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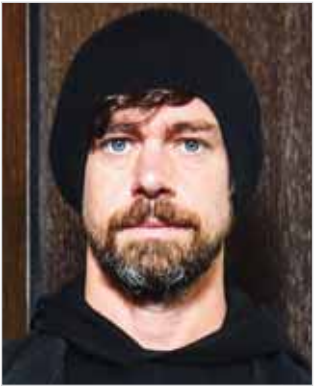
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Serious charges

The allegations of former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey are very sensitive and must be investigated

The recent controversy surrounding Jack Dorsey, former CEO of Twitter, and his statement alleging government intimidation by the Indian authorities during the farmers' agitation has raised significant concerns. The claim that the Indian government forced Twitter to remove around 300 accounts has sparked a heated debate regarding freedom of expression, accountability of social media platforms, and the role of governments in regulating online spaces. While these allegations must be taken seriously, it is crucial to approach the issue with a balanced perspective that weighs the interests of all stakeholders involved. The allegations made by Jack Dorsey regarding government intimidation in India during the farmer's agitation deserve a thorough examination. While it is important to address any potential overreach or suppression of free speech, we must also recognise the need for social media platforms to operate within the legal frameworks of the countries in which they operate. Achieving a delicate balance between



free expression and accountability is essential in our increasingly connected world. Transparency, collaboration, and responsible governance can help foster an environment where democratic values are upheld, and the rights of all stakeholders are respected.

The allegations made by Dorsey are shocking, to say the least. He in an interview said that Twitter was constantly intimidated by the Government to block and limit the accounts of around 300 activists, and journalists who were not on the same page as the government. Twitter was threatened with raids, putting the staff behind bars and even kicking out Twitter from India. The Indian Government has vehemently denied the allegations and accused Twitter of violating the law. In a Twitter post, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, India's deputy minister for information technology, called Dorsey's claims an outright lie. He said no one was jailed or a single raid conducted on Twitter premises. However, to put things in perspective several accounts were indeed blocked or limited including the Twitter account of Rahul Gandhi, and the official Twitter account of protesting farmers though many were de-blocked after a while. The opposition has been alleging that the government is resorting to undeclared 'Emergency' and controlling media and intimidating the journalists and activists who dare to speak against it. Social media, which is an extension of the mainstream media is the voice of the people and must not be muzzled on flimsy premises. The fact of the matter is that many journalists have their Twitter accounts suspended or limited on flimsy grounds which is a breach of the fundamental right to right and expression. Twitter has also alleged that the government has acted in an arbitrary fashion, just dictating terms without giving specific reasons for account deletion or suspension. Last year, Twitter moved to Karnataka High Court seeking relief on content. The Government must come clean and tell its side of the story so that the image of the country in the world as a free democracy does not suffer.

PICTALK



The Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple reflected in Padmatheertham pond, in Thiruvananthapuram

Oppn must support Modi's global agenda



TARUN CHUGH

The Opposition needs to introspect if it has played a constructive role in issues that are of grave importance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the US Congress on June 22. This will be the second occasion that PM Modi will address the US Congress. India's G20 Presidency has brought a global focus on the country, as the country has become a voice of the Global South.

The world order is in flux. The global humanity is facing a host of challenges and they require urgent attention. Disruptive technologies, financial inequity, healthcare access, climate change, pandemic response, global response, and energy transition are some of the issues currently at the top of the global agenda. India has shown leadership in all global issues, including advocating peace efforts in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

India in the last financial year registered 7.2 per cent GDP growth. India has once more come out as the fastest-growing economy in the world. By becoming the fifth largest economy in the world, India is being sought after by the developed world. India has regularly been taking part in the G7 meetings. Indian economy is bigger than four of the G7 countries. Thus, India is being accorded a pivotal position in global economic affairs.

It must also be mentioned that the Indian voice on issues such as Climate Change is heard with all seriousness. By forming International Solar Alliance, India has shown the roadmap for the clean energy transition to achieve the goal of net zero emissions. At the same time, India raised the voice of the Global South and the poor countries strongly at the Hiroshima Summit of the G7 meeting.

At such a juncture, it's important to keep a tab on the Indian political leaders and their responses to prepare a collective response for the country on such global challenges. In matters of international affairs, India for decades has had a consensus stance among the political leaders to speak in



one voice. This unity served the national interests of the country well in times when India faced challenges. Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee spoke for India when he was abroad as an Opposition leader. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi needs to know that when he attempts to belittle PM Modi during his foreign visits, he ends up harming Indian interests. The Opposition needs to introspect if it has been able to do a constructive role in responding to issues that are of grave importance. By falling for the greed to spread disinformation, the Opposition does more harm to the Indian interests and even harms credibility in people's eyes.

India came out with two vaccines when the world was battling the Covid-19 pandemic. PM Modi made it clear that the Indian vaccines are for the people of the world. When the developed world was stocking the vaccines, India was sending them to the poor countries that could not have bought costly doses from the multinational companies. India not only vaccinated its population but also provid-



PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES PROVIDE PLATFORMS FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TO BECOME EQUAL STAKEHOLDERS IN FORMULATING RESPONSES OF THE COUNTRY ON KEY CHALLENGES

ed protective shields to millions of people the world over. Even during the pandemic outbreak, the Opposition could not play a constructive role. The Opposition had run a campaign against India's vaccine diplomacy. But India won the hearts of people all over the world, and the goodwill gained now serves the national interests of the country. Opposition for the sake of opposition makes for bad politics. Parliamentary committees provide platforms for the members of the opposition parties to become equal stakeholders in formulating responses of the country on key challenges. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one such disruptive technology. AI is being widely debated in the parliaments of developed countries. The Opposition in our country should also come forward and share their views on the issue which can be considered by the government.

On global issues, India should speak in one voice. When PM Modi would address the US Congress second time in his tenure as the prime minister of the

country, the world will be looking at him with the hope that India will be able to provide solutions to several challenges faced by global humanity. The global hope from India is also because the country rushed foodgrains to countries that faced acute hunger crises after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. PM Modi, in equal measures, told both Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky that diplomacy is the way out of war.

The record FDI flow in the country shows that the world truly believes in the Indian economy. The trained Indian manpower is being sought after in the Middle East, Europe, the US, and Australia. The emergence of India as a global power is also being welcomed by people all across the world, as they know that India has always positively contributed to global humanity. This calls for the Opposition parties to sit back and reflect and also introspect.

(Author is the national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Sir — BJP-ruled Manipur is finished due to widespread violence as per police report today many villagers were killed and hundreds have been injured when suspected militants attacked Khamelock village in Imphal East district and fired indiscriminately. Unofficial sources put the death toll at 11 which is suspicious and misleading. A police official said that heavily armed militants attacked the Khamelock village late on Tuesday night and fired on the villagers from automatic weapons killing many people on the spot and injuring others. The victims were either sleeping or just finished their dinner when the extremists rained bullets from their sophisticated arms. The injured were immediately taken to various hospitals but they gave up. The death toll is likely to increase as the condition of several of the wounded is stated to be critical. It is high time the Centre must dismiss the state government and impose the President's rule as law and order have collapsed across the state and people live in fear.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

1000 DAYS AND COUNTING

Sir — 1,000 days completed since Umar Khalid has been arrested. Muslim social workers and students including Umar Khalid had been arrested after Delhi Violence. Almost all except a few are still behind bars. The saddest thing is that the Muslim population is 14% while their number in jails is 30%. Hence, it shows that not only Khalid's but countless Muslim youth's bright lives have darkened in prisons.

Tausif Qamar | Howrah

WHY REFUSE A BONA-FIDE THOUGHT?

Sir — By the laws of nature, one can only succeed if one can go with the flow. But success matters when you have people around you to celebrate it. In a society where speed and the ability to adapt accordingly matter, a thing called "relationship" loses its halo. Changes are inevitable; every person changes with time but at the cost of their

No honking day



Through the columns of your esteemed newspaper, I would like to draw the attention of the Central Government towards the need to celebrate 'No-Honking Day' in all metropolitan cities of the country and not just in Mumbai. Honking is a common problem that is faced by almost all people of metropolitan cities. Whether the traffic is slow or someone doesn't drive carefully, people always honk at it. But honking has become a major and more serious problem than what we expected. Honking causes pain in the ears and sometimes it is so fatal that it causes loss of hearing. The average human ear can sustain a volume of up to 80 decibels but honking goes around 90-110 decibels. Honking also causes frustration

and loss of temper. A lot of disputes on the road also take place due to continuous honking. Honking causes noise pollution which results in respiratory agitation, racing pulse, high blood pressure, headaches and in case of extreme loud honking, gastritis, colitis and even heart and panic attacks.

As per the survey from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Honking causes almost 60-70% of noise pollution. No Honking Day can help to reduce 60-70% of noise pollution which is an effective way to increase the Health and Happiness index. No Honking is also an effective way to safeguard people's life whose ears are sensitive. Shri Nitin Gadkari, Central Minister for Road Transport and Highways, has also announced the replacement of honks by Indian musical Instruments.

I would request you to publish my letter in your newspaper and make our society and government aware of this threatening danger of honking and 'No-Honking Day' as an effective way to curb this danger.

Sarthak Kothari | New Delhi

relationships. One thing that makes animals and humans different is social communication. We often call it 'staying in touch'. But one interesting rule about staying in touch is 'approach me first,' i.e., I will only approach you when you approach me. This 'approach first' mentality is a second thought that often worsens relationships. Quashing this mentality, one must call, message, or meet the person without thinking about who approached first or who communicates frequently. Second thoughts are generally appreciated at work, not in relationships. So, if you miss a person, without any second thought, just initiate communication and try to stay in touch. Reason: You miss them!

Aditi Singh Jadoune | Ujjain

PASSENGERS STUCK

Sir — Passengers of Air India's Mumbai to Doha flight were stuck at the Mumbai

airport on Tuesday after their flight was delayed for more than 17 hours. The flight was scheduled to depart at 7.30 pm on Monday. Several passengers took to Twitter to complain that Air India's staff had not provided any information or help amid the long flight delay. Everyone knows quite well that time is Precious in human life. It becomes most precious in the course of travelling by plane in particular, no body can feel flattered by hearing this sort of disgusting news that the Passengers are seeking help and are not getting appropriate information about flight. So, It is a very very concerning matter that requires the respective staff office of Mumbai airport to ponder the recent problem and bring betterment in airline systems

Md Shahnawa | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Need to promote Indian science

We must develop a science-policy engagement forum to popularise the breakthroughs in Indian labs

Many times scientific community and politicians come to crossroads while promoting scientific discoveries. Even though every research lab managed by central, state and private organizations does ground-breaking discoveries, very few get public attention. Why is it so? Every scientific research will have an output that is bound to affect the common man's life. But the public is carried away by news value research like the space-related ones that get gets media attention. There are many labs where scientists toil their life to find cures for various diseases, develop high-yielding plant varieties, find solutions to conserve the ecosystem, make our daily life easier by developing various technologies for infrastructure and communication, etc. But unfortunately, poor scientists, though gets acceptance from their peer group, don't find acceptance from the common man.



Even when our spending on R&D has tripled in the last 10 years, members of the scientific community and the public often complain about the lack of budgetary allocation for scientific research. Even after 75 years of experience, we don't have confidence in our researchers. We still provide more value to people having overseas experience or publications in foreign journals for job selection. If India has to become the global leader in science our policymakers should value the scientific contribution made by the candidate in the Indian laboratories. Only these people can understand the issues affecting our society and find remedies for them. Only when scientific discoveries reach the poorest of society science will get respect and attention. Here comes the need to develop a science-policy engagement forum through which our scientific community, policymakers and citizen-science groups can frequently interact.

Science policy engagement refers to the active involvement of scientists and researchers in shaping and influencing policy decisions at various levels, including local, national, and international. By engaging with policymakers, political leaders, administrators and diplomats, scientists can contribute their expertise, scientific evidence, and insights to inform policy development and decision-making processes. Scientists should communicate scientific concepts, evidence, and findings to policymakers in a manner that is accessible, concise, and relevant to their policy concerns using language that policymakers can understand.

They should present scientific information in a format that is easy to comprehend, such as infographics, policy briefs, or executive summaries. Similarly, they should engage with a range of stakeholders, including NGOs, industry representatives, community groups, and advocacy organizations. Even people from industries should also be made part of this. Many times scientific discovery become popular only



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

after the product reaches society. Collaborating with diverse stakeholders can help build coalitions, broaden the impact of engagement efforts, and strengthen the legitimacy of policy recommendations. They enable scientists to communicate their research findings, address gaps in their research, and recommendations to policymakers thereby highlighting their research findings at the global level. Building trust and rapport is crucial for effective engagement.

Science policy engagement is an essential avenue for scientists to contribute their expertise, promote evidence-based decision-making, and shape policies that address societal challenges. By actively engaging with policymakers, scientists can bridge the gap between science and policy, promoting the use of scientific evidence to inform policy choices. These interfaces should operate transparently, ensuring clarity about their purpose and processes. Openness promotes trust and credibility.

(Biju Dharmapalan is a science communicator & columnist)



FIRST COLUMN

LIVE LIFE IN A YOGIC WAY

Yoga is not just a set of exercises, it is workout for body, mind and soul



RAVI VALLURI

On the 21st of June, Summer Solstice in Northern Hemisphere, as has been for several years in a row now, millions across the globe will assemble in schools, parks, offices, educational and scientific institutions, and various establishments and unison they will perform yoga. The world will become a Yoga Mat under the azure sky. The United Nations has not only endorsed observing International Yoga Day but has given a major thumbs-up to this ancient Indian practice and has taken up popularising it across the universe.

A symphony synchronizing the body, mind and soul As a music lover, one fondly recalls the iconic lyrics of Across the Universe by the Beatles. Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup They slither wildly as they slip away across the Universe Pools of sorrow and waves of joy are drifting through my opened mind Possessing and caressing me Jai Guru Deva, Om Jai Guru Deva implies the victory of the big mind. Om, when fragmented into three syllables – AAA (the hubbub that emanates from the abdomen), UUU (the reverberation emerging from the chest region) and MMM (the resonance materialising from the head region).

Yoga is a kind of exercise in which a practitioner locomotes the human body into several distinct and diverse positions to attain physical fitness and flexibility. While performing yogic exercises the sadhak has to invariably pay attention to the breath.

METAPHYSICAL DEMEANOUR

The root of the word yoga lies in the Sanskrit word – yuj – authentically meaning to conjoin. While Lord Shiva is believed to be the original progenitor of this ancient science, Maharishi Patanjali revealed to humanity the intricacies of yogic science through his treatise Patanjali Yoga Sutra.



AN INSIGHT INTO SHIRSHASANA

The asana involves inverting the body, with hands, neck and shoulders bearing the entire weight of the body. The first step is the Vajrasana. Through a series of fluid steps to be executed at a slow, measured pace, the practitioner moves from Vajrasana to the final pose where the legs are held straight up, toes pointing upwards and the arms cradling the head, with the elbows bent at right angles for further support.

As a practitioner holds the pose, it works against the pressure of gravity, assisting in draining impure blood from the lower limbs and also enhancing blood flow to the head and neck regions.

Moving out the asana has also to be done at the same measured pace to prevent injuries. This involves tracing all the steps backwards until one moves into Shishuasana. It is advisable to rest the body in Shavasana following this asana.

Beginners are advised to practice Shirshasana at the end of their yogic asana programme while advanced practitioners can perform it either at the beginning or the end of a yogic session. It may be mentioned that the asana is very powerful to awaken the Sahasrara chakra, which is responsible for the lofty position this sovereign among asanas enjoys.

However, there is a word of caution. Shirshasana is contra-indicated for those individuals suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems, chronic glaucoma, and host of other diseases. It should neither be practised during pregnancy nor menstruation. The practitioner should learn the craft under the careful guidance and supervision of a trained yoga instructor.

(The writer is the CEO of Chattisgarh East Railway Ltd, East west Railway Ltd and is a faculty of the Art of Living)

Export units can bolster new foreign trade policy



AS MITTAL

The export-oriented industry has the potential to make the Indian economy a USD 5 trillion economy



Export plays a pivotal role in the economic development of a nation. To give impetus to export the long-awaited new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) came into effect on 1 April 2023, has set a target of achieving 2 trillion US dollars in exports by 2030 and seeks to integrate India further into global value chains as an export hub. Lastly, the FTP has added four new 'Towns of Export Excellence' (TEE) in addition to the already existing 39 towns of export excellence.

In the country of 766 districts, only 43 towns of export excellence get leverage of fiscal incentives for global market surveys and brand promotions, setting up warehouses, and import of capital goods at zero customs duty for export-oriented production. These biased efforts diluted the concept of 'One District-One Product' and 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas'. Therefore, a holistic approach has become more important than ever and focuses on syncing, streamlining, and synergizing foreign trade policy objectives while simultaneously ensuring its compatibility and coherence with the global trading system. Thus, significant changes and refinements are needed to make the new FTP suitable at the policy level as well as for EXIM (Export-Import) operations.

The new Foreign Trade Policy 2023-2028 has set a goal to make India a US\$ 5 trillion economy, which needs to go beyond its standard format, which has remained unchanged since the policy was introduced in 2004. Instead of a few Towns of Export Excellence with few products like handicrafts, hosiery, handloom, apparel, etc, the focus on 'Industries of Export Excellence' (IEE) is needed. There is a need for policy rationalization to level the playing field for export-oriented industrial sectors, which can off-take directly in the export market at large. For expansion in foreign trade, the government must assess the demand for key products in the global market, to ensure



HAVING A 65 PER CENT SHARE IN THE GLOBAL MARKET, INDIA IS THE LEADING EXPORTER OF BASMATI RICE, OF WHICH PUNJAB HOLDS A 45 PER CENT SHARE

(The writer is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice Chairman of Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board. Views expressed are personal)

export volumes, values, scale, and intensity. The new FTP should incorporate a plan to identify and promote the key sectors like textile and apparel, bicycles, auto parts, tractor, engineering goods, hand, and machine tools, and agri-products like basmati, fruits & vegetables, and dairy products.

Export Share and Scope: Still, India has been struggling to raise its share of global export of merchandise to 2 per cent. World's largest milk producer, with a 24% global share of milk production but less than 0.5% of world dairy exports from India. The second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, a food-surplus economy failed to export its valuable surpluses.

Basmati: Having a 65 per cent share in the global market, India is the leading exporter of basmati rice, of which Punjab holds a 45 per cent share. There is huge scope to diversify from non-basmati to basmati to tap the new global markets as there is a gap in the export of both commodities as 39.50 lakh tonnes of basmati rice exports with forex earnings of Rs. 26,417 crores during 2021-22, whereas non-basmati export was 72 lakh tonnes worth 45652 crores in the same period. Still, there is huge scope to tap the new global markets for basmati rice export.

Textile and Apparel: The size of the Indian textile and apparel market is estimated at \$153 billion, 70% of which is domestic consumption while exports constitute the rest 30%, while India's share in the global export market is 5% while China is the largest supplier of textile and apparel with a 37% share followed by Bangladesh with 7% and India stood as 4th largest supplier. USA, UAE and

UK, Germany, France, and Australia are potential export markets.

Tractor: In the global market of 30 lakh tractors annually, India's production share accounts for 33%, over 10 lakh units in a year. Germany leads as an exporter in the global market with a 16% share while India's share is still 2.2%. Out of 10 lacks total production, around 9 lakh units were sold in the domestic market while 1.31 lakh units were exported in 2022, with a share of 34% Sonalika is the largest exporter from the county. Still, the Potential export markets for India are the US, Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, SAARC, and African nations which can lead to over export of 2 lakh tractors in the next 2 years.

Auto Parts and Engineering Goods: The top five major exporters are Germany, China, the US, Japan, and Mexico accounting for 54% of the global auto parts market. As per the Automobile Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA), the export share is 25% of the total turnover of 5.10 lakh crore, and the global share is 11%. Strong international demand and resurgence in the local original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and aftermarket segments are predicted to help the Indian auto component industry grow in the global market.

Bicycle: China is dominating the global market and exports 60 per cent of its production of 10 crore bicycles, 6 crores are exported across the world in a year. India is the world's second-largest manufacturer of bicycles, still far behind China in terms of exports, and out of 2 crore production only 10 lakh bicycles are being exported which is merely 5% of the total

production. The potential target is to increase share in the global market by at least 10% in the next three years because still there is huge potential to cater as the US, European countries, and Africa have surged as bicycle and e-bicycle markets.

Sports Goods: Accounting for a share of 42.2 per cent in global exports, China is the largest exporter of sports goods while India is accounting for 0.56 per cent of global exports. The significant headroom for India's sports goods industry in the future is to tap the potential countries like the USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Columbia, and Argentina.

Way Forward: To fuel the spirit of 'Local goes Global' and to galvanize the country to become an export hub by identifying products and services with export potential. The potential of export at the district level and conducting outreach activities, including buyer-seller meets, and trade fairs can onboard a greater number of exporters and importers. While some districts in India are already known for their exports, the new measures will widen the scope of outreach and potentially onboard previously excluded exporters. Exports from MSMEs and remote districts will not only have positive cascading effects on the economy but also the livelihoods of millions of people.

As India has set an export target of \$900 Billion in FY 2023-2024, and to achieve this target must orient towards the pillar industries intending to focus on the untapped export potential to be part of India's export success story.

Today's lifestyle is not conducive to the environment

Changing individual and community behaviour alone can make a significant dent in the environmental and climate crisis

Environmental degradation and climate change are global phenomena where actions in one part of the world impact ecosystems and populations across the globe. Estimates suggest that if requisite action is not taken against the changing environment, approximately 3 billion people globally could experience chronic water scarcity. The global economy could lose up to 18% of GDP by 2050. Over the last two decades, several macro measures have been implemented globally to address environmental degradation and climate change, including policy reforms, economic incentives and regulations. Despite their enormous potential, actions required at the level of individuals, communities and



SUNIL GOEL



DIMPLE KHOKHAR

(Prof Sunil Goel is an eminent social scientist, Dean and Chairman at Dr BR Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Dr Ambedkar Nagar, and Dimple Khokhar is a researcher)

institutions have received limited attention.

As far as transport is concerned, in most high-income countries, personal transport is the lifestyle domain with the largest contribution to the overall lifestyle footprint. The world's roadways are clogged with vehicles, most of them burning fossil fuels. Fossil fuels power the ships that carry trade and the aeroplanes that allow us to travel. Greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector have more than doubled since 1970, with around 80% of this increase coming from road vehicles. Around 10% of the global population accounts for 80% of total motorized passenger kilometres, with much of the world's population hardly travelling at all. But

we do have alternatives to driving that can make a difference.

Walking, biking, urban public transit and trains help reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

A diet that is higher in plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, and lower in animal-based foods, has a lower environmental impact (greenhouse gas emissions and energy, land, and water use). Regarding fashion, being stylish does not mean being wasteful. Buying fewer clothes, shopping second-hand, or upcycling, i.e., creating new clothes out of old ones, helps save water and reduce waste. In the last 15 years, clothing production has doubled while the number of

times a garment is worn before being discarded has decreased by 36%. The fashion industry (clothing and footwear) produces more than 8% of greenhouse gases and 20% of global wastewater annually. It takes about 7,500 litres of water to make a single pair of jeans -- from the production of the cotton to the delivery of the final product to the store. 85% of textiles end up in landfills or are incinerated although most of these materials could be reused. Every second, the equivalent of one garbage truck full of textiles is landfilled or burned.

Some 93 billion cubic meters of water -- enough to meet the consumption needs of five million people -- is used by the fashion industry annually. Waste is a big problem.

Every year, an estimated 11.2 billion tonnes of solid waste is collected worldwide, and the decay of the organic proportion of solid waste is contributing to about 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Where waste cannot be avoided, recycling leads to substantial resource savings. For every tonne of paper recycled, 17 trees and 50% of water can be saved. Recycling also creates jobs: the recycling sector employs 12 million people in Brazil, China and the United States alone. Only 9% of all plastic waste ever produced has been recycled. About 12% has been incinerated. Around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute, while up to 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide every

year. In total, half of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once -- and then thrown away. From 2010 to 2019, e-waste generated globally grew from 5.3 to 7.3 kilograms per capita annually. Meanwhile, the environmentally sound recycling of e-waste increased at a much slower pace -- from 0.8 to 1.3 kilograms per capita annually. Everyone should come forward to save water. Water is a precious resource: Less than 3% of the world's water is fresh (drinkable), of which 2.5% is frozen in the Antarctica, Arctic and glaciers. And humans are misusing and polluting water faster than nature can recycle and purify water in rivers and lakes. Using water smartly can help us ensure a steady flow of

clean, safe water. You can save water by taking shorter showers, turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, installing a low-flow toilet, and many other ways.

With one shower of about 10 minutes a day, an average person consumes the equivalent of over 100,000 glasses of drinking water every year. Changing individual and community behaviour alone can make a significant dent in the environmental and climate crises. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), if one billion people out of the global population of eight billion adopt environment-friendly behaviours in their daily lives, global carbon emissions could drop by approximately 20 per cent.

SMITH HAPPY TO BE BACK AT EDGBASTON

LONDON ■ AFP
Steve Smith is happy to be kicking off a new Ashes series at Edgbaston, four years after a performance he ranks as the most enjoyable of his 97 Tests for Australia.

The notoriously raucous Birmingham crowd subjected Smith and team-mate David Warner to a volley of boos and jeers in 2019, as the pair made their return to Test cricket following year-long bans for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal.

Some fans even donned cardboard face masks of Smith crying at a press conference during the height of the drama, but the Australian was all smiles by the end of the match.

Australia win that first Test by 251 runs, with Smith making centuries in both innings, scoring 144 and 142, underlining his status as one of the world's best batters.

"I think that Test match is probably my favourite out of my career so far, given the circumstances and the importance of a first Ashes Test, particularly away from home," he



said ahead of Friday's series opener in Birmingham. "I've had a couple of good ones. It would be nice to repeat it again but I'm just going to go

out there and go through my routines and do what I need to do, and hopefully I can score some runs and help the team out.

"Coming back here I've got some wonderful memories and some things I can draw from." Smith hit 774 runs in just

seven innings in 2019, in a series that ended 2-2, averaging a remarkable 110.57, and his ability to build long innings has the potential to cause

England plenty of problems again.

He scored a 31st Test hundred against India during last week's World Test Championship final win at The Oval, but he is not alone as a batting threat.

Australia currently fill the top three spots in the Test rankings -- Smith is at number two behind Marnus Labuschagne and narrowly ahead of the in-form Travis Head.

"I think it's cool to see us all at the top of the tree," Smith said.

"I think those two in particular, the improvements they've made over the last four or five years have been exceptional.

"We all do it completely differently, obviously Trav comes out and plays very aggressively and takes the game on. It's sort of a 'see ball, hit ball' mentality.

"Marnus and I probably think our way through situations a little bit differently, but it is cool to see the hard work of those guys pay off and for them to get themselves up there in the rankings."



Broad to play 1st Test

AFP ■ LONDON

England have favoured Stuart Broad's experience over Mark Wood's raw pace for the first Ashes Test at Edgbaston as they named their team on Wednesday.

With James Anderson and Ollie Robinson fit to return to the XI after resting injury niggles against Ireland at Lord's, there was just one spot left in the seam attack for Friday's series opener.

Captain Ben Stokes has previously spoken of his desire to have a bowler with express pace and, with Jofra Archer and Olly Stone on the sidelines, would have been tempted to pick Wood.

But Broad, with 582 Test wickets under his belt, and who led the attack impressively against Ireland, has got the nod.

His selection guarantees another chapter in the 36-year-old's storied rivalry with Australia opener David Warner, who floundered

badly against Broad in 2019, when the Englishman dismissed him seven times in 10 innings.

With spinner Moeen Ali slotting straight in at number eight after agreeing to return to Test cricket, the only question that lingers over the England side concerns the fitness of all-rounder Stokes.

The skipper's longstanding left knee problems have been a source of constant speculation but he has ramped up his participation in training over the past 48 hours, bowling at close to full speed.

Opener Ben Duckett and fellow batter Harry Brook are the only players in the side who will be making their Ashes debuts in Birmingham.

England team for first Ashes Test at Edgbaston:

Ben Duckett, Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (capt), Jonny Bairstow, Moeen Ali, Stuart Broad, Ollie Robinson, James Anderson



Brook hopes to realise Ashes dream

AFP ■ LONDON

Batting sensation Harry Brook hopes to make the same impact as England's 2005 Ashes heroes as he prepares to face Australia for the first time in Test cricket.

The Yorkshire batter, 24, has had a remarkable start to his international career, hitting four centuries in his first seven Tests and winning the T20 World Cup.

The first game of the five-match Ashes series starts at Edgbaston on Friday, with England desperate to reclaim the urn.

"It's definitely a dream come true to be involved in my first Ashes," said Brook. "I was growing up watching the very best players from England and Australia facing each other."

"Obviously the 2005 Ashes was a big one. I can always remember the over (Andrew) Flintoff bowled to (Ricky) Ponting and KP (Kevin Pietersen) smacking it everywhere against (Shane) Warne and (Glenn) McGrath, those boys.

"They were my earliest memories. I'm going to go out there and play the way I have done in the last 12 months. I hope that's enough to inspire a few too."

Brook, who averages a remarkable 81.80 in Test cricket, is unfazed about facing the newly crowned Test world champions and their much-vaunted bowling attack.

"They're one of the best teams in the world, coming off the back of a World Test Championship win," he said.

"I'm looking forward to facing those boys, challenging



myself against them and whatever plans they have against me."

Brook's success at the top level is not based solely on weight of runs, but speed of scoring. He boasts a Test strike rate of 99.03 -- a fraction shy of a run a ball -- and shone against spin during England's tour of Pakistan.

Australia have often prioritised attacking English spinners over the years and are likely to do so again with Moeen Ali, with Brook promising Nathan Lyon more of the same.

Asked how he intended to approach a player with 487 wickets to his name, Brook's response was typically blunt.

"What do you think? If he bowls a good ball then I'm going to respect it. Other than that, I'm going to try and take him on," he said.

"He could get a lot of wickets, but hopefully we're going to hit him for a lot of runs. I'd like to think I'm a player who can find gaps and hit different gaps.

Bracewell to miss ODI World Cup

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

All-rounder Michael Bracewell has been ruled out of this year's ODI World Cup in India after rupturing his Achilles tendon, dealing New Zealand yet another blow ahead of the marquee event.

The big-turning off-spinner has been sidelined for six-eight weeks after suffering the injury on his right leg on June 9 while playing for Worcestershire Rapids in the English T20 Blast.

Bracewell is scheduled to undergo surgery in the UK on Thursday after which he will start a lengthy rehab that will keep him away from the ODI World Cup, starting in India from October 5.

"Michael's a great team man and has had a fantastic 15

months for New Zealand since his international debut. We've seen his exceptional skills in all three facets of the game and he was shaping as an important player for us at the World Cup in India.

"The power that he's got ... Gives us a little bit of a fear factor," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said on Wednesday.

"Michael's naturally pretty disappointed, but also pragmatic in acknowledging that injuries are a part of sport and he's now turning his focus to his rehabilitation," Stead added.

Bracewell's injury comes about two months after limited overs skipper and batting mainstay Kane Williamson injured his right knee during the IPL in April.

Aussies dominate Test rankings

AFP ■ LONDON

Australia will head into the Ashes series with their batters occupying the top three spots in the men's Test rankings.

In the latest weekly update from the International Cricket Council published on Wednesday, Marnus Labuschagne retains top spot with team-mates Steve Smith and Travis Head just below him.

The last time batsmen from the same side occupied the top three places was in 1984, when West Indies players Gordon Greenidge, Clive Lloyd and Larry Gomes filled the slots.

Smith scored a century in Australia's World Test Championship final win over India last week, while Head rises from sixth after scoring 163 in the same game at The Oval.



Joe Root is the highest England batter at sixth in the list.

Australia spinner Nathan Lyon has moved up to sixth in the bowling rankings after taking five wickets in the match against India.

His captain Pat Cummins remains third, with England's James Anderson second.

The first Ashes Test begins at Edgbaston on Friday.

India to start 2023-25 WTC cycle with WI tour

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India will begin the 2023-25 ICC World Test Championship (WTC) cycle with the upcoming tour to the West Indies in July and over the next two-year period will play some high-profile bilateral series against Australia and England among others.

India will travel to West Indies next month to play two Test matches in Dominica (July 12-16) and Trinidad (July 20-24). India have been finalists in the first two editions of the WTC, losing to New Zealand (2021) and to Australia (2023) in the final.

The WTC 2023-25 cycle will begin with the Ashes, when England face Australia in Birmingham on Friday.

After the tour to Windies, India's next WTC assignment will be on away shores against South Africa between December 2023 and January 2024.



India will host England for a five-match Test series in Jan-Feb 2024. They will then face Ban in Sep-Oct 2024.

Followed by that, India will host England for a five-match Test series in January-February 2024. They will then lock horns with Bangladesh in September-October 2024. At home and immediately after that New Zealand will visit the sub-continent for a three-match Test series in October-November 2024.

After those two relatively easy home schedules, India will travel to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, a five-match series, against Australia between November 2024 and January 2025, which

also marks the end of India's WTC engagements.

Wasim Khan, ICC's General Manager of Cricket said: "This championship has invigorated Test match cricket, bringing context for players and fans, and a high level of competitiveness as teams battle it out to be crowned World Test Champions at the end of the two-year cycle.

"The big turnout out at The Oval over the five days and the incredible viewership levels across the globe for the final is testimony to the continued popularity of Test cricket."

The structure of the nine-team WTC remains intact with each side playing three home and as many away series over a two-year period culminating in the final of a one-off Test.

MAIDEN INNINGS: CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S CRICKET

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women's cricket has gained much traction over the last few years, with the Indian Women's team achieving remarkable success. The book 'Maiden Innings' by Kapil Pathare sheds light on the untold stories of empowering Indian women in cricket. It pays tribute to the unsung heroes of Indian women's cricket, showcasing their endurance, passion, and unwavering commitment to the sport. The book focuses on the newest generation of women cricket stars while also tracing the journey of the six golden girls who revolutionized women's cricket in India. It highlights the achievements of the 'India's Final Fabulous Fifteen,' inspiring young girls across the nation with their extraordinary feats and invincible spirit.

