

Teachers' Shortage a Hurdle

India, with its ambitious aspirations to emerge as a global leader in higher education, faces a critical challenge that threatens the realization of its vision. As of October 31, 2024, over 5,182 teaching posts remain vacant across central universities, according to data shared in the Rajya Sabha. This acute shortage of faculty in premier institutions is a matter of grave concern, not only for the quality of education but also for India's long-term intellectual and economic development. Faculty shortages disrupt the very fabric of higher education. Central universities, being among the most prestigious institutions in the country, serve as the backbone of India's intellectual and research ecosystem. A significant gap in the teaching workforce compromises the quality of education, leaving students underserved. Larger teacher-to-student ratios often lead to overburdened faculty members, limited individual attention for students, and insufficient mentoring. This, in turn, affects the academic rigor and diminishes the global competitiveness of Indian graduates. Moreover, research—an essential pillar of higher education—suffers tremendously due to faculty shortages. Central universities are expected to lead innovation and cutting-edge research; however, with reduced faculty strength, research initiatives often take a back seat. This not only limits India's ability to contribute to global knowledge but also hampers the country's ambitions to feature prominently in global university rankings. The persistent faculty vacancies in central universities arise due to a combination of systemic inefficiencies. Regular occurrences such as retirements, resignations, and increased demand for teaching staff due to expanding student populations create a continuous churn in the system. However, the delay in recruitment processes exacerbates the issue. Although the University Grants Commission (UGC) launched the CU-Chayan portal in May 2023 to streamline the recruitment process, the pace of hiring has been inadequate to bridge the existing gap. Despite special recruitment drives that filled over 7,650 teaching positions, the backlog remains considerable. This indicates deeper inefficiencies in policy implementation, coordination among institutions, and allocation of resources. Another challenge lies in attracting and retaining high-quality teaching talent. Salaries, professional development opportunities, and work environments in many universities fail to match global standards, making it difficult to draw top-tier educators to central universities. Addressing this crisis demands immediate, multi-pronged intervention. First, the recruitment process must be expedited. The CU-Chayan platform offers a centralized mechanism to simplify and speed up hiring, but it needs better implementation and monitoring. Central universities must also be held accountable for filling vacancies within stipulated timelines. Second, the government must invest in making teaching an attractive profession. Competitive pay scales, robust research grants, and professional growth opportunities can draw talented educators to academia. Additionally, empowering universities with greater autonomy in hiring processes can reduce bureaucratic delays and improve efficiency. Third, addressing faculty shortages should go hand-in-hand with improving the overall infrastructure in universities. Investing in modern facilities, fostering collaboration with international institutions, and providing state-of-the-art research tools will not only enhance the appeal of teaching positions but also raise the academic standards of these institutions. India's ambition to lead the world in higher education cannot succeed without addressing the fundamental issue of faculty shortages in central universities. With 5,182 teaching posts lying vacant, millions of students and the nation's intellectual growth are at stake. The government and central universities must act decisively to fill these gaps, ensuring that India's higher education system remains a beacon of excellence in the global arena. Only then can India truly harness its demographic dividend and position itself as an academic powerhouse.

India On Ukraine

DIPLOMACY & WAR

■ PROF (DR) D K GIRI

The Ukrainian war has completed one thousand days with horrible deaths and devastation that has been going with it. There is no end to the bloodshed in sight in days to come. On the contrary, it has just been escalated both by Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine was allowed by Joe Biden to use the missiles supplied by the United States in the Russian territory outside the war zone. Russia has responded in Putin's lowering the threshold for use of nuclear weapons. At the same time, Russia has launched ballistic missiles into Ukraine capable of carrying nuclear warhead.

As the war rages, Russia launched 188 drones against most regions of Ukraine in a night time attack, as reported by Ukrainian air force. This attack marked a record number of drones used in a single day. As per the available reports, most of the drones were intercepted but quite a few hit the apartment buildings and damaged the critical infrastructure.

Admittedly, it is hard to get authentic data from either sources -- Ukraine or Russia. By far, the most authentic data, available from Institute for the Study of War in Washington, Moscow has seized 2,700 sq kms of Ukrainian land this year compared to 4,65 sq kms in 2023. Russia occupies about 28% Ukrainian land. From many sources, it is evident that thousands and millions of people have fled for their lives in this war and billions worth of properties and resources have been lost.

The questions staring at the whole world is how to end this war. On India's perspective on the war, New Delhi has been maintaining from day one that the conflict could not be solved on the battle ground; it can only be done through dialogue and diplomacy, in other words negotiation. But, can you negotiate with a lion when your head is in its mouth? That raises a practical question on efficacy of diplomacy when there is obvious power disparity.

We will do well to recall that negotiation between two blocs was possible when there was balance of power between USA and the Soviet Union. That is how the world experienced several negotiations on arms control and disarmament etc. It is another thing, ironically, that each disarmament negotiation ended in further armament on either side. As one party discovered the disparity in one kind of weapon, it added more of that kind to maintain the parity. Also, negotiations took place between the victors in the Second World War.

There was a brief period of unipolar world led by the United States. The decline of United State as single super became evident; so was the simultaneous dilution of multilateral institutions like the United Nations. The hierarchy among the world powers disappeared leading to a kind of anarchy; the authority over any state agency became non-existent. The countries in the world turned to self-help and an instinct for survival.

Consequently, conflicts became com-

monplace. As the world powers failed to resolve conflicts in any part, some of them turned into wars. The wars in the Middle-East and Ukraine are pathetic examples of stark failure of diplomacy. Shall we then believe the suggestion that, in order to have peace, one may have to fight a war? In the sense of demonstrating one's power for compelling the adversary for negotiation, this dynamic between war and peace is somewhat understandable. But what is more acceptable and the least harmful is

Ukraine at any time. So, it is not out of order for the West to come out openly. It will not lead to a Third World War more than it is now. Ukrainian war will not draw China, another military and economic power to make it a world war. Unless Russian President Putin is made to realise that he cannot win and can only self-destruct, he may not agree to the terms set by Ukraine and its supporters. Russia has to vacate the land it has taken from Ukraine after February 2022 if not after annexation of Crimea.

democracy, human rights and pluralism etc., they have to seriously recalibrate their strategies.

Coming back to diplomacy, no dialogue is feasible if there is a big gap in power of deterrence among the negotiating parties. A bipolar world is conducive to negotiation between somewhat equal powers. Such a scenario is emerging – the Global West on one side and China-Russia on the other, the Global South choosing either of the side formally or issue-ba-

In the case of Ukraine, where a full-blown war goes unabated, is there any prospect for negotiation? Not as things are now on the ground. Russia will like to fight to the finish, which means Ukraine surrendering. Ukraine will continue to fight till the last man, as it gets the support of the West. It is still a fight between Russia and Ukraine, although called a proxy war between Russia and the West as the latter is supplying Ukraine with military and financial aid. In order to bring about the balance of power or in this case terror, the West has to openly declare war against Russia unless Moscow agrees to a ceasefire and come to the negotiating table. The terms of negotiation are subject to negotiation itself. Russia is already using troops from North Korea and Yemen etc. The United Kingdom is ready to fight on the side of Ukraine at any time. So, it is not out of order for the West to come out openly. It will not lead to a Third World War more than it is now. Ukrainian war will not draw China, another military and economic power to make it a world war. Unless Russian President Putin is made to realise that he cannot win and can only self-destruct, he may not agree to the terms set by Ukraine and its supporters. Russia has to vacate the land it has taken from Ukraine after February 2022 if not after annexation of Crimea.



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If the world leaders care to dig into the personality and perspectives of Putin, they will be wary of trusting him. He detests America-led world order and seeks to destabilise the European security order. His main excuse for the so-called special operation in Ukraine was to prevent the latter from joining NATO. Joining NATO is a process. Did Ukraine apply for the NATO membership? On the other hand, Putin ended up pushing two of his other neighbours Sweden and Finland into NATO.

Moreover, Putin in 'partnership that lasts forever' with China, seeks to establish a new world order where China has the control over the India-Pacific region and Russia in Eurasia. Both the countries together want to establish a new world order led by institutions like BRICS, SCO and other such. Ukraine, therefore, is a piece in such a big plan. If the Global West wishes to counter that, for the sake of

Let us face some established truths. A multi-polar world is a strategic fantasy. Strategic autonomy is political romanticism. Security overrides other priorities. Collective security is wise and less expensive. In an inter-dependent world, staying alone is unviable. The habit of going with everyone makes one less faithful.

However, when the West begins to club China and Russia, the bipolarity will soon emerge and make diplomacy easier to conduct. If Donald Trump cuts a deal with Putin by throwing Zelenskyy or Poland under the bus, it will have grave consequences for the subsequent world order, particularly, in view of the intentions of Putin and Xi-Jinping.

Yes, diplomacy should win and war as a strategy must lose. But for diplomacy to succeed, the countries should show the collective capacity that they are ready for a war. ---INFA

ROCKY ROAD AHEAD IN CLIMATE MITIGATION

■ DR. GYAN PATHAK

The UN Climate Conference (COP29), world's largest climate conference that brought together nearly 200 countries in Baku, Azerbaijan, wrapped up with a hard-fought agreement on climate finance but uncertainties over the climate crisis mitigation still looms large. Tripling finance to developing countries from \$100 billion to \$300 billion annually by 2035, aiming to scale up finance to \$1.3 trillion from public and private sources, will be of little use if the issue of "who pays what is not decided" and the fund committed is not delivered in time.

The question is of paramount importance at this time, as we have witnessed an earlier target of \$100 billion set in 2009, which was reached for the first time only in 2022, after a delay of 13 years. On business-as-usual scenario, the world is set to pay a too heavy a cost. The road ahead seems to be rocky, suggests the work done so far not only on funding but also on climate crisis adaptation and mitigation.

A deal to advance a UN-governed global carbon market was also signed early in the conference fund projects cutting greenhouse gas emissions. This market will facilitate the trading of carbon credits, incentivizing countries to reduce emissions and invest in climate-friendly projects. Other steps forward at COP29 included extension of a programme centred on gender and climate change, and agreement on support for the least developed countries to carry out national adaptation plans.

However, funding agreement for \$300 billion yearly by 2035 reached under New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) frustrated the negotiators from the developing countries and the island states that are hit hardest by the climate crisis, and many among them are undergoing an existential crisis. Civil society groups and developing nations were totally disappointed with the funding pledges from wealthier

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countries. Several countries had also boycotted the final negotiation meeting extended after the scheduled conclusion of the summit.

Developing nations who had sought over \$1 trillion in assistance called the agreement "insulting" and argued it did not give them the vital resources they required to truly address the complexities of the climate crisis.

Reacting to the outcome, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "I had hoped for a more ambitious outcome – on both finance and mitigation – to meet the great challenge we face. But this agreement provides a base on which to build", but adding "It must be honoured in full and on time. Commitments must quickly become cash. All countries must come together to ensure the top-end of this new goal is met." For many vulnerable nations, it represents a glimmer

of hope—but only if commitments translate into swift action, he emphasized.

Focusing on the step forward the outcome represents, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell said, "It has been a difficult journey, but we have delivered a deal. This new finance goal is an insurance policy for humanity amid worsening climate impacts hitting every country, but like any insurance policy, it only works if premiums are paid in full and on time. He further has emphasized that the world leaves Baku with a mountain of work to do. "So, this is no time for victory laps. We need to set our sights and redouble our efforts on the road to Belem" the city that will host COP30 next year.

India's representative strongly denounced the new goal, calling it a "paltry sum" and emphasizing, "We seek a much higher ambition from the developed

countries and the amount agreed does not inspire trust that we will come out of this grave problem of climate change."

A representative from a group of small island nations said: "After this COP29 ends, we cannot just sail off into the sunset. We are literally sinking," and the conference outcome highlighted "what a very different boat our vulnerable countries are in, compared to the developed countries".

A major issue now will be deciding who pays what. The list of richer countries responsible, drawn up in 2002, is outdated. Countries like China and India have since developed rapidly and increased their emissions. There are also questions about how the funds will be distributed and ensuring accountability. Some developed nations argued that these rapidly developing countries should also contribute.

The next major milestone in the global climate effort will be the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for June 2025 in Seville, Spain. That event would focus on mobilizing financial resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, with climate finance as a key component.

Another important thing is the Nationally Determined Contributions, that are to be submitted afresh by every country by February 2025. The current NDC commitments are not enough to deal with the current climate crisis. Moreover, the commitments are not being fulfilled by many countries leaving vast gap between the efforts and what is actually required to keep the temperature at 1.5 degree Celsius by 2030 under Paris Agreement of 2015.

Several unresolved issues will be sure to spill over to COP30 to be held in Belem in Brazil in November 2025, which will be a crucial moment for countries to strengthen their national climate action plans and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy. The conference will place a strong emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting clean energy technologies, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNCCC) has said.

THE EARTH NEWS

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Published at: Anjuman-Imamia Building, Main Market, Leh-Ladakh

Printed at: JK Printing and Publications, Near Mataror Stand, Sunjwan, Jammu.

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