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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



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 makhn par lakeer karne mein maza nahi aata hai, main patthar par lakeer karta hoon
— PM NARENDRA MODI

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

He made this strong pitch while chairing a roundtable 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 countrywide 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 Raja 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 Rajgir 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 Rajgir, 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 Bajjal. 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 Bajjal 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 Rashtrapati Bhawan.



Vinai Kumar Saxena

Bajjal, who was appointed as the Delhi Lieutenant Governor in 2016, resigned last week citing personal reasons. Bajjal'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.

Temp plunges, flights delayed as rain, gale lash Delhi-NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Eight people were injured as trees and houses fell in different parts of the city after gusty winds accompanied by rain lashed the national Capital on Monday morning, bringing the minimum temperature down to 17.2 degrees Celsius from 29 degrees Celsius - nine degrees below normal. Heavy rain and thunderstorms in Delhi and its adjoining areas led to massive traffic jams and affected flight operations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGAI).

According to information, around 130 flights were delayed — 90 at the departure terminal and 44 at arrivals — while 20 were diverted to other airports between 6 am and 10 am as wind speeds touching as high as 75 km per hour disrupted operations. Taking note of water-logging and traffic jams, Gurugram police issued an advisory to work from home for Monday.



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that in an 80-minute period, the temperature in Delhi fell by 11 degrees from 29 degrees Celsius at 5.40 am to 18 degrees Celsius by 7 am.

Private weather forecaster Skymet said that the minimum temperature recorded in the city was not only the lowest of the season but also the lowest in a decade during May. The lowest all-time minimum in May stands at 15.2 degrees Celsius, which was observed on May 2, 1982, it added.

According to Skymet Weather, mercury in Delhi went down by "10 degrees in one hour" on Monday morning. The temperature dropped from 29 degrees at 5:30 am to 19 degrees at 6:30 am. "Delhi recorded 17.2 degrees minimum temperature on May 23, its lowest during the decade for May. Record for the lowest is 15.2 degrees on May 2 in 1982.

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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GUEST COLUMN

Philosophy as a silent revolt against political mess



Vir Singh

What matters the most for a nation to represent its strength and outstanding state of being? Responding to this question in the words of ecophilosopher Henryk Skolimowski, it is the intellectual and cultural strength. A conscious and awakened nation does not desperately run after economic progress.

Economy and politics in our contemporary world are one and the same entity—the two faces of a single coin, both being parasites on earth's ecosystems.

shrinkage. On the other hand, ecology and philosophy are one and the same. They both are the basis of natural evolution and cultural progress. The intellectual and cultural strength, in fact, lie in a philosophy a culture nurtures and evolves within its ecosystems, the geographical settings.

animals and human race.

Most of the planet is deforested at the hands of politico-economic processes. Politics and economics in our contemporary world are led by each other. Insatiable quest for economic growth is managed by political system.

pursued the intellectual and cultural ends of life. We became aware of the true value of things. We ignored and discarded the petty concerns of ordinary life and tried to dwell in higher things." It is the philosophy that puts balance on political system and on exploitative kind of economy in the ambit of capitalism.

Cultural diversity is as diverse and rich as nature's biodiversity. Every country broadly represents a peculiar culture. The specific geographical culture also represents a civilisation that has its own super heroes and heroines, its legends, its wonderful stories, its unique history, and its own enduring impressions.

doctrines, enigmatic theories, life-enhancing karma, human dignity and reverence-for-nature attitude, the basic Indian philosophy—the eco-philosophy—offers all the solutions for resolving the contentious issues emanating from erroneous contemporary global politics.



Intellectual and cultural ends of life create philosophical and ecological pathways for a nation. Recalling the days of uprising in Poland, Skolimowski, the father of eco-philosophy writes, "We

people during uprising in the WWII days had no problem in identifying themselves with the higher ends of life — while trying to emulate some of their heroes of antiquity.

The violence-rearing cultures in certain geographical settings of the earth are those which rose amid a scenario lacking nature's biodiversity, such as in the widespread deserts. History is replete with some of the condemnable characteristics of these cultures: inclined to violence, aggressive, merciless, parasite nature and uncivilised behaviour.

Sung in the Skolimowski philosophy, the Indian philosophy is basically an eco-philosophy. Impregnated with evolutionary ideas, mature

Our world has witnessed horrible and stressful times. Gradually strengthening rule of economy-oriented politics over ecology-oriented philosophy and gradual replacement of wisdom-oriented Dharma by life-eclipsing values emerging from a petty faith is the root cause of all sorts of the stresses and diseases prevailing in our contemporary world.

(The author is emeritus professor of Environmental Science, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Views expressed are personal)

Instead of SSR, selfie-points on Kedarnath path to have Gen Rawat's image: Maharaj

Minister changes decision after criticism for planning selfie-points based on late actor

PNS ■ DEHRADUN After facing criticism for his recent announcement about making selfie-points based on actor Sushant Singh Rajput on the path to Kedarnath, the State's Tourism and Culture minister Satpal Maharaj has changed his decision.



distortion of facts had resulted in objections from various social and political quarters. As a result, the screening of this movie had been banned in the seven districts of the State due to law and order concerns in 2018. These seven districts were the ones with where there are cinema halls.

It is pertinent to mention here that recently while talking to media persons, the minister had said that selfie points based on the late actor Sushant Singh Rajput would be made on the route to Kedarnath. He had said that Rajput had spent time here while working on a movie.

Homes in Dronagiri burgled for 4th consecutive year

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The locks on various homes in the high altitude village of Dronagiri have been found to be broken. The materials kept inside many homes were scattered around while some were also stolen.

Rahul Singh and Bhopal Singh were also burgled. The items stolen from these homes include food items, clothes, utensils and bed rolls among other items.



According to local sources, the locks of many homes in the village were found to be broken. The home of Bagh Singh was also broken into, all the contents were scattered around while some were also stolen.

village have been burglarised. According to villager Narendra Rawat, thefts in this village have been taking place for four consecutive years now. The authorities have not been able to catch the culprits so far.

It is pertinent to mention

here that Dronagiri village in Chamoli district is where the residents are still miffed at lord Hanuman for carrying away the top of the mountain peak they used to worship. It is believed that unable to identify the life saving Sanjeevani herb, lord Hanuman had carried away the mountain peak to take the herb to save a grievously injured Lakshman.

Spell of rain & winds expose gaps in Nainital again

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The lack of proper garbage disposal and other gaps in a popular tourist destination were exposed yet again after rain accompanied by gusts of wind hit Nainital on Monday.

The rain during the morning caused the drains to overflow. The lower Mall Road experienced water logging which caused considerable inconvenience to the public in commuting.

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भारतीय चिकित्सा पद्धति राष्ट्रीय आयोग. National Commission for Indian System of Medicine. Ministry of Ayush, Govt. of India. Ref. No. Estt. 1/2022 (NCISM). Dated: 20.05.2022. PUBLIC NOTICE. Subject: - Fake Central Registration Certificate-reg.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS. CHANGE OF NAME. In my Army records my son's name mistakenly written as Harsh whereas his correct name is HARSH PATIYAL. In my Cbse board documents, my mother's name is entered wrongly as Khushi Dhani whereas her actual name is Khushi Bhupendra Dhani.

Rain temporarily affects pilgrim movement to Kedarnath

Hail, squall and intense showers forecast at isolated places today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN



The rain on Monday caused authorities to stop pilgrims from going beyond Sonprayag towards Kedarnath after early morning as a precautionary measure. Those who were already ahead of Sonprayag and en route to Kedarnath were allowed to proceed while the others were requested to stay where they were. The Sonprayag police station officer Yogendra Gulsain said that pilgrims were

prevented from going beyond Sonprayag from about 9 AM due to considerable rain and fog in Kedarnath. Pilgrims were made to halt at various places and later on, those who had already progressed beyond Sonprayag and were en route to the shrine were allowed to proceed slowly after the rain became lighter. Meanwhile, temperatures came down noticeably due to rains experienced in various parts

of the State on Sunday and Monday. The maximum and minimum temperatures dropped six degrees Celsius and four degrees Celsius respectively than the normal in Dehradun on Monday. The trend of rainy weather is likely to continue in the State on Tuesday with the State meteorological centre also issuing a warning regarding the possibility of thunderstorm accompanied with hail/

lightning/squall (50-60 kmph gusting upto 70 kmph) at isolated places. Apart from this, the meteorological centre has forecast the possibility of light to moderate rainfall/thunderstorm likely to occur at many places with intense showers at isolated places in the districts on Tuesday.

The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to experience partly to generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershowers accompanied with hail/lightning and gusty winds (50-60 kmph) are likely to occur in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 32 degrees Celsius and 16 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun on Tuesday.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Monday were 29.4 degrees Celsius and 26.9 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 28.4 degrees Celsius and 20.2 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 13.5 degrees Celsius and 8.7 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 19.2 degrees Celsius and 9.2 degrees Celsius respectively in New Tehri.

Congress steps up campaign in Champawat by election

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Even as chief minister and Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Pushkar Singh Dhama is interacting with the public and addressing gatherings in different parts of Champawat, the Congress has stepped up its campaign in the Champawat Assembly by-election. On Monday, the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara and leader of opposition (LoP) Yashpal Arya took out a foot march in the Tanakpur market and asked people to vote for the Congress party candidate Nirmala Gehtodi.

“Karan Mahara, Yashpal Arya take out foot march; Harish Rawat starts campaigning for Gehtodi”

The deputy leader of Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Bhuwan Kapdi and former MLA Hemesh Kharkwal and other leaders also accompanied the PCC president and LoP during the Yatra. Former chief minister and member of Congress Working Committee (CWC) Harish Rawat started campaigning in favour of the Congress candidate in Champawat from Monday afternoon. Rawat would now camp in Champawat till May 28.



Meanwhile the in-charge of Uttarakhand Congress Devendra Yadav would plunge himself in the election campaign on Tuesday. He would arrive in Champawat on May 24 and camp there for three days.

The Congress candidate Nirmala Gehtodi is facing an uphill task in Champawat since CM Dhama is the BJP candidate from the seat. Dhama along with the previ-

ous MLA Kailash Gehtodi and others is addressing public gatherings and interacting with people in different parts of the constituency. For Dhama the by-election is very important for his political career and to retain his position as CM of the state. He had lost the Assembly election from his traditional Khatima seat. Dhama was defeated by Bhuwan Kapdi of Congress party. Though Dhama lost the election his party was able to

secure a two-third majority in the state assembly and the central leadership of BJP reposed its faith on him by appointing him the CM for second consecutive term. BJP MLA from Champawat Kailash Gehtodi vacated his seat for Dhama. The voting for Champawat by elections would be held on May 31 while the counting of votes would be on June 3 and the result would be declared on the same day.

Two SSB personnel killed in car mishap

PNS ■ PITHORAGARH

Two personnel of the Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) died in a car accident on the Pithoragarh-Thal Didihat road on Monday. The local police and SSB recovered the bodies.

According to sources, a car number UK07DT-4557 fell off the road and down the mountainside at Lalghati near the dumpster on Thal Didihat road. At the time of the mishap, SSB 11th battalion ASI Manoj Kumar Pant and HC Veer Singh were in the car. While Pant hails from Berinag area of Pithoragarh, Singh is from Raipur area of



Dehradun. The duo was killed in the mishap. The bodies were brought to the Didihat mortuary by the police and

SSB. The cause of the incident is being ascertained. The families of both the above deceased have been informed.

Weeping Swami continues decades old penance near Ganga's source

VINOD CHAMOLI ■ NEW TEHRI

Even the biting cold in the Himalayan region of Gangotri in Uttarkashi district has failed to deter an ascetic who has been performing penance in and meditation for the past 21 years on the banks of the Bhagirathi river in the area.

Gaumukh glacier as the place for his penance. This region has been favoured by ascetics and seers for a long time. Such ascetics can be seen immersed in devotional and spiritual activities throughout the year despite the freezing tempera-

on the banks of the Bhagirathi river some distance from Gangotri. Though he has made some improvements in the cave, he shuns visitors and even publicity in general, preferring to continue his spiritual practice in solitude. He



However, it is the manner of his penance which is quite different.

Swami Vадantananda had a unique way of worshipping the Ganga as he cries every morning and evening. Calling to mother Ganga while positioned near the river, he lets his tears become part of the Bhagirathi's waters. He has been doing so for the past 21 years without any break. This is his way of invoking mother Ganga and he has chosen the region where the Ganga originates as Bhagirathi from the

tures experienced here during the winter. While the ascetics have their own ways of progressing spiritually, Vадantananda has been offering his tears in devotion to the Ganga for a bit more than two decades now. During the winter when the higher Himalaya are covered in thick snow and the Gangotri shrine is also closed to the public, the Swami remains here and practices meditation to keep his spirit high.

Vадantananda lives alone without any helper in a cave

does not allow people to enter his cave and if disturbed his outburst is enough to keep the onlookers at bay.

Aged about 55 years, the Swami said that about 21 years ago he heard a call from mother Ganga and went straight to the Gangotri shrine. Since then, the idea of being separated from this mother has not come to his mind, he says. He avoids talking on other subjects and shuns opining on other matters, preferring to talk only about the goddess Ganga.

U'khand AAP sees red on CM Dhama's tourist remark

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand unit of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has reacted strongly to the statement of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama in which he had said that AAP had come and gone from Uttarakhand like a tourist. The state convener of AAP, Jot Singh Bisht said that this statement of the CM which he made during his recent Delhi visit smacks of a conspiracy to promote defections in other parties and hurts the democracy. He said that the fact is that the Uttarakhand CM has got uncomfortable from the manner in which the AAP governments led by Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann in Delhi and Punjab respectively are taking steps to solve the basic problems of the people. Bisht said instead of making such comments the CM should make a statement on

his plan to increase the income of the state as the BJP government has loaded a debt burden of Rs 1 lakh crore on Uttarakhand. Launching a scathing attack on the state government for its failure to manage the Char Dham Yatra, Bisht said that 60 pilgrims have died in the Yatra so far but the CM of the state is busy visiting temples to seek divine blessings for himself for Champawat by polls and his ministers are having fun in Dubai and Delhi. He also attacked the state government for removing the contractual health workers who were appointed during the pandemic of Covid-19. In an oblique reference to the resignation of colonel (retd) Ajay Kothiyal and other leaders, the AAP leader said that the party has always come out stronger in the last ten years.

12 new Covid-19 cases reported in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Health department of Uttarakhand reported 12 new patients of Covid-19 in the state on Monday. Death of no patient was reported in the state on the day. The authorities also declared 22 patients cured of the infection on the day. The department has so far detected 92,720 new cases of the disease from January 1 this year

cent on the day. The health department reported four new patients each from Dehradun and Nainital and one each from Tehri, Udham Singh Nagar and Uttarkashi on Monday.

The number of active patients of Covid-19 in the state was at 69 on Monday. Dehradun with 44 cases is at the top of the table of active



till date. A total of 88,119 patients have recovered from the disease so far in this year while 275 patients have died in the state since January 1 this year. The recovery percentage of the disease was at 96.12 per cent on Monday. The positivity rate of the disease was reported at 0.99 per

cent on the day. The health department reported four new patients each from Dehradun and Nainital and one each from Tehri, Udham Singh Nagar and Uttarkashi on Monday. The number of active patients of Covid-19 in the state was at 69 on Monday. Dehradun with 44 cases is at the top of the table of active

Election process starts for Rajya Sabha seat from Uttarakhand

The voting will take place on June 10 from 9 AM to 4 PM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN



The election commission has released the schedule for the election to the Rajya Sabha (RS) seat from Uttarakhand which is falling vacant due to the end of six year term of RS MP Pradeep Tamta. The process of the election would start with the notification on May 24. The chief electoral officer (CEO) Uttarakhand Sowjanya said that the term of RS MP Tamta is ending on July 4, 2022. She said that the process of the nomination would start on May 24 and May 31 is the last date of filing of nomination papers. The scrutiny of nomination papers would be done on June 1 and the candidates can take back their nomination papers till June 3. The voting would take place on June 10 from 9 am to 4 pm. The counting of votes would be done on the same day and the entire process would end before June 14.

and two independents. The ruling BJP has sent a panel consisting of ten leaders to the party high command for the RS seat. The panel includes the

name of former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat. However the opposition Congress has not opened its cards on its candidate for the RS seat.

RS election schedule sets up a cloud over Budget session of assembly

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The schedule for the RS seat in Uttarakhand has set up a cloud of suspense over the holding of the budget session of state assembly in Gairsain from June 7. As per the schedule, the notification for which would be released on Tuesday (May 24), the voting would be held on June 10. The chief electoral officer (CEO) of Uttarakhand has mentioned that the nomination papers can be obtained by the candidate from Room number 33 of Vidhan Sabha building Dehradun from the secretary or joint secretary or returning officer or assistant returning officer which means the voting would also be held

in Dehradun. It is pertinent to mention here that the state administration has already submitted a plan to hold the budget session of state assembly at Gairsain from June 7 which means that the members would have to come to Dehradun on Friday, June 10 for casting their votes. However the voting would not be required in case the opposition Congress decides not to nominate its candidate. It is learnt that the state government is now contemplating to hold the budget session in Dehradun or hold the session in Gairsain after the end of process of election of Rajya Sabha seat.

Never take easy way out, PM tells Indians in Japan

Says BJP Govt has made the Indian democracy strong and resilient in last eight years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/TOKYO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he never prefers to take the easy way out because of the teachings and training he received over the years.

Describing his work ethics during an interaction with the Indian diaspora in Tokyo, Modi said because of the teachings "I have got in my life, I have developed a habit that 'Mujhe makhann par lakeer karne mein maza nahi aata hain, main pathar par lakeer karta hoon."

He also said the BJP government has made Indian democracy strong and resilient. "In the last eight years, we have made our democracy strong and resilient. It is serving as one of the strongest pillars of progress," he said.

The Prime Minister said "We are working towards building a system that is not only inclusive but caters to a leak-proof governance to fulfill the aspirations of every citizen. We have a people-led government in the true sense in India today. This has become a key reason for strengthening democracy in India."

Japan are "natural partners" and Japanese investments have played an important role in India's development journey. Addressing the Indian community in Tokyo on the first day of his two-day visit to Tokyo, Modi also said India's relationship with Japan is of spirituality, of cooperation and of belonging. There are more than 40,000 Indians there.

"Today's world needs to follow the path shown by Lord Buddha. This is the way to save humanity from the challenges facing the world today, be it violence, anarchy, terrorism and climate change," Modi said.

Noting that India has always found a solution no matter how big the problem is, Modi said that during coronavirus pandemic, there was an atmosphere of uncertainty, but even in that situation, India supplied 'Made in India' vaccines to cores of its citizens and also sent it to more than 100 countries.

Tracing the age old relations between the two countries, Modi said before Vivekananda was going to Chicago for his historic address, he had come to Japan and left a deep impression on his mind in Japan. He had openly praised the patriotism



of the people of Japan, the confidence of the people of Japan, and the awareness of the people of Japan for cleanliness, the Prime Minister said.

He also said the world is realising the speed and scale on which India is increasing its infrastructure and capacity building. Japan is an important partner in building this capacity of ours.

India is fortunate enough to have the blessing from Gautam Buddha. India is continuously serving humanity no matter how big the challenge is, India will find a solution to it, he said.

Modi arrived in Tokyo on a two-day visit on Monday to attend a summit of the Quad leaders. "Landed in Tokyo. Will be taking part in various programmes during this visit including the Quad Summit,

meeting fellow Quad leaders, interacting with Japanese business leaders and the vibrant Indian diaspora," Modi tweeted in both Japanese and English.

"Ohayo, Tokyo! PM @narendramodi arrives to a warm welcome in Tokyo on what is his fifth visit to Japan in the last 8 years," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted.

Modi interacted with children outside the hotel in Tokyo. He also saw the drawing of a young girl and signed an autograph for her during his interaction with the children.

He then interacted with a boy who was waiting for him with a drawing of the tricolour. Prime Minister Modi asked him from where he learnt Hindi and praised him for his fluency in the language.

'India, Japan can be imp pillars of secure region'

Modi writes Op-ed in Yomiuri Shimbun in Japan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid China's aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asserted that India and Japan would contribute towards building an open, free and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, connected by secure seas, integrated by trade and investment, defined by respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity and anchored in international law.



partnership is expanding across a broad range of areas," he said in the article published in the mainline paper published from Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka and other major cities.

"Our defence ties are growing rapidly, from exercises and information exchanges to defence manufacturing. We are doing more in cyber, space and underwater domains," Modi said in article titled 'India-Japan: A Partnership for Peace, Stability and Prosperity'.

India and Japan will also contribute towards building an open, free and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, connected by secure seas, integrated by trade and investment, defined by respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity and anchored in international law, Prime Minister wrote, amidst China's aggressive postures in the region.

China has territorial disputes with many countries in the strategic Indo-Pacific

region including Taiwan over which the US President on Monday sent a warning to Beijing with the latter verbally retaliating.

The Chinese government claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea.

"Besides security, together and with like-minded partners in the region and beyond, in institutions and arrangements like Quad, we are promoting initiatives for development, infrastructure, connectivity, sustainability, health, vaccines, capacity building and humanitarian disaster response in the region," Prime Minister Modi said.

"Special, Strategic, Global. Each of these three words that describe the India-Japan partnership has a unique significance, yet they fall well short of the true potential of our ties," Modi said.

In a tweet, he said: "Penned an op-ed on the vibrant relations between India and Japan. Ours is a partnership for peace, stability and prosperity. I trace the journey of our special friendship which

completes 70 glorious years. @Yomiuri_Online"

"I have had the opportunity of regularly interacting with the Japanese people since my days as Gujarat CM. Japan's developmental strides have always been admirable. Japan is partnering India in key sectors including infrastructure, technology, innovation, start-ups and more," he said in a series of tweets.

From Bodhisena to Swami Vivekananda, India-Japan cultural ties have a long and rich history of mutual respect and learning from one another, Prime Minister said.

Among Mahatma Gandhi's cherished personal possessions were small statues of Mizuru, Kikazaru and Iwazaru, the Three Wise Monkeys, he said.

Prime Minister Modi said that his own conviction about this partnership began in his early days as Chief Minister of Gujarat.

It was not just the sophistication of Japanese technology and skills, but also the seriousness and long-term commitment of Japan's leadership and businesses, that made Japan Gujarat's preferred industrial partner and the most prominent presence in Vibrant Gujarat Summits since its inception, he said.

INSHORT

NCPDR ORDERS FIR AGAINST RALLY ORGANISERS New Delhi: The apex child rights body NCPDR on Monday sought registration of an FIR against those responsible for allegedly letting a child raise provocative slogans during a political rally in Kerala. A short video of a boy sitting on the shoulder of a person during the 'Save the Republic' rally held by the Popular Front of India (PFI) in Alappuzha on May 21 and raising allegedly provocative slogans has gone viral on social media.

Now, pension relief for kin of missing Central Govt staff in militancy-hit areas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

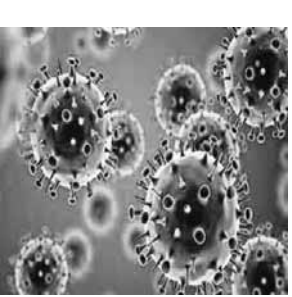
In a major relief, particularly for Government employees serving in militancy affected areas like Jammu & Kashmir, North-East as well as Naxal prone pockets, the Centre has notified rules extending pensionary benefits to missing Central Government employees. According to the earlier rule, the next of kin of an employee would not receive the family pension, if he or she went missing and the family pension would not be paid till the missing Government was declared dead in accordance with the law or till seven years had passed since he went missing.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh announced that the government has relaxed family pension rules for missing central government employees. "Now, in all cases where a government servant covered by NPS goes missing during service, the benefits of family pension will be immediately paid to the family of the missing government servant. In case he re-appears and resumes service, the amount paid as family pension during the intervening time of his missing period can be accordingly deducted from his salary," Jitendra Singh said in a Press note. The Minister said this is going to provide huge relief particularly in those regions where instances of government employees going missing are reported more frequently. He said, cases of abduction of central government employees working in violence-prone areas have come to the fore and therefore to instill confidence and to protect them and their family interests, the changes in the pension rules were brought about.

New Covid variants don't pose a threat yet, says INSACOG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Though the first confirmed BA.4 and BA.5 variants of the Sars-CoV-2 have been detected in India from Hyderabad and Tamil Nadu respectively, these do not yet pose a concern as its other variant, BA.2, an offshoot of Omicron, continues to be dominant in India, already prevalent widely across the country, said the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) in its latest bulletin. "BA.2.10 and BA.2.12 are BA.2 sub-lineages that have been detected and many old BA.2 sequences have been reclassified into these new sub-lineages. So far these sub-lineages are not reported to be associated with increased severity of disease," said INSACOG in its latest bulletin on results of genome sequencing. According to data submitted



to GSAID during the past four weeks, 773 samples were of the Omicron variant, making it about 97.2% of the total submitted samples of the said variant. "Suspected recombinant sequences are under further analysis," said the consortium in the bulletin. The BA.4 variant was detected earlier this month in Hyderabad in samples taken from a traveller from South Africa, where this strain of Omicron has been causing the current Covid-19 wave, people aware of the matter said, adding that this information is subject to an official confirmation.

Inter-State Council with PM as chairman, six Mins reconstituted

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Inter-State Council that works to promote and support cooperative federalism has been reconstituted with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Chairman and all Chief Ministers and six Union Ministers as members. This apart, 10 Union Ministers will be the permanent invitees to the Inter-State Council. According to an official notification, the union ministers who were made members of the council are: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Virendra Kumar, Hardeep Singh Puri, Nitin Gadkari, S Jaishankar, Arjun



Munda, Piyush Goyal, Dharamendra Pradhan, Pralhad Joshi, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Kiren Rijiju and Bhupender Yadav. The mandate of the council is to create a strong institutional framework to promote and support cooperative federalism in the country, activate the council and zonal councils by organising its regular meetings. It also facilitates consideration of all pending and emerging issues of the centre-state and inter-state relations by the zonal councils and inter-state council and develop a sound system of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-state council and zonal councils.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND Applications are invited for filling up the two posts of Staff Car Driver (Ordinary Grade) (General Central Services, Group C, Non-Gazetted, Non-Ministerial) in the Pay Matrix Level 2 of the Pay Matrix (Rs. 19900-63200/-) as per 7th CPC in the Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi on Deputation/Absorption basis from amongst the Dispatch Rider (Group 'C') and Group 'C' employees in level - 1 in pay matrix (Rs. 18000-56900/-) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare who possess valid Driving License for Motor Cars on the basis of a Driving Test to assess the competence to drive Motor Cars failing which from officials holding the post of Dispatch Rider on regular basis or regular Group 'C' employees in level - 1 in the pay matrix (Rs. 18000-56900/-) in other Ministries of the Central Government.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PMGSY (JKRRDA) DIVISION BARAMULLA NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS NIT No.: 02/EE/PMGSY/Blam/E-TENDERING-OF-2022-23 Dated:- 21/05/2022 For and on behalf of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Executive Engineer PMGSY Division Baramulla invite e tenders on Percentage Basis for the following works with Two Years DLP for Serial No. 1 to 3 & Three years DLP for Serial No. 4 from the eligible & approved contractors of J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other States.

ED seizes foreign currency worth ₹1.53-cr at Kolkata airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has seized foreign currencies worth Rs 1.53 crore from a domestic passenger at the Kolkata airport under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). The flyer had travelled from Gorakhpur to Kolkata with the foreign currencies. "During search (of the suspect flyer), 1,998 numbers of foreign currencies consisting of USD 1,65,000 and Euro 30,460 (equivalent to Rs 1.53 crore) were found in the possession of the passenger. However, he has failed to provide the source of the said foreign exchange and the purpose of traveling with such a huge amount of foreign exchange without any valid document.

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Making allegations against judges now 'unfortunately' becoming new fashion: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday said that making allegations against judges is "unfortunately" becoming a new fashion now and the stronger the judge, the greater the allegations against him. The apex court, while hearing an appeal filed by an advocate who was found guilty of contempt by the Madras

High Court and was sentenced to undergo two weeks of simple imprisonment, observed that making allegations against judges is rampant in Uttar Pradesh and now it is happening in Bombay and Madras also.

The top court said the conduct of the appellant was "thoroughly contemptuous" and besides levelling wanton allegations against the single

judge of the high court who had issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him, the recusal of one of the judges hearing the proceedings there- upon was sought on thoroughly improper grounds.

"Now, this is becoming unfortunately a new fashion of making allegations against judges. The stronger the judge, the greater the allegations against the judge. This is hap-

pening now in Bombay. Of course, it is rampant in Uttar Pradesh, now Madras," a vacation bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Bela M Trivedi said. "Let a strong message go," said the bench, adding that judges are assaulted across the country and in the district judiciary, sometimes not even a 'lathi' (stick) wielding policeman is there for their protection.

Centre warns restaurants against forceful service charge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) on Monday warned restaurants against levying service charges forcefully on consumers. The department has reminded restaurants and eateries that it is the discretion of the consumers to pay or not pay the service charges as they are completely voluntary. The DoCA has convened a meeting with the National Restaurant Association (NRA) on June 2 to discuss the issue. In a letter written by Rohit Kumar Singh, Secretary, DoCA to President, National Restaurant Association of India, it has been pointed out that the restaurants and eateries are collecting service charge

from consumers by default, even though collection of any such charge is voluntary and at the discretion of consumers and not mandatory as per law. It has been pointed out in the letter that the consumers are forced to pay service charge, often fixed at arbitrarily high rates by restaurants. Consumers are also being falsely misled on the legality of such charges and harassed by restaurants on making a request to remove such charges from the bill amount. "Since this issue impacts consumers at large on a daily basis and has significant ramifications on the rights of consumers, the department construed it necessary to examine it with closer scrutiny and detail," the letter further adds.

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ASHA workers get Global Health Leaders Award, PM lauds feat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Known as the pillars of the healthcare system in India, one million ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers have brought laurels to the country as they bagged the Global Health Leaders Award-2022 at the ongoing 75th World Health Assembly in Geneva. "ASHA (which means hope in Hindi) are more than 1 million female volunteers in India, honoured for the crucial role in linking the com-

munity with the health system, to ensure those living in rural poverty can access primary healthcare services, as shown throughout the Covid-19 pandemic," said a statement from the World Health Organisation (WHO). They were one of the six recipients of the award. The ASHA initiative, which falls under the National Health Mission, was launched in India in 2006. However, they are not well-paid. But this has not deterred them from doing yeoman services, which were particularly visible dur-

ing the Covid crisis in the last two years. Soon after an announcement was made by the WHO conferring award on them, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to appreciate them. "Delighted that the entire team of ASHA workers have been conferred the WHO Director-General's Global Health Leaders' Award. Congratulations to all ASHA workers. They are at the forefront of ensuring a healthy India. Their dedication and determination are admirable," he said.

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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



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

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?

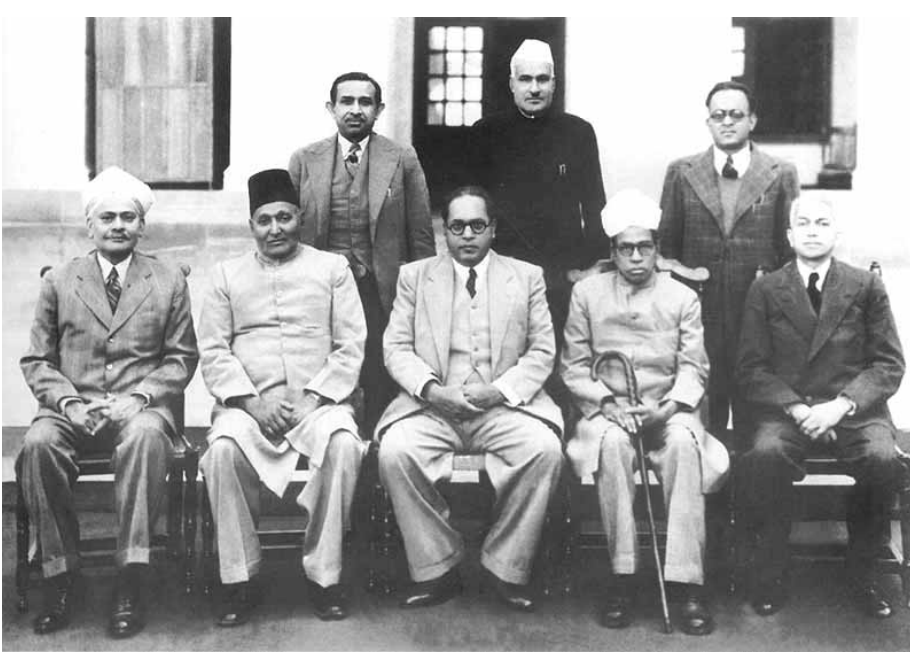


JS RAJPUT

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

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 loudspeaker 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

to every politician — and also high-perk-privilege-drawing bureaucrats to ponder over what this courageous leader — a member of the AICC for 39 years and arrested by the British 11 times, expressed as his serious apprehension: "Although I have every respect and praise for this Constitution, yet there is one thing which I am most afraid of; and it is that this Constitution is tendentious to create a class a class that democracy has created everywhere of professional politicians."

He had great apprehensions on politics becoming a profession, with allurements of power, perks and privileges. This apprehension has really come true. Mahavir Tyagi, as many others, wanted professionals to come to politics, with all of their expertise, to strengthen the system, but earn their livelihood from their own vocation. Today, exceptions apart, it is inheritance and allurements of power, perks and privileges. This is the current comprehension of the spirit of Ambedkar's Constitution.

But for Mahavir Tyagi and his ilk, it was different: "Only one thing will make this Constitution attractive. If the whole of this Constitution were provided with one supreme provision or safeguard, then I think the whole thing will be all right. It is this: If we could add a proviso to it as follows: "Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution, no citizen of India shall draw for his personal use either from the public exchequer or from private enterprise a pay, profit or allowance which exceeds the earnings of an average wage earner." Could there be any takers among the elected representatives in this third decade of the 21st century?

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity. The views expressed are personal.)

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

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.

Zeeshan | 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) Ashram 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. Stephen Hawking had unequivocally predicted ('a veiled threat') that our planet will gradually rise its temperature and will become a 'hot-fireball' in next six centuries; and to protect it - "we need to act now before it's too late". The human's lust for deriving more power from fossil fuels for our vehicles and industry is having a serious cause of concerns of scientists and environmental experts; warrants to have adequate notice of active derivative - "The Wax" - we use very frequently in our daily life. We burn every-year more than three 'billion-candles' on cultural and religious occasions. They significantly increase the level of 'greenhouse gases', inviting new threats to human health. Most of the candles are made from 'Paraffin wax' - derivative of petroleum - which have common carcinogenic toxins released by burning of diesel in IC engines. For instance, each 50 gm household candle burns for about four hours. That produces about 39 gm of carbon dioxide. A single candle thus produces nearly 30 times more carbon dioxide than a single fire-cracker which produces a mere 0.4 gm. The 'collective flames of earth's gradual burning' are reaching to the coldest region Antarctica opening-up the gate-ways of destruction of humanity from multiple fronts ranging from North and South poles of Antarctica to the ecologically vulnerable and fragile-points known as 'third pole of earth' - the Himalayan range - melting the precious



'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. Is the sun to blame for rising temperature on earth? No. The earth's climate is influenced by the sun and acts as giver of life. However, the scorching heat touching new records is not attributable to the sun's activities. The most abundant 'greenhouse gases' physically or chemically are responsible. "It will continue to get more-hotter and fiercer until humans stop burning of fossil fuels" climatologists from Oxford University contend.

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 warming has increased, since 1975, at the rate of roughly by 0.15 to 0.20°C per decade. Planets like Venus have carbon dioxide content that is 1,54,000 times more than on earth (about 19000 times on Mars). It produces such Green House Gases impact that the surface temperature is over 475 degree Celsius, sufficient to melt lead. The alerts of Stephen Hawking warrant serious measures to bridle this spiral at any cost. Some studies at University of North Carolina predict that five lakh lives can be saved by the year 2030 if the GHG are controlled. For mitigating the impact of the lurking shadow of climatic dangers, all the countries should unanimously step-up their priorities and revisit the whole issue of 'using fossil fuels and its derivatives' to meet our 'bare-minimum needs' only. Accordingly, India being more vulnerable in respect of pollution-related issues, it is high time the regulatory authorities framed more stringent guidelines and launched massive public-awareness campaigns across the nation for the betterment of our future generations.

(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

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



UTTAM GUPTA

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. This results in huge under-recovery on units sold to HHs/farmers.

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 Ujjwal 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 electrici-

ty 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 to maximize generation and to domestic coal based plants to do 10 percent/30 percent blending with imported coal will result in sharp increase 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 intrinsi-

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.



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.

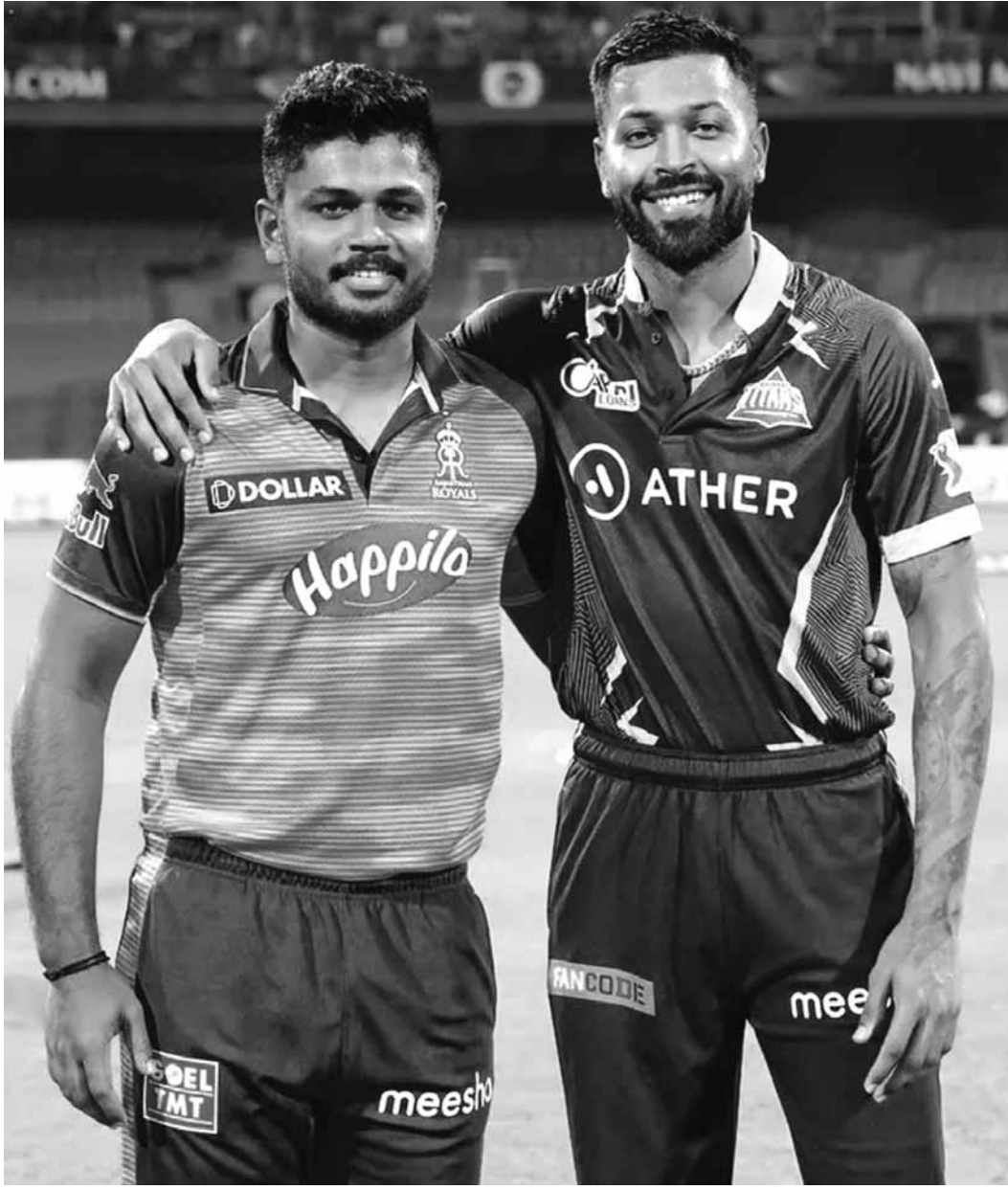
Their weak link was their top-order batting with highly-rated Shubman Gill failing to convert his starts but the addition of veteran Wriddhiman Saha has done wonders for the team.

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 Riyan 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.

I kept learning as a batter & captain: Sanju Samson

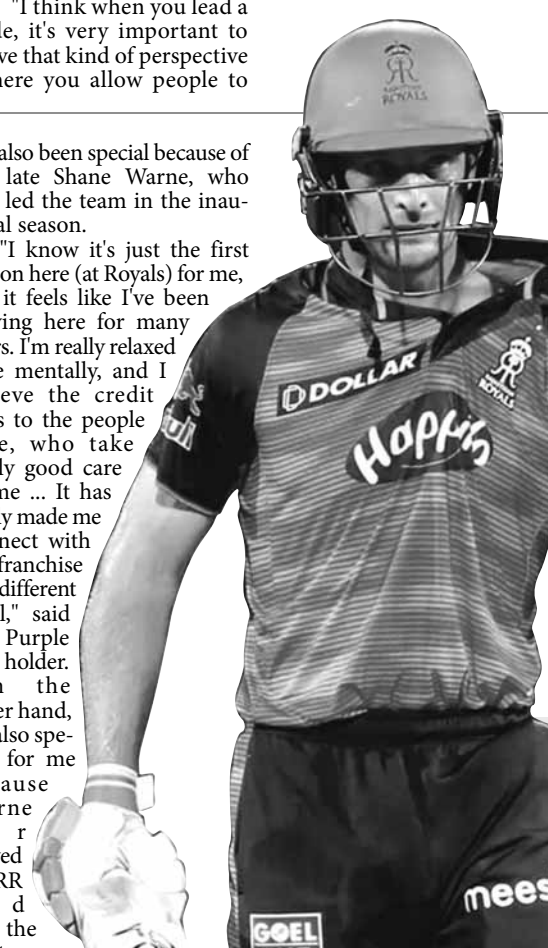
PTI ■ KOLKATA

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 I kept on learning 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."



WARNE HAS BEEN WATCHING ME FROM ABOVE: CHahal
Yuzvendra Chahal credited his success to the closely knit group and said playing for RR

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 Sharmin 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 pacemaker 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.

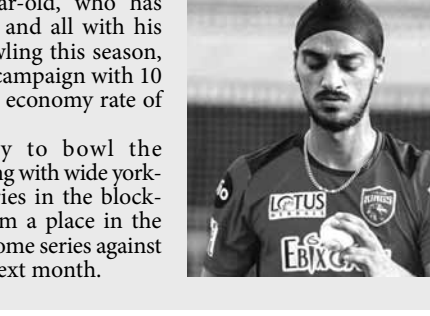
Arshdeep delighted to represent India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Delighted to earn a maiden national call-up, 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.

