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The State of the Chinese Economy - Part 1

By Brig Hemant Mahajan, YSM

Author is M Sc, M Phil in Defence Studies. He joined IMA Dehradun in July 1973 and passed out as a Commissioned Officer on 15 June 1975. He commanded his battalion 7 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY in Operation Rakshak in the most difficult areas of Poonch and Rajouri.

Potential for Growth

China's economic growth has been slowing in recent years, transitioning from rapid, double-digit growth to a more moderate pace. However, it still remains one of the world's largest economies and continues to hold significant potential for growth. Key drivers of future growth include:

- **Domestic Consumption:** As incomes rise, Chinese consumers are spending more, which can boost domestic demand and economic activity.
- **Technological Innovation:** China is investing heavily in technology and innovation, which can drive productivity and create new industries.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Continued investment in infrastructure, such as transportation and energy, can support economic growth and improve efficiency.

Exports and Imports

China is a major global trading power, with both its exports and imports playing a significant role in its economy. While China's exports have continued to grow, there have been concerns about the impact of trade tensions with the United States and other countries.

Chinese Stock Market

The Chinese stock market has experienced both ups and downs in recent years. It has been influenced by factors such as economic growth, government policies, and global market trends. While there have been periods of volatility, the Chinese stock market remains a significant player in the global financial landscape.

Overall, the Chinese economy is facing a period of transition. While it still has significant potential for growth, it is also grappling with challenges such as slowing economic growth, trade tensions, and demographic changes.

The relative performance of the Chinese and Indian economies has been a topic of interest in recent years. While India has been one of the fastest-growing major economies globally, China's economic growth has been gradually slowing down. Here are some key points between the Chinese and Indian economies:

Economic Growth Rates:

India's Rapid Growth: India has consistently been one of the fastest-growing major economies in recent years, driven by factors like a large youth population, economic reforms, and a growing middle class.

China's Slowing Growth: China's economic growth has been moderating as it transitions to a more sustainable growth model, moving away from export-led growth towards consumption and services.

Convergence in Growth Rates:

Reduced Gap: The difference in growth rates between China and India has indeed been narrowing, with India's growth outpacing China's in some recent years.

Convergence: This convergence in growth rates suggests that the gap between the two economies may be reducing.

Factors Influencing the Trend:

Structural Differences: China's economy is more export-oriented and has a higher level of industrialization compared to India, while India's economy is driven more by domestic consumption and services.

Future Outlook:

Potential for Catching Up: While India has been closing the gap in growth rates with China, there are challenges such as infrastructure deficits, bureaucratic hurdles, and regulatory complexities that could hinder its ability to sustain rapid growth.

Rebalancing Priorities: China's focus on quality growth, technological innovation, and sustainability is likely to influence its economic trajectory in the coming years, potentially leading to a more balanced and resilient economy.

While India has been narrowing the growth differential with China and has shown strong growth momentum, China's economy remains significantly larger and more industrialized.

Declining Foreign Investment in China

Foreign investment in China is rapidly declining due to heightened geopolitical tensions and unpredictable regulatory measures. Many European Union and Japanese companies are approaching China with increased caution. Meanwhile, India is positioning itself as an attractive alternative for investors who are growing wary of China.

The Shift in Foreign Capital Flows

China, once a magnet for foreign capital due to its exceptional growth, is now seeing a significant reduction in foreign investment. From stock markets to private equity and foreign direct investment (FDI), the flow of foreign money into China is dwindling. China's stock exchanges have stopped releasing daily data on overseas fund flows, which has led to increased concerns among investors. Analysts believe that if the current trend continues, China may experience its first annual outflow from its stock market since 2016. This shift is largely attributed to foreign funds steadily withdrawing from the market, with year-to-date figures showing a negative trend as of August 19.

Private Equity Firms Reconsidering China

Top private equity firms such as Blackstone, KKR, and Carlyle have significantly slowed their investments in China. Geopolitical tensions and Beijing's tighter control over businesses have made dealmaking in China more challenging. In recent years, the number of new investments by the ten largest global buyout firms in China has plummeted, with only five small deals made this year. Concerns about the risks of investing in mainland China have led to secondary buyers demanding steep discounts, ranging from 30% to over 60%.

Foreign Direct Investment Hits a Low

Foreign direct investment (FDI) into China has reached its lowest point since the early 1990s. In 2023, China's direct investment liabilities rose by only \$33 billion, an 82% decrease from 2022. This decline underscores the challenges Beijing faces in attracting overseas investment to boost its economy. The third quarter of 2023 marked the first time since 1998 that investment fell. With advanced economies raising interest rates and Beijing cutting them, there is an increasing preference among multinational companies to keep their capital outside of China.

European and Japanese Firms Losing Confidence

The 2024 Business Confidence Survey by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China revealed a continued downward trend in business confidence among European firms, despite China's reopening in early 2023. Structural issues such as sluggish demand, overcapacity, and challenges in the real estate sector have further dampened confidence.

The survey also highlighted that 68% of respondents found doing business in China more difficult, marking the highest percentage on record. Majority of Japanese firms have either reduced or maintained their investment levels in China, with many expressing a negative outlook for 2024.

India's Opportunity to Attract Foreign Investment

As foreign capital inflows into China decrease, India sees an opportunity to attract these investors. India's GDP growth forecast for 2024 has been revised upward, making it an appealing alternative for companies looking to diversify away from China. India has set an ambitious target of attracting at least \$100 billion annually in foreign direct investment over the next five years. Strategic reforms are being suggested to enhance India's appeal to global investors, including reducing costs for companies relocating to India, improving the ease of doing business, and establishing a framework for evaluating investment proposals.

A Changing Investment Landscape

The decline in foreign investment in China reflects broader geopolitical and economic shifts. As China becomes a less attractive destination for foreign capital, countries like India are positioning themselves as viable alternatives. However, for India to fully capitalize on this opportunity, strategic reforms and improved investment conditions are essential.

To be continued in next issue

From Prosperity to Discontent: How America's Rust Belt is Reshaping the Nation's Political Landscape

By Dr. Santhosh Mathew

The author is Associate Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed in his book *The End of History* that liberal democracy had triumphed, marking the culmination of humanity's sociopolitical evolution. However, as we approach the 2024 presidential election, America's Rust Belt tells a different story—one of economic decline, political discontent, and a profound transformation reshaping the nation's political landscape. The attitudes of blue-collar Americans and the influence of right-wing think tanks are coming into sharp focus, with Donald Trump's candidacy embodying the changes afoot. The Rust Belt, stretching across states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan, was once the industrial backbone of America. Steel mills, coal mines, and manufacturing plants provided stable employment and fostered thriving communities. However, over the past few decades, globalization, automation, and the shift to a service-based economy have taken a heavy toll. Factories have shuttered, jobs have disappeared, and communities have been left grappling with a sense of abandonment and despair. This economic decline has had a profound impact on the political attitudes of the region's residents. Blue-collar workers, who once found pride and purpose in their work, now face an uncertain future. The promise of the American Dream has become elusive, leading many to question the direction in which the country is headed.

The blue-collar workers of the Rust Belt feel betrayed by both major political parties. The Democratic Party, once seen as the champion of the working class, is now perceived as out of touch, focusing on issues that seem distant from the everyday struggles of these communities. The Republican Party, while traditionally representing business interests, has found an unexpected ally in these disillusioned workers, thanks to the rise of populist figures like Donald Trump. Trump's appeal to blue-collar Americans lies in his promise to restore the glory days of American industry. His rhetoric of bringing back manufacturing jobs, renegotiating trade deals, and cracking down on immigration resonates deeply with those who feel left behind by the forces of globalization and technological change. For many in the Rust Belt, Trump represents a voice that understands their plight and offers a glimmer of hope for a better future.

The decline of American liberalism is intricately linked to the discontent brewing in the Rust Belt. In the 1990s, liberalism, with its focus on civil rights, economic equality, and environmental protection, seemed to be the dominant force shaping America's future. However, the focus on identity politics and environmental issues has alienated many blue-collar voters, who feel that their economic concerns have been sidelined. This growing disconnect has allowed conservative ideologies to gain traction. The liberal establishment, once a bastion of progressivism, is now viewed with suspicion and distrust by many working-class Americans. This shift has opened the door for conservative figures to step in and offer an alternative vision, one that promises to address the economic and cultural anxieties of the Rust Belt.

Right-wing think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, have played a crucial role in shaping the policies and rhetoric of the conservative movement. These organizations provide the intellectual framework for Trump's campaign, advocating for deregulation, tax cuts, and a rollback of environmental protections. Their influence extends to judicial appointments, with many of Trump's Supreme Court picks aligning with their conservative ideology. The Heritage Foundation and similar organizations have been instrumental in crafting a vision of America that resonates with the frustrations and aspirations of blue-collar voters. They advocate for a return to traditional values and a rejection of what they see as the excesses of liberalism. This vision includes prioritizing economic growth through traditional industries, even at the expense of environmental considerations and scientific consensus on issues like climate change.

Donald Trump's candidacy is a direct response to the discontent brewing in the Rust Belt. His promises to revive American manufacturing, protect jobs from foreign competition, and restore national pride have struck a chord with voters longing for stability and prosperity. Trump's choice of running mate, J.D. Vance, a junior senator from Ohio, underscores his commitment to addressing the concerns of the Rust Belt. Vance, author of the bestselling memoir *Hillbilly Elogy* has a deep understanding of the struggles faced by working-class Americans. His own life story, rising from a troubled upbringing in the Rust Belt to becoming a prominent political figure, mirrors the aspirations of many in the region. Together, Trump and Vance present a compelling ticket for voters who feel left behind by the modern economy and disillusioned with the political establishment.

As America approaches a critical election, the political landscape is marked by deep divisions and uncertainties. The Rust Belt states, with their pivotal role in the electoral map, could determine the outcome of the presidential race. The decline of liberalism, the rise of blue-collar discontent, and the influence of right-wing think tanks are all contributing to a potential shift towards conservative authoritarianism. The stakes are high, and the future of American democracy hangs in the balance. The Rust Belt's journey from industrial powerhouse to political battleground encapsulates the broader struggles facing the nation. The challenges of economic displacement, cultural fragmentation, and political polarization are not unique to this region, but they are perhaps most acutely felt here. In this turbulent time, it is imperative for progressives to reengage with the working class, addressing their economic concerns and restoring their faith in the democratic system. The battle for the soul of America is not just about winning an election; it is about ensuring that every American, regardless of their background, has a stake in the country's future. The Rust Belt's story is a reminder that the health of a democracy depends on its ability to include and uplift all its citizens, not just the privileged few. As the nation stands at a crossroads, the Rust Belt's voice will be crucial in determining the direction America takes. Will it be a return to traditional values and economic nationalism, or a renewed commitment to inclusive progressivism? The answer lies in the hands of the voters, and the world will be watching closely. Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* suggested that future conflicts would be cultural rather than ideological. In America's heartland, this clash is already unfolding, as the battle for the country's identity intensifies.

A Journey Beyond the Festival

By Uday Kumar Varma

Author is a former Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI

As the 10-day celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi comes to a close, millions of devotees will bid farewell to Lord Ganesh, immersing His idols in rivers and seas with a mixture of reverence and sadness. Yet beyond the ritual lies a more profound question: What remains after these ten days?

While the vibrant energy of devotion may fade as we return to our daily routines, the spiritual discipline we practice during the festival offers us a unique opportunity for personal growth. How can we carry this sense of purpose forward, beyond these ten sacred days?

More Than a Deity: Ganesh's Lasting Wisdom

Ganesh, with his distinct elephant-headed form and his place as the remover of obstacles, stands out in Hindu mythology. His image, seemingly unconventional, invites us to look beyond the surface and connect with something deeper. Ganesh's wisdom isn't confined to rituals—it transcends into our daily lives, encouraging us to embrace patience, humility, and awareness.

The story of his creation—born out of divine will, beheaded, and then reborn—mirrors the human experience of facing challenges, accepting change, and growing through adversity. Ganesh's lessons are as much about overcoming our inner obstacles—fear, ego, and ignorance—as they are about seeking external success.

A Time for Inner Reflection

During Ganesh Chaturthi, the daily rhythm of life pauses for many. Rituals, prayers, and offerings create a structure that fosters self-discipline and reflection. For ten days, we find ourselves more mindful of our actions and more aware of the world around us.

This sacred period nudges us toward virtues like compassion and patience, virtues that Ganesh embodies. But what if these ten days could be the beginning of a more permanent transformation? Could the discipline we show during the festival seep into our everyday lives, helping us become better versions of ourselves?

Ganesh: A Guide for Personal Growth

For those on a spiritual path, Ganesh's role goes far beyond the festival. He represents the delicate balance between the spiritual and the material, showing us how to navigate both. His teachings guide us to face life's obstacles with grace, not just to remove them but to grow through them.

These challenges—whether they are external difficulties or inner struggles—are opportunities for growth. Each one, when faced with wisdom, helps us evolve. The patience we cultivate during this festival can lead to greater self-awareness, while the humility we learn becomes a tool for navigating life's complexities.

Keeping Ganesh's Spirit Alive Every Day

It's easy to feel the spiritual energy of Ganesh Chaturthi during the festival, but as soon as we return to our regular lives, distractions take over. The challenge, then, is not to let Ganesh's lessons fade away with the end of the celebrations. What if we treated each day as if Ganesh's presence still filled our homes?

The teachings of Ganesh encourage us to carry his virtues—wisdom, humility, and the ability to overcome challenges—into our everyday lives. This requires conscious effort, a willingness to reflect, and the courage to make long-term changes in how we think and act.

The Path to Lasting Virtue

The immersion of Ganesha's idol at the end of the festival isn't just a ritual; it's symbolic of a deeper truth. Just as his physical form dissolves into the waters, so too should we dissolve our egos and embrace humility. The real work begins after the festival when we take the lessons learned during these ten days and apply them to the rest of the year.

By living with the same devotion and mindfulness that we show during Ganesh Chaturthi, we can continue to grow spiritually. The wisdom Ganesha offers is not a temporary gift, but a lasting guide for how to live a life of integrity and purpose.

Sustaining the Festival's Legacy

The true challenge of Ganesh Chaturthi lies not in its celebration, but in ensuring that the festival's deeper lessons continue to resonate. Can we make a lasting commitment to embodying resilience, selflessness, and insight in our daily lives? Even the smallest shifts in our attitudes can spark waves of transformation—not just within us, but in the world around us.

When we seek Ganesha's blessings, we aren't merely asking for worldly achievements. We are asking for the inner vision to see beyond our immediate desires, the fortitude to confront life's challenges with unwavering grace, and the courage to live with deeper consciousness. These are not fleeting virtues; they are pillars that elevate us toward a higher purpose.

By carrying forward the essence of these ten days—infused with reflection, discipline, and reverence—we align ourselves with the universal truths that Ganesha embodies. In this alignment, we breathe life into the festival long after the idols are immersed, allowing its spirit to guide us not just in moments of worship, but in every step of our journey.

America Holds the Key to Ending the War In Gaza

By Vappala Balachandran

The author is Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat

The involvement of a Bedouin in violence against Israel might fly in the face of Tel Aviv's claims that the Bedouins living in the country have been victims of Hamas.

THE killing of three Israeli civilians near the Allenby (King Hussein) Bridge border crossing in the occupied West Bank on September 8 by Maher Ziab Hussein al-Jazi, a former Jordanian soldier, has added a new dimension to the Israel-Hamas war by directly involving Jordan in the conflict.

The Allenby Bridge was originally a World War I crossing point for the British forces from the East to the West Bank. It was named after Field Marshal Edmund Allenby, who had led the Palestine campaign. The recent incident has revealed different dimensions of the Israel-Jordan relationship in terms of security, diplomacy and trade.

During the late 1980s, I was taken on a conducted tour of the Allenby Bridge, 5 km east of Jericho city in the West Bank, for the showcasing of Israel's preventive security measures to track terrorists and drug traffickers crossing over from Jordan to Israel. We did not have diplomatic relations with Israel then. Apart from video tracking, the bridge had a facility to track border crossings on foot through a study of sand footprints by expert Bedouin trackers. I also met members of the Israel Defence Forces' (IDF) Bedouin Tracker Unit.

According to the IDF, on September 8, Maher Ziab drove a truck from Jordan, "exited the truck and opened fire," killing three Israeli civilian employees. Why didn't the IDF, with their most modern, AI-driven mass facial-recognition tools like Red Wolf, Blue Wolf and Wolf Pack, detect him while he was on the Allenby Bridge?

Also, the bridge is a high-security zone in which all persons crossing get searched at least three times. That the Jordanian could travel with a weapon means that it is a serious security breach.

The IDF had shot dead a Jordanian judge, Raed Zeiter, in 2014 on the bridge merely on the basis of suspicion, something that Israel had to publicly apologise for. Inquiries later revealed that Raed was going to his hometown, Nablus, in the West Bank. The killing had led to strong protests in Jordan and the West Bank. The Arab media had also reported that there were large-scale protests in Jordan after he was killed.

Notably, Maher Ziab, who was shot dead by the IDF, belonged to the influential Huwaitat tribe among the Bedouins. He was a resident of the Husseiniya area in Jordan's southern Ma'an Governorate. Huwaitat traces its origin to Fatima, daughter of the prophet Muhammad. Some of them were part of the historical 'Great Arab Revolt', described by Lawrence of Arabia in his 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'.

The involvement of a Bedouin in violence against Israel might fly in the face of Tel Aviv's claims that the Bedouins living within Israel have been victims of Hamas, as they were supporting the regime. It may be recalled that Kaid Farhan Elkadi, a Bedouin hostage who was found by the IDF in a Gaza tunnel on August 27, was given a rapturous welcome. However, in the wake of Elkadi's rescue, international media outlets that visited his village in Negev found strong resentment against the Benjamin Netanyahu regime.

Originally from Saudi Arabia, the Huwaitat had migrated to Jordan, Syria and Egypt (Sinai Peninsula), where they are found in large numbers. In 2020, Huwaitat leader Suleiman Mohammed al-Taqique al-Hwaiti had started an agitation against a new Saudi project called Neom, a planned mega-city, that could result in the displacement of 20,000 Huwaitat tribe members. This resulted in violence and brutal suppression by Saudi Arabia. If the Huwaitat decide, they could open another front against Israel.

Diplomatically, Jordan — which has been highly critical of Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza war — has a peace accord with Israel that was signed in 1994 by King Hussein and then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the presence of US President Bill Clinton. Annex III deals with the details of cooperation on crime. This is under strain, as revealed by the joint statement issued by Jordan, Qatar, Palestine and Kuwait on September 3 condemning PM Netanyahu's accusations that weapons were being smuggled to the Hamas through the Egyptian border.

West Asia observers now feel that Netanyahu's prolonged war in Gaza, aimed at keeping him in power, is going to affect Jordan adversely. David Hearst, Editor-in-Chief of the Middle East Eye, had observed on August 23 that Jordan's "balancing act is at risk of crashing down" with the latest Israeli intrusion into the West Bank, reviving the old Zionist policy to consider Jordan as the 'only Palestinian state', combined with Donald Trump's latest idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. He has stated: "The crudest version of this plan entails direct threats to the Palestinian villages and towns of the occupied West Bank to leave or be burnt out by settlers."

At the same time, prominent US Democrats like Senator Chris Van Hollen have criticised President Joe Biden's policy on Israel on the ground that it violates American law. In March, Hollen said Netanyahu's actions in Gaza preventing US humanitarian aid had violated Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 — also known as the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act — and stated that no arms should have been given to Israel.

Jonathan Steele, The Guardian's former foreign affairs correspondent, reminds us how the Secretary of State in President HW Bush's Cabinet, James Baker, had dealt with Netanyahu in 1989 by banning him from entering the US State Department. He says that Baker was furious with Netanyahu, who was then Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, for describing American policies as a 'distortion and lies'.

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India's National Security Challenges Amid Global Disorder

By Amb Amit Dasgupta (Retd)

The author is a former Indian diplomat. The article is excerpted from a talk delivered by the author at the Centre for National Security Studies, Bengaluru.

The combative rise of China has challenged US hegemony in global relations. In such a world, the crafting of a foreign policy that ensures national security requires vigilance, patience, caution, economic and military clout, and more importantly, constant risk management that enables India to maintain its strategic autonomy.

These are troubling times and a question that is often asked is how India might craft a foreign policy in a world that is deeply divisive and combative, and yet ensure national security. Such questions are no longer the sole purview of South Block but bother common citizens because of the implications global developments have on their everyday existence.

Consider, for instance, how unrest in Bangladesh can trigger an enormous refugee crisis imposing an unanticipated burden on the Indian economy and how this could sour India-Bangladesh relations; or how an unstable Pakistan can impact India; or how an unfriendly Maldives can threaten peace and tranquility in the Indian Ocean; or how the South China Seas dispute can disrupt sea lanes, supply chains, and raise the price of commodities; or how the war between Russia and Ukraine has raised the global price of oil and grain; or how the Gaza conflict and the likelihood of enhanced escalation can widen the conflict arena impacting global growth; or the manner in which the world economy is teetering on the brink of deep recession, to name a few.

Foreign policy, in other words, is not an isolated relationship between individual countries but essentially an integrated and contextual one that is also deeply influenced by socio-economic factors and political developments in a country or region and spilling over. In such a scenario, the crafting of foreign policy becomes a daunting and continuous task because of the potential risks to national security.

The singular objective of foreign policy is ensuring security of its national interests. This is achieved through risk assessments driven by an early warning system and a rapid response, through a multi-step and multi-stakeholder process that identifies threats, challenges, and opportunities. Interplay between the three often occurs. For example, a threat can be downgraded to a challenge (as has happened in the case of the pandemic), in as much as a challenge can become a threat (an impending storm can be a challenge and thereafter, rapidly transform into a threat, if it becomes an approaching cyclone). Interestingly, a challenge can also become an opportunity (the serious challenge of crimes against women, children, and the marginalized also offers the opportunity to take corrective measures, plug loopholes, make laws stricter, and enhance compliance and enforcement).

At the same time, threats, challenges, and opportunities can vary in scale and intensity. Some development can be a bigger or lesser threat, for instance. Risk management, consequently, is the timely identification and intervention in scenarios we are confronted with, failing which our security would be compromised with short, medium, or long-term consequences.

Risk management

Accurate risk assessment is not easy. Often miscalculations take place that can have serious implications. The tendency to impose old assessments on new scenarios end up backfiring. Socio-psychological factors should never be ignored, since getting blindsighted is a common failing. Ego and muscle power does not always win wars. Goliath, it may be recalled, is known to have been slayed.

It is worth remembering that the US with all its military might and with the full backing of its western allies saw defeat in Vietnam and then again, in Afghanistan. Human nature refuses to learn from history. It was, once, wisely advised that we should never underestimate human stupidity.

Risk analysis is like solving jigsaw puzzles. Pieces need to be put in the right place or the puzzle would never get solved. Impatience drives us into forcing pieces into spaces where they don't fit. The consequences can be serious.

Strategic risk management

It is said, and rightly so, that a nation's security is impacted by how stable its neighbourhood is and more importantly, how robust its relationship is with its neighbours. For a country that is as big as India, in comparison to its immediate neighbours or periphery, this requires great sensitivity and a genuine approach towards fraternal relations. Missteps can have long-term consequences. Genuine and sustainable relationships are built on trust and take years to build, but only minutes to destroy. Winning back trust is never easy. Lingering doubts and suspicions stand in the way of going back to the happy days.

Recall, for instance, that in 2015, Nepal suffered an earthquake that resulted in the loss of around ten thousand people and enormous loss of property, including revered heritage structures. India was the first responder to the tragedy and launched its largest overseas disaster relief operation (Operation Maitri) through search and rescue, medical aid, and assistance programmes that won it many friends in Nepal and globally. This was public diplomacy at its best. But then, New Delhi frittered it all away by imposing a blockade, in the very same year, triggering a massive humanitarian crisis. This extraordinary misstep resulted in a loss of trust that India is yet to regain.

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India is Proud of: Dr. Talimeren Ao (28 January 1918 – 13 September 1998) Iconic Footballer from Nagaland



Dr. Talimeren Ao was an Indian footballer and physician from Nagaland. He is best known as the captain of the India national football team in their first ever match after independence. One of the most famous Naga's, he was a figurehead of India's football history, and his name is resonant in the collective memory of the people. He played domestic club football for Mohun Bagan.

On 28 January 1918, Ao was born to Reverend Subongwati Ningdangri Ao and Maongsangla Changkilari in Changki village in the Naga Hills. He was their fourth child among 12.

Ao studied at Impur Christian School and was captain of the school team.[6] In 1937, he was nominated as best footballer of All Assam Inter School Football Championship after winning the tournament with the team. He later joined Jorhat Christian Mission School and also captained its football team.

In 1943, Ao joined then Calcutta Football League club Mohun Bagan AC, and he played in the defence. In Mohun Bagan, Ao was centre-half and along with his two backs, they were popularly known as "the Great Wall of China". He was given the captain's armband in 1948 to captain the Indian Football Team in London. In 1950, Ao's footballing talents were well-known and as such, caught the attention of various clubs from overseas, among which included the famed English club Arsenal F.C. Ao famously rejected a one-year contract from the club, choosing to continue with his studies; a decision which he never regretted in his later years.

Ao made a famous statement to Press when Indian team played barefoot against France in 1948 Summer Olympic in London "Well, you see, we play football in India, whereas you play bootball."

In 1948, a year after India won its independence, Ao became captain of the India national football team. He was part of the national team that toured to Europe in 1948 and went on to defeat the Pinner F.C. 9–1 on 24 July, Hayes F.C. 4–1 on 26 July, and Alexandra Park FC 8–2 on 28 July. He led the team at the 1948 Summer Olympics in London, in their first official game and was flag-bearer of the Indian contingent. India was then managed by Balaidas Chatterjee.

Ao (in right) shaking hands with French captain Gabriel Robert, in 1948 Summer Olympics.

He played for Syed Abdul Rahim managed India until 1951,[39][40] but missed a golden opportunity to play in the biggest tournament on earth, as India had not gone to the 1950 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

Ao studied at R. G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, West Bengal He earned MBBS degree from there, and in 1963, returned to Nagaland where he was given the post of Assistant Civil Surgeon. He later became Civil Surgeon. Ao went on to be appointed as Director of Health Services of the Government of Nagaland, from which he retired in 1978.

In 2002, Mohun Bagan Athletic Club honoured him by creating the Mohun Bagan Ratna Award and giving him a life membership. In Assam, an outdoor stadium at Kaliabor and an indoor stadium at Cotton College have been named after him. In 2003, 'Dr. T. Ao Northeast Football Trophy' was incepted in honour of him, to promote the development of football in the North-East.

In 2009, Union Minister for Mines, Bijoy Krishna Handique, inaugurated the first Dr. Talimeren Ao Football Trophy at the DDSC Stadium in Dimapur, Nagaland, to encourage and challenge the North-East Youth to excel in both sports and academics. In 2012, Government of Nagaland instituted Dr. T. Ao Awards in memory of him, and Naga archer Chekrovolü Swüro became the first one to receive it. In January 2018, a year-long celebration of the 100th birth anniversary of Ao was inaugurated at the Raj Bhavan in Kohima by the Nagaland Governor Padmanabha Acharya. In his memory, "T. Ao Inter District Football Tournament" was unveiled in Nagaland, by the Nagaland Football Association (NFA). In 2018, laying of foundation stone of both the Dr. T. Ao Sports Academy and Dr. T. Ao Stadium began

In 2018, India Post issued a ₹5 commemorative postage stamp of Ao, the second Indian footballer honoured with a postage stamp after Gostha Pal in 1998.

Dr.Talimeren Ao's excellence in Football and his services to society as a qualified Doctor can never go out of memory of Northeast people. No doubt he was a true legend.
