

# India, Russia, China troika

*"The 21st century will be the Asian century. This also means that Asians will be expected to provide greater leadership to solve global challenges, including environmental challenges."*

**-Kishore Mahbubani**

*"Asia is rich in people, rich in culture and rich in resources. It is also rich in trouble."*

**-Hubert H. Humphrey**

*"West watching with jealousy- that means they are closely monitoring it."*

**-Mr. Peskov on Russian TV on the eve of PM Modi's visit.**

PRIME Minister Modi has embarked on his first State visit in the third term to Russia on 8 July 24 and among other things he would also attend 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit in the company of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The importance being accorded to this visit by the West is easy to understand. But in my opinion, China too would be looking at this visit with all the seriousness. For the success of 21st century belonging to Asia, it is critical to understand the troika of India, Russia and China through the prism of power and personalities involved.

The combined population of India, China and Russia is almost 40% of the world population. These three countries are founder members of BRICS along with Brazil in June 2009 and later joined by South Africa in 2010, giving it the acronym BRICS. Now BRICS has expanded and is seen as a rival to the leading advanced economies called G7 block. Russia and China are perma-

nent members of the UN Security Council and hopefully India should be on that high table soon. Militarily, all three are among the top three in Asia and are also declared nuclear powers. In short, this troika really packs a punch.

India and Russia share a special relationship, rich from the cold war era of US and USSR led coalitions in the West and East. After the US tilted towards Pakistan by signing a military pact in 1954, India had no choice but to look towards the USSR. India

needed big ticket manufacturing units and our public sector industry, factories, dams, even nuclear power plants have the footprint of the erstwhile USSR. The type of socialism rubbed on us and in some way impacted our growth trajectory. But the time-tested Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971 in the wake of 1971 Indo-Pak war has been the bedrock of this strategic partnership.

The last decade has witnessed a major resurgence of Indo-Russia relationship, particularly in defence and economic convergence. India has been able to get much better defence deals with the clause of Make In India. The joint venture for production of world class Brahmos missiles is a shining example such synergy. Russia still accounts for almost 60% of arms imported by India but the current regime is clear to reduce this economic burden. The defence production in India exceeded 1.2 lakh crores as per figures of June 24 and India has aggressively pushed the private defence industry to meet both the domestic and export needs.

India has astutely balanced the enduring ties with Russia and growing proximity to the USA in tune with the emerg-

ing global geo-politics. On one hand, India has bought 13 times of cheap crude petroleum from Russia as compared to 2021, on the other hand, India has signed four foundational agreements with the USA, the later resulting in GE-HAL aero engines and procurement of high tech MQ9B drones. India has been neutral in the Russia-Ukraine war and PM Modi even told President Putin is that this not the era of war.

**BY LT GEN M K DAS**

Undoubtedly, the ongoing war would figure in the deliberations. The West would be interested if PM Modi is able to broker peace, after having met President Zelenskyy of Ukraine on the sidelines of G7 Summit in June 24.

India and China have shared a tumultuous strategic relationship after the Galwan crisis of June 2020 in the Eastern Ladakh region. But China has emerged as our largest trading partner with \$118.4 billion of commerce in 2023-24.

Even with our best efforts in Make In India, our economic linkages with China continue to grow. While India is proving to be a worthy competition to China in emerging as the manufacturing hub, still a large ecosystem of ours is dependent on Chinese spares and equipment.

There is still huge asymmetry between India and China and we have a lot of catching up to do. But India can benefit a lot in two key manufacturing ventures, one in the semi-conductors and second in the lithium batteries including those for EVs.

Russia is at the strategic crossroads having forged very close ties with China. With the entire might of the West breathing down his neck, President Putin visited China on 16-17 May 24, largely to enhance military cooperation and pres-

ent a global alternative to the US led NATO. So, if we look at the timelines, the troika of India, China and Russia is in a state of conflict from June 2020 onwards, with the formal invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022. It is here that the three key personalities would play the lead role in resolving global challenges.

With President Xi Jinping firmly ensconced in his third term and likely to continue and President Putin at the helm of Russia since 1999, there is no doubt who calls the shots in these countries. Interestingly, PM Modi is also in his third term and the troika of these three powerful leaders has directly or indirectly shaped the global landscape of regional and international relationships. The weakening US leadership also has contributed to the rise of this troika, even when India and China continue to have frosty relationship.

It is unlikely that this troika can have any formal understanding and treaty to present a strategic global alternative to the West. But the economic considerations would keep them together at least in the foreseeable future as has happened with the BRICS. The continuity of three leaders at the helm would be critical to maintain the delicate balance of power between them. The future trajectory of US dominated West would also be incumbent on the next US President and the economic might of the EU. No doubt that the visit of PM Modi would be closely watched, not only by the West but by other global powers as well. It is for the troika of India, Russia and China to provide the enabling environment to shape the destiny of the 21st century Asia, now or never.

*(Lt Gen M K Das, PVSM, SM, VSM (Retd))*

# Climate change disrupting education outcomes, increasing learning loss, says UNESCO report

■ By Gunjan Sharma  
NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

CLIMATE related stressors like heat, wildfires, floods, droughts, diseases and rising sea levels affect education outcomes and threaten to undo educational gains of recent decade, according to the Global Education Monitoring Report.

The global report compiled by UNESCO, Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) project and University of Saskatchewan in Canada has pointed out that most low and middle-income countries are experiencing climate-related school closures every year, increasing chances of learning



loss and dropout.

"Climate change related impacts are already disrupting education systems and outcomes. Direct effects include the destruction of education infrastructure as well as injuries and loss of life among students,

parents and school staff. Climate change has a negative impact on education indirectly through its displacement of people and the effects on people's livelihoods and health," the report said.

"Over the past 20 years,

schools were closed in at least 75 per cent of the extreme weather events, impacting five million people or more. Increasingly frequent natural disasters, including floods and cyclones, have led to the deaths of students and teachers and have damaged and destroyed schools.

"Exposure to heat has significant detrimental effects on children's educational outcomes. An analysis linking census and climate data in 29 countries between 1969 and 2012 showed that exposure to higher than average temperatures during the prenatal and early life period is associated with fewer years of schooling, especially in South-East Asia," it added.



# Next round of India-Korea FTA review meeting from 17th in Seoul

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

WITH talks to upgrade the existing India-Korea free trade agreement (FTA) moving forward, senior officials of both countries will hold the next round of negotiations from Wednesday in Seoul, an official said.

The agreement, dubbed as comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA), was operationalised in January 2010. So far, 10 rounds of review talks have been concluded.

The Indian team "will visit Seoul from July 17-19" for the next round of review meetings,

the official added.

"In the 11th round, both the sides would discuss the broad contours for closing the deal," the official said, adding that Korea is keen to conclude the negotiations this year.

The two countries have sought greater market access for certain products, which are under the negative list of the agreement. No customs duty concessions are granted for the goods under this list.

The Department of Commerce has engaged with different ministries, including heavy industries, steel, and chemicals, to pre-

pare the offer list.

India has sought greater market access for certain products like steel, rice, and shrimp from South Korea to boost exports of these goods. India has flagged issues over Korean firms not buying Indian steel.

The review exercise assumes significance as both sides have shared the hope that the CEPA upgradation negotiations would play an important role in strengthening and deepening economic cooperation between both countries.

In general, such review or upgrade exercises include implementation issues, rules of

origin, verification process and release of consignments, customs procedures, further liberalisation of trade in goods, and sharing and exchange of trade data.

India has also raised concerns about the growing trade deficit between the two countries. India's exports to Korea dipped to USD 6.41 billion in 2023-24 from USD 6.65 billion in 2022-23 and USD 8 billion in 2021-22.

The imports stood at USD 21.13 billion in the last fiscal as against USD 21.22 billion in 2022-23 and USD 17.5 billion in 2021-22.

# Maldives pledges \$1.3 million in aid for Palestinians

COLOMBO, July 14 (IANS)

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THE Maldives has pledged to donate over \$1.29 million in humanitarian aid for Palestine, Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations Ali Naseer Mohamed said.

The aid was announced during the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Pledging Conference held Friday at the UN headquarters, Xinhua news agency reported.

Naseer also said that the Maldivian government has increased its annual donation of \$5,000 to Palestine by 10-fold, to \$50,000 this year.

The representative also urged the international community to increase their financial assistance and fulfill political obligations to progress UNRWA initiatives.

# IAF recalls 'OP SAFED SAGAR'

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

**THE IAF** on Sunday recalled the force's contribution in the Kargil war 25 years ago during which it flew thousands of strike missions and helicopters sorties to bolster the Army's efforts in fighting against the adversary.

To commemorate the silver jubilee of the victory in the 1999 Kargil war, the Indian Air Force is celebrating 'Kargil Vijay Diwas Rajat Jayanti' at Air Force Station Sarsawa from July 12-26, honouring the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice for the nation, the ministry of defence said in a statement.

On Saturday, IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari laid a wreath at the Station War Memorial as a tribute to all air warriors who laid down their lives in service of the nation. He felicitated and interacted with many next of kin during the event.

A spectacular air show was organised that included display by the Akash Ganga Team and aerial displays by Jaguar, Su-30 MKI and Rafale fighter aircraft.

A 'Missing Man' formation was flown by Mi-17 V5 in memory of the fallen heroes. A static display of IAF helicopters such as Mi-17 V5, Cheetah, Chinook was also organised along with performances by the Air Warrior Drill Team and the Air Force Band, it said.

25 years of Kargil war



Akashganga Skydiving Team of the IAF in action during the air show to commemorate the 25 years of Kargil Vijay Diwas on Sunday. (ANI)



# K P Sharma Oli appointed Nepal's new Prime Minister

■ By Shirish B Pradhan  
KATHMANDU, July 14 (PTI)

K P SHARMA OLI, CPN-UML chairman and seen as a pro-China leader, was appointed Nepal's Prime Minister for a fourth term on Sunday to lead the new coalition Government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan nation.

Oli, 72, succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda who lost the vote of confidence in the House of Representatives on Friday, leading to the formation of the new Government process as per Article 76 (2) of the Constitution.

President Ram Chandra Paudel appointed Oli as the new Prime Minister under Article 76-2 of the Constitution of Nepal, according to a notice issued by the President's Office.

Oli became the Prime

Minister with the support of the Nepali Congress, the largest party in Parliament.

Oli's swearing-in ceremony is scheduled to take place at 11 am on Monday at Shital Niwas, the main building of Rashtrapati Bhawan.



On Friday night, Oli staked his claim to become the next Prime Minister with the back-

ing of NC president Sher Bahadur Deuba and submitted the signatures of 165 House of Representatives (HoR) members -- 77 from his Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) party and 88 from the Nepali Congress. (NC).

CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Prachanda lost the vote of confidence in HoR during a floor test on Friday.

Earlier last week, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-UML chairman Oli inked a seven-point deal to form a new coalition Government replacing Prachanda. The two leaders agreed that the remaining term of the Parliament would be shared between them turn by turn. In the first phase, Oli will become the Prime Minister for 18 months as per the agreement.