI

development journey in the form of a 'Japan Week'.

He made this strong pitch while chairing a round-table with Japanese business leaders in Tokyo.

Nitish bowls another googly on caste census

Convenes all-party meet; move seen as his increasing proximity to RJD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another sign of growing proximity between the Janata Dal(U) and the RJD in Bihar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has convened an all-party to develop consensus on holding a caste census in Bihar. Leader of Opposition and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav recently met Nitish Kumar to press for holding the caste census.

The BJP has been all along opposed to such an exercise apprehending that could revive the Mandal politics all over again, but the party is expected to attend the meeting. The BJP leadership does not want the caste census to become a trigger for political instability in Bihar at a time when the relationship between the JD(U) and the saffron party is at an all-time low.

Incidentally, the Union Government had gone on record in Parliament saying there was no move to hold a nationwide caste census.

The move has come amid speculation that Nitish was moving away from the BJP and has finalised some secret "deal" with the RJD. The crisis in Bihar NDA has yet another dimension. There is a strong



buzz that the JD(U) may deny Rajya Sabha nomination to Union Steel Minister RCP Singh, who is seen as close to the BJP leadership. The denial of ticket to RCP could be seen as yet another rebuff to the BJP by Nitish, who has already opposed the BJP on demand for a Uniform Civil Code and removal of a loudspeaker from masjids.

Nitish has also reservations about bringing back the CAA and the NRC and said that he would want that a suggestion made by his party in 2010 should be the criteria for the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

The political temperature in Bihar has also risen amid reports that Nitish has asked his party MLAs to stay put in Patna for the next 72 hours, while he himself is going to Raigir on Tuesday.

While JD(U) leader Shrawan Kumar denied that any such directive has been issued to the MLAs, reports said majority of the MLAs and senior JD(U) lead-

ers are camping in Patna. Incidentally, last time in 2018 when Nitish dumped the RJD to join hands with the BJP, he had gone to Raigir, obviously to consider his political step away from the hustle and bustle of politics.

The way Nitish Kumar and his party have refused to comment on corruption cases and CBI raids against Lalu Prasad and his family members has become another talking point in Bihar politics. It was the same Nitish Kumar who dumped the RJD in 2018 on the issue of corruption.

Asked to comment on the date of the all-party meeting, Nitish said, "Many parties have agreed to the date. But we must have the consent of all parties for holding the meeting on any particular date."

The JD(U) leader, whose ally BJP has of late grown aggressive over the issue, expressed confidence that all parties in the state will back the proposed move before clearance is given by the cabinet.

CAPSULE

YOGA DAY IN PHYSICAL MODE AFTER 2 YEARS

New Delhi: After a two-year gap due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the main event of the eighth International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebrations on June 21 will be held in the physical mode at Mysuru in Karnataka.

SCIENTIST WITH IT MIN JUMPS TO DEATH

New Delhi: A 55-year-old scientist working with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology died after allegedly jumping-off from the seventh floor of the Shastri Bhawan in central Delhi on Monday, police said.

BIDEN BACKS JAPAN BID TO JOIN UNSC: KISHIDA

Tokyo: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said that US President Joe Biden supports Japan's bid to join a "reformed" UN Security Council. If approved, Japan would join Britain, China, France, Russia, and the US as permanent members of the international body's security council.

Varanasi court order on maintainability of Gyanvapi suit today

PNS ■ VARANASI

Varanasi District Judge Ajay Kumar Vishvesha on Monday reserved his judgment on maintainability of the Shringar Gauri-Gyanvapi Mosque lawsuit. He will deliver the order on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a former seer of Kashi Vishwanath Temple filed a petition seeking permission to perform puja of the "Shivling" claimed by the Hindu side to have been found in the wuzu khana of the Gyanvapi mosque.

A city lawyer also submitted an application in the court demanding action against the Samajwadi Party national president, the AIMIM chief and six others.

District Judge Vishvesha started hearing the Shringar Gauri-Gyanvapi lawsuit on Monday afternoon.

Man who turned Khadi around is now Delhi LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission, was on Monday appointed the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi replacing Anil Baijal. He is the first man from the corporate and social sector to be selected for such a gubernatorial post. He is the person who made Khadi a global brand. President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday issued a notification to this effect.

"The President of India has accepted the resignation of Shri Anil Baijal as Lt Governor of National Capital Territory of Delhi. "The President of India has been pleased to appoint Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena to be the Lt Governor of National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office," read a communiqué issued by



Vinai Kumar Saxena

Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Baijal, who was appointed as the Delhi Lieutenant Governor in 2016, resigned last week citing personal reasons. Baijal's resignation has led to speculation about who will replace him. Praful Patel, the administrator of Lakshwadeep and Daman & Diu, was the top choice for the post but the appointment of Saxena surprised everyone in the political circle.

Make harmonious panchayats and wards, work unitedly: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that harmonious Panchayats and wards should be made in the upcoming Panchayat and urban body elections. Efforts should be made to ensure unopposed elections in an atmosphere of harmony and equanimity forgetting all mutual quarrels and enmity.

Panchayats and wards where elections are held unopposed, will be termed 'ideal' and all the schemes of the government will be implemented in an ideal manner. I myself will go to such panchayats. Together we should develop state in such a way that we become exemplary. Chouhan said that efforts should also be made to ensure that there should be Panchayats and urban bodies where all representatives are women.

Chouhan said that the development of Salkanpur temple will be done in a big way. The development of the state is being made by Salkanpur Devi,

we are all instruments in her hands. He prayed to Maa Vijayasan Devi to keep everyone healthy and happy and to have good luck and prosperity for all.

The Chief Minister performed bhoomi-pujan of development works worth Rs 43.69 crore in Salkanpur today. Along with this, letters of approval were distributed to 3852 new beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Awas Plus.

Chouhan said that no poor in the state will remain without a pucca house. Houses will be sanctioned to about 12 thousand more beneficiaries of this area. Beneficiaries should not fall in any trap. He instructed the collector to ensure better and good quality housing. Building materials should be procured from one place to reduce the cost.

Chouhan said that children should be well nourished, educated and cultured and for which better operation of Anganwadis is must. The government will leave no stone unturned in this work, but the society should also take up the

responsibility. Tomorrow, I myself will go out on the streets of Bhopal with a handcart and collect toys, clothes, TV and other material for anganwadi children from people.

The Chief Minister said that new power is emerging in the state in the form of women self-help groups. It is our endeavour that women should be able to carry out various economic activities successfully and they should have a monthly income of at least 10 thousand rupees each. The government is also marketing and branding their products. Chouhan said that the best education should be given to the children. The government will make complete arrangements for the education of the son and daughter.

Chouhan said that farmers should do natural farming on some part of their land. It is like nectar. They should keep a cow on their farm for this and use Jeevamrut in farming. The government will give Rs 900 per month to the farmer for keeping a cow for this purpose.

US will defend militarily if China invades Taiwan: Biden

AP ■ TOKYO

US President Joe Biden said on Monday that the United States would intervene militarily if China were to invade Taiwan, saying the burden to protect Taiwan is "even stronger" after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It was one of the most forceful presidential statements in support of self-governing in decades.

Biden, at a news conference in Tokyo, said "yes" when asked if he was willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if China invaded. "That's the commitment we made," he added.

The US traditionally has avoided making such an explicit security guarantee to Taiwan, with which it no longer has a mutual defence treaty, instead maintaining a policy of "strategic ambiguity" about how far it would be willing to go if China invaded.

Detailed report on P8

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CM reviews preparations for the programmes on President Kovind's visit to Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that all the preparations related to the President's visit should be completed next week.

President Kovind will travel from Bhopal to Ujjain on the morning of May 29, where he will address the participants of All India Ayurveda Conference at Kalidas Academy.

Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajoura, Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman, Director General of Police Sudhir Kumar Saxena and senior officers were present.

in the programme being held in Shimla on May 31 at 11 am. The amount of Kisan Samman Nidhi will be distributed by the Prime Minister to the beneficiaries.

Chouhan expresses grief over fire in Chemical Factory

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed grief over the untimely demise of two persons in a fire accident in a chemical factory in Pachama Industrial Area of Sehore.



Visitors stand outside the Boat Club closed due to inclement weather following a heavy dust storm, at the Upper Lake in Bhopal on Monday.



Children during Animal Clay Model Making Workshop at Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH) in Bhopal on Monday.

Neva application presented before MP Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Presentation of Neva - National eVidhan Application was made in presence of Girish Gautam, Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha on Monday.

is a Software solution to automate the end-to-end process of State Assemblies in multi-tenancy mode. In this area, work has been started in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala Pradesh, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh under e-Vidhan.

Ensure daily supply of drinking water, directs Chief Minister to officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it is necessary to ensure that people get drinking water every day. Whether water is supplied by tap, tanker, tube well or has to be transported, make whatever arrangements are necessary and ensure daily drinking water supply.

pregnant women to the health centres for institutional delivery in Barwani, "Pahunch Abhiyan" (Outreach Campaign) to complete all the necessary documents of villagers and Ankur Abhiyan for tree plantation.

the responsibility of the society along with the government. Chouhan said that he himself would go out on May 24 in Bhopal for the purpose of collecting material for the children of Anganwadis.



CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and his wife Sadhna Singh plant a sapling on the birth anniversary of their son Kartikey Singh, in Bhopal on Monday.

Representatives of THINK gas call on Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was today called on by President of ThinkGas, Manmohan Ahuja, Bharat Saxena, Vice President Maheshwaran and D.S. Durgesh.

Environment friendly THINK Gas, is working in the field of clean fuel since the year 2018, which supplies natural gas to consumers for about 200 persons in the state.

It may be noted that environment friendly THINK Gas, is working in the field of clean fuel since the year 2018, which supplies natural gas to the consumers of domestic, commercial, industrial and automotive sectors in 5 states of the country.

CM opens Salkanpur Bhog Prasadam Center

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched Salkanpur Bhog Prasadam Center of Self-Help Group in Malibaya. He inquired about the activities of the self help group and also inspected the products and equipments made by them.

एचडीएफसी म्यूचुअल फंड - निवेशक जागरुकता कार्यक्रम. म्यूचुअल फंड्स के बारे में और अधिक जानने के लिए इसमें अवश्य भाग लें.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Tightrope

The new Australian PM has his task cut out with regard to his role in QUAD vis-à-vis China

The Chinese feel that Australian Labour Party leader Anthony Albanese, who succeeds Scott Morrison as the Prime Minister, may adopt a less hostile attitude towards them. Where does that feeling leave the QUAD? The US-initiated security dialogue is about countering the projection of Chinese power in the Indo-Pacific. As an equal partner in the quadrilateral, how the Albanese-led Australia interprets the growing tension between China and the United States becomes crucial for both. The QUAD had a chequered first phase when under Liberal John Howard, Australia withdrew from the dialogue, and his successor, Labour's Kevin Rudd, did not rejoin. The strategic initiative got a second life in 2017, and the four members are today more serious than ever to protect the QUAD. That is why the QUAD would like to reassure themselves that the shrillness of the campaign in the run-up to the just-concluded Australian elections, particularly over the Liberal-Labour spat over who is closer to China and who is not, will not find its echo now that Albanese has taken over. The QUAD and the Australian people want to know if Albanese will review or continue with Morrison's policies. The China-Australia ties were at their worst during Morrison's tenure. In the recent election campaign, Labour was under intense public scrutiny over its China policy. The Morrison-led Liberals accused Albanese of being soft on China, claiming that "the Chinese Government has picked their horse and he's sitting right there". A video showing Albanese trying to speak in Mandarin at an Australian Chinese trade association dinner in 2018 was recirculated afresh.



Albanese did not take the bait and maintained that there will not be a major change on contentious matters like Taiwan and the South China Sea. He said Australia's relationship with China "will remain a challenging one", and that the friendship with the US will remain the "first pillar" of Australia's foreign policy. Closer to the election, the Labour party displayed a similarly hardened attitude towards China. Labour's Penny Wong — the new Foreign Minister — led her campaign saying they will not take "a backward step" on Australia's current tensions with China. The same Wong had said a year ago that the bilateral friction does not mean that "there's no room for improvement in our actions". Wong also criticised Morrison for preferring the AUKUS-linked nuclear-powered submarines pact over the French submarine deal. The Labour at that time wanted Australia to have a view separate from the US over military and security matters. To think that Albanese, new to international diplomacy at this level, would adopt an America-first policy and simultaneously try to rationalise relations with China appears far-fetched. For its part, China is leaving no stone unturned to send the message that a healthy relationship is in the interests of both countries. Beijing will lose no opportunity to drive a wedge in the QUAD. It is time for the real Albanese to stand up.

PICTALK



Anchored boats during a dust storm at a ghat in Varanasi

PTI

Embarrassing cover-up

The Taliban have ordered all female TV news anchors to cover their faces while on air

The Taliban-led Islamic Emirate Government in Afghanistan has pronouncedly returned to its crooked ways, especially with regard to the country's women. Actually, it's always been biased against the fair gender, even when it was in power the last time in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. After they seized power again in August last year, the Taliban initially appeared to have moderated their restrictions somewhat, announcing no dress code for women. But in recent weeks, they have made a sharp, hardline pivot that has confirmed the worst fears of the rights activists and further complicated the Taliban's dealings with an already distrustful international community. On March 23, 2022, the first day of the school year in Afghanistan, eager female students arriving for class found closed gates and armed Taliban guards posted there. Despite the *de facto* authorities' assurances only days earlier that schools would reopen for girls above sixth grade, they had barred girls from further education. The Minister of Higher Education — part of an all-male Government — has stated publicly that Islam is more important than qualifications, so education is of no value to boys or girls.



Then earlier this month, the Taliban's Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and the Propagation of Virtue ordered all women to wear head-to-toe clothing in public that leaves only their eyes visible. The decree said women should leave the home only when necessary and that male relatives would face punishment for women's dress code violations. And now, as per a report last weekend, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have started to enforce a new order requiring all female TV news anchors in the country to cover their faces while on air. After the order was announced midweek, only a handful of news outlets initially complied. But on Sunday, most female anchors were seen with their faces covered after the Taliban's Vice and Virtue Ministry began enforcing the decree. However, the presenters are obviously not happy with the diktat. They feel it's the imposition of "just an outside culture" and there "aren't feeling good at all" while presenting programmes. But all hope's not lost. Not yet! In an act of solidarity with female colleagues, the channel's male personnel covered their faces with masks, including the main evening newsreader. Way to go, you are fighting for a cause.

True trustees of the Constitution?

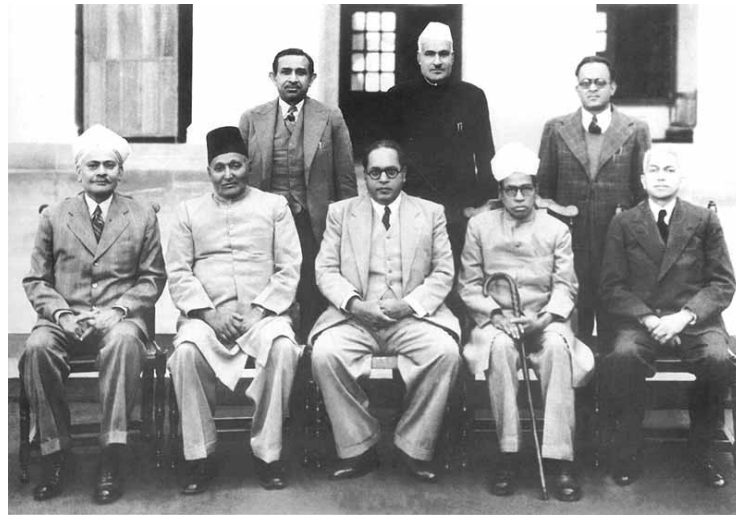
Our forefathers, who drafted the Constitution, had pictured an entirely different scenario for the development of the nation than what it has now become



JS RAJPUT

The unseating of the then Union Government by the people in May 2014 shocked those who were convinced of being the only conscience keepers to the nation, the protectors of the Constitution of India. Come September 2015, certain authors, poets and film personalities gave expression to their hurt conscience on what they thought were increasing intolerance and "unmaking of India". Recently, another letter written by 108 bureaucrats to the PM received only stunted media response; that too, from ideologically inclined fellow travellers. Selective efforts, people understand, are mere manifestation of the loss of hegemony over institutions and regular sources of support from the corridors of power. India deserves far more unbiased and credible civil society think tanks. Is it not intriguing that those worried about the 'victimisation of a particular community, intolerance and attack on secular fabric' just prefer to keep mum when orchestrated violence takes place in West Bengal before and after Assembly elections. Their conscience is not aroused when two ministers of the Maharashtra Government are put behind bars, but refuse to resign! The 108 custodians of the Constitution just did not remember TT Krishnamachari, Keshav Deva Malaviya or Lal Bahadur Shastri! Does it not indict the bureaucracy as a whole when the house of a senior IAS officer is raided and over ₹17 crore in cash is recovered? When orders of the Supreme Court of India on loud-speaker decibel levels are flouted for years and insistence on it being implemented is resisted? The unscrupulous come in the support of the deviant! Does the highest Indian judiciary deserve this treatment?

In Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the State Governments are openly encouraging the flouting of court orders on decibel levels; these two Governments are also the custodians of the spirit of Constitution. Why can't the 'hurt and worried' luminaries issue an appeal to



respect the judiciary?

As one peruses the Constituent Assembly debates, one is inspired by the spirit and intent that remains organically present during these deliberations, conducted with Rajendra Prasad as its president. The chairman of the Drafting Committee, BR Ambedkar, was admired for his comprehension of the socio-economic and cultural context of India. He had thorough comprehension of the global scenario and had acquired a great futuristic vision. He made a historic speech on November 26, 1949, when the draft was finally approved by the Constituent Assembly: "Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the welfare of the country will depend upon the way in which the country is administered. That will depend upon the men who administer it. It is a trite saying that a country can have only the Government it deserves."

Those with a hurt conscience must have read it all when they entered the corridors of power to implement the provisions of the Constitution, and preserve

and protect its spirit. Did they realise that it was imperative on the part of the implementers, including the elected representatives, bureaucrats and legal luminaries to remember Ambedkar's expectations: "I shall only hope that all those whose good fortune it may be to work this Constitution in future will remember that it was a unique victory which we achieved by the unique method taught to us by the Father of the Nation, and it is up to us to preserve and protect the independence that we have won and to make it really bear fruit for the man in the street. Let us launch on this new enterprise of running our Independent Republic with confidence, with truth and non-violence and, above all, with the heart within and God overhead."

On November 25, 1949, senior Congress leader Mahavir Tyagi was given four minutes to speak, which he considered "the most precious of my life, past, present and future". The Draft Constitution was a 'concrete picture' before them, in which each of the members had contributed; and Ambedkar was the chief artist. It would be very relevant

IN MAHARASHTRA AND RAJASTHAN, THE STATE GOVERNMENTS ARE OPENLY ENCOURAGING THE FLOUTING OF COURT ORDERS ON DECIBEL LEVELS; THESE TWO GOVERNMENTS ARE ALSO THE CUSTODIANS OF THE SPIRIT OF CONSTITUTION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IS SLASHING FUEL PRICES LOGICAL?

Sir — A reduction in central excise duty per litre of petrol by ₹8 and ₹6 for each litre of diesel will translate into retail prices on these fuels dropping by ₹9.5 per litre and ₹7 per litre. Again, the price subsidy for LPG of ₹200 per cylinder to beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme is a boon. So it is in the hands of the Finance Minister to control inflation. If this holds true, then inflation can be controlled periodically in the same way instead of making people struggle. Tax reduction must be at once passed to consumers who are now reeling under direct or indirect taxes.

At the same time, the taxes levied must be routed towards reduction of burden of purchasing power of every citizen of State-Central sectors. It is the duty of an elected Government to give concessions to the lower strata of people to ease their day-to-day expenses in terms of fulfilling their basic daily needs. So far they haven't taken positive steps to enhance the purchasing power of the lower and middle class citizens. It is time to control commodity prices; the sale of things should be streamlined and made available in the open market.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

INDIA'S CONDITION SAME AS LANKA'S?

Sir — Sri Lanka, our neighbouring country, is experiencing an unprecedented economic collapse that has pushed its Government into a deep crisis. Lanka is struggling to import basic necessities for its 22 million people because of its diminishing foreign reserves and crippling debt; anti-Government protests even turned violent which led to the burning of the houses of the President and other Ministers houses, and this violence ultimately led to the PM's resignation. The policies of Rajapaksa led the \$81 billion economy to bankruptcy. The two policy blunders were the cutting of taxes overnight and barring the import of chemical fertilisers and pesticides to push Lanka into organic farming.

Appreciate the nuances first



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, while speaking about our country's foreign policy again on foreign land, had compared the conflict with China on Leh and Doklam with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, it is expected that he should have learnt a thing or two about the foreign policy from his forefathers, perhaps someone like Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Pt Nehru had such foresight that he predicted way back in the 1950s that Atal Bihari Vajpayee will one day become the PM of India, and his saying came true in 1998-

99 when Vajpayee became our PM. When Indira Gandhi took the bold decision on Bangladesh, the entire Opposition highly praised Indira Gandhi.

When PV Narasimha Rao was the PM, an Indian delegation to the UN was led by leader of the Opposition AB Vajpayee; such instances are rarely seen these days. The foreign policy of any country is a continuous process and, even with the change of Government, the policy and a nation's stand on most issues remain the same. Present example is before us in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, where India followed its own foreign policy and maintained neutrality as well as old relations with Russia and also purchased oil from it by paying in roubles. Side by side, India is also attending the QUAD meetings and, on this front, even Pakistan had praised the foreign policy of India many times.

Yash Pal Raihan | Jalandhar

Diminishing foreign reserves, huge piles of debt, devaluation of currency, rising inflation, rupee value dropping its lowest level compared to dollar and total economic collapse has compelled the people of Sri Lanka to struggle for their basic needs. The shortage of almost everything from food, medicines to cooking gas has resulted in social unrest and political turmoil. Lankans often call out that there is a threat to their country from Islamic extremists. Same is the situation in our country. Our economy is damaged, rupee value has fallen, commodity prices are out of the reach of common man.

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

SIDHU'S CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Sir — With a fight for the fourth playoff spot, the fight between bat and ball was more tense than usual. The last two matches evinced keen interest from the bookie angle as the result would have had a bearing on the final outcome. The way Ashwin swept and pulled his old team-

mates from CSK was exhilarating, while the match between MI and DC was somewhat disappointing as the Delhi side could score within 160 and thereby lost a fair chance of going to the playoff stage. MI, who were doing bad so far, prevented DC with a facile win.

Royal Challengers Bangalore are having a minus run rate and that could have ousted them from the championship with NRR. However, the tournament reached the final stage with such interest to decide the last four positions. GT, RR and LSG booked their berth with facile wins and that too with a higher net run rate to show. RCB got a backdoor entry because of MI making a match of the final game. As a matter of fact, a number of bookies were arrested during IPL 15 and we would like to see fewer controversies during the final stages of the championship.

CKR Nathan | Ghaziabad

SOUNDBITE

It's always people first for us. The decision (slashing fuel prices) will positively impact various sectors.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



I believe it's very important that this country has certainty... so it can move forward.

Australia ex-Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

Getting (to act in) Aashram was more of a gift from the universe.



Actor — Esha Gupta



I didn't want to win that way (a late blunder by world champion Magnus Carlsen).

Indian Grandmaster — Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is a part-time politician and a habitual offender.



BJP spokesperson — Gaurav Bhatia

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN TIME TO REJECT FOSSIL FUELS RIGHT AWAY

A candle produces more CO2 than a single firecracker



PRITAM SINGH

More than 95% human activities over the past 4-5 decades are responsible for inching 'mother-earth' towards getting warmer year after year, eclipsing our life-system.



'snowy regions'. These snowy regions are solid water (ice) which act to play a significant role of our 'life-line on earth' - cooling down the earth's temperature compatible to our living conditions.

An analytical data from the satellites have observed that the sun's energy output has changed less than 0.1% in the last 40 years whereas earth's warming has increased by at least 1.1° Celsius (1.9° Fahrenheit) in 142 years.

(The writer retired from the Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun and is now an educator and analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Indian power sector is pushed to the brink



UTTAM GUPTA

Among other things, free discoms from State control, allow them to set tariff for all consumers and permit private firms into the distribution business

Faced with an acute power crisis caused amongst others by sudden spurt in power demand in this season, the Modi Government has fired all cylinders to tackle the most crucial of all bottlenecks in the way, namely coal which accounts for nearly 52 percent of total power generation capacity in the country.

During April/May 2022, the Union Power Ministry - using powers vested in the Government under Section 11 of the Electricity Act, 2003 - issued directions to (i) all imported coal-based plants (ICB) to operate and generate power to their full capacity and (ii) all generation companies (gencos) based on domestic coal to import at least 10 percent of their fuel requirements (there is a move to further raise it to 30 percent).

Other measures include asking all gencos having captive coal mines to maximize production from their mines; Coal India Limited (CIL) - a central public sector undertaking (CPSU) which contributes about 85 percent of domestic coal production - to auction its mines 'not under use' to private companies; galvanizing railways' infrastructure to move coal from mines to plants site etc.

The Government has also announced financial and price support measures to help gencos actually see things happening on ground zero.

Thus, it has directed the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC Ltd) to arrange short term loans for a period of six months with adequate safeguards for ICB plants, which are under stress. It has also allowed 'pass-through' of the increase in cost of imported coal under the power purchase agreements (PPAs) of gencos with power distribution companies (discoms).

The Government's intent is to increase availability of coal- both from domestic and imported sources, by putting more money in the hands of gencos so that they can pay for higher cost imported fuel (in just about two months, its price is up by \$100 per ton, courtesy difficult geopolitical situation) and even more importantly, allow them charge more from discoms to recover the higher cost.

But things may not pan out as desired. The discoms (mostly owned and controlled by State Governments) may not agree to hike in tariff; besides such revisions are open to challenge in the court. It won't be easy to sell expensive stuff in the 'power exchange' either as under the extant regulations, the tariff chargeable is subject to a cap. As for garnering additional production, effort there won't yield results in the near term.

Even if the Government is able to surmount these problems by forcing the buyers (read: discoms) to pay for the higher cost and removing the tariff cap on sales in the exchange, this will push the already fragile discoms into deeper mess.

The discoms are in dire straits because



HAD THE PRODUCTION COME ANYWHERE NEAR THE TARGET, THE CURRENT CRISIS IN THE POWER SECTOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AGGRAVATION OF DISCOMS WOES COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. THE HUGE SHORTFALL DEMONSTRATES THE DIRE NEED FOR BETTER PLANNING AND TIMELY EXECUTION OF PROJECTS

(The writer is a former Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)



State Governments order them to supply a sizeable chunk of electricity to households and farmers at a fraction of the cost of purchase and distribution or even free (in some states, subsidy accounts for 30-40 percent of discoms' revenue). Although, States promise to reimburse discoms the excess of the cost over realization from sale, most of them either don't reimburse at all or do it partially and that too after delay.

Discoms' under recoveries are exacerbated by high aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) loss - a jargon for power theft. To offset, they charge high tariffs on supplies to industries and businesses. Despite this cross-subsidization, overall, discoms incur huge loss.

Thanks to persistent losses, as of March 31, 2022, they had piled up a mammoth debt of over ₹600,000 crore. They also owe about ₹100,000 crore to independent power producers (IPPs) and other generators in the public sector such as NTPC.

The efforts to revitalize discoms have been going on for two decades with four major schemes launched in 2002, 2012, 2015 and 2021; yet none has delivered. The last two under the Modi Government deserve special mention.

Under Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) launched in November 2015, the Centre coordinated a financial restructuring package (FRP) of ₹400,000 crore for discoms in lieu of their committing to reduce AT&C losses from 20.7 percent during 2015-16 to 15 percent by 2018-19 and reducing the gap between average revenue realisation (ARR) from sale of electricity

vis-a-vis the average cost of supply (ACS) or the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit during 2015-16 to 'zero' by 2018-19.

During 2019-20, discoms' AT&C losses were 18.9 percent against the 15 percent target for 2018-19, while ACS-ARR gap was ₹0.42 per unit against the target of 'zero' for 2018-19.

In the Union Budget for 2021-22, the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman launched a 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD) with an allocation of over ₹310,000 crore. Under this scheme also, in lieu of support to discoms, the government set targets for reducing AT&C losses to 12-15 percent and ACS-ARR gap to 'nil' by 2025. The release of money - under the Scheme - is linked to their meeting various reform targets.

As in the past, these are hollow proclamations. Under UDAY also, discoms were required to set their house in order. But, they didn't. The current AT&C losses at about 25 percent are even higher than 20.7 percent during 2015-16 (when the scheme was launched). Forget reduction. Hence, claims under RLRBSD don't inspire.

How will the crisis triggered by coal shortage and the manner in which the government is dealing with it impact discoms' finances?

The direction to all ICB plants maximize generation and to domestic coal based plants to do 10 percent/30 percent blending with imported coal will result in sharp in the cost of power purchase by discoms. Since, our political brass won't let HHs/farmers pay even a paisa more and industries are already crippled by high tariff - ₹10 per unit plus in most states; hence can't be further

increased, this will end up further inflating their losses.

In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set a coal production target of 1500 million tons (MT) for 2019-20. During 2019-20, India produced around 730 MT. In 2020-21, production declined to 716 MT (courtesy, Covid). During 2021-22, at 777 MT it exceeded the 2019-20 level but was barely 50 percent of the target.

Had production come anywhere near the target, the current crisis in the power sector and consequential aggravation of discoms woes could have been avoided. The huge shortfall demonstrates the dire need for better planning and timely execution of projects. Modi also needs to plan for a smoother transition to renewable sources ensuring that conventional source (read: coal) which currently takes a major share of the load doesn't become an impediment.

However, the most important thing our political class needs to do is to actually carry out reforms in the power sector at ground zero. This will call for unshackling of discoms from State control, giving them freedom to set tariff for all consumers (HHs/farmers included), allowing private firms in distribution business and vesting infrastructure for transmission, wheeling and last-mile delivery of power in an independent entity which should provide access to it on 'common carrier' principle in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

If any State Government wants to give subsidy to farmers and HHs, it should be given directly to the beneficiaries using the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mechanism.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THEY (THE INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE) HAVE COMPLETELY CHANGED. THEY DON'T LISTEN TO ANYTHING; THEY ARE ARROGANT.

— CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



YES, THE INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE HAS CHANGED. YES, THEY FOLLOW THE ORDERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. NO, IT'S NOT CALLED ARROGANCE.

— EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR

Russia will not disappear soon

It is awaiting leadership change

Russian President Vladimir Putin will almost certainly not be in power three years from now. The war he foolishly began in Ukraine has fatally undermined his political credibility among the Russian elite (and among a large though mostly silent part of the population). One way or another, he will be replaced.

He may even save everybody the trouble by dying before he can be removed. He definitely doesn't look well, his behaviour is increasingly erratic, and rumours that he is suffering from some terminal disease abound. Russia is not a fascist state, just a kleptocracy where the thieves and the thugs have taken power, but Putin's personal behaviour does begin to resemble Hitler in his bunker in the final days, and Hitler too



GWYNNE DYER

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

was very ill. Putin knows nothing about military matters, but he is reportedly micro-managing single 'battalion combat groups' (about 1,000 men) in the currently stalled Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine, trying to retrieve a military situation that has sunk into stalemate. Very Hitlerian. So what will become of Russia when he goes?

Alexander J. Motyl thinks it may just disappear. In an opinion piece in 'The Hill', the leading political website in Washington, Motyl, a political scientist at Rutgers University, suggests that "The Russian Federation could metamorphose into 10 or more states, only one of which would be known as Russia. That would change the face of Eurasia forever." It certainly would, but it



does imply the permanent demise of a state that has dominated northern Eurasia for the past four centuries (the first Russians reached the Pacific in 1647). It also ignores the remarkable homogeneity of that state's population: 81% are ethnically Russian, while none of

the many minority group even reaches 4%. There have been occasions, most recently during the civil war of 1917-22, when Russia was temporarily carved up into rival jurisdictions, but these interludes have never lasted long. The sense that there is a special Russian identity, even a unique 'Russian civilisation', always reasserts itself.

Decolonisation came late to the Russian empire and was harder to recognise, because Russia's imperial possessions were around its own land borders rather than across the oceans. Nevertheless, it was the same process, and just as irreversible (as Putin has been discovering).

Russia is as unlikely to split up permanently as France or Japan. Motyl's speculations on its break-up are wishful think-

ing, possibly motivated by the fact (unmentioned by 'The Hill') that both his parents were born in Ukraine.

It is understandable that Ukrainians might wish Russia to vanish, but that is not going to happen. So what will happen when Putin goes?

We cannot know yet what a genuinely post-Communist Russia would look like. Although it's 31 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, almost all the people in senior political positions began their careers in the Communist Party. The ideology was dumped, but the administrative style and the factional struggles remain.

Moreover, one single man, Vladimir Putin, has dominated Russian politics for more than two-thirds of that time. It's hard to disentangle what is intrinsic-

cally Russian in the way Russia has been run during that time from what was just part of Putin's personality, but we are about to find out.

The default position is to say that the Russians are somehow fundamentally different from other Slavs. After all, the Poles and the Czechs got real democracy and genuine prosperity after 1991, whereas the Russians got Putin, border wars, and (for most people) genteel poverty.

But there were two big differences that had nothing to do with 'national character', whatever that is. One was that all the former 'satellite countries' of Eastern Europe immediately ditched their local Communist collaborators and got a whole new set of politicians, whereas Russia was essentially stuck

with the old Commies wearing new hats.

The other difference was that the western Slavs experienced the change as liberation, whereas their former rulers saw it as a loss of empire that stranded tens of millions of Russians in places that were suddenly foreign countries.

It would have been unreasonable to expect these two sets of people to react in the same way, and sure enough they didn't. But it's equally unreasonable to be convinced that Russians will go on behaving in the same ways when the ex-Communist ruling elite loses power (which may be imminent) and a new post-imperial generation takes over instead.

We have no idea what's coming out of the box then. It could even be something good.



INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2022



The first half (of the tournament) I was playing some of the best cricket I've ever played, and I'm still taking lots of confidence from that going into the play-offs — JOS BUTTLER

GT take on Royals for place in final

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Equipped with a lethal bowling attack and boasting a number of quality finishers, debutants Gujarat Titans will start as favourites against spin-heavy former champions Rajasthan Royals when the two teams face-off in the first IPL Qualifier, here on Tuesday.

Captaining a team in the IPL for the first time ever, a fit-again Hardik Pandya has been a revelation this season as he led from the front with both bat and ball to ensure a top finish for his team in the league stage.

Apart from firing at number 4, Pandya has used his resources well, be it the death bowling of wily Rashid Khan or making his batting exploits count to go alongside the fiery duo of David Miller and Rahul Tewatia. Every little thing has fallen in place.

Their weak link was their top-order batting with highly-rated Shubman Gill failing to convert his starts but the addition of veteran Wriddhiman Saha has done wonders for the team.

The discarded India wicket-keeper-batter is batting with a newfound passion at the top of the order and has scored three half-centuries in nine matches to make up for Gill's lacklustre run.

While the Afghan leg-spinner has been outstanding in the middle and death overs, India senior pacer Mohammed Shami has given them perfect starts, by being the highest wicket-taker (11 wickets) in the powerplay this season.

Saha, who has been making headlines since he was axed for Team India, will look to make a point as he along with Bengal teammate Shami play in front of their home crowd again.

The fact that the playoffs will be



Titans vs Royals
Live from 7:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

played on fresh tracks would put the seamers in focus and Pandya may look to bring in Alzarri Joseph to go alongside Lockie Ferguson and Shami.

The Titans had defeated the same opponents by 37 runs in the league stage but the inaugural edition champions have a spin-heavy attack to go with rich experience and they might prove to a tricky customer.

The Titans also have looked vulnerable as they suffered three defeats in last five matches, including an eight-wicket thrashing by Royal Challengers Bangalore in their previous outing, which would mean that the Pandya-led side has to step up.

Three of Titan's four defeats, and four of Royals' five losses have come while setting up a target as the toss would also be a key area of concern.

The Sanju Samson-led outfit boast of both the Orange and Purple Cap holders this season -- Jos Buttler and Yuzvendra Chahal.

They also have the experience of Ravichandran Ashwin whose versatility has come to the fore especially in the second-half of the season. Ashwin's batting has also made a huge difference.

Batting at number 5 ahead of their regular batters Shimron Hetmyer and Rryan Parag against Chennai Super Kings the other day, Ashwin smashed an unbeaten 23-ball 40 to script a five-wicket win that also sealed their top-two finish.

But for them to repeat their 2008-IPL winning show, the Royals would not just need an Ashwin but the top-order to fire.

IPL Playoffs: Super Over could determine winner in case of disruptions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Super Over could decide IPL 15's champions should rain gods play spoilsport and no play is possible in regulation time.

If not even an over a side is possible, the league standing will take precedence and will decide the winner, according to an IPL briefing note.

This will also apply to the Qualifier 1, Eliminator, Qualifier 2, which do not have reserve days.

May 30 has been kept aside as a reserve day for the summit clash, which will begin at 8pm.

With the IPL moving to Kolkata for the playoffs and inclement weather forecast for the city, the IPL has issued certain guidelines in case of rain-interrupted games.

While Gujarat Titans take on Rajasthan Royals in Qualifier 1 on Tuesday, Lucknow Super Giants will play Royal Challengers Bangalore at the same venue the next day in the Eliminator.

The second Qualifier and the final are slated to be played in Ahmedabad on Friday and Sunday respectively.

"The number of overs in the playoff match may, if necessary, be reduced so that each side has the opportunity to bat for five overs," the IPL guidelines read.

"For the Eliminator and each Qualifier playoff matches, in the event that it is not possible to schedule a five-over match to complete by the end of the extra time on the original day, the teams will, if conditions permit, play a Super Over to determine the winner of the relevant Eliminator or Qualifier match."

If the Super Over is not possible "the team that finished highest in the league table after the 70 matches of the regular season shall be declared the winner of the relevant playoff match or final," it added.

In case of the two Qualifiers and the Eliminator, if one innings is complete but no

Play is possible in the second, the DLS method will come into play.

If the final starts on May 29 that is at least one ball is bowled then the "match will resume at the point where it stopped on the previous day. For the avoidance of doubt, any match recalculations done without the match actually restarting on the previous night will be ignored."

Their leading run-getter Buttler has slowed down in the business end of the season with single digit scores — 2, 2, 7 — in his last three outings. The Englishman, who has slammed three centuries and three fifties this season, is yet to score a half-century in five innings and the Royals would desperately need him to be back among runs.

Their batting too has slumped with Samson and Hetmyer's loss of form and they would look to get into the act ahead of the big match.

The fact that the loser of the Qualifier One will get a second shot at making the final will give both the teams some breathing space.

Disappointed with last few games: Jos Buttler

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Star Rajasthan Royals batter Jos Buttler is "disappointed" with his form in the last few games but said he is taking a lot of confidence from the big knocks that he had played early in the tournament going into the IPL play-offs.

The English wicketkeeper-batter has accumulated 629 runs at a strike rate of 147, including three hundreds and three fifties, this season but has slowed down in the business end of the tournament with single digit scores — 2, 2, 7 -- in his last three outings.

"I've obviously been delighted with my form in the IPL, but a bit disappointed with the last few games," said the 31-year-old Buttler ahead of RR's first qualifier against Gujarat Titans at the Edens Gardens on Tuesday.

"The first half (of the tournament) I was playing some of the best cricket I've ever played, and I'm still taking lots of confidence from that going into the play-offs."

RR finished second in the points table behind new entrants Gujarat Titans.

Retiring out is risky but can give competitive advantage: Ashwin

Experienced spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who has impressed both with ball and bat this season, feels certain decisions like retiring out can provide a competitive edge to the teams if done properly.

"It's important to understand how it (a decision) is going to give us an edge in important moments. I think (retiring out) is part of the future of the game in T20 cricket, and I believe it's there to stay," said Ashwin, RR's most economical bowler this season.

"People are going to perceive it as risky because once you retire a batter out and things don't go your way you might have to explain that. But if it's executed well, then it can give you a competitive advantage." Ashwin has scored 183 runs and picked up 11 wickets at an economy of 7.14 this season.

WARNE HAS BEEN WATCHING ME FROM ABOVE: CHAHAL

Yuzvendra Chahal credited his success to the closely knit group and said playing for RR

I kept learning as a batter & captain: Sanju Samson

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Leading the franchise for a second full season, skipper Sanju Samson said he has never stopped learning and communication has been one of the key components of his captaincy. "I think I've actually developed and learn as a batter and also as a captain. I'm really enjoying the responsibility of leading this team, especially with so many experienced players in our side."

"I think when you lead a side, it's very important to have that kind of perspective where you allow people to come and talk to you in pressure situations and allow them to express their ideas," said Samson.

"I do receive a lot of information, a lot of suggestions... So, I'm really enjoying the unity and the willingness of everyone to contribute to the team, and I think it's very important to listen to everyone. But I also know that the final call has to be from my side, and I have to take the ownership of each and every decision made by the team."

has also been special because of the late Shane Warne, who had led the team in the inaugural season.

"I know it's just the first season here (at Royals) for me, but it feels like I've been playing here for many years. I'm really relaxed here mentally, and I believe the credit goes to the people here, who take really good care of me... It has really made me connect with the franchise at a different level," said the Purple Cap holder.

"On the other hand, it's also special for me because Warne played for RR and I think his blessings are with me. I feel like he's been watching me from above."

VASTRAKAR SHINES IN SUPERNOVAS 49-RUN WIN

PTI ■ PUNE

Pooja Vastrakar picked up four wickets for just 12 runs in a brilliant pace-bowling display as Supernovas notched up an easy 49-run win over Trailblazers in a record-breaking opening match of the Women's T20 Challenge here on Monday.

The 22-year-old Vastrakar claimed the wickets of Trailblazers' captain Smriti Mandhana (34), her opening partner Hayley Matthews (18), No 4 Sophia Dunkley (1) and Salma Khatun (0) in two separate spells to tear apart the batting line-up of the defending champions.

England left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone and Australia all-rounder Alana King chipped in with two wickets apiece as Trailblazers could only score 114 for 9 in 20 overs while chasing 164.

The Supernovas had earlier scored the tournament's highest-ever score of 163 all out after opting to bat.

Trailblazers made a strong start to their chase with Mandhana and Matthews putting on 39 runs for the opening wicket in five overs.

But Vastrakar struck triple blows on



Trailblazers to leave the defending champions in deep trouble.

She first had the wicket of Matthews off the last ball of the fifth over and then dismissed skipper Mandhana and Dunkley in the space of four balls in the eighth over.

Wickets kept on tumbling in quick succession as Sharmim Akhter (0) was out in the next over for a duck to be King's first victim of the day.

Runs were hard to come by for Trailblazers as they reached 71 for 4 at the halfway mark. But two quick wickets in

the 11th over bowled by Ecclestone virtually ended the contest.

Ecclestone had Richa Gosh (2) off the second ball of the over and Arundhati Reddy (0) was run out in the next delivery as Trailblazers batters looked in a hurry to return to the hut.

Harmanpreet Kaur brought Vastrakar for her second spell and the pacesetter got immediate success by having Khatun to reduce Trailblazers to 73 for 7 at the end of 12 overs.

Asking rate had climbed more than 11 runs an over by then and one-down Jemimah Rodrigues (24) tried to make a match out of it but she also fell in the 14th over to Meghna Singh to extinguish any hopes of Trailblazers' fight back.

Earlier, Supernovas captain Kaur top-scored with 37 off 29 balls while Harleen Deol and Deandra Dottin chipped in with 35 and 32 respectively.

They, however, lost five wickets in the last two overs for just eight runs, including that of Kaur, in a dramatic collapse.

Matthews was the pick of the Trailblazers bowlers with figures of 3 for 29 while Salma Khatun took two for 30 runs.

County stint will keep me in good stead: Pujara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Back in national team for the Edgbaston Test after scoring a bagful of runs in County cricket, Cheteshwar Pujara said his stint for Surrey will hold him in good stead when India takes on England in the one-off red ball fixture in July.

The 34-year-old Pujara scored 720 runs, including two double hundreds and two centuries, in five Division two games for Sussex, which forced the selection committee to give him a call-up for the rescheduled 'fifth' Test of the last series.

"I am glad to have been selected for the England Test, and happy that my recent county performances were recognized," Pujara told PTI.

"Having spent some time in the middle during the county games, I do believe



it will keep me in good stead as we get ready for the game against England.

"As always, looking forward to preparing and training well ahead of the tour, and do hope to continue contributing to the Indian team," he added.

The fifth Test, which was postponed last year due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the Indian camp, is scheduled from July 1 to 5 in Birmingham.

Going through a poor run of form, Pujara had been left out of India's home Test series against Sri Lanka earlier this year but he made a return to the squad after producing a scintillating performance for Surrey.

Pujara amassed an unbeaten 201 against Derbyshire, before scoring 109 against Worcestershire. He also smashed 203 and 170 not out against Durham and Middlesex. Playing for Saurashtra in the Ranji Trophy, Pujara had also hit 91 against Mumbai and 64 not out against Goa. Pujara has scored 6713 runs at 43.87 in 95 Tests for India.



Usman dropped for WI ODIs

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has dropped leg-spinner Usman Qadir and hard-hitting batters Asif Ali and Haider Ali for next month's limited-overs international series against the West Indies.

"Usman, Asif and Haider remain in our plans for the shortest format as we have a series of T20s lined up this year, including the T20 World Cup," chief selector Mohammad Wasim said in a statement on Monday.

Wasim said the return of vice-captain Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz from injuries resulted in Usman's absence for the ODI series. Both players missed Pakistan's last ODI series at home against Australia.

Rawalpindi will host the three one-day games, which are part of the Cricket World Cup League, on June 8, 10 and 12.

Arshdeep delighted to represent India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Delighted to earn a maiden national call-up, left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh said bowling to the big-hitting Punjab Kings batters in the nets helped him perfect his yorkers.

The 23-year-old, who has impressed one and all with his death over bowling this season, ended his IPL campaign with 10 wickets and an economy rate of 7.70.

His ability to bowl the change-ups along with wide yorkers and deliveries in the block-hole earned him a place in the squad for the home series against South Africa next month.



Arshdeep got to know the good news on his way to Punjab's last league stage match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday.

"I got to know just before the match, in the bus that I have got selected in the Indian team. Because the match was going on I didn't feel much," Arshdeep told teammate Harpreet Brar after Punjab Kings' five-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad.

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आज़ादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

सुपोषित और
शिक्षित भविष्य के लिए



शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री

आइये, आज जुड़ें हम सब

मुख्यमंत्री
शिवराज सिंह चौहान
द्वारा

आंगनवाड़ियों में बच्चों के पोषण और
सर्वांगीण विकास के लिए
जनभागीदारी का अभूतपूर्व आह्वान



मुख्यमंत्री लोगों के बीच जाकर
आंगनवाड़ी के बच्चों के उपयोग की वस्तुएं एकत्रित करेंगे।
24 मई, 2022, भोपाल, सायं 5.30 बजे
नर्मदा पार्क → अशोका गार्डन → परिहार चौराहा → मन्सा देवी मंदिर → अशोका गार्डन

"एडॉप्ट एन आंगनवाड़ी अभियान"



प्रदेश सरकार की पहल पर आंगनवाड़ी में बच्चों के पोषण और समग्र विकास के लिए आवश्यक वस्तुओं और सुविधाओं को सरकार और समाज के संयुक्त प्रयासों से जुटाने का यह अभियान संचालित है।

“हमारे बेटे और बेटियाँ देश का भविष्य हैं। स्वस्थ, शिक्षित, संस्कारवान् बच्चे हम सबकी जवाबदारी हैं। हमारा देश वसुधैव कुटुंबकम् का देश है। मैं अपील करता हूँ कि पूरा समाज इस जन-आंदोलन से जुड़ जाये। अपनी आंगनवाड़ियों के लिए हर नागरिक कोई न कोई चीज जरूर दान करे।

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शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

