

## Mega hydro power projects

Since Jammu and Kashmir has enough potential for eco-friendly hydro power generation capacity but for whatever reasons, it has exploited so far only slightly over 16percent of the estimated 20000 MW of the potential, should be a compelling force to do more in the power sector. On the other hand, there is no dearth of the perpetually increasing demand for power and the gap between demand and supply is increasing which calls for the UT incessantly going in for indigenously harnessing and generating more electricity. More mega power projects are the only answer not only for meeting the ever increasing demand for power and attaining self-sufficiency but even exporting the surplus to other states or the National Grid and thus increase revenues. Towards that direction, undoubtedly, efforts are being made to exploit the available potential to the optimal level and power position, its availability and distribution therefore, is expected to vastly improve in the very near future. However, the deficit is as usual, being fulfilled by importing power.

Ratle Power and Unj Power projects like initiatives are landmark ones and only in December last year, Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Council cleared 850 MW Ratle project in joint venture mode which is expected to be completed within three years. Referring to the Unjproject located in Kishtwar district considered to be one of the biggest, it was going to change the face of the power scenario of the UT. Taking further steps in the direction, recently signing by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir a Memorandum of Understanding for mega power projects with stipulation of "return" of all the power projects to the UT after 40 years was aimed at guaranteeing the power management autonomy of the concerned power projects to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

The parties to the MoS being the UT Government and the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) is basically for the proper implementation of the Ratle HEP, Kirithai -2 HEP as also the execution of the SwalkotHEP, Uri -1 and Dulhasti stage -2 power projects. Since a huge investment by way of cost being Rs.34000 on these projects was involved, not only proper execution of the works but adhering to the timelines of completion and commissioning of these projects had to be made sure. Any delays would entail cost escalation which under present strains on the economy due to COVID impact was by all counts to be avoided. Let the fate of Swalkot project for years in a row not visit other promising projects. Excepting one project, all other projects were in Doda district which pointed towards perceptible economic activities in the district getting generated. Not only that, avenues of large scale employment, both direct and indirect, would take place where mostly, the locals being beneficiaries would result in an overall perceptible progress in the concerned areas. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and MoSin the Prime Minister's office Dr.Jitendra Singh being present on the occasion of signing of the MoS lent more purpose to it and a massive investment in the lucrative sector could be expected for which concerted efforts and administrative toning up process were imperative. Provisions favourable for the interests of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, even on long term basis, in the sense incorporating a new clause in MoU of transferring back the projects after the stipulated period, assumes importance as the same has been done for the first time.

How much a consumer used power per month, a uniform practice in Jammu and Kashmir is still not in vogue. While most of the consumers are paying electric bills as per metered reading, others were not and the decision of the Government in not being in "a position" to supplying electricity to anyone without metres in the near future would put in place an accepted and workable procedure. Gearing up for the pressures on demand for power by an expected increased pace in industrialisation in the UT which is estimated to be around additional 15 percent on an annual basis, the Government in power sector needed to do proper and meticulous planning. We expect, besides a turnaround in the non-stop supply of power in urban areas which agreeably has improved considerably, our rural areas too should enjoy round the clock power supply. We also expect that additional 19 power projects which were inaugurated on the occasion, would bring about considerable improvement in power distribution and management. Let us not now, anymore keep stretching the deadline of attaining power self-sufficiency beyond 2025 under the great emphasis being laid on "Atmanirbar Bharat" in Jammu and Kashmir. That will definitely be the real acid test of the performance of our power sector and the planners.

## Valley's lone food testing lab de-notified

Otherwise also, there are very rare activities of food testing laboratories in UT of Jammu and Kashmir being known or effective in their purpose which gives not only a long bridle to the adulterators but a "relief" too that no action was going to be taken against them. Whatever the case, the only laboratory in Kashmir valley supposed to be engaged in testing food samples has been barred from doing so by the Food Safety and Standards Association of India (FSSAI) as it has failed in getting accreditation by the National Accreditation Board for Laboratories (NABL).

Why the authorities failed in applying for and getting accreditation as required mandatorily from the NABL within the permitted time and even beyond, must be got known and accountability fixed. The plea that documentation and other paper work could not be completed in time neither carries any conviction nor is acceptable, however, the "grace period" given by the NABL must be availed of so that the laboratory was authorised to resume its functions in February this year. The work so sensitive by nature, however, must be got done from their counterparts in Jammu and activities widened and intensified to be seen and felt performing to bring about perceptible results.

# Xi Jinping and the Future of CCP

Brig Anil Gupta

In an unprecedented move effective from the New Year's Day, China has removed the military from the Government control and expanded the powers of its Central Military Commission (CMC), headed by Xi Jinping, to mobilise military and civilian resources in defence of the national interest, both at home and abroad. The new Defence Law has removed policy and decision making from the State Council (the Cabinet), thus further consolidating power in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Paramount leader all powerful Xi Jinping. It is aimed at strengthening the military leadership under Xi, providing it with the legal grounds to respond to the challenges of accelerating confrontations in which China is embroiled with its neighbours and the US. It empowers Xi to deal firmly with situations that could harm the communist regime at home and abroad. CMC will now be responsible for the formulation of the National Defence Policy removing it from the purview of the State Council.

Has Xi realised that his move to take on India, the most powerful among the 18 nations with China has a dispute, aimed at sending a strategic message has backfired? Coupled with this many other decisions taken by Xi Jinping in 2020 are haunting him with increased dissension and threat to the regime spurring a debate to discuss the fallout of these follies on the future of Xi Jinping and the CCP. It being a single-party state CCP and China is synonymous.

Empirically speaking no totalitarian party so far has ruled for more than 74 years. The CCP has already entered the 72nd year. CCP relies on three Ps to maintain its iron grip on China. Personnel control, Propaganda and Peoples' Liberation Army. In his effort to consolidate the rule of CCP and its ideology, Xi Jinping has assumed firm control of the three Ps side lining the "collective leadership" propounded by his predecessors thus becoming a virtual dictator. In the process is CCP losing control over him and is being undermined? The questions his dissenters often ask "Is CCP supreme or the Supreme Leader?"

In absence of collective leadership Xi is surrounded by a coterie which rather than giving a rational advice generally accedes to the Paramount Leader's thinking? In his urge to become the most

powerful Chinese leader and bequeathed with Chairman Mao Dezing, he has taken few decisions which are proving counter-productive leading to dissension within the party and against the party. The latter is fuelled more by external forces determined to overthrow the communist regime taking advantage of growing economic disparity and growth of two distinct classes in China. The expansionist ideology of the CCP followed aggressively by Xi is the major bone of contention at international level.

When the Communists under Mao seized control of mainland China in 1949, it aggressively distanced itself from its feudal past. However, under Xi Jinping there has been a concerted attempt to merge the past with the present. In order to combat the dissent against the CCP, he has projected the party as the inheritor of the great Chinese empire of the past.

Despite being born with a Red Spoon Xi was not parachuted to the top and had to struggle his way through at every stage. His initial background and subsequent struggle for rise to power has made him ambitious, adamant and a committed communist.

Xi took over the reins of the party in 2012 when it was in a disarray. In the process of consolidating his position and hold over the party he brought an end to the "collective leadership" system and became all powerful by grabbing all the three powerful posts in China including a resolution passed for abolishing president's term limit, enabling him to rule indefinitely. This act of his has not gone down well with the young and aspiring leaders within CCP who see a dark future for them with bleak chances of rising to the top. Like all authoritarian leaders Xi also has a fair number of dissenters and domestic opponents.

During his consolidation of power amongst other things he has relied a lot upon emphasis on ideology and nationalism. To fulfil his ambition and imbibe nationalism he announced a roadmap in what is referred to as "China Dream." The underlying idea behind China Dream is to restore the ex-Middle Kingdom's glory and regain the Chinese supremacy through expansionism. It is also aimed at minimising internal dissension through national unity. Xi's ambition is to make China not only stronger but assertive as well, world's number one power by 2050.

China, under Xi Jinping, has witnessed substantial growth thus seeking a greater leadership role in world affairs. At the same time his repressive policies in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong as well as excessive curbs on academic freedom, issues like ecological degradation and widening wealth disparities at home, trade war with USA and aggressive behaviour with its neighbours have posed serious challenges for the party and Xi domestically and globally.

The policy of forced population transfers is also proving counterproductive due to fewer livelihood opportunities in the relocated habitats causing dissatisfaction. Income disparity between the rural and urban population also poses a serious threat. His attempts to introduce legal framework in China has drawn flak from the hardliners within the party who consider CCP to be above any law.

Post the outbreak of Covid, for which many nations blame China, Xi Jinping has been mired in controversies due to his various decisions that have led to weakening of China globally and CCP domestically. To combat the global anger against China, Xi embarked on an aggressive policy to silence his critics and dissenters at home. In the process, he committed the Himalayan Blunder of employing PLA to teach India, its potential competitor, a lesson. By doing so he wanted to convey a strategic message but the resolute response of India put a lid on all his hopes and drove him on the back foot severely denting his image at home and abroad. His simultaneous aggressive moves in South China Sea, East China Sea, Hong Kong and Taiwan also drew stiff resistance. There was a global outcry to halt the expansionist designs of the CCP turning it into a battle of ideologies; Communism versus Democracy, Authoritarian versus Free World. The Wolf Warrior diplomacy and 3W strategy of Xi Jinping not only proved counterproductive but have led to complete Chinese isolation and increased abhorrence for the CCP.

His adventurism at seas and on borders with India resulted in a unified alliance by the West and by nations in China's neighbourhood against China. QUAD, is fast turning into a military alliance from just a formal grouping. Japan is strengthening its armed forces. Australia has become more belligerent viz a viz China. India has signed pacts to augment defence and economic engagement with Vietnam and Japan; both victims of Chinese

aggressiveness. Taiwan is determined to face the mainland hegemony and not to succumb to its threats, its determination is buoyed by increased support from USA, UK and France have begun aggressive patrolling of South China Sea. All eyes are now set at Joe Biden and his China policy which is expected to be tougher and more damaging than his predecessor. But for a handful of friends in Turkey and Pakistan, China under Xi Jinping faces total global isolation.

Even at home things do not appear to be better due to growing unemployment, loss of business, relocation of global companies, fall out of control over Hong Kong, disruption and realignment of global supply chains, food shortage, growing income disparities, cruelties of PLA, and suppression of dissent with iron hand; all adding to the woes of Xi Jinping. The implementation of the recently introduced Civil Code, an effort to introduce Rule of Law, which is to begin in 2021 would be another litmus test for Xi's hold over the CCP as there is bound to be conflict of interest in its successful implementation and maintenance of the supremacy of CCP. Growing demands for reforms and resistance by the ethnic communities of the autonomous regions to force "Sinicization" is a tinderbox that may lead to demise of CPC and China's balkanisation as and when it explodes.

China is at a unique point in history. The CCP has presided over the country for more than seven decades and is close to the shelf life of contemporary totalitarian parties.

Will all powerful and over ambitious Xi Jinping be able to sail China through its present crisis or would lead towards the demise of the CCP will to a large extent depend on how he reacts to China's global isolation and growing dissension within the party? Ex-professor Cai Xia, who has been recently expelled from the elite Central Party School, has criticised Xi Jinping and said under his regime the Chinese Communist Party is not a force for progress for China. She said there was widespread opposition within the party but few dared to speak out, afraid of political retaliation in the form of internal party discipline and corruption charges. China watchers are keeping their fingers crossed.

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## PSC violating SC, CIC, SIC Judgements

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

After the Central RTI Act 2005 was extended to J&K post Article 370 abrogation people were expecting public authorities in J&K to be more responsive. This seems to be the opposite as Government Departments and other institutions are either non responsive or information is totally denied under RTI Act. In my previous piece I had highlighted how public authorities like the office of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Rural Development Department Civil Secretariat Jammu, Services Selection Recruitment Board (SSRB) and several other public authorities were denying information under RTI. All these public authorities didn't even respond back to RTI applicants within stipulated time. The DC office Budgam even failed to adjudicate the first appeal filed by the appellant namely Mushtaq Ahmad Lone. The aggrieved has now filed 2nd appeal before Central Information Commission (CIC).

**PSC denies info**  
In a recent case J&K Public Service Commission (PSC) has once again denied to provide certified copies of evaluated answer scripts to an information seeker namely Mohammar Ramzan Khan. Mr Khan's son Irfan had failed to qualify the J&K Civil Services Exam (CSE). The candidate had qualified the mains exam and appeared for the interview but his claim is that he has been given less marks in the Anthropology paper. Deputy Secretary who is also the designated Public Information Officer (PIO) informed the RTI applicant that PSC does not provide evaluated answer scripts of the candidates however he can inspect the same as per record retention schedule. This goes against several judgments of the J & K State Information Commission (JKSIC) and Central Information Commission (CIC).

Meghna Jaswal

In the past year, COVID-19 has proved to be detrimental to the entire world especially to a country like India with a huge population where administering and ensuring the prevention protocol becomes a whole new challenge. With the year coming to an end, there have been some advances made in order to contain the virus, some of which has been successful to some extent. The hope of successful prevention if not elimination of the virus with the discovery of vaccines has led to some merry in the hearts of people, however, with the new strain which has recently started transmitting quite quickly, again the reservations regarding the new vaccines are arising and becoming stronger.

It is first imperative to understand what exactly the new strain is and how severe it is. Medical experts claim that there are a lot of rumours surrounding the new strain of Corona virus and as claimed by the Prime Minister of UK, Boris Johnson, that the new strain is 70% more effective and infectious. Scientists claim that there is no such relevant research which may indicate towards the new strain being more severe. Claims have also been made in reference to past viruses stating how mutations are a common occurrence and no solid conclusions can be made as of now and it would take more time and research by observing the patients as the cases come up.

Viruses as stated before occur through mutations and the new strain called VUI-202012/01 is a result of genetic mutation in the spike protein which the SARS-CoV 2 uses in order to spread the infection to human cells. The distinguishing factor of this new strain is in its frequency and transmissibility. While cases have been increasingly seen of the new strain in UK, experts claim that it was first observed nearly a year ago in China. In case of the corona virus being an RNA virus, mutations being a common occurrence are expected.

**What does it mean for India?**  
The Civil Aviation Ministry of India on the 23rd of December suspended all flights between the European countries and India. The flights suspension from UK would remain till January 7th as per the ministry's directive. Till now 25 cases have been discovered of the new strain in India and the government has been strictly regulating all the

tral Information Commission (CIC). The order also goes against Supreme Court judgement titled CBSE Versus Aditya Bandopadhyay and Others.

**JKSIC Judgement 2019**  
In April 2019 the erstwhile State Information Commission (SIC) has held that no Public Authority can deny information sought under the provisions of Right to Information Act (RTI) by formulating any subjective opinion as the same amounts to over-riding the statutory law. The judgment pronounced by the then Information Commissioner Mohammad Ashraf Mir in a 2nd Appeal filed against the First Appellate Authority (FAA) and Public Information Officer (PIO) of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) for denying evaluated answer sheets of all the papers of Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Judicial Competitive Examination, 2017 to the appellant.

In response to the RTI application, the PIO had conveyed to the applicant that details of marks secured by each candidate in the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Judicial Competitive Examination, 2017 were available on the website of the Public Service Commission. Regarding demand of evaluated answer scripts, the PIO contended that PSC has decided to provide copies of answer scripts only where the examination is of objective type/QMR format and in case of descriptive type examination, the PSC had decided to allow inspection of evaluated answer scripts.

Since the Judicial Services exam was a descriptive type examination, the PIO accordingly offered inspection of all answer scripts of the applicant instead of taking copies of the same. The appellant had submitted before the Information Commission that he was not interested in inspection of answer

scripts and wanted hard copies of all his answer sheets. He even cited the celebrated judgment of Supreme Court titled "CBSE Versus Aditya Bandopadhyay and Others" and the judgment of Central Information Commission in case titled "Swati Babbar Versus GGSIP University".

After hearing both the sides in length, the Information Commissioner Mohammad Ashraf Mir, while referring to the appropriate provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Act, 2009, observed, "there is no dispute regarding the fact that an evaluated answer script is an information within the meaning of Section 2(d) of the J&K RTI Act, which corresponds to Section 2(f) of the Central Right to Information Act, 2005". Referring to the judgment of Supreme Court in "CBSE Versus Aditya Bandopadhyay and Others" case, the Information Commission further observed, "there is also no dispute that right to information includes inspection of documents/records as well as taking extracts or certified copies of documents or records in terms of Section 2(i) of the Act".

**Swati Babbar case**  
Vide her RTI application dated 26.12.2016, Swati Babbar an architecture student had sought copies of answer sheets (external exam) of some subjects in B.Arch course from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University Delhi. The information was denied by the PIO. The First Appellate Authority (FAA) also upheld the PIO's order. The case finally landed in the Central Information Commission (CIC) New Delhi when the aggrieved filed 2nd appeal. The then Information Commissioner Yashovardhan Azad while disposing off the case directed for disclosure of the information and issued penalty notice to the PIO of University for withholding information. The CIC order No:

CIC/GGSIU/A/2017/109634 reads as :  
"PIO failed to reply to RTI application dated 10.08.2016, a prima facie instance of causing deliberate obstruction in flow of information is made out against the then PIO. The Designated Officer of this bench is directed to issue show cause for maximum penalty to the then PIO. Notice be served through the present PIO as well as First Appellate Authority (FAA). Written explanation by notice must reach the Commission by 27.10.2017. Hearing, if found necessary, shall be notified in due course"

**Conclusion**  
There are several other judgments issued by former State Chief Information Commissioners G R Sufi and Khurshid Ahmad Ganai wherein PSC has been directed to reveal copies of answer scripts to RTI applicants. There are several judgments of CIC plus Apex court order on the subject as well. If PSC continues to follow its own rules and strictures, this is nothing but lack of legal acumen among the officers of JKPSC. I hope they will go through the judgements I mentioned above. This will enable PIO of JKPSC to get some clarity on providing certified copies of answer scripts under RTI Act 2005 to information seekers. There are several cases wherein information seekers after having access to answer scripts were able to get justice. I am aware of a case titled Dr Riyaz Ahmad Daga V/s SKIMS Srinagar wherein 40 marks in one single paper of MD Medicine exam had not been counted and the RTI applicant had failed in the exam. All this was revealed when Dr Riyaz had been given access to answer scripts by the then State Chief Information Commissioner G R Sufi in 2012.

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## Covid-19 new strain Impact on India

passengers who travelled from UK in the previous week.

All the infected people are being kept under quarantine in isolated rooms under various health care facilities and their close contacts have also been kept under quarantine. The health ministry has also ensured that contact tracing has been ini-

governments and administration was not truly ready for it. It led to 1.3 billion Indians being forced to stay indoors. India suffered a huge economic crisis due to this lockdown.

As per official data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, "the Indian economy contracted by 23.9% in the April-June quarter of this fiscal year."

Economists termed it as the worst decline recorded since 1996. India's GDP has also been the worst hit amongst other nations as the decline was steep and it also shouldn't be forgotten that the informal sector is not completely captured in these GDP calculations which actually accounts for more than 50% of gross value added. Therefore, in terms of the economic status, India has already suffered a major blow back. In terms of the new strain of corona virus, the government has to again ensure that the illusion of the pandemic getting over is distorted and people need to keep taking the necessary precautions which include wearing a mask, sanitizing and social distancing. Closed spaces, crowded spaces and close contact must be avoided. The lockdowns imposed earlier pushed a lot of Indians into unemployment and put the economic growth of India at a dead end. Therefore, in order to avoid this not much can be done except the usual prac-



tiated for family members, co passengers and other people. Thereby, a strict vigilance policy is being followed. Understanding the mistakes of the past as well as learning from the examples set by certain districts like Bhilwara in Rajasthan among others can ensure successful containing of the new strain.

The Government of India previously on the onset of the virus had enforced a strict lockdown which was probably the most stringent lockdown imposed among all the other nations of the world. Despite this fact, India wasn't able to successfully contain the virus as it had hoped to achieve. The lockdown happened abruptly and even the state

time which needs to be followed in a more stringent manner with the new strain that has come up.

There are not necessarily any new precautions which can be added to the ones which already exist. However, the mistakes of the past in terms of keeping a vigilant check on travelers and personal responsibility as well as some of the factors that might contain the spread of the virus. There have been a few cases of people fleeing hospitals or not informing the authorities. That again needs to be kept under check. While the COVID numbers seem to be getting better it is also imperative to note that the pandemic is far from over as PM Modi advises people to stay cautious till the vaccination drive is not completed which will take place in the following year.

**How does the new strain affect the vaccines?**

Experts are pointing out that there is no cause to worry as of now since the vaccines elicit a broad range of responses and thereby the main question to address would be whether the virus will become sensitive to the vaccines in the longer run. Infact, experts in the European Union are also claiming that the vaccines will be effective against the new strain of the virus.

The Government of India has lined up 3 vaccine candidates and has started preparing for a huge vaccination drive. So in terms of the vaccination drive, India is well prepared especially considering that the vaccine manufacturers are claiming that with a few tweaks the vaccine would be suitable for the new strain as well while some claim that the vaccine already is suitable for it.

As of now, Dr VK Paul, Niti Aayog member and head of National Expert Group on Covid-19 vaccination has claimed that the government has already made preparations in terms of cold storage being made available for the vaccines. And other provisions are also being made to ensure the smooth delivery of vaccines. Till the time more research is not made on the effect of the new strain on the vaccine, a new analysis won't be certain. However, Indian authorities are taking all possible measures at the moment to make sure that the new strain which is extremely transmissible does not spread and is successfully contained. Now it all boils down to individual responsibility and constraint.

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