

Swadeshi

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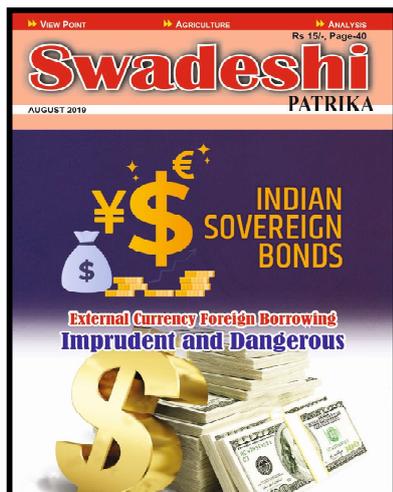
AUGUST 2019



INDIAN SOVEREIGN BONDS

**External Currency Foreign Borrowing
Imprudent and Dangerous**





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LETTERS 3

NEWS 34-38



CONTENTS

COVER STORY 6

Govt's Move to Take Foreign Loan Unwise, May Come at a Dangerous Cost
Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



- 1 Cover Page
- 2 Cover Inside Page

08 **OPINION**

Time to seed the world

..... Inder Shekhar Singh & RK Trivedi

10 **FOCUS**

Duties on fuel to cause thaw, Swadeshi savings can fund govt

..... Shivaji Sarkar

12 **ISSUE**

Transgenic crops, rural strife

..... Kavitha Kuruganti

14 **DISCUSSION**

Food safety concerns

..... Sandhya Jain

16 **VIEWPOINTS**

High Income Tax will not secure Social Justice

..... Dr. Bharat Jhunjunwala

18 **BUDGET**

Nirmala Sitharaman's Solid First shot at Budget

..... Dr. R. Balashankar

20 **SCRUTINY**

A silent fiscal crisis?

..... Rathin Roy

22 **FARMING**

Agriculture alone has the potential to Reboot the Economy

..... Devinder Sharma

25 **WATER**

Addressing the water filter paradox

..... Sudhirendar Sharma

27 **ANALYSIS**

Unsolved Assignment of Dr. Kalam

..... Alok Singh

29 **HISTORY**

Aspects of Ancient Indian Yoga

..... Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur

31 **CAMPAIGN**

"President of India: Ganga"

..... Vimal Bhai

- 39 Back Inside Cover
- 40 Back Cover



Current Issues

This week witnessed two important developments at the policy level which required to be highlighted. Firstly, the move by the Minister of Commerce and Industry to not attend the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a well thought move and should be laudable. As understood, Minister has been in consultations with the industry which was highly unfavorable in government signing the RCEP as it would damage the domestic. RCEP is a proposed FTA involving 16 countries that were launched in November 2012 at ASEAN summit. RCEP presents a major threat and not a major opportunity for India. India's trade deficit with ASEAN countries has increased manifold over the years since we have signed an FTA with ASEAN. RCEP is bigger FTA proposed which is inclusive of ASEAN plus China, Australia, Japan, South Korea and India. India already has huge trade deficit with China. Under such circumstances, it is not wise for India to sign the RCEP agreement.

Secondly, the Finance Minister in her Budget 2019 has announced to issue the sovereign bonds in the international market to finance the fiscal deficit. Since then many experts have given varied opinion for and against the sovereign bonds. While those in for sovereign bonds argue that India has lowest external debt to GDP ratio; foreign interests being lower would reduce future interests' payment and this will also result in 'crowding out' effect i.e. reduction in government borrowing will enable domestic borrowing for private borrowers. Each of the arguments have been countered successfully by those against sovereign bonds. Though the foreign interests' rates are lower, the coupon rate of the sovereign bond is decided by the credit rating of India which currently is among the lowest at BBB-, so it is unlikely that India will get sovereign bonds at cheaper interest rates. In case the government goes for a dollar denominated bonds, India has to shell out more for future payments since rupee is depreciating against dollar each year. Also, sovereign borrowing involves serious loss of policy independence. Further, one cannot guarantee that future governments stop breaching the limits set for external borrowing. Therefore, since the risks associated with sovereign bonds are high, it is advisable that government go for borrowings in the domestic markets rather than going offshore.

– Anand, Hyderabad, Telengana

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Quote-Unquote



This is a historic moment for India. The entire nation is proud today with the successful launch of Chandrayaan-2.

Ram Nath Kovind
President, Bharat



The abolition of Triple Talaq will contribute to women empowerment and give women the dignity they deserve in our society.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, Bharat



Terrorism is not the problem of India alone but it is a global problem. Every country has made strong laws to fight terrorism.

Amit Shah
Home Affairs Minister, Bharat



Any discussion on Kashmir, if at all warranted, will only be with Pakistan and only bilaterally.

Jai Shankar
Minister of External Affairs, Bharat

Ban Glyphosate

10 deaths. Over 3-4 years. In a small village in Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh that no one outside had heard of. The deaths were treated as a natural until a peculiar pattern began to be noticed. All the victims had complained of a lump in their neck or other body parts. The lump was later diagnosed as cancer.

Sadly, it took more such deaths before the farming village realised all the victims had been exposed to Glyphosate, a herbicide sold under the name of RoundUp or Glycel. It is used on tea plantations, in rice fields and to grow fruits like banana and pineapple. It is now also commonly being used in home gardens.

As it turns out this weed killer is killing more than weeds. It is killing human beings who come in contact with it. Not just in Uttar Pradesh, but in every state and countries around the world.

In the year 2015, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), an agency of the World Health Organization, had found in its research that 'Glyphosate', which is an active ingredient in Monsanto's Round-Up, is "probably" carcinogenic. The review, conducted by WHO's International Agency for Research in Cancer, found that glyphosate increased risks for non-Hodgkin lymphoma as well as DNA and chromosomal damage. A Working Group of 17 experts from 11 countries met at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) on 3-10 March 2015 to review the available published scientific evidence and evaluate the carcinogenicity of five organophosphate insecticides and herbicides: diazinon, glyphosate, malathion, parathion, and tetrachlorvinphos.

IARC also concluded that there was "strong" evidence for genotoxicity, both for "pure" glyphosate and for glyphosates mixture. IARC reviewed about 1000 studies. Some of the studies looked at people exposed through their jobs, such as farmers. Others were experimental studies on cancer and cancer related effects in experimental systems.

When the World Health Organisation first confirmed that Glyphosate is probably carcinogenic, and researches show that it may also cause DNA and chromosomal damage, immediately many countries banned it on an emergency basis. In mid-May in the US, a court ordered the RoundUp manufacturing company Bayer-Monsanto to pay 2 billion dollars (approximately Rs. 14000 crores) to a couple who had suffered from cancer after using their herbicide), which was later reduced.

In India, Punjab took the lead by banning Glyphosate in 2018. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana followed suit. Maharashtra is also planning to ban it. But a nationwide ban is still not in place. That's because the majority of us Indians, particularly our farmers don't know about the deadly risk of using Glyphosate. That is why Swadeshi Jagran Manch started this petition asking the Prime Minister to immediately ban Glyphosate and all its forms to save lives. We are trying to build public awareness on this issue. Sign my petition and help me spread the word.

We need to act urgently because companies are taking advantage of our ignorance. They are sending their agents to approach farmers directly and trap them attractive promotional offers. Farmers get lured because they are told this herbicide is a cost-effective method to kill weeds quickly. What they are not told is the health hazard and risk to their lives.

A national consultation was organised by Swadeshi Jagran Manch on July 26th, 2019 to strengthen the demand for ban on glyphosate. Citing numerous scientific studies which show various adverse impacts of the deadly weedicides experts called for a ban on Glyphosate by the Government of India, which received strong support from parliamentarians also. A petition initiated by Swadeshi Jagran Manch on Change.org gathered more than 1.19 lakh signatures so far from citizens of India, making the ban demand louder.

The consultation saw the participation of environmental and social activists like Dr Vandana Shiva, Dr Suman Sahai and Kavitha Kuruganti, in addition to farmer leaders like Rakesh Tikait (Bhartiya Kisan Union) and Mohini Mohan Mishra (Bhartiya Kisan Sangh) as well as medical experts. Cutting across party lines, Parliamentarians like Dr KC Tyagi (JD(U), MP of Rajya Sabha), Shri Rajinder Agarwal (Meerut MP of Lok Sabha) and Shri Vishnu Dutt Sharma (Khajuraho MP of Lok Sabha) also extended their support to the call put out by SJM. Shri Kashmiri Lal, All India organiser of Swadeshi Jagran Manch handed over the petitions from citizens on www.change.org campaign portal to the MPs in the consultation.

Govt's Move to Take Foreign Loan Unwise, May Come at a Dangerous Cost



If the government borrows in foreign currency, then in order to spend it domestically it will have to get the same converted into rupee from the Reserve Bank of India. This is bound to increase risk of inflation in the country. Although Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman did not acknowledge in her Budget speech that the government's revenue fell short of budget estimates of 2018-19, if we look carefully, the revised revenue estimates of 2018-19 are much lower than the Budget. This shortfall is seen in both direct taxes and direct taxes. But the central government repeatedly reiterated its commitment to keep fiscal deficit lower, which was

restricted to 3.4 per cent of the GDP in 2018-19, and would be brought down to 3.3 per cent in the year 2019-20. In the last five years, this approach of keeping fiscal deficit low has been much appreciated, as this government was able to keep the price line under check, which came as a big relief to the common man.

When the total expenditure of the government is more than its revenue receipts and capital receipts, this difference is termed as fiscal deficit. This fiscal deficit at present is compensated by borrowing from the public. So far, the Indian government did not take any loans by issuing sovereign bonds in foreign exchange to compensate government spending.

Resurgent India Bonds were issued for investment by non-resident Indians during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's regime. It got a huge response and the country was able to attract \$3.5 billion then. Although the Indian government has been taking loans from many institutions, including international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank etc., and has also made commercial borrowings, loans were not raised by issuing sovereign bonds in foreign currency.

Government's View

Sitharaman, in paragraph 103 of her speech, said something that had never been said in a Budget speech before. "India's sovereign debt in its GDP is the lowest in the world, which is below 5 percent. The government will begin to increase a portion of its gross lending program in foreign exchange in overseas markets. This will also have a beneficial effect on the demand of government securities in the domestic market," she noted.

Our GDP is \$2.8 trillion today, i.e. 2,800 billion dollars. If loan is raised equivalent to 10 per cent of the GDP, it would mean a loan of 280 billion dollars. In Indian currency, it turns out to be 19 lakh 15 thousand crore rupees. However, according to the latest news, India's foreign exchange reserves have broken all records and reached almost \$430 billion. In such a situation, there is no justifica-



Not only bureaucracy but important stakeholders, namely economists, monetary policy experts and foreign currency and international trade experts, should be consulted for such big decision.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

tion for taking a loan as a foreign currency.

Government sources say that foreign borrowings are currently less than 5 per cent of the GDP and can be easily increased to 15 per cent. In such a situation, the question that arises is: can the present government put a cap on foreign loans which no future government can breach? What is the guarantee that the governments of future will not raise this loan further? At the same time, there is no visible strategy to increase foreign exchange earnings in the future to reduce the risk of going into debt trap.

International Experience

To take this decision, we must look at the experience of countries that have taken loans from international markets to meet their government deficit. The experience of these countries has been far from good.

Indonesia's foreign debt today is 36.2 per cent of the GDP, in Brazil it is 29.9 per cent, in Argentina it is 51.9 per cent, while Turkey and Mexico this burden stands at 53.8 per cent and 36.5 per cent of their respective GDPs. Their respective decisions to take foreign loans have trapped them in such a vortex that now they are raising even more loans to avoid sovereign default.

The reason for this is that foreign loans have to be repaid in foreign currency (say, dollars). Given deficit in the balance of payments and resulting shortage of foreign currency, these countries are pushed into foreign debt trap. These countries have become examples of economic mismanagement. After trapping many countries in this nexus, the rich countries, which are in the lead role of

international financial institutions, have started dictating their terms and including tariff reduction among other things.

For instance, to help Indonesia come out of debt distress, IMF offered a bailout; however, in return it demanded some fundamental financial reform measures: the closure of 16 privately-owned banks, the winding down of food and energy subsidies, and it advised the Indonesian Central Bank (Bank Indonesia) to raise interest rates.

Not Really Cheap Foreign Loan

It is said that foreign currency loan from foreign countries is cheaper and therefore makes fiscal management easy. No doubt, nominal interest rates are low in foreign loans and since international agencies are rating India relatively better, we can enjoy benefit of lower interest rates. Those who favour foreign loans may say that we can take less expensive loans from abroad and reduce government's debt cost.

But this argument may hold good only in the short run. Given the low interest rate, we forget the upshot of currency risk. We must not forget that sovereign foreign currency borrowing and resulting debt servicing multiply pressures for devaluation, which may actually increase real burden of payment in rupee. Therefore, foreign loans are not at all cheap in the long run.

Despite not taking foreign loan in the past, rupee has been devaluing in the past. As per a rough estimate, our devaluation rate has been close to 6 per cent annually in the recent past. If we tread this path of foreign borrowing, this rate may get accentuated. Therefore, while estimating the rate of inter-

est and basic payoff, the risk of currency risk cannot be ignored.

We have a speaking example before us. Significantly, a large number of Indian companies has raised loans from overseas for want of cheap interest. They originally thought that they are getting loan at a lower rate of interest of 3 per cent to 4 per cent, as the finance minister perhaps has been told.

However, as the rupee depreciated by year-to-year, these companies went into heavy losses due to the hike of interest and repayments liabilities. Learning from that experience, private companies are largely avoiding foreign debt and have started borrowing domestically.

High Risk of Rising Inflation

If the government starts borrowing in foreign currency to finance its expenditure, we must be prepared for yet another risk: inflation. If the government borrows in foreign currency, then in order to spend it domestically it will have to get the same converted into rupee from the Reserve Bank of India. This is bound to increase the risk of inflation in the country. The government has been claiming to be fiscally prudent with lower fiscal deficit (proposed fiscal deficit of only 3.3 per cent in 2019-20). If we go on the path of foreign borrowing, there will be no benefit of keeping the fiscal deficit low. This phenomenon has been seen world over, wherever foreign currency loans were raised.

The government must understand that this is a big decision and before taking this step on the advice of the bureaucracy, it should consult stakeholders, namely economists, monetary policy experts and foreign currency and international trade experts. □□

Time to seed the world



India is a biodiversity-rich country. We are the centre of origin for many crops, fruits and vegetables. Along with a rich bio-heritage, we have been blessed with all types of climate and soil. Our nation's hard-working farmers, seed savers and plant breeders, along with mother nature, have co-evolved thousands of varieties to provide us with nutrition and also prepared us for drought, floods and climate change. In recent times, public institutions, along with the Indian private sector, have aggressively pursued this goal, too. Unlike other sectors, they have not only taken from mother nature but have also added

to her bounty. Today, each Indian can proudly showcase to the world that we have achieved food sovereignty, while also conserving biological diversity in the sui generis way under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) ambit.

India has the sixth largest domestic seed market in the world. The size of the industry is over Rs 20,000 crore and it will continue to grow at six to seven per cent. But we are far from the saturation point. Restrictions on export of seeds weigh heavy on growth. In 2017, the Indian seed exports were valued at \$101 million, a paltry sum when compared to the global seed export market of \$11,924 million. This was due to the lack of both harmonisation with international regulations and a strong national seed export policy. The Modi Government has the mandate to clean up the clogs and facilitate the development of mutually beneficial ties between national, regional and world seed markets.

Since 2008, India has been a participant of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes, which open up seed trading potential with over 60 countries. Our hybrids in corn, paddy, forage crops, millets, vegetables and cotton are popular in many countries due to their productivity and resilience. Indian farmers and plant breeders will find new markets from Vietnam to South Africa. Apart from bringing economic prosperity to the Indian farmers, this push may also help farmers of Kenya, Egypt, South Sudan and Uganda among others, double their incomes. India needs to promote its indigenous R&D and seed export as part of its economic diplomacy. Indian seeds should become part of all aid programmes given to countries so as to popularise them.

ASEAN countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar also present a ready market for Indian seed exports. Currently, we are trading vegetable and fruit seeds with them, but there is a huge potential for expansion. Take the



For better prosperity of the agriculture sector, the Government must allow farmers market access and promote Indian varieties globally

Indra Shekhar Singh, Rk Trivedi

case of Vietnam and India, both countries have huge coastline, which are threatened by salinity due to climate change. We have to work on a governmental level to share our seeds and biodiversity to counter these threats. India has many paddy varieties for salinity; we should encourage cross-breeding to climate-proof our rice production.

Closer home, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka can be the top three destinations for all Indian hybrid seeds. Overall, Bangladesh reported 57 per cent, Nepal 88 per cent and Sri Lanka 83 per cent gap in supply in 2018-19. For paddy seeds in 2017-18, Nepal reported a gap of 701,398 MT, Sri Lanka 104,000 MT and Bangladesh 75,957 MT. Similarly for wheat, Nepal reported 78,720 MT and Bangladesh 33,490 MT.

Our agro-climatic zones provide an opportunity for Indian farmers and breeders to be the leaders in seed production. We can become seed home for the world. We can exponentially increase our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and bring prosperity to rural India by sharing our superior varieties with other nations.

We can also increase this share by creating agriculture economic zones along the lines of special economic zone (SEZs). This can be done under the “Make in India” scheme so that companies and Government agencies can get tax benefits and indulge in rigorous R&D. This step will strengthen the Indian agriculture sector by breeding superior seeds and preparing the crop for climate change. This scheme can be used to boost our FPOs, too.

Farmers and village clusters can be encouraged to grow seeds

in partnership with various companies and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). This will ensure that the target of doubling farmers’ incomes is achieved by 2022 as they will have ready buyers for their produce. Additionally, growing seeds will fetch farmers a price far beyond the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The Government should also create an Indian seed standard and certificate that should be trusted across the world. We should rely on international standards and learn from their procedures. But to establish India as a strong force, we need to develop an indigenous standard through which we can smoothen seed exports and build regional trust.

The Government can further provide financial assistance for exporters under the “Market Access Initiative” scheme to encourage seed export business. States, which record good export growth, can get financial assistance to promote export-related infrastructure. Telangana has already shown much initiative for promoting seed exports.

Further, to promote export of seeds, the Government can form an autonomous body ie, the seed export council. This council can have representation from the public sector, the Indian seed industry and plant breeders. It can work under the Ministry of Agriculture. This will be a novel step by Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar to double farmers’ income.

In addition to all these, we can institute a single point for quarantine testing and clearance for export of seeds. The Government can undertake these steps to facilitate seed exports from the coun-

try. Further, we can harmonise our biodiversity laws and create a special provision within the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) to smoothen regulations for the export of seeds. The NBA can play a key role in drafting these new regulations.

Our Intellectual Property Right (IPR) laws are also complementary to most African and Asian nations, who don’t recognise patents on seeds and they, too, follow the sui generis system under the World Trade Organisation. The Modi Government has a unique opportunity to take the lead in creating a universal system based on breeder rights and the philosophy of Vasudev Kutumbhakam, which also protects commercial rights of our plant breeders. Through this policy, we can allow Indian farmers and FPOs to enter seed breeding contract with farmers across the world.

As we chase the goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, India needs a firmer grip on the globalised market. But will we allow our farmers to reap the benefits of globalisation? In the rush to fill our PDS schemes with cereals, we have asked them to sacrifice for nation-building, now are we willing to reward them? It is not late, the Government can make the start by extending the “Make in India” scheme to Indian farmers and not double but maybe quadruple their incomes by 2022. We need to allow the farmers market access and promote Indian varieties across the world. It is now time for India to not only feed but also seed the world. □□

(Indra Shekhar Singh is Programme Director for Policy and Outreach at the National Seed Association of India (NSAI) and RK Trivedi is executive director, NSAI)
<https://www.dailyioneer.com/2019/columnists/time-to-seed-the-world.html>

Welcome bid to move away from Nehru Duties on fuel to cause thaw, Swadeshi savings can fund govt

The Narendra Modi's NDA-II government's budget has changed the focus to peg India's finances on village and farms – visible shift from the Nehruvian economy of promoting large public sector entities. The new government instead wants the private sector to be a driver be it infrastructure or overall economy. That is aimed at building a larger \$ 3 trillion economy in the immediate future and \$ 5 trillion in the course of time. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman says, “In purchasing power parity, we are in fact, the 3rd largest economy already, next to China and the US”.

That sounds good. Sitharaman's Rs 27.86 lakh crore budget has interesting features. It is ambitious and spread widely. Her positive is looking for the soul of India, that she says, “lives in its villages”. So the economy is planned to get a boost with empowerment of the villagers, women and farmers. It sees the farms and increasing rural income as the pivot. The Pradhan Matri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G), PM Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Bharatmala, Sagarmala and Udaan are designed to be engines of connectivity and rural and urban – now being called ‘*rurban*’ – growth. The 1.25 lakh km new roads would entail Rs 80,000 crore investment.

The scheme of fund for upgradation of regeneration to traditional industries (SURTI) will create 100 clusters for 50,000 artisans. The ASPIRE for promotion of technology business incubators (TBI) in rural industry proposes another 100 clusters to develop 75,000 skilled entrepreneurs in agro-rural industry sectors. This is in addition to 10,000 new farmer producer organisations (FPO), apparently with corporate interface, to ensure economies of scale for farmers over next five years.



Focus on empowerment of villagers, women, famers and private sector as the driver of in the overall economy is a welcome step.
Shivaji Sarkar



The PM digital saksharata, Jal Shakti in 256 districts, e-nam, APMC, swachha Bharat for rural solid waste management are designed to spur rural growth. Many of these would be a bridge between urban and rural growth. These are backed by many programmes for industry. This is likely to create demand and spur the growth of the industry and allied sectors.

Fine. But the finance minister has thrown a spanner. Her proposal to levy additional excise duty, road and other cess of Rs 2.50 on petrol and diesel will be inflationary as it would shoot up transport expenses at all levels. Truck, bus and other transport fares are to shoot up. This may thaw the economy.

Already cess, duties are high on fuel. Tolls are at atrocious rates. It calls for a relook and withdrawal of the proposal to keep economy on track. Another act of raising customs duty on gold, already high at 10 percent, has been increased to 12.5 percent. Presumably, gold is mistakenly considered an item of consumption by the rich. No marriage in poor or rural household is complete without purchasing of gold. Apart, those suggesting such levies forget that NDA-I of Atal Behari Vajpayee had taken the prudent decision of having zero duty on gold import to stop smuggling. Higher duties are happy indicators for the smugglers, who have links with international gun, drug, runners and terrorist organisations.

Though the aim is to raise revenue, it may end up increasing surveillance at multiple sectors causing revenue loss. Ideally, this needs to be rolled back as the losses outweigh gains.

Similarly, TDS on cash withdrawals of over Rs 1 crore, not

The govt should not be in a hurry to digitalise economy as cash is the fastest transaction method.

large sum for even small businesses may cause slowdown. The government should not be in a hurry to digitalise economy. Cash is the fastest transaction method. Linking it to black money – simply meaning untaxed – is misnomer.

Let the cash lubricate and speed up economy. Digitalisation would be normal an automatic process. There are apprehensions too for digitalization as many Aadhar-linked accounts are stated to have been defrauded. Government needs to go slow and withdraw such strange rules that make dealings and tax filing cumbersome. It was expected that the FM would say some words on abolishing income-tax. Instead increasing rates to 47 percent though for an income over Rs 5 crore does not bode well. High taxes reduce disposable income and are dampener for the people to consume. She has still time to review it.

Indian economy needs simplicity in tax administration. More is the rigmarole more the complication for the economy. The NDA-I had started on a good note. The FM should continue that.

Besides, those who have been let off up to Rs 5 lakh income should be allowed not to file tax returns. This only burdens the tax office with more clutter and little benefit. Another correction in the system should be to allow taxes, as of now, to be calculated at Rs 5 lakh instead of forcing those who

earn a rupee above it to pay from the base rate of Rs 2.5 lakh. This is dichotomy and is not a good sign for tax administration. This drains a taxpayer of huge sum to feed an oversized government at the cost of the comfort to the economy.

Sooner, the FM does it, would be better for all – taxpayers, tax administrators and the market. Politically too it would soothe the voters, who have as the FM in the opening paragraph says, overwhelmingly supported the Modi government, “putting the nation first”. A small gift would have larger dividend.

Taxing the bank deposits does not suit the welfare nature of Narendra Modi government. It may give small revenues but it causes immense hardship to those who save. Savings, the FM says, has to be encouraged to boost the economy. The TDS and low interest rates dampen the enthusiasm of the savers. Her words must match the deeds. It's a necessity not only for the savers but for a nation that is pining for funds. If savings are taken care of, the government would not have to look for borrowings abroad as the FM's speech indicate to spur growth and fiscal management. This *swadeshi* move would make easy finance available to government and save forex.

The FM may do some rework. It would contain inflation which after this budget is likely to rise to 5 percent. For a \$ 5 trillion economy in nine years, it would require a growth rate of at least 11 percent not 8 percent as the Economic Survey indicated. With a little vision, the budget 2019-20 can become the real growth propeller and deviate from the residues of Nehruvian economy. □□

Transgenic crops, rural strife

A campaign led by residual followers of Sharad Joshi-led Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra is demanding that genetically modified (GM) crops like Herbicide Tolerant Bt (HT Bt) cotton be approved. In Haryana too, a fringe group calling themselves the Bhartiya Kisan Union, are doing the same. The irony is that HT Bt cotton is already grown on millions of hectares of land, under the very nose of central and state regulators. It has been aided by the illegal use of a deadly chemical called Glyphosate, used to kill weeds. There is no application for HT Bt cotton approval in India and the seed supplies are patently illegal.

Farmers' desperation is understandable, given the prevailing crisis. However, that does not make these technologies desirable or safe for either farmers, consumers or the environment. Haven't farmers seen deaths and hospitalisation after acute pesticide poisoning? Public policy-making cannot be driven by such demands created by campaigns.

A majority of countries around the world don't grow GM crops. They may be consuming some GM foods through the indirect channel of GM livestock feed from USA and Brazil making its way into the human food chain system, but most nations have taken a conscious decision about disallowing GM crop cultivation.

There are scientific reasons for this. GM crop cultivation is a direct hazard to the environment and food chain. The countries importing livestock feed are doing it because of lack of options, and often under arm-twisting from the USA, which had rushed into transgenic cultivation way back in 1996. To this day, only five countries in the world have more than 90% of GM crop cultivation area, with USA continuing to have more than 50% of the world's transgenic area.

In the past decade, 33 countries tried transgenic crop cultivation, but only 24 continued with the practice. In reality, there has hardly been an agricultural technology in our midst, which has created so much rural strife. While Shetkari Sanghatana farmers are campaigning for GM crops, most farmer unions in the coun-



The rampant, illegal cultivation of HT Bt cotton is leading to disruption of the crop chain.

Kavitha Kuruganti



try have been against the approval of transgenics.

Protests and even direct action of uprooting GM crop trials have taken place from the 1990s onwards, led by large farmer unions. It is a strange situation with farmers fighting against each other.

It is reported that the herbicide drift, which destroys fields of neighbouring farmers, has been a leading cause for litigation between farmers in the USA.

In the past 20 years in India, we have also seen strife between local seed companies and MNCs erupt from time to time, in courts and outside. There is, of course, strife when farmers resort to agitations after Bt cotton crop losses, an additional tension between state governments and farmer unions. Needless to say, what farmers are opting for, and what consumers want, are also different, causing new points of tensions. In the USA for instance, consumers' demand for organic foods is the highest in the world, while the producers there are cultivating transgenics due to various compulsions.

The greatest body of evidence on the adverse impact of GM crops is actually from herbicide tolerant transgenic. More than 85% of GM crop cultivation in the world is of this kind. Here, a crop is genetically engineered to withstand (and even absorb) the use of deadly herbicides like Glyphosate, so that farmers use the chemical liberally on the crop to kill weeds, rather than employ wage workers to manually de-weed the farm. When the weeds get resistant and become super-weeds, deadlier chemicals are recommended and sold. The company gets to profiteer by selling the seed as well as



It is also important to notify a rule under the Environment Protection Act to fix liability on the event developer in case illegal GM crop cultivation is discovered.

the associated herbicide.

Other than the impact of the herbicide and the GM crop on soil, on non-target organisms and human health, is the issue of poor rural women losing the little employment potential that exists for them in agriculture.

In Maharashtra, we recently heard about the horrific phenomenon of young farming women undergoing hysterectomies in desperate search for employment as sugarcane cutters. The crisis of employment and the declining workforce participation of women in India, driven mainly by rural decline, are well-known.

It is a policy choice to be made by governments about disallowing technologies like herbicide-tolerant crops, especially when the government has no alternative employment to offer. Several committees, including the Supreme Court Technical Expert Committee, have already said that HT crops should not be allowed in India.

Governments need not sit wringing their hands helplessly. It is easy to crack down on seed production and supply systems of illegal GM. In India, only 7-8 districts in 4-5 states are the main hubs of cotton seed production. Cracking down on the fields, by the use of lateral flow strip tests for HT

hybrid cotton seed production fields is easy enough, apart from inspections in ginning factories and seed treatment plants.

More importantly, the way to deal with the problem is to ban Glyphosate in India. The central government has to take a decision. The Maharashtra government, should meanwhile, enforce an order it has passed to stop licensing of sales. Glyphosate sales are taking place all over and the agriculture department is not doing anything concrete to enforce its own order.

It is also important to notify a rule under the Environment Protection Act to fix liability on the event developer in case illegal GM crop cultivation is discovered. After all, how did the seeds come out from R&D pipeline when bio-safety norms don't allow anything to be released without legal authorisation?

Finally, we need labour costs in agriculture to be subsidised. Not by deploying MGNREGS for agricultural operations, but by starting an additional scheme for diverting subsidies from unsustainable chemical fertilisers to subsidising manual de-weeding and using the MGNREGS apparatus for actual oversight & payment to workers.□□

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<https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-transgenic-crops-rural-strije-2774380>

Food safety concerns



In *Rottenseed! Cottonseed, Alzheimer's and Your Brain*, nutritionist Bruce Semon traces the rise of Alzheimer's to a toxin in cottonseed that goes to the brain and randomly ties up important structures there. Cottonseed, a byproduct of cotton farming, contains poison but is routinely fed to farm animals, poultry and fish, from where it enters their flesh and reaches human beings when they eat this meat. Dr Semon, the first writer to trace the link between toxic cottonseeds and human health, describes his experiments on feeding cottonseed to animals.

In India, some farmers are illicitly extracting cottonseed oil and selling cheaply to vegetable oil dealers, who mix it with

edible oils and sell to unwary consumers. In the past decade, cotton farming has risen sharply under the influence of GM cotton, peddled by multinational firms, increasing chances of the even more lethal GM cottonseed oil entering the human and animal food chain. In 2018, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) detected BT cottonseed contamination in edibles oils. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has so far done little to contain this adulteration. The Government must ban cottonseed for human or animal feed and warn against its consumption.

Cottonseed is also implicated in infertility. Male and female infertility has often been attributed to hormonal problems but Semon argues that cottonseed is loaded with toxic chemicals. It killed many animals to which it was fed, which led to studies on just how much cottonseed could be fed to animals without killing them.

A major cottonseed toxin is "gossypol." Researchers have known this since 1950 but no one made it public. China is supposed to have examined gossypol as a possible form of birth control for men (it interrupts sperm formation). In women, gossypol causes failure to ovulate. Other harmful effects cannot be ruled out.

Indeed, India faces grave dangers as unprecedented levels of GM genes have been found in Indian foods. CSE detected unprecedented levels of genetically modified genes in Indian foods, both imported and indigenous. CSE's Pollution Monitoring Laboratory found 32 per cent of 65 food products purchased randomly from retail outlets in Delhi-NCR, Punjab and Gujarat, to be GM-positive. Among imported samples, 80 per cent were GM-positive.

Scientist Amit Khurana said the CSE study revealed that in their biosafety submission to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, Monsanto/Bayer lied that "BT cottonseed oil is equivalent to natural cottonseed oil" and contains no GM traces. Moreover, the edible oil companies, that used transgenic BT cot-



India faces grave dangers as unprecedented levels of GM genes have been found in our foods. The time for labelling GMOs is over; Governments must simply ban them.

Sandhya Jain

tonseed without regulatory approval, also endangered public health. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has often relied on Monsanto's printed biosafety submissions.

Dr KR Kranthi, former chief, Central Institute for Cotton Research, warned of edible oil contamination: "The possible routes of BT cotton protein entering the food chain are through human consumption of un-refined cottonseed oil, in which traces of BT protein may be present with particulate seed residues or through consumption of meat or milk of the animals which are fed on BT cotton seed-cake."

Biosafety expert Dr Vandana Shiva said, "Illegal GMO Round-up Ready BT cotton has spread in farmers' fields with no action from the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC). Illegal GMO foods are flooding India's markets with no action from FSSAI. The Government is supposed to protect its citizens from harm and illegal actions. How long will it protect the GMO industry and allow Indians farmers and citizens to be harmed?"

Dr Gilles-Eric Seralini, who was hounded by multinational companies and their media acolytes until the French courts penalised his attackers for defamation, explained the effects of ingesting GM over a five-ten year period, "We have already demonstrated on mammals that BT toxins attack mucosal and epithelial cells, inducing heavy long term chronic diseases." GMOs and pesticides, he says, are a biological arsenal causing diseases from cancers to farmers' suicides.

The Indian Government did not conduct any independent sci-

Many scientists and activists now feel that the time for labelling GMOs is over; Governments must simply ban them.

entific study before adopting Monsanto/Bayer's GMOs, as pointed out by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on science and technology (Report 301 on GM crops and their effects). FSSAI's GM labelling rule has been lambasted as too lenient and corporate-driven. A scientific study in the Journal of International Immunopharmacology (August 2018) found that the BT protein, present in BT crops, causes immune reactions and triggers food allergy and intestinal inflammation in mice.

Meanwhile, several scientific studies, including one published by the Public Library of Science (July 2013), have found compelling evidence that the DNA of genetically modified foods can enter the human bloodstream and cause many health problems. Blood samples of over 1,000 participants were collected and "the results indicated that meal-derived DNA fragments (which were large enough to carry complete genes) can avoid degradation and ultimately enter the human body's circulation system." Researchers said these are actually stretches of DNA large enough to pass complete genes of GMO plants (like soy, corn or canola oil) to humans.

In some blood samples, the

relative concentration of plant DNA was higher than human DNA. The researchers said that participants with inflammatory bowel disease and auto-immune disease had the highest concentration of transgenic gene. Previous studies show that GMOs can change the beneficial bacteria in the small intestine and trigger auto-immune diseases and inflammation, making it difficult to absorb the real nutrients in food. These findings vindicate the claims of independent scientists and researchers who have long warned the regulatory bodies and biotech industry that GMO genes can be transferred from dairy and animal products to people.

After prolonged resistance, the European Food Safety Authority was forced to admit that DNA from food (GMO or non-GMO) could end up in animal tissues and milk and other dairy products consumed by people. The GMO companies are strenuously resisting the findings and investing millions of dollars to hide their toxic GMOs and defeat the GMO labelling movement, even as people eating these hidden toxins are getting sicker and sicker.

Many scientists and activists now feel that the time for labelling GMOs is over; Governments must simply ban them. This is also the time for the Government of India to order a scientific study of the diseases (cancer, diabetes, auto-immune, organ failure) that followed introduction of the Green Revolution. The artificial self-sufficiency wrought by the chemical fertiliser and pesticide-based agriculture has long devastated the health of animals, humans and the very soil. □□

(The writer is Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; the views expressed are personal)

High Income Tax will not secure Social Justice

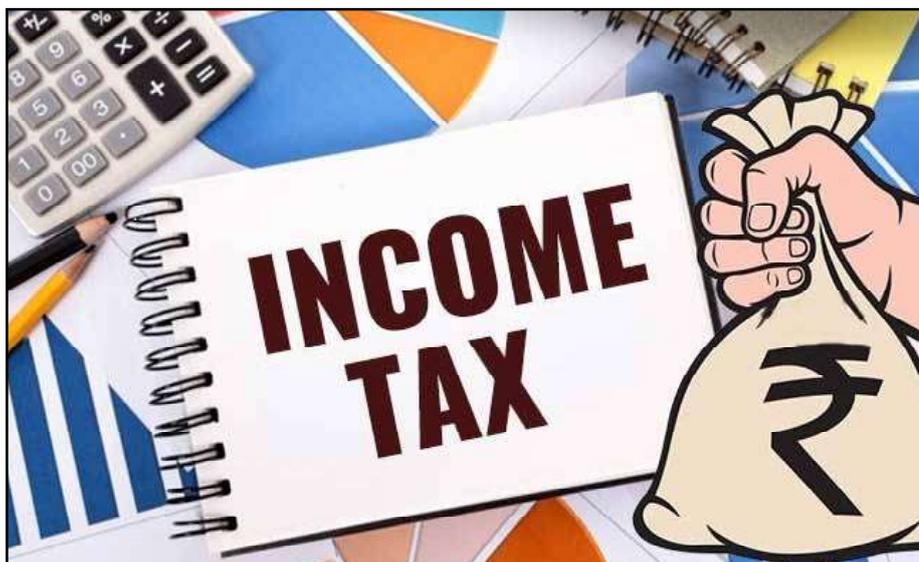
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman has increased the marginal tax rate on high net worth individuals (HNIs) from about 35 percent till now to 42.7 percent. “Marginal” rate of 42.7 percent means that the taxpayer will have to pay income tax of 42.7 paise out of every one rupee earned by him or her above an income of Rs 5 crores. On the face, this is a step in the right direction. The rich earn money from the country and they have a greater responsibility towards our people. However, globalization has created a totally different dynamics of taxation because the HNIs can migrate to other countries where the tax rates are less. They can continue to do business in India as “foreign” nationals. Say a person had invested Rs 100 crores in a business and making a profit of Rs 6 crores per year. He would have to pay an Income Tax of Rs 2.49 crores as an Indian national as per the new rates announced by the Finance Minister. Now let us say, he migrates to Abu Dhabi, pulls out his investment from India, then sends that money back to India as “Foreign Investment” and continues to run his business as previously. But now the income earned by him in India will be taxed in Abu Dhabi. The catch is that the income tax in Abu Dhabi is zero.

Therefore, if you become an Abu Dhabi citizen, you do not have to pay tax on your income in India. The rate is lower if not zero in most developed countries. The marginal rate of Income Tax is 30 percent in the United States of America. These lower-than-India tax rates provide a huge incentive for HNIs to migrate out of India. According to one report about 5000 HNIs have been migrating every year from India. These HNIs are taking their wealth with them. Once abroad, they have less incentive to invest in India. In this way, the high tax rates will harm investments in the Indian economy. Thus, Mr T V Mohandas Pai, chairman of Manipal Global Education says: “Tax terrorism is the foremost cause of millionaire exodus. Most of those who have left were from Mumbai and Delhi...



High tax rates would harm investments in the Indian Economy and it would lead to the causes of migration abroad and millionaire exodus.

Bharat Jhunjunwala



said tax harassment had peaked; so much so that it had created a fear psychosis among them.”

The other grouse is the deteriorating quality of life in India. The HNIs say that air quality, traffic condition and other parameters of good living environment have gone from bad to worse over years, says Pai. The Bullet Train is leading to cutting of large numbers of mangroves; the National Waterway project on the Ganga is leading to killing of dolphins and turtles; forests in the Aravallis are being cut for housing projects... The list goes on and on. The result of these “development” activities is that the quality of life has deteriorated and HNIs are migrating. A friend of mine was living in Delhi. His wife’s weight came down from 45 kilo to 22 kilo. Then he migrated to Dehradun. Her weight came back without requiring any medications. The same with HNIs.

The third reason for migration of HNIs is that they are looking at investing and building assets overseas. The best way to do this is to become an overseas resident, say Pai. The economic growth is down in India and there are few investment opportunities. For these reasons, the raising of income tax rate will only lead to an exodus of HNIs from India and boomerang as lower collections of Income Tax, lower investments and lower rates of GDP growth. It is impossible to sustain high Income Tax rates once we have opened our economy to global capital flows. Today every country is reducing the tax rates to attract HNIs. To increase tax rates in this scenario will be suicidal.

The Finance Minister, however, rightly said that the HNIs must

***Progressive
taxation on
consumption of
petrol and electricity
and honouring
simplicity and
charity by HNIs can
contribute to the
Indian Economy.***

contribute more to the building of the economy. The question is how? I have three suggestions to make. First, the Finance Minister must tax luxury consumption—especially that which adds to pollution and deterioration of quality of life. For example, we could have a “progressive” pricing of petrol. Those buying more than 5 liters could be charged a higher price. The electricity charges could be made much more progressive. The electricity price in UP, for example, is Rs 4.90 per unit for first 150 units while above 500 units the rates are Rs 6.50 per unit. The upper rates could be raised to, say, Rs 15 per unit. Luxury consumption goods like chocolates and sodas could be taxed heavily. Polluting goods like plastic bags could also be taxed heavily. The HNIs would barely notice these taxes but the Finance Minister would get revenues and the reduced consumptions of the polluting goods would make it more attractive for HNIs to remain in India.

The second step the Finance Minister can take is to honour simplicity and charity. To earn is good. To indulge in ostentatious consumption is not. The display of

wealth builds anger among the poor. On the other hand, the income earned by HNIs will have a socially smoothening effect if part is used in charity. The Finance Minister could institute national- and state-level awards along the lines of Padma Awards for HNIs living a simple life and for those giving in charity. That would act as an incentive for other HNIs to remain in India. They will feel respected and wanted rather than disrespected and haunted.

The third step that the Finance Minister could take is to reduce the salaries of the Government Employees. My assessment is that the common man of the country does not see the HNIs as their enemy. We have outgrown socialism. They recognize that the HNIs take risks and contribute to the economy. Their ire today is against the Government Employees who not only live, relatively speaking, “ostentatious” lives compared to the common man, but also extort bribes on every pretext. It is wonder for one and all to see that a Government Employee drawing a salary of, say, Rs 50,000 per month, and having a corruption income of, say, Rs one lakh per month, is deputed to serve the common man earning Rs 10,000 per month. The idea that Government Employees, 98 percent of whom are corrupt, will control the businessmen, only 50 percent of whom are corrupt, is self-evidently flawed. Therefore, the Finance Minister should institute an external evaluation system to track and dismiss corrupt Government Employees and honour and respect HNIs. That will encourage HNIs to stay in India and help attain higher growth rates. □□

Formerly Professor of Economics at IIM Bengaluru

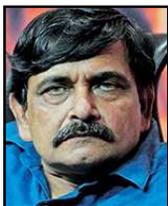
Nirmala Sitharaman's Solid First shot at Budget

Narendra Modi's sixth budget apparently is one for all with something for all. It is natural that Budget 2019 is a thanks-giving budget for Modi's second term, rare in history, making him the third after Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Manmohan Singh to get re-elected after a full five-year term. Hence, this a unique occasion and opportunity to deliver. It rained in Delhi and the Sensex crashed temporarily as the new Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her maiden budget.

As the first budget in Narendra Modi's second term, hopes were sky high this morning. In his first innings, Modi had managed the economy well, with a lot of hype and highlights like demonetisation and GST, big gains in ease-of-doing business, controlling inflation, fixing the fiscal deficit and maintaining growth at a steady 7 percent plus. Now Modi is looking at taking the Indian economy to 5 trillion dollars, a quantum jump from the existing level of 2.7 trillion dollars. The big challenges are generating employment, fixing data on growth and economy, reducing taxes, increasing revenue and maintaining fiscal prudence. With private investment still sagging, the burden of growing the economy and creating jobs is basically on public investment.

Two mega initiatives, Ujjwala and Saubhagya, have dramatically improved the ease of living with easy access of clean cooking gas and electricity supply to the needy. Nearly 1.95 crore houses are proposed to be provided to eligible beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Nearly 1.25 lakh km of roads will be upgraded under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana at an estimated cost of nearly Rs. 80,200 crores.

The budget aims at consolidating the gains of the past five years while there is considerable stress on "Gaon, Gareeb and Kisan" and Swadeshi, the growth model advocated, has large avenues for privatisation and inviting foreign capital in almost every area.



The major beneficiaries are the salaried, middle-income group, farmers and the youth. The budget has tried to put more money in the common man's pocket. This will increase demand, help growth.

Dr. R. Balashankar



It is estimated that railway infrastructure will need investment of Rs. 50 lakh crore between 2018 and 2030. The recommendations of a high-level empowered committee of retiring power old plants and other structural reforms will also be taken up now. UDAY has also helped so far and it will get better further in the coming years. There will be multiple measures undertaken to deepen the corporate bond market; there is also a proposal to increase minimum public shareholding in companies to 35 percent from 25 percent. These are proposed by the Finance Minister stressing the need for privatisation. The government intends to work to make a platform for listing social enterprises and voluntary organisations to raise capital as equity, debt or units like mutual funds. India's FDI flows in 2018-19 was compared to global at \$54.2 billion, 6 percent higher than last year. The government is examining options of opening up FDI in media, aviation and some other sectors to improve these flows further. The government is planning an annual global meet to get all three sets of global players: Industrialists, corporate leaders, corporate sovereign and venture funds. The new emphasis on Make in India was expected as in the past years it has not been a success area.

The other areas like tourism, education and culture, which were lagging behind due to lack of innovative policy initiatives and tardy execution, are now in focus. These all areas of great wealth creation and improving the country's image.

To upgrade the quality of teaching, the GIAN was started aimed to bring in the global pool

The govt intends to work to make a platform for listing social enterprises and voluntary organisations to raise capital as equity, debt or units like mutual funds.

of scientists and researchers. Adding such initiatives have paid off. To make India a hub of higher education, the government proposes 'Study in India' to bring in foreign students to pursue education here. The government proposes allocation of Rs. 400 crores for world-class higher education institutions in the country. The government is developing 17 iconic tourism sites as world-class tourist centres to improve the flow of domestic and foreign tourists to these destinations.

IT, education, and service sectors, which were for long considered engines of growth in the post-liberalisation era, have not performed well in the past five years. The ambitious project of Bharatmala will enhance road connectivity and Sagarmala will help port and waterways connectivity - so infrastructure is back in focus. These along with other such initiatives such as UDAAN scheme will improve India's enable connectivity and bridge the rural and urban divide.

The government has made big advances in tackling the problem of non-performing assets or NPAs. The hard measures of the past three years have brought great relief. A record recovery of

over Rs. 4 lakh crore has been achieved over the last four years. Provision coverage ratio is at its highest in seven years and credit growth has improved to over 13%. The government has proposed to allocate Rs. 70,000 crores for PSU bank recapitalisation.

The Modi government has been balancing macro-economic initiative and micro-level delivery. There are problem areas like farmer disquiet, declining manufacturing and slow growth in employment generation. However, overall, the economy performed and it was under-employment rather than unemployment that was the major issue. Kickstarting technological incentives and pushing education sector reforms, along with enhancing health-care and new world-class hospitals are bound to create a vibrant job market. The budget is comprehensive and all-encompassing in these aspects. The beauty of the new budget is that it has gone beyond fixing income and expenditure to advance ease of living. It has scores of schemes to entice the Pravasi Bharatiya which again is a focus of the Modi government.

The interim budget presented by Piyush Goyal in February 2019 had given an indication of the tax reliefs and incentives that would be offered to various segments like the middle class and farmers. The new budget has concretised and enhanced those steps.

The major beneficiaries are the salaried, middle-income group, farmers and the youth. The budget has tried to put more money in the common man's pocket. This will increase demand, help growth. Overall, a budget that means business. □□

(Dr R. Balashankar is Member, BJP Central Committee on Training, and Committee on Publications and former Convener BJP National Intellectual Cell and former Editor Organiser.)

A silent fiscal crisis?

This year's Budget speech was the first I have seen that, in my memory, has no paragraphs on the fiscal situation which, along with the tax proposals, is at the core of any Budget. However, it outlines the contours of government economic policy more generally, and does it well. It also directly addresses concerns regarding the banking and financial sectors with concrete proposals to tackle the currently troubled situation.

In my previous column (Some medium-term fiscal arithmetic, June 7), I argued that the Centre's fiscal space was severely constrained. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the speech avoids any mention of the macro-fiscal situation. This is understandable: It has not been the tradition in India to confront such difficulties openly.

The macro-fiscal numbers presented with the Budget documents suggest "business as usual" (see table). The total expenditure as per cent of GDP continues to shrink from 13.34 per cent in 2014-15 to 13.2 per cent in 2019-20. Revenue receipts increase by only 0.35 per cent of GDP in the same period. Collectively, this has allowed government to secure a fiscal deficit-GDP ratio of 3.4 per cent in the 2018-19 (RE) compared with 4.1 per cent in 2014-15. Thus fiscal consolidation has been secured by consistently reducing the size of the Central government and modestly increasing the revenue-GDP ratio.

This was looking good until I read Table 1, Chapter 2 Vol II, of the Economic Survey (ES). There, the provisional accounts for 2018-19, as reported by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), has presented data that is very different from those in the revised estimates (2018-19 ES in Table). According to



The ability of government to shrink the expenditures in 2019-20 would severely strain attempts to maintain fiscal discipline.

Rathin Roy



BUSINESS AS USUAL

	2014-15	2018-19 BE	2018-19 RE	2018-19 ES*	2019-20 BE
Total expenditure (% GDP)	13.34	13.0	13.04	12.2	13.2
Fiscal deficit (% GDP)	4.1	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3
Revenue receipts/GDP	8.83	9.18	9.18	8.2	9.3
Tax-GDP ratio	7.25	7.88	7.88	6.9	7.81

BE: Budget Estimate; RE: Revised Estimate; ES: Economy Survey; * CGA data

the CGA data, the revenue-GDP ratio is 8.2 per cent, a full percentage point lower than reported in the revised estimates. But the ES pegs the fiscal deficit at 3.4 per cent, the same as in the revised estimates. How is this done given the stunning shortfall in the tax-GDP ratio? Well, the total expenditure-GDP ratio reported in the ES is 0.85 per cent of GDP lower than the 2018-19 (RE). The remaining 0.15 per cent is secured by assuming a slightly higher GDP growth rate than that used in the 2018-19 (RE).

This is worrying. If the survey is correct, it is most certainly not business as usual. The Central government would have shrunk by 1.1 per cent of GDP since 2014-15. Our revenue performance would be dismal compared to previous years. The ability of government to shrink the expenditures by 0.85 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 (as opposed to increase it by 0.15 per cent relative to RE 2018-19) would severely strain attempts to maintain fiscal discipline. For the 2019-20 (BE) to be credible, revenue receipts would need to rise by a whopping 1.1 per cent of GDP, where the Budget allows for just a 0.12 per cent increase.

The CGA is the authorised institution to issue fiscal accounts. If their numbers, as reported in the ES, are way off the mark, then this would cause a collapse in the credibility of the fiscal accounts. But I have full confidence in the fiscal

The ability of government to shrink the expenditures by 0.85 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 (as opposed to increase it by 0.15 per cent relative to RE 2018-19) would severely strain attempts to maintain fiscal discipline.

accounts. However, if they are accurate, this would mean that the Budget numbers presented severely underestimate the magnitude of the unstated fiscal crisis that we went through in 2018-19, which cannot be conceivably be fully reversed in 2019-20. At the heart of the crisis is a shortfall in tax revenues which, as the ES makes clear, is mainly due to a shortfall in GST revenues (but also personal income tax revenues), compared to the numbers presented in the RE.

For the rest, the share of central sector schemes is projected to increase from 10 to 13 per cent of total expenditure in FY 2019-20. This will be achieved by reducing the share of subsidies, finance commission transfers and the states' share of central taxes. The first is laudable, the second not alarming — such transfers taper off in the

final year of the Finance Commission award. The third continues an undesirable policy of raising revenues through non-shareable cesses, a predictable, if misplaced, response to the grave fiscal constraint the Central government is facing.

On the revenue side, the share of GST will decline from the projected 23 per cent in the Budget 2018-19 to 19 per cent in the Budget 2019-20. This reflects reality: The GST is not revenue neutral, and the political bargain to get the states on board with GST involved a generous compensation for their shortfalls. This means that the Centre has had to bear the entire brunt of the deficit in GST collections. This has been a costly price in loss of fiscal space that the Centre has had to pay to implement GST. It is now of the first importance that we reiterate our commitment to this important reform and all stakeholders work to improve the effectiveness and buoyancy of GST: The finance minister's speech proposes important simplifying reforms.

Paragraph 103 of the Budget speech is brief but marks a major shift in government fiscal policy. It proposes that the sovereign government of India borrow from foreigners to finance its expenditures. I have grave concerns about this proposal on grounds of economic security and sovereignty, and about the macroeconomic consequences. But there are no details in the Budget and it would be unfair to comment until the concrete policy proposal is made explicit. But I would respectfully urge transparent reflection and consultation before taking this route. □□

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<https://www.nipfp.org.in/blog/2019/07/08/silent-fiscal-crisis/>

Make no mistake: Agriculture alone has the potential to Reboot the Economy



At a time when Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz says that neo-liberalism is ‘dead and buried’, and the world as a result is increasingly grappling with the gigantic problems of rising unemployment, gnawing inequality and climatic change reaching a tripping point, agriculture alone has the potential to reboot the economy.

While the accumulation of wealth in the western countries is essentially built on greenhouse gas emissions, as author Amitabh Ghosh would say, the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had the courage to acknowledge: “The world’s current economic model is an environmental suicide. Climate change is

showing us that the old model is more than obsolete. We need a revolution on how best to make the global economy sustainable.”

His clarion call at the World Economic Forum 2011 however went unheeded. No media even thought of initiating a discussion on this grim portrayal of the global economic future.

While the current economic model has outlived its utility, more of the same will only exacerbate the destruction of natural resources, advancing the climatic catastrophe the world is staring at, and lead to unimaginable socio-economic disruptions. Already with the Himalayas melting at an alarming rate, reducing the snow depth by one-and-a half feet every year, with river flow shrinking, lakes and water bodies disappearing; and with oceans polluted and rising, the environmental consequences of economic growth have been dastardly.

As if this is not enough, look at the environmental fallout of industrial agriculture. Soil fertility has declined to almost zero in intensively farmed regions; excessive mining of groundwater sucking aquifers dry; and chemical inputs, including pesticides, becoming extremely pervasive in environment, the entire food chain has been contaminated.

As soils become sick, forests are logged for expanding industrial farming, soil erosion and water depletion takes a heavy toll leading to more desertification. Not drawing any lessons, Brazil’s new president, Jair Bolsonaro, has launched an assault on the Amazon rainforests. Within hours of assuming office he issued an executive order that practically spells a death-knell for the pristine forests, considered to be a global lung.



My understanding is that only agriculture can reboot the economy, sustain millions of livelihoods, and reduce global warming.

Devinder Sharma

In Punjab, the Chief Minister has time and again warned of creeping desertification if the present rate of ground water withdrawal is not corrected. A report by the Central Ground Water Board has warned that Punjab and Haryana will turn into a desert in another 25 years if it continues with the current rate of exploitation.

And yet I find expectations on economic reforms have risen significantly. In the second tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, corporate-backed think tanks, credit rating agencies, and economic writers without exception have called for more reforms, going to the extent of seeking bold reforms.

How did Higher GDP help?

I fail to understand that if a higher GDP in the ten years of UPA-1 and UPA-2, an outcome of economic policies driven by the ideology of economic reforms, had failed to translate into jobs, how will aggressively pursuing more reforms create more jobs now. That's a question no one wants to answer. More so at a time when we are fast moving from jobless to job-loss growth. Recent studies show that besides the urban centres, huge job losses have taken place for the rural farm and non-farm workers as well.

Similarly, the growing demand for reducing corporate tax to attract investments and provide jobs has come at a time when globally there is no empirical evidence for it. Just because the corporate bodies need it, credit rating agencies and think-tanks are going overboard justifying it. Nobel laureate Paul Krugman has in a tweet questioned this flawed thinking saying how wrong it was to imagine that

slashing corporate taxes would lead to a huge surge in investments.

In a graph he tagged, sourcing the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, he showed clearly that there is no relation between corporate tax cuts and rising investments. Nor does it lead to more job creation. In fact, he further explains that the tax cuts had only enabled the rich to invest more in the stock markets.

Another bold reform that the industry associations are crying for is reforming the labour markets, which essentially means the privilege to 'hire and fire' workers. Again, Paul Krugman in a tweet said "basically very little evidence that we gain anything from the brutality of our labour markets".

In simple words, the 'brutal' labour reforms in the US haven't worked. If it didn't work in the US, from where we copy and paste economic policies, I wonder how will the same labour reforms work in India. This has to change. Not an easy task, but considering the realisation that agriculture needs structural reforms; I see a ray of hope.

Driving out people from Agriculture is foolish

In the given economic scenario, my understanding is that only agriculture can reboot the economy, sustain millions of livelihoods, and at the same time substantially reduce global warming.

The first and foremost requirement is to accept the yeoman role agriculture can play in revitalising the economy in the years to come. The economic thought that encourages farmers to be forced out of agriculture to the cities where cheaper labour is needed has to first change. If agriculture be-

comes economically viable, the rural economy too undergoes a rapid transformation thereby drastically reducing the rural-urban migration. While the villages will become pivot of economic growth, the cities will be saved of a huge migratory influx protecting them from an impending collapse. With farming becoming viable, it will also reduce the pressure on creating more jobs in the cities. Agriculture therefore is the saviour.

Addressing the fifth meeting of the governing council of the Niti Aayog recently in New Delhi, the Prime Minister had announced the formation of a high-level task force for suggesting structural reforms in agriculture. This is a positive development, and if curated properly has the potential to propel the much needed agricultural transformation by the year 2024. This requires fresh thinking, and banking on approaches that are ecologically sustainable and conform to the location-specific needs of the country.

For instance, the Prime Minister's focus on water harvesting and conservation is driven by the desire to reactivate traditional water harvesting technologies, and make water conservation an important factor in farming strategies. Instead of intensive farming, the emphasis has to shift to agro-ecological farming systems requiring less water, with the focus diverted to local production, local procurement and local distribution.

What India needs is a series of desi reforms in agriculture, ensuring that growth in agriculture is so entwined with food policies that hunger and malnutrition is relegated to the past. Meanwhile, a high-level task force of chief ministers

headed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has been formed.

The task force would do well if it does not copy the failed agricultural reforms from the United States and European Union. To illustrate, Indian economists are building up pressure to open up agriculture to foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail trade as well as in preparing the farm markets for commodity trading. If this had worked, I see no reason why the average farm income in the US should have nosedived in 2018.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) had estimated the 'median' farm income to be in the negative at minus \$ 1,553 (or minus Rs 107,739). In other words, the average farm household in the US was living in debt, with the debt margin increasing substantially for half the households existing below the 'median'.

In fact, the Chief Economist for USDA had admitted that real farm incomes have been declining since the 1960s, thereby necessitating huge farm subsidies to keep farming viable. This is happening at a time when the world's biggest commodity trading centre, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange is located in the US, and the world's biggest organised retail chain the US-based WalMart has completed more than half a century. But neither commodity trading nor the entry of private markets could rescue agriculture.

Direct income support is Welcome

To me, this is a great opportunity. The Prime Minister has already set the ball rolling when in the interim budget in February

Driving out people from agriculture is foolish and it can revitalise the economy by reducing the rural-urban migration.

made a provision for providing a direct income support of Rs 6,000 per year to small farmers, which was extended later to all land-owning farmers.

In my understanding, it was a tectonic shift in economic thinking, moving away from 'price policy' to 'income policy'. Gradually, I am sure the direct income support in the years to come will one day increase from Rs 500 a month to as much as Rs 5,000 a month. And I am hoping that PM-Kisan scheme is followed by setting up a National Commission for Farmers Income & Welfare, incorporating the existing Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), with the mandate to provide an assured income of Rs 18,000 per month per farming family. This has to be provided by way of topping-up on the average incomes in each of the districts. The date for assessing farm incomes district-wise is available.

Considering that the average farm income in 17 states of India or roughly half the country stands at a mere Rs 20,000 a year, the importance of direct income support can be easily gauged.

At the same time, public sector investment between 2007 and 2017 being in range of 0.4 per cent of GDP, the reason why agricul-

ture is faced with a terrible agrarian crisis becomes obvious. With low investment and low incomes, no miracles can be expected.

Agriculture therefore needs massive infrastructure investments, including expanding the existing APMC regulated markets infrastructure to reach 42,000 mandis in 5 kms radius, linking these mandis with a network of village link roads, strengthening the MSP delivery system, and providing for a network of godowns, foodgrain silos and warehouses. This has to be accompanied by formulating Ease of Doing Farming initiatives on the same lines as ease of doing business. Ease of Doing Farming will be a governance reform removing bottlenecks and hurdles farmer's encounter during crop production, harvesting and marketing operations.

Transforming agriculture is only possible provided policymakers get out of the dominant mindset that considers agriculture to be a burden on the national exchequer.

It has to be acknowledged that the path to future economic growth definitely passes through agriculture. Given the right kind of policy push, farming can turn into an economic activity thereby not only strengthening the livelihood security for 600 million people directly or indirectly dependent on farming but in addition creating a huge demand that will reignite the wheels of economic growth.

This is the probable image of a sustainable future that the world awaits eagerly, where an ecologically sustainable agriculture corrects the climate imbalances, reduces income inequality and helps build up sustainable livelihoods. □□

<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/make-no-mistake-agriculture-alone-has-the-potential-to-reboot-the-economy>

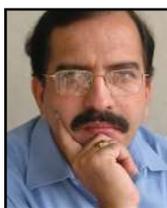
Addressing the water filter paradox

It may have missed common attention that a modern city like Ludhiana wastes an estimated 15 million litres of water each day. Ludhiana is not alone, large metropolitan cities waste double that amount while the lesser endowed cities waste only half as much. Add such involuntary contribution from all cities and towns, and one would get an astronomical figure of unbelievable proportions. This has been so when the country's per person water availability is shrinking each year — presently at an alarming low of 1,300 cubic meters having slipped from a high of 1,816 cubic meters in 2001. Without corrective measures, the situation is unlikely to look any better.

Thanks to the growing penetration of reverse osmosis water filters at the household level, water wastage is bound to remain inevitable. With the best of brands reporting no more than 50% recovery, each litre of water secured through the system pushes some four to five litres down the drain. RO is a wasteful technology by design, all claims to the contrary are only to fleece the customers. With public water supply evoking little confidence in terms of quality, the domestic water filter market continues to exploit public sentiment by knocking at every door. Celebrity endorsements and attractive offers have pepped up the water filter market.

With an expected cumulative annual growth rate of 15%, water purifier market in the country is expected to reach \$4.1 billion by the end of 2024 as compared to \$1.1 billion in 2015. According to the report of the US-based Transparency Market Research, RO filters will continue to expand its share in the water purifier market which stood at 37% in 2015.

“The promise of offering exceptional services to the end users and making pure water affordable are the two key strategies being adopted,” according to the



RO and UN technology water filters are not only wasting huge amount of potable water but also contaminating existing surface water sources.

**Sudhirendar
Sharma**



report. For its quality, a growing number of consumers are investing in RO and UV technology.

Water wastage from such filters notwithstanding, the demand for affordable and clean drinking water has continued to propel demand for RO water filters across the country. What's more, commercial RO filtration units are gaining popularity across rural and semi-urban areas. While large corporations taking pride in supporting non-profits under their CSR portfolio, several MPs are diverting MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme) funds to finance such water ATMs. In the absence of any directives on waste water disposal from ATMs, discard from RO plants is invariably contaminating existing surface water sources.

It is a Catch-22. People's lack of faith in the quality of water supplied by urban water utilities has

come as a boon for the filter water industry. Filter water industry is perfectly placed to exploit the situation, presenting RO water filter as a new health status symbol. Coming with an enviable water quality tag endorsed by celebrities like Hema Malini and Madhuri Dixit, even those households who may do well with a gravity water filter are switching over to a RO system. Ironically, consumers consider water wastage as an unavoidable opportunity cost of using a RO water filter for maintaining a healthy life.

There is no denying that a RO filter is best suited for water with higher turbidity and suspected dissolved contaminants, but it is also a fact that not all water supplied justifies the blanket use of RO filters. Gravity purifier, sediment purifier and other filters are as effective, provided consumers are aware of the quality of water sup-

plied to them. There are two ways in which the crises of sorts can be averted. First, it should be made mandatory for the urban water utilities to flag their supplied water quality periodically for consumers to make an informed choice on picking the right filter to match the suspected water quality.

Second, and perhaps more important, is the need to regulate the water filter industry. Not only should each brand explicitly reflect its water recovery data, it must carry a clear message on what quality of input water would suit best the RO filter under reference. It will then be left for the consumer to take a call. If celebrity endorsements carry such a message loud and clear, a significant saving on water can be expected at the household level. It is now for the Niti Aayog to take up this matter. □□

(Sudhirendar Sharma is a writer and development professional)
<https://www.dusseindoll.com/opinion/panorama/addressing-the-water-filter-paradox-746320.html>

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The productivity of the Indian Parliament: Unsolved Assignment of Dr. Kalam

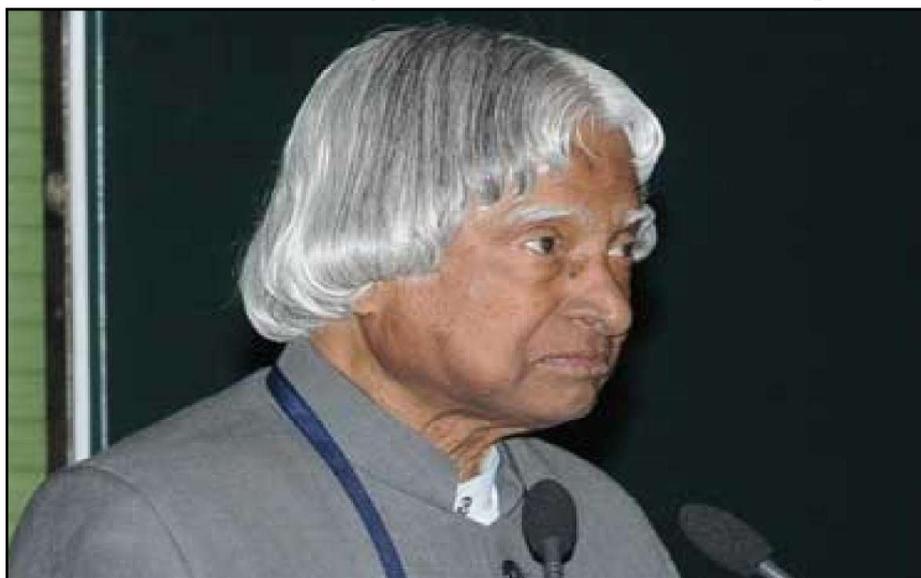
Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam who wished to be remembered as a teacher had planned a surprise assignment for his students at IIM Shillong which he could not offer them. The assignment related to finding innovative ways to end disruptions in the functioning of the parliament. Dr. Kalam was traveling with his close aide Srijan Pal Singh, a graduate from IIM Ahmedabad, and during this travel from Delhi to Shillong, he was expressing his concern regarding disruptions in the parliament. During travel discussion, he said that he had seen two different governments during his tenure and these disruptions keep happening and something needs to be done; someone has to come up with solutions to make parliament a place of work for developmental politics. He planned to discuss with participants of IIM Shillong and ask them to prepare an assignment to come up with three innovative ideas to improve the productivity of the parliament of India. While delivering the lecture he fell and could not be revived. As per his close aide- Dr. Kalam believed that a person is blessed if death comes while working and standing tall without any long drawn ailing. Dr. Kalam was also concerned that he himself doesn't know a particular solution to end disruptions in parliament, so how should he put this issue and seek solutions from the participants of his lecture.

A ray of hope is emerging. The change in leadership style is one tool to maintain discipline and control disruptions in the house. Apart from these, there are many other domains of the functioning of the parliament which needs to be explored. The classrooms are becoming smart, and moreover, the government is committed to smart city, so can we have smart parliament - and expect the authorities to come up with a smart parliament sometime in near future. Work from home is a new practice and this practice is followed at those workplaces where the efficiency is increasing because of it and so it's sensible to explore jobs



Physical infrastructure and information technology infrastructures are just facilities and the people who are engaging such facilities are more accountable for the smooth functioning of the system.

Alok Singh



which is suitable for such approach in parliament house. The productivity can also be improved by changing processes and by managing time apart from many other tools. The constraints imposed on sessions of parliament are the number of session days, working hour per session day and the total number of sessions in a year. The Indian parliament has monsoon session, budget session, and winter sessions. The timings and duration of the sessions are changed as per requirements.

The Prime Minister, the speaker of Lok Sabha and the speaker of Rajya Sabha has shown serious efforts during recent days for the functioning of the parliament in a productive way. The current Lok Sabha in its first session has created many paths and demonstrated improved efficiency in term of its functioning as well as maintaining discipline inside the house. The Prime Minister has expressed his anguish public regarding the absence of ministers during question hour, the Lok Sabha speaker has entertained a record number of questions from a record number of different participants during different slots and the vice president who is the ex-officio chairperson of Rajya sabha has demanded attendance from concerned members from the government side. The cabinet ministers are canceling their planned foreign trips to contribute in the proceedings of the parliament because of the revised schedule of ongoing sessions. There is a change in the air.

A pitch can also be created to measure the quality of the contribution of members of parliament. Every stakeholder including elected representatives nominated

Any individual whether it be an elected representative or a housekeeping staff or someone else or anyone else- be recognized for their efforts in smooth functioning and improving the productivity of the sessions of the parliament.

members, officials, the team of ministers, manpower engaged in maintenance of the infrastructure including information technology infrastructure, has to own their responsibility with full commitment to make parliament more productive and more efficient. The repetitive discussion be discouraged unless and until it demands attention to some missing dimension. The rules are formulated in such a way that the representative who is speaking from the floor of the house speaks for the sake of the nation and not for personal publicity. There are a lot of issues which is difficult to measure or test about its relevance and so it's challenging to put into practice. The parliament should come up with an alternative system having the same level of visibility as that of the floor of the house, where all the members have the opportunity to raise as many questions as they wish and in as much detail as possible. But it should not be at the cost of the time of the house. The sittings in the parliament engage a lot of costs, not only in monetary terms but also in terms of attendance of all the representatives in-

cluding the prime minister, as they all have a lot of other issues in the queue which demands their physical presence at some other place. The tradeoffs need to be justified in case a member is missing their attendance in parliament when the session is going on. The quality measurement tools which are engaged in the manufacturing sector and over a period of time has been engaged by services sector including educations sector needs to be customized to meet the requirement to measure the quality of sessions of parliament. Any individual whether it be an elected representative or a housekeeping staff or someone else or anyone else- be recognized for their efforts in smooth functioning and improving the productivity of the sessions of the parliament. Even if the layout of the seating arrangement needs to be changed it should be explored seriously. The other tool to be engaged extensively is that of ICT i.e. information, communication and technology. The members should be trained enough to have convenient and timely access to information which is required to be understood and interpreted correctly for the smooth functioning of the house. The scheduling of the session is done in a professional way. It can be also be treated using tools of project management which attempt to optimize the resources and at the same time meet the deadlines. Physical infrastructure and information technology infrastructures are just facilities and the people who are engaging such facilities are more accountable for the smooth functioning of the system. An emerging culture in the functioning of parliament session is visible. Let's keep a watch on it. □□

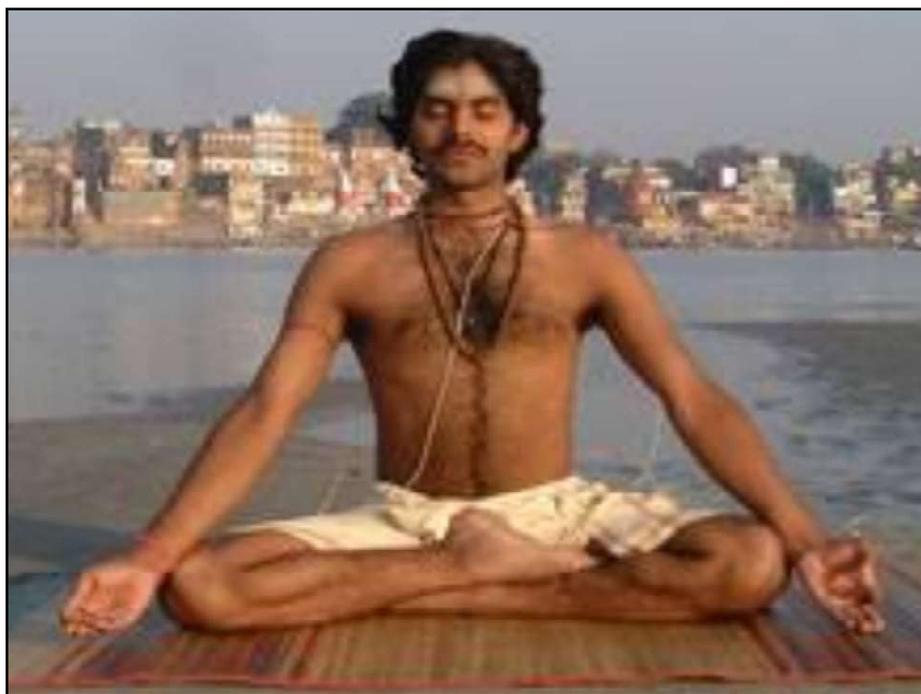
Aspects of Ancient Indian Yoga

The followers of Yoga should in the first instance practise a definite system of moral and religious restraints, such as non-injury, truthfulness, purity, sincerity, sex-control, self-contentment, and the like, called yamas and niyamas, for the external purification of mind. Ordinarily all activities associated with mental life are of the nature of continual relationing and movement. The Yogin who wishes to invert the processes underlying the maintenance of psychic structure arrests his mind statically on a particular object to the exclusion of all others, so that on the focal point of consciousness there may be only one state, which does not move, and all relationing process of the mind is at complete arrest.

Yoga is defined as a partial or complete arrest or cessation of the mental states. As an accessory process the Yogin learns to steady himself in a particular posture (asana) and gradually to arrest the processes of breathing (pranayama). His efforts to exclude other objects and to intensify the selected mental state which is to be kept steady on the focal point are called dharana and dhyana respectively. As a result of his progressive success in arresting the mental states, there arise new types of wisdom (prajna) and the subconscious: potencies gradually wear out; ultimately all the subconscious and unconscious potencies of the structural relations are destroyed, and, as a result thereof, the avidya which was determining the nirus of the mind is destroyed, and the whole fabric of the mind is disintegrated, leaving the pure purusha in his transcendent loneliness (kaivalya), which is regarded as the ultimate aspiration of the human mind.



Yoga is partial or complete cessation of the mental states. Yogin learns to steady himself in a particular asana and controls the processes of breathing (pranayama).
Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur



In the yoga process supreme ethical purity in thought, word, and deed is the first desideratum. When the mental field is so prepared the Yogin attacks the more difficult bondage of its psychological nature, consisting of the conscious and unconscious forces which may drive him to sense-objects sense gratifications. At each stage of meditative concentration he has a supra consciousness which destroys the roots of the conserved experiences and fundamental passions, and yet does not build any psychological structure. This leads to the ultimate destruction of mind and self-illumination of transcendent pursusha in an utterly non-phenomenal and non-psychological manner.

The Yoga believes in the existence of God, who is associated with a absolutely pure mind. With such a mind be exerts a will such that the evolution of the prakriti or the guna reels may take the course that it has actually taken in consonance with the possible fruition of the mundane and supra-mundane or spiritual needs of the individual persons. The Yoga thinks that, had it not been for the will of God, the potentialities of the guns might not have manifested themselves in the present order. The Sankhya, however thinks that the necessity inherent in the potentialities is sufficient to explain the present order, and the existence of God is both unwarrantable and unnecessary.

The Yoga School of philosophy, of which Patanjali was the traditional founder, must not be confused with what is commonly called yoga in the Western world. This, the system of training known as hatha-yoga, is of much liter or-



The Yoga believes in the existence of God, who is associated with as absolutely pure mind.

igin, as far as can be gathered from the sources, and is based on physiological theories related to the 'serpent-power' (kundalini), which from its seat in the base of the spine may be raised by breathing and other exercises to rise through a vein or channel in the spine to reach 'the thousand petalled lotus' (sahasrara) at the top of the skull. This is scarcely a philosophy at all, but is rather a magico-religious system of training, with its roots probably to be found in primitive Shamanism.

The Nyaya School was essentially a school of logic, maintaining the view first clear thinking was an essential preliminary to salvation. This school evolved, about the beginning of the Christian era, a system of syllogistic logic which seems to have been quite independent of the Aristotelian system which conditioned the thought of Europe. The usual formula of the Indian syllogism was as follows:

- i. There is a fire on the mountain,
- ii. Because there is smoke on it,
- iii. And where there is smoke there is fire, as, for example, in a kitchen
- iv. This is the case with the mountain,
- v. And therefore there is a fire on it.

We may compare this with the

Aristotelian formula:

- i. Where there is smoke there is fire.
- ii. There is smoke on the mountain.
- iii. Therefore there is fire on it.

The Indian syllogism is more cumbersome than the Greek one, but it might be more effective in debate, since the point is driven home by repetition, the first preposition being virtually the same as the fifth and the second the same as the fourth.

The example (here the kitchen) was looked on as an essential element of the syllogism, and also seems to derive from debating technique. It is a survival from the earliest phase of Indian philosophical thought, when listeners were often satisfied with analogical arguments. An example of such an argument is the famous parable of the salt in the Chhandogya Upanishad (vi. 13), which is mentioned above (p. 113). As salt dissolves in water, so the individual is dissolved in the absolute Brahman. This, from the point of view of logic, is no argument at all, but it helps to explain a mystical theory and is very effective as a means of enforcing conviction upon one already predisposed to believe the proposition. □□

“President of India: Ganga”

In his address in the Parliament, President said that the government has set a goal for making Ganga uninterrupted and clean by 2022. Along with the Ganga, the government will work on a similar pattern on the Yamuna, Narmada, Kaveri, Godavari and other rivers. This has got me worried about the future of these rivers in the country. The long list of social movements, government assurances, orders from local courts, high courts and the Supreme Court, as well as the National Green Tribunal on issues related to the Ganga, are in front of us.

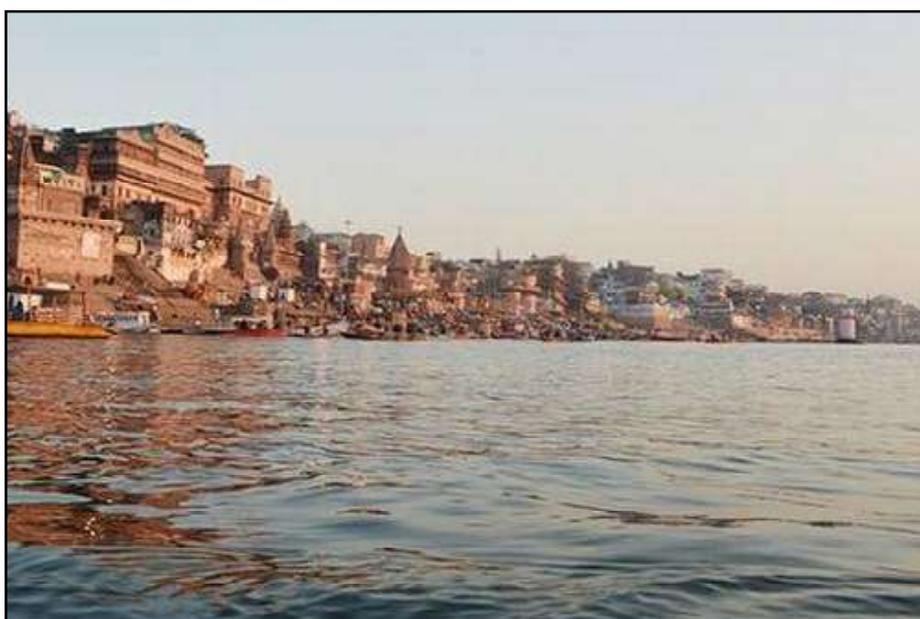
Yet the Ganga is, from her origins to her meeting with the Gangasagar, shackled and shocked. The Ganga has been bound in dam projects from the origin of her main streams in the mountains. The Alaknanda Ganga has been shackled by the Vishnuprayag dam, while the Bhagirathi Ganga has been dammed from Maneri Bhali to the giant Tehri dam. The Ganga and her tributaries have been stricken with about 56 major dam projects, some of which are already constructed while others are in various stages of construction and studies.

There is no other river in the country, or in the world, like the Ganga, which is the subject of so much discussion and which has been given the status of the national river. While the Hindus consider the Ganga as the redeemer of sin, however, all religious people in the country have faith in the Ganga. The Prime Minister of the country that represents a fifth of the world’s population considers himself a son of Ganga, and became a Member of Parliament and reached the highest position in government from a constituency on her riverbanks. The Ganga, which is directly and indirectly associated with the life of nearly 40 million people, is also known for her spiritual-economic-natural beauty. The river also plays a crucial role in the ecology of a large area of India.



Mining, dams, barrages, harbours have damaged the national river Ganga. However the Central Govt's Namami Ganga project and leading activists are engaged in damage control but results are yet to come.

Vimal Bhai



While President had to say the words written for him in Parliament, we expect the first citizen of the country to come forward and understand the Ganga's pain as a common man.

It is not necessary to repeat the history that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi first started the cleaning of the Ganga or that the Manmohan Singh government had given the status of the national river to the Ganga.

Due to the fasting of Sant Swami Sanand (formerly Prof. GD Agrawal), the Manmohan Singh government stopped the construction of two dams of Loharinag-Pala, Pala-Manari and Bhairon valley in order to leave the Bhagirathi Ganga intact for 100 kms. Upon declaring the Ganga as the national river, it also established an authority. Around this time, the Wildlife Institute of Dehradun recommended the shelving of 24 dam project on the Ganga. To counter this report, a report was commissioned from a professor at Roorkee University. In this report, Ganga was kept in C class. It was not that during his tenure he intended to give the Ganga complete Gangatva but still there was much happening during Manmohan Singh's tenure.

At the same time, after many long battles, the courts also began to respond. In 2008, on an appeal filed by economist Bharat Jhunjhunwala and Vimal Bhai, the National Environmental Appellate Authority canceled Kotli Bhel Phase-1B on the Alaknanda Ganga. The courts also ordered compensation for dam affected people and fines on dam companies for violation of environmental conditions. Or, where people understood the re-

***Matu Jansangathan
and Bhuswami
Sangharsh Samiti
have managed to
stop the construction
of the proposed
Devsari dam on the
Pinder Ganga for
almost 10 years.***

ality of the dams, they stopped the construction of the dam on the ground. For example, Matu Jansangathan and Bhuswami Sangharsh Samiti have managed to stop the construction of the proposed Devsari dam on the Pinder Ganga for almost 10 years. Matu has also intervene in public hearings of various other projects and able to stop them. Under the leadership of Gangadhar Nautiyal, there has been a long movement on the Mandakini Ganga. Women leaders such as Sushila Bhandari came forward and led movements. With dam construction having slowed down, the rights of the local people have been strengthened.

But on issues such as mining, the administration comes across as completely anti-Ganga. In Haridwar, Swami Sivananda ji of the Matra Sadan has been fighting legal battles against mining on the Ganges as well as keeping long fasts for the same. Even if the legal case is won, the administration responsible for the compliance of court orders seems silent in front of the mining mafia. Is this silence not collusion? In the fight over dams, the administration has always stood with the dam companies, irrespective of who forms the

government.

In addition to the above facts, President should also consider that the present government started the Namami Ganga project with a Rs. 22,000 crore budget. At the same time, it is the present government which is preparing to run large cruise and cargo ship on the Ganga. The harbors have been constructed. On the issue of the barrages on the Ganga, a large number of organizations in Bihar, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh have become active. The World Bank is also wrapped up in this issue, since they are also providing aid. But blessed is your government, which has kept its ears shut and has continued doing what it has decided.

The Chief Minister of Bihar had expressed his intention of opening the Farakka Barrage. However, with the changed political situation when he joined hands with the central government, he too has been silent on the issue.

In states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, in the context of Namami Ganga program, the graph from the project level to the budget and expenditure has been very low, even though the party forming the government at the centre and in these states has been the same. However, during the elections, several projects were announced, one after another, with much publicity. With the elections in mind, at the Ardhakumbh in Allahabad, the Ardhkumbh city was constructed and water made available in the Ganga with great publicity and marketing. Millions came to wash away their sins in the river Ganga and, upon returning home, gave their vote to the current centre government. This was all made

possible on the Ganga. In the virtual world of the media, this played a big role and the Ardha-kumbh was publicized internationally as the Kumbh. However, the state of the pollution of the Ganga can be stated by the Central Pollution Control Board.

In August 2013, the Supreme Court on its own setup a committee to examine the role played by the dams on the Ganga in the Uttarakhand disaster. The government then created a new committee to weaken the recommendations of this Ravi Chopra Committee. A committee was also formed by the Central Electricity Authority. However, in the last 5 years, the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Power have been unable to file a unanimous affidavit in the courts.

I want to inform President that the former Ministry of Water Resources has released a notification for minimum water flow. Several times the then-Minister Nitin Gadkari, in his speeches and in person, had stated that the government has decided to not allow any new dams to be built on the Ganga, and that even the dams with some work finished will be stopped. The Prime Minister's Office also held a meeting on issue of dams on the river Ganga at the end of February 2019. A team was also sent to look at the status of seven under-construction dams. The committee also went to the sites, but its report has not been made public to this day. The Environment Ministry had to file an affidavit in the Supreme Court on the basis of this report, which it has not done yet.

This same intention was stated in the letter received from the



Women leaders such as Sushila Bhandari led movements and with dam construction having slowed down, the rights of the local people have been strengthened.

government by the Matra Sadan's young sanyasi Brahmachari Atma-bodhanand, who had been sitting on fast in order to fulfil the resolution of Swami Sanand ji, on the occasion of his fasting for 194 days on May 4, 2019. On this basis he gave his fasting a rest. However, on June 16th, Matra Sadan gave the government two months' time after which the fasting will be resumed.

President should know that his government has spent 5 years without making any concrete plan, rule, law, with regards to keeping the Ganga flowing uninterrupted and clean: affidavits have not been filed in the courts; announcements made in speeches have not been fulfilled; the assurances given and promises made, in public and in-

dividually, have not been fulfilled; with regards to mining, the notifications did not get implemented despite the same party being in government at the centre and in Uttarakhand; not only were the under-construction dam projects not stopped, no notification preventing future dam building activity was issued; nor were the promises made to the sanyasis kept.

Here I am not talking of the sanyasis of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, who sang praises for the government at their recent meeting in Haridwar and passed a resolution against the soul of the Constitution; the same Constitution which President is supposed to protect. There was even a resolution passed to remove silt from the Ganga to keep the Ganga flowing uninterrupted, i.e. there was clear cooperation with the mining sector. Swami Sivananda ji has completely opposed this.

The head of President's government is the same as in 2014. They have now received the mandate for another term. So will he do something substantial for the Ganga or will the words and deeds of President lose all value? □□

Matu Jansangthan (working in Uttarakhand since 1988 on the issue of environment and People's rights)
https://www.counterview.net/2019/07/uninterrupted-clean-ganga-five-years-of.html

SJM asks PM Modi to stop officials from attending Huawei conference



Swadeshi Jagran Manch wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 31 July 2019, complaining that officials of the department of telecom are “flouting” service rules by attending a conference sponsored by Chinese telecom giant Huawei starting August 1. Urging the PM to rely on indigenous technology, the SJM has cited security concerns in partnering with the Chinese giant.

The SJM, which is the economic arm of the RSS, the ideological mentor of the BJP, has been pushing for regulating trade ties with China. It has written to the PM to ensure that DoT officials should not be allowed to attend a 5G conference sponsored by Huawei, saying it already is under the scanner and faces restrictions in several countries including the US, Japan, Australia, Vietnam and South Korea.

“Instead of adhering to the highest standards of integrity required in the Central Civil Services Conduct Rules, which also enjoin officials to protect the security and integrity of India, the entire top echelons of DoT are attending a conference paid for by Huawei, which together with other Chinese telecom companies, faces outright bans/ severe restrictions...Even in India the operations of Huawei are not beyond suspicion, and is never investigated thoroughly,” SJM’s national co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan has written in the letter to the PM.

The SJM has also cautioned against allowing Chinese telecom giants entry into the Indian market, pointing out that “Chinese dominance in India’s telecommunication sector is very damaging”.

“It is not only creating a security threat but also killing opportunities for our indigenous players. India is required to take a firm stance on this,” Mahajan wrote. He pointed out that outgoing telecom secre-

tary Aruna Sundararajan had last month assured that the telecom department will ensure no partnership with this Chinese major would only be allowed after ensuring that there is no compromise on the country’s security.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rss-affiliate-asks-pm-to-stop-officials-from-attending-huawei-conference/story-M37NKD1zqVpWxtUzgdBO0O.html>

Government sole owner of RBI profits, surpluses: SJM

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch has said the government is the sole owner of the RBI profits and surpluses and has hit out at the earlier central bank management for sending out the impression that the Centre wanted to snatch the bank’s profits.

“Nowhere in the world, the central bank keeps the profits with them. The government owns the RBI profit. The whole picture painted by the RBI executives of that time is that the surplus is the property of RBI which the government wants to take away. It was an anti-patriotic picture with an imprudent approach. They (the erstwhile RBI managers) also know, as professional bankers, that nowhere in the world the profits are kept with the central bank,” SJM told IANS (India’s Largest Independent News Service).

“Over the years, the reserves got piled up. The new (Jalan) panel has now given a road map under which the reserves would be transferred to the government. It is the right of the people of this country represented by the government to make use of any profit made by the monetary authorities. RBI has no contingency. The central government does the recapitalisation of banks, any risk to depositors’ money, the government takes care, so where is RBI’s contingency?” asked SJM.

The government had set up a six-member committee headed by former RBI Governor Jalan to examine the central bank’s requirements on provisions, reserves and buffers to determine how much of the



reserves could be transferred to the government. The committee had recommended that the surplus reserve held by the central bank be transferred to the government in tranches over three to five years.

But the fight over the RBI profits and surpluses saw skirmishes between North Block and then RBI management led by Governor Urjit Patel and his deputy Viral Acharya who said the funds belonged to RBI. After a bitter inconclusive fight, a panel was set up under Bimal Jalan which has finalised the report but yet to submit it. There was lack of consensus over the transfer of profits and surplus in that panel as well, where the former finance secretary and Finance Ministry nominee Subhash Chandra Garg dissented on the worked-out formula.

As per the annual report of RBI, the total reserves are Rs 9.59 lakh crore.

<https://www.cnbctr18.com/economy/govt-sole-owner-of-rbi-profits-surpluses-says-swadeshi-jagran-manch-4069851.htm>

SJM ticks off Agriculture ministry over 'misleading' reply in Parliament on herbicide Glyphosate

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) has ticked off the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare for 'misleading' the Parliament and Minister Narendra Tomar and for 'hiding true facts' on the herbicide Glyphosate. The Manch has reacted strongly to a reply given by the ministry to an unstarred question in Parliament on July 9.

The question by Member of Parliament Pratiima Mondal was on whether Glyphosate only kills weeds or also causes cancer along with other harmful effects, the steps being taken by the government to regulate its use, whether several countries have banned the carcinogenic herbicide, and whether the government intends to ban glyphosate in India.

Tomar read out an officials response denying the same. The Manch has hit back with a strong letter to Minister Tomar.

"The response that was drafted by your officials and read out by you is incorrect and is meant to hide true facts around this deadly chemical called Glyphosate", a letter sent to Tomar by SJM says.

SJM, in fact, is planning to take up the issue in a much bigger way. While Mahajan has already piloted a petition on Change.org demanding the ban, the SJM has now scheduled a panel discussion on the issue' on July 26.



Environmental activist Vanadan Shiva, Kavitha Kuruganti of Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic agriculture, Suman Sahai of the Gene Campaign and JD(U) spokesperson K C Tyagi will participate in the discussion, ET gathers.

Mahajan, in the detailed communication to Minister Tomar, says that Glyphosate has been categorised as a Probable Human Carcinogen (Group 2A) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and studies in India done by the likes of Indian Toxicological Research Centre (ITRC, Lucknow) also suggested that "glyphosate has tumor promoting potential in skin carcinogenesis and its mechanism seems to be similar to TPA".

SJM Co-convenor said that while officials refer to the Insecticides Act 1968 to respond to the question on regulation of glyphosate in India, they did not reveal that glyphosate is rampantly being used all over the country including on unauthorised and illegally cultivated Herbicide Tolerant (HT) Bt cotton, while registration of glyphosate was for tea plantation and non-cropped area only.

He has also noted that several countries from Austria to Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, middle Eastern nations, Vietnam, Portugal are among those who have banned the use of glyphosate partially or completely and American Courts have awarded millions of dollars in damages in three different cases related to glyphosate use and cancers caused to petitioners.

He further points out that even in India, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Punjab and Kerala state governments have issued orders to stop the licensing and sales of glyphosate in their respective states.

He has drawn the minister's attention to the Insecticides Act 1968 that does not allow state governments to take up prohibition or ban policies on haz-

ardous chemicals and hence puts in implementation hurdles.

“Moreover, such progressive orders are effective only if the Centre orders for a ban throughout the country”, Mahajan has written urging the government to ban the chemical.

“It is also important that officials who are feeding incorrect information to you should be identified. We need to figure out at whose behest are they misleading you and thereby the entire Parliament”, the SJM Co Convenor has cautioned.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/swadeshi-jagran-manch-ticks-off-agriculture-ministry-over-misleading-reply-in-parliament-on-herbicide-glyphosate/articleshow/70348974.cms>

Govt puts TikTok, Helo on notice after complaint from SJM

Swadeshi Jagran Manch has alleged that the platforms are being used for anti-national activities. Social media platform TikTok has come under the lens of the government and may face ban if it does not comply with regulations.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has sent questions to TikTok and Helo app, both owned by ByteDance, on whether they are collecting excessive data and if they are stored in China. MeitY has asked them to respond by July 22. The government also threatened that if the responses are not appropriate then the companies would be banned in India.

The questions to both the companies follow a complaint by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-affiliate Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) to the Prime Minister alleging that the platforms are being used for anti-national activities.

In a three-page query, the government has asked if the companies can confirm that the data of Indian users will not be transferred to any other foreign government or third party in future; if data are shared with any third party and if ‘yes’ then for what purposes; if TikTok and Helo are considering ‘storing/processing this data in India’; and if TikTok uses the services of ‘Influencers’.



MeitY has sought explanation from Helo on allegations that it paid a huge sum to other media platforms for putting 11,000 morphed political ads on social media sites.

It also raised the violation of child privacy and entry age of 13 years being set by these platforms while persons below the age of 18 years are considered minors in India.

It asked that if the companies have taken any measures to create awareness among children and parents to ensure safe use of the platform and to avoid any addictiveness of the application among children and the young.

The MeitY also enquired if TikTok has offices in India. When contacted TikTok and Helo, both said in a statement, “In line with our commitment to India, we are investing \$1 billion in India over the next three years, with a strategic focus on developing technology infrastructure, establishing local partnerships and supporting initiatives such as the Skill India Programme which we are proud to be assisting with already,” the statement said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/social-media/govt-issues-notice-to-tiktok-helo-seeks-answer-to-queries-or-face-ban/article28539672.ece>

SJM against government issuing foreign currency bonds

An influential Hindu nationalist group close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party has demanded his government review its plan to raise money by selling foreign currency bonds. They say it is anti-patriotic as it could create long-term risks for the economy, potentially allowing rich foreign nations and their financial institutions to dictate the country's policies.

“We can't allow this to happen,” declared Ashwani Mahajan, the Co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM). Declaring that the SJM will campaign against the plan by convening meetings of influential economists, Mahajan said: “We are confident that government will withdraw its decision on these bonds.”

“We must look at the experience of countries that have taken loans from international markets to meet their government deficit. The experience of these countries has been far from good,” he said, citing Argentina and Turkey as examples.

As per SJM going overseas to borrow may mean that the rupee currency depreciates at a faster rate and allows foreign governments to demand tariff reductions. A Finance Ministry spokesman declined to com-

ment for this story.

Speaking at a business summit in London, British Prime Minister Theresa May expressed hope that the Indian government would choose the British capital as the location to issue its first international sovereign bonds. New Delhi has not so far given any details about where they will be issued.

Subhash Chandra Garg, the top official at the Finance Ministry, told Indian business leaders last week that the overseas debt move was part of efforts to bring down real interest rates for Indian firms, to help the economy grow faster.

"We will have a very open attitude to welcome foreign investment and savings because that is what would be required," SJM said.

Garg said that the problem with relying so much on domestic debt was that the government tapped into nearly 80 per cent of total savings in the economy, leaving little for private companies. As a result, those businesses are forced to pay up to 12-13 per cent in interest rates on bank loans.

The government has in the past considered raising funds from overseas markets but those tasked with determining the feasibility of such a plan have ended up recommending against it.

"Most of the debt is of domestic origin, insulating the debt portfolio from currency risk," former Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, wrote in a paper on public debt in February last year.

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/economy/180719/swadeshi-jagran-manch-against-government-issuing-foreign-currency-bond.html>

Piyush Goyal not attending RCEP Beijing meet

It is official. The commerce and industries minister Piyush Goyal will not take part in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Intersessional Ministerial meet. The minister was scheduled to attend the meet on August 2-3 in Beijing. The RCEP is a mega trade agreement negotiated among 10-member ASEAN countries and six foreign trade agreement (FTA) partners - India, China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand. These countries are home to 45 per cent of the world population. They contribute 25 per cent to global gross domestic product and generate 30 per cent of cross-country trade. They also attract 26 per cent of foreign direct investments.

The 27th round of negotiations being held at



Zhengzhou in China will be followed by the trade ministers' conclave. Meanwhile, the minister cancelled his tour after the government extended the ongoing Parliament session till August 7, government officials told BT.

Goyal is also the deputy leader of the Bharatiya Janta Party in Rajya Sabha. However, there is more than what meets the eyes. India is in no mood to conclude the negotiations. At least not in the present form. The member countries are creating pressure to conclude negotiations, and they blame that India is becoming a stumbling block. Earlier, the deadline was December 2018, but was extended till end of this year, since many member countries went in for general elections.

Goyal is under immense pressure from the local industry to not budge under pressure on cheaper imports from these countries. The absence of Goyal means India is budging. The 19 other countries are pushing India to forgo concerns on tariff elimination. The pact would mean more dumping of products.

In the last fortnight, Goyal met with representatives of various export promotion councils in Delhi and Mumbai. There is a major resistance from the steel, auto, textiles, and engineering goods manufacturers along with farmers and dairy producers.

Most member countries are determined to sign the agreement by the end of 2019. India is not keen to oblige. Many manufactures argue India has free trade agreements with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea and is negotiating a deal with Australia and New Zealand. The RCEP will only give more access to Chinese products, with almost zero resistance. Goyal might have bought time to think more by skipping the ministerial. At the end of the day, he may take a balanced view.

<https://www.businesstoday.in/top-story/piyush-goyal-not-attending-rcep-beijing-meet/story/368870.html>

SJM says India unlikely to accept China-led trade deal

India is unlikely to sign a China-backed Asia-Pacific trade pact because of opposition from industry and farmers, a powerful nationalist group tied to Prime Narendra Modi said on August 2, 2019, in a blow to prospects for creating a giant free trade zone.

Trade ministers from 16 countries are trying this week to negotiate the terms of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in Beijing in a new effort to break down barriers in an area home to 45 percent of world population. But progress has been slow, in large part because of disputes between China and India over access to markets and lists of protected goods.

“During the wider consultations, none of the sectors appreciated the idea of going ahead with RCEP,” said by co-convenor of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM).

“Given the opposition from all the sectors, it is not likely that the government will go ahead with the pact.” India’s trade ministry has said it remains engaged in talks over the pact, seeking to strike a balance between tariff cuts and domestic sensitivities.

The pact includes the 10 members of the ASEAN grouping of Southeast Asian nations and six Asia-Pacific countries, such as major economies China, India, Japan and South Korea.

ASEAN countries are pushing for the pact to be concluded by December 2019 as protectionism rises across the world, affecting prospects for growth.

Indian farmers believe the pact will force cuts in tariffs on farm goods, leading to cheaper imports, such as dairy products, into a country where agriculture is still the mainstay of a population of 1.3 billion.

Several other industry groups in India, such as steel, engineering and auto makers have opposed New Delhi’s participation in the pact, citing the threat of cheaper imports from China.

Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal dropped out of the Beijing meeting citing parliament engagements, and has sent trade officials instead.

A finance ministry official said there were concerns about Chinese goods flooding the Indian market.

“RCEP for us is almost like FTA with China, so we really need to be careful,” said the official, who declined to be identified due to the sensitive nature of the talks.

“We need to make RCEP work for us if we sign it, else we should not. It does not matter how much time it will take.”

<https://in.reuters.com/article/india-trade-pact/rss-economic-wing-says-india-unlikely-to-accept-china-led-trade-deal-idINKCN1U5ICE>

Malnutrition-struck Maharashtra turns to millet to enrich tribal health, lifestyle

In a bid to curb malnutrition and improve the lifestyle of its tribal population, the state has decided to promote millet cultivation in four tribal-dominated districts — Thane, Palghar, Raigad and Nashik.

The government has made an allocation of Rs 42 lakh for a special drive, Pragati Abhiyaan, to train tribals to grow millet — jowar, bajra, ragi.

The highly nutritious cereal is largely consumed by tribals who inhabit warm regions with poor soils. But the area under cultivation is rapidly falling due to crop damage by infectious diseases.

Pragati Abhiyaan will supplement ongoing programmes to control malnutrition like national employment act MGNREGA, public distribution system and healthcare schemes.

To be implemented by the state tribal department, the drive hopes to revive cultivation of millet and finger millet in areas under PESA, or the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act, 1996.

An officer from the state tribal department told DNA, “The government has issued guidelines for effective implementation of the drive. Millets, also called nutri cereals, are also good sources of beta-carotene and B vitamins, especially riboflavin, niacin and folic acid.”

The officer said promoting cultivation and consumption of ‘nutri cereals’ is important as 23% of children in 0-23 months age group were stunted, of whom 8% were severely so. Also, approximately 23% children were underweight of whom 7% were severely emaciated.

A recent Indian School of Business report observed that about 59% of preschool children, 61% of adolescent girls, 76% of pregnant women and 73% of lactating mothers in Maharashtra suffer from anaemia. Mineral content of millet ranges from 1.7 to 4.3 g/100g which is manifold higher than wheat (1.5%) and rice (0.6%). □□

<https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-malnutrition-struck-maharashtra-turns-to-millet-to-enrich-tribal-health-lifestyle-2776803>

Swadeshi Activities

Pictorial Glimpses



Mahila Sammelan, Delhi



Swadeshi Gosthi, Jodhpur (Raj.)



Zila Sammelan, Delhi



Swadeshi Sangosthi, Sirsa (Har.)



A Seminar on Employability Matrix, New Delhi



Pricharcha, Kashi (U.P.)



Swadeshi Activities

Pictorial Glimpses



