

# Swadeshi

PATRIKA

AUGUST 2021



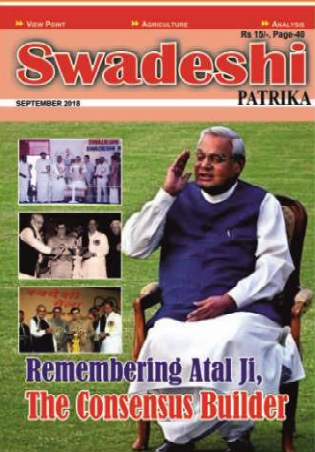
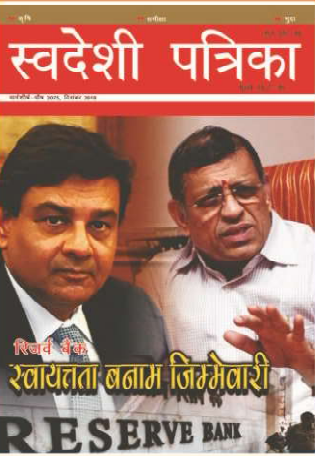
## Need for a comprehensive E-commerce Policy



**Swadeshi Patrika wishes its readers,  
writers, contributors and entire Swadeshi Family**



# **HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY**



## **VOICE OF**

**SELF RELIANT INDIA**

## **SWADESHI** Patrika

## **स्वदेशी** पत्रिका

# **पढ़ें और पढ़ायें**

+



**Vol-26, No. 8**  
 Shravan-Bhadrapad 2078 August- 2021

**EDITOR**  
**Ajey Bharti**

**ASSOCIATE-EDITOR**  
**Dr. Phool Chand**

**PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:**  
 Ishwardas Mahajan on behalf of **Swadeshi Jagaran Samiti**, 'Dharmakshetra', Sector-8, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-22,

**COVER & PAGE DESIGNING**  
**Sudama Dixit**

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**  
 'Dharmakshetra' Sector-8, Babu Genu Marg, R.K. Puram, N. D.-22

**E-MAIL :** swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com  
**WEBSITE :** [www.swadeshionline.in](http://www.swadeshionline.in)

**LETTERS** 3

**NEWS** 35-38



# CONTENTS

**COVER STORY** 6

**Need for a comprehensive E-Commerce Policy**

**Swadeshi Samvad**

- 1 Cover Page
- 2 Cover Inside Page

**09 DISCUSSION**  
 De ..... **Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**

**11 C**  
 Ra ..... **Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma**

**13 ENVIRONMENT**  
 Halting the march of Environment Monster ..... **Dr. KK Srivastava**

**15 ENVIRONMENT**  
 Environment Protection: Lessons from Past ..... **Dr. Jaya Kakkar**

**17 EPIDEMIC**  
 USA Debate on COVID Vaccines has lessons for Other Countries ..... **Bharat Dogra**

**19 DISCUSSION**  
 India-China: Bhai-bhai to buy-buy to bye-bye ..... **Sanjaya Baru**

**21 AGRICULTURE**  
 The huge cost of producing cheap food ..... **Devinder Sharma**

**23 ANALYSIS**  
 Needed public investment in new technologies ..... **Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala**

**25 SCRUTINY**  
 Afghan conflicts hit India with fears of security, high prices ..... **Shivaji Sarkar**

**27 OPINION**  
 Designing Proxy- Businesses on Proxy E-commerce ..... **Alok Singh**

**29 FARMING**  
 New agricultural paradigm ..... **Sandhya Jain**

**31 HISTORY**  
 Situating Themselves in History and Reconstructing Identity: A Note on the Meenas of Jaipur-VIII ..... **Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur**

**33 SJM ACTIVITY**  
 Memorandum of SJM about Pesticide Management Bill 2020.

- 39 Back Inside Cover
- 40 Back Cover



## Decongesting Urban Centres

*Come monsoon season and all the Indian metros become mega swimming pools throwing the daily life out of gear and making everyone's life miserable. Major part of the year these metros have air so much polluted that it is almost poisonous creating deadly diseases among kids and elderly.*

*This disastrous and complicated situation is result of decades of un-planned urbanization, huge migration of rural population to urban centres in search of better life. As per Economic Survey 2017, during 2001 - 2011 on an average annually 5 - 6 million villagers migrated to cities. None of Indian cities are planned to take in this level of migration while ensuring quality life. Urban infrastructure can neither accommodate this population nor can be expanded.*

*If this migration is not stopped and urban centres are not decongested, then not only the cities will become unliveable but also the migrating farm labour from villages will create huge supply gap for farm sector impacting agriculture sector drastically. Covid-19 pandemic also has shown us that densely populated places are extremely vulnerable.*

*Policy makers, Politicians, Bureaucracy, Elected representatives and Industrialists all will need to take the situation very seriously and work towards creating fundamental amenities within rural settings including sufficient employment opportunities so that rural population doesn't need to migrate to cities. This is the only way to improve lives in both rural and urban India.*

*An example of success story: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sridhar\\_Vembu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sridhar_Vembu).*

— Naresh Sharma, is an IT Advisor to Banking and Insurance industry in Sweden and a Swadeshi Warrior.

### EDITORIAL OFFICE

#### SWADESHI PATRIKA

'Dharmakshetra', Sector-8, Rama Krishna Puram, New Delhi-22

■ Tel. : 26184595, E-Mail: [swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com](mailto:swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com)

For subscription please send payment by A/c payee Cheque/Demand Draft/Money

Order in favour of 'Swadeshi Patrika' at New Delhi, or

Deposit the subscription amount in Bank of India A/C No. 602510110002740,

IFSC: BKID 0006025 (Ramakrishnapuram)

Annual Subscription : 150/-

Life Membership : 1500/-

Kindly write your full name and address in capital letters.

If you do not receive any issue of Swadeshi Patrika, kindly e-mail us immediately.

#### Disclaimer

The views expressed within are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of Swadeshi Patrika. Swadeshi Patrika often present views that we do not entirely agree with, because they may still contain information which we think is valuable for our readers.

## Quote-Unquote



**It is our duty to ensure that our work helps closely knit, bind our India which is filled with diversity.**

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister, India



**RSS will organize nationwide "workers' training" to face the possible third wave of corona and these trained workers will reach about 2.5 lakh places.**

**Sunil Ambekar**  
Akshil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh, RSS



**Pakistan has no locus standi on Indian territories and it should vacate all areas (POK) under its illegal occupation.**

**Arindam Bagchi**  
Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson, Bharat



**India is hugely dependent on the import of pesticides, despite its huge potential to manufacture it. Due to faulty rules favouring imports, import of pesticides are encouraged against the interests of domestic manufacturing. Unfortunately, present draft doesn't include sufficient provisions to safeguard domestic manufacturing.**

**Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**  
National Co-convenor, SJM

## **Uttar Pradesh shining among BIMARU states**

A f

# Need for a comprehensive E-Commerce Policy

To

**Sh. Anumpam Mishra**

**Joint Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs,  
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution  
Government of India**

On the outset, Swadeshi Jagran Manch takes this opportunity to appreciate and welcome the proposed Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, which have been issued under section 94 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. This is an important milestone in consumer protection from new E-Commerce giants, which though are running full fledged E-Commerce, call themselves as merely technology platforms. As per your call for observations/comments on these proposed rules, SJM wishes to submit as under:

**1. The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020** have been issued under section 94 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The definition of ‘consumer’ as defined in section 2(7) of the Act, does not include a person who obtains such goods for resale or for any commercial purposes as well a person who avails of such services for any commercial purposes.

It is apparent that since provisions of the Act do not apply to traders and service providers, as referred above, the rules framed under the Act would also not be applicable to them, and therefore cannot be expected to provide any protection under these rules, even if they are exploited due to dominant position of the E-Commerce giants. There is a general impression that the E-Commerce Rules are applicable to all the parties involved in E-Commerce which is not true. It is therefore, suggested that this aspect must be clarified by way of clarification by the Ministry and DPIIT must make suitable Rules for protection of traders and service providers who avail services through E-Commerce for commercial purposes.

We wish to underline that there are many traders and service providers, which are not getting any protection under the law, due to inadequate or non-existent E-Commerce laws. Small traders (on Amazon, Flipkart-Walmart), drivers on Uber, Ola etc. and small restaurants involved in Zamato etc., hairdressers, carpenters, electricians etc. on Urban Clap etc. and many other workers are subject to severe hardships by these E-Commerce giants, having no protection, at all, against exploitation. Obviously, consumer protection laws cannot provide any protection to these vulnerable sections of the society.

## **2. Proposed amendment by inserting new Rule 4: Registration of E-Commerce entities-**

(a) The proposed amendment requires every E-Commerce entity which intend to operate in India to register itself with DPIIT. It is suggested that the words ‘intend to operate in India’ be replaced with the words ‘supplies goods or services to a consumer in India’. This would be helpful to regulate even those E-Commerce entities also which do not establish offices in India but still have lots of revenue being generated from consumers located in India.

(b) Compulsory registration of giant E-Commerce entities is a welcome step, which will go a long way to regulate for any wrong doings by them. However, it is suggested, to avoid any hardship to E-Commerce entities with very small consumer base in India, a threshold may be prescribed for compulsory registration. This would save small E-Commerce players from avoidable compliances. The definition of MSME may be adopted to define small E-Commerce players.

(c) DPIIT must also create a monitoring mechanism to identify the defaulter E-Commerce entities and must also have an adjudication mechanism for penalising such defaulters.

## **3. Proposed amendment to Rule 5: duties of e-commerce entities-**

(a) Explanation to Clause(a) of Sub-rule (5) of Rule 5 requires E-Commerce entity to appoint a ‘Chief Compliance Officer’ who is resident and citizen of India. Similarly, Explanation to Clause (b) of Sub-rule (5)



of Rule 5 requires E-Commerce entity to appoint a 'Nodal Contact Person' who is resident and citizen of India and Explanation to Clause(c) of Sub-rule (5) of Rule 5 requires E-Commerce entity to appoint a 'Resident Grievance Officer' who is resident and citizen of India. These designated persons shall be responsible for their respective jobs given in the Rule.

It is suggested that concept of 'officer who is in default' as included in the Companies Act, 2013 be introduced in the E-Commerce Rules also, so that the persons in accordance with whose advice, directions or instructions the E-Commerce entities act can be brought to books in case of any contravention under the Act and the E-Commerce Rules.

(b) Para(e) of sub-rule (2) may be deleted as the same is repeated in sub-rule (3).

#### **4. Proposed amendment of inserting sub-rule (12) to Rule 5 read with Rule 3 (1)(c)**

The words "with an intent to maximise the revenue of such E-Commerce entity" may be deleted from the definition of 'Cross selling' in Rule 3(1)(c) as the same is communicating a confusing message that disclosures in clear and accessible manner, as referred in proposed sub-rule (12), are to be given only when the intent is to maximise the revenue and not otherwise.

#### **5. Proposed amendment to sub-rule (14) to Rule 5 -**

(a) The intent of these amendments seems to discourage flash sales, with ultimately affecting the consumers by limiting their choices and other ways. However, to avoid any ambiguity, the words 'manipulate the price' in Para (a) and the words "mislead users by manipulating" in Para (c) need more clarity and the parameters may be defined for the same. The following additional paragraphs may be added after (14) (c):

(i) refrain from treating more favourably in ranking services and products offered by the marketplace entity itself or by any third party belonging to the same undertaking compared to similar services or products of third party and apply fair and non-discriminatory conditions to such ranking; and

(ii) provide advertisers and publishers, upon their request and free of charge, with access to the performance measuring tools of the gatekeeper and the information necessary for advertisers and publishers to carry out their own independent verification of the ad inventory; and

(iii) provide to any third party providers of online search engines, upon their request, with access on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms to ranking, query, click and view data in relation to free and paid search generated by end users on online search engines of the gatekeeper, subject to anonymisation for the query, click and view data that constitutes personal data;

---

(b) Further provisions are required to be included as to which authority/regulator shall be monitoring these actions, if any, by E-Commerce entities.

(c) Para (f) may be replaced with the following paragraphs: “refrain from using, in competition with business users, any data not publicly available, which is generated through activities by those business users, including by the end users of these business users, of its core platform services or provided by those business users of its core platform services or by the end users of these business users; and provide business users, or third parties authorised by a business user, free of charge, with effective, high-quality, continuous and real-time access and use of aggregated or non-aggregated data, that is provided for or generated in the context of the use of the relevant core platform services by those business users and the end users engaging with the products or services provided by those business users; for personal data, provide access and use only where directly connected with the use effectuated by the end user in respect of the products or services offered by the relevant business user through the relevant core platform service, and when the end user opts in to such sharing with a consent.”

#### **6. Proposed sub-rule (17) to Rule 5**

The past experience is that dominant E-Commerce market places have been misusing their positions to help their related parties and associates and exploited small suppliers operating on their market places and consumers in general. The proposed rules do not define dominant position as well as ‘abuse the position’. It is therefore, suggested that the proposed Rule may be replaced with the following para:

“(17) No E-Commerce entity which holds a dominant position in any market shall, abuse its position as provided in subsection (2) of Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002.”

#### **7. Proposed sub-rule (19) to Rule 5**

The past experience with dominant market places is that the consumers are not provided complete information about the actual supplier of goods or service and in its absence, proper redressal of consumer complaints is not happening. With the object of having two ways communication between buyers and sellers and without compromising the privacy of the sellers and the consumers, the proposed Rule may be replaced with the following para:

“(19) Every E-Commerce entity shall display clearly and prominently in its invoice, the name, address and contact details in the same font size as that of the e-commerce entity’s.”

#### **8. Proposed amendments to new Rule 6**

It has been noticed that dominant E-Commerce market places are collecting data of fast moving items with goods margins being sold by vendors and provide the same to their related parties or associates to manufacture and /or trade the same on their e-market place with profit sharing or higher percentages of commissions. It is therefore, suggested that para (a) of sub rule (6) of Rule 6 may be replaced with the following:

“(a) ensure that it does not use any information collected through its platform for its unfair advantage or for unfair disadvantage to the sellers.”

#### **9. It is suggested that the following be inserted as Rule (10)**

“In the larger interest of the consumers, the E-Commerce market places shall disclose the following information on their website on quarterly basis –

- a) Total business executed on their platform
- b) Advertisement cost incurred
- c) No of complaints received and redressed”

**10. (a)** It is suggested that suitable rule may also be inserted to provide for capacity building for inspection and enforcement of E-Commerce transactions, unfair trade practices, mis-selling, manipulation of prices, search algorithm and other technical aspects of digital transactions with consumer protection perspective.

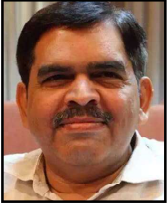
(b) E-courts may be established for consumers’ grievances redressal.

**Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**

*National Co-convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch*

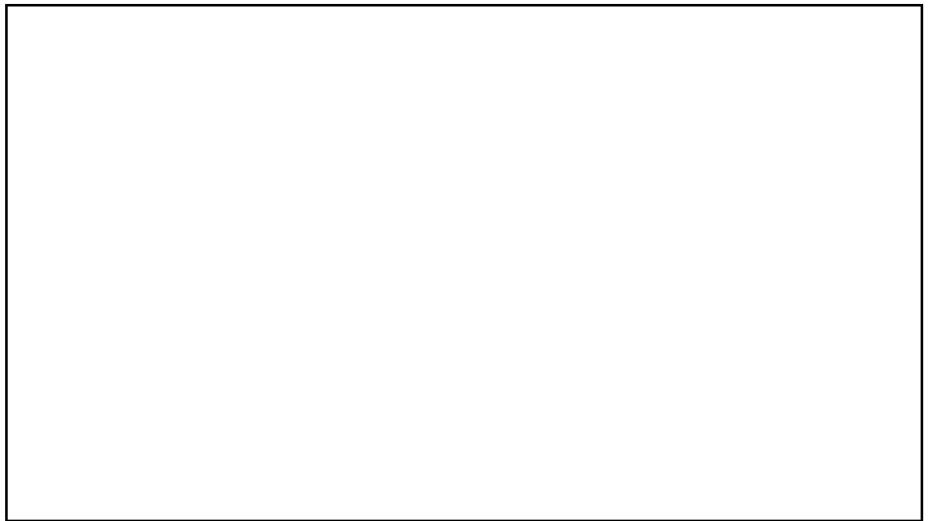
**D**

**R**ecently, former Governor,



*T*

**Dr. Ashwani  
Mahajan**





# Ra

The present day Global Financial Architecture has begun to take its shape since 1940s, w



*Re*

**Prof. Bhagwati  
Prakash Sharma**



# Halting the march of Environment Monster



Incessant march towards industrialization, urbanization, and material growth without environmental concerns has led to release of harmful emission of many toxic elements in the atmosphere causing rapid warming of the planet Earth. Global warming and the resultant climate change have become one of the most worrisome concerns in recent times. None of us can be absolved – consumers, businesses and industrial economy – of the responsibilities of contributing to this frightful catastrophe. We are exploiting and destroying nature at alarming rate. Efforts by concerned stakeholders – including the ruling class – to act as guardians

of Environment, on the other hand, are woefully short.

Overconsumption, population pressure, intense exploitation of natural resources have led to adverse impact on human well being. Welfare of mankind is being compromised. If exploitation of environment remains unchecked it would undermine the systems that sustain life and livelihood, and for countries like India, derail efforts to improve living standards. According to WWF between 1970-2016 animal population declined by 68%. The UN global biodiversity outlook 5 warns that the world will fail to meet all the 20 targets set in 2010 to slowdown the destruction of wildlife and ecosystem. In this VUCA (Volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world we need to develop sustainably, for which we need to create new paradigms for livelihood, growth and development in harmony with nature. We need to make a transition to develop pathways that take into account the critical role of nature. Failure to do so would undermine the efforts to meet the Paris climate goals and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

All nations, but more so developing countries like India, have development deficit and need to augment economic growth to bridge it. But they must mainstream nature in their development plans from reduced pollination that lowers crop yields and wild fires that ravage communities to the extinction of creations of rare beauty, loss of biodiversity produces incalculable harm. The planet cannot take any meaningful break if we do not regulate chemicals, reduce and eliminate toxins and circulate all materials. Let's face it, at present rate of unsustainable consumption fear of annihilation may not be unfounded.

Woke, a term in modern lingo, refers to being awake, about social issues, including global warming, climate change, sustainable production and consumption. Contrary to popular belief, India is structurally more 'woke' than so called developed western world. Thus while we are told that India is polluted, actually it has a per capita emission of 1.8 tonnes, way lower than the global average of 4.7 tonnes and much smaller compared to the US and Australia that pollute 8 times more, at 16.2 and 16.9 tonnes. India's reduced carbon footprint might be attributed to a lower motorization rate – 18 per 1000 population vs 602 for EU and 747 for the US. It is also due to lower consumption of non vegetar-



*Monstrity of environment is all because of human misdeeds. So, taming it in our favour is also our responsibility!*

**Dr. KK Srivastava**

ian stuff which produces methane; India has a naturally 'woke' diet. Top 18 out of a list of 172 countries have an annual per capital meat consumption of more than 90 kgs; Indian consumption, one twentieth of that.

India pollutes far less, consumes more frugally, and lives more sustainably than the most. But don't have a complacent smirk. Climate issues have hit us like pandemic-none is spared due to externalities. There are no artificially drawn boundaries segregating us from other nations. Hence India cannot lie low. As it strives to progress faster in terms of material wealth (Remember the goal of \$5 trillion economy?!), through the route of industrialization, sustainability is becoming the first casualty – safety of environment, planet earth, and business itself. Human progress is like a triangle with three arms – people, planet and profit, the so called 3 P's. If we wish to increase the size of the triangle, then lengthening all the arms of the triangle simultaneously alone will yield result. Thus, while trying to squeeze more profit will only mean ill effects for the planet and human resources, sustainability at the expense of fair profit is equally not maintainable. Both, along with people, are important: sustainability of business and that of mother earth. There prevails no either or choice. Yet the dilemma is real.

India reduced support to the fossil fuel industry, one of the biggest pollutants, by 4% between 2015 and 2019 while countries in the G-20 forum are failing to meet their commitments. The G20 provided \$636 billion in direct support for fossil fuels in 2019. A counterfactual however, is that we still have

66 coal powered plants. While it is true that India is the world's third largest carbon emitter (after China and the US) the fact is that we definitely need cheap and reliable power to meet out developmental goals. First, India has to provide clean cooking energy to 800 million people and electricity access to 200 million; second, we have to create jobs and that cannot happen without more and better power; and third, the urban transition will entail huge energy needs. To add to these, the energy transition has to be just because of livelihood implications. To take another example, India discards 15,000 tonnes of plastics daily, of which 43% is single use – a sinister menace. Plastic itself has replaced aluminium, steel, and natural fibers like jute and hemp in many industries. But it remains beyond the pale of established waste collection system for recycling purposes and floats on the surface of earth and ocean for centuries. The choices certainly are not clearcut.

Not that it is not possible to take preventive steps to control environmental damage without compromising industrial progress. This however does not translate into action because of human inertia and apathy. Why does human mind not think consciously and urgently about environment damage, compared with say terrorism? This is because as social mammals, we only think about living beings and their evil designs. If global warming had been unleashed on us by a ruthless despot, we would have been concerned. Second, if a violation fails to transgress moral boundaries, it may not alarm out brain. No human society has moral codes about atmospheric chemistry. Third, the threat it still lurking

somewhere in distant future (so we feel). We get concerned about clear and contemporary attack, and not to something which is not even in our line of vision. These, and then some more, reasons have therefore at best led to green washing and Dominic Greens (Remember Quantum of solace, the Bond movie) – the fake environmentalists. Unless we convert ourselves into green consumers, the business will not feel pressured to mould itself. This can be done only if we force the business practices to term green. We need to become 'active green' to engage the business. Then we need to tell the marketer what do we want as regards environment friendly substitute products, at what price preference, with what price performance trade off, and with what kind of underlying appeal (functional, emotional or social). Based on these answers the marketer needs to develop better business practices through innovation in material usage, scouting services and marketing itself. Customer intimacy and competitive advantage need to be looked at from new strategic frameworks; and co-operation along the whole value chain needs to be ensured so as to incorporate the impact of climate on consumers' changed shopping pattern. Equally, producers have a huge role in transforming the way environment damaging products are produced and consumed.

In sum, companies must realize that in long run sustainability is possible only if they are sensitive to the needs of the planet. Responsible consumers, business process, products, and government policies and action together can ensure sustainability. □□

*The author is a noted economist and management thinker.*

# Environment Protection: Lessons from Past



Environmental resources are indeed precious, and yet are in perilous state. Rampaging marauders have little concern, giving birth to Dominic Greens, the fake environmentalists (Remember, Quantum of Solace, the Bond Movie?). Emissions are continuously rising, earth temperature is scaling up dangerously, people are dying because of the toxic air they are forced to breath, life spans are being cut short, and each new generation is afflicted by more and newer diseases than the previous one. According to a recent survey air pollution is the most prevalent risk

factor (76%) among the surveyed population. Even if all the promises of emission cut made in the Paris Accord are honoured – highly unlikely – the world would still be warmer by over 3 degree Celsius. Emission of CO<sub>2</sub> – an externality – cannot be left to the vagaries of an unregulated market, since it will produce excessive harmful gases. Global warming is a particularly scary externality. So, we need to levy penal charges against unsustainable living. But more importantly, we need to incentivize sustainable living practices. Everyone needs to contribute – citizens, business, consumers, managers, and of course the ruling dispensation. In a competitive and global setting businesses have begun to feel the need to incorporate environmental care itself as an integral part of their pursuit of competitive advantage. Enlightened businesses realize that there is no conflict between meeting the needs of the planet and attaining the goal of commercial profit; indeed, green practices are self repaying in a short time horizon for business.

Take ITC as an example. The company has over the years built a robust portfolio of environmentally sustainable businesses. It is the only enterprise in the world of comparable dimensions which is carbon negative, water positive, and solid waste recycling positive for more than a decade now. ITC has been ranked number one globally among its peers and number three overall on Environmentally Sustainable Goals (ESG) performance in the food products industry. The company even designs its own buildings paying homage to good environmental practices. It draws inspiration from even our past as we have illustrated later in this article. All stakeholders must realize that in long run sustainability is possible only if we become sensitive to the needs of the Planet. Take the example of building architecture.

The Indian architect of today has multiple choices ranging from the ancient Hindu temple style to the latest in reinforced concrete glass, and stainless steel. Of course India can evolve some new formula, not necessarily based on European precedent, but to meet the changed economic conditions and social habits of the day.

While all problems relating to water scarcity and climate catastrophe may not



*While environmental catastrophe is starkly facing us, solutions are also in sight, some from our past too.*

**Dr. Jaya Kakkar**

lie in the methods and practices of our past, certainly some inspiration may be drawn from the old practices. And we can reduce the present state of collective recklessness and unaccountability towards our environment for example rain water harvesting has been a traditional practice in our past. Storage reservoirs, ponds, lakes, irrigation, canals, step wells, etc. were constructed, maintained, and preserved. Various water bodies were built by kings and emperors who also encouraged village communities and individuals to build and maintain these on their own.

In contemporary times technology offers many easy, even if expensive, ways to ensure amenities like water, light, cooling and heating. So the desire to consider and respect natural elements like climate, topography and orientation towards naturally environment friendly projects has become a matter of discretion. But buildings can be made more eco friendly in a self financing way. Ideally the health of planet should not be compromised in face of lure for the lolly. If mind is applied conflict between planet and profit will vanish. During the ancient and medieval times the architects had to be far more imaginative and focused since they had to meet the limitations for the locale and yet address the aspirations of their royal patrons. For example, Golconda fort and the Qutb Shahi necropolis were constructed so as not to conflict with nature supplied water to the fort using an indigenous system of underground pipes and gravity. The Qutb Shahis devised a five tiered system to ensure water supply. From the bund at Durgam

Cheruru water flowed via pipes and aquaduct.

The Qutb Shahi tombs complex was aligned in such a manner as the rain water would flow into pits which in turn would carry it to custom built baolis. Not a drop was wasted. Seven baolis had systems to draw water out using oxen so that the complex always remained clean and verdant. The fort chambers were also so aligned that the winds naturally cooled the interiors. The human had a stone floor with hollow channels underneath, through which boiling water was passed to create steam even as several cold plunge pools offered a respite.

The hotel property ITC Kohenu (Hyderabad) has drawn inspiration from such model of architecture. It has used technology to cooperate with environment, and not attempted to conquer it. The hotel has a narrow Z shape with the building appearing to lean forward at 93 degree N angle. The architect found that such an angle would be the best for lighting and cooling all year round. But since the plot was very narrow on that axis to accommodate a straight building, the edges were angled to a Z. Additionally there are strategically located louvered sections and balcony which enable the building to get sunlight on one hand, as also with shades for segments with tall windows. The tapered shape building reduces the direct blast of the sun on the east-west axis, so that the guests can enjoy sunrises and sunsets without the need for excessive air conditioning to offset the heat. Moreover, wooden louvers and balconies make sure that a low sun will also not cause overheating. The edges of the building

are rounded for airflow, and are an ode to the wind smothered boulders, integral to the rocky landscape of this part of the Deccan, which have withstood the long onslaught of the time. The hotel has done well to adopt this.

As Qutb Shahi royalty used to relax in verdant charbaghs, likewise on similar lines sky gardens have been added at various levels to green the hotel as also to allow natural ventilation and fire breaks. The vertical gardens along the entrance, inspired from medieval architects and landscape planners, help cool the building. Indeed sheer wealth of a bygone era's architectural ingenuity must inspire us in modern times to draw lessons in aesthetics and best environmental practices while we design our buildings now. All the architectural devices used by ITC have an impeccable rationale. Medieval rulers created manmade water bodies and naturally cool and airy buildings. But now technology has made us lazy, arrogant and inured to environmental needs. We have a glorious past to look up to, but we tend to run towards West to draw inspiration. Partly because our architects have been fed on a diet of western 'developed world' precepts and practices. Recently we have initiated the mammoth task of constructing the central vista in Delhi. While little is known, indeed remains undisclosed, about the architectural foundations of the project beyond the rudimentary, it may still not be late if the political potentates draw appropriate lessons from our glorious past and pay their obeisance to environment preservation. □□

*Dr Jaya Kakkar teaches History, Culture, and Environmental Studies at Sbyam Lal College, Delhi University.*

# USA Debate on COVID Vaccines Has Lessons for Other Countries

The USA was among those countries which were in the forefront of speeding up the development and distribution of COVID vaccines. Over a much longer period the USA has developed a relatively more detailed system of records and data relating to various vaccines. In addition the USA is also known for intense debates on various issues of widespread public interest, and so it is useful to follow this debate here with a view to learning from the experiences here. Although the US government as well as several multinational companies and foundations, including those promoted by billionaires, are deeply committed to very strong promotion of vaccines and any other view is actively discouraged in many ways, nevertheless democratic space is still available here, in media, public campaigns and in courts, for articulation of alternative views.

One aspect of the more detailed record keeping in the USA relates to the much quoted VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System), an officially recognized and supported system where adverse events, serious adverse events and deaths following various kinds of vaccines have been recorded for years yielding a lot of data. Although officially recognized studies have also stated that adverse events are seriously underestimated in VAERS, nevertheless this system remains useful for the continuity it provides and providing a lot of data in public domain. There are other sources of official data also which are not so readily shared. Also it must be stated clearly that VAERS does not establish a cause and effect relationship. It merely tells us, in terms of the experience for a certain number of days following vaccine, a certain number of adverse events including deaths that were reported and recorded.

The VAERS system tells us that for the roughly sixteen and a half year period (198 months) from July 1997 to December 2013, counting all the various vaccines that are administered in the USA, many adverse events were recorded



*The USA was among those countries which were in the forefront of speeding up the development and distribution of COVID vaccines.*

**Bharat Dogra**



which included 2149 deaths. This figure is available in a paper titled Deaths Reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System 1997-2013, authored by Pedro L. Moro, Jorge Arana, Mario Cano and others. This paper, as its title tells us, is based on what was recorded in VAERS. The paper also tells us that the deaths were mostly of children and reduced towards the end of the period (declining trend). This paper also informs us that hundreds of millions of vaccines are administered every year in the USA.

By dividing 2149 by 198 we find that on average per month 11 post-vaccine deaths were recorded, counting all the various vaccines administered in the USA.

Now let us look at the post-vaccine deaths recorded only for COVID-19 vaccine in the USA under the VAERS since this vaccination started a few months back. During the roughly seven months period from December 14 2020 to July 16 2021, a total of 5467 deaths have been recorded. This works out to an average of 781 deaths per month.

Regarding both the previous records and the recent COVID ones, we are here of course referring to the recorded numbers of events (and not to any cause and effect relationship), under the same VAERS system. Nevertheless it is significant to know that in the context of COVID vaccine, 20 per cent of deaths took place within 48 hours of vaccination and 34 percent took place due to illness which started within 48 hours following vaccination.

Hence, to summarize in one sentence, what we see in terms of VAERS records is that the number of post-vaccine deaths record-

***What we see in terms of VAERS records is that the number of post-vaccine deaths recorded per month for just COVID-19 vaccine up to July 16, 2021 (781) is more than 70 times of the deaths per month that were recorded earlier for all vaccines combined (11).***

ed per month for just COVID-19 vaccine up to July 16 2021 (781) is more than 70 times of the deaths per month that were recorded earlier for all vaccines combined (11), as revealed in a longer-term study of VAERS records for 198 months, years 1997-2013.

### **Isn't this disturbing?**

Actually the reality may be even more disturbing as the total number of deaths reported in VAERS systems following COVID vaccine is closer to 11000 or nearly double the number we have used, but it was stated recently by official US sources that this includes some deaths in foreign locations which should be excluded. Hence above we have used the much lower adjusted estimate which excludes these 'foreign' deaths. However even a calculation based on those official estimates which are underestimates in more than one way are quite disturbing.

Similar calculations can be made for the European Union, for UK and perhaps for some other countries and regions as well, where there is a continuity of such data for several years.

As pointed out it is also useful to look at the data of other adverse events. During the period of about 7 months following COVID-19 vaccine, in the VAERS system, after excluding foreign location data, till July 16, a total of 425,950 adverse events and 33,748 serious injuries were recorded. The serious adverse events can include serious illness and health problems requiring hospitalization but these can also include health problems which can be the beginning of longer-term disease or disability. All VAERS recorded data is widely known to be a significant underestimate of the actual situation, as admitted in officially recognized reviews or studies. But even the underestimated figures are revealing.

Despite this many observers in developing countries feel that the safety systems in a developed country like the USA must anyway be better than in their countries, even if only factors relating to availability of much higher budgets and advanced technology are considered. Therefore these observers are puzzled how the recorded rates of adverse events including serious adverse events and deaths (in the context of COVID 19 vaccine) are much lower in these developing countries compared to developed countries. Is this a case of there being actually much lesser adverse events (which would be great, if true) in these countries compared to the USA or the European Union, or is this a case of very few of these getting into official records?

Needless to add, proper recording and data collection are extremely important for forming and following correct policy. □□

The writer, a journalist and author, is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Man Over Machine (Gandhian Ideas for Our Times) and Planet in Peril.

## India-China: Bhai-bhai to buy-buy to bye-bye

This is a historic month for China. The Communist Party of China (CPC) came into being 100 years ago, in July 1921. Communist China entered the international mainstream a half century ago, in July 1971, when the United States decided to come to terms with the reality of its existence. China's spectacular rise over the past quarter century, as a global trading superpower, the "factory of the world", and as Asia's most powerful nation, ready to challenge America's global dominance, is the stuff of legend.

Yet, even as China celebrates these landmark events, large parts of the world have become increasingly concerned about its assertion of newly acquired hard power — economic and military. In looking back at China's rise a large part of the public discourse in India has been dominated by commentators on foreign policy, security and defence. Regrettably, very little has appeared in print on the social, cultural and human dimensions of China's transformation and rise.

In his recently published pithy narration of the events at Beijing's Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989 (Tiananmen Square: The Making of a Protest, A Diplomat Looks Back), former foreign secretary and a former Indian ambassador to China Vijay Gokhale observes in passing: "Indians can no longer afford to have a superficial understanding of events involving their largest neighbour and to-be-hegemon, other than at their own peril".

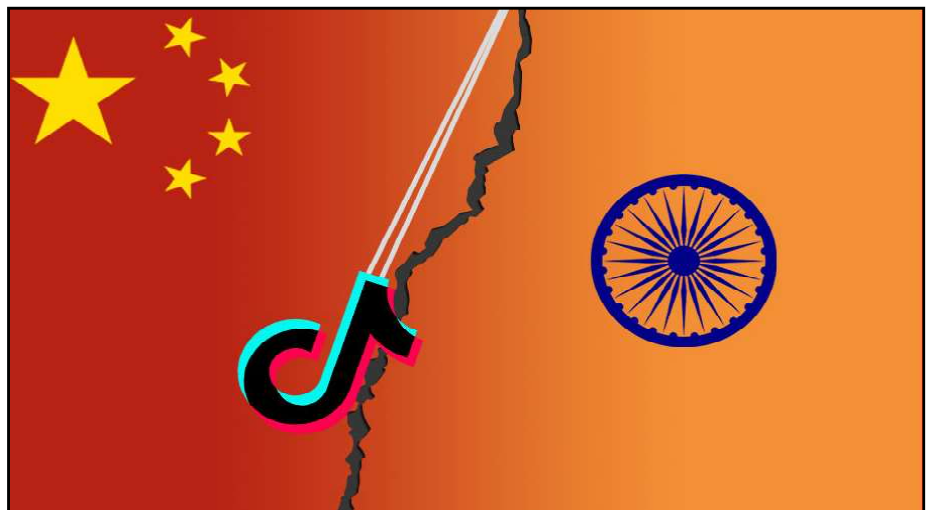
Mr Gokhale is spot on. Yet so much about what appears in print in India about China is about foreign affairs and the economy, written mostly by Westerners or Indians living in the West, and so little from Indians with a first-hand knowledge and experience of life and people in China. For most Indians China is an adversary, a source of cheap products or the home of chow mien.

At one level this is not surprising. The fact is that the interaction between the neighbours has been limited through most history. More important, people-to-people interaction between the two republics over the past three quarters of a



*China has risen on the foundations of its human capabilities and Indians ought to have a better appreciation of that.*

**Sanjaya Baru**



century has been even more limited. Little wonder then that even today we depend so much on retired diplomats to educate us about contemporary China. Only a couple of bright Indian journalists and a handful of scholars have been able to bridge the public awareness gap between the two.

This worryingly low level of social and cultural interaction between China and India has dipped further thanks to renewed tensions between the two and the post-Galwan and post-Covid freeze in bilateral interactions. The China-India relationship has moved from the honeymoon days of “Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai”, and the post-Cold War phase of increased economic and business interaction – “India-China buy-buy”, as someone put it — to the current “Cold War” phase of “India-China bye-bye”. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs.

Whatever the differences between the two countries, and there are many, there ought to be both a better understanding of each other within both societies and increased people-to-people interaction. For over a century Indians fought Western imperialism and colonialism and yet not only acquired an intimate knowledge of Western culture, science, literature, music and so on, but also benefited from such knowledge.

India’s attitude towards China today should not be very different from the view that Mahatma Gandhi famously expressed of the kind of relationship that he sought with Britain and its people in the midst of the national movement for Independence. When asked by a Briton in that period “How far would you cut India off

***Whatever the differences between the two countries, and there are many, there ought to be both a better understanding of each other within both societies and increased people-to-people interaction.***

from the Empire?”, Gandhiji replied: “From the Empire, completely; from the British nation, not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve. The British Empire must go and I should love to be an equal partner with Britain, sharing her joys and sorrows. But it must be a partnership on equal terms.”

Even as India rejects China’s hegemonic ambitions, as it did the hegemony of the West, and disapproves of its authoritarian political system, Indians must acquire a better understanding and appreciation of Chinese society, culture and its knowledge-creating institutions. China is not merely an authoritarian, militarised Communist regime, which it is, but it is also a highly creative and productive knowledge-based society and economy. China has risen on the foundations of its human capabilities. Indians ought to have a better appreciation of that.

The Xi Jinping regime is itself to blame for the acute focus in Indian public discourse on China’s negative attributes. However, it is in India’s interest to balance that with a better understanding of life in China. The Chinese too should realise that Indians are a proud people with their own memory of

their civilisational inheritance and can be nobody’s cat’s paw.

The history of Indian nationalism is in many ways greater than the history of Chinese nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress did not fight for India’s liberation alone. They fought for the liberation of all colonised people and against imperialism and colonialism in all its manifestations. Whatever strategic and foreign policy compromises India might make in the short run cannot be a deviation from its “tryst with destiny”.

In July 1971, when then US national security adviser Henry Kissinger met Chairman Mao Zedong in Beijing and proposed a US-China condominium against the Soviet Union, China did not give up its civilisational inheritance of being an independent-minded nation. It walked a path that gave it the strategic space for its own rise. India too seeks that space for its own development. Over the past 50 years the people-to-people contact between the United States and China has been intense and extensive. It has created the foundation for a durable relationship even when the two seek today greater strategic space for themselves.

It is in the interests of both China and India that there is similar engagement between their people, even as the two states jostle with each other for strategic space within Asia and the world. People-to-people relationships must stand on their own footing and not always be subject to state-to-state relations. □□

*The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author, and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.*  
<https://asianage.com/opinion/columnists/110721/sanjaya-baru-india-china-bhai-bhai-to-buy-buy-to-bye-bye.html>

# The huge cost of producing cheap food



*The focus on producing surplus and cheap food threatens the survival of the country's smaller farms, Prince Charles said, adding that if these farms disappear, 'it will rip the heart out of the British countryside.'* The warning has been sounded at a time when a global business data platform estimates the number of employed and self-employed farmers in the UK to have come down to just 1.07 lakh.

**Devinder Sharma**

In a recent BBC Radio broadcast, Prince Charles said: “How we produce food has a direct impact on the earth’s capacity to sustain us, which has a direct impact on human health and economic prosperity.” The clamour for producing cheap food, which is at the very foundation of the mad race towards an unfettered economic growth, is actually based on externalising the ‘hidden costs’ of modern industrial farming.

The focus on producing surplus and cheap food threatens the very survival of the country’s smaller farms, Prince Charles said, adding that if these small farms disappear, “it will rip the heart out of the British countryside.” The warning has been sounded at a time when Statista, a global business data platform, estimates the total number of employed and self-employed farmers in the UK to have come down drastically to a mere 1,07,000 in 2020.

In many ways, his warning finds reverberations in the iconic farmers’ movement being witnessed in India, wherein the protesters appear to be worried about the possibility of their livelihoods being usurped by big agri-business companies once the Central farm laws are implemented. In addition, although 86 per cent of India’s farmlands are below 2 hectares, categorised as small and marginal, the advent of the Green Revolution in the mid-1960s emphasising on the need to intensify production per unit of land, has come at a huge cost. Instead of making a long overdue correction, more of the same is now being pushed by facilitating the entry of big agri-business companies.

This reminds me of a plenary talk I delivered at the 2017 Organic World Congress titled ‘World Must Detoxify its Toxic Farmlands’, presenting a six-point charter for a more specific action-oriented programme at the local, national and international levels to reverse the ecological devastation that industrial farming has inflicted on the planet. Intensifying food production has not only inflicted a severe blow to environment by destroying natural resources, including soil and water, and acerbating climate change in the process, but the resulting unsustainable food sys-



tems that have been encouraged over the past few decades in the guise of building efficiency and competitiveness have also taken a heavy toll on human life.

While the ‘hidden cost’ of producing cheap food has been talked about time and again, with some of the well-known experts and even some of the international committees, including the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) in 2009, and more recently, the 2021 report of The Economics of Biodiversity presented by economist Partha Dasgupta, warning that business as usual is not the road ahead, global leadership has simply ignored these concerns. It will, therefore, be interesting to see how the UN at its proposed Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in September 2021 plans to come up with an effective and implementable roadmap for radically overhauling the way food is produced, processed, transported and consumed.

But, as Albert Einstein had once said, we cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. This is exactly what more than 300 civil society organisations, small-scale producers, indigenous communities and individual scientists/experts are pointing to, and this is what the UNFSS has to be careful about. Launching a campaign for boycotting the so-called People’s Summit, they accuse the UNFSS of “facilitating greater corporate concentration, fostering unsustainable globalised value chains, and promoting the influence of agri-business on public institutions.”

This shouldn’t come as a surprise since the World Economic

***It will, therefore, be interesting to see how the UN at its proposed Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in Sept. 2021 plans to come up with an effective and implementable roadmap for radically overhauling the way food is produced, processed, transported and consumed.***

Forum too had in 2009 come up with a New Vision for Agriculture to be executed by 17 multinational agri-business companies. Finding corporate-led market-based solutions to a crisis that is actually the outcome of creating over the years an enabling environment for free markets is not what the world requires at this crucial juncture. Rethinking agriculture is the need of the times given that half the world’s land is used for agriculture, and as a consequence of pushing intensive farming systems, it also happens to be the second biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Nevertheless, another timely report by Rockefeller Foundation — ‘True cost of food: Measuring what matters to transform the US food system’ — that not only quantifies the cost of producing cheap food, but goes much beyond providing a value tag to the ‘hidden costs’ should hopefully shake up our blinkered economic thinking. Cheap food has always been considered essential to keep economic reforms viable. So far, it has worked because economists and policymakers refused to measure

its true cost. But the massive environmental disruptions, resulting human health costs and huge livelihood distortions resulting from producing cheap food, are so large that it is no longer possible anymore to keep the shocking figures under the carpet.

### **American consumers spent roughly**

\$1.1 trillion in 2019 on food. The report says the food price tag, however, does not include the cost of healthcare from diet-related illnesses, the damage it does to environment, including soil, water and biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions resulting in climate change, agrarian distress and much more. Adding up all these costs, “the true cost of the US food system is at least three times as big — \$3.2 trillion per year.” While this certainly is a conservative estimate, what the report helps bring out is to provide numbers to what was already known — the current food system that the world follows is badly broken.

Globally too, the true cost of producing food is three times higher than what consumers pay. In India, where agriculture output is worth Rs 20.19 lakh crore, and where farming as a profession is at the bottom of the economic ladder, studies are needed to quantify the true cost of producing food. Farming remains in distress because to provide cheap food, the right price is denied to growers. Reversing this would require bold decisions based on a completely fresh thinking and approach. The same economic and scientific thinking that led to the crisis cannot be expected to provide any real-time solutions. □□

*The author is Food & Agriculture Specialist.  
<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/the-huge-cost-of-producing-cheap-food-286919>*

## Needed public investment in new technologies

China has recently successfully landed its spacecraft on Mars, created temperatures equal to that of the sun in their laboratories, and produced its own fighter jets instead of buying them from Rafael or other manufacturers. These achievements have been made possible because the Chinese government has made huge investments in the creation of new technologies. Needless to say we are lagging behind. Our situation has become more desperate in this period of Covid. Our government is not even able to manage its current expenditures and it is having to borrow huge amounts to maintain the them. Although the Finance Minister has increased the capital expenditures by 35% to Rs 5.5 lakh crore in this financial year 2021-22. However, this amount is very small compared to the needs of investment in technologies. We need to invest heavily if we wish to keep up with the march of technologies at the global level.

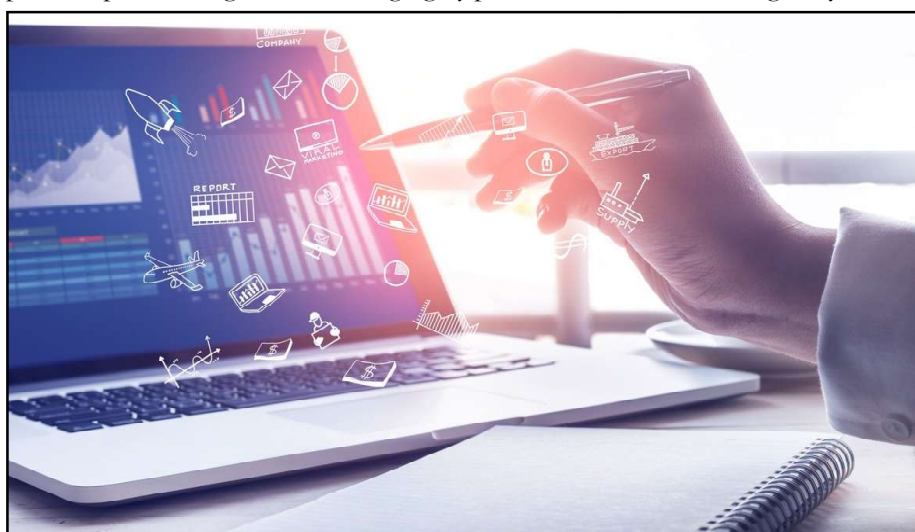
The present value of market capitalization of all the public sector undertakings is about Rs 20 lakh crores. This is about 4 times the total annual capital expenditures of the Union Government at Rs 5.5 lakh crore. The government can raise about 4 times more money for these investments if the existing public sector undertakings are privatized.

Certain Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) are will continue to be necessary. For example, the State Bank of India manages the clearing houses in every district of the country. The Central Board of Secondary Education undertakes regulation of schools across the country. Such PSUs are providing “public goods” that are necessarily to be provided by the Government. The regulation of schools cannot be left to the whims and fancies of the private sector. However, other PSUs are no longer essential. For example, banks other than the State Bank of India can be easily privatized without any loss to the economy. Private banks are able to provide the banking services provided by these Public Sector Banks. The possible profiteering and overcharging by private banks can be managed by stricter



*If India has to be self-sufficient in many aspects of defence, science and technology then govt. has to make huge investments in new technologies just like the Chinese Govt.*

**Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala**



regulation by the Reserve Bank of India. The privatization of these Public Sector Banks will only heat up the competition among the banks and make them more efficient and force them to reduce the price of the services provided by them. Similarly, there is no need for the government to run Air India since other airline companies like Indigo and Spice Jet are able to provide domestic aviation service. Likewise oil companies like Indian oil can also be privatized since private oil companies like Reliance are able to provide the services. The basic point is that there remains no case for the government to undertake these activities in areas where private sector can be competent to provide the required services. Thus I reckon that out of the market capitalization of 20 lakh crores of all the PSUs in the country about 1/4th or PSUs having market capitalization of Rs 5 lakh crores may be retained to provide essential services like managing clearing houses and regulation of schools. The remaining PSUs having market capitalization of Rs 15 lakh crores can be privatized. This amount would be about three times the present capital expenditures of the Union Government. This money can be utilized to invest in the creation of technologies so that we can compete with the global powers. We should not forget that the Patriot Missiles of United States were able to destroy Saddam Hussein's army in a few days because they were technologically more advanced. Therefore, investment in technology will be absolutely essential if we have to protect the sovereignty of our country and also strengthen our economy. We should not forget that multinational corpora-

tions are remitting huge amounts as royalty payments because they are giving licenses of their patented technologies to Indian manufacturers. Fifty percent of the price of Covid-19 vaccine is being paid to Astra Zeneca and other companies. We would not have had to pay this amount if we had invested in the creation of the Covid-19 vaccines.

The following areas desperately require more investment by the Government of India. First, Artificial Intelligence. Today IBM has a project named Watson which is helping doctors to process the various information about a patient and suggest the future course of treatment. The Artificial Intelligence programmes process the huge amount of information about a patient and provide the doctor with a number of alternative courses of treatments. The doctor's work is reduced to taking the final call on the alternative treatments suggested by Artificial Intelligence. Thus, we must invest in Artificial Intelligence.

Secondly, investment is required in the Internet of Things (IOT). The security of offices, for example, can be better managed by computers. The computer can process the information about a possible theft and automatically direct the doors to be closed and send message to the police.

Third, the genetic modification is being done across the world. We have seen the possible negative impact of such experiments in the possible creation of the Covid-19 virus in China. But the same genetic technologies can also be used to create more beneficial technologies like improving yields of our crops and making them more resistant to

diseases and heat; or genetically modifying potatoes to produce vitamins.

Fourth, we need to invest in promoting our conventional medical systems like Ayurveda, Unani and Homeopathy because Allopathy has its limits. Allopathy is creating bacterial infections that are resistant to anti-biotics and that are increasing by the day. There is a need for the Government to promote research in alternate medical systems across the globe including, for example, African Tribal Medicines.

Fifth, Virgin Galactic is planning to launch a commercial spacecraft. Indian Space Research Organization has successfully launched a number of satellites of other countries on commercial basis. There is a need to establish a separate PSU to launch commercial space ships and land spaceships on moon and mars. There are a large number of other areas where such investment in new technologies is needed. The government should therefore privatize the non-essential public sector undertakings like banks, airlines and oil companies and use this huge money to invest in new technologies that will increase our technological prowess and help us protect our sovereignty.

A possible counterargument may be that the Government should not renege from its responsibility of welfare of present employees of the PSUs. In my view, this argument is upside down. By privatizing existing PSUs the employees of the present PSUs remain employed with the buyer of the PSUs. *In addition* new employment will be created in the new PSUs. Thus privatization will create employment, not reduce it. □□

# Afghan conflicts hit India with fears of security, high prices

The new session of Parliament may have more to decide than the set agenda of 30 bills as the Afghan situation is turning murkier with a hasty US withdrawal. The house may have to chart out time to discuss the developing situation that sees Taliban, Pakistan and gradually China growing their influence and mostly at the cost of India. The stability of the present Afghan regime is critical for New Delhi not only to save its Afghan investments as also it might hit the supposed better GDP growth at 7 plus percentage. The situation is becoming complex as apart from extra budgetary burden on the covid19 health issues, depressing activities, and high inflation, India's security related expenses may surge to check the fall-out of increased violence in the western part of the subcontinent.

India and Afghanistan share deepened economic and trade links despite uncertainties about achieving a political settlement to the lingering conflict. India has invested over \$3 billion in reconstruction and relief work since 2001 when the US-led troops drove the Taliban out of Kabul. Delhi still firmly supports President Ashraf Ghani's government. Four months back in March, during a three-day visit to New Delhi, Afghan foreign minister Haneef Atmar desired that the two countries deepen economic and trade links.

But the recent flash battles with Taliban, tactically supported by Pakistan army, and capture of many strategic areas; are making it difficult. The recent statement of Pak army spokesman Maj Gen Baba Iftikhar, "Pakistan is a facilitator of the peace process but not a guarantor" speaks volumes of Pakistan's complicity. Islamabad had always been against India's humanitarian and developmental work that made India immensely popular in Afghanistan. The recent killing of an Indian photo journalist Danish Siddiqui, embedded with Afghan army reveals the weakening of control by Ashraf Ghani regime.

India has last week withdrew its diplomatic personnel from Kandahar consulate general and closed down consul offices in Herat and Jalalabad amid grow-



*The stability of the present Afghan regime is critical for New Delhi not only to save its Afghan investments as also it might hit the supposed better GDP growth at 7 plus percentage.*  
**Shivaji Sarkar**



ing threats to Indian employees in these regions not far from Pak border and operational areas of Taliban. The strategy is to weaken the Afghan hold, strengthen Taliban so that it could have renewed vigour at the negotiating table for power sharing. Afghanistan remained a key issue at foreign ministers' discussion at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet on July 14 in Tajikistan. Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar participated with the foreign ministers of China, Russia, Pakistan and West Asian countries. The SCO joint statement merely stated that international terrorist organisations are destabilizing the country and peace be restored with talks between Taliban and Afghan government.

It does not give any succour to India. The wishy-washy deals of SCO will not solve the issue. As it appears India is on the back foot. The Taliban's historic linkages with Lahkar-e-Taiba and jaish-e-Mohammed are the sore points. Taliban will always stand by these organisations and shelter them even if it gives an assurance to India. This virtually pushes India to the brink of direct or indirect conflicts and increases its security paraphernalia and expenses.

The issue of Iran virtually reneging on Chabahar port and access to central Asia, Taliban has already created problems. India's \$ 3 billion investments are virtually at stake. It is likely to impact its external trade as well. The additional burden on India is not easy to fathom but would be substantial.

The Afghan failure of the US is reflecting also on dollar. This is adding to global inflation and it would create further troubles for

***The Afghan failure of the US is reflecting also on dollar. This is adding to global inflation and it would create further troubles for India. The inflation has virtually crossed the newly-set up tolerance level of RBI at 6 percent up from 5 percent.***

India. The inflation has virtually crossed the newly-set up tolerance level of RBI at 6 percent up from 5 percent. During the last one year CPI has been rising continuously. The government has announced for its staff 11 percent rise in DA and it may add another 3 percent to adjust to the rising inflation.

The wholesale price index is also galloping and has reached 12.94 percent as per May figures due to rise in commodity prices in the international market. The sharper rise means the consumer prices would further firm up. The government expenses would go beyond the revised estimates of 7 percent. This would constrain the government on one hand and the other would cause market prices to zoom.

The National Statistical Organisation figures say food, fruit, edible oil prices and daily rise of petrol prices are impacting consumption. (A SBI report on its card uses reveal that high petrol and commodity prices have led people to cut expenses on other items to pay for fuel). In the rural areas, the share of bulk or high value purchases fell 22 percent and low value by 10 percent. People are opting for less than Rs 10 purchas-

es, a sign of severe cash and income crunch. Even for FMCG electronics and apparel, buyers are settling for lower priced products. Overall share of high value products drops- packaged goods by minus 21.6 percent; home care and personal care by minus 2.7 percent, and TV sales fall by 4 percent since end December, 2020.

The lockdown has impacted IIP, which grew at 29.3 percent against a drop of 57.3 percent a year back. It is a positive indicator but not exactly a booster for the economy. The poorer sales and production also mean that the industry would take time to recruit people and employment scenario might take time to brighten up.

International commodity prices are expected to harden, says Bloomberg, because of the volatile Afghan situation. Despite the U.S. having spent an estimated \$900 billion on the Afghan conflict, the Taliban are at their strongest controlling more than half the country. The Afghan military, which receives training and advice from the U.S. and its allies, has been hampered by insufficient air power and heavy combat losses and desertions.

India may not have direct involvement in the conflict but it is expected to pay a heavy price for it even in the domestic market. A HSBC Capital Market study warns that upside risks to inflation could re-emerge in the second half of the fiscal as conflict deepens. Corporate are likely to pass on higher prices to consumers and there would be demand side pressure further hardening the prices.

The recovery remains dicey and more so as the Afghan situations gets murkier. The country would have to gird up its loin. □□

# Designing Proxy- Businesses on Proxy E-commerce

The big technology-based companies have emerged as controllers of business using e-commerce driven conveniences. The unique selling point of these companies is that the customers are getting advantages and hence their work is holy cow. Their businesses should be worshipped as they have made available many choices and complete transparency to the consumers, whether it be in product purchase or services purchase. They create an impression that the customers are happy and so the policymakers should support them in their endeavors. End of the day it's customers who should be happy and they claim that they practice the philosophy that the Customer is the King. In a globalized world, one entity is a customer to another in one sector and the role reverses in other sectors.

In the global village, it's not about the domestic company or foreign company. It's about the net new job created, net new taxes generated, and the net new growth contributed. It's not about making the unorganized sector organized blindly. The new organized sector which provides the convenience of doing business to the customer by sitting in the living room on their home but kills the independence of service providers is unacceptable. On one hand, the customers are at ease but on the other hand, the whole supply chain including the people involved in the logistics is stressed. A consumer of one product is a supplier of the other product. For example, a person who is a logistics supplier for restaurant food is a consumer when the same person books a taxi. It's the whole business fabric and the social balance which is getting distorted. This is a massive misuse of technology without considering the constraints of social basics. Such business drivers need to be given due diligence.

The customer is the most important chain in a business deal. Since these companies provide the convenience of use to the customers and so, it's obvious that such companies will drive the business. It forces unwilling suppliers to partner with such companies. Once they are in their loop the technology companies



*The policymakers should come up with laws that make such crimes a criminal offense.*

*The promoters who initially had a business should not be in hurry to reach the top in the shortest time by practicing unacceptable business behavior.*

**Alok Singh**



start eating the thin margin of small service providers, for example, small hotel owners in case of online platforms for hotel booking, and small taxi owners in case of an online platform for taxi booking. They claim to be a common platform but don't behave like that. Such a business model kills the private label of the small players. The customers perceive themselves to be primarily the client of the proxy platform provider and not the customer of the manufacturer or service provider. The local suppliers are on the verge of collapse. These practices are anti-competition. The competition commission of India (CCI) is looking into such matters. The tools available with CCI seem to be ineffective. They need to be equipped with laws that have sharp teeth. These business models offer no risk to proxy platform providers. They generate business, they impulse consumers to the chosen vendors and the chosen service providers of their choice and don't own the responsibility of employer-employee-related laws. They even practice socially unacceptable advertisement behavior.

It means that these big companies aspire to control the sector, whether it is the vegetable purchase, mobile phone purchase, apparels purchase, food purchase, hotel room purchase, or any other product or service. Each of them initially passes the advantage to the end-user customer and makes the other suppliers in the chain dependent on them. These companies have literally forced the whole system to collapse. They have manipulated their accounting, their sales, their profit, their financing, their tax to the government, their business origin and are facing rage worldwide.

***The customers perceive themselves to be primarily the client of the proxy platform provider and not the customer of the manufacturer or service provider. The local suppliers are on the verge of collapse. These practices are anti-competition.***

These companies publicly admit that their businesses are at a huge loss and so they don't qualify to pay corporate taxes to the government. But surprisingly year after year despite incurring huge losses their valuation keeps increasing and they are able to attract a huge amount of foreign money in their companies. They create a web that hinders tax collections of all the nations of the world.

These companies don't realize that moment the regulators catch them they will be defenseless. Even the team of the best breed of lawyers won't be able to defend them. They will have to run away from the country. They will move from one court to the other for bail and if they are unlucky they will land in jail, their reputation of success will be ruined, their assets will be ceased and the repercussions will be huge to the stakeholders. The earlier the collateral damage happens better it is for everyone.

The policymakers should make accountable not only the promoters of such businesses but those who are on the payroll of such companies should also be made li-

able. Few of such proxy platform companies had successfully listed themselves in the stock market and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) couldn't stop them from doing so. The existing laws are hopeless. The ill-informed investors are at huge risk.

The policymakers should come up with laws that make such crimes a criminal offense. The promoters who initially had a business should not be in hurry to reach the top in the shortest time by practicing unacceptable business behavior. The corporate governance laws won't spare them for their misdeeds in the long run. The domain expert top-level employees of such companies who participate in the strategic decision-making process should not be discounted as far as a partner in crime is concerned. Most of the best brains working for such companies got trained themselves in institutes of national importance at a much-subsidized rate on taxpayer's money and are now on the payroll of proxy platform companies should also not be spared. The best lawyers, the best finance expert, the best accounting experts, the best operations expert, the best human resources people, and the entire best mind that are willing to rent their expertise for generating income for them to have a lavish lifestyle at the cost of small and marginal business owners are criminals of the nation. Such people can do any harm to society. The laws need a look into it. The government can come up with its own platform which is fair to small and marginal business providers as well as transparent to the consumers. □□

*(Alok Singh is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management Indore and currently is faculty of general management at NICMAR, Delhi-NCR Campus.)*

# New agricultural paradigm



*State sponsored propaganda about "miraculous yields" extended the phenomenon across the country ruining soil fertility and the nutritious value of food crops; the impact on public health was noticed by the medical community, but all voices were silenced.*

**Sandhya Jain**

The over-hyped green revolution of the late 1960s introduced varieties of dwarf rice and wheat in northern India, with a cocktail of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that sucked up ground water and gradually made it unfit for drinking as the chemicals leached into the soil and water. State-sponsored propaganda about “miraculous yields” extended the phenomenon across the country, ruining soil fertility and the nutritious value of food crops; the impact on public health was noticed by the medical community, but all voices were silenced. Today, Gurdaspur-to-Delhi trains are called “cancer express”, yet there has been no medical study of the harm caused by chemical agriculture to the health of humans, animals, soil, and water resources.

Now, four momentous laws could pave the way for a revolution in which farmers drive the change, with technology playing a supportive role. If government repudiates the genetically-modified food crops lobby, India could return to farming methods that do not require costly inputs and force farmers into a vicious cycle of debt (and even suicide).

On September 16, 2020, one day before the three agriculture-related bills were moved in Parliament, the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 was passed, bringing all cooperative banks under the purview of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It means stricter supervision of 1,482 urban and 58 multi-state cooperative banks, with deposits of Rs. 4.84 lakh crore.

The legislation undermines the strongmen who control the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), mandis, loans, etc. in many States. It is noteworthy that large farmers are resisting the new laws; earlier they opposed MGNREGA as they had to match wages or lose farm labour. The ongoing COVID epidemic has also improved the bargaining power of farm labour, and added to the bitterness of large farmers. Often, agents arranged debt for farmers from private moneylenders, who charged usurious interest and enjoyed political heft; such debt has been linked to farmer suicides in some States.

Simultaneously, the Union cabinet approved Rs 15,000-crore fund for animal husbandry as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package, and a scheme for interest subvention of two per cent to ‘shishu’ loan category borrowers for one year under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. These developments form the sub-text to the Farm Bills.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020 allows sale and marketing of produce outside notified APMC mandis. State governments cannot collect market fee, cess or levy for trade outside the APMC markets; inter-state trade barriers are nixed and provisions made for electronic trading of agricultural produce. No license is needed; anyone with a PAN card can buy directly from farmers. The new system provides a dispute resolution mechanism in case farmers are not paid immediately, or within three days.

The APMCs failed as they allowed vested interests to seize the system. States levied cess to earn extra revenue that was not part of the budget and was used for 'discretionary' development spending, mostly under the chief minister's orders. As the cess increased, political appointees took charge of the APMCs. Even FCI paid cess. Small farmers were burdened with the cost of transport to take their produce to the mandis, and deal with middlemen. For instance, waiting outside sugar mills, with heat evaporating the sugar content in the cane, desperate farmers have succumbed to agents (of nearby mandis) who arrive miraculously and dictate the price.

Under the new Act, politicians and urban elite farmers will find it difficult to get large "agricultural" incomes mandi-certified, and pay zero per cent income tax, as payments have to be made against PAN cards.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 regulates contractual farming rules and state APMC

Acts. Farmers can make contracts with a corporate entity or wholesaler at a mutually agreed price. The system already exists in 20 States; PepsiCo buys potatoes from 24,000 farmers across nine States. Further, 18 States already permit private mandis, while Kerala and Bihar don't have APMC mandis at all. More pertinently, the Act prohibits acquiring ownership rights of farmers' land.

The Centre has funded <sup>1</sup> 6,685-crore for formation of 10,000 farmer producer organisations (FPOs) and <sup>1</sup> 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). The FPO will give farmers higher bargaining power, while AIF and market reforms serve as additional enablers. They can invest in farm equipment, infrastructure and build forward market linkages by making agreements with agribusinesses, thus improving access to technology and investment. Maharashtra's Sahyadri Farmers Producer Co. Ltd., with 8,000 marginal farmers, exports 16,000 tonnes of grapes every season.

The end of socialist-era impediments should stimulate increased private sector investment across the value chain, creating jobs in logistics service providers, warehouse operators and processing unit staff. The rise of food-processing industries could create non-farm jobs in rural areas. India processes less than 10 per cent of output (cereals, fruits, vegetables, fish, etc.) and loses around Rs 90,000 crore annually to wastage. Hopefully, market linkages will motivate farmers to diversify and grow crops such as edible oils, and help reduce India's edible oil import bill that currently stands at over \$10 billion.

Finally, The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 removes excessive controls on production, storage, movement and distribution of food commodities; removes cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, and paves the way for cold chain infrastructure to come up. Previously, controls regarding storage of essential commodities (onions, potatoes, edible oils, jute, rice paddy, sugar) gave draconian powers to authorities to raid "hoarders", confiscate stocks, cancel licensing and even imprison offenders. This naturally discouraged investment in storage as entrepreneurs feared being prosecuted as "hoarders". Lack of storage also contributed to volatility in prices as price stability depends on adequate storage.

Henceforth, The ECA 2020 will be invoked only under extraordinary circumstances such as war, famine, natural calamity of grave nature and extraordinary price rise (100 percent increase in retail price of horticultural produce over the preceding 12 months, or 50 percent increase in retail price of non-perishables over the preceding five years).

Dismissing the propaganda that the new laws would end the minimum support price (MSP), the Centre has quietly ordered procurement, effectively nipping the canard that small and marginal farmers would be shortchanged. It remains to be seen how long the critics can sustain the mobilisation on the streets. □□

*Sandhya Jain is an author, independent researcher, and writer of political and contemporary affairs. Jain is a post graduate in Political Science from Delhi University and has had over three decades of experience as a professional journalist.*

<http://swatantramag.com/new-agricultural-paradigm/>

# Reconstructing Identity and Situating Themselves in History: A Preliminary Note on the Meenas of Jaipur Locality-VIII

Contradictions in the Meena's 'Brahmanical' origin can be seen here. This theory clearly indicates their tribal origin and matrilineal traditions as Muniji mentions that clans were named after mothers and the Meenas were named after their mothers, Meena and Maina." However, the tribal origins are quickly Sanskritized'. Skanda Purana is quoted to mention that Shiva, the God of Kailash, was the lord of the Kshatriya Meenas. The other major Purânas like Shiva Purana offers yet another mythological origin of the Mainas.

In unifying the community, Muniji quoted Abhidhana Cintamani Kocca, Sabdastoma Mahânidhi%, Siddhanta Kaumudi and other historical traditions to mention the conversion of a few Meenas into Islam who were then known as Meos. Hence, the Meena leadership attempted to unify their community across religious divisions. The Meos who had emerged as a powerful gentry in some parts of eastern Rajasthan interestingly trace their lineage to various Rajput clans: Tomar Rajputs of Delhi, Mathura's Jadus, Jaipur's Kachwahas and Ajmer's Chauhans. Meena Purânas Bhūmika combines 'Sanskritic' traditions of the origin of the Meenas with popular traditions. Bardic chronicles are also quoted by Muniji in which the origin of the Meenas is traced to the Meena avatar of Vishnu: Kshatriya Vishnu). The first Meena king reigned in Satya Yuga and his descendants have been reigning since then. Very interestingly, bardic traditions mention the 36 clans of Rajputs as 'ancient and Adi Sanatan Arya, and the Rajakula Meenas (royal Meenas) as Adivasi Meena-kula (indigenous Meenas or pure Meenas who did not have mixed marriages) having 12 pals, 32 tadas and 5,200 gotras. Some of the leading seers of the twentieth century such as Baba Kali Kamblivale Svami Visudhanandaji of Haridwar, Mahatma Abhilasa Das ji of Ayodhya and Mahatma Agradasji of Galta are quoted to prove that 'Meena' was an avatâra of Vishnu. Thus, Muniji sought legitimation from a long lineage of seers in claiming a 'Sanskritized' image for the Meenas.



*Muniji  
'sanskritized' the  
Meena elite of the  
bardic traditions.  
He gave them a  
respectable past to  
claim a prestigious  
present.*  
**Prof. Nandini  
Sinha Kapur**



Muniji devotes an entire chapter in the Meena Purana Bhûmika to the birth of Vishnu Matsya. The chapter titled Matsyavatâraaur Arya DevakulakaItihasa begins with the Puranic account of the mahapralaya (deluge) and Vishnu taking the form of Matsya, a general discussion on the ten avatâras of Vishnu: Matsya, Kachchhapa, Varaha, Nrsimha, Vâmana, Parasurama, Râma, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. Although Muniji quotes the Puranic story of the origin of Matsyaavatâra as given in the Matsya Purana (birth of Vishnu with the upper half of a human body and a lower half of a fish), Muniji denied fish status to this avatara and claimed it was actually a Mahapurua (a sage), who assisted Manu during the Mahapralaya. And, Muniji declared that the Meenas originated from this Matsya god. However, he laments that subsequently to the birth of the Matsyaavatâra, the community got divided, lost solidarity and the Meena empire' broke into small parts. And then he repeats the traditional divisions of the Meenas into 12 pals, 32 tadas and 5,200 gotras and claims that these divisions originated from the break up of the ancient Meena empire'. Perhaps, the most important point here is the appeal by the Meena leadership for 'unity and solidarity indicative of the typical tribal characteristic of closing intra-tribal divisions. On the other hand, the search for respectability within the great tradition' continued with the claim for Rajput status.

In the subsequent chapters, Muniji constructs a historical account of the royal' houses of the Meenas. Both the imperial Mauryas of Magadh and the later Mau-

***In the subsequent chapters, Muniji constructs a historical account of the royal' houses of the Meenas. Both the imperial Mauryas of Magadh and the later Mauryan dynasty of Mandsaur and Chittor (Chittorgarh locality in district Chittorgarh) are claimed as branches and sub-branches of the Meenas.***

ryan dynasty of Mandsaur and Chittor (Chittorgarh locality in district Chittorgarh) are claimed as branches and sub-branches of the Meenas. Raja Mauryadhvaja is upheld as the ancestor of the imperial Mauryan kings, Chandragupta, Bindusara and Asoka and is said to belong to a sub-branch of the Meena Kshatriyas." MahârâjaMânaMaur of the eighth century who reigned at Chittor belonged to the clan of the Maurade (a subclan of the Meenas) Meenas. Hence, ancient Indian history and prestigious dynasties are being appropriated to reconstruct a 'respectable' past and present.

Muniji 'Sanskritized' the Meena chiefs of the bardic traditions into the 'Candravamœiya' (Rajput) Meena kings of Jaipur of the pre-Rajput (pre-Kachwaha) era. A dynastic and genealogical list of the Candravamœiya Meena kings of Jaipur is provided in Appendix at the end of the book. Maharaja Alansimha was the last of the Meena kings of Jaipur in the pre-Kachwaha period who had his capital at Khohgong. Tod's story of Dhola Rae, the founder of the Kachwaha dynasty brought up by the Meena chief of Khohgong is incorporated into the history of the Meena king of Jaipur, Maharaja Alansimha. Kachwaha prince Dhola Rae was brought up by the

Meena king of Jaipur. More importantly, he is stated to have married a Meena princess, daughter of Mauryaking Muraria of Maura kingdom. Thus, for the first time the Meena elite claimed direct social links with the Kachwaha dynasty of Jaipur. Subsequently, Dhola Rae in alliance with the Tomar Rajputs of Delhi hatched a conspiracy, exterminated the Meena king and appropriated the Meena kingdom of Jaipur.

The alliance with the Mughals (Tod's story) was dropped and Kachwaha alliance with the Rajputs was highlighted, indicating inter-Rajput network of political and military alliances. Muniji introduced a new element into this popular tradition. A Bhat (a genealogist), named Barhat turned disloyal towards his Meena master and instigated Dhola Rae to appropriate the Meena kingdom of Jaipur by treacherously killing his benefactor. This perhaps points towards Meena rivalry and contestation with the Bhats and Charans who legitimized Rajput power in the medieval period. Bhats and Charans had refused recognition to the Meenas in the royal traditions of Jaipur state. Appropriation/annexation of the capital city of the Meenas, Khohgong and Dhundhar by the Kachwaha prince Dhola Rae is dated to AD 1128.) □□

**The Chairperson and Members,  
The Standing Committee on Agriculture,  
Parliament of India.**

### **Subject: Memorandum of Swadeshi Jagran Manch about Pesticide Management Bill 2020.**

Dear Sir/Madams

Swadeshi Jagran Manch is a Socio political platform representing people from various walks of life, working towards promoting indigenisation with a vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat with a balanced approach towards environment, indigenisation, decentralisation and employment.

On the outset, Swadeshi Jagran Manch wishes to express its commitment towards natural agriculture free from chemicals, to safeguard the interests of the people. However, It's highly unfortunate that the Insecticide Act 1968, was not capable to provide enough safeguards against hazardous impacts of these chemicals. Regulation of pesticides in India has been generally unscientific and lackadaisical, which is evident from the large scale deaths and hospitalisations of farm workers and farmers due to acute poisoning, the residues of banned and restricted pesticides showing up in food and environmental samples, export consignments getting rejected on numerous occasions due to pesticide residues, accidental deaths like those of children in Chhapra in Bihar due to pesticide poisoning, spurious/misbranded chemical pesticides being passed off as bio-pesticides, bird/wildlife deaths due to poisonings, fish-kill in water bodies, contaminated environmental resources etc. NCRB data says that in 2019, 31,026 people died in India by insecticides (suicides and accidental intake). If we add chronic exposure impacts of pesticides to this, these numbers would be in millions. India is still continuing with many pesticides which have been banned or severely restricted by many other countries for their hazardous impacts. Though, in modern times, thanks to emerging agro-ecological science's approach to pest management, our existing regulatory regime has not evolved with the same and still lays too much emphasis on 'killing pests' rather than 'managing pests' through numerous highly successful non-chemical practices. On the outset Swadeshi Jagran Manch acknowledges that the present 'Pesticide Management Bill (PMB) 2020' is an improved one, as compared to earlier versions of the Bill. We note with pleasure that the present Bill has extended its scope to include advertising, packaging, pricing, labelling, disposal also in its scope. It states that it may constitute an authority to exercise powers for price fixation and perform functions to regulate the price of pesticides. It also states that registration of pesticide shall also be guided by factors including safety, efficacy, necessity, end-use of the pesticides, risk involved. It also states that Registration Committee may conduct an independent enquiry to verify the information submitted by the applicant.

However, after a perusal of PMB 2020, SJM wishes to point out to the following shortcomings and gaps, which are needed to be taken note of and necessary changes are required to be made to achieve national objectives of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and safety from hazardous impacts of pesticides:

#### **Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission:**

1. Country at present is hugely dependent on the imports of pesticides, despite the fact that country has huge potentials with respect to manufacturing of pesticides. Moreover, due to faulty rules favouring imports, import of pesticides were encouraged against the interests of domestic manufacturing. Unfortunately, present draft doesn't include sufficient provisions to safeguard domestic manufacturing. On the contrary, there still exist many provisions, which promote importers' and foreign interests. SJM suggests following inclusion in Section 18 of the draft PMB 2020:

"Registration committee has the rights to refuse the registration for import of ready-made pesticides if (a) that pesticide is already registered and being manufactured in India. (b) If Committee is satisfied that alternatives are available in the country. This would promote domestic manufacturing, and save the economy from import dependence."

2. Through amendment in rules, Central Insecticides Board (CIB) and Registration committee (RC) waived off an important safety provision in 2007. Earlier, Registration of "technical grade" and monitoring of Chemical Composition of this technical grade post registration was an integral part of Insecticide Act 1968 to ensure farmer's safety. Waiving off of this important safety provision for importers, farmers security and environment safety were impacted as well as, domestic manufacturing. There is a need to correct this lapse in the old Act and inclusion of the following provisions in Section 18 of Draft PMB 2020. The Registration Committee shall not

register a pesticide if (a) the “Technical Grade” of the pesticide is not registered in India; (b) it is satisfied that the pesticide does not meet the claims of safety or efficacy submitted by the applicant; (c) where applicable maximum residue limits of the pesticides on crops and commodities have not been specified under the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006. Inclusion of these provisions in the bill would enable regulators to withdraw the “Technical Grade” samples for monitoring the expiry and associated impurities. This would also ensure farmers’ and consumers’ security, environment and soil preservation as per the Indian standards.

3. There is a clause in Section 22(1) in the draft PMB 2020, which gives unwarranted advantage to MNCs, who generally happen to be the first registrants. This Section 22(1) needs to be deleted. There is no need to empower “First Registrant” to manipulate the registration of “Subsequent Registrants” in India.

4. Assembly and repackaging should not be equivalent to manufacturing as most of the importers are selling the imported pesticides in different brands without value addition and threatens the survival of the domestic manufacturers.

5. To regulate imports of pesticides, provision for imposition of non-tariff barriers should be made to safeguard the life of plants, animals and human being by way of legal provisions on the lines of WTO restrictions, for Sanitary and Phyto sanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).

6. To safeguard the interests of domestic manufacturers, strict provisions be made in the PMB 2020, not to allow data exclusivity to the innovator company. This would make it possible for Indian manufacturers to produce these chemicals in India, after the expiry of patent.

7. Bio-pesticides and organic/natural pesticides had been the speciality of Indian agriculture and have huge potential in modern agriculture. The proposed Act does not provide adequate recognition, legitimacy, level playing field and registration processes to these novel products. SJM firmly advocate and propose to include special framework for these safer alternatives to provide poison free food to country’s populace.

### **Environmental Safety, Farmers’ Health and Soil Preservation**

1. Processes of review of pesticides after registration have not been streamlined. There are other countries which review every registered pesticide periodically five years after registration, to assess the safety of the pesticide based on latest scientific evidence. Further, such a review requires an independent mechanism separate from the body that does the registration in the first instance. In the new Pesticides Management Bill 2020, registration and review are proposed to be done by the same body (Registration Committee) – the body which has registered them will not be best placed to review those pesticides itself. A separate Review Committee consisting of bio safety experts must be constituted to review pesticides, to avoid any bias.

2. A multi-ministerial, broad based body with representatives from state governments, farmers etc., in the form of Pesticide Management Board is being proposed in the new Bill, to replace the Central Insecticides Board in the extant legislation. However, it is being envisaged only as an advisory body with all regulatory authority actually vested in the Registration Committee consisting of a few technical persons. The Pesticides Management Board has to become an empowered regulatory body with oversight authority over ‘Registration Committee’ and the proposed ‘Review Committee’ as well.

3. The regulation of pesticides should be free from the influence of the pesticide industry and importers lobby to avoid possible conflict of interest. The new Bill’s provisions for prevention of conflict of interest are weak and inadequate. The provisions to prevent conflict of interest at all levels amongst all human resources involved in the regulatory regime must be strengthened (Sec. 10).

4. The new Bill misses out on many such key points; for instance, the new Bill does not specifically and mandatorily list factors such as antidote availability, transparent, independent scrutiny of information on need, alternatives and long-term comprehensive bio safety of a pesticide (the legal language used in the Bill makes such testing optional), precautionary approach being adopted based on bans in other countries.

5. Swadeshi Jagran Manch recommends that the proposed Pesticide Management Board should include independent specialists, beekeeping experts, pollinators, zoologists, marine biologist and also foreign trade experts including specialists from Director General Foreign Trade to appreciate the impact of pesticide usage on exports.

Kindly take note of our suggestions and incorporate appropriately in the PMB 2020.

**Dr Ashwani Mahajan** (National Co-Convenor, SJM)

## SJM suggests changes in consumer protection e-commerce rules



The Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) suggested a host of amendments to the proposed consumer protection e-commerce rules and said the government must also make provisions for the protection of the traders and service providers associated with e-commerce giants. In its suggestions to the Department of Consumer Affairs, the SJM said there is a general impression that the rules are applicable to all the parties involved in e-commerce, "which is not true", as the Consumer Protection Act does not apply to the traders and service providers.

"It is, therefore, suggested that this aspect must be clarified by way of clarification by the (consumer affairs) ministry, and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) must make suitable rules for the protection of traders and service providers who avail services through e-commerce for commercial purposes," the outfit said.

The SJM said there are many traders and service providers, which are not getting any protection under the law, due to the "inadequate or non-existent" e-commerce laws.

"Small traders on Amazon, Flipkart-Walmart; drivers on Uber, Ola etc.; small restaurants involved in Zomato etc.; hairdressers, carpenters, electricians and others on Urban Clap etc.; and many other workers are subject to severe hardships by these e-commerce giants, having no protection at all against exploitation," it said.

The SJM termed the provision for compulsory registration of e-commerce entities under the proposed rules as "a welcome step", saying it will go a long way to regulate the e-commerce giants "for any wrongdoings by them".

"However, it is suggested, to avoid any hard-

ship to e-commerce entities with a very small consumer base in India, a threshold may be prescribed for compulsory registration," it said.

This would save the small e-commerce players from "avoidable compliances", it said and suggested that the definition of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) "may be adopted" to define small e-commerce players in the proposed rules.

The SJM also sought changes in the wordings of the rules for the registration of e-companies to bring under its ambit even those e-commerce entities that do not set up offices in India but still have "lots of revenue" being generated from the consumers located in the country.

"The DPIIT must also create a monitoring mechanism to identify the defaulter e-commerce entities and must also have an adjudication mechanism for penalising such defaulters," it said.

The SJM suggested that the rules should provide for capacity building for inspection and enforcement of e-commerce transactions, unfair trade practices, manipulation of prices, search algorithm and other technical aspects of digital transactions with a consumer protection perspective.

"E-courts may be established for the consumers' grievances redressal," it said.

The SJM noted that e-commerce companies under the proposed rules are required to appoint those as chief compliance officers, nodal contact persons and resident grievance officers who are residents and citizens of the country.

The SJM suggested that the concept of "officer who is in default" as included in the Companies Act, 2013 be introduced in the e-commerce rules also, "so that the persons in accordance with whose advice, directions or instructions the e-commerce entities act can be brought to books in case of any contravention under the Act and the e-commerce rules".

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/rss-affiliate-suggests-changes-in-consumer-protection-e-commerce-rules/articleshow/84613325.cms>

## India court quashes Amazon, Walmart's Flipkart bid to stall antitrust probe

An Indian court on Friday dismissed appeals by Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O) and Walmart's (WMT.N) Flipkart that sought to stall an antitrust investigation into their business practices, dealing a major setback to the U.S. firms in a key market.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) last year ordered an inquiry after allegations from brick-and-mortar retailers that the U.S. firms promoted select sellers on their e-commerce platforms and used to business practices that stifle competition.

The investigation was on hold for more than a year after companies challenged it, denying wrongdoing and arguing that the CCI lacked evidence, but a court allowed it to continue in June. The High Court in southern Karnataka state rejected the U.S. firms' appeals.

"By no stretch of imagination can inquiry be quashed at this stage. The appeals are nothing but an attempt to ensure that action initiated by the CCI ... does not attain finality," a two-judge bench said while reading the decision in court. "The appeals are devoid of merit, and deserve to be dismissed."

The two firms are likely to appeal the decision at India's Supreme Court, according to people familiar with the case. Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Flipkart said in a statement it would review the court's order, adding that it remains in compliance with Indian laws.

Abir Roy of Sarvada Legal, which filed the antitrust case against Amazon and Flipkart on behalf of a trader group, said the court's decision "further reinforces that the CCI investigation should continue promptly."

The CCI investigation is the latest setback for Amazon and Flipkart, which are grappling with prospects of tougher e-commerce regulations and accusations from brick-and-mortar retailers that the companies circumvent Indian law by creating complex business structures.

The companies face several allegations in the case, including exclusive launches of mobile phones, promotion of select sellers on their websites and deep discounting practices that drive out competition.

In February, a Reuters investigation based on Amazon documents showed it had given preferential treatment for years to a small group of sellers and used them to bypass Indian law. Amazon has said it does not give preferential treatment to any seller.

Trade minister Piyush Goyal last month lashed out at U.S. e-commerce giants for filing legal challenges and failing to comply with the CCI's investigation, saying "if they have nothing to hide ... why don't they respond to the CCI?"

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/india-court-quashes-amazon-flipkart-plea-against-antitrust-probe-2021-07-23/>

## SJM suggests changes in pesticide management bill



The SJM said it has submitted a memorandum to a parliamentary panel suggesting changes in the pesticide management bill that can help achieve the "national objective" of Atmanirbhar Bharat and safety from hazardous impacts of the pesticides.

The parliamentary standing committee on agriculture is examining the pesticide management bill, 2020. The bill, introduced in Rajya Sabha on March 23 last year to replace The Insecticides Act, 1968, was referred to the parliamentary panel on June 3.

"They have invited objections and suggestions from the stakeholders and general public and are conducting hearings. Swadeshi Jagran Manch has given its memorandum to the committee on the issue," SJM said in a statement.

The bill seeks to regulate the manufacture, import, sale, storage, distribution, use, and disposal of pesticides, to ensure the availability of safe pesticides and minimise the risk to humans, animals, and the environment.

Flagging "shortcomings and gaps" in the bill in its memorandum to the parliamentary panel, the SJM said that the proposed law does not include "sufficient provisions" to safeguard domestic manufacturing.

"On the contrary, there still exist many provisions, which promote the interest of importers and foreign interests," it said, suggesting that the bill should provide the registration committee with "right to refuse" registration for import of ready-made pesticides if they are already registered and manufactured in India. The registration committee should also have the right to refuse the registration for import of ready-made pesticides if the committee is satisfied that alternatives are available in the country, the SJM suggested.

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/ris-affiliated-body-sjm-suggests-changes-in-pesticide-management-bill-446689>

## **Demands Stricter Rules to Rein in US E-Commerce Giants Like Amazon, Flipkart in India**

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) called upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to amend the newly introduced Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, to further check the growing hegemony of American e-commerce giants in India.

While welcoming the new rules, SJM said that several clauses in the new law still do not address the concerns of small Indian traders, who are already at a disadvantage due to the dominant market positions of e-commerce giants. In his communication to the federal Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Mahajan noted that the definition of "consumer" in the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, doesn't include a person who purchases goods for re-sale or other commercial purposes. The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 come under Section 94 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

"It is apparent that since provisions of the Act do not apply to traders and service providers, as referred above, the rules framed under the Act would also not be applicable to them, and therefore cannot be expected to provide any protection under these rules, even if they are exploited due to the dominant position of the e-commerce giants", the SJM said.

The economic advocacy outfit further claimed that "small traders" on Amazon and Flipkart, or drivers on ride-sharing apps such as Uber were being subjected to "severe hardships" by the e-commerce giants.

"Obviously, consumer protection laws (in their current form) cannot provide any protection to these vulnerable sections of society", SJM said.

The Indian outfit lamented that the new rules failed to define the concepts of "dominant market position" or "abuse" of position, on the back of allegations in India that big e-commerce companies exploit small suppliers who use their services to distribute goods and services. The group said that e-commerce platforms must also ensure transparency in the way they do business by disclosing the details about their total business and advertising costs, as well as complaints received and redressed every three months.

SJM has also suggested a series of amendments to the new e-commerce rules to guarantee that the rights and privacy of end users of products and services are protected.

The outfit said the new law must mandate "proper two-way communication" between buyers and sellers without compromising the privacy of sellers or customers. It complained that consumers are not provided with "proper information" about the actual supplier of goods, which hinders the process of redressing any grievances arising from transactions.

The Indian group additionally noted that dominant e-commerce players were currently indulging in "unfairly collecting" data about goods being sold by their vendors and sharing these details with their "associates". SJM said that India should penalise this unfair business practice under the new rules.

SJM, further called for the creation of e-courts to swiftly resolve e-commerce-related disputes.

<https://spatniknews.com/india/202107211083428523-rss-affiliate-demands-stricter-rules-to-rein-in-us-e-commerce-giants-like-amazon-flipkart-in-india/>

## **China criticises NBC Olympics broadcast for 'incomplete map'**

China criticised NBC Universal for showing an "incomplete map" of the country in its broadcast of the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics, after a map displayed during the arrival of Chinese athletes included neither Taiwan nor the South China Sea.

The Chinese consulate in New York said the display "hurt the dignity and emotions of the Chinese people", in a post on its official Weibo social media platform on Saturday.

Comcast-owned NBC, which holds U.S. broadcasting rights to the Olympic Games, did not immediately reply to a request for comment sent through its official contacts page.

The Chinese consulate did not specify why it objected to the map but said: "We urge NBC to recognise the serious nature of this problem and take measures to correct the error." China's state-controlled Global Times newspaper also criticised the Olympics broadcast and the display of the map.

Maps' references to self-ruled Taiwan and the disputed South China Sea have stirred controversy in recent years, with Johns Hopkins University last year reversing a decision to show Taiwan as part of China on a map indicating the spread of the coronavirus.

Two years ago, U.S. retailer Gap Incapologised for selling a T-shirt that it said had an incorrect map of China. A picture posted to social media showed that the T-shirt did not include the island of Taiwan or the South China Sea. □□

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/china-criticises-nbc-olympics-broadcast-incomplete-map-2021-07-24/>

Swadeshi Activities

# Plantation for Safe Environment

Pictorial Glimpses



Himmat Nagar, Gujarat



Bhiwani, Haryana



Palwal, Haryana



Himmat Nagar, Gujarat

Swadeshi Activities

**Vichar Varga, Madhya Bharat**

(31 July-1 August 2021)

Pictorial Glimpses



**Vichar Varga, Chittor**

(31 July-1 August 2021)



**Vichar Varga, Brij**

(31 July-1 August 2021)

