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COLOUR DOESN'T DEFINE BEAUTY, SAYS ACTRESS ILEANA D'CRUZ



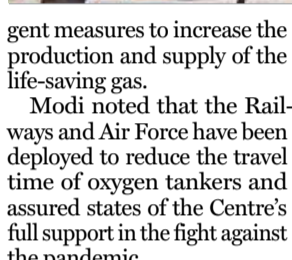
Gasping to end oxygen crisis

RAILWAYS, AIR FORCE TO HELP REDUCE TRANSPORTATION TIME FOR LIFE-SAVING GAS TANKERS, MEDICINES

NEW DELHI: Amid several states flagging scarcity of medical oxygen in the COVID-19 fight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said Railways and Air Force are being deployed to reduce the transportation time for oxygen tankers and all state governments need to work together to meet requirements of life-saving gas and medicines.



Chairing a high-level meeting with chief ministers of 11 states and union territories with maximum COVID-19 cases, Modi urged states to work as one and coordinate with one another to fulfil medical requirements, asserting that "if we work as one nation, there will not be any scarcity of resources". Modi said every state should ensure that no oxygen tanker, irrespective of its destination, is stopped or gets stranded, a statement said.



The prime minister's call for coordination and working together to meet the spiralling health crisis comes amid multiple reports of medical oxygen supply being stopped at borders of one state or the other during transit.

Hospitals in many states have complained of a shortage in their oxygen supply and sent out SOS messages, requiring the government to take urgent measures to increase the production and supply of the life-saving gas.

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Modi noted that the Railways and Air Force have been deployed to reduce the travel time of oxygen tankers and assured states of the Centre's full support in the fight against the pandemic.

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The meeting with the chief ministers also saw a controversy with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's decision to telecast his comments live during the interaction with Prime Minister Modi drawing disapproval from the latter, who chided him for "breaking protocol". Later, the Union government officials accused the AAP leader of "playing politics".

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One should always maintain restraint," Modi said, prompting a defensive Kejriwal to say that he will keep this in mind in future and offered an apology in case he had made a "mistake or spoken harshly".

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It was the prime minister's third meeting with chief ministers in the last five weeks, while he also held his fourth review meeting in one week to review the oxygen availability situation, officials said.

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Later, at a virtual meeting with leading oxygen manufacturers, Prime Minister Modi called for utilising the industry's full potential to meet the demand of medical oxygen in the coming days, saying there is a need to increase the availability of oxygen cylinders as well as to upgrade logistical facilities for its transportation.

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In his interaction with the oxygen manufacturers, including Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, Modi urged the industry to utilise tankers meant to transport other gases for oxygen supply, saying the time now is not only to deal with the challenges but also to provide solutions in a very short time.

Hospitals in many states have complained of a shortage in their oxygen supply and sent out SOS messages, requiring the government to take urgent measures to increase the production and supply of the life-saving gas.

In his meeting with the CMs, Modi asked states to take stringent measures against hoarding and black marketing of essential medicines and injections.

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He also called for making people continuously aware so that they do not indulge in panic buying. He said that with united efforts, they will together be able to stop this second wave of the pandemic across the country.

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AGENCIES

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AGENCIES

Choppy trade drags Sensex by 202 pts



MUMBAI: Equity benchmark Sensex declined 202 points on Friday, tracking losses in ICICI Bank, Infosys and HUL amid persistent concerns over the economic impact of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

After a volatile session, the 30-share BSE index ended 202.22 points or 0.42% lower at 47,878.45. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty dropped 64.80 points or 0.45% to 14,341.35. M&M was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding over 2%, followed by Dr Reddy's Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, HUL, ICICI Bank and Infosys.

On the other hand, PowerGrid, NTPC, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC and Asian Paints were among the gainers. "It was a choppy trading day and benchmark indices fell sharply towards the final session of the market mainly led by selling pressure in across the sectors barring PSU Banks. Concerns of rising COVID-19 cases continued to weigh on investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

According to Ruskim Oza, Executive Vice President, Head of Fundamental Research at Kotak Securities, Indian markets succumbed to FPI selling this week on account of the sharp rise in COVID-19 cases. FPIs have remained net sellers this week with the rupee sustaining at 75 levels against the USD. "As India has become the epicentre of the virus resurgence, there is fear of potential earnings downgrades which could turn out to be higher in case of mid and small caps vis-à-vis the large caps."

AGENCIES

India 87th on global energy transition index



NEW DELHI: India has been ranked at the 87th position among 115 countries in the Energy Transition Index (ETI) that tracks nations on the current performance of their energy systems across various aspects, according to a report. The report from the World Economic Forum (WEF) released on Wednesday and prepared in collaboration with Accenture also draws on insights from ETI.

The top 10 countries in the index are Western and Northern European countries, and Sweden is in the first position followed by Norway (2nd) and Denmark (3rd). "China (68) and India (87), which collectively account for a third of global energy demand, have both made strong improvements over the past decade, despite coal continuing to play a significant role in their energy mix," the report said. As per the report, India has targeted improvements through subsidy reforms and rapidly scaling energy access, with a strong political commitment and regulatory environment for the energy transition.

"China's improvements primarily result from reducing the energy intensity of the economy, gains in decarbonising the energy mix through the expansion of renewables and strengthening the enabling environment through investments and infrastructure," it added. The index benchmarks 115 countries on the current performance of their energy systems across three dimensions - economic development and growth, environmental sustainability, and energy security and access indicators -- and their readiness to transition to secure, sustainable, affordable, and inclusive energy systems. AGENCIES

Extend compliance timelines, industry players urge govt

NEW DELHI: Industry leaders have urged the government to extend timelines for compliances under corporate and taxation laws and consider repeating some of the support measures announced for businesses after the national lockdown in March 2020, given the fresh spate of lockdowns in parts of the country, including Maharashtra and Delhi.

In an interaction with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Sanjay Aggarwal said the central government had last year acted swiftly and extended the timelines for compliances under various corporate laws and the same steps and support measures are required this year also.



Sitharaman assured that industry's inputs will be considered for the industrial and economic growth of the country, the Finance Ministry said in a statement after the meeting. The Minister also stressed that the way to tackle the current situation is through micro containment zones 'so that life and livelihood can be protected'.

The government is 'working arduously for smooth coordination between States, hospitals and suppliers of oxygen and vaccines to give relief to people in the fight against COVID-19', Sitharaman pointed out. "Provision of oxygen, vaccines and their logistics to people affected by coronavirus is being ensured, given the recent surge in cases of COVID-19 pandemic across the country," she said, adding that the government is identifying idle manufacturing capacities for bolstering oxygen supplies.

AGENCIES

Farmers stay firm on demand

NEW DELHI: Farmer unions protesting the Centre's three contentious farm laws at Delhi's borders alleged on Monday the government was trying to "use coronavirus as an excuse to quell their agitation".

The Sunyukta Kisan Morcha, a joint forum of farmer unions, also said the date for their proposed march to Parliament is yet to be decided.

"The government is trying to use coronavirus as an excuse to quell farmers' protest. They used the same trick last year. We will not let it happen," farmer leader Yogendra Yadav alleged during a press conference at Delhi's Singhu border.

He said, "The government's hypocrisy on coronavirus has been exposed. Ministers and leaders have been holding election rallies. They have no right to question others."

Yadav said immunisation camps were being set up at all farmer protest sites for those willing to take the vaccine jabs. Oxymeters and ambulances are being arranged, health facilities are being ramped up



to encourage farmers to wear masks and a pamphlet on measures to keep virus at bay will be distributed, Yadav said. Another leader said the farmers protest sites at Delhi's border have not reported "coronavirus cases in large numbers" so far. "These are open, well ventilated spaces. These protest sites are not Covid-19 hotspots," he said.

AGENCIES

AGENCIES

AmEx, Diners Club face curbs

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India has restricted American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd from on-boarding new domestic customers onto their card networks from May 1 for violating data storage norms.

The order will not impact the existing customers of these two entities, the central bank said in a statement on Friday.

American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd are Payment System Operators authorised to operate card networks in the country under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act).

The RBI has imposed the restrictions on American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International by an order dated April 23, 2021.

"These entities have been found non-compliant with the directions on Storage of Payment System Data," the RBI said.

The supervisory action, it added, has been taken in exercise of powers vested in RBI under the PSS Act. AGENCIES



AGENCIES

Carpet industry weaves virtual global awareness

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

The carpet industry is all set to go online to highlight its exquisite Indian carpets that reflect the timeless amalgamation of nature, culture and art while being part of luxurious lifestyles in modern times.



India's carpet-weaving is a traditional and well-established industry with magnificent masterpieces created by over three million Indian carpet weavers and craftsmen that continue to attract consumers around the globe. This industry contributes significantly in the employment and income segment as well as foreign exchange earnings, according to Vikas Gupta, CEO, Greyweave.com.

"The Indian carpet industry is primarily an export-oriented industry and Indian carpets are exported globally to around 200 countries including USA, Germany, UK, UAE, Italy, Australia, Turkey, France, Canada, Belgium, Brazil, Japan, Nether-

land, Saudi Arab and Sweden, which are considered the most important carpet-export destinations."

"However, with the COVID crisis affecting the market badly, carpet brands are now gearing up to mark their presence on digital mediums through virtual fairs and online business in 2021-22. While the digital presence is expected to enhance brand's ability to generate traffic and sales, the virtual fairs and online shopping platforms are expected to increase awareness outreach to people through websites - thus also helping the entire carpet industry to emerge as an organized sector while increasing brand's credibility and visibility in the larger target audience."

"Since inception, this carpet manufacturing sector has been rural-based, and its online presence is expected to boost regional growth. The sector is therefore prepping up for major upgradations to elevate its export performance."

"While online visibility is expected to foster business, carpet weaving is not a newly emerged profession as the tradition of carpet-weaving dates as far back as the 16th century, when Mughals established the art of carpet weaving in the town of Akbarabad, now Agra. Carpet-weaving continued expanding and surviving in India under the patronage of the Indian nobility."

"Even today, the contribution of the carpet industry to employment and income generation is well-recognised as it caters to employment in rural and semi-urban areas, while contributing substantially to societal objectives like poverty alleviation through employment generation."

"The carpet industry in India is the finest example of how a domestic industry practiced at home can be transformed to a full-grown mechanised industry. The sector is growing exponentially from the safer confines of the home, where the carpet was weaved to the market catering global audience with its online and offline presence.

Strategic business models are being widely used in the textiles world these days to analyze the problems and prospects of any business situation."

"The adoption of omni-channel retail will continue to have a profound impact on every element of the supply chain. The strong presence on mobile search engines like Google Mobile will strengthen the brand while helping them with digital systems. Mobile e-mail is seen the most used extension of telecommunication functionality and search functions are the primary driver of Internet commerce, where it can be a lucrative adaptation."

"Brands and retailers need will enable transactions and deliver confirmations via the mobile web or phones. Various brands have understood that it is the right time to get strategic about cross-channel targeting and marketing. Also, the paramount use of analytics to mine business intelligence and understand customers will be critical," Gupta added.

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Make vaccines free for all; ramp up health infra

In his recent address to the country amid the raging storm of Covid-19 cases, which was apparently intended as reassurance of the government's commitment to averting economic decline and ramping up health facilities, Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided little insight into specific measures. It should be evident from the pace of infection spread and the large number of deaths in several regions that the sensible course open to the Centre and State governments is to enable economic production and consumption while massively scaling-up the health response. Modi, who advised States to treat lockdowns as a last resort, has virtually acknowledged, with the benefit of hindsight, that last year's measure dealt a severe blow to unorganised labour and the self-employed. The priority now is for the workforce to be vaccinated and containment measures against disease spread to be restricted to micro locations. Yet, the crucial question is that of universalising vaccinations for everyone above 18 years of age from May 1. The Centre's latest policy has effectively opened the floodgates to an unregulated system with market-determined vaccine pricing. Rather than use monopsonist power to procure all vaccines for price-capped distribution, extending the model that has been in place since March 1, the move has led to a 266% to 400% price increase for Covishield for State governments and private hospitals, respectively. Bharat Biotech has also hinted at the need to recover its investments in Covaxin through price flexibility. Manufacturers should not be rushing to seek approvals in those regions where the profits are the highest, leaving out the poorer territories. All vaccines need a sustainable manufacturing base, but the government must ensure a good, free people's vaccine for all -- like the one for the polio campaign. The Centre cannot simply shrug off its responsibility.



PS RAGHAVAN EXPLORES HOW RETAINING AUTONOMY OF POLICY CAN HELP INDIA MAXIMISE ITS INFLUENCE

Time to reset relations with Russia

It was clear from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's 'working visit' to India two weeks ago that India-Russia relations are not quite the flavour of the season. Lavrov's principal objective was to prepare the ground for the visit of President Vladimir Putin later this year. The break in 2020, after 20 annual summits, had provoked speculation, partly flowing from Lavrov's criticism last year of a U.S.-led Indo-Pacific policy, drawing India into "anti-China games" and undermining the India-Russia partnership. A few weeks earlier, Putin had extolled the vibrancy of Russia-China defence cooperation. These remarks encouraged the advocacy for a shift of India's foreign policy away from a weak and China-tethered Russia and towards the U.S.

The joint media appearance of Lavrov and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar did not change the narrative. They said their talks were warm, comprehensive and productive; they mentioned the time-tested friendship, energy projects, defence cooperation and Russian support for India's manned space programme. They glossed over their divergent perspectives on Afghanistan. Phrases like "identical or similar views" did not carry much conviction. Much more eloquent than fine words was the fact that, for the first time in all his visits to India, Lavrov could not meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Jaishankar said he conveyed the Indian perspective on the Indo-Pacific and Lavrov said they discussed the Asia-Pacific. "Indo-Pacific" continues to stick in Russian throats. India insists that its Indo-Pacific initiatives seek a cooperative order, that the Quad dialogue (of India, Japan, Australia and the U.S.) is not the nucleus of a politico-military alliance, and that it never subscribed to the Trumpian posture (now under review by the Biden administration) of military confrontation with China. A \$1 billion Indian line of credit for projects in the Russian Far East and activation of a Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor were announced when Modi and Putin met in 2019. The message was that India's effort to restrain Chinese aggression is compatible with Russia's vision of a Eurasian partnership. Russia remains unconvinced, either because it feels India's words do not match its actions or because of its close ties with China.

As India-China tensions have grown, so have India's concerns about Russia's China embrace, encompassing close political, economic and defence cooperation (Russia accounted for 77% of China's arms imports in 2016-20). India's apprehensions about their technology- and intelligence-sharing were heightened by Putin's remark that he would not rule out a future Russia-China military alliance. It is not clear



whether he was stating a conviction, reassuring China or warning India and/or the West. Lavrov said in Delhi that Russia-China relations, though very close, are not "aimed at establishing a military alliance". Modi would like this confirmation from the ultimate maker of Russian policy, when he meets Putin. He may also hear why Russia cannot see the logic of India's Indo-Pacific actions.

Lavrov visited Pakistan directly after India — the first time a Russian Minister has done so. He received red-carpet treatment and met the Army Chief and the Prime Minister. He confirmed that Russia would strengthen Pakistan's "counter-terrorism capability" — a euphemism used by the U.S. earlier for its weapons supplies to Pakistan. Russia is now Pakistan's second largest defence supplier, accounting for 6.6% of its arms imports in 2016-20. Their cooperation includes joint "counter-terrorism" drills and sharing perspectives on military tactics and strategic doctrines.

At the same time, Russia remains a major supplier of cutting-edge military technologies to India. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) records that Russia supplied 49% of India's arms imports in 2016-20. The proportion has been falling, as India diversifies its imports. Despite this, India's second largest supplier, France, had only an 18% share. SIPRI estimates that recent orders for Russian arms could boost future import figures. This is a reality check. Defence cooperation is not a transactional exchange. Sharing of technologies and strategies is underpinned by a mutual commitment to protection of confidentiality. Sustainable defence cooperation is based on a credible assurance

that what is transferred to our adversaries will not blunt the effectiveness of our weapons systems. In this already complex mix, the American sanctions legislation, CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), adds an external layer of complexity.

The criticality of geography in geopolitics is often underestimated. The Eurasian landmass to India's north is dominated by Russia and China. Strategic and security interests in Central Asia, West Asia and Afghanistan dictate our engagement with the region and the connectivity projects linking it, like the International North-South Transport Corridor through Iran (that was discussed with Lavrov). India cannot vacate this space to a Russia-China condominium (with Pakistan in tow), without potentially grave security consequences.

The China angle

The Modi-Putin summit will tackle the "irritants" and, as before, will probably announce that perspectives have been reconciled. But such annual assertions do not convince the political, official, business, media and academic circles in the two countries, which have to sustain a major partnership.

The relationship has to be located in a broader geopolitical context. The principal element in this is the drive for superpower status of a powerful, assertive China. It is self-evident that the U.S., as the pre-eminent superpower, seeks to retard this process. In a deviation from classical geopolitical strategy, the U.S. is taking on both China and Russia (which is the lesser power, despite its military power and energy dominance), thereby driving the two together and arguably accelerating the move to bipolarity. Even so, the differentials in military, economic and political power across countries may complicate the emergence of two clear poles of the Cold War variety. A let-up in the Western hostility to Russia could add to the complexity, if Putin's Russia takes the opportunity to loosen the Chinese embrace and position itself as a pole in the multipolar world. India has to explore the space within these processes to maximise its global influence by steering clear of alliances and retaining autonomy of policy. The partnership with Russia will not have the salience of past decades, but will remain important for our continental interests and defence capability. The depth of the relationship will depend on the willingness and capacity of both countries to show mutual sensitivity to core security concerns.

PS Raghavan is a former Indian Ambassador to Russia. Views are personal.



MUKUL SANWAL EXPLAINS HOW INDIA HAS A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN THE HYPER-CONNECTED WORLD

Dealing with data and a new global order

The shift of global power from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific raises strategic questions for India. Is the world divided because of an assertive China or is the shift of power to Asia a switch to the historical norm? Is the United States defending multilateral rules or the hegemony over the rules it had set? Should India take sides or bide its time as a neutral contender to both China and the US?

The Industrial Revolution restructured the global manufacturing order to Asia's disadvantage. But in the 'Digital Data Revolution', algorithms requiring massive amounts of data determine innovation, the nature of productivity growth, and military power. Mobile digital payment interconnections impact society and the international system, having three strategic implications.

First, because of the nature and pervasiveness of digital data, military and civilian systems are symbiotic. Cybersecurity is national security, and this requires both a new military doctrine and a diplomatic framework. Second, the blurring of distinctions between domestic and foreign policy and the replacement of global rules with issue-based understanding converge with the growth of smartphone-based e-commerce, which ensures that massive amounts of data give a sustained productivity advantage to Asia.

Third, data streams are now at the centre of global trade and countries' economic and national power. India, thus, has the capacity to negotiate new rules as an equal with the U.S. and China.

Innovation based on data streams has contributed to China's rise as the second-



largest economy and the "near-peer" of the U.S. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander recently said the erosion of conventional deterrence capabilities was the greatest danger in the strategic competition with China. The national security strategy of the U.S. puts more emphasis on diplomacy than military power to resolve conflicts with China, acknowledging that its military allies have complex relationships with Beijing, as it seeks to work with them to close technology gaps.

China's technology weakness is the dependence on semiconductors and its powerlessness against U.S. sanctions on banks, 5G and cloud computing companies. But its Fourteenth Five Year Plan emphasises a \$1.4-trillion strategy for the development of science and technology. China's digital technology-led capitalism is moving fast to utilise the economic potential of data, pushing the recently launched e-yuan and shaking the dollar-based settlement for global trade.

China has a \$53-trillion mobile payments market and it is the global leader in the online transactions arena, controlling over 50% of the global market value. India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) volume is expected to cross \$1 trillion by 2025. The U.S., in contrast, lags behind, with only around 30% of consumers using digital means and with the total volume of mobile payments less than \$100 billion. The global strategic balance will depend on new data standards. Earlier this year, China formed a joint venture with SWIFT for cross-border payments and suggested foundational principles for interoperability between central bank digital currencies at the Bank for International Settlements. The U.S., far behind in mobile payments, is falling back on data alliances and sanctions to maintain its global position.

India's goal is to become a \$5-trillion economy by 2025. While the country is fast-tracking its digital rupee, the challenge

is promoting engagement with major powers while retaining its data for innovation and competitive advantage.

With Asia at the centre of the world, major powers see value in relationships with New Delhi. India fits into the U.S. frame to provide leverage. China wants India, also a digital power, to see it as a partner, not a rival. And China remains the largest trading partner of both the U.S. and India despite sanctions and border skirmishes. These fluid relationships have their own trade-offs, raising the question: whose interests do the current rules really serve? India, like China, is uncomfortable with treating Western values as universal values and with the U.S. interpretation of Freedom of Navigation rules in others' territorial waters. New Delhi's Indo-Pacific vision is premised on "ASEAN centrality and the common pursuit of prosperity". The European Union recently acknowledged that the path to its future is through an enhanced influence in the Indo-Pacific, while stressing that the strategy is not "anti-China". The U.S. position in trade, that investment creates new markets, makes it similar to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

India alone straddles both U.S. and China-led strategic groupings, providing an equity-based perspective to competing visions. It must be prepared to play a key role in moulding rules for the hyper-connected world, facing off both the U.S. and China to realise its potential of becoming the second-largest economy.

Mukul Sanwal is a former UN diplomat. Views are personal.

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

ON BANKS' VULNERABILITY TO CREDIT-RELATED CORPORATE FRAUDS

- NEED TO SECURE BANKING SYSTEM**
The UK Home Secretary Priti Patel's decision to allow fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi's extradition to India serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address the banking system's vulnerability to fraud.
- FINANCIAL FRAUD CASES ON THE RISE**
The total number of cases of fraud (minimum size of Rs 1 lakh) at banks and financial institutions rose 28% by volume and surged 159% by value to Rs 1.85-lakh crore in the 12 months ended March 31, 2020.
- LOAN PORTFOLIOS FACE HIGH RISKS**
With frauds mainly occurring in the loan portfolio, as per the RBI, there was "a concentration of large value frauds, with the top 50 credit-related frauds constituting 76% of the total amount".
- PRIVATE BANKS TOO FEEL THE PINCH**
While PSBs have had to bear the brunt of the hit from fraudulent borrowing with 80% share in 2019-20, private lenders outpaced their peers in terms of number of cases and the increase in value of frauds.
- TIGHTER NORMS NEED OF THE HOUR**
The RBI as industry regulator needs to walk the talk and ensure tighter oversight to curb credit-related corporate frauds. Any laxity will threaten overall financial stability.

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BOOKS: REVIEW

Learning about India through its languages

A new book delving into the early history of South Asia reveals how migration — both external and internal — has shaped both, Indians and Indian languages from ancient times.

"Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India through its Languages", published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI), is written by noted linguist Peggy Mohan. The book, through an incisive study of languages, such as the story of early Sanskrit, the rise of Urdu, language formation in the North-east, presents the argument that "all Indians are of mixed origins".

"Hindi, Marathi, all the northern languages we call 'Indo-Aryan': they have words that were taken from the Prakrits and Sanskrit, but the way these words string together is strikingly different. There is another parent in this family that we

have been ignoring!", said Mohan, who has also the author of "Jahajin" and "Walk in C-Minor".

"There are so many ways to look at history! Now the languages we speak have much to add to the story told by archeology, the historical record and modern genetics," she added.

Path-breaking in its revelation of the hidden story of Sanskrit, it also explores the surprising rise of English after Independence and how it may be endangering India's native languages.

"Urdu, too, has a story, starting with men who spoke Uzbek coming to Delhi and finding early Hindi, but preferring to speak Persian, the way so many of us opt for English. The north-east has a separate story too, starting near Banaras, where there is a different history and a totally different 'maternal' substratum — no gender, for example. And English, which

took to the Indian landscape like a hardy and determined weed," said the Trinidad-born author.

The book also got high praises from eminent historian Romila Thapar and award-winning journalist-author Tony Joseph.

While Thapar commended the book for revealing new dimensions in aspects of Indian history so



Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India through its Languages By Peggy Mohan Penguin Random House India 352 pages; Rs469

"ably and accessibly" in this book, Joseph, who is the author of best-selling "Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors", called the book a "necessary read".

Peggy Mohan takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the world of Indian languages. Weaving linguistics and history tightly together, she explores how waves of migration over millennia have left their mark on what we speak and how we speak. Wanderers, Kings, Merchants is an accessible account [and] a necessary read," said Joseph about the book. The 360-page "Wanderers, Kings, Merchants", priced at Rs 599, is presently available for sale on online and offline stores.

To sum up, one of India's most incredible and enviable cultural aspects is that every Indian is bi-

lingual, if not multilingual. Delving into the fascinating early history of South Asia, this original book reveals how migration, both external and internal, has shaped all Indians from ancient times. Through a first-of-its-kind and incisive study of languages, such as the story of early Sanskrit, the rise of Urdu, language formation in the North-east, it presents the astounding argument that all Indians are of mixed origins. It explores the surprising rise of English after Independence and how it may be endangering India's native languages.

Peggy Mohan began life in Trinidad, West Indies, and earned a PhD in linguistics from the University of Michigan. She has taught linguistics at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia, among other centres. She is the author of three novels, and has contributed to reputed publications, such as the Economic and Political Weekly and IIC Quarterly. She has developed educational television programmes for children, and learnt cartoon animation and opera singing. She now teaches music in Vasant Valley School, New Delhi.

