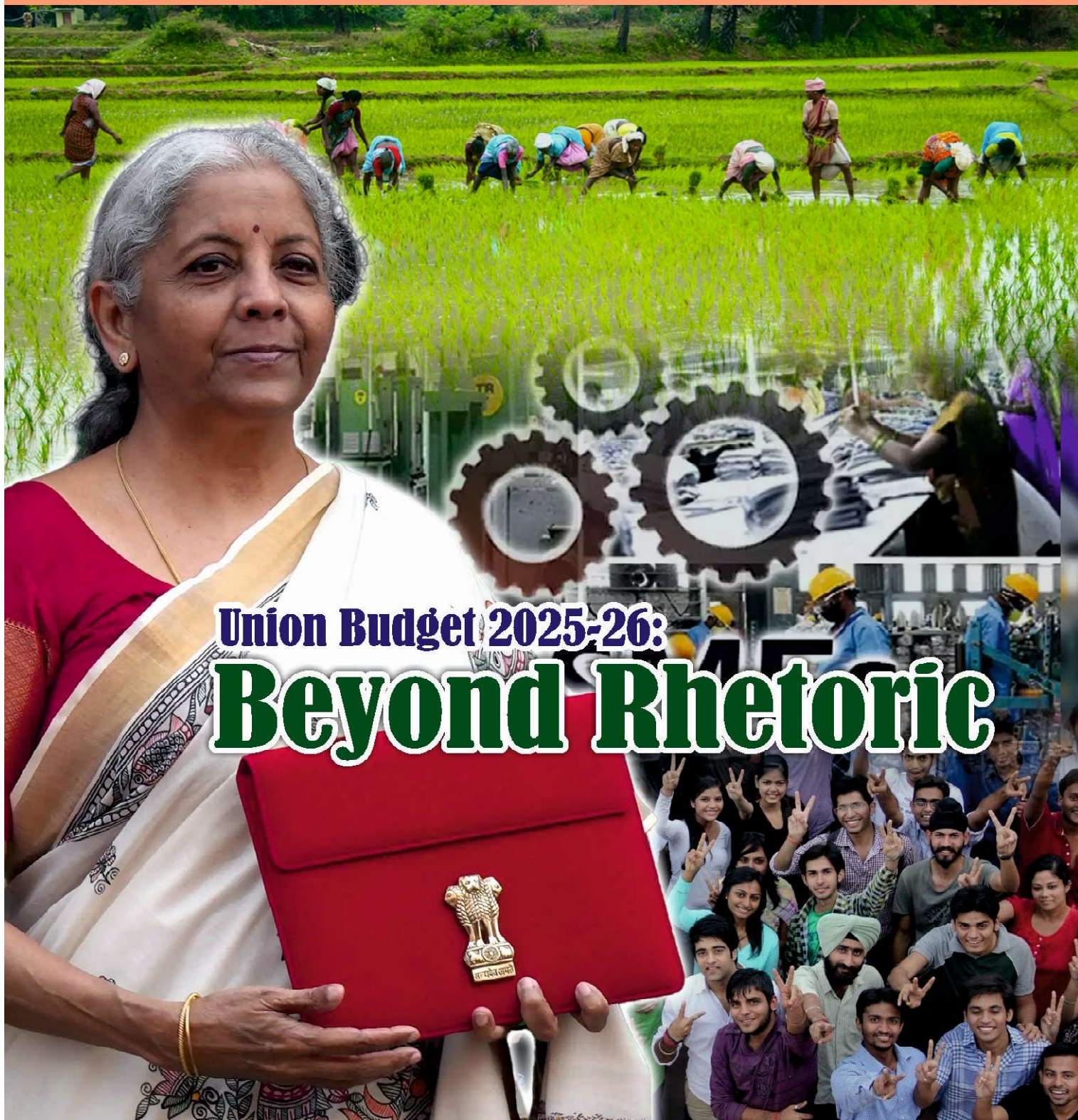


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February 2025



Union Budget 2025-26:
Beyond Rhetoric

Swadeshi Activities

Swadeshi Program

Pictorial Glimpses



East Odisha



Rajkot, Saurashtra

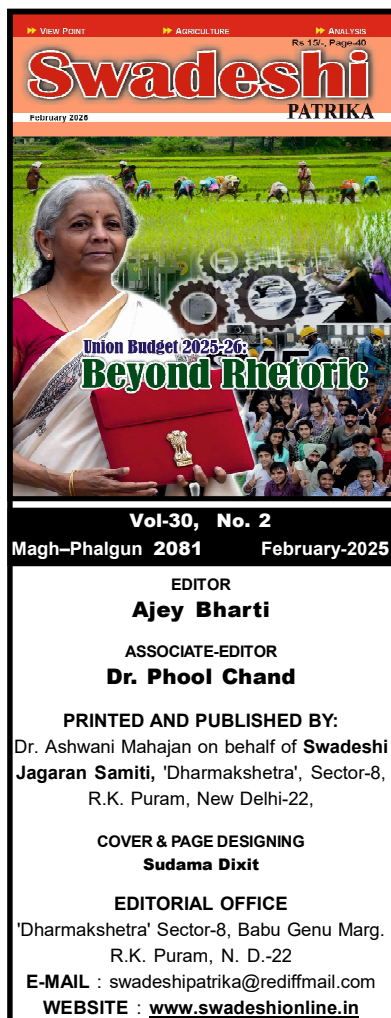


Veer Narmad, Gujarat (South)



Swadeshi Shodh Sansthan, Delhi





LETTERS

3

NEWS

36-38



CONTENTS

COVER STORY

6

Union Budget 2025-26:

Beyond Rhetoric

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



1 Cover Page

2. Cover Inside Page

08 BUDGET 2025-26

Budget Proposals and Implications

..... Dr. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal

11 BUDGET 2025-26

A Transformative and Game-Changing Pathway to Viksit Bharat

..... Dr. S. Lingamurthy

14 BUDGET 2025-26

Budget is forward note for Vikasit Bharat

..... Mahadevayya Karadalli

17 BUDGET 2025-26

Why India should have a 'sin tax' on ultra-processed foods

..... Indra Shekhar Singh

19 BUDGET 2025-26

Revamping MSME's Sector for a Viksit Bharat

..... Nandita Chitra

21 ECONOMY

India's Culture, Society and Economy – Past, Present and Future

..... S. Gurumurthy

27 TECHNOLOGY

An Overview of Disruptive AI Technology – DeepSeek

..... Vinod Johri

29 SCRUTINY

Grappling with America First

..... Abhijit Das

31 FARMING

A 'Fitness Factor' For Farmers And Farm Workers Can Help Bridge The Country's Economic Divide

..... Devinder Sharma

33 MAHAKUMBH

Nagas Sadhus: The Ultimate Line of Defense

..... Alok Singh

39 Back Inside Cover

40 Back Cover



Union Budget 2025-26

The Union Budget 2025, presented by the Finance Minister, embodies the government's vision for a self-sufficient and thriving India. By allocating 10 lakh crore Rupee for infrastructure development, the budget seeks to stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance the overall quality of life for citizens. This strategic investment in infrastructure is poised to have a ripple effect on various sectors, including manufacturing, services, and agriculture.

Furthermore, the budget's emphasis on tax relief for the middle class, through an increased exemption limit of 5 lakh Rupee, is a prudent move aimed at boosting consumer spending and aggregate demand. This measure is likely to have a positive impact on the economy, as middle-class households are expected to increase their consumption expenditure, thereby driving economic growth.

In addition, the budget's focus on supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through a 10,000 crore Rupee fund is a welcome move. The budget's allocation of 1.5 lakh crore Rupee for education and 1.2 lakh crore Rupee for healthcare is also noteworthy.

Finally, the budget's emphasis on promoting green energy through a 20,000 crore Rupee fund reflects the government's recognition of the importance of sustainable development. As India continues to grow and develop, it is essential that we prioritize environmental sustainability and reduce our carbon footprint.

Overall, the Union Budget 2025 presents a comprehensive and forward-looking vision for India's economic growth and development. By prioritizing infrastructure development, tax relief, MSME support, education, healthcare, and green energy, the budget sets the stage for India's continued growth and prosperity.

— Vijeet Kumar, *Delhi*

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Life Membership : 1500/-

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Quote-Unquote



These are children of very ordinary families, and they are lured by big dreams and promises. That is why we must fight against the whole human trafficking ecosystem.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Bharat



For decades we have been talking about globalisation. Now we are facing the issue of fragmentation in the world.

Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister, Bharat



The textile sector is the second-largest job creator in the country, after agriculture. We have set a target to take the number of textile jobs to 60 million from 45 million at present. The sector has got an allocation of 5300 crore rupees in the Budget.

Giriraj Singh, Textiles Minister, Bharat

End of Free Trade Era

After taking over as President of the USA, Donald Trump launched a frontal attack on the global free trade system, created after World War II, by announcing his intent to impose higher tariffs (on a reciprocal basis) on imports from many countries around the world. Since the 1990s, the belief has gained ground that the policy of liberalisation, globalisation, and privatisation is the only way forward for the world, especially developing countries. However, the scenario changed abruptly with the tariff war initiated by Donald Trump. Notably, it was the US and its allies who had pushed the world towards free trade, especially with the advent of the World Trade Organization (WTO), introducing a rules-based global trading system. With the WTO coming into existence, tariffs were gradually reduced, and non-tariff barriers also shrank in number and intensity. Apologists for free trade dominated the discourse on trade policy, counting on growing international trade in the post-WTO period, which, according to them, helped developing countries achieve high growth rates.

Donald Trump was the first to start undermining the WTO trading system. During his first term as US President, he blocked the nomination of judges to WTO dispute settlement panels. This virtually paralysed the dispute settlement mechanism (DSM) in the WTO, which is critical to the rules-based trading system. Now, in his second term, Donald Trump is overturning the basic rule of the WTO by imposing tariffs unilaterally. The US, once the biggest supporter of free trade and a rules-based global trading system, has suddenly realised under Donald Trump that for decades it has bought more goods from the rest of the world than it sold, resulting in a huge trade deficit, which reached 918.4 billion US dollars in 2024. Trump's argument is very simple: if other countries are imposing higher tariffs on US exports, the US will also impose higher tariffs, which he calls 'reciprocal tariffs.' It is believed that this action by Donald Trump could presage a global shift towards higher tariffs. This poses a significant challenge to the WTO trading system. Although, at first glance, Trump's arguments seem valid-imposing high tariffs on a reciprocal basis because other countries are imposing high tariffs on American exports-this argument lacks legitimacy in reality. Notably, the WTO came into existence after new issues were introduced in the GATT negotiations, which included TRIPS (Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights), TRIMS (Trade-Related Investment Measures), agriculture, and the service sector. Developing countries were apprehensive and, therefore, opposed the inclusion of these new issues, as they were destined to benefit developed countries and harm health security, domestic industry, agriculture, and, above all, the sovereignty of the developing world. At that time, India and other developing countries imposed high tariffs and non-tariff barriers to protect their respective domestic industries. To make the deal more attractive, developing countries were allowed to impose higher tariffs than developed countries in exchange for accepting new issues in GATT and signing agreements on TRIPS, TRIMS, agriculture, and services.

The WTO system greatly benefited the US and other developed countries, as it paved the way for a strong patent and IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) regime. This benefited their pharmaceutical and other companies through royalties, opened developing countries to investment by multinational companies, and expanded markets for US agricultural products in countries like India. However, after China's entry into the WTO, its aggressive foreign trade policy dealt a huge blow not only to manufacturing in India but also in the US and Europe. Moreover, China's growing strategic clout, fuelled by its massive trade surplus and rapid growth, challenged US dominance. Meanwhile, the US economy slowed down. Donald Trump understands that free trade policy is partly responsible for the USA's economic condition-especially due to cheap imports from China, which led to the closure of US industries, rising unemployment, and an overall slowdown of the economy. Those who strongly supported the free trade policies adopted under US pressure since the 1990s are now shocked by Donald Trump's actions. Experts in India who once extolled the benefits of free trade are now criticising Trump's policies, but they can no longer preach free trade to developing countries. It must be understood that economic theories operate on certain assumptions; if these assumptions fail, then the policies must be reconsidered. This also applies to the theory of free trade. If adopting free trade policies has led to a decline in manufacturing in India and other countries, resulting in job losses and increased dependence on foreign countries, then there is a need to adjust the policy accordingly. In the last five years, India has sought to promote domestic manufacturing of goods previously imported from countries like China through the Atmanirbhar Bharat policy. This initiative has already started yielding dividends. However, the biggest obstacle to its success is India's still relatively low import duties. For the Atmanirbhar Bharat policy to succeed, imports from China must be curbed.

Even today, some argue that, regardless of what the US does, India should reduce its import duties. This advice is economically unsound. It is important to recognise that the biggest advocates of free trade in the past-such as the US-are now becoming protectionist in the interest of their own economies. Therefore, with the US imposing reciprocal tariffs, free trade policies will no longer be relevant. Today, as the existence of the WTO-the strongest instrument of free trade-is under threat, there is no justification for advocating free trade. While India can negotiate trade deals with other countries, including the US, based on mutual interests, there can be no dogmatic commitment to free trade in Trump's era if others are becoming protectionist. India must seize this opportunity to prepare its industries for global competition within a protective environment.

Union Budget 2025-26: Beyond Rhetoric



This budget has the distinction of recognizing the gig workers, working with e-commerce platforms, register them with E-Shrm Platform and granting them the benefit of health cover, apart from encouragement given to labour intensive sectors. For long Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh and Swadeshi Jagran Manch had been demanding welfare measures for gig workers.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

While concerns were being expressed about health of the economy, due to deceleration in GDP growth in last two quarters, depreciating rupee, continuing inflation, decline in consumption, rising trade deficit, declining forex reserves, it was real challenge for the government to spur manufacturing growth, push self reliance in agriculture, supporting the farmers and address imbalance in agriculture production, reducing dependence on foreign countries regarding pulses and edible oils, and also give tax relief to middle income tax payers, and at the same time address inflationary concerns. Budget 2025-26 has tried to balance all these concerns and take the economy forward.

But, despite all odds, fiscal health of the country was in a fairly good position, with lower fiscal deficit, booming taxes, both direct and indirect taxes, comfortable NRI remittances and increasing investment announcements in the current fiscal year. This could give space to the Finance Minister, to offer big relief to the small tax payers and continue with big capex, apart from greater provisions for health, education, agriculture and manufacturing.

Big Relief to Middle Class

Though, Narendra Modi government had been giving some relief to the middle class in terms of income tax, but the narrative had been that middle class gets a very raw deal in every successive budget. But in its first full budget in Modi 3.0, Finance Minister has offered a real big relief to middle class, by freeing them from paying any tax up to Rs 12 Lakhs of annual income, or Rs one lakh monthly income. In case of salaried class, this exemption is 12.75 lakhs, as they get benefit of standard deduction, of Rs 75,000 from their income. Though, people with income beyond Rs 12 Lakh, are not found to be similarly lucky, but they also get some relief, though, not as big as people earning up to Rs one lakh monthly income.

Manufacturing Push

Since, the start of Aatmanirbhar Bharat policy, a demand has been picking up to give a big push to domestic manufacturing. Budget 2025-26, has the distinction of giving big push to manufacturing, especially in clean tech sector, including Electric Vehicles' batteries and motors, wind power equipments and other renewable power equipment. MSME Manufacturing Mission, enhanced credit Guarantee for MSME; credit card for micro enterprises, with Rs 5 Lakh limit, to address their working capital needs; extension of PLI beyond earlier list; and several other measures to improve manufacturing to insulate the country from Chinese dominance are important initiatives of this budget. The present endeavor of the government will go a long way towards the goal of making India, a manufacturing hub, and that too through MSME sector.

This budget has tried to remove obstacles in the clean tech path, by way of push given to lithium batteries, motors for electric vehicles and other clean-tech

manufacturing. It's important to note that due to our excessive dependence on imported batteries, motors for electric vehicles and also solar cells, our import bill has been rising and in future nation could even be exploited due to our dependence on imported components. Therefore, it is giving push to Aatmanirbhar Bharat and saving nation from exploitation by foreigners, especially Chinese.

National Manufacturing Mission for MSMEs, various schemes for start-ups, encouragement to toy industry to make India 'Toy Hub' of the world, are other main highlights of the budget.

Encouraging MSMEs

Budget gives new boost to the MSME sector by giving enhanced credit guarantee cover to MSMEs at all levels, start-ups and export oriented units; measures for labour intensive sectors, more specifically leather and footwear sector, toys, food processing and others. More specifically manufacturing mission has been started covering small, medium, large; all kinds of industries for furthering make in India.

Agriculture Push

Constitution of 'Makhana Board' is exemplary step towards promoting a wonder nutritious agricultural product, of Bihar and can open new vistas for encouraging agriculture products of different other regions. Recently, government had constituted Turmeric Board also, which had long been demanded by Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, since UPA days, to address concerns of Telangana turmeric farmers. Push to make India self reliant in pulses, cotton mission and several



other schemes for agriculture are worth appreciating. Raising the limit on Kisan Credit Card too is satisfying, apart from several other measures. Contrary to the rhetoric of imperative of shifting population from rural Perhaps, it was pleasing to hear from Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech, that the goal is to generate ample opportunities in rural areas so that migration is an option, but not necessity. With increased income opportunities in rural areas, this may be a possibility, thanks to efforts of the government.

Bridging gaps between rural and urban India

Country has been faced with a big challenge of eroding relative incomes in rural areas vis-a-vis urban areas. It was satisfying when Economic survey reported that the gap between MPCE (Monthly Per Capita Expenditure) in rural and urban populations has narrowed from 84 percent to 70 percent. This has been made possible due to increased spending on rural roads, welfare schemes like housing, clean cooking fuel, water, electricity, health care, sanitation and many more. This process needs to be further accelerated.

Budget 2025-26 does much more to push rural incomes. Apart

from raising Kisan Credit Card limit, agriculture push, food processing push and many more efforts to raise rural incomes can go a long way to reduce rural urban disparities.

Health Push

Union Budget 2025-26 allocates expenditure of Rs 103280 crores on health and family welfare, Ayush and health research.

If we see over last 11 years there has been an impressive 8.3 times increase in expenditure on health and family welfare, Ayush and health research, from Rs 12482 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 103280 crores in Budget 2025-26. During this period the size of Union Budget has increased by hardly 2.8 times.

Along with push for health equipments, increasing 10,000 seats in medical colleges, and target of 75,000 additional seats in next five years, Union Budget 2025-26 allocates Rs 103280 crore for Ministry of Health, Ministry of Ayush and Healthcare Research, signaling a significant push for growth, with key measures like customs duty exemptions on life-saving drugs and the establishment of daycare cancer centres are some of the essential steps, which this budget has made.

Gig Workers

This budget has the distinction of recognizing the gig workers, working with e-commerce platforms, register them with E-Shrm Platform and granting them the benefit of health cover, apart from encouragement given to labour intensive sectors. For long Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh and Swadeshi Jagaran Manch had been demanding welfare measures for gig workers. □□

Privatisation of Nuclear Energy Sector: Budget Proposals and Implications

The Union Budget 2025-26 has been presented in Parliament on the 1st February 2025. Normally a Budget is presumably considered to be a Financial Statement with various tax proposals for revenue generation and the Government expenditures along with certain policy statements for the overall economic growth and certain schemes for the farmers and for rural development and certain other important fiscal announcements. However in this year's budget proposals there is a very silent mention of certain very important announcement on the Energy Security through Nuclear Energy Mission. In paragraph 61-62 of the Budget Speech, Hon'ble Finance Minister has spoken about the proposal for the Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat. It says that development of at least 100 GW of nuclear energy by 2047 is essential for our energy transition efforts. She has proposed for necessary amendments to the Atomic Energy Act 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010 for an active partnership with the private sector towards this goal. It has further elaborated and has spelt out the need for an outlay of Rs.20000 crores for setting up research & development facilities in order to carry out this mission. The Budget speech has stated that at least five Small Modular Reactors (SMR) will be indigenously developed and operationalised by 2033.

Therefore, there is a need to understand about the nuances of this mission particularly the implications for the proposed amendments in the Atomic Energy Act 1962 and the Civil Liability Nuclear damage Act 2010. There is simultaneous need to understand the implications for the proposed active participation of the private sector as to whether it would also allow FDI and foreign technology collaboration and partial or wholly allow MNCs in the Nuclear Energy generation or a limited entry for research and development of the Small Modular Reactors (SMR).



The Budget speech has stated that at least five Small Modular Reactors (SMR) will be indigenously developed and operationalised by 2033.

**Dr. Dhanpat Ram
Agarwal**



What would be the total cost outlay for 100 GW for the nuclear energy and what would be the requirements for Uranium or the other alternative sources of the raw materials like Thorium for producing the nuclear energy. It would be also necessary to understand the implications of the Indo-US nuclear deal signed in the year 2007.

In order to understand the above issues, let us first understand the genesis and the objectives of the Nuclear Energy Mission. The amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil liabilities Act were the prerequisites of the India – US 123 Agreement of 2007 which were pending for a long time which our country had not been agreeing for a long time since 2007-08 after signing the Indo-US Nuclear deal as Atomic Energy was reserved for the Government and no private sector was allowed on the basic ground of national security.

It is apparently reflected and as is the evident from the recent visit of the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to USA and from the Joint statement issued after the Bilateral Meeting at the white house with the US President Mr. Donald Trump in Washington DC on 13th February 2025, within less than two weeks from the announcement in the Union Budget on the 1st February 2025. The gist of one of the various other issues as stated in the Joint Statement with the caption “Energy Security” is as below:

Energy security

- Re-committed to the US-India Energy Security Partnership, including in oil, gas, and civil nuclear energy.
- US support for India to join the International Energy Agency as

a full member.

- To fully realize the US-India 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement by moving forward with plans to work together to build US-designed nuclear reactors in India through large scale localization and possible technology transfer.
- Unlock plans to build large US-designed reactors and enable collaboration to develop, deploy and scale up nuclear power generation with advanced small modular reactors.

Thus it is believed that the hasty announcement about the proposal for amending the Atomic Energy Act was in the background of the ensuing PM visit to France and USA immediately after the placement of the Budget. One may also argue and agree that the basic idea is to comply with the requirements of the Paris agreement for climate change and to look for long term energy security. Thus, this mission seems aligned with India’s commitment to reducing carbon emissions and meeting future energy demands, positioning nuclear energy as a pivotal component of the nation’s energy strategy and to meet net zero commitments by 2070.

The Government desires to align the above objectives with Viksit Bharat and feels that there is need for intensive research and it may require huge capital investment and technological collaboration by involving private sector which requires amendments in the present legal framework. Therefore, the Proposed Amendments are:

1. Atomic Energy Act

Current Restriction: The Atomic Energy Act of 1962 restricts nuclear power generation to government entities, specifically the Nuclear Power Corporation of

India Limited (NPCIL) and Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited (BHAVINI).

Proposed Change: Amendments aim to permit private companies to own and operate nuclear power plants, thereby encouraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the nuclear sector.

2. Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)

Current Provision: Enacted in 2010, the CLNDA imposes strict liability on nuclear plant operators and grants them the right to seek recourse from suppliers in case of accidents caused by defective equipment or services. This has deterred foreign suppliers due to potential unlimited liability.

Proposed Change: The government plans to amend the CLNDA to align with international norms, potentially limiting or removing supplier liability. This alignment is expected to address concerns of foreign nuclear suppliers and facilitate stalled projects with companies from the U.S. and France.

Impact on India’s Strategic Nuclear Partnerships

Changes in private sector participation and liability concessions in India’s nuclear energy sector will have significant implications for its strategic partnerships with key countries, particularly the United States, Russia, and France. It is likely to have major foreign influence on our nuclear research program which is highly sensitive from the National Security point of view and may also come in the way of our indigenous existing research. The relaxations and the concessions for the nuclear damages and for the civil liability as contained in the present law CLINDA may prove to be very

dangerous as per our painful experience from the Bhopal Gas tragedy. India should have continued with the present proposal of insurance pool which is in practice in many countries. Russia has already agreed on this Insurance pool arrangements through its company Rosatom, our most reliable partner, constructing Kudankulam Nuclear Plant (KNPP) and planning new projects.

USA has the plan to execute and revive the six AP1000 reactors planned in Kovvada, Andhra Pradesh with Westinghouse if India softens liability rules or offers indemnity via an insurance pool. Similarly France's EDF has been negotiating for the Jaitapur Power Plant (Maharashtra), the World's largest nuclear power plant (6 EPR reactors, 9.6 GW capacity). EDF too has demanded liability concessions similar to what was proposed

by Westinghouse of USA.

It is argued that by allowing USA, Russia and France, India can leverage these partnerships to counter China's nuclear diplomacy, particularly I Africa and Southeast Asia.

However, India's long term energy security and strategic autonomy depend upon reducing reliance on foreign nuclear technology and developing an independent nuclear energy ecosystem. India should rely upon its existing technology and further research. We already have expertise in Pressurised Heavy water Reactors (PHWRs) developed by Bhabha Atomic Research centre (BARC), the 700 MW Indian PHWR is the backbone of India's civil nuclear program. The next step is to accelerate the Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR) and commercialise the prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) under BHAVINI to establish a thorium based

energy cycle reducing uranium dependence. This is important as we are not the part of nuclear supply group as we have not signed the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the same is not in our national security interests. We can simultaneously encourage our domestic companies like L&T and BHEL and few others which has the potential to work in this field.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRS) and next-gen nuclear tech are a game changer for India's distributed power needs, especially in remote areas, islands and industrial hubs where IITs and BARC can collaborate and make India self-reliant in Nuclear Technology. India has 25% of the World's thorium reserves, giving it a long term strategic edge in nuclear energy which can be the primary fuel by 2047 when India become Viksit Bharat. □□

(National Co-Convenor, SJM)

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Budget 2025-26:

A Transformative and Game-Changing Pathway to Viksit Bharat



The Union Budget 2025-26 encompasses a holistic approach, addressing key developmental pillars such as youth and women empowerment, scientific education, culture and tourism, agricultural modernization, MSME growth, infrastructure expansion, digital connectivity, and socio-economic upliftment.

**Dr. S.
Lingamurthy**

The Union Budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated a total expenditure of Rs. 50.65 lakh crores while maintaining a targeted budgetary deficit of 4.4 percent. This budget is characterized by its consistency, comprehensiveness, and transformative nature, introducing structural reforms across key sectors such as agriculture, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), investment, exports, and the middle-class tax relief, aligning with the national vision of *Viksit Bharat*. The primary focus of the budget is to accelerate economic growth, promote inclusive development, stimulate private sector investments, enhance household sentiments, and increase the disposable income of India's expanding middle class.

Agriculture and Rural Development

The 2025-26 Union Budget continues the government's commitment to socio-economic welfare, mainly targeting aspiring youth, women, and farmers. The government has emphasized decentralized development strategies to generate employment in rural areas by introducing new initiatives and integrating departmental programs over the past decade. Notably, the budget has proposed the *Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana* and the *Developing Agri Districts Programme*, which aim to cover 100 districts and support approximately 1.7 crore farmers. Additionally, providing short-term credit for 7.7 crore farmers, fishermen, and dairy farmers through *Kisan Credit Cards* (KCC), with an increased credit limit of Rs. 5 lakhs, will significantly enhance agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

Recognizing the economic importance of *Makhana* production, the budget has proposed the establishment of a *Makhana Board* in Bihar, India, the largest





producer of *Makhana* globally, derives approximately 80 percent of its production from Bihar, generating an estimated revenue of Rs. 500 crores. The proposed board is expected to enhance production, processing, value addition, and marketing, uplifting economically disadvantaged districts such as Darbhanga, Madhubani, and Saharsa.

India remains the most significant global producer of pulses; however, rising imports to meet domestic demand necessitate a strategic intervention. The budget introduces Atmanirbharta in Pulses, focusing on key pulse varieties such as *Tur*, *Urad*, and *Masoor*. This initiative prioritizes developing climate-resilient seeds, enhancing productivity, and assuring remunerative prices for farmers, benefiting approximately five crore cultivators nationwide.

MSMEs and Entrepreneurship Development

To bolster the MSME sector, the budget has proposed issuing 10 lakh customized credit cards for registered micro-enterprises, each with a credit limit of Rs. 5 lakh under the *Udyam Portal*. Additionally, a novel scheme aims to provide term loans of up to Rs. 2 crore to

To bolster the MSME sector, the budget has proposed issuing 10 lakh customized credit cards for registered micro-enterprises, each with a credit limit of Rs. 5 lakh under the Udyam Portal.

5 lakh first-time entrepreneurs, particularly from women, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities, over the next five years. These interventions underscore the government's commitment to employment generation and inclusive economic growth.

Moreover, the budget emphasizes technological advancements for MSMEs, sustainable manufacturing practices, workforce readiness for emerging job markets, ease of business, and quality enhancement to enhance global competitiveness. The MSME sector is a critical driver of *Viksit Bharat*, ne-

cessitating substantial investment in skill development and industrial modernization.

The budget further supports micro-units in industries such as footwear, leather, toys, and food processing by increasing credit guarantee coverage to Rs. 10 crores for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) and Rs. 20 crores for startups. Additionally, the revised MSME classification—doubling turnover and investment limits—aims to facilitate greater access to formal sector credit, enhancing their competitive edge in domestic and international markets.

Export Promotion and Trade Facilitation

To enhance India's position in global markets, the budget has introduced several trade facilitation initiatives, including the *Export Promotion Mission*, *Bharat Trade Net* (BTN), the *National Framework for Global Capability Centers* (GCCs), and improved warehousing facilities for air cargo under *UDAN* and the *Maritime Development Fund*. These initiatives enhance infrastructure accessibility, streamline export credit mechanisms, support cross-border factoring, and address non-tariff barriers, strengthening India's MSME export sector.

Taxation and Middle-Class Relief

A significant budget highlight is the introduction of a new income tax framework, which exempts tax on annual incomes up to Rs. 12 lakh. This policy will stimulate rural and urban consumption demand, fostering domestic economic growth. Furthermore, reductions in Basic Customs Duty on essential medicines and medical equipment will enhance the affordability of healthcare services, ensuring broad-

er accessibility. Approximately one crore gig workers have been integrated into government welfare schemes via the e-Shram portal and healthcare coverage under PM Jan Arogya Yojana for the first time.

Education, Research, and Digital Transformation

The budget prioritizes education and skill development through the establishment of five *National Centres of Excellence for Skilling* in collaboration with global institutions, the expansion of *Atal Tinkering Labs* across 50,000 schools over five years, and the creation of a *Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Education*, with an initial allocation of Rs. 500 crores. Additionally, broadband connectivity will be extended to all government schools and primary health centers in rural areas, facilitating digital inclusion.

Further, the *PM Research Fellowship* will fund 10,000 students pursuing technological research at premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). The allocation of Rs. 20,000 crores for private-sector-driven research, development, and innovation underscores the government's commitment to fostering a knowledge-driven economy. Initiatives such as the *Gyan Bharatam Mission* and the *National Digital Repository of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)* aim to document and preserve India's rich manuscript heritage, reinforcing cultural and academic advancements.

Moreover, expanding medical education through an additional 10,000 seats, cumulatively reaching 75,000 over five years, will enhance healthcare accessibility and human resource development. Increased capacity in IITs is anticipated to

The budget prioritizes education and skill development through the establishment of five National Centres of Excellence for Skilling in collaboration with global institutions, the expansion of Atal Tinkering Labs across 50,000 schools over five years ...

strengthen scientific education and research. Additionally, initiatives such as *PM SVANidhi*—offering formal credit access, UPI-linked credit cards, and entrepreneurial capacity-building—will further empower aspiring entrepreneurs.

Culture and Tourism

India's economy is deeply rooted in its cultural heritage, with traditional practices significantly sustaining economic dynamism. Recognizing this, the Union Budget has strategically incentivized homestays through MUDRA loans and introduced performance-linked incentives for states to enhance tourism and pilgrimage-related initiatives. A key proposal in the budget includes the development of 50 prominent tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments, aligning with the vision of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*. This initiative aims to establish critical tourism infrastructure, improve travel accessibility, and strengthen connectivity to major cultural and historical sites.

Furthermore, the budget has allocated financial support for 40 projects across 23 states, providing interest-free loans for 50 years, amounting to ¹ 3,295.8 crore un-

der the *Special Assistance to States for Capital and Investment*. The *Swadesh Darshan* scheme has been allocated approximately ¹ 1,900 crore, while *Swadesh Darshan 2.0* (SD 2.0) will emphasize sustainable and responsible tourism. The revised scheme will continue to expand the 34 already approved projects, which have received a total funding of ¹ 793.2 crore, as part of the overall ¹ 2,541.06 crore allocation by the Ministry of Tourism. These measures are expected to encourage private investment in cultural tourism hubs and generate substantial employment opportunities.

The Heal in India initiative under medical tourism also seeks to attract international visitors by leveraging India's rich cultural and heritage connections. The budget also prioritizes the development of Buddhist tourism circuits, linking them to the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. This initiative is expected to contribute to the holistic development of these sites, fostering both spiritual enrichment and economic growth.

Conclusion

The Union Budget 2025-26 encompasses a holistic approach, addressing key developmental pillars such as youth and women empowerment, scientific education, culture and tourism, agricultural modernization, MSME growth, infrastructure expansion, digital connectivity, and socio-economic upliftment. By integrating forward-looking policies and targeted interventions, the budget is poised to be a transformative force, fostering inclusive and sustainable development. Consequently, the 2025-26 budget is not only a game-changer but a strategic blueprint for realizing the vision of *Viksit Bharat*. □□

Budget is forward note for Viksit Bharat

Bharat has completed the first quarter of the 21st century and it is pleased to record that our economy is the fastest-growing among all major global economies. During this decade nation's development track record and structural reforms have drawn global attention.

The great Telugu poet and playwright Gurajada Appa Rao had said, 'A country is not just its soil, a country is its people.' In line with this, Viksit Bharat, encompasses: zero-poverty; hundred per cent good quality school education; access to high-quality, affordable, and comprehensive healthcare; hundred per cent skilled labour with meaningful employment; seventy per cent women in economic activities; and farmers making our country the 'food basket of the world'. To achieve development Central government's four powerful development engines are: Agriculture, MSME, Investment, and Exports. To reach the destination: Viksit Bharat the avenues are Reforms, guiding spirit and Inclusivity. This Budget aims to initiate transformative reforms across six domains. Viz. Taxation; Power Sector; Urban Development; Mining; Financial Sector; and Regulatory Reforms.

Agriculture as the 1st Engine. Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana - Developing Agri Districts Program, Building Rural Prosperity and Resilience, Aatmanirbharta in Pulses, Comprehensive Program for Vegetables & Fruits, National Mission on High Yielding Seeds, Mission for Cotton Productivity are special areas identified to strengthen economy. Enhanced Credit through KCC and India Post as a Catalyst for up liftment of the Rural Economy.

MSMEs as the 2nd Engine, Government proposed to set up a National Manufacturing Mission covering small, medium and large industries for further-



Budget also focuses on manufacturing to empower entrepreneurs, MSME and Small business to fulfill the aspirations of 140 crores of Bharatiyas.
Mahadevayya Karadalli



ing “Make in India” by providing policy support, execution road-maps, governance and monitoring framework for central ministries and states. Currently, over 1 crore registered MSMEs, employing 7.5 crore people, and generating 36 per cent of our manufacturing, have come together to position India as a global manufacturing hub. With their quality products, these MSMEs are responsible for 45 per cent of our exports. To help them achieve higher efficiencies of scale, technological upgradation and better access to capital, the investment and turnover limits for classification of all MSMEs will be enhanced to 2.5 and 2 times respectively. This will give MSMEs the confidence to grow and generate employment for our youth. The details include Significant enhancement of credit availability with guarantee cover, Credit Cards for Micro Enterprises, Fund of Funds for Startups, Scheme for First-time Entrepreneurs, Measures for Labour-Intensive Sectors, Focus Product Scheme for Footwear & Leather Sectors.

History reveals that before advent of Muslim and Britisher since centuries, Bharat was leader of world market in leather business. To revive and to enhance the productivity, quality and competitiveness of India's leather sector, a focus product scheme will be implemented. The scheme will support design capacity, component manufacturing, and machinery required for production of non-leather quality footwear, besides the support for leather footwear and products. The scheme is expected to facilitate employment for 22 lakh persons, generate turnover of 4 lakh crore Rupee and exports of over 1.1 lakh



A digital public infrastructure, 'Bharat Trade Net' (BTN) for international trade will be set-up as a unified platform for trade documentation and financing solutions. This will complement the Unified Logistics Interface Platform.

crore Rupee.

Investment as the 3rd Engine, which encompasses investing in people, investing in the economy and investing in innovation. A game changing thought i.e. investing in people to increase productivity mentioned. So, Atal Tinkering Labs Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme, National Centers of Excellence for Skilling, Centre of Excellence in AI for Education Day Care Cancer Centres in all District Hospitals etc., became the part of the budget. Strengthening urban livelihoods In-

vesting in the Economy Public Private Partnership in Infrastructure Jal Jeevan Mission Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat Investing in Innovation Research, Development and Innovation PM Research Fellowship Gyan Bharatam Mission are proposed to achieve Viksit Bharat.

Exports as the 4th engine - Export Promotion Mission – An Export Promotion Mission will be setup with sectoral and ministerial targets, driven jointly by the Ministries of Commerce, MSME, and Finance to facilitate easy access to export credit, cross-border factoring support, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets.

A digital public infrastructure, 'Bharat Trade Net' (BTN) for international trade will be set-up as a unified platform for trade documentation and financing solutions. This will complement the Unified Logistics Interface Platform. The BTN will be aligned with international practices. Support for integration with Global Supply Chains. National Framework for GCC a national framework will be formulated as guidance to states for pro-

PM highlighted the initiatives for startups, including the Deep Tech Fund, Geospatial Mission, and Nuclear Energy Mission. He extended his congratulations to all citizens for this historic budget. Budget will try its best to empower every citizen, agriculture sector, and give boosts to rural economy.

moting Global Capability Centers in emerging tier 2 cities to leverage this opportunity for the benefit of the youth.

Reforms as the Fuel Tax Reforms - Government has implemented several reforms for convenience of tax payers, such as (1) faceless assessment, (2) tax payers charter, (3) faster returns, (4) almost 99 per cent returns being on self-assessment, and (5) Vivad se Vishwas scheme. Financial Sector Reforms and Development.

Pension Sector - A forum for regulatory coordination and development of pension products will be set up is the good move towards welfare of Pensioners.

For the insurance sector the FDI limit will be raised from 74 to 100 percent. This enhanced limit will be available for those companies which invest the entire premium in India. The current guardrails and conditionality's associated with foreign investment will be reviewed and simplified.

Grameen Credit Score KYC Simplification - the revamped Central KYC Registry will be implemented with a streamlined system for periodic updating.

Indirect Taxes

Budget aims to rationalize

Customs tariff structure and also support domestic manufacturing and value addition, promote exports, facilitate trade and provide relief to common people. As a part of comprehensive review of Customs rate structure, remove seven tariff rates. This is over and above the seven tariff rates removed in 2023-24 budget. After this, there will be only eight remaining tariff rates including 'zero' rate. Budget proposed to apply appropriate cess to broadly maintain effective duty incidence except on a few items, where such incidence will reduce marginally and also levy not more than one cess or surcharge.

Relief on import of Drugs/Medicines

To provide relief to patients, particularly those suffering from cancer, rare diseases and other severe chronic diseases, FM proposed to add 36 lifesaving drugs and medicines to the list of medicines fully exempted from Basic Customs Duty (BCD). Further, to give boost to Critical Minerals Textiles, Electronic Goods Lithium Ion Battery Shipping Sector Social Security Scheme for Welfare of Online Platform Workers.

An initiative to Support to States for Infrastructure is in the form of an outlay of 1.5 lakh crore Rupees is proposed for the 50-year interest free loans to states for capital expenditure and incentives for reforms.

Considering aspirations of states due for election is necessary for party in power. At the same time Government has to take into considerations of demands of voters of other states who have voted for the party in power. For example for Karnataka State it is very much needed to Create Railway Division at Kalaburagi, Starting AIMS at Kalaburagi and Raichur.

Let us conclude with Prime Minister remark, that this budget focused on how to fill the pockets of the citizens rather than focused how to fill the Government Treasury. Increase their savings, and make them partners in the country's development. He emphasized that this budget lays the foundation for these goals. "Significant steps have been taken towards reforms in this budget." This budget not only addresses the current needs of the country but also helps in preparing for the future.

PM highlighted the initiatives for startups, including the Deep Tech Fund, Geospatial Mission, and Nuclear Energy Mission. He extended his congratulations to all citizens for this historic budget. Budget will try its best to empower every citizen, agriculture sector, and give boosts to rural economy. Budget proposals benefit the middle class. Budget also focuses on manufacturing to empower entrepreneurs, MSME and Small business to fulfill the aspirations of 140 crores of Bharatiyas.

□□

Why India should have a 'sin tax' on ultra-processed foods



Ultra-processed foods, apart from aggravating lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, endocrine disruptions, cardiac issues, and high blood pressure, can attract a lot more expenditure towards themselves, endangering the local producers and the local food economy.

Indra Shekhar Singh

Nirmala Sitaraman presented the Union Budget for 2025. However, one suggestion of the Economic Survey was perhaps overlooked. It's the proposal to tax ultra-processed foods like soft drinks, breakfast cereals, chicken nuggets, etc, at a higher rate to safeguard India's health.

Western foods are mostly processed in heavy industrial factories and laced with heavy doses of preservatives, sweeteners, emulsifiers, and synthetic colouring and flavouring agents. All these ingredients increase the shelf life and flavour of 'products', almost making them addictive. These additives are not commonly found in our Indian kitchens. Many of these additives are associated with a plethora of lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, endocrine disruptions, cardiac issues, high blood pressure — and neurological diseases like dementia, anxiety, and also cancer. The list of damages to human health is a long one.

One doesn't even have to look far to the US, where ultra-processed foods have destroyed the health of poorer Americans, causing an obesity epidemic, among many other problems. Ultra-processed meats, including nuggets and other frozen meats sold across the US, have resulted in bad colon and digestive system collapses. It was known that in 2018, 2/3 of all the calories consumed by US youth were highly processed foods. Furthermore, research suggests that ultra-processed foods make up between 60 per cent and 90 per cent of the standard American diet. The direct result is staggering rates of childhood obesity. As per a Harvard Public Health study, processed foods are making Americans sick, and about 1,600 deaths daily are caused by the high consumption of ultra-processed foods in the US.

In fact, the food movements in the US and across the world vociferously



speak out against processed foods. And the organic and regenerative food movement across the world is growing around the world to prevent additives and industrial ultra-processing in food. In fact, the situation is so serious that many European nations, like France, Hungary, Denmark, Finland, etc, have a tax on sugar, salt, and ultra-processed foods, including soft drinks.

The Economic Survey suggestion comes in a timely manner as these ultra-processed, industrially manufactured foods have a high penetration in the Indian diet too. It is reported that between 2011 and 2021, ultra-processed foods have had a growth rate of 13.7 per cent. Meanwhile, the rural expenditure survey shows that rural India spent 9.6 per cent of its food expenditure on ultra-processed food. When it comes to other urban areas in India, we see 10.6 per cent of the spending on food is towards the purchase of the ultra-processed foods.

Now these trends present a major problem because with the same growth progression, ultra-processed foods can attract a lot more expenditure towards themselves, endangering the local producers and the local food economy.

The local food economy is still very strong and provides healthy alternatives to the ultra-processed factory foods. The local indigenous-based food systems are promoting health and local crops and farmers, whereas the ultra-processed foods are extractive and, after providing temporal satisfaction, are bad for health in the long run. We have case studies from all over the world.

India needs to be very careful, as we are a growing country battling diabetes and other food-style-related diseases. In fact, some



India needs to be very careful, as we are a growing country battling diabetes and other food-style-related diseases. In fact, some studies point to the fact that India is already home to the highest number of diabetic patients in the world.

studies point to the fact that India is already home to the highest number of diabetic patients in the world. Child diabetes is now also growing among the urban youth in metropolitan cities, and this trend is only set to increase in other areas as ultra-processed foods enter more households and thalis. Also, ultra-processed foods are now becoming a fashion statement, hence even more detrimental to India's health.

Time for 'sin tax'

So going back to the Economic Survey, the government should have created higher tax slabs for the corporations selling these ultra-processed food products and also for their products. Because these foods may be pleasurable to

consume but, in the long run, are quite bad for our children and food system.

Ultra-processed foods do not attack our health, but these corporatised food products are bad for our local food vendors and producers. Because each time a child prefers instant noodles or chips or a soft drink, he/she is not only choosing disease but also placing his/her money on corporate food systems. This weakens the local food economy.

The government ought to tax the ultra-processed foods and also encourage producers to not use additives and synthetic colours in foods. All industrial producers and products that have health-harming additives like emulsifiers, industrial chemical preservatives, and synthetic colouring and flavouring substances should all be taxed more. The natural and chemical-free food producers should be removed from the tax, or at least all natural foods and locally processed foods should be taxed the least.

This step will increase the government's revenue, stop the food-style diseases from spreading further, and finally give a big boost to producers of natural and chemical-free indigenous foods. □□

The author is an independent agri-policy analyst and former director – Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India.
<https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/why-india-should-have-a-sin-tax-on-ultra-processed-foods-13858873.html>

Revamping MSME's Sector for a Viksit Bharat

Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitaraman assured a number of structural reforms to strengthen the MSME sector in her budget speech on February 1, 2025. The Budget has correctly identified MSME's as the second engine of growth, with over 316 million registered MSME's in India, accounting for over 35 percent of the manufacturing sector. In her speech, the FM underlined the sector's vital role in elevating India's standing as a global manufacturing hub. According to the updated estimates for 2025, the Union Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises was awarded Rs 23,168 crore instead of Rs 17,306 crore, which is a 4.6% increase over the previous Budget.

The investment and turnover thresholds have also increased due to changes made to the classification criteria. The investment limits for micro industries have been increased to Rs. 2.5 Cr, small industries have been increased to Rs. 25 Cr and medium-sized businesses have been increased to Rs. 125 Cr. In contrast, the turnover limits for micro businesses have been raised to Rs. 10 Cr, small businesses have been raised to Rs. 50 Cr and medium-sized businesses have been raised to Rs. 500 Cr. It is anticipated that these changes will further improve the competitiveness, expansion, and operation of the MSME.

A more welcoming growth environment will result from these adjustments, allowing companies to relocate without encountering any regulatory obstacles. Now that more companies are MSMEs, they will have simpler access to government contracts, finance, and subsidies. A broader range of businesses will now be eligible for the government's Credit Guarantee Schemes for MSMEs, making it simpler for them to get both secured and unsecured business loans. If expanding businesses move up, they won't have to worry about losing their MSME privileges.

The Budget 2025 has taken care of these aspects by addressing the issues, suggesting structural and policy reforms thereby enhancing the future prospects for MSME growth and development.
Nandita Chitra



Additionally, there would be potential for a “ripple effect,” which would include increased job creation, increased market rivalry, and more robust economic contributions from the industry. In the next five years, we could be able to add an additional 5-7 million employment thanks to the extension of the MSME threshold. So, if the business is on the cusp of expansion, based on the revised threshold it is the perfect time to re-evaluate the existing growth strategies and tap into new benefits.

Additionally, growth and expansion would be guaranteed by the updated expenditure. An increase in investment expenditure might give MSMEs the money they need to expand. This could be applied to investing in technology and innovation, breaking into new markets, or increasing production capacity. Additionally, increased productivity is possible. Improved operational efficiency might result from investments in software, automation, or technology, which enables MSMEs to lower expenses while increasing output. Additionally, more money may be spent on research and development, which will help MSMEs stay competitive, produce new goods, and enhance their current ones, all of which will increase their market share. MSMEs can modernise and enhance consumer engagement by investing more in digital tools, e-commerce platforms, and automation as a result of the growing significance of digital transformation. Also, with increased investment, MSMEs may expand their workforce, contributing to local job creation and improving the economy.

The government makes sure

that the classification takes into account a company's actual market presence rather than just its capital expenditure by taking turnover into account.

Documentation and compliance needs are simpler when definitions are uniform and standardised throughout manufacturing and services. Consequently, the burden of compliance would be reduced. Due to change in the outlay there would be more better opportunities, especially for startups. Hence this would result in more industries. By increasing the number of MSMEs, more businesses will be able to take advantage of government programs like credit guarantees, subsidies, and simpler loan availability, which will promote inclusive growth.

The FM also stated that the credit guarantee coverage will be improved in order to increase credit availability. It will range from Rs 5 crore to Rs 10 crore for micro and small businesses, resulting in an extra Rs 1.5 trillion in credit over the course of five years.

Lack of timely availability of necessary finance is one of the main issues MSMEs confront. In light of this, the budget suggestions for customised credit cards that offer microbusinesses registered on the Udyam Portal a maximum of Rs. 5 lakhs will help those businesses that are having trouble obtaining liquid cash to satisfy their financial obligations. It is anticipated that one million of these cards will be distributed in the first year, simplifying working cash access. Additionally, a new fund of money with an expenditure of Rs 10,000 crores is announced for entrepreneurs. According to the new plan, during the next five years,

5 lakh women, members of scheduled castes, and members of scheduled tribes will be eligible for term loans up to 2 crore rupee for first-time business owners.

With a goal of creating 22 lakh job opportunities and generating Rs. 1.1 lakh Cr in exports, the budget guidelines have also placed a specific emphasis on the footwear and leather industry. The allocation for the coir, village, and khadi industries rose by 9% to Rs 1,532 crore. In the meantime, funding for skill development and entrepreneurship has grown by more than 19% to Rs 836 crore. The budget announces a cluster-based toy manufacturing strategy with the goal of making India a global centre for toy production.

The sector's performance will undoubtedly be improved by the government's emphasis on deregulation and the extension of the Ease of Doing Business 2.0 strategy. Over 20 million small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) would be impacted by this new development.

The MSME industry in India offers countless opportunities for expansion, job creation, and diversification. However, structural obstacles and a lack of necessary funding are impeding its full growth. Investigating the sector's problems and proposing a suitable plan to enhance its performance was therefore urgently needed. The Budget 2025 has taken care of these aspects by addressing the issues, suggesting structural and policy reforms thereby enhancing the future prospects for MSME growth and development. □□

(PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Economic Studies and Planning, Central University of Karnataka)

India's Culture, Society and Economy – Past, Present and Future

I. The Critical Question

The single most critical question which has tormented the Indian establishment consisting of most thinkers, intellectuals, academics, political leaders, policy makers, economists, sociologists of India since Independence is whether the Indian religions, culture, traditions, lifestyle and values are compatible with the contemporary time, particularly for economic development. This question has also acutely tested the faith and conviction of the people in Hindu culture which constituted, according to the Supreme Court, the way of life, ethos and traditions of the Indian nation itself. It has also challenged the capacity of the religious and spiritual leaders to help sustain the faith of the people in their religion and philosophy. While the Indian establishment had virtually concluded that India's traditions and culture are incompatible with contemporary economic thinking, the people of India did not agree with the establishment and the religious and spiritual leadership of India had kept the faith of the people alive in both. But, with India now perceived as a rising world super power by think tanks like the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relation [ICRIER] in India and many outside, it is time to make a value judgement on Indian culture – its past, present and future – to know to whether it is compatible with contemporary demands and what is its contributory role for India and for the world as India emerges as a global force. This calls for a look back and look ahead from our current position



The family savings in India which is the direct product of family culture is now 25% of the GDP and according to Goldman Sachs, a top global banker, this has ensured that India does not need foreign investment for its infrastructure development.

S. Gurumurthy

II. Indian mind under western influence

In free India's discourse, the proponents of our sense of this ancient nation, Hindu philosophy, culture and lifestyle had always been on the defensive for the last several decades because the colonists had made us believe that the West was always advanced in economics and technology and we were always backward in both. Since the soft India was militarily conquered and colonised, the colonial and the other Western thinkers, consistently labelled India as barbaric [Wm. Archer/ Winston Churchill], or as semi-barbaric [Karl Marx], or as disqualified for development in modern capitalism because of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs [Max Weber] or as functioning anarchy [JK Galbraith] and exerted great negative influence on the Indian mind and on Indians' opinion about India. Of them, according to studies, Karl Marx and Max Weber, neither of whom visited India nor otherwise deeply familiar with Hindu culture and traditions, have exerted the greatest influence on Indian academic and intellectual establishment. The continuing tsunami of such negative academic and intellectual vibrations devalued the Hindu philosophy, culture, society, traditions and values in the mind of the Indian scholars and rated them as backward and unsuitable for the contemporary world. A well-known Indian economist Dr Raj Krishna even described, as late as in 1978, the moderate GDP growth rate of India as 'Hindu Growth Rate'. This term was later

popularised by the then World Bank chief McNamara to say that India would always survive on aid from West and deride India. Undeniably the Indian mind was dominantly influenced by the Western scholars and philosophers.

III. The U-turn – western scholars now disprove the detractors

But in the last decade or thereabouts, this whole impression has undergone a change with the rise of India. With the rise of Japan in the 1970s, of the East Asian nations in the 1980s, of China in the 1990s and of India at the dawn of the 21st century, a huge geo-political and cultural power shift has been taking place in the world from the Euro-American West to Asia. The assumption in, and of, the West till Asia rose was that West was the First [rate] World and the rest belonged to the Second and Third [rate] Worlds. The rise of Asia, Japan first, prompted the Western scholars to study whether such rise was founded on any potential inherent in them. On such study, Paul Bairoch, a Belgian economist, came out with his stunning finding that as late as in 1750, India, with 24.5% and China with 33% had a combined share of 57.5% of global GDP, when the share of Britain was 1.8% and that of US just 0.1%. This led to two huge debates in the West. One, whether the West had a lesser standard of living compared to Asia as late as in the 18th century; two, whether the rise of the West was due to any superior qualities or capabilities inherent in it, or, it was just exploitation of its colonies. Based on Bairoch's study some historians like Ferdinand Braudel said that the standard of living of the West was not higher than that of Asia before industrialisation. Some felt that the West exploited the Rest



and particularly Asia and grew and others differed.

As if to resolve the debate, the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation [OECD], a forum of developed nations of the world, constituted a study – the Development Studies Institute – under Angus Maddison, a great economic historian, to study, in substance, whether Paul Bairoch was right. Angus Maddison, who felt at the start that Bairoch was unlikely to be correct, ended up endorsing him completely. In his study 'World Economic History – A Millennial Perspective', Maddison not only confirmed Bairoch, but went on to say that India was the world economic leader for 17 centuries from the beginning of the Common Era, with China, which overtook India later, as No 2. And after CE 1800, both of them lost out – with India crashing to 1.8% and China 6.2% in 1900. As the British Historian William Dalrymple wrote, the current rise of India is not a rags to riches story, but that of an empire, which had lost out temporarily, striking back to acquire its due position in the world. These studies have completely disproved the views of Marx and Weber, Galbraith and Raj Krishna and also established that the Indian culture and way of life could and did build

a successful globally powerful economic model for India. So, India, rich in cultural heritage, was also economically prosperous. It was therefore canard spread by the colonial scholars that the Indian culture and traditions were incompatible with economic prosperity.

IV. Traditional culture and modernity, economy and society

It is necessary at this point to know what, in the Hindu understanding, is tradition, culture and modernity and what is their role in the economy and society. Our culture, according to the Kanchi Mahaswami who lived for a century among us, is founded on the twin principle of "aparigraha" [contentment] and "nirahambhavana" [humility]. Both these virtues are the products of the larger consciousness of relation among humans and within all elements of creation; they recognise and imply a higher duty to fellow humans and to nature. The virtue of contentment recognises and balances economic differences. Humility comprehends and addresses all differences. These two virtues help to unify the diversities. This twin virtues are therefore in tune with the very principle of creation, namely, unity in diversity. The diverse appearances of high and small, high and low, and weak and

strong are harmonised by these virtues of higher relations. This is supplemented by worldly relations, family, community, society and nation. Our culture honours relations. It rests on relations and it promotes and sustains relations in turn, as Sri Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita, on the basis of “parasparam bhavayantah”, namely mutually cooperative relations. Our tradition and culture mutually cooperatively relate individuals to families, families to communities and communities to larger society and the larger society to the country and finally the country to the world on the principle of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”. No other ancient civilisation even thought of the world or the world as ‘family’; the modern civilisation looks at the world as ‘market’.

The expanding relationship of these collectives is well-described in Mahabharata capturing the integral relation between individual, family, village, the country and God, thus: “*Tyajet ekam Kulasyarthe, Gramasyarthe Kulam tyajet; Gramam Janapadasyarthe, Atmarthe prithivim tyajet*”. It means that [rights of] individuals are to be sacrificed for the family; [rights of] families are to be sacrificed for a village; [rights of] villages are to be sacrificed for the country; and when it comes to realising God, the entire everything can be sacrificed.” The meaning is that the individual owes duties to families, families to village [neighbourhood] village to the country. So the relation between the individual to the nation is interlinked and integrated by a sense of duty to one another. The traditional society is relation-oriented which binds everyone to duties to families, near and dear, community and society, even to nature and animals. This sense of

The world which has witnessed almost a breakdown of the global financial system in the year 2008 saw two distinct responses. The Asian countries which are largely family-community based recovered fast. The Economist Magazine wrote a cover-page article on Asia’s “Astonishing Rebound”.

duty is comprehended in the concept of Dharma. Now let us see how the decline of culture or collective behavioural norm leads to economic decline.

V. Cultural decline leads to economic decline

In contrast, in the Western civilization there is no integrality, only compartmentality. The individual and his rights are supreme, subject only to the law. If there is a conflict between the individual and the family or between the individual and the village or society, the individual rights prevail. In the Western view, the family itself is a contract, a terminable one. There is nothing called society, said Margaret Thatcher. Driven by individualism, modernity rests on law and contracts to regulate individual human beings. The principal drive of modernity is rights and rights-consciousness – the individual rights, human rights, gender rights, animal rights and so on. In fact the core of modernity consists in releasing humans from tradition, traditional relations and bonds and atomising them and granting rights to them.

While India, China and generally Asia are on the rise, the Euro-American economies are declining or slowing. The world which has witnessed almost a breakdown of the global financial system in the year 2008 saw two distinct responses.

The Asian countries which are largely family-community based recovered fast. The Economist Magazine wrote a cover-page article on Asia’s “Astonishing Rebound”. But the West, which has over several decades weakened family and communities has not recovered from the downtrend. Actually, the bankruptcy of households in America triggered the financial crisis in America that exploded as the financial crisis in the US, which was later exported by America as a global economic meltdown. The recent economic downturn of the West, particularly America, is a standing example of how this sequence of decline in culture and values to decline in national economy is a cause and effect sequence. This led to the decline of families. This necessitated the state with a social security programme to intervene to take care of people – the elders, infirm, and the unemployed, who were left unprotected because of the decline of culture and therefore families. In the year 1980, the National Bureau of Economic Research [NABER] in the US had warned against this kind of State-provided social security which makes families functionless and purposeless adding that it would inevitably cause “serious erosion in family values”. The NABER said that while business firms have taken over much of the family func-

The economic policy which makes the people government-dependent on the government was originally expounded by an ancient Indian thinker Bahuka in Srimad Bhagavatam. Kamsa, who became a hate figure because he repeatedly killed the children Vasudeva, asked his adviser Bahuka how to make the people, who hate him, accept him.

tions production of food, the State taking over the vital functions would render the family meaningless. This amounted to virtual nationalisation of families. With the nationalisation of families, the propensity of the families to save also was eroded. This also further accentuated decline in savings. The current value of the future social security burden of the US is estimated at \$104 trillions, which is 6.5 times the GDP of America! This is the cost of the decline in culture and families. Experts say that this is a dynamite waiting to blow up the US economy.

VI. Indian thinker Bahuka's economics rejected in India thousands of years ago, is now followed by America

The economic policy which makes the people government-dependent on the government was originally expounded by an ancient Indian thinker Bahuka in Srimad Bhagavatam. Kamsa, who became a hate figure because he repeatedly killed the children Vasudeva, asked his adviser Bahuka how to make the people, who hate him, accept him. To which Bahuka replied: 'open your treasury to the people; give them free money to enjoy life; breakup families; teach women that chastity is not worth having at the cost of pleasure; bring up children to look upon parents as old and useless; once people

begin to believe in unrestrained pleasures of life as the goal of life, self-restraint will disappear; and men will be like well-fed cattle at the mercy of their cowherds and like uncomplaining beasts, obey your lash as if it were a favour from you.'

This is precisely what the US economic system has done to its people. It has freed the people from families and relations and enslaved them to the government. These individuals are individually free, but collectively slaves! Each one of Bahuka's advice has been implemented in the US. Women have lost chastity for pleasure and that is why a fifth of the pregnancies are teenage girls; 41% of the pregnant are unwed women; and half of the households are government dependent. The Americans have discarded their relations, turned families into contracts, to be finally at the mercy of the government. The individuals, women, and elders got freedom from their families only to become slaves of the governments. So the advice of Bahuka, rejected by Indians thousands of years ago, has now been adopted by the US with disastrous consequences which India has avoided. The US today bears testimony to the fact that the decline in culture leads to decline in economic performance and strength of a nation.

VII. Dharma and modernity

The sense of duty in the traditional model and the sense of right in modernity are a total contrast. The duty of one transforms into the right of another. So dharma transcends both duty and right because it comprehends both. Dharma consists of self-enforcing norms by the voluntary submission of the people. Culture is the collective behaviour according to the norms of Dharma which protects Dharma; and Dharma which is the behavioural norm of the individual and then collective protects culture. The relation between Dharma and Culture is mutually beneficial cooperation. Enforced law which creates enforceable rights cannot create families; but it can destroy them. It cannot create relations; but it can destroy them. It cannot create communities; but it can destroy them. This is self-evident from a comparison of law and contract dominated West and culture and relation dominated – read dharma driven – Indian society.

VIII. Indian culture has protected Indian society, economy

The principles of Dharma embedded in our cultural values which have protected our society and economy are: respect for parents and elders, respect for women; respect for teachers; respect for animals; respect for nature. These principles are embodied in the concept of Pancha Maha Yagna. The upanishad proclaims "matru devo bhava", "pithru devo bhava" "acharya devo bhava" and "athithi devo" bhava. Our Vedas proclaim reverence for mother earth. Our religious literature calls upon all to worship girls and women through kanya puja and suvasini puja. Mahabharata insists on protection of

forests and tigers saying that tigers protect forests and forests protect tigers. Our spiritual literature implores us to worship rivers, mountains and other forms of nature. It is these principles of dharma embodied in our culture which have saved the Indian economy; environment and ecology in India. It has preserved the respect for parents, elders, teachers, women, and nature. No other major religion of the world today makes it part of the religious practices to respect parents, teachers, elders and nature. In fact the Bible says that all forms of nature worship is not only idolatry, but also stupid and to worship nature in any manifestation is to exchange the creator for the created. Islam is even more opposed to reverence for anything other than Allah. It calls upon the children to disobey the parents to obey the religion. Neither in Christianity nor in Islam are teachers other than those who teach of Bible or Quran recognised, much less celebrated.

How the cultural value of society and family influence over the individual is not just a theoretical idea but an effective functioning value is brought out in a commercial research to sell products. It says: *"In India, social acceptability is more important than individual achievement and is given priority in an individual's life. Group affiliations are given precedence with family traditions and values. For most Indians, family is the prime concern and an individual's duties lie with the family. In India people's search for security and prestige lies within the confines of the near and dear"*. It is a traditional cultural value which has sustained the Indian family, society and economy, even when the Indian state had remained hostile to our dharma for almost a millennia, and continues to

The world, particularly the West, needs India. That is why two most famous historians, Arnold Toynbee from UK and Will Durant from US, who lived through the turbulent 20th century had this to say ...

sustain even today. These values constitute the social, cultural, and civilisational capital of India.

This cultural orientation is self-evident in the Indian economy. The family savings in India which is the direct product of family culture is now 25% of the GDP and according to Goldman Sachs, a top global banker, this has ensured that India does not need foreign investment for its infrastructure development. Since 1991 to 2011 the amount of foreign investment that has funded Indian development was only 2% of the total; while the rest 98% has been funded by local savings in which the family tops with 70% of the national savings.

It is the culture of protection of the elders, care of young and the responsibilities which the family undertakes as a cultural institution, and the disciplining of the relations between humans and between humans and nature through the concept of dharma and sustained by culture that has protected our economy and society. In contrast, in the West, the care of the parents, unemployed, infirm, ill-healthy are all the concern of the state. All family obligations are nationalised in the

West, while it is dharma and culture founded on dharma which takes care of all family obligations.

IX. Indian culture protects environment

In respect of protection of the environment by inculcating cultural values there is no parallel to the Hindu ethos which look upon and train the people to look at nature as divine. On the contrary in monotheistic faiths nature is considered to be secular intended for the enjoyment of humans. In his famous essay published in the popular Science magazine in 1967 Lynn White held the biblical view of dominance of earth and nature by man as the primary cause of environmental crises. 'This view is directly in contrast to the Hindu view which considers nature as sacred and human beings as part of nature. The world in the tip of the environmental crisis needs the Hindu perspective of nature as sacred.

X. World needs India and Indian culture and spirituality for its survival, say historians and economists

The world, particularly the West, needs India. That is why two most famous historians, Arnold Toynbee from UK and Will Durant from US, who lived through the turbulent 20th century had this to say:

"It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation is the ancient Hindu way. Here we have the attitude that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family": Arnold Toynbee

"It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us

such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all numerals and decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit: they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. Perhaps in return for the conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, a pacifying love for all living things": Will Durant

If this were what Arnold Toynbee and Will Durant said in the last century, one of the most well-known economists and thinkers of the world, Jean Pierre Lehmann, who was also the Adviser to the World Trade Organisation and is presently Professor in IMD, the famous management institute in Switzerland wrote, in 2006 that what is needed is a global ethical and spiritual role model for which the best candidate to fill the spot is India with non-conflicting Hinduism, adding that globalisation cannot work without Hindu way of life.

XI. What values the West needs from Hindu India today are what is precisely at risk in India

The West needs to learn from Hindu India's cultural values (i) to rebuild and protect the family and social foundations of its economy, (ii) to reinstate the reverence for nature and (iii) to revive the respect for women. Individual rights, gender rights, children's rights, elders' rights, and other rights consciousness have undermined the respect for women and brought down the sustaining structures of the family and caused the lack of reverence for nature in the Judeo-Christian Western civilisation and led to the current environmental crisis. Though, fortunately in India, these

sustaining values – family and society, respect for women and reverence for nature – are still functioning form, they are at great risk because of the continuation of colonial mindset through the intensification of the process of westernisation of the Indian intellectual, educational and media and generally the secular establishment, in the name of modernisation which is just alibi for westernisation. The Indian intellectual establishment is unable to draw the line between the individual belief system and the country's ethos and way of life, it tends to throw the baby with the bathtub – namely discard the national culture as conflicting with secularism, which according to the Supreme court it does not. This is precisely what the Supreme Court has said in its judgement in Prabhoo's case and Farooqi's case where it has distinguished between Hindu cultural values as the way of life of the people of India and the Hindu religion as such, saying that the Hindu cultural values is the foundation for secularism itself.

XII. Conclusion

Because of the Indian establishment's lack of intellectual and political courage and because of the concept of political correctness, the very values which sustain the Indian family, society, economy and environment and which the West desperately needs to import from India for its own good and even survival, are at risk in India. The public discourse promoted by the politically correct establishment is making it fashionable to follow the very western model which has brought down the families, societies and economy; undermined the respect for women and made them carbon-copy the West and fight for

their rights at the cost of respect; and destroyed the reverence for nature which has invited the global environmental crisis.

QED: Indian people need to reinforce their conviction in those values which most of them practise even today and the young India must be made to imbibe these values first in the interest of the Indian economy, society, and environment, before India can teach these values to the West.

The world – particularly the Western world – is keen to follow our values and is already following it. Lisa Miller, the religious affairs editor of the Newsweek magazine wrote a stunning article on August 14, 2009 titled "We are All Hindus now" referring to the changing American beliefs. She said that data shows 'we are becoming more like Hindus and less like *Christians in the ways we think about God, our selves, each other, and eternity; 65 percent of us believe – like Hindus – that "many religions can lead to eternal life"; they include 37 percent of white evangelicals, the group most likely to believe that salvation is theirs alone; a third of the Americans burn, not bury the dead; a quarter of the American believe in rebirth.* The West needs from us, and imports, our spiritual and cultural assets. Isn't Dhrshta Swami Vivekananda proving right? Is not America now opening the gift from Swami Vivekananda it had kept unopened for over a century? But ironically when the West is looking at us, many of our intellectuals, academics and thinkers are looking to the West!

QED: to make young Indians consciously imbibe Hindu cultural values which contemporary India largely follows is the biggest challenge to India. □□

<https://gurumurthy.net/> <https://docs.google.com-india-s-culture-society-and-economy-past-present-and-future/>

An Overview of Disruptive AI Technology – DeepSeek



Several articles and news have been published in the newspapers and magazines on the latest disruptive AI technology – DeepSeek and our young generation, engineers, students and teachers must be encouraged to research and innovate on the latest technologies whether in artificial intelligence, cyber security, blockchain.....the opportunities are endless. There is a general impression that the Chinese have developed it at very lost cost and it is the domain of rich countries. Though it is not entirely true but Chinese have made huge investments in research and development with the Government, Corporate and fund managers roped in. The magnitude of investments is astonishing.

An article was published in the Pioneer “From Open AI to DeepSeek: The fight for supremacy” on 1 Feb 2025 by Nilantha Ilangamuwa. This article, first in series on DeepSeek takes an overview of the Disruptive AI Technology – DeepSeek and introduces the global scenario on artificial intelligence. The entire input of has been taken from the article of Nilantha Ilangamuwa as mentioned.

China has rapidly closed the AI gap and geopolitical tensions shifting from military might to algorithmic dominance. Though it is hasty to infer that the world is entering a digital Cold War but technology has already taken over the economy and defence. Let us imagine a computer's hard drive containing a replica of your brain, connected to a high-speed Internet. The biological brain may become irrelevant when the machine not only possesses the mind but also gains control over everything is identified as ‘who you are’. This is what General Artificial Intelligence (AGI) truly represents - the vast, the unexplored frontier we are hurtling towards. The year begins with an AI race that was dominated by American startups, is now being swiftly overtaken by China at a significantly lower cost. We have crossed the Rubicon, heading towards the unknown destination, the consequences remain uncertain, and no one can predict what lies ahead.

The AI arms race, gaining unprecedented velocity, is propelling us into an era where the very foundations of intelligence, humanity, and civilization are being deconstructed at astonishing pace. Humanity, having long contended while with the challenge of technology reshaping its self-perception, is now facing an existential dilemma unlike any before. Artificial intelligence, however, threatens to do precise that. AGI poses a question so starkly profound that it demands our full intellectual engagement: What happens when the very attribute we have long considered uniquely human - the capacity to reason, to create, to understand - becomes replicable, scalable and infinitely more efficient, to the point where machines not only rival but surpass our cognitive limitations?



The future, it seems is no longer entirely within our grasp - but perhaps this is the precisely the kind of leap forward we need to ensure our survival.

Vinod Johri

What becomes of the human essence when faced with the entities capable of thinking faster, learning more swiftly, and ultimately transcending us in a once inconceivable way? The new race in AI has surged ahead, with China unveiling results of its years of intensive experimentation. The release of Qwen 2.5, followed by DeepSeek - an inexpensive yet formidable competitor to models like GPT - 4 from Open AI - has appended the established order. This shift is not merely a matter of technological rivalry; it signifies a profound alignment in the global power, where currency of influence is no longer military might or economic clout, but data control, computational resources and technological ingenuity.

The new 'cold war', truly it may be called so, is not one of armaments but of algorithms that information - the intellectual race whose stakes extend far beyond economic primacy to the very survival of the human civilization itself. As AI advances, it forces us to confront deeply uncomfortable truths about our nature. For millennia, humanity has positioned itself at apex of the intelligence on Earth, a secret of being a 'super species'. Yet what occurs when our very creations - machines begin to outshine us in the same domains? When we no longer retain exclusive domain over intelligence, how does this fundamentally alter our sense of identity?

Are we like the alchemists of antiquity, on the verge of realising what we no longer control our fate, but have given birth to entities that might one day supplant us? The very nature of the intelligence itself is now irreversibly in question. Cognitive architectures, once the exclu-

sive province of human brain, are now being mirrored and surpassed by machines. AI, in its most advanced forms, becomes a reflection of our intellectual framework - yet that operates faster, more efficiently, and with an ability to learn that far exceeds human potential. This is not merely an augmentation of human capabilities; it heralds the dawn of new epoch, where human and machine cognition converge, indistinguishable and perhaps inseparable. As we approach this unnerving future, we must ask ourselves whether we are philosophically, politically, and socially prepared to co-exist with entities that may one day rival or eclipse us.

Will we, as a species, embrace co-evolution, finding a new equilibrium in our relationship with the machines, or will we cling to fast myths of human exceptionalism attempting to subjugate or destroy the very creations we have birthed?

The decisions we make now will echo far beyond our survival, influencing the very nature of intelligence and future trajectory of all life on the Earth. The geopolitical ramifications of this technological revolution are as profound as its existential implications. *Powerful nations with vast resources for research, development, and energy will continue to dominate the future, while smaller countries may face unprecedented crises including crises concerning their own identity.*

As AI becomes embedded in the infrastructure of global politics, we are entering the era of digital empires - systems of control as potent as any traditional nation-state, commanding not only information but the very nature of human interaction. In this new digital cold war, the battle is not merely for technological supremacy, but for con-

trol over global political system itself. Is the rise of AI, an essential leap forward in humanity's evolution, or does it signals the twilight of human relevance?

AI is necessary tool; a portal that helps protects us from danger of total annihilation. Others, however, may see it as harbinger of obsolescence, a point of no return where our creations ascend to power and render as us irrelevant. However, there is a subtler, more philosophical interpretation of this transformation shift. Perhaps the advent of AGI is not our fall from grace, but the birth of a new chapter in the human evolution - one where we transcend the biological constraints that have long defined us. Like our ancestors who tamed fire and invented the wheel, we may soon wield AI as a tool that propels us to a new height. The fusion of human and artificial intelligence could lead to a post-human condition - that not only of extinction, but of surpassing the boundaries of our biological form and entering a phase of hybridised existence. This, of course, depends on our ability to confront the ethical and political structures that accompany the rise of AGI.

The true challenge is not whether we will create machines that surpass us is intelligence, but whether we have the wisdom to ensure that they remain our allies rather than adversaries. We must learn to coexist with these new intelligences, integrating them into our societies in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, our humanity. This is the existential challenge of our time - one that will determine whether the era of artificial intelligence will culminate in annihilation or transcendence.

[Continued on page no. 28]

Grappling with America First



President Donald Trump's America First trade policy has created turmoil across continents. Colombia, Canada, Mexico, and China have already faced the brunt of the muscular use of tariffs by the US for supposedly addressing illegal immigrants and illegal sales of fentanyl. President Trump has also threatened the European Union with high tariffs. What goals Trump will seek to achieve with his tariff threat and which country he will strike next remains uncertain.

While India has managed to stave off any immediate tariff threat, the signs appear to be ominous. In the past, Trump has accused the country of being a tariff abuser and currency manipulator — accusations which have been strong-

ly denied by the Indian government. India should brace itself for being required to accommodate the economic interests of the US.

With the US accounting for almost 17% of India's merchandise exports and our overwhelming dependence on it for exports of information technology services, we are undoubtedly vulnerable to pressures from the US. On the trade front, what could be the demands made by the US on India? The 2024 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers (NTE report) brought out by the United States Trade Representative, which contains a laundry list of perceived grievances against its trading partners, provides some pointers.

First, the NTE report identifies high tariffs on the following products as constituting a significant barrier to trade in agricultural goods and processed foods: alcoholic beverages, almonds, apples, canned peaches, chocolate, citrus fruits, coffee, cookies, corn, dairy products, frozen French fries, grapes, pecans, potatoes, poultry, prepared foods used in fast-food restaurants, raisins, vegetable oils, walnuts, etc. These products are likely to be on the US list of demands for lowering customs duties and easing import requirements.

Second, in the manufacturing sector, the NTE report makes a mention of India's high tariffs on motorcycle, automobiles, drug formulations, medical devices, and telecommunications equipment. Further, it has commented adversely on price controls for cardiac stents and import restrictions on laptops, tablets, and servers. President Trump could seek to prise open the Indian market for increasing the US exports for these products.

Third, with respect to services, India's prohibition on foreign investment in the inventory-based model of e-commerce retail, the government maintaining an "explicit sovereign guarantee on every Life Insurance Corporation policy", and the same giving it "an unfair competitive advantage" find adverse comments in the NTE report. The US has also raised concerns about the announcement by the National Payments Corporation of India to impose a market share limitation of



Getting trapped in a free trade agreement negotiation would not serve India's interests.

Abhijit Das

30% for foreign electronic payment service suppliers processing online payments made through India's United Payments Interface. There are several other market access-related concerns of the US in various service sectors.

Fourth, it is hidden from no one that an important objective of the US is to enhance the windfall profits of its producers of patented pharmaceutical products by seeking to dismantle India's generic medicine industry. This is to be done through tightening provisions beyond what has been mandated by the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement at the World Trade Organization. In particular, the US is likely to demand an amendment to Section 3(d) of the Indian Patents Act, which has so far been effective in putting brakes on evergreening of patents and facilitating the timely entry of generics in the market. The NTE report has specifically articulated US concerns on Section 3(d).

Addressing the issues of deep economic interests to the US are likely to have far-reaching and adverse implications for India. Given the very high level of subsidies provided by the US to its farm sector, the livelihood of Indian farmers would be threatened if India lowers the customs duties on agriculture products with substantial domestic production. It would also have an adverse impact on the efforts of the government to diversify from cereal production to other agricultural products. Aatmanirbhar Bharat could take a hit on account of lowering tariffs on automobiles, or changing rules to accommodate US interests in various service sectors. Further, allowing inventory-based online retail would

exacerbate the crisis confronting small and medium enterprises as well as kirana stores. Removing the price caps on cardiac stents and making changes to the Indian Patents Act to address American concerns would result in a gradual increase in the price of medicines and make affordable healthcare a fast-receding dream for large segments of the population.

How should India respond to US concerns? First and foremost, as in the case of India's response to Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminium in the past, it must not hesitate in imposing retaliatory tariffs in case the US again imposes illegal tariffs on India's exports. Second, India could indicate its willingness to address some issues of US interest, provided the adverse impact on its farmers and workers is minimised and healthcare of its citizens not

jeopardised. As suggested by some analysts, certain aspects of the recent Budget appear to be a step in this direction. Third, as an integral part of any deal with the US, India must insist on securing reciprocal market access for its goods in the US market. Fourth, India could agree to enhance its defence purchases from the US, provided the terms and conditions are right. No doubt all this would constitute a transactional approach to trade issues in the bilateral context. However, getting trapped in a free trade agreement negotiation, where India would be required to comprehensively address issues of interest to the US in merchandise trade, services, government procurement, digital trade, genetically engineered products and intellectual property, would not serve its interests. □□

(The writer is an international trade expert.)

<https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/grappling-with-america-first/3740317/>

[Continued from page no. 26]

An Overview of Disruptive AI Technology – DeepSeek

Ultimately, the measure of our humanity will not lie in our ability to create machines that rival us in intelligence, but in our capacity to retain those qualities that define us: empathy, creativity, and the willingness to evolve in response to monumental change. If we can meet with this challenge, the future - however certain - will hold us at least the promise of our fragile immunity. If not, we may find ourselves consigned to the dustbin of history, supplanted by the very entities we have created. Are we prepared

to face the unknown abyss, or will we cover in fear, clinging to the confronting illusions of the past? The future, it seems is no longer entirely within our grasp - but perhaps this is the precisely the kind of leap forward we need to ensure our survival.

In the next article on DeepSeek, we will discuss in more depth and our country's efforts in foraying research, investments and Government's infrastructural advancements towards developing our own AI models. □□

A 'Fitness Factor' For Farmers And Farm Workers Can Help Bridge The Country's Economic Divide

For quite some time I presumed that the 'fitment' factor was some sort of a grading or standard that is expected to be achieved by fitness enthusiasts in a gym. But with the announcement of the 8th Pay Commission, I realise that this factor has nothing to do with a gym.

Like in finance, where a 'haircut' is actually a deduction taken from the principal loan amount at the time of insolvency proceedings, a fitment factor is a simple formula that has been worked out to show by what percentage the salaries of employees should be increased at the time of pay revisions. After a little more research, I found that in the 6th Pay Commission, a fitment factor of 1.86 was applied. In the 7th Pay Commission, using a fitment factor of 2.57, the minimum basic salary for a government employee jumped from Rs. 7,000 to Rs. 18,000 per month.

While it is too early to say what will be the fitment factor by which the newly constituted 8th Pay Commission will raise the salaries, it is generally believed that the basic and grade pay salaries are projected to increase by a factor of 2.28 to 2.86. If that be so, the minimum salaries will rise to anything between Rs. 41,000 and Rs. 51,480 per month. Similarly, pensions will increase from a minimum of Rs. 9,000 to anywhere between Rs. 21,500 and Rs. 25,000. At least, this is what the media is speculating. The employees, however, are demanding a fitment factor of 3.68, which means a still higher jump in basic salaries.

'The fitment factor is an important means of keeping the salary of government employees and pensioners in line with rising inflation. It adjusts the basic salary to the new pay scale by increasing it by a certain multiplier. It has a direct impact on the gross salary and pensions. Through this, it ensures to maintenance of the purchasing power of the employees and improves the economic condition,' says an explain-



A fitment factor will keep salaries of government employees and pensioners in line with the rising inflation.

Devinder Sharma



er on the MSN portal.

This is certainly welcome. There has to be a mechanism which ensures a bright economic future for the employees. The fitment factor surely helps ensure ease of living for the employees.

The bigger question it entails is as to how much will be additional burden from the pay rise expected every year after implementing 8th Pay Commission recommendations. Against the expectation of an additional expenditure of Rs. two lakh crore per year for the central government employees and pensioners, the total additional burden when the 8th Pay Commission gets implemented across the country will be very high.

As per a study by Credit Suisse, the 7th Pay commission for instance had resulted in an additional financial burden of Rs. 4.5 lakh to 4.8 lakh crore every year, the total expenditure from the new Pay Commission would be comparatively much higher, may even touch or exceed Rs. Six lakh crore.

Given the economic benefit from the 8th Pay Commission accruing to the government employees, who at best form just four to five per cent of the population, it is time to ensure that other sections of the society are not left behind, specially the workers and farmers comprising the majority population.

While the Fitment factor ensures that salaries of employees are well taken care of, other sections of the society can't be left languishing at the bottom of the pyramid. The rural wages, which fall in the unorganised sector, must also receive a comparative hike in wages.

While the generous application of fitment factor for employees is justified, why can't a suitable for-

As per the latest Situation Assessment Survey for Agricultural Households that was conducted in 2019, the findings of which were released two years later, the average monthly income for a farm household stood at Rs. 10,218.

mula – call it a 'fitness (not fitment) factor – be worked out for MNREGA workers.

The revised estimate in FY 24 for MNREGA workers is Rs. 86,000 crore, which is hardly 1.78 per cent of the total budget. This needs to be enhanced substantially and should not be seen as an unwanted or avoidable burden. It will, however, make a lot of economic sense if these workers also see a jump in wages in the same proportion as the government employees. The higher minimum wages for 100 days guaranteed employment will surely translate into a higher rural demand. This will lead to inclusive growth.

Similarly, a fitness factor needs to be introduced for working out in future the Minimum Support Price (MSP). While farmers get MSP based on A2 plus FL formula, which means the farm output price based on the cost entailed in cultivation plus the cost of family labour, farmers are demanding MSP to be given as per the recommendation of the Swaminathan Commission.

Accordingly, the MSP they demand should be worked out as per the formula $C2+50$ per cent, which

means setting a price based on comprehensive cost plus 50 per cent profit. But considering that 79 per cent farmers do not even know of what is MSP and how it works (as Sharad Pawar had once remarked), I guess farmers, by and large, have little idea about how the fitment factor works for employees.

As per the latest Situation Assessment Survey for Agricultural Households that was conducted in 2019, the findings of which were released two years later, the average monthly income for a farm household stood at Rs. 10,218. While an average agricultural household comprise five members, it is the combined income of a family which may have a member running a tea shop or working as a daily wage worker.

As has been often mentioned, the average income from farming operations alone (without adding any non-farm income) comes to a paltry Rs. 27 per day. Given that the periodic labour statistics show an increasing reverse migration to the villages, agriculture is coming under additional stress. Already, studies show that close to seven crore workers have gone back to their villages in the last five years, which shows a heightened need to enhance budgetary support for farming.

From a well-established fitment factor already in place for the employees, introducing a fitness factor for farmers and farm workers will surely help to bridge the economic divide.

It will help to move from existing income disparity towards more inclusive income parity, carving a definite pathway to achieve the vision of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. □□

(The author is a noted food policy analyst and an expert on issues related to the agriculture sector. He writes on food, agriculture & hunger) http://www.bhaskar.com/opinion/a-fitness-factor-for-farmers-and-farm-workers-can-help-bridge-the-country-economic-divide-1350508#google_vignette

Nagas Sadhus: The Ultimate Line of Defense

The diminishing shelf life of technology, the role of technology, the demographic challenges, and the demographic dividend are the two focal points of the world's current civilization.

Today, whether it be trade, education, manufacturing, banking, health care, social benefits, identity, communication, or any other process, whether services or manufacturing, it relies on man and machine to excel in the world. The race to be supreme in the multipolar world is between man and machine. Those at a demographic disadvantage have no alternative other than to establish a machine against the man. Those who own demographic dividends have all the alternatives open to place themselves in this multipolar world.

The defense is one domain where the race for technological supremacy is heading in an anxiety mode. The Russians, Americans, Europeans, and Chinese are using all the tactics and techniques to dominate the world's market for selling and accumulating the best defense and military infrastructure. The world's era of a trade war by weaponizing tariffs as a handy tool to safeguard one's economic interest is tangibly visible. Any nation that wants to be self-reliant needs the urgency to be self-sufficient in food, energy, and defense. Trade wars are bearable because they compromise day-to-day comfort if food and energy security are assured.

But when it comes to defense, the mind, heart, and eyes go blind. There is no way one can compromise the defense necessities. Hence, the Americans Europeans, and even Russians are weaponizing the defense deal as a channel to gain economic progress. They keep looking for opportunities and creating opportunities for this business of defense deals. The easy market for them is the defense products. The vulnerable nations are easy prey.



We are the last resort for universal happiness, and this is possible because we have Akhadas and millions of Naga Sadhus. Naga Sadhus is our ultimate line of defense.

Alok Singh



Any democratically elected government that has to face an election at a regular interval cannot take an iota of risk to compromise its national security. In extreme cases, the budget allocation for procuring the military hardware is prioritized vis a vis food. Within the country itself, in the Naxal-affected area of Bihar, there was a time when farmers prioritized purchasing weapons for self-defense rather than buying tractors and other farm equipment to increase farm productivity. At the macro level, the nation's behavior is like that only.

The early engine of growth in terms of resources other than financial and technological are energy and fuels like petroleum products. Many nations other than Europeans, including America and Russia, hedged their earnings by selling energy products. When the world is on a launchpad to create and use environmentally friendly ways like wind and solar and others to satisfy their energy needs, fuel selling is risky, and oil-dependent countries of the Middle East are also facing the heat. Hence, defense is the product that saves them days.

The inventory of oil is different from the inventory of food. The oil inventory can be imported when the currency and the price in the international market are favorable, and the only constraint is the storage capacity. The foods can be imported, but apart from the storage capacity, the shelf life of the perishable eatables, even in raw format, is lesser than that of oil. Whosoever pays gets these products, whether for immediate consumption or lengthier consumption. The defense products are neither oil nor food.

The importation of defense products cannot be treated like oil

We have many fronts to handle. We wish to be Swvalambi, Aatmanirbhar, and Vikshit Bharat by 2047. Things are in our favor. Accepting the diminishing life of technology, including defense technology, is good news.

or food products. Defense products have positioned themselves as drivers of the economy for Americans, Europeans, and Russians. The Chinese have demonstrated that they can live and grow without Alphabet, Meta, Apple, or Walmart. Defense products are the last rescue products for Americans, Europeans, and Russians to dominate the world economically, financially, technologically, and militarily.

Now, the scenario is more dynamic. Those who want to dominate the world using their defense products will obviously sell products that do not make the buyer more powerful than the seller. The seller will create a race among neighboring countries to create an inventory of defense products. This never-ending plan is a conspiracy to create difficult choices for developing countries.

Even automobile companies don't offer their best products to customers in a single go. They sell their basic products first and keep the best product to launch when their peers come up with a very competitive product that threatens

their market share. Defense is a different game. The sellers of defense products are at a demographic disadvantage. They want the machines to be ahead of humans.

We have many fronts to handle. We wish to be Swvalambi, Aatmanirbhar, and Vikshit Bharat by 2047. Things are in our favor. Accepting the diminishing life of technology, including defense technology, is good news. The demographic advantage gives us confidence that in the race of man versus machine, man will lead.

In the ideal situation, when we are at par with the best defense products and can counter any military attacks, humans will be the deciding factor. The Israeli experience has demonstrated that technologies do fail and are less reliable than humans. When technologies fail, the traditional way is the best way—the only way. It is the original way.

The MahaKumbh at Prayagraj has demonstrated that Naga Sadhus is here for us. When the unforeseen situations demanded, our Naga Sadhus gave up their right, belief, and tradition to have the Amrit Snan, i.e., first to have the initial holy bath. Despite many restrictions pre and post-1947, our Akharas own many defense strategies that no one in the world can fully figure out.

Our traditions assure us that we are ahead, whether it be Shastra or Ashtra. We are the last resort for universal happiness, and this is possible because we have Akhadas and millions of Naga Sadhus. Naga Sadhus is our ultimate line of defense. They can train us the way Israel has trained its men, women, and even children. We all bow our heads to our Naga Sadhus. □□

(Alok Singh has a doctorate in management from the Indian Institute of Management Indore and promoter of Transition Research Consultancy for Policy and Management.)

This year's Budget 'prudent', addresses key concerns: SJM



Hailing the Union Budget as “prudent budget amidst challenges”, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) said it has tried to address all the key concerns to take the country's economy forward and also make it self-reliant. Presenting the Union Budget for 2025-26 in Lok Sabha on Saturday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a slew of announcements and also exempted annual income of up to Rs 12 lakh from income tax, rejigging tax slabs.

In her budget speech, she laid out a blueprint for next-generation reforms, including raising the FDI limit in the insurance sector, simplification of tax laws and cutting duties on intermediaries while providing enhanced fiscal support for welfare measures.

It's a “prudent budget amidst various challenges” the country was facing, the SJM said in a statement.

“Concerns were being expressed about health of the economy due to deceleration in GDP growth in last two quarters, depreciating rupee, continuing inflation, decline in consumption, rising trade deficit, declining forex reserves,” SJM said.

It was a “real challenge” for the government to spur manufacturing growth, push for self-reliance in agriculture, support farmers and address imbalance in agriculture production, reduce dependence on foreign countries regarding pulses and edible oils, and also give tax relief to middle-income taxpayers, and address the inflationary concerns at the same time, SJM added.

“Budget 2025-26 has tried to balance all these concerns and take the economy forward,” SJM added.

SJM said the Budget has given a push to the manufacturing sector in the country. The MSME manufacturing mission, enhanced credit guarantee for the MSME, credit card for micro-enterprises, the extension of the PLI beyond an earlier list and several other measures proposed in the Budget to improve manufacturing will insulate the country from “Chinese dominance”, SJM said.

“The Swadeshi Jagran Manch was demanding a well-defined manufacturing policy in the country for a long time. The present endeavour of the government will go a long way towards this goal,” SJM added.

SJM said the Union Budget has also tried to remove obstacles in the clean tech path, by way of push given to lithium batteries, motors for electric vehicles and other clean-tech manufacturing.

“It's important to note that due to our excessive dependence on imported batteries, motors for electric vehicles and also solar cells, our import bill has been rising and in future, the nation could be even exploited due to our dependence on imported components,” SJM said.

“Therefore, it is giving a push to Aatmanirbhar Bharat and saving the nation from exploitation by foreigners,” SJM added.

“Budget 2025-26 does much more to push rural incomes. Apart from raising the Kisan Credit Card limit, agriculture push, food processing push and many more efforts to raise rural incomes can go a long way to reduce rural-urban disparities,” SJM said.

Allocation of Rs 98,311 crore for the healthcare sector in the Budget indicates a “significant push” for growth, SJM said. Key measures like customs duty exemptions on life-saving drugs and the establishment of daycare cancer centres are some of the essential steps the Budget has made, SJM said.

“The SJM welcomes the budget announcement for recognising gig workers,” SJM added.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/rs-affiliate-swadeshi-jagran-manch-says-this-years-budget-prudent-addresses-key-concerns/articleshow/117860261.cms?from=mdr>

FAO Food Price Index slips 1.6% in January due to falling sugar and oil prices

Global food commodity prices declined in January, driven by significant drops in sugar and vegetable oil prices, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The FAO Food Price Index averaged 124.9 points during the month, marking a 1.6 percent decrease from December. While the index remains 6.2 percent higher than the same period last year, it is still 22 percent below its peak in March 2022.

The FAO Sugar Price Index saw a sharp decline of 6.8 percent from December and was down 18.5 percent from January 2024. This drop was attributed to improved global supply prospects, spurred by fa-



vorable weather conditions in Brazil and India's decision to resume sugar exports. Similarly, the FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index fell by 5.6 percent, reversing recent gains. The decline was largely due to lower global prices for palm and rapeseed oils, even as soy and sunflower oil prices remained stable.

The FAO Meat Price Index also dipped by 1.4 percent, with lower international prices for ovine, pig, and poultry meat offsetting an increase in bovine meat quotations. Meanwhile, the FAO Cereal Price Index edged up by 0.3 percent from December but was still 6.9 percent lower year-on-year. Wheat export prices experienced only a slight decrease, whereas maize prices rose due to lower production and stock forecasts in the United States. Rice prices declined by 4.7 percent amid ample exportable supplies.

In contrast, the FAO Dairy Price Index rose by 2.4 percent from December, registering a notable 20.4 percent year-on-year increase. The rise was primarily driven by a 7.6 percent surge in international cheese prices, which outweighed declines in butter and milk powder prices.

FAO's latest Cereal Supply and Demand Brief provides fresh insights into global cropping trends for 2025. Winter wheat sowings in the northern hemisphere wrapped up in January, showing increased plantings in France, Germany, and the UK, while Russia reported a reduction due to weather conditions. Maize harvests in the southern hemisphere are set to begin in the second quarter of 2025. Early projections suggest improved yields in Argentina and Brazil, while record-high maize prices have led to increased plantings in South Africa.

FAO has revised its forecast for global cereal utilization in 2024/25, predicting a 0.9 percent rise to 2,869 million tonnes, primarily due to higher anticipated use of maize as animal feed. Global cereal stocks are expected to decline by 2.2 percent by the end of the 2025 season, largely due to a significant contraction in U.S. maize stocks. Despite this, the global cereal stocks-to-use ratio for 2024/25 is projected to remain

at a comfortable level of 29.8 percent.

International cereal trade is forecast to contract by 5.6 percent to 483.5 million tonnes in 2024/25, primarily due to reduced demand from China for barley, maize, and wheat. The latest figures indicate that while global food commodity prices are declining, shifts in cereal production and trade dynamics will play a key role in shaping future market trends.

<https://eng.ruralvoice.in/international/fao-food-price-index-slips-1.6-in-january-due-to-falling-sugar-and-oil-prices.html>

Interaction programme on 'Entrepreneurship and Swadeshi Economy' conducted

Manipur Institute of Management Studies (MIMS), Manipur University (MU), in collaboration with Swavalambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA), Manipur Prant, organised a one-day interaction programme on 'Entrepreneurship and Swadeshi Economy' at MIMS Auditorium Hall. Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Satish Kumar, Akhil Bharatiya Sah-Sangthak, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, highlighted the principles of entrepreneurship and motivated students to think from the perspectives of an entrepreneur, and attainment of quality of life. Elaborating on the difference between job seeker & job provider, he pointed out that 'quality of life' comes through entrepreneurship.

Prof N Lokendra Singh, Vice-Chancellor, MU, stressed that exposure to new ideas lead to out-of-the-box thinking. Sharing his insights on entrepreneurship and swadeshi economy in the context of Manipur, he pointed out that some of the essential necessities of entrepreneurship in the State include the right attitude towards available natural resources, skills, history, and cultures of different communities. The VC also urged the students to instil thoughts of entrepreneurship, pursue realistic assessment of the place, harness original ideas and ideas inherited from ancestors, which can be marketed within and outside the State. Sharing the success story of his start-up, Roshni Kumar Yambem, co-convener, SBA, Manipur Prant, said, "Startup is not a billion-dollar company, but it is about anyone who is trying to generate income by themselves".

Highlighting the principle of self-reliance under Swavalambi Bharat Abhiyan, he encouraged students to visit the website and explore its facilities.

Prof Prabhakar Laishram, Director, MIMS, highlighted the importance of having a theoretical knowledge of management and company laws for successful operations of business.

Prof W Chandrabu Singh, Registrar, MU and coordinator, SBA, Manipur Prant, hosted the interactive programme, bringing a whole new approach to entrepreneurship among the students community.

Dr S Keshorjit Singh, faculty, MIMS and coordinator, SBA, Bishnupur District, gave the welcome address while Prof Jibon Kumar Sharma proposed the vote of thanks.

<https://e-pao.net/GP.asp?rc=21..180225,jeb25>

Trump tariffs can plug loophole that helped Chinese retailers

US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China may plug a loophole that particularly helped Chinese e-commerce countries flood the US with cheap goods: a tariff exemption for packages worth less than \$800. Under the US law, most imports valued at less than \$800 enter duty-free into the United States as long as they are packaged and addressed to individual buyers. It's referred to as the de minimis rule. This clause has been a boon for China's e-commerce retailers who ship often cheaper wares directly to consumers in the US.

Trump's executive orders directing 25% levies on Canada and Mexico — plus a 10% duty on China — specify that the “de minimis” exemption for small packages no longer applies, Bloomberg has reported.

The full scope of the de minimis changes — whether they apply just to the new tariffs issued Saturday or to older existing trade levies — was not clear, as per the Bloomberg report. However, trade lawyers told Bloomberg Trump's language cracking down on the de minimis exemption could apply broadly, even to existing duties against China, Canada and Mexico.

Regardless, the impact of the change threatens to fall most squarely on China, affecting retailers including Alibaba, JD.com Inc., PDD Holdings Inc.'s Temu and fashion-focused Shein. American shoppers and companies imported about \$48 billion worth of shipments from the world under that loophole in the first nine months of last year, according to US Customs and Border Protection estimates.

The smaller-value shipments account for more than a tenth of China's exports to the US, according to research from economists at Nomura Holdings Inc.

In 2023, Conservatives anxious to counter China set their sights on de minimis, a top trade priority for labour unions and progressives: cracking down on the deluge of duty-free packages coming in from

China. A bipartisan group of lawmakers planned to introduce a bill to eliminate the de minimis. Congress raised the US government's threshold for expedited, duty-free treatment from \$200 to \$800 in 2016.

“I think everybody's got to kind of wrap their head around what kind of mistake this was,” Robert Lighthizer, the former US trade representative during the Trump administration, told a House panel in 2023. Lighthizer urged Congress to get rid of the de minimis rule altogether, or take it to a much lower amount, say USD 50 or USD 100. He said foreign companies are taking advantage of the “loophole” and “putting people out of work in stores, they're putting people out of work in manufacturing.” Last year, House Democrats pushed to prohibit Chinese-made goods from benefiting from the special treatment for lower-cost goods. That move was part of a larger measure that boosted investments in semiconductor manufacturing and research.

The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, a US congressional committee, had said that exploiting the \$800 threshold may be a major avenue through which Chinese companies selling directly to American consumers can circumvent US law designed to prevent the sale of goods made with forced labour. The committee also said Customs and Border Protection “could not reasonably scrutinize” goods sent under the USD800 threshold for forced labor concerns because of the sheer amount of products coming in. The committee is most concerned about retailers Temu and Shein, which ship directly to consumers in the US. In a report released in 2023, the committee said the two companies alone were likely responsible for more than 30 per cent of all de minimis shipments entering the US each day, or nearly 600,000 a day last year. The committee also had competitiveness concerns. It pointed out that US retailers such as Gap and H&M paid \$700 million and \$205 million in import duties, respectively, in 2022. In contrast, virtually all of the goods sold by Temu and Shein are shipped using the de minimis exception in which the importer paid no duty.

In early 2022, when the US Congress was considering putting the de minimis trade provision in the semiconductor bill, several business groups led by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers wrote congressional leaders urging them to keep it out. They said the changes would “impose sweeping costs on American business-

es, workers and consumers, add new inflationary pressures on the US economy, and exacerbate ongoing supply chain disruptions at US ports.”

De minimis speeds the pace of commerce and lowers costs for consumers. It also allows US Customs and Border Protection to focus its resources on the bigger-ticket items that generate more tariff revenue for the federal government.

John Drake, a vice president at the US Chamber of Commerce, who argued that the current US law should be preserved, had told AP at that time that cutting back the threshold not only would represent a big tax increase for many US small businesses, but many would have to hire a customs broker to process their shipments. “There’s a reason Congress raised the level back in 2016,” Drake said. “They knew in addition to it being a competitive advantage for the US business community, they also recognised that collecting duties on these low-value shipments, you know, really wasn’t worth the trouble.”

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/trump-tariffs-can-plug-loophole-that-helped-chinese-retailers/articleshow/117859691.cms?from=mlr>

An imprint of Sangh suggestions in key announcements



The Union Budget accommodated and incorporated the inputs of various offshoots of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on sectors as diverse as manufacturing, agriculture and gig workers, people aware of discussions said on Saturday, signalling synergy between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological fount.

Union Ministers JP Nadda, Jyotiraditya Scindia and others congratulate Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Union Budget. The budget should also put to rest any speculation that a schism developed between the BJP and the Sangh, said the people cited above. Offshoots of the RSS such as the Swadeshi Jagran Manch that push for indigenisation, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Sangh’s labour wing, and the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh that is a collective of

farm unions, all hailed the budget.

Mohini Mohan Mishra, all India general secretary of the BKS said the government largely addressed the farmers’ concerns. The BKS had demanded an increase in the limit of the Kisan Credit Card, which has been raised from 3 lakh Rupee to 5 lakh Rupee. “This will benefit all the farmers in the country and will undoubtedly lead to an increase in food grain productivity,” Mishra said. He said the Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana, will benefit farmers in the 100 least productive districts of the country, and lead to an increase in agricultural employment opportunities.

The BKS also hailed the formation of the turmeric and makhana boards, and the announcement of a urea plant in Assam to meet the shortage of fertilisers in the northeastern states. “Mission cotton will increase production and cut the dependence on BT cotton that is neither productive nor dependable,” Mishra said.

The SJM, which pushed for a manufacturing policy and fresh curbs on imports from China in addition to extension of the PLI scheme beyond 14 sectors, also welcomed the budget.

“We are happy that it addresses many of the issues concerning the present day manufacturing and MSME sectors. We have been pointing out that India needs to focus on domestic manufacturing and cleantech to insulate itself from Chinese dominance,” said Ashwani Mahajan, the national co-convenor of SJM.

The BMS said there are multiple provisions aimed at improving the lives of the working class. “BMS has been advocating an increase in the income tax limit for some time now, and we deeply appreciate that the government has listened to us and taken our suggestions into account. The budget is forward-looking and is designed to enhance opportunities for both job creation and self-enterprise,” said Ravinder Himte, the general secretary of the organisation.

The BMS hailed loans of up to Rs. 5 lakh to promote the fisheries sector, proposal to create 2.2 million new jobs in the leather industry, loans for the MSMEs, and the inclusion of gig and platform workers in the e-shram portal.

“The announcement of a health cover for them is a commendable step towards worker welfare. The proposal for new income tax rules, simplifying the tax structure and providing greater clarity for taxpayers in addition to the revision of the income tax limit will offer relief to the middle class,” Himte said. □□

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/an-imprint-of-sangh-suggestions-in-key-announcements-101738435563621.html>

Swadeshi Activities

Swadeshi Meetings

Pictorial Glimpses



Mahakumbh, Prayagraj



Swadeshi Mela, Hubli, Karnataka



West Odisha



Swadeshi Activities Abhiyan Meetings

Pictorial Glimpses



Hooghly, Madhya Bang Prant



North, West Bengal



Kollam, Kerala



South, West Bengal

