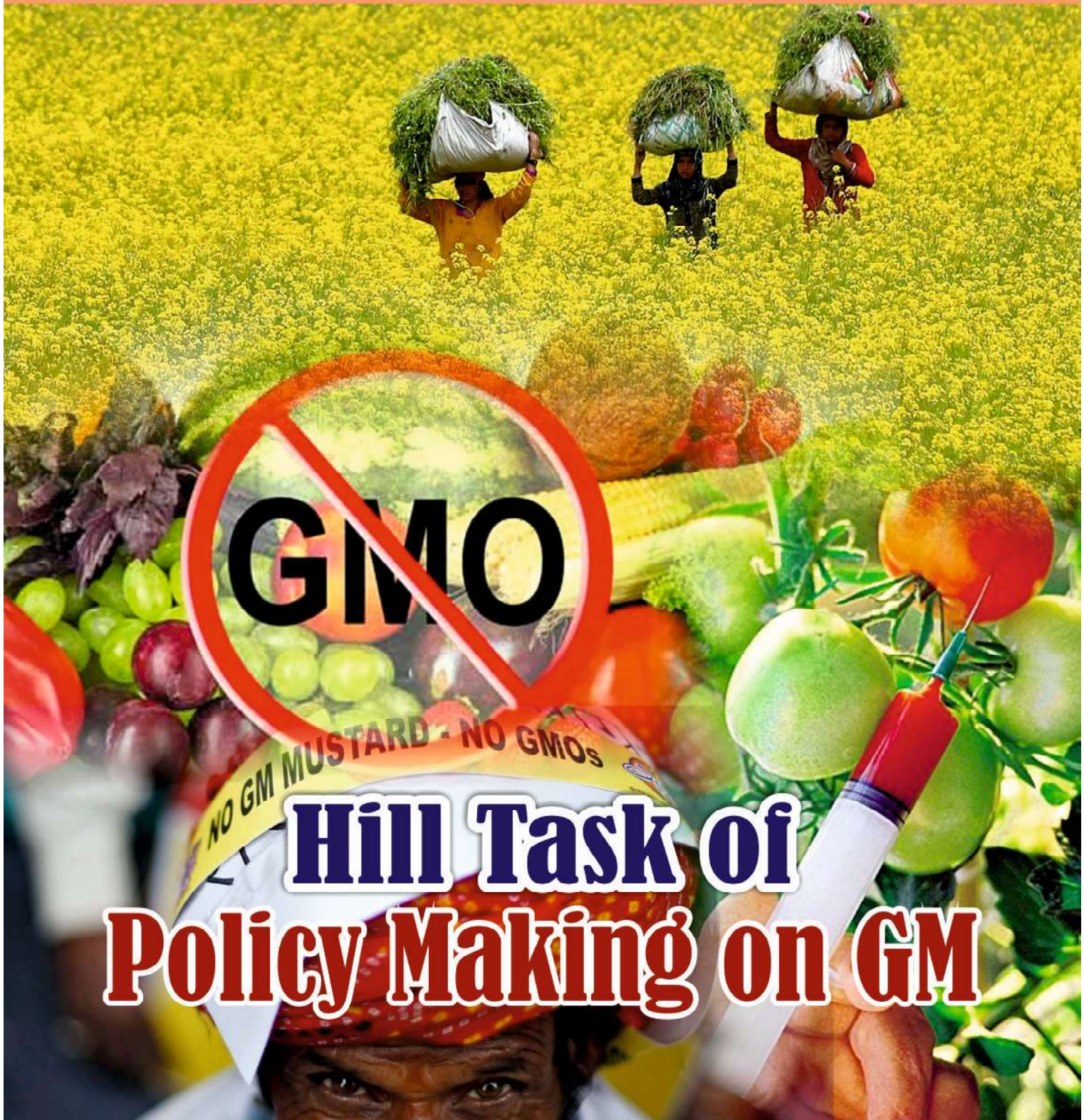


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September 2024



Hill Task of Policy Making on GM

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan Meetings



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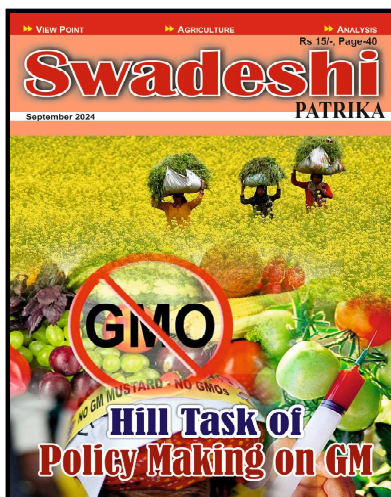


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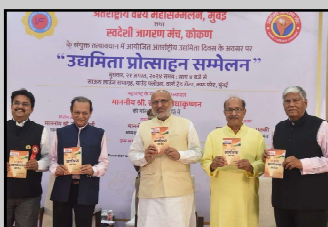
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Employment in Agriculture: The Path to Prosperity

Since ancient times, Agriculture was the main industry of India. About two thirds of the people in India used to do agriculture work, which people used to do with enthusiasm along with their family and people around them. Farming was seen as a festival which included the entire process from sowing of crops to harvesting. For example, Makar Sankranti, Vaishakhi, Lohri, Bhogali Bibu, Gudi Padwa, Onam, Pongal, Basant Panchami, Nua-khai etc. are festivals which are celebrated even today. No one used to leave his land to work outside, it was considered an insult or sin towards his land. In previous times, the landlord was a respected position in the village and he used to give employment to 100-150 people throughout the year on his agricultural land, but today the situation has changed in such a way that the landlord of the village has become a laborer in the factories of the cities, the main reason for which is not trusting his land and becoming dependent on the factories. Now people do not consider agriculture as a business, It has become a farming - gardening, they have forgotten that the raw material for factories comes from agriculture only, and the farmers who are doing agriculture are not getting the respect in the society that the earlier landlords used to get.

Even today, about 45% of the people in India are engaged in agriculture and related work. According to the Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI), about 45.76% of the total workforce is engaged in agriculture and allied sectors during 2022-23.

Keeping all this in mind, we should go back to our agricultural work again and do agricultural work with the family, so that we will gradually get rid of both the problems of increasing unemployment and hunger in the country, as agriculture is only capable of providing dignified livelihood, and the country will move forward on its resolve to become a developed nation.

— Kishan Sharma, Researcher, Swadeshi Shodh Sansthan, Delhi

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Quote-Unquote



Moving towards sustainable development, India is committed to achieving net zero carbon emission. Our efforts to adopt clean energy on a large scale are in line with this goal.

Droupadi Murmu, President, Bharat



It is undeniable fact that even as the global order faced critical challenges, solutions did not emerge from the multilateral domain... The reason is both the obsolescence and the polarization of multilateral organizations.

S. Jayashankar, External Affairs Minister, Bharat



We will do our work for the creation of a developed India through agriculture, farmers' welfare and rural development with honesty and dedication... The rural development department should play an incomparable role in this.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Agriculture Minister



It is the responsibility of the government and FSSAI to tell people which food products are safe to eat and which are not.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-convenor, SJM

Hurdles in Affordable and Effective Cancer Treatment

Cancer, one of the most dreaded diseases, has become a worldwide epidemic. In India too, the number of people suffering from cancer is rising steadily. On the plus side, there has been significant progress in treatment in recent years, with several highly effective medicines being developed for various types of cancer. Due to decades of research, many of these medicines, once very expensive due to royalties, have now become more affordable. Still, some new treatments, which may offer even better outcomes, remain out of reach for many Indian cancer patients. A key example of these treatments is biologics—complex, large-molecule drugs derived from living cells. Biologics precisely target cancer cells and have shown great promise, such as trastuzumab for breast cancer and bevacizumab for colon and other cancers. But many of these drugs are prohibitively priced in India. This is where biosimilars come in—lower-cost, highly similar versions of these biologic drugs that offer a more affordable option for cancer patients. These medicines have brought a ray of hope in the fight against cancer. For instance, in January, Aurobindo Pharma received approval to market the biosimilar version of trastuzumab in India, while in June, Biocon Biologics was granted approval by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to produce biosimilar bevacizumab at its Bengaluru facility. But even though India is making huge strides in the biosimilar sector, there are still several barriers to availability, which must be addressed urgently.

The decoding of the human genome had a major impact on health research, helping us to better understand diseases and develop personalised medicine tailored to different patients. An outcome of this research is biologics, which are made from living cells, usually complex proteins, using genetic engineering. Biologics have made targeted therapy possible in conditions like cancer and autoimmune diseases. Examples of biologics include drugs like pegfilgrastim, which stimulates white blood cell production in chemotherapy patients, and adalimumab, used for autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis. In cancer treatment, biologics such as trastuzumab and pertuzumab target HER2-positive breast cancer. These new drugs have given new hope to millions of patients. However, many cancer patients, especially in developing countries, cannot take advantage of these new treatments because they are either unavailable or too expensive. And that's where biosimilars come to the rescue—similar versions of already-approved biologics, which are safe, effective, and available at a lower cost. Just as generic medicines reduce costs for chemical drugs, biosimilars make biologic treatments more affordable.

In India, it's estimated that about 1 in 9 people are at risk of developing cancer in their lifetime. And nearly 60 per cent of breast cancer cases are diagnosed at stage 3 or 4, when the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. This puts a heavy financial burden on both individuals and the public healthcare system. In this scenario, it is fortunate that India has among the world's highest number of biosimilars approved in the domestic market. Yet, for the masses, accessing these life-saving drugs is still not as straightforward as it should be. Patent challenges, complex regulatory processes, and market entry barriers often stand between patients and biosimilar drugs. The question: Will we be left behind in effective cancer treatment due to these barriers?

The situation demands immediate action. In India, we have to create an environment where breakthroughs like biosimilars can reach cancer patients at affordable prices. One major obstacle is evergreening, a strategy used by patent holders to maintain their control. By filing multiple patents for even very minor modifications, these companies extend their market exclusivity and delay the entry of more affordable biosimilars. As a result, patients suffer. Notably, Section 3(d) of the Patents Act was designed to stop such practices by preventing patents for minor modifications. This was reinforced by the Supreme Court in the 2013 Novartis vs Government of India case over the cancer drug imatinib mesylate. Nevertheless, original biologic manufacturers still find ways to delay biosimilar access. They aggressively challenge biosimilar producers in court and lobby against reforming biosimilar marketing approval regulations to prevent biosimilar manufacturers from obtaining marketing approval quickly, even though India's IPR regime doesn't provide data exclusivity. As a result, biosimilar manufacturers are forced to conduct their own expensive trials, delaying the affordable production of biosimilars. This issue is not limited to India. In the US too, companies are adopting similar tactics to create obstacles for the entry of biosimilars in the market. To deal with this problem, the Increasing Access to Biosimilars Act was introduced in the US Congress in March 2023. Many measures are needed to increase the availability of biosimilars in India. First, misuse of IPR laws needs to be curbed, so that a balance is established between innovation and competition.

Second, there are many misconceptions about biosimilars among doctors and patients, which need to be addressed. For this, a comprehensive public awareness campaign is needed to build confidence in these life-saving medicines. The clock is ticking fast, and without widespread access to biosimilars, thousands of cancer patients are losing their battle. Life-saving treatment is not a privilege but a right. The govt and the healthcare system should understand this. India's biopharma industry has no dearth of knowledge, talent, and resources. We should not let the corporate greed of biologic patent-holders stand in the way of affordable & effective treatments for cancer patients.

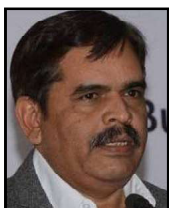
Hill Task of Policy Making on GM

Recently, Honorable Supreme Court of India delivered a split verdict regarding commercial cultivation of genetically modified (GM) mustard in India. Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Sanjay Karol presented differing opinions. Justice Nagarathna ruled against the commercial sale and environmental release of GM Mustard, citing flaws in the approval process and inadequate consideration of environmental and health impacts; Justice Karol found no manifest arbitrariness in the GEAC's decisions. He supported the continuation of field trials but stressed that they should proceed with strict safeguards.

The case (Suman Sahai and others versus Union of India) regarding commercial release of GM crops has been long pending in the Honorable Supreme Court of India, since the year 2004, but the government and others supporting GM crops have not been able to convince the court for commercial release of GMO. Not one, but there are numerous contentious issues in this case, that the court has not been able to resolve for so long. The split decision of the Supreme Court delivered on 23 July 2024, regarding commercial release of GM Mustard, once again shows the complexities in this case.

The very fact that this case is being heard by the courts, is due to the reason that governments in various regimes have been pushing the use of GM crops, by way of granting regulatory approvals. Interestingly the issue of release of GM crops is not with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, but with Ministry of Environment and Forests. The reason behind this is that the release of GM crops are confronted with the risk of adversely impacting the environment.

Though, delivering a split judgement on the issue of commercial release of GM Mustard, both judges agreed on the need for a national policy on Genetically Modified (GM) crops. And they directed the central government, to consult all stakeholders and experts within 4 months to formulate this policy. At the same time the bench referred the matter to Chief Justice of India for further adjudication by the appropriate bench.



It is a matter of great regret that the fact that GM mustard is herbicide tolerant was concealed initially. It is worth noting that while testing the DMH-11, no test was conducted about its herbicide tolerance.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



Therefore, the matter, although, has gone to yet another appropriate bench to be constituted by the Chief Justice of India, the most important part of this judgement is that the government has been directed by the court, to formulate a policy on GM, after consultation with various stakeholders and experts. By any stretch of imagination, an issue which has created immense debate and heat in the country and the world, in the last more than quarter of a century, where experts are divided, people not just worried, but are frightened, where there is a total lack of a formidable regulatory mechanism, where Supreme Court has itself held back its decision, for decades, on the matter due to lack of regulatory mechanism, insufficient proofs of the GMOs being safe for human health and environment, where many countries have already banned GM crops on concerns of human health and environment, it is very unlikely that the government will be able to accomplish this task of preparing a national policy on GM after consultation with stakeholders and experts, in just 4 months.

This is not the first time that the consultative mechanism will be adopted for GM crops. At an earlier occasion, we have had public hearings with regard to commercial release of BT Brinjal, under UPA government, with the then Minister of Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh. The Minister asked the science academies to provide further data on Bt brinjal that could aid in the decision making. After the academies failed to do this, the moratorium was issued Minister Jairam Ramesh on the commercial release of Bt brinjal,

citing safety concerns.

Plausible Structure of Consultations

While, Supreme Court has directed the government to hold stakeholders and experts' consultations, an important question is that what could be the structure of these consultations. There is a whole set of issues on which these consultations can happen. Many of the contentious issues have long been listed by the Technical Expert Committee of Supreme Court, which can form the basis of consultative process, and help reach at conclusions.

Let us try to have a look at the contentious issues revolving around GMO in the country:

Very first Issue, on which there is a lack of consensus among the experts, is the claim of higher productivity of GM crops. Interestingly, the official version is that the country has been importing a large amount of edible oils, most of which are GM oils. Government's claim that adoption of DMH 11 can help solve the deficiency in mustard production in the country, and can help reducing the dependence on imports and increase the income of the farmers, due to higher productivity of DMH 11, is countered by the experts, who say that productivity of DMH11 is no more than 2200 kg per hectare, while the yield of many other hybrids of mustard in the country ranges from 2500 kg to 4000 kg per hectare. Significantly, the recorded productivity of mustard is already more than DMH 11 in many parts of the country. According to a research paper by Dr. Dheeraj Singh, former Director of the Indian Institute of Mustard and Rapeseed, the productivity of va-

rieties RS 1706, RH 1424 and RH 725 grown by farmers in Rajasthan (as announced by the government itself) is 2613 kg, 2604 kg, 2642 kg. respectively.

Second issue of contention is that of intellectual property rights. Farmers organisations are worried that once we adopt GMO, the monopoly of MNCs over seed will increase the burden on farmers in the form of royalty on seeds. Their apprehensions are not without a reason. We see that the farmers had to pay through their nose for BT cotton seeds (approximately Rs 8000 crore), as a major portion of the price of BT cotton seed was trait fee. Farmers had a sigh of relief when government of India removed the trait fee from the seed price as their seed had failed miserably in terms of their claims of resistance towards 'pink ball worm'. The present DMH 11 seed, though, is being presented as swadeshi, actually have used some traits of technology of Bayer company.

Third important issue related to GMOs is their impact on international trade. Whereas, supporters of GM claim, without a valid argument that it will reduce our dependence on imported edible oils (in case DMH11 is allowed), fact of the matter is that we may lose our major advantage in international trade, once we adopt GM in food crops. Today, we are exporting nearly USD 54 billion worth of food products, riding on Non-GM tag. Once GM in food is permitted, we lose this important advantage, as importing countries, where GM is not permitted, may impose ban on Indian food imports.

[Continued on page no. 19]

GM technology is more about increasing control of multinational companies on farmers, not helping them

While the scientifically established evidence regarding the adverse impacts of GM (Genetically Modified) crops and food on health, farming and environment increases, the powerful attempts to spread these crops have not decreased, these have increased. There have been so many national and international conferences of concerned people, farmers and experts, so many popular appeals, papers, articles and expert warnings against GM crops. Amazingly the response of the powerful promoters of GM crops has been not to heed these warnings or to make a careful examination of the issues raised by them but instead to march forward at a faster pace in the opposite direction. As the expert opinions against GM crops and food increase to such an extent that merely short summaries of these can result in huge volumes, one wonders how such important scientific research that establishes very serious risks can be ignored?

In the struggle of the power of money vs the power of reason, who will win? It is the interests of environment protection, sustainable livelihoods of farmers and health and safety of food system versus the search for very high profits and control by a few. What will prevail?

Who are the powerful forces who keep insisting on spreading GM crops despite the weight of evidence being so heavily against them? Before trying to answer this question, let us first try to see what exactly is the balance of scientific evidence on this issue? For this let us hear what the most eminent scientist of India on this subject Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava has stated. He was the founder of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, the Vice Chairman of the National Knowledge Commission and was appointed by the Supreme Court of India as an observer in the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee as he was widely perceived to be not only a very accomplished expert on this issue and that too of the highest integrity but in addition he was also seen on the basis of his past record as a very strong and persistent defender of public interest.

Therefore it is very useful and interesting to see what this very senior scientist with a comprehensive understanding of this issue had to say about GM crops. First of all he made a strong and clear effort to break the myth which had been created by relentless manipulation by the very powerful forces trying to spread GM crops in India. According to this myth most scientific research supports GM crops. While demolishing this myth Dr. Bhargava wrote, "There are over 500 research publications by scientists of indisputable integrity, who have no conflict of interest, that establish harmful effects of GM crops on human, animal and plant health, and on the environment and biodiversity. For example, a recent paper by Indian scientists showed that the Bt gene in both cotton and brinjal leads to inhibition of growth and development of the plant. On the other hand, virtually every paper supporting GM crops is by scientists who have a declared conflict of interest or whose credibility and integrity can be doubted."



Who are the powerful forces who keep insisting on spreading GM crops despite the weight of evidence being so heavily against them? Before trying to answer this question, let us first try to see what exactly is the balance of scientific evidence on this issue?
Bharat Dogra



In another review of recent trends titled 'Food Without Choice' (published in the Tribune) Prof. Pushpa M. Bhargava, who was an internationally acclaimed authority on this subject, drew pointed attention to the "attempt by a small but powerful minority to propagate genetically modified crops to serve their interests and those of multinational corporations (read the US), the bureaucracy, the political setup and a few unprincipled and unethical scientists and technologists who can be used as tools." Further he warned, "The ultimate goal of this attempt in India of which the leader is Monsanto, is to obtain control over Indian agriculture and thus food production. With 60 per cent of our population engaged in agriculture and living in villages, this would essentially mean not only a control over our food security but also over our farmer security, agricultural security and security of the rural sector."

Eminent scientists who have examined the technology of genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified (GM) crops have come to a clear conclusion that it is a highly hazardous and risky technology. For example eminent scientists from several countries who comprise the Independent Science

Panel (ISP) have drawn this conclusion after studying various aspects of GM crops, "GM crops have failed to deliver the promised benefits and are posing escalating problems on the farm.GM crops should be firmly rejected now."

Such examples of the opinion of eminent scientists about the serious risks and hazards of GM crops can be multiplied. The question that arises is - then why are some big multinational companies so eager to promote these hazardous and risky crops. The answer is that these companies are not interested in improving food security, they are only interested in tightening their grip over the world's food and farming system so that they can squeeze huge profits out of it, regardless of any adverse impacts on farmers, consumers and environment. Hunger may worsen, fertile fields across vast areas may get contaminated, large number of unsuspecting people and animals may fall seriously ill-they are not seriously bothered about all this as long as they can tighten their control and increase their profits.

In fact if we look at the trends in world food and agriculture in recent decades then these have been dominated by the increasingly desperate efforts by huge multi-

national companies to increase their dominance of the world food and farming system. The way in which patents were incorporated into the WTO agenda and so in a very clever way almost all countries were forced to change their patent laws in keeping with the interests of developed countries provides a glaring example of the high-powered forces at work to implement this agenda of dominance. The new patent laws helped the food and farming giants to tighten their grip on plants and seeds resources of the developing countries.

Genetic erosion of their plant wealth has also proved very expensive for farmers, particularly those based in developing countries. Due to the combined impact of destruction of natural forests, and the introduction of green-revolution type agriculture, which replaced local varieties over large areas by new monocultures, genetic erosion has been taking place on a massive scale even in the countries which have been the original source of much of the plant diversity. Soon thousands of varieties of plants were lost to these countries for ever. However, already several of these had been stored carefully in the labs and gene banks of the developed countries whose scientists had been engaged in these collections for several years. Suddenly, in the time span of a few decades, the natural advantage which some parts of the world had enjoyed for millions of years appeared to have been reversed.

Today several experts agree that most of collected genetic diversity is stored in gene banks in Europe and North America. In a handful of high-security institutions of these and a few other countries,

the world's most valuable raw material is stored, and it is unlikely that the countries of origin from where most of this material came will have free access to it.

Pat Roy Mooney brings out the glaring injustice of this situation, "It is a raw material unlike any other in the world. It has not been bought. It has been donated. It has been donated by the poor to the rich. The donation has been made under a noble banner proclaiming that genetic resources form a part of the heritage of all humanity, and thus can be owned by no one. But as the primary building blocks of agriculture, genes have incalculable political and economic importance. Industrialized governments - often overruling the intentions of their scientists - have come to hoard germplasm and to stock seeds as part of the arsenal of international power diplomacy. Private companies in North-although glad to receive free genes - are loath to divulge or share the adaptations they draw from these donations."

It was noticed a few decades back that the nature of the seed industry was changing in several countries, particularly the rich western countries (although similar changes were soon noticed also in several developing countries). The seed industry had earlier been based on small firms. These firms were now being gobbled by big companies, especially companies which already had big stakes in agro-chemical industry - within a single decade, chemical corporations spent billions in buying up seeds companies. In fact the American Seed Trade Association even organized a special symposium on 'How to sell your seed company?' Apprehensions were rightly voiced

that a small number of giant companies will control seeds as well as agro-chemicals, and that the production of seeds can be given such an orientation as to require high and increasing amounts of agro-chemicals. According to one widely quoted estimate at least 27 corporations had initiated 63 programs to develop herbicide tolerant crops. Already a few multinational companies control a very considerable part of the international seeds sector and pesticides and herbicides industry and trade.

These trends were strengthened further by the developments in the controversial technology of genetic engineering. A very important part of genetic engineering research has been devoted to herbicide-tolerant plant varieties.

Soon the genetic engineering companies shifted to the even more obnoxious technology of introducing pesticide properties within plants. About these trends, the Independent Science Panel has said, "Bt proteins, incorporated into 25% of all transgenic crops worldwide, have been found harmful to a range of non-target insects. Some of them are also potent immunogens and allergens. A team of scientists has cautioned against releasing Bt crops for human use."

Despite this clear view, shared by many eminent scientists, the main company involved is willing to go to any length - bribery, coercion, lies, manipulations to spread its obnoxious technology because its objective is not food security, its objective is only to tighten its grip on food and farming system.

Genetic engineering is so important in this quest for dominance as this complex and expensive

technology is concentrated to a large extent in the hands of a few giant multinational companies and their subsidiaries. The story that started with snatching the plant resources of tropical/developing/poor countries, then proceeded with new patent/IPR laws gets completed with genetic engineering. This is the carefully manipulated route which these companies, blessed by their governments in several cases (particularly the USA), have followed in their race for dominance of the world food system.

This quest for dominance is seen perhaps most clearly in the pursuit of what has been called the 'terminator technology'. In a widely discussed paper (published in the Ecologist, Sept/Oct 1998) Ricarda A Steinbrecker (Science Director of the Genetics Forum UK) and Pat Roy Mooney (widely acclaimed winner of the Right to Livelihood Award) summarise the implications of this most controversial use of generic engineering,

"On March 3rd 1998 the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a little-known cottonseed enterprise called Delta and Pine Land Company, acquired US patent 5,723,765 - or the Technology Protection System (TPS). Within days, the rest of the world knew TPS as Terminator Technology. Its declared goal is to promulgate plants that will produce self terminating offspring - suicide seeds. Terminator Technology epitomises what the genetic engineering of food crops is all about and gives an insight into the driving forces behind the corporate campaign to control and own life.

"The Terminator does more than ensure that farmers can't successfully replant their harvested

seed. It is the “platform” upon which companies can load their proprietary genetic traits - patented genes for herbicide-tolerance or insect-resistance and get the farmers hooked on their seeds and caught in the chemical treadmill.”

Further this paper says, “Most alarming though is the possibility that the Terminator genes themselves could infect the agricultural gene pool of the neighbour’s crops and of wild and weedy relatives, placing a time bomb. Temporary “gene silencing” of the poison gene or failed activation of the Terminator countdown enables such infection.

“Between 15 and 20 percent of the world’s food supply is grown by poor farmers who save their seed. These farmers feed at least 1.4 billion people. The Terminator ‘protects’ companies by risking the lives of these people. Since Terminator Technology has absolutely zero agronomic benefit, there is no reason to jeopardize the food security of the poor by gambling with genetic engineering in the field. Whether the Terminator works immediately or later, in either instance it is biological warfare on farmers and food security.”

As people’s consciousness about the hazards of GM crops grew, many US products were refused by its trading partners. This alarmed GM giants, and gave them additional reason to push GM crops in important developing countries so that alternative sources for supply of non-GM products, or products not contaminated by GM crops can not emerge. The crucial thing to understand is that some governments, particularly in the west but also elsewhere, and the big GMO (Genet-

ically modified organisms) companies have established close links so that there are unwritten directives from the highest levels not to deny clearance to GMOs on environment, health and related grounds. Henry Miller, who was formerly in charge of biotechnology at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA, USA) says, “In this area, the US government agencies have done exactly what big agribusiness has asked them to do and told them to do.”

This support given by the governments further greatly increases the power of MNCs to push their hazardous products and technologies in their quest for dominance.

Corruption also enables MNCs to achieve quick results. People wonder why there has been a rapid spread of GM crops in the USA, even though several scientists (in addition to farmers and activists) have opposed GMOs there as well. An idea of the various forces responsible for this can be had from a complaint the US Securities and Exchange Commission had filed in the US courts stating that a leading GMO company had bribed 140 officials between 1997-2000 to obtain environmental clearances for its products. The company admitted this charge and paid a penalty of US \$ 1.5 million.

A report by a major US financial risk assessor Innovest stated, “It is understandable that the US Government has essentially taken the industry position on GE (Genetic Engineering) safety and labelling.. US Government support for GE crops appears to stem from the fact that the crops are mostly US-developed and the GE companies have made substantial

financial contributions to US politicians and political parties. This is not said as a criticism of politicians, but rather of the campaign finance-system, which allows politicians to accept money from the firms they are supposed to regulate. Money flowing from GE companies to politicians as well as the frequency with which GE company employees take jobs with US regulatory agencies (and vice versa) creates large bias potential and reduces the ability of investors to rely on safety claims made by the US Government. It also helps to clarify why the US Government has not taken a precautionary approach to GE and continues to suppress GE labelling in the face of overwhelming public support for it.”

Dr. Pushpa Bhargava has written, “According to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, Monsanto bribed at least 140 Indonesian officials or their families to get Bt cotton approved without environmental impact assessment. In 2005, the firm paid \$ 1.5 million in fine to the US justice department for the graft. This is one of the many penalties that Monsanto has paid in its country of origin in spite of its close ties with the US government and its various regulatory agencies.”

Hence farmers and citizens of all countries and particularly of the majority world, learning from Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, should prepare for a non-violent struggle to save our farming and food system, environment and health from the very serious dangers and risks of GM/GE crops. □□

The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include *India's Quest for Sustainable Farming and Healthy Food*, *Planet in Peril*, *Protecting Earth for Children*, *Man over Machine* and *A Day in 2071*.

Budget: Economics prevails over politics

Over a century ago, British economist Alfred Marshall said economics meant political economy. What he said was not as clear then as it seems today. Autocratic communism that saw “politics itself as economics” collapsed in half a century. Globalisation, which perceived “economics as a global market”, had a cerebral hemorrhage in under a quarter century. These economic doctrines that dominated the world for a whole century are being reduced to a footnote in contemporary economic history.

The recent collapse of the global supply chains that threatened to integrate the world without borders, have left economists and statesmen bewildered. This is where Alfred Marshall’s concept of political economy, a mix of national economics and national politics, seems to be emerging as the alternative to globalisation. The proportion of economics and politics in Marshall’s idea of political economy varies from country to country. And India is no exception to this trend.

Since 2014, the Modi government’s economic mix has had a greater share of economics than politics. It was the other way round in the second half of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) dispensation.

Balancing the mix

In democratic countries worldwide, there’s a clear trend towards politically-driven economics that provides not just subsidies but even sustenance allowances to people. Studies show that even in the most liberal and open America, due to politically-driven economics, a majority of Americans are beneficiaries of government handouts in some form or the other. Given this background, the question is what is a politically-driven budget and an economically-driven one?

A politically-driven budget prioritises current populist demands over future growth spend. An economically-driven budget, conversely, resists popular demands to spare the resources for future growth. Since the 1950s, our budgets have taken three distinct forms. Until 1990, under the socialist planned economy, our country’s budgets focused on export-import production controls, taxes and central bank financing. After the advent of liberal economics in the 1990s, the focus shifted to stock markets, foreign investment, and liberalisation of production and free trade. But over the last 15 years, our economy too has begun to fall in line with Alfred Marshall’s political-economic hybrid. The second half of the UPA budgets had less economic drive and more political drift.

The Modi government’s budgets have had more economic drive and less political drift. The UPA’s politically heavy, economically light budgets slowed the growth. In contrast, the Modi government’s more economically heavier budgets triggered higher growth. This impact is tellingly reflected in macro data.

Undeniably, the growth during the decade of Modi’s rule has been manifold as compared to the UPA regime. The phenomenal growth was achieved by a substantial increase in development spending by the Modi government.

In this context, it’s crucial to examine whether the current budget in the coalition



The recent collapse of the global supply chains that threatened to integrate the world without borders, have left economists and statesmen bewildered.

S. Gurumurthy

government continues Modi's 10-year economic growth pattern or are there changes.

Continuing development spend

There's a thumb rule to assess whether a budget is economically driven — read growth oriented — or not. That is, whether the government borrows for development spend or non-development spend like freebies and subsidies.

In the current budget, the total development spend is '15 lakh crore. The Modi government plans to borrow a total of '16 lakh crore this year. It means that 94% of the borrowing is for development. Clearly, the Modi government borrows for development only. This is a significant shift from the UPA rule, which was the other way round.

In the 2013-14 budget, the UPA government borrowed Rs 5.42 lakh crore, out of which only 3 lakh crore (55%) was for development and the balance Rs 2.42 lakh crore was for non-development, including freebies and subsidies. That Modi's current budget is more economically and less politically driven is self-evident.

There are of course elements of coalition politics in the budget allocations for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. But they are fundamentally on development spending. In Andhra Pradesh, the Telugu Desam Party government had invested thousands of crores of rupees in the Polavaram project and the new capital, Amaravati.

The Jagan Reddy government, which came to power later, virtually scrapped these projects and made the investment wasteful. The budget has allocated Rs 15,000 crore to give life to the two projects, which are not Andhra projects but the nation's as well.



The Rs 12,500 crore allocation for flood control and irrigation projects in the Kosi-Mechi Link Project in Bihar is also a development-oriented allocation.

Core themes

The finance minister highlights four core themes of the budget: employment, skill development, MSME sector, and middle-class-oriented scheme. For generating employment in the formal sector, which is the first theme, a three-pronged approach has been spelt out: one, the government will cover the first month's salary for new employees. Two, for businesses creating new jobs, the government will pay two years of provident fund contributions. Three, in the manufacturing sector, the government will cover four years of provident fund contributions for new employees and also employers. These initiatives are projected to create three crore jobs, mitigating the unemployment among the educated.

The second theme, skill development, talks of upgrading 1,000 ITIs, to train 20 lakh people in five years, and educational loans to 1.25 lakh students. The third focuses on MSME development, featuring government guarantees for unimpeded bank credit, directives for banks to lend on inhouse appraisal without rating agency certificate, a special government fund to pre-

vent MSME failures in times of stress, and increase in middle-level loan ceiling amount under the Mudra scheme from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh. The fourth unburdens the middle class with an annual tax relief of Rs 17,500, also proposing loan facilities for overseas education with a near term Rs 10 lakh crore housing scheme for one crore urban middle-class.

The success of the proposals is undoubtedly dependent on how well they are implemented. The Modi government's track record in implementation of more difficult projects inspires confidence that these doable schemes will be achieved.

Other key aspects

As the finance minister has kept the focus on the four core themes in the light of the perception that the government had not taken the educated youth unemployment issue head on, some crucial aspects of the budget have been less prominently featured.

Beyond the four core themes, the budget contains significant near term and long-term elements. The proposal to create 10 million certified natural farmers with marketing chain structures is a futuristic idea. Allocation of Rs 11.11 lakh crore for infrastructure development, in line with Modi's decade old infra thrust, is crucial for successful job creation and also for the success of

other schemes. Infrastructure has been the foundation of Modi's growth strategy since 2014. It did set off high economic growth.

Because of the growth focus, the finance minister hasn't ignored the stressed groups. The rural employment scheme (MGNREGA) allocation has increased by 60% from Rs 60,000 crore to Rs 86,000 crore. The free cooking gas scheme allocation has seen a tenfold increase from Rs 180 crore to Rs 1,800 crore. The free food grain distribution programme initiated during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic continues, benefiting the underprivileged.

Seedling for future

There are other long term futuristic elements as well in the budget. India has signed the global agreement committing to fulfil climate control guarantees by 2070. This requires reducing thermal

power usage and pollution for which clean power through nuclear and solar energy is the dominant supply side alternative.

India is committed to invest in these alternative energy sources with the next generation in mind. This will yield no direct advantage to the party in power in the coming elections.

The budget has initiated a far reaching programme for the research and development of small nuclear power plants. It is something akin to a grandfather planting a mango seedling for his grandchild — a long-term vision that political parties focused on short-term electoral gains will bother less about.

The allocation for the nuclear sector has been upped five-fold from Rs 442 crore last year to Rs 2,228 crore. Solar power allocation has been doubled from Rs 4,970 crore to Rs 10,000 crore. Semicon-

ductor industry, the futuristic technology, has seen its allocation double from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 6,000 crore. Research and development funding has increased from Rs 840 crore to Rs 1,200 crore. Most of these allocations are investments for the gen next.

To end, this budget has not drawn any unusual criticism even from the hostile opposition. Even P Chidambaram has only claimed that the Modi government has "stolen" the Congress plans. Rahul Gandhi tweeted his usual political criticism, calling it a "budget to stay in power".

Apart from routine political accusations, no major economic flaws have been pointed out by anyone, including the opposition. Indeed, it is a budget in which economics predominates politics. □□

(S Gurumurthy - Editor, Thuglak Tamil Magazine. Chairman, Vivekananda International Foundation Strategic Think Tank)
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E-commerce: Fulminations, Fears, Facts

Recently Piyush Goyal criticized the business practices of global e-commerce giants like Amazon. He questioned them on their following of Indian rules; moreover he accused them of taking recourse to predatory pricing. Predatory pricing involves selling at below cost prices, deliberately absorbing huge losses, but with a view to establish eventual market dominance by killing competition – or at least offer low prices at the expense of small retailers who cannot afford to match these low prices. The discounted rates are especially relevant in apparels and consumers electronics, especially mobiles. According to Goyal due to such predatory practices, more than 1 crore small vending stores and nearly 10 crore mom and pop stores are likely to be put in peril. Initially he seemed to have voted against large e-commerce platforms, especially the large ones with deep pockets, but later tampered his statements by qualifying that e-commerce was not bad per se, since it offers huge benefits to the consumers (competitive pricing, ease of buying, wide selection, accessibility); what he was lamenting about was the absence of fair play. According to Goyal, all the multinationals, especially these e-commerce giants come to India due to very attractive sized market; they aint here really to help small and medium business to sell their products.



Given the deep pockets, technological supremacy, and giant size of the multinational e-commerce platforms there is a justifiable need to be wary of their anti competitive, anti regulatory practices; else they are likely to prey upon small, unorganised offline retail.

KK Srivastava

E-commerce is a tech platform that aggregates buyers and sellers on one platform; it is not, technically speaking, a seller but only an enabler. It is different from the model in America where Walmart and Amazon sell products directly owned by them on these platforms. Indian laws do not allow the latter practice – the so called inventory driven model; Amazon and Flipkart (with substantial stake of Walmart) in India cannot directly sell; they can only offer marketplace. This regulation was introduced to prevent these large platforms from enjoying mo-



nopolistic power of large seller who potentially can force the vast unorganized (and therefore tiny) vendor without any clout out of market. Notably in 2020 the Competition Commission of India had initiated an investigation against these giants over allegations of deep discounting and the practice of preferred sellers. Allegations of predatory pricing were also levied against some (Ola, Shopee); but these were dismissed as having no basis.

Predatory pricing is an anti competitive practice that certainly works to the disadvantage of the firm's existing small competitors. Besides, it dissuades prospective new entrants from entering; this reduces competition, and therefore, denies consumers the benefits of competitive practices (quality product, sustaining low prices, wider choice). While consumers seems to benefit in the short term via lower prices, the long term outcome is less competition, less options for the buyers, and (most dangerous of all) the very real probability of the dominant firm later changing monopolistic prices to the detriment of the consumers.

While e-commerce platforms cannot directly offer discounts to buyers (since they don't sell directly, at least legally), they host deep discount events and flash sales where sellers after humungous discounts. Most glaring example of this are the Great India festival, Big Billion Days, Independence Day sale ... indeed, such occasions for sale are increasing. While it may be argued that deep discounting benefits consumers and, thus, should be allowed as a practice, if we look deeply then we realize that there is

a real risk of eliminating of brick and mortar retailers; this clearly creates distortions in the supply side of business. CCI has, that is why, passed an order which recognized deep discounting as an anti competitive factor.

To be sure, there does exist a rule that one vendor cannot sell more than a quarter of total sales on a single platform. Similarly participation of marketplaces in any selling is disallowed even through any group companies. The inventory of a vendor is deemed to be controlled by an e-commerce platform if more than 25 percent of purchases of such vendor are from the platform/group companies. Then, no seller can sell its productions exclusively on one platform. All vendors are expected to be treated fairly and equitably by a platform – no discrimination in providing services like financing, payment, advertisement, warehousing, etc.

And yet online retailers continue to show deep discounts on their balance sheet, while attempting to pass off these as being provided by the sellers. That's why, Goyal says, Amazon and its ilk post huge losses in their account books. To be sure, while e-commerce is indeed growing at a fast pace, it comprised only 8 percent of total retail sales in 2022. Around 1.76 million retail enterprises take part in e-commerce activity in India. But the issue here is to assess the gains and losses objectively. On the positive side are consumer convenience, aggregation efficiencies, generous discounts, and market access to the vendors. But it is, on the flipside, not clear if the jobs lost in offline retail are compensated by e-commerce, or whether

the latter is a bigger job creator. This, and other issues, remain unsettled as of now due to lack of concrete evidence either way.

The biggest issue is the absence of a regulatory and institutional set up to oversee a large market. For instance it is hard to more on a predatory pricing, if the competition regulator fails to act in this regard. The e-commerce market in India is a fast growing segment. With more and more consumers and businesses on boarding such platforms, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has to ensure that firms do not indulge in unfair practices. It should ensure fair play and a level playing field. There should be greater transparency in pricing and less information asymmetry. Policy should be guided by the objective of safeguarding competition. Anti competitive actions, such as e-commerce sites pushing their own products instead of (strictly) being only aggregators of seller and buyers, need to be investigated. Data protection needs to be resolved with the early implementation of data protection laws. Incidentally, the draft policy on e-commerce, prepared about four years ago, seems to be nowhere near deliberated upon. It is time this draft is dusted out, discussed. And then a coherent policy is put out. It is better than making public statements (by influential people) that only go to unsettle the stakeholders, without really clearing the government stand. Till then the government's unease with the growth model of these giants will remain, given their financial heft, deep pockets, and technological prowess. □□

India's Defense Export Boom: A New Era of Global Military Leadership

India's defense industry has achieved a remarkable milestone, crossing the Rs. 21,000 crore mark in exports, making a significant shift in the country's position as a major player in the global defense market. The country's indigenous arsenal, once a rarity on the global stage, is now in high demand. From the Tejas fighter jets to the versatile Akash air defense systems, Indian-made defense products are earning accolades and securing deals worldwide.

The surge in defense exports holds immense importance for Indian economy, as it not only generates revenue but also creates employment opportunities, stimulates innovation, and enhances the country's global standing. By establishing itself as a reliable supplier of cutting-edge military equipment and technology, India is prepared to strengthen its diplomatic ties, forge new alliances, and play a more influential role in shaping global security dynamics.

Key Factors behind India's Defense Export Success

Government Initiatives: A turning point in India's defense export journey came with the introduction of a dedicated defense export strategy in 2014, marking a significant shift in the government's approach. This strategic move brought together top officials to spearhead arms sales, paving the way for a more proactive and coordinated effort. The subsequent launch of the "Make in India" program in 2014 and the "Atma-nirbhar Bharat" initiative further bolstered this drive, creating a fertile ground for defense manufacturing to flourish. By promoting public-private partnerships and incentivizing research and development, these initiatives have played a crucial role in transforming India into a burgeoning defense export hub, with an ambitious target of \$5 billion in defense exports by 2025 set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020.



As India's defense exports continue to soar, the country is all set to reap significant economic benefits, enhance its global standing, and play a more influential role in shaping global security dynamics.

Dr. Jaya Sharma



Private-Sector Participation: The private sector's increasing participation in defense manufacturing has been a significant factor in India's export success. Companies like Tata, Mahindra, and Reliance have invested heavily in defense production, utilising their expertise in engineering, technology, and innovation. This has not only enhanced the quality and range of defense products but also brought in much-needed efficiency and competitiveness.

Strategic Partnerships: Strategic partnerships and collaborations too have played a crucial role in India's defense export growth. The government has actively promoted joint ventures, technology transfer agreements, and co-production arrangements with foreign companies. This collaborative approach has enabled Indian companies to access advanced technologies, gain expertise, and tap into global markets.

Focus on Niche Technologies: India's focus on niche technologies and products has helped the country carve out a unique space in the global defense market. By concentrating on areas like missile systems, radar technology, and electronic warfare, Indian companies have developed specialized expertise, making them attractive partners for foreign countries seeking cutting-edge solutions. This focused approach has also enabled India to differentiate itself from larger competitors and establish a reputation for innovation and quality.

Key Export Destinations: India's defense exports have reached a diverse range of countries across the globe. Some of the key destinations include:

1. *Southeast Asia:* Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam have emerged as significant markets for Indian defense exports. India's strategic partnerships and geographic proximity have facilitated the growth of defense ties with these nations.

2. *Middle East and North Africa:* India has made significant inroads in the Middle East and North Africa, with countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt emerging as key customers.

3. *South America:* India has also made a mark in South America, with countries like Brazil and Peru showing interest in Indian defense products.

4. *Africa:* India's defense exports to Africa have grown steadily, with countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania being key destinations.

Key Products: India's defense exports encompass a wide range of products, including:

1. *Missile Systems:* India's missile systems, such as the Akash and BrahMos, have garnered significant interest globally.

2. *Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems:* Indian companies have developed expertise in radar and electronic warfare systems, which have been exported to several countries.

3. *Aircraft and Helicopters:* India's aircraft and helicopters, such as the Tejas and ALH, have been exported to countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal.

4. *Naval Systems:* India's naval systems, including warships and submarines, have been exported to countries like Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

5. *Artillery and Small Arms:* Indian companies have also ex-

ported artillery systems and small arms to various countries.

New Opportunities in Global Defense

The global defense market is expected to grow due to increasing security concerns, territorial disputes, and modernization efforts. This trend creates opportunities for Indian companies as countries seek to reduce their dependence on imports and develop their own defense industries. New markets in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America offer potential for growth in Indian defense exports. India's investments in R&D and innovation can lead to the development of advanced products, increasing export potential. Collaborations with foreign companies can also help Indian companies access new markets, technologies, and customers, further boosting their global presence.

Challenges Ahead

India's defense export ambitions face several challenges. One major hurdle is the competition from established players like the US, Russia, and China, which have a strong foothold in the global market. Also, India struggles with technology transfer, joint production, and licensing agreements, which can hinder export growth. To gain customer trust, Indian products must meet global quality and reliability standards, which can be a challenge. Further, complex export control regulations and licensing requirements can slow down export processes, while the industry's heavy reliance on government support makes it vulnerable to unpredictable policy changes. Protecting intellectual property and ensuring cybersecurity are also crit-

ical concerns in defense exports. Finally, India's defense industry faces supply chain management and infrastructure development challenges, impacting its export capacity and potential for growth.

How Will India's Economy Benefit from this?

The boom in defense exports is likely to have a profoundly positive impact on the Indian economy. Increased defense exports will earn India significant foreign exchange, strengthening the rupee and improving the country's balance of payments. This growth will also contribute to India's economic growth by generating revenue and creating jobs in the defense manufacturing sector. Further, a growing defense export industry will drive the development of related industries, such as aerospace, electronics, and shipbuilding, leading to overall industrial growth. The need to develop advanced defense products will also drive innovation and technological advancements in India, having spin-off benefits for other sectors. As India becomes a significant defense exporter, it can reduce its dependence on imports, leading to savings in foreign exchange and reduced trade deficits. Ultimately, a thriving defense export industry will enhance India's global reputation as a reliable and capable defense manufacturer, leading to increased diplomatic and strategic influence.

India's rising defense exports will boost its global standing. It will be recognized as a reliable manufacturer, improving diplomatic ties and credibility. A growing defense export industry will establish India as a leader in regional security, enhance its economic clout, and transform its image from an importer

to a key player in the global defense market.

In conclusion, India's defense export boom marks a significant milestone in the country's journey towards becoming a global military leader. With a robust defense manufacturing sector, strategic partnerships, and a focus on niche technologies, India is well-positioned to capitalize on the growing global demand for defense products. While challenges persist, the government's proactive approach and the private sector's in-

creasing participation have created a fertile ground for growth. As India's defense exports continue to soar, the country is all set to reap significant economic benefits, enhance its global standing, and play a more influential role in shaping global security dynamics. With a clear vision and concerted efforts, India can establish itself as a reliable and capable defense manufacturer, cementing its position as a major player in the global defense market.

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[Continued from page no. 7]

Hill Task of Policy Making on GM ...

Fourth contentious issue is about GM seeds on Indian food and ayurveda. GM alter the availability of food crops, which are traditionally a part of our food habits. Say for instance, 'Sarson Ka Saag'. Similarly, Indian mustard has many medicinal uses in Ayurveda, which we may lose, if DMH11 is allowed.

Fifth issue in the debate over GMO is its herbicide tolerance. It's notable that approximately 88 percent of GM crops are designed to be herbicide tolerant. This means, GM crops would generally enhance the use of herbicides, leading to increased toxicity. All major herbicides are proven carcinogenic.

It is a matter of great regret that the fact that GM mustard is herbicide tolerant was concealed initially. It is worth noting that while testing the DMH-11, no test was conducted about its herbicide tolerance. When alert citizens and experts exposed this misdeed of GEAC, the committee imposed a condition that under no situation, any herbicide will be used by the farmers.

The list of contentious issues includes, various other points; without deliberating on those, we may be failing in our duty to make an informed policy on the subject. These issues include, impact on seed sovereignty; impact on biodiversity; impact on consumers protection and choices; impact on food security, food sovereignty and nutrition security; issue of conflict of interest (if we see the people who are recommending adoption of GM, are actually linked with developers of GM); lack of independent testing; impact of GM Mustard on honeybees, which are important for productivity of mustard and other crops; and socio-economic considerations related to use of herbicide tolerant GMO.

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Is direct seeding of rice a solution or a new problem in disguise?

Sometimes I wonder. Why do we first destroy the inherent capacity and then after a few years go in for capacity rebuilding. Well, if you think it isn't clear as to what I mean, let me make an effort. It was interesting to read a statement by Subroto Geed, President of South Asia wing of Corteva Agri-Science, a global agricultural company that provides crop protection and seed products to farmers: "At Corteva Agri-Science, we understand the challenges rice farmers face and acute need to promote sustainable farming. That's why we are focused on increasing Direct Seeding Rice (DSR) adoption through a multi-stakeholder approach.

By bringing together diverse partners and leveraging advanced seed technology, crop protection solutions, and sustainable agronomic practices, we empower farmers with effective solutions for resilient rice production."

The DSR technology in rice cultivation may sound to be highly innovative, but, excuse me, to only those scientists and business journalists who probably cannot see beyond what the corporate battlefield has to offer. The 'precision technology' tool that is now being made available with much fanfare was, in fact, being practiced by Indian farmers or for that matter by rice farmers across Asia decades ago.

To make it look as if the technological innovation approach is multi-stakeholder, diverse partners are being engaged to leverage the advanced seed technology. Surprisingly, we now have the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the umbrella agricultural research organisation of the country, getting into an agreement with the multinational giant, Bayer. According to media reports, Bayer plans to bring one million hectares under DSR by 2030.

In a memorandum of understanding between ICAR and Bayer, a set of policy frame works, including agronomic solutions, crop protection, mechanisation for DSR and other precision technology tool are envisaged. Of course, all this will require capacity building at the farmers as well as at the research and extension levels.

When I was growing up I had always seen rice farmers undertaking cultivation by sprinkling seeds in a field filled with water. Later, after completing my Master's in agriculture I joined a multi-edition major English language daily as its Agriculture Correspondent. It was around that time agricultural universities and extension services were aggressively promoting transplanting of paddy. The argument of agricultural scientists and extension workers then was that transplanting in rice increased crop productivity. No one questioned the tall claim, and it was something that everyone seemed to agree with.

For several years, a picture of women transplanting paddy seedlings in rows became a routine front page photograph in my newspaper also indicating the advent of Kharif crop season. Even now, a picture of women workers transplanting paddy has become a popular way to identify a report or analysis that talks of rice.



The emphasis on DSR as a panacea for agricultural problems is misleading. It is a carefully constructed narrative designed to promote the sale of agrochemicals and machinery.

Devinder Sharma

But it was mid-1980s, a study by International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) lifted the lid over the so-called efficiency of paddy transplanting. The study said that there is no difference in crop productivity if you sow rice by broadcasting of seeds (which means seed sprinkling) or by transplanting paddy seedlings. It was during that time I was on a short term assignment with IRRI at Los Banos in the Philippines, and had an opportunity to meet one of the top rice scientists of the world. I asked him if according to IRRI study there is no difference in rice yield if the crop is sown by broadcasting or transplanted, then why we were told to shift to transplanting of paddy. After all, this was quite a shift in the way rice cultivation was undertaken.

What I was told was no less than an eye-opener. The emergence of high-yielding varieties of rice coincided with the period when the tractor industry was trying to expand its marketing. Given that 97 per cent of rice cultivation globally happens in Asia, broadcasting of seeds do not allow the tractors to operate in paddy field. With seeds having been broadcasted, it becomes difficult for the tractor to operate in the rice field without trampling the rice plants. Transplanting in rows therefore became a solution to ensure that a tractor could cooperate in a rice field without causing any damage. Higher productivity in that case was not the criteria but creating a narrative around it helped convince farmers and extension workers of the need to shift from broadcasting of seeds and in the guise help the industry to market its tractors in Asia.

In other words, the politics of



technology destroyed the inherent capacity or skills of the farming community to not only sow the seeds directly but also in the process ensure climate resilience leading to sustainable rice production. It is now being claimed that DSR will revolutionise rice production in India without being told that Indian farmers were efficiently doing it in the past. The only difference now being that the industry is drilling a herbicide along with seed which in my understanding is much more harmful to the environment. Just like depletion of groundwater in case of paddy cultivation has become a problem; it will be herbicide application that will emerge as a major problem in the years to come. Earlier, farmers were only broadcasting the seeds. It too was direct sowing.

Very cleverly, rice farmers were divulged from continuing with climate savvy practices by a system approach that involved agricultural universities and the agribusiness industry. Simply put, rice farmers were much more future looking than what the agribusiness industry now is trying to rebuild the capacities for. As I said earlier, first destroy the existing capacity, and after having exploited the farming communities by selling

expensive industrial tools, now rebuild capacities so as to sell new industry tools backed by digital technology providers. Both ways, it is farmers who are at the losing end, and it is the input industry that laughs all the way to the bank.

This in reality is the real circular economy.

Now look at the industry claims. With several industry players joining hands, and with ICAR and IRRI supporting them, a new narrative of water-positive rice cultivation is being built. It is being said that DSR will save 35 to 40 per cent water, save Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 per acre as transplanting labour cost, save fuel and machine cost for puddling operations, and also save environmental damage by hard soil pan creation as a result; and finally lead to 35 per cent reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Wasn't this what rice farmers were actually saving on when they were simply broadcasting seeds? We actually first destroyed the time-tested and innovative technology of broadcasting seed to be replaced by less efficient branded technologies which we market as innovative. □□

(The author is a noted food policy analyst and an expert on issues related to the agriculture sector. He writes on food, agriculture and hunger)
<https://www.bhaskar.com/news/opinion/is-direct-seeding-of-rice-a-solution-or-a-new-problem-in-dignise-1333377>

Bharat, Russia, and Ukraine

The Bharat has earned a considerable reputation worldwide in the last decade. The acceptance of our human-oriented philosophy is reflected undisputedly in the practice of Yoga worldwide. The worldwide desire to have a Unified Payment Interface (UPI) reflects acceptance of our technological capability. The remarkable reception received by Bharat from two nations at war, i.e., Russia and Ukraine, which happened within a month, is the acceptance of our principles of foreign diplomacy.

It demonstrates that we are serious and the only trusted player on the chessboard of international affairs. We need not create excuses to explain meeting one and the other. There was no need for a cooling period between the two meetings.

The world is looking at us to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict, whatever the domestic constraints and international compulsions are for the three of us. We will wait and watch for the world to see how we discharge this responsibility.

The prior and post narrative relied on post-independence historical trends built within the country, such as Russia being our long-trusted ally. The opponents, on occasion, critiqued the preference of Russia over Ukraine. The recent meeting with Ukraine provided other opportunities for the opponents to claim that we have lost the confidence of Russians. In the same breadth, they can claim that the Ukrainians will not trust us because of earlier behavior. The opponents have their time-dependent portfolio of opinions, which keeps changing. The proponents can argue that we won the Russian heart when Americans froze the foreign exchange of Russians in dollars and banned access to the “Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication” (SWIFT) facility. The second opportunity we understood with Russians was during New Delhi’s leadership’s G 20 concluding meetings.

We are dependent on energy security for the international fraternity. Oil is the mutual reason that bonded the interests of Russia and Bharat. Both of us had a win-win situation. This situation didn’t create any new conflict for anyone—the ongoing conflict wherever in the world had an indifferent impact. We did not lobby for lifting sanctions against Russia. We traded in our currency, and Russia accepted it. This simple accomplishment is also a gesture of concern for all.

We are an economy that stands relatively on solid macroeconomic parameters, and this was the result of well-planned, disciplined, and desirable efforts put in over subsequent years of excellent and bad learnings, with the black-and-white decision that led us to desire that we have to be a self-reliant, and developed country by 2047.

The international currency is an essential constituent of this effort. Hence, we bought Russian oils with our currency or mutually agreed upon basket of currency by isolating American dollars, as Russia has lost all its dollar deposits. Russians have been our traditional weapons suppliers; we have already moved ahead significantly in our defense manufacturing, including arsenals, naval submarines, and



*We are in NAM
and QUAD
simultaneously,
and we are with
Russia and
Ukraine
simultaneously,
and none of the
direct
stakeholders are
uncomfortable
with us.*

Alok Singh

other weapons and ancillaries. Today, this is why we have a huge export opportunity for defense products. Our dependency on Russians for arms and ammunition is not the reason to define our relationship with Russia per se. We preferred those who accepted our currency for trade and did the deal.

Bharat and Ukraine committed in their meeting to working towards universal food security in general and in Asia and Africa in particular. They also assured cooperation in the economic, scientific, and technical domains, defense, and cultural and people-to-people ties.

Bharat, Russia, and Ukraine (BRU) are at the center of global politics today. Under the umbrella of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the West appears to be concerned with Russians. However, they are equally concerned about Chinese economic and geographical hegemony. China exploited the Russia-Ukraine war to test its strength against NATO, which comprises thirty European and two North American countries. China has created a web of opponents to checkmate NATO plus Bharat by engaging openly with Russia and North Korea.

Our neighborhood is deeply in trouble, created by specific global forces, and despite that, we are in control of our neighborhood rather than the Chinese. Our one neighbor who is supporting the Russian war is troubling our other neighbors and is using it as a proxy against us. The situation in the former Himalayan Kingdom and now the democratic republic of Nepal needs our consistent attention because of their inclination towards the Chinese, and we have to neutralize the Nepali compul-

Bharat and Ukraine committed in their meeting to working towards universal food security in general and in Asia and Africa in particular. They also assured cooperation in the economic, scientific, and technical domains, defense, and cultural and people-to-people ties.

sions, whatever they are. However, the long legacy and natural choice are in our favor.

The missed opportunity to integrate Bhutan with ourselves keeps popping up as a subject of debate. We owe the responsibility for defending Bhutan, but the Chinese are creating trouble for us by disturbing its boundaries.

Bangladesh, an integral part of Bharat before 15 August 1947, has always considered our people. However, our international enemies are creating trouble within Bangladesh by targeting the Hindus to deviate from our strengths. China is a crucial party in Bangladesh's affairs.

In this, the role of NATO's leader, i.e., North Americans, is also under the radar. We recently rescued Sri Lanka from the Chinese trap of debt as well as other affairs. The Maldives, Myanmar, and Thailand trust us more than the Chinese or the two North American countries. The Japanese and Australians are always comfortable with us and feel troubled by the Chinese. The South China Sea looks upon our navy for defense and maintaining global maritime order.

These global chessboards of economics, defense, trade, and the well-acknowledged cultural conflict are not zero-sum games. Those who believe in a zero-sum game, i.e., "I

win, You lose, or You win, I lose," need to change; otherwise, they will have to bear irreparable damage to their culture and people.

We are the face of art with trust. We have paid the price for trust, right from the days of membership to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Opponents of our foreign policy complain that we cannot simultaneously be with Russia and China. However, we have demonstrated G20 success, in which we didn't allow criticism of Russia, concluded the meeting with a grand welcome, and expanded the G20 family by including the African Union (AU). AU itself has fifty-five member states.

Today, we have formulated our defense group, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which includes Bharat, Australia, Japan, and America. We are in NAM and QUAD simultaneously, and we are with Russia and Ukraine simultaneously, and none of the direct stakeholders are uncomfortable with us. We owe the responsibility for the new world order on all fronts, including climate, humanity, civilization, health, energy, food, defense, and others. The absence of a tool of veto right in the United Nations Security Council seems to dwarf our role on the world stage. □□

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

Congress Narrative and Ecosystem in India

(The practice of broadcasting false propaganda by twisting the facts, drawing false conclusions and suppressing inconvenient Truth.)

The Congress party, which has ruled the country for almost 6 decades since independence without any major opposition. Congress Party has developed the art of mastery on controlling the media, a sacred institution which has enormous power in shaping the public opinion. People was made to believe that Congress is the only party which fought for independence. Therefore, the people of that time naturally and innocently believed the Congress. Out of blind admiration supported Pandit Nehru, the undisputed leader of Congress. Taking the advantage of this Nehru, his family and his successors created a group of Anti – Santana Sanskriti consisting of left-wing ideological, Marxists intellectuals and placed them in important places controlling the flow of information to general public, such as Media, various social and cultural academies, Heads of Universities, Boards of Academics etc. In the absence of social media, the media was indirectly controlled by congress ecosystem and was used to broadcast government news propaganda. This ecosystem had exclusive privilege of being gate keepers, thereby allowing only those who toe their line of thinking into position of authority in these institutions and hence ensuring their line of thinking only perpetuates for many generations. These people, under the guise of democratic free speech etc., would twist the news to their liking whenever required, but would shamelessly suppress inconvenient facts. A close look reveals that this ecosystem acted like famous Nazi Propagandists Goebbel who was shaping public opinion as Nazis wanted by using Goebbels’s strategy of telling a lie repeatedly and ensuring that the voice of opposite view does not reach the people.



The Congress continued the practice of propagating the perverted version of history, tradition and culture of India, which British propagated and stifled the voices which challenged this view.

**Mahadevayya
Karadalli**

The Congress continued the practice of propagating the perverted version of history, tradition and culture of India, which British propagated and stifled the voices which challenged this view. In the media, in the press, in the universities, in the strategic positions of the government, they had nurtured their loyalists who are labeled as intellectuals, progressives and ideologues. It is a well-known fact that an eco-system had grown by co-opting its supporters by giving state awards, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Jnanpith awards, honorary doctorates, positions of Chancellors etc, with good salaries & other perquisites like Luxury accommodation, traveling abroad etc. For example, in 2012 Prof Amartya Sen a Nobel laureate appointed as Chairman of Nalanda University an ancient educational study Center and During his tenure project was suffered inordinate delay and mismanagement. But paid handsome salary and perquisites. As a reward for his loyalty though his health does not permit him to work Prof U R Anantmurthy was appointed as first chancellor of Central University of Karnataka. Government by extending extraordinary faculties, status to Intellectuals. In return they were expected to be loyal to their masters and work to promote the congress false narrative across all medias of communication such as print and visual media, education, cinema and other arts literature etc., Besides, these “congress intellectuals” were also puppets in the hand’s foreign governments and media circles, who

were anti Sanatani in nature and wanted to promote the “idea of India as cultivated by Britishers” to justify their colonial rule.

Deprived of a chance to govern after 2014, the Congress is gasping like a fish out of water. The Congress, which was the architect of building the perverted narrative about Bharat’s culture and tradition, was all set to take power in 2024, hoping that 10 years Modi Rule would have created “Anti - Incumbency” against BJP Government at center. But its wish was not fulfilled. It feels compelled to double down to promote more and more of their narratives to discredit the ruling government, which unfortunately ends up in discrediting true nature of India that is Santana Dharma and its traditions.

For example, in 2024 Loka Sabha, the BJP, in fact did not lose the game, but saw merely the reduction in victory margin (Comparing with cricket match it is like X Team defeated Y team by merely 10 runs, instead of defeating with a margin of more than 200 runs, as used to happen in the past) It was advertised that Modi’s has lost the match. Such a wrong narrative, tried to suppress the fact that, the Congress could not cross the hundred mark and entire opposition could not cross the number achieved by a single party i.e., BJP. They tried to keep the citizens in a delusion by promoting the fact that the Congress won double the number of seats and whereas the BJP won less than the number of seats won in the last Lok Sabha. It is quiet surprise BJP cadre also come under this hangover. But the Congress plan was unfurled in the President’s vote of thanks, as though this reduction in



margin of defeat in itself is a cause of great celebration. Prime Minister, many BJP leaders, including Anurag Thakur, spoke highly during the debate in parliament on motion of thanks to President’s speech, which did not make news for traditional congress supporting media. But Kharge and Rahul’s speech was not only given wide publicity and promoted both in traditional and social media by congress ecosystem.

Rahul Gandhi has often said that India is not a country but a union. When the spirit behind the speech is closely examined, it feels like this deliberate statement is part of a nation-breaking frenzy, giving an impression that parts which came together by accident of history to form Indian Union, can always break away as there is no fundamental underlying unity in India. The media which belongs to congress ecosystem, does not talk about the dangerous consequences of such an idea for the integrity and unity of country. As a follow-up to this, he did not condemn Kerala, where he is an MP, for appointing a foreign secretary for his state.

Although it is known that the budget includes department-wise grants and state-wise distribution is done automatically in each department, immediately after the

presentation of the budget, the states ruled by opposition parties lamented that they did not get the grant. Even when the UPA government was in power, state-wise budget grants were not given in the budget documents, a fact which exposes the false narrative Congress ecosystem was propagating.

The conduct of congress ecosystem post Modi 3.0 Govt is not a surprise as it is just a continuation of the lies, they were spreading during election period also. such as Modi will change the constitution and remove reservation if he wins etc., In addition false promises which are financially impossible to implement were made such as depositing, Rs 8500/- to each voter’s account every month.

In addition to spreading lies, suppressing facts/ news which are inconvenient to Congress ecosystem and its supporters, is also major propaganda tactics.

Ruling BJP has to take strong steps to address problem posed by “Intellectuals”. Through narrative and eco-system. But will it take firm action to create an alternative to the Congress ecosystem? Can false narratives be effectively replaced? Will BJP rise again? Is it the voice of the affected citizens in real sense? Time only can answer these questions?

(Continued...)

Kashmir: Deep rooted Conspiracy to balkanise Bharat–2

In the previous article, the chronology of events of partition of Bharat with reference to Kashmir and UN role there just before the independence was discussed briefly. The thesis of Shri R.L. Gupta on Indo-British relations 1947-1950 (Independence Day to Republic Day) submitted in 1969 was referred in the article. The more revealing facts of intervention of the United States and Britain in Kashmir affairs with a view to holding influence in South East Asia have been narrated in “The History of British Diplomacy in Pakistan” by Ian Talbot, Professor of Modern South Asian History at University of Southampton, UK (ISBN 978-1-032-11590-0), “Freedom & Partition – Momentous Events of 14-17 August 1947” – Tan Tai Yong, Gyanesh Kudesia – (ISBN – 978-93-5687-068-0) and daily reporting in the newspapers of that time (Till now, I have gone through all the newspapers of Hindustan (Hindi) from 1945-1958) besides several other books on Kashmir. The second part of previous article - “Kashmir: Deep rooted Conspiracy to balkanise Bharat” covers some more facts how Kashmir was attempted as battle ground on massacre and bloodshed of Kashmiris, based on R.L. Gupta’s thesis. The then newspapers have elaborately published news, articles, statements and analyses more honestly while authors picked and chose according to their narratives ignoring the glorious past of Kashmir and ground realities of Kashmir.

By and large, the British attitude to the Kashmir question was neither impartial nor objective. Though the British Government, in the initial stages claimed to have adopted a neutral attitude, in the Security Council, its representative completely identified it with the Pakistani cause. It caused both surprise and disappointment in Bharat and affected Indo-British relations adversely. Alan Campbell Johnson wrote in his diary,



The reaction of Pakistan to Kashmir’s accession to Bharat was very violent.
Vinod Johri



“Various suspicions are seeping into the minds of the Indian Government and the politically conscious public which taken together could develop into a major frontal attack on Indo British good-will. In the first place, there is bewilderment at the delay of the United Nations in accepting India’s basic complaint that an act of aggression has taken place.... Hence grows the suspicion that the United Nations is being made the forum for the promotion of international power politics. As evidence of this, the published attitude of the American and British delegates, Warren Austin and Noel Baker, are cited. Both are wildly accused of being unashamedly pro-Pakistan for a variety of unedifying reasons.”

The Bhartiya reaction to the attitude adopted by the British Government on the problem of Kashmir was lucidly summed up by the UN correspondent of “The Hindu” (12.02.1948) in the following words:

“It is abundantly clear that British policy regarding India and Pakistan in the international field is going to be precisely what it was as regards the Congress and the Muslim League in the domestic sphere - ostensible public profession of neutrality coupled with secret, but nonetheless actual and effective, support for Pakistan and all anti-Indian and anti-democratic forces.... Mr. Noel Baker evidently came here from London with a more or less clear-cut programme of “settlement” regarding the Kashmir dispute. From the very first day, he has been trying to push it through on the pretence of agreeing with India as to the urgency of the situation. The majority of the Council members have

gone along with him. I am reliably informed that their bias has even more plainly been revealed at “private meetings” between India and Pakistan which Mr. Noel Baker has assiduously promoted and where doubtless he hoped some sort of a “settlement”, could be patched up....”

The joint proposal of Prime Minister Attlee and President Truman for arbitration was neither welcomed nor appreciated in Bharat. Prime Minister Nehru was “surprised at the intervention of President Truman and Mr. Attlee in the Kashmir issue” and told them that it was no use side-tracking the basic issue. He said:

“If what we say is in accordance with facts, the whole world ought to appreciate that our stand is justified. If we are wrong, we should be plainly told so. But it is not right to side-track the basic cause of the conflict. Such a situation obviously makes us restless and uneasy.”

The Hindu (06.09.1949), in an editorial entitled “Intervention” commented:

“On the whole Indian public reaction to the joint appeal of the American President and the British Prime Minister has been one of doubt, if not of exception to this somewhat unusual step of suggesting the acceptance of a particular proposal to two independent states, who were parties to a dispute involving complicated issues concerned not only with those two states but also the political future of the people of the third state. One would naturally expect; those who tender advice to post themselves fully with the facts of the situation and the contention of the Parties. But it is unlikely that Messrs.

Truman and Attlee have had either the time or the material to go fully into the Kashmir developments up-to-date....”

Thus, the attitude of the British Government on the Kashmir question was considered in Bharat to be neither impartial nor objective. It seems that the British Government was actuated by considerations of power politics in adopting this attitude and was also unnecessarily trying to interfere in Bhartiya affairs. This was widely regretted in Bharat and adversely affected Bharat-British relations. The attitude of the Conservative Party (in accordance with its traditionally pro-Muslim outlook) was in line with her pro-Pakistani bias and was, therefore, ignored by and large in the country. But the attitude of the British Press was in marked contrast to its attitude on the Hyderabad question. The suggestion of the British Press for partition of Kashmir was strongly resented throughout the country. On the whole, the British attitude to the Kashmir question seemed to be determined by considerations of strategy and politics and not either impartiality or friendly relations with independent Bharat. All this is unfortunate, for two reasons. For one thing, British Government has a certain responsibility for the origin of both the Kashmir and Hyderabad problems, in that they would not have arisen if it had unequivocally advised the princely states to join promptly either dominion - in this case, Bharat, for obvious reasons of geographical contiguity, among others. All the more, therefore, the Bharatiya government and people were very much annoyed with the British stand in respect of these two questions.

Attitude of the Conservative Party

The Kashmir question was not much of a political issue within Great Britain. The Conservatives, like the British Labour Government, considered the problem of Kashmir a serious one and urged solution by holding a plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. However, they were more vocal in their criticism of India and support to Pakistan. Their leader, Winston Churchill, participating in the debate on Hyderabad and Kashmir in the House of Commons said -

“.... Nor can I understand what principle underlies the attitude of the Indian Government towards the two States. In Kashmir, four-fifths of the people are Muslim and the ruler is a Hindu. His accession to the Dominion of India is accepted without any reference to the vast majority of his people. In regard to Hyderabad, the case, as a communal problem, is the other way round. The ruler is a Muslim and the bulk of the people are non-Muslims. The Indian Government - the Nehru Government take the line that in one case it is the will of the people and in the other case it is the decision of the ruler. In either case, however, we work it, they get them both. I must say that we ought to notice this very curious way of deciding these grave issues.”

Conservative spokesmen also considered Kashmir vital to the defence of Pakistan and suggested ‘friendly arbitration’ by the Commonwealth and the British Government if the United Nations failed to enforce a decision.

Attitude of the British Press

British Press was very critical of Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute. It blamed the Pakistan Government “for bungling the diplomatic situation” and favouring and fostering the rebel tribesmen.

The Times, (30 Oct 1947) in a leading article said:-

“The Pakistan Government, making a first false step, gave economic support to this movement by withholding supplies from Kashmir. The reported intention of Pakistan to reply by sending forces of its own into Kashmir is a different matter; it would, in fact, be a hostile act against the Dominion of India, with which Kashmir is now lawfully associated.”

The Manchester Guardian (31 October 1947) also wrote in an editorial-

“.... To drive the Kashmir Government into federating with Pakistan, Mr. Jinnah, seems to have used the weapon of economic blockade. The Afridi raiders may not be Pakistani troops, but seem to bear to Pakistan the same relation as the German “tourists” did to the German Government in the Spanish civil war....”

The Daily Telegraph (6 January 1948) admitted that -

“.... there can be equally little doubt that Pakistan has favoured and fostered the rebel tribesmen, if not encouraged them more actively. Whether Mr. Jinnah or his Prime Minister, Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan, could now call off the rebels without military intervention, is more dubious....”

The New Statesman and Nation deplored the intervention of Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute and called her the guilty party. It said -

“....To us the manner of Pakistan’s intervention in the whole affair seems to make her the guilty party. Disavowing the raiders, she was all the time supporting them and inserting her own army. Placing no reliance on the possibility of a democratic solution, she deliberately resorted to force....”

But while strongly criticising Pakistan, the British Press considered the partition of Kashmir as the best solution to the problem.

On 31 October 1947, The Manchester Guardian wrote -

“.... There will have to be a compromise. The easiest interim plan might be for Kashmir proper to join Pakistan and for the territory of Jammu, which it had formerly included, to federate with India.”

The Economist also said -

“.... After all that has happened in Kashmir, the best solution is probably to be found in a partition of the state with a directed population exchange....”

The Times also advocated:

“.... The sensible course for both sides India and Pakistan, might be to accept some partition of the country as inevitable and to give the Commission (United Nations) a free hand to arrange the preliminaries early....”

There is lot to read about the conspiracy of plebiscite and Radcliffe line of partition in Kashmir context. The Commissions set up by United Nations under the US and British diplomats only complicated the mess and multiplied hostilities. Apparently, UN was façade but US and Britain were the deep state forces destabilising the region with Pakistan as an easy prey. □□

Bangladesh's Colour Revolution

The situation in Bangladesh after the exile of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed is crystallizing with the appointment of Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus (83) as head of the interim government, the release of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia from prison, and the decision of the United States and United Kingdom to revoke Sheikh Hasina's visa to their countries, thereby making their hands in the contemporary events in Dhaka quite explicit. Current indications suggest she may find a haven in Belarus that has friendly ties with Russia, China, the Gulf States, and India.

The Bangladesh Parliament has been dissolved and fresh elections could be held within six months. While the current violence began with protests against the reservation policy that was alleged to benefit only Awami League supporters, there has been extensive arson, vandalism, targeting of the Hindu minority and destruction of several temples.

The timing of the coup seems to have been dictated by domestic events in America, where a Donald Trump victory in November 2024 could scuttle many geopolitical plans. Fresh elections in Bangladesh are likely to see the return of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) under Tarique Rahman, self-exiled (in London) son of the ailing Khaleda Zia, 79.

Sheikh Hasina

The bells tolled for Sheikh Hasina when she publicly stated that the US wanted to carve out a Christian country from parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar. In New Delhi, analysts believe this would include parts of India's Manipur and Mizoram.

Addressing members of her 14-party alliance at Gono Bhaban (PM's residence) in Dhaka, she revealed that she was assured smooth re-election to Parliament by a "white-skinned foreigner" if she allowed a foreign country (read US)



Sheikh Hasina's ouster is a strategic setback for India as she was a friendly leader who stood up against Islamic radicalism and crushed anti-India insurgency on Bangladesh soil.

Sandhya Jain



to build an airbase in the Bay of Bengal (probably on St Martin's Island), according to the Dhaka-based newspaper, The Daily Star. She compared the proposal to the carving out of East Timor from Indonesia.

Washington is also irritated by Bangladesh's proximity to China. It wants to block China's access to the Indian Ocean via the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (Yunnan-Rakhine) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Xinjiang-Balochistan). Washington supports Rakhine insurgents and during several high-level visits in 2023, hinted that if Arakan Army rebels won in Rakhine, they could facilitate the repatriation of one million Rohingya refugees in Dhaka camps. This would be possible only if the Myanmar Air Force is denied mastery of the skies above Rakhine State so that the Arakan Army can control the region.

Beijing fears that a US-backed independent Rakhine could jeopardise the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and give Washington control of the China-funded Kyaukphyu deep sea port, triggering secessionist movements in the western Myanmar states of Chin and Kachin. New Delhi does not favour US-backed statelets on its borders with Myanmar.

Washington also wanted Sheikh Hasina to sign two military-related pacts, viz, General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements (ACSA).

The Belt and Road Initiative has benefitted Dhaka. According to the Bangladeshi daily, Prothom Alo, China has loaned Bangladesh nearly \$3 billion since fiscal year

Washington is also irritated by Bangladesh's proximity to China. It wants to block China's access to the Indian Ocean via the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (Yunnan-Rakhine) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Xinjiang-Balochistan).

2019-2020, and currently, nearly 14 projects are being implemented with Chinese loans amounting to nearly \$10 billion.

In July 2024, China and Bangladesh elevated their relationship to the level of a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership." However, due to the need to balance between China and India, Dhaka nixed a deep-sea port at Sonadia Island in the Indian Ocean as New Delhi viewed it as a dual-use facility that could host Chinese surveillance ships in peacetime and encircle India if it wished. Beijing was annoyed by Dhaka accepting India's offer to fund the Teesta River water management project, and this was probably the reason why China refused a \$5 billion loan Hasina sought during her visit.

Mohammad Yunus

Mohammad Yunus, a former professor of economics at Chittagong University in Bangladesh, founded the Grameen Bank to offer loans to poor entrepreneurs. In 2006, he won the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the Grameen Bank.

Yunus is a critic of Sheikh Hasina and was forced to resign

from the Grameen Bank in 2011 after crossing the legal retirement age of 60. In an interview with Reuters in June 2024, he condemned the January 2024 elections because they were boycotted by the main opposition party. The US State Department lambasted the elections as "not free and fair" while the British foreign office condemned acts of "intimidation and violence".

Just before the elections, a court in Bangladesh sentenced Yunus to six months in prison for violations of labour law, which he denied. He faces more than 100 cases of similar violations and graft accusations.

Renowned Bangladeshi journalist Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury asserts that Yunus has a spotty public record. Far from lifting millions from poverty with cheap loans, he pushed them deeper into poverty with crippling interest rates (21 to 37 per cent), even though he received most funds as grants from donor countries.

In a 2019 film, *The Micro Debt*, Danish investigative journalist Tom Heinemann exposed secret documents proving how Muhammad Yunus, in the mid-1990s transferred 100 million dollars (mostly grants from Norway, Sweden, Germany, the US and Canada) to a new company in the Grameen-family, mostly owned by his family members, to dodge taxes.

Yunus is a key donor of the Clinton Foundation while Hillary Clinton had used her position in the State Department to award more than US\$13 million in grants to Yunus, despite his exit from Grameen Bank in 2011. He received huge funds from other US federal agencies. When the Bang-

ladesh government accused Yunus of corruption, Hillary Clinton tried to bully it to withdraw the charges. An approved World Bank loan of US\$ 1.2 billion to build the Padma Bridge was cancelled. The bridge was later constructed by a Chinese firm in June 2022.

David Bossie, president of the conservative activist group Citizens United, urged the FBI to investigate possible conflicts of interest in the Clinton-Yunus association. He told *The Daily Caller News Foundation* that probes into Hillary Clinton's private email server should cover the "mixing of State Department and US government business with Clinton Foundation donors." In January 2007, when an army-backed interim government came to power, Hillary Clinton tried to have Muhammad Yunus installed as the "new leader of Bangladesh." His sudden rise is therefore no coincidence.

Khaleda Zia

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (1991-1996 and 2001-2006), imprisoned on corruption charges, won a reprieve on the back of an Islamist wave. The BNP had an alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami which was accused of war crimes during Bangladesh's liberation war. BNP is alleged to have ties with the radical Hefazat-e-Islam that seeks Sharia law in Bangladesh, and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Winning her first term in alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami, her reign was painful for Hindus, and to a lesser extent the Buddhist Chakmas and Christians. Her cabinet included two Jamaat-e-Islami members who worked against Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

In April 2001, officials of the

Sheikh Hasina's ouster is a strategic setback for India as she was a friendly leader who stood up against Islamic radicalism and crushed anti-India insurgency on Bangladesh soil.

Bangladesh Rifles aligned with Zia, murdered 16 Border Security Force (BSF) jawans in Meghalaya. The then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was helpless. Later, Khaleda's victory unleashed untold horrors upon Hindus, as reported by the BBC. The European Commission's envoy Antonio de Souza Menezes urged Khaleda to act against the culprits, but she did not even formally condemn the violence.

In October 2001, there was violence against Indians on the Meghalaya border and a tribal youth who resisted was hacked to death (Pioneer, 30 October 2001). His decapitated body was recovered near the international border. Bangladesh's *Sangbad* daily revealed that the ruling BNP cadres imposed the Jiziya tax on Hindus and other minorities wishing to stay in their ancestral homes in Chittagong.

Violence

Several Bangladeshi newspapers have reported violence against Hindu homes and businesses by mobs, and their valuables looted in at least 27 districts in Bangladesh on August 5, 2024. The same day, the ISKCON temple in Khulna

was torched and the murtis of Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra Devi were destroyed. Three devotees living in the centre managed to survive.

Around 25 persons were killed after protesters set the 5-star Zabeer International Hotel in Jashore on fire. They were after Shahin Chakladar, an MP of the Awami League, and owner of the hotel.

Thousands of Hindus are racing towards India after Islamists forced them out of their villages in orchestrated violence not seen since 1971. The first group reached the border on August 6, 2024. The RSS and Vishwa Hindu Parishad urged the Government of India to take steps to ensure the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh. However, Prasun Maitra, leader of the Hindu Samhati in West Bengal, said, "Hindus in Bangladesh can't silently migrate to India on the excuse of marriage, education or treatment and keep uttering false stories of nostalgia of peaceful symbiosis with Muslims. If they need shelter in India, they must be vocal about atrocities due to religious identity."

Challenges for India

Sheikh Hasina's ouster is a strategic setback for India as she was a friendly leader who stood up against Islamic radicalism and crushed anti-India insurgency on Bangladesh soil. She firmly extradited leaders of groups like ULFA to India. Her exit will foster regional instability, with security challenges in the northeastern states. The Act East Policy may be affected and bilateral connectivity disrupted. Strategic thinkers want the government to prepare to proactively bolster (widen) the Siliguri Corridor. □□

<https://www.sandhyajainarchive.org/2024/08/12/bangladeshs-colour-revolution/>

Bangladesh crisis underlines the necessity of political risk management

The political crisis in Bangladesh and a renewed wave of anti-India sentiment sweeping across the neighbouring country have once again prompted analysts to examine the nature of political risk Indian companies face when they invest abroad. It is useful to remember that it is not so much in distant lands but, in fact, closer home in South Asia that Indian businesses have had more run-ins with political risk.

In 2004, a Tata group proposal to invest up to \$3 billion in Bangladesh's energy sector ran into political rough weather and was eventually abandoned. In 2009, products of the Dabur group came under what was perceived to be a politically-motivated consumer attack in Nepal. In 2013, a newly-elected government in the Maldives terminated an airport construction project awarded to the GMR group by a previous government. More recently, the Adani group has faced rough weather in Sri Lanka when functionaries of the government in Colombo alleged political pressure from India in the award of a contract.

It has been reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been encouraging Indian companies to invest overseas and emerge as global corporations. Even before securing any such official support, several major firms have been investing overseas partly to secure access to global markets and partly to de-risk the Indian environment. Few, however, have made any significant investment in assessing political risk, beyond hoping the home government would bail them out in difficult times.

Such dependence on the home government for dealing with overseas political risk itself constitutes a political risk. What happens when the political leader in government who guarantees protection overseas is himself replaced or no longer able to keep his word? Does a company board evaluate this risk when approving a proposal to venture out under such domestic political protection?



To insulate overseas investment, expertise in internal politics and policy of countries of interest is needed.
Sanjaya Baru



When a global company operating in India found itself exposed to a change in domestic laws, it chose to go to court. Some people advised the company's global boss to approach the newly-appointed minister responsible for the change of policy. Having that kind of information and knowing how to get to the person is also risk management. This, too, requires feet on the ground and eyes and ears where possible.

Those investing in developed economies depend on the latter's more predictable policy environment, not worrying too much about political risk. Though, even there, Indian businesses have had to grapple with domestic politics. Lakshmi Mittal, for example, had to deal with European politics in his bid to take over the cement MNC Arcelor. Infosys has had to convince American politicians that it is creating wealth and employment even in the US and not just in India.

Political risk management by Indian firms has ranged from "playing golf" with "persons that matter" in the overseas investment destination, to securing "political protection" in that country or "consulting the Indian ambassador". Indian business leaders are quite adept at securing political protection overseas given the long years of experience at home. Diplomats have found an avenue for post-retirement employment, working for companies that have investments in countries where they have been posted. The lack of adequate demand for political risk insurance has not encouraged and developed this line of consulting adequately at home.

In creating the geo-economics and strategy programme at the

International Institute of Strategic Studies a decade ago, I tried to explore the Indian corporate market for overseas political risk assessment and discovered that most business leaders were satisfied investing in building personal relations with "those who matter" in the relevant country. Over the past decade, many Indian business groups have funded research institutions and think tanks that study the global economy and politics. However, their focus is mostly on national security, foreign policy and bilateral relations rather than country-specific economic and political risk.

They have much to say in their working papers and newspaper columns on what governments say and do, on what they should or should not do and very little on offer for CEOs and board rooms on country-specific risks to Indian business. The irony is that both in government and business, most believe they have little use for such "academic" research. There have been intermittent efforts at promoting area studies and country-specific expertise but few undertake country political risk.

An important institution that has often filled the information gap for corporates between what may be regarded as purely "academic" research and "agenda-based" advice from governmental functionaries has been the media. Foreign correspondents are an excellent source of information that could feed into political risk assessment. There is, in fact, a long history of such a role being played by foreign correspondents with many distinguishing themselves as experts in area studies. This important source of overseas risk assessment is hardly available in India since few

media companies invest in foreign correspondents.

In the past, when a few newspapers did appoint correspondents in neighbouring countries, some of the journalists became important sources of information on that country. What they could not or would not put on paper they would convey to diplomats and spooks. This has happened the world over, which is why foreign correspondents are sometimes viewed as quasi-spooks. No government likes such quasi-spooks but every government makes use of them.

Foreign governments and businesses dependent on mainstream Indian media's coverage of the general elections in India were less prepared for the final result than those who paid attention to what some foreign correspondents were writing.

Given that both the government and individual firms are serious about overseas investment, they must facilitate the growth of area studies and expertise in the internal politics and policy of countries of interest and importance. It is not enough for think tanks to focus only on the foreign policy of other countries. They must also invest in developing local expertise in the domestic politics of countries where they intend to place their shareholders' money.

If the kind of reporting that has been done out of Dhaka over the past fortnight by Indian media was done in the fortnight preceding Sheikh Hasina's exit, many Indian firms, as well as the government in Delhi, would have been better prepared to deal with the sudden turn of events. □□

The writer was Member, National Security Advisory Board of India, 1999-2001 & media advisor to PM of India, 2004-08
<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/sanjaya-baru-writes-bangladesh-crisis-underlines-the-necessity-of-political-risk-management-9528195/>

Legitimacy of ‘global rankings’

We are entering that time of the year when a slew of Western think tanks and NGOs will issue various “global rankings” for 2024 on democracy, media freedom, happiness, and other assorted subjective issues. Almost certainly, most of these will show India at the bottom of the pile — unhappier than countries at war, less free than Afghanistan, and so on. In the last few years, several commentators, including this author, have exposed the ludicrous methodologies used to arrive at these rankings.

It is important readers recognise that these rankings are not harmless annoyances that can be ignored. They have real-world implications because they are hardwired inputs into sovereign ratings and other decision-making processes. They are also used for a range of activities, from academic research to the manipulation of geopolitical narratives. Therefore, these rankings and indices cannot be casually ignored. They need to be actively deconstructed. Those interested in a critique of their methodologies may see EAC-PM working papers: *Reversing the Gaze* (March 2023) and *Why India Does Poorly on Global Perception Indices* (November 2022). However, this article will look at a somewhat different issue — the well-oiled institutional system that gives these indices and rankings their legitimacy.

An important route that gives these indices both legitimacy and influence is their inclusion in the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) hosted on the World Bank’s website (bit.ly/4cv8xDf). As stated on the website, WGI is “a global compilation of data capturing household, business and citizen perceptions of the quality of governance in more than 200 countries”. Thus, legitimised by the World Bank, these indicators are then used by investment managers, academia, credit ratings agencies, and so on.



It is important to question narrative-making dominated by a North Atlantic cabal.

Sanjeev Sanyal



Therefore, it will come as a surprise to many commentators that WGI is not the property of the World Bank, but of two researchers — Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay. The page mentions them in passing, and the wording gives the impression that they happen to be employees who are currently managing it on behalf of the World Bank. What is not made clear is that the two researchers own the space. Readers can verify this on the website and decide if it is misleading. Kaufmann, for instance, left the institution years ago and appears to be the semi-retired emeritus president of a think tank.

It is only when one gets to the small print at the bottom of the page that one realises what is going on: “The WGI represent research published to encourage academic debate and analysis. The views expressed in the research methodology do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, its Executive Board, or World Bank management.”

While it is not unusual for researchers to put out an idea as a paper for discussion, the WGI page is quite different, as it is a continuously updated curation of indicators that is permanently hosted on the website of the World Bank. Inclusion in the list clearly lends a certain legitimacy derived from the multilateral agency. In fact, it is most commonly referred to as World Bank WGI. Yet, the institution takes no responsibility for it!

The way WGI is set up makes it so that it provides indicators for six categories: voice and accountability, political stability, governance effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

Inclusion in the list clearly lends a certain legitimacy derived from the multilateral agency. In fact, it is most commonly referred to as World Bank WGI. Yet, the institution takes no responsibility for it!

Rankings and indices from various think tanks are aggregated into these categories. The choice of these sources is entirely derived from the personal preferences of Kaufmann and Kraay — no justification is given for the choices. What is also striking is that most of the sources are derived from a few North Atlantic institutions. Surely, Worldwide Global Indicators hosted by the World Bank should reflect opinions from across the world.

In recent years, several country representatives at the World Bank have questioned the placing of WGI on the World Bank website. The matter has even been discussed at the board level, but somehow, WGI continues to be hosted by the multilateral agency. However, if anyone raises an objection about any of the curated indices, they are directed by World Bank officials to the original sources. The origin think tanks and NGOs do not feel they owe anyone an explanation, as their place in the WGI is secure.

This problem was illustrated last year by the response of Staffan

Lindberg, director of Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), to criticism of their annual global democracy rankings. Rather than explain the methodology, Lindberg condescendingly stated in an interview that V-Dem’s rankings were based on complex mathematical computations by a supercomputer. In other words, there was no need to explain things to mere mortals. One wonders why V-Dem needs complex mathematics and a supercomputer to collate the views of some 30-40 unknown “experts”.

Once legitimised by the World Bank or a similar institution, the index or ranking finds its way into academia, media, and even government documents. In turn, they amplify the narrative by quoting each other in circular references. These days they get further amplified by artificial intelligence algorithms and Wikipedia. Eventually, it ends up as received wisdom in college essays and everyday conversations that no longer look back at the primary evidence. The whole edifice may be based on a single point of legitimacy but the ordinary person will think “surely they cannot all be wrong”.

As one can see, this is rather like a money laundering operation where the World Bank gives legitimacy to WGI but takes no responsibility, WGI then passes the buck to the source think tanks, and the think tanks blame it on supercomputers. This is why it is important to question this global narrative-making system as well as think of how institutions from outside the North Atlantic cabal can do global rankings and sovereign ratings. □□

(The author is Indian economist and popular historian)
<https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/legitimacy-of-global-rankings/>
3589990/

SJM organizes seminar on Entrepreneurship Day



On occasion of Entrepreneurship Day, a seminar cum workshop organized by Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) to highlight the importance of Swadeshi towards the development of an economy. The programme was held under the leadership of Anita Sharma, Mahila Pramukh (Chief) of SJM, Jammu Province and Deepali Handa, head of SJM core committee.

Speaking on the occasion, Anita Sharma highlighted the importance of Swadeshi and the contribution of domestic products to the economy.

Deepali Handa emphasised the Government efforts to make Self Reliant India and generate employment under Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan.

She also spoke about women's contribution towards welfare of society and laid stress on their confidence and to face challenges without fear.

Principals, Chairman and Directors of the schools lauded the efforts of Swadeshi Jagran Manch and said it's a platform to give and shape identity to an individual, their contribution towards society is highly commendable and look forward to more such programmes of the organization for better society and the nation.

A large number of youth including men and women attended the seminar and were given information about Skill Development. They get training in different skilled courses – computer, stitching, mobile repairing, beautician, painting etc.

After getting training, where they can be placed and become entrepreneurs was well- explained by the team of Swadeshi Jagran Manch.

Among others who addressed during the seminar included Dr Nidhi, Anu Suri, Pooja Uppal and Deepali Sharma.

<https://www.daijicelior.com/sjm-organizes-seminar-on-entrepreneurship-day/>

Swadeshi will make economic development sustainable

Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan said that India is aspiring to become a developed nation by 2047. Stating that the government is providing a strong impetus to 'Make in India', he said Swadeshi will make the economic development of the nation sustainable. The Governor was speaking at the 'Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme' on the occasion of World Entrepreneur Day at the World Trade Centre in Mumbai.

The programme was jointly organised by the International Vaish Federation and Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Mumbai.

The Governor felicitated young entrepreneurs Divya Rathod and Nikunj Malpani on the occasion.

He also released two books '37 Crore Start Ups Ka Desh' and 'Temple Economics' on the occasion.



Ajay Patki, All India Co-Convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), Konkan, Ravindra Sanghvi, Vibhag Sanghachalak (RSS) Mumbai, Dilip Maheshwari, President, International Vaish Federation and Vijay Kalantri, President, World Trade Centre Mumbai were present.

The "Make in India" initiative is based on four pillars, which have been identified to give a boost to entrepreneurship in India, not only in manufacturing but also in other sectors. The four pillars of 'Make in India' initiative are the New Mindset, New Sectors, New Infrastructure, and New Processes.

'Make in India' recognizes 'ease of doing business' as the single most important factor in promoting entrepreneurship. A number of initiatives have already been undertaken to ease the business environment. The aim is to de-license and de-regulate the industry during the entire life cycle of a business.

<https://www.daijiworld.com/index.php/news/newsDisplay?newsID=1219462>

SJM backs Goyal's remark on impact of e-commerce growth

Swadeshi Jagran Manch and the Confederation of All India Traders Association (CAIT) have voiced their support for Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's remarks on the rapid growth of e-commerce in India and against predatory pricing. They also said the rolling out of e-commerce policy has become the need of the hour. Commerce and Industry Minister Goyal, at an event in New Delhi on Wednesday, questioned the business model of e-commerce companies that has been impacting small retailers in the country because of their predatory pricing.

Meanwhile, Goyal clarified today that India is not against e-commerce but wants it to give fair competition and legal compliance. He stressed the importance of supporting small retailers and ensuring they have an equal chance to compete. "We are not against e-commerce, what we want is fair play," the minister posted X post. He had questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/rss-affiliate-backs-goyals-remark-on-impact-of-e-commerce-growth>

Development of Northeast is on priority asserts: CA R. Sundaram

Tripura University in association with Techno India College of Engineering, Agartala and Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) organized an awareness programme in line with its activities towards promoting Organic Entrepreneurship in the state. A MoU between Dattopanth Thengadi Employment Generation Resource Centre (DTEGRC), Tripura University and G Cube Foundation (industry) has also been signed in the august presence of chief guest CA R. Sundaram, a renowned thinker and All India Convener of SJM. This industrial collaboration will provide training to the students in the sector of Bamboo processing and innovative product development which will be a firm step towards Swavlamban of Northeast Bharat.

The trained students in turn will be hand held through technical training to start their own ventures. On the occasion, CA R. Sundaram assured that the Swadeshi Jagran Manch is committed to develop northeastern Bharat. He further added that he has been visited many places of ashtalakshmi pradesh during



his weeklong visit.

Prof. Ganga Prasad Prasain, Vice-Chancellor, Tripura University said that the University has already been initiated the step to produce more and more entrepreneurs in the state by setting up the DTEGRC in the campus. He further added that the objective of DTEGRC is to handhold the youth of Tripura with technical support, financial linkages and opportunities to showcase their innovation to the masses. He also assured that the University is committed to start many more such Centers in the near future.

Prof. Deepak Sharma, Kshetra Sanyojak, Purvottar Kshetra of SIM and Registrar, Tripura University ignited the young minds by his motivational thoughts. He said that before signing formal MoU with the Industry, the University has already been able to develop innovative products through valorization of the bamboo industry waste. Dr. Shaon Raychaudhuri, Director, DTEGRC added that the University in turn will help the industry to develop innovative products from Bamboo as well as the waste generates by the industry, ensuring a zero waste work environment and more business opportunities which creates more employment opportunities in the state. Dr. Debakar Deb, Principal Techno College of Engineering, Agartala also urged the students to think out of box. On the occasion, Dr. Sunil Kalai, Assistant Professor, Dept. of JMC, Tripura University has been awarded with the Dattopant Thengadi special award for his excellent contribution in uplifting of the life of the Tribal societies in the state. The event also witnessed the release of a book on "Organic Entrepreneurship" written by Prof. Rajkumar Mittal, Former Vice-Chancellor and Member of UGC, New Delhi. The formal vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Dharmendra Dubey, Dept. of JMC and the programme was moderated by Dr. Aishwarya Jha, Dept. of Hindi, Tripura University. More than one thousand scholars and students have been benefited with

the programme. Later on the day, another such programme was also organized in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Narsinggarh, Agartala.

Youth urged to embrace self-employment for prosperity: Vinay Sharma

A one-day district-level training session was held at Ashirwad Hotel in Bangana as part of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch's "Self-Reliant India" campaign. The event, organized by the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, aimed to promote self-reliance among the youth. The session saw participation from Vinay Kumar, the Punjab coordinator of Swadeshi Jagran Manch, along with workers and officials from the regional area.

At the conclusion of the training session, Jaswant, a full-time member of the Himachal Pradesh unit of Swadeshi Jagran Manch, was present as the chief guest. Vinay Sharma, the organization minister of Swadeshi Jagran Manch, emphasized that the primary goal of the event was to inspire self-reliance among the youth. He highlighted that the Swadeshi Jagran Manch is committed to promoting local Indian products and companies to strengthen India's economy. Sharma stressed the importance of making India self-reliant and preparing the youth for self-employment opportunities. Jaswant Singh further elaborated on the history of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, noting that it was established in 1991 in Nagpur by the late Dattopant Thengadi, a skilled organizer, with the support of five national organizations affiliated with the Sangh. True to its name, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch has been highly successful over the past three decades in raising public awareness about the use of indigenous products.

EU detects GM rice in Pakistan's Basmati consignment

An organic basmati rice consignment sent from Pakistan to Germany has been found to contain genetically modified (GM) rice by the European Union (EU) authorities. An EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) issued on August 5, said the consignment had entered Germany via the Netherlands.

The contamination was traced back by government laboratories in Germany and Luxembourg to genetic modification of the 370 variety introduced in Pakistan as an experiment. This could give India the edge in getting the geographical indication (GI) tag in

the EU to exclusively market basmati rice. It will help New Delhi gain in the \$500-million export market. Currently, its petition, filed in July 2018, is pending with the EU as well as Pakistan since the beginning of this year. Though 500 tonnes of GM rice from India were found in a consignment in June 2021, the difference is that it was not basmati rice in the case of New Delhi.

Once such GM traits contaminate commercial seeds, it is difficult to clean them. The US rice industry took 10 years to get rid of LibertyLink GM rice and achieve a non-GMO status, industry sources said.

According to sources, the contamination could have happened because of Chinese scientists trying out GM rice varieties in Pakistan. This has resulted in the import of seeds from China and other countries.

"The EU is sensitive to GM products. The finding of GM rice in a consignment indicates weak surveillance during export. The European Commission may revamp the current in-process quality control system in Pakistan," said S. Chandrasekaran, who has authored the book 'Basmati Rice: The Natural Geographical Indication'. While Pakistan has sought GI status for the fragrant variety rice earlier this year, India has challenged it. Besides, several inconsistencies have been found in Is-Imabad's application, including a claim that it grows basmati in regions that are part of India. Chandrasekaran said a GM product and a GI product can never co-exist.

"The current incident is atypical example of the behaviour of contemporary reputation (that could hamper Pakistan's claim)," he said. Sources said food based on GMOs is regulated in the EU and only permitted if the corresponding GM crop has been approved. Per EU regulations, GMO above 0.9 per cent in food or feed has to be labelled. Currently, no GM rice has been approved by the Union and it has zero tolerance for such consignments. Shipments even with the presence of a trace of such GMOs have to be withdrawn. The contamination of US rice consignments with LibertyLink in 2006 led to damages valued between \$741 million and \$1.28 billion for the US rice industry.

Sources said Pakistan's long-grained Indica rice DNA elements were found to contain GM rice originating from China. RASFF issued six such alerts in 2011 and 2012. In 2012, Pakistani scientist Fida Abbasi developed a new rice strain that gave a higher yield. The scientist claimed that it would provide 15 tonnes a hectare of rice against 5 tonnes from the traditional variety. □□

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/eu-detects-gm-rice-in-pakistan-basmati-consignment/article68497159.ece>

Swadeshi Activities Entrepreneurship Promotion Programmes

Pictorial Glimpses



Hapur



Swai Madhopur



Baliya



Jodhpur



Odisha



Prayagraj



Raipur



Nimach, Malva



Haldvani, Uttrakhand



Telangana



Tiruppur, TN



Tripura



Gujarat



Manipur



Lucknow

Swadeshi Activities Entrepreneurship Promotion Programmes

Pictorial Glimpses



JNU, Delhi



Mumbai



Rourkela, Odisha



Banswara, Chittoor



Hisar, Haryana



Bhopal, MP



Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Dhaultpur, Raj.



Jammu



Gangapur, Raj.



Almora



Kalahandi, Odisha



Lodhiana, Punjab



Singhbhum, Jharkhand



Moradabad, Meerut