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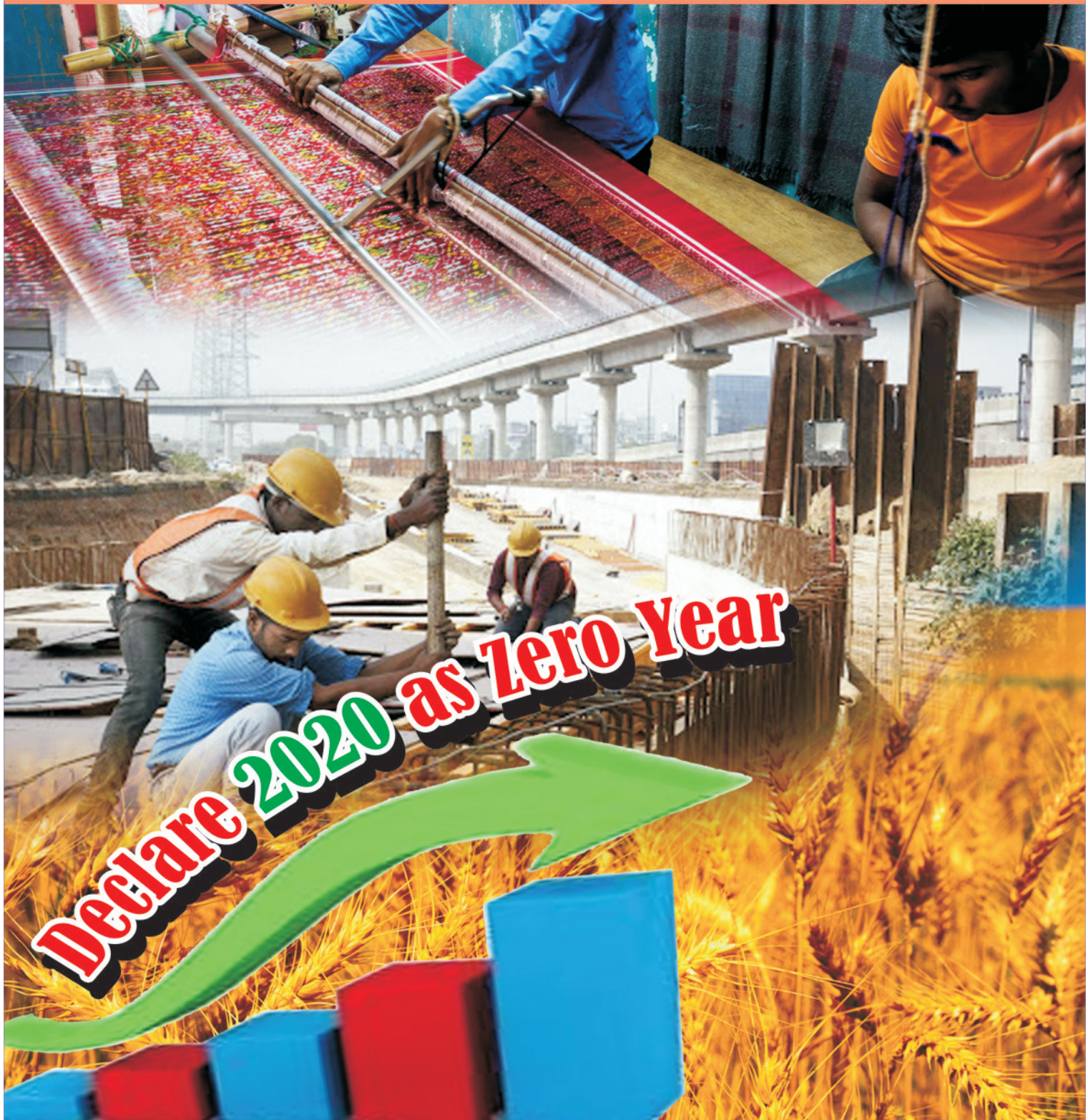
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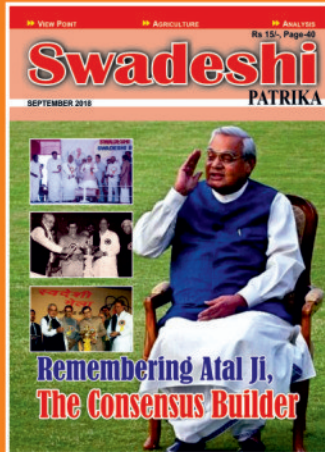


Declare 2020 as Zero Year

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HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY



VOICE OF

SELF RELIANT INDIA

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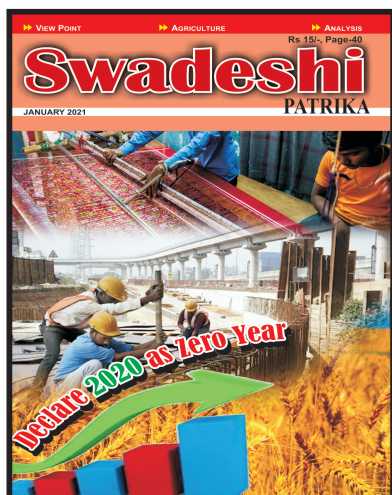
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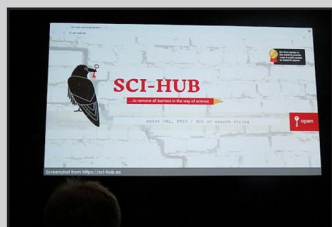
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PACS and Farm produce

In Bihar, the majority of farmers are small and marginal cultivators. They have mostly to sell their produce to local traders as the procurement by the state government's nodal procurement agency - Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) tends to be usually slow and delayed. For example, the ongoing paddy procurement by PACS is delayed due to higher moisture content in the paddy. The farmers have to sell to local traders at a much lower price of around Rs. 1100 against MSP of Rs. 1800 for the paddy lest their produce would go to waste because of the non-availability and non-affordability of the storage facility. Few of the farmers who sold to PACS complained about delayed payments which further prompted the farmers who needed immediate money to sell their produce elsewhere.

Farmers in Bihar had shared their problem in the context of lack of legal MSP and lack of payment deadline that the PACS often refuse to procure the produce in the name of moisture and even if they procure some quantity, farmers have to run for months to get their dues cleared. The concern is where farmers will go to sell their products to receive MSP and when PACS keeps on delaying procurement, refusing procurement, and in absence of a deadline for payment. Small and marginal farmers do not have surplus produce to wait for procurement by PACS and they need money immediately after harvest for further expenses related to agriculture and non-agricultural. The only source of income is farm produce for small farmers and all the other schedules of life keep on getting delayed and postponed and cancelled for them. This delay has its multiplier effect on other expenses. In such situations, the small and marginal farmers are unable to bargain for their produce and surrender their produce for whatever is offered by local traders who provide them significantly lesser than MSP but the immediate payment. The other complaint is the priority given to a few farmers over the others in the same village by the PACS. The farmers need a strengthened procurement market system whether it is PACS or local traders, payment within deadline and MSP from all buyers for all farmers or at least a mechanism where the price differentiation tactics followed by traders can be checked in favour of small and marginal farmers.

– Kumar Gaurav, Samastipur, Bihar

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Quote-Unquote



India continues to take decisive action & demonstrate its resolve to end COVID19 pandemic. As the world's largest vaccine producer it's well placed to do so. If we ACTogether, we can ensure effective & safe vaccines are used to protect the most vulnerable everywhere Narendra Modi.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General of the World Health Organization



India is full of outstanding people who are working diligently towards furthering cleanliness.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, India



We believe that legal guarantee to MSP will be not only important for farmers' well-being but also crucial for the country's food security. It will not increase inflation as certain economists have argued.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
National Co-convenor, SJM

Need to regulate cost of medical treatment

Recently, the Supreme Court has directed the government to cap the cost of treatment in hospitals. It is worth mentioning that earlier the government had fixed the maximum cost of various treatment for hospitals and nursing homes providing treatment under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme; however, there is no capping of charges by the hospitals for the general public. In this regard, the instructions given by the Supreme Court to the Central Government assume significance.

Private sector participation in health sector has been increasing for quite some time. In the last nearly 30 years, under the policy of globalization, privatization and liberalization, whereas economic resources of governments have shrunk, the attitude of governments towards social services has also changed. Total government spending on education, health and other social expenditure as a percent of total expenditure has almost stagnated. But in the meanwhile, the demand for health facilities has been increasing due to rising infectious and non-infectious diseases, people's changing attitudes towards, new researches in the field of health, innovations of new diagnostics, medicine and new treatments. However, the expansion of government facilities in secondary and tertiary health facilities has almost stopped. In such a situation, the demand for increasing healthcare facilities is now being largely met by the private sector.

It is seen that in the government primary health care centers in villages and cities, many types of health facilities including treatment, vaccination, mother-child care, are being received by the common man. The Primary Health Service Center is also being expanded on a large scale under the 'Ayushman Bharat' program. This is the reason that India was able to spread new innovations in the field of health to the masses in villages and cities. The advantage of this was that the death rate of children below 5 years has reduced considerably in recent decades. It is worth noting that this rate has been reduced from 119 in 1992-93, 101 in 1998-99, 74 in 2005-06 and only 34 per thousand in 2019.

Significantly, the decrease in the death rate of children is largely due to increase in primary health facilities, provision of food for children in Anganwadi centers, etc. by the government. The contribution of private sector directly cannot be overstated in this case. But there is a very small expansion in secondary and tertiary health facilities in the public sector. New big hospitals, AIIMS etc. have been established in all the provinces, but the secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities have mostly expanded in the private sector, especially in the corporate sector. A large number of small and big nursing homes are also built in the private sector.

Due to increase in burden of diseases, health awareness and new measures related to treatment, more people are getting admitted in nursing home and hospitals in the country. But the point of concern is that in the last ten years, the cost of hospitalization has gone up by almost two and a half times. According to the 75th survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), the cost of hospitalization in the private sector was recorded at an average of Rs 27347 in rural areas and Rs 38822 in urban areas (July 2017 to June 2018).

The effect of increasing privatization of health is that the burden of health expenditure on the people is increasing. According to the Medical Journal 'Lancet' out of pocket expenditure on health in India is 78 percent, which is more than any other country in the world. Due to the burden of health expenditure, people are constantly being pushed below the poverty line. Although the government has recently brought out 'Ayushman Bharat' program providing for free medical treatment facility for 10 crore poor families up to Rs 5 lakh, the burden of medical treatment for the middle class is still unbearable.

Due to the increasing role of the private sector in the health sector (especially secondary and tertiary health facilities) and the increasing pressure on the general public, the need for regulation of the private sector is increasing. It is worth noting that earlier, the Central Government had given great relief to the general public by controlling the cost of coronary stents and knee implants. However, this step is being considered to be extremely inadequate. Therefore, the need of the hour is to regulate rates of all types of medical treatment and diagnostics.

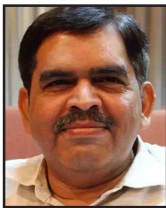
No doubt there is a need to increase in investment in the health by the private sector will also have to be encouraged. However, in the name of encouraging private investment we cannot allow fleecing of middle class by corporate hospitals. In the pharmaceutical sector, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) is working to control price of essential medicines. In this regard, stage has already been set to regulate the prices of many more devices, as they have already been brought under the category of drugs. The need of the hour is to constitute a regulatory authority to regulate cost of all types of treatments, procedures and diagnostics in the private sector by determining their prices at appropriate level. This will be a necessary step to protect the public from unfair exploitation by the private sector.

Declare 2020 as Zero Year

Economists are busy these days calculating the loss of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) during Corona period. India's Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) has calculated a contraction of GDP (at constant prices) by 15.7 percent between July and September, 2020 (on annual basis). Earlier the agency had estimated a contraction of GDP by 23.9 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (that is, April to June 2020). Past Chief Statistician of Government of India, Pronab Sen has said that the GDP of India could contract nearly 10 percent in the current fiscal year (2020-21), and according to him macroeconomic condition is very uncertain. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) however, has expected this contraction of GDP to be 7.5 percent in 2020-21.

It does not require any rocket science to understand the reason for this contraction in GDP. We understand that GDP of a country is money value of all final goods and services produced within the geographical boundaries of that country in a given period of time, normally a year. Since economic activities including manufacturing, construction and services of various kinds have been badly hit in this year due to lockdowns and reduced movement of humans due to pandemic, loss in GDP was inevitable. Only sector which has not got affected was agriculture. In the last two quarters and agriculture has shown a positive growth of 3.4 percent in both quarters; manufacturing has shown a decline by 39.3 percent and 0.6 percent. Trade, hotels, transportation, communication has shown a contraction of 47 percent and 15.6 percent respectively.

In the third quarter, the economic activities have started picking up, and we find reversal in manufacturing in many commodities. Demand has started picking up, while many bottlenecks are also getting removed. An indicator of consumer demand is passenger vehicle sales, where we find an increase by 4.7 percent in November 2020, compared to November last year. Demand for loans has also picked up by 5.5 percent in November 2020 compared to November last year. We find Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) has been above 50 for the past four months for both services and manufacturing sectors; and October manufactur-



Making world class goods for domestic and international markets, as Prime Minister says with 'zero defect and zero (environmental) effect'. After getting disillusioned from China, whole world is looking towards India as an alternative. Let's turn this crisis into an opportunity.
Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



ing PMI was recorded at 58.9, which is fastest growth in 13 years. Though, it has eased to 56.3 in November 2020, we can conclude that Indian economy has started showing green shoots after nearly four months of severe economic crisis. Whereas, on the one hand there were public health issues arising out of pandemic; and on the other hand there was decline in economic activity and therefore, loss of employment.

Government finances were also in a very bad shape. On the one hand revenue has been declining due to depressed economic activities; on the other hand, there has been a huge pressure on the government to spend more on welfare of marginalised sections of the society. Till November, government has been providing free ration to nearly 80 crore people, who have been badly affected due to decline in economic activities. On the other hand to give boost to the economy government has come out with wide ranging booster packages for different sectors. They include production linked incentive schemes for active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and electronic and telecom sectors. The government has also announced several schemes to promote gainful employment both directly as well as indirectly. The government has also offered schemes for real estate sectors and import substitution in various other sectors. All that has put huge pressure on government finances, but at the same time it has given big boost to the economy, plagued by pandemic.

Green shoots in the economy

There is near unanimity among economic analysts that economy is heading towards a fast revival,

One reason, which may cause faster than expected recovery, is the pent up demand. That is, demand which has been missing due to decline in economic activities may come up with subduing of pandemic.

post pandemic. However, there are differing views about the shape of recovery. Whereas, official view is that the economy is heading towards V-shaped recovery, while some others are expecting U shaped (economy stagnating for a while and then recovering); or W shaped (going up first and then after taking a dip, rise again) recovery. However, there is near unanimity that whatever be the shape of the recovery, economy definitely is going to recover.

One reason, which may cause faster than expected recovery, is the pent up demand. That is, demand which has been missing due to decline in economic activities may come up with subduing of pandemic.

Second, reason for faster recovery, is the efforts on the part of the government to encourage domestic production. It's notable that a bailout package of nearly 20 lakh crores has been rolled out by the central government to bring the economy out of the pandemic related economic losses and to give boost to Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Thirdly, new policy of boosting self reliance has also given boost to domestic production by discouraging imports, especially from China.

Fourthly, even internationally we find that recovery has been faster than expected. Indian economy is also expected to experience faster economic recovery and reduction in pandemic related unemployment.

Declaring pandemic year as zero year

Given the fact that the world has witnessed a pandemic after more than a century and the situation is not something which is routine; it wouldn't be prudent to look at GDP contraction, in the same way we look at GDP growth. Better way is to treat this pandemic year as zero year; and calculate GDP growth from the year 2019-20, skipping the year 2020-21.

Sometimes, we do come across a period which we want to forget as a black period. Year 2020 is also such a year. Let's move forward with a spirit and resolution of self reliance. Leaving behind 2020, let's take a big leap forward in 2021, with new lessons learnt from pandemic. Let's usher in a new era of self reliant villages, with job creation at village level in dairy, poultry, horticulture, floriculture, bamboo farming, cottage industry, food processing, high value crops and more and value addition at village level. A new eco system; where our villagers are not constrained to migrate to cities.

In manufacturing, let's not be dependent on China or any other country. Making world class goods for domestic and international markets, as Prime Minister says with 'zero defect and zero (environmental) effect'. After getting disillusioned from China, whole world is looking towards India as an alternative. Let's turn this crisis into an opportunity. □□

2021: RED, GREY and GREEN Zones



WORLD

Indubitably the pandemic was the most historic and consequential global event in recent times. It led to an economic response in the form of fiscal and monetary stimulus of \$20 trillion. It precipitated a global health emergency infecting nearly 81 million people worldwide, claiming about 1.8 million lives. It also led to a loss of trillions of dollar worth of wealth. Cumulative damage could be nearly \$30 trillion over 5 years compared with pre pandemic trend. At 10.2 million, India has had second largest number of cases in the world. India has to face its first economic recession in 59 years. The virus spread spared none, including those with wealth and power. Lockdowns and social distancing crippled the world economy.

As a sideshow, the geopolitical rivalry between the two behemoths – US and China – got accentuated. While China has been targeting global democracies since previous times, hegemonistic designs of China have now come out in the open. Again, while the trends were already emerging, globalization as we know, is almost dead. We will witness narrower groupings of the like minded collaborations, based on geographies, political thinking, or even economic interest. Challenges are plenty, however. New identities are difficult to forge, certain issues like climate change, control of pandemics, etc. need global collaboration and compromise. But will geopolitical rivalries provide room to face common challenges? One wonders. Though the world economy has recovered from the initial shock, the fact remains that this year has been that of the second or third worst downturn in the last one hundred years. GDP, employment, productivity, health, all of these and more, suffered huge losses. Returning to normal will be neither easy nor prompt, Hope it will, but.

How much damage will be incurred will be dependent on the measures undertaken by the major economies. The balance sheets of households and businesses need to be made healthy again; this can not happen overnight. It is indeed difficult to predict near term outlook. Partly, because China is a major contributory to world economic growth. Post 2008, China had recovered very rapidly. This time, however, recovery is rather mild. Besides, Chinese focus has turned inward providing less support to the rest of the world. To add to this, the less developed regions have no means to loosen their purse strings – India being a prime example – partly due to lack of resources but part also because the economy itself may not have the capacity to squeeze production and productivity out of the finances without inviting inflationary forces. Will these countries get support from US and EU? Who knows? They have to put their own economies in order first. Their governments have to vote on the stimulus package. All in all, a scenario fraught with uncertainties.

Till date worldwide a fiscal stimulus of \$12 trillion plus liquidity infusion



Year 2021 is mired in uncertainties as far as the World, and Indian, Economy, Polity, and Society are concerned.

KK Srivastava

(over Rs. 8 lakh crore by RBI) has been undertaken. This will need a calibrated tapering now so as to stabilize emerging debt, equity and currency markets on one hand and avoiding too much austerity on the other. Recall that the latter had slowed the post 2008 recovery. This therefore means that 2021 onwards, there is likely to be a paradigm shift in policy making in many areas.

One, private consumption and investment both being in downward mode, fiscal frugality may not be a virtue, though being spendthrift may neither be possible nor desirable. Two, in view of both disruption and distrust as far as Chinese supplies are concerned, new supply chains are likely to be more automated and shifted to their destinations of consumption. China is not likely to cede space so easily, however, nor for that matter other nations have immediate prowess to supplant China. Three, the whole world will spend increased percentage of its public expenditure on maintaining and growing health. Lastly, hybrid models of work place (work from home plus office together) will come into focus. This in turn will lead to altered mobility pattern and more and more reliance on digital mode adoption in our everyday life.

INDIA

For India, it has been a year of churn on all fronts – political, strategic and of course economic. Pandemic and consequent lockdown brought tremendous economic upheaval in the Indian economy. India is one of the worst hit economies among global majors. The protracted lockdown and the freezing of industrial activity hurt the economy badly; a recession re-

sulted. Private consumption and investment went down, and so did the GDP and its growth. Tax collections went down which put a check on govt. spending. Nearly 100 million jobs were lost during the lockdown months. While exports are growing, they are yet to recover to prepandemic levels. Recovery in manufacturing, industry and services has not been satisfactory as of date. On the brighter side, however, agriculture, e-commerce and retail, digital economy and stock markets have delivered.

On the political front India faced a very belligerent Chinese incursion into Ladakh. For sure, China has hegemonistic designs all over the world, but especially in its neighbourhood including India with which it has had a record of long standing uneasy existence. While the year began with protests against the controversial citizen amendment bill, the unrest has failed to ebb due to ongoing farmers' agitation right on the borders of Delhi. Ruling BJP is strengthening its grip in areas hitherto unruled by it; it looks comfortable to do well in West Bengal elections. It has already captured power in MP.

Due to a constraint of space if we focus only on economy, then if a recovery, which is rapid and certain and all encompassing, is to be ushered in, then more and more reforms will have to be effected, including reduction in regulatory clutches, promotion of (ease of doing) business, providing adequate finance to the various sectors of the economy, especially MSME, and build infrastructure to build a robust foundation to facilitate economic activities are steps that are repeated ad-nauseum but need to be emphasized more time. The pro-

duction linked incentive schemes across 10 sectors have created positive sentiments around large industry. This should lead to a capex pick up in the new financial year. This in turn should promote long term economic growth. Atmanirbhar Bharat is a fact of life, an integral part of our economic policy.

The ironic fact is that economic liberalization, since 1991, notwithstanding there is a long way to unleash the animal spirits, the entrepreneurial energy. Statism and sarkari patronage is integral for survival of business in India still. Ease of doing business is still largely a phrase. Govt. controls policies, regulations, and CBI, ED and other investigating agencies. State has stymied industry; netas can always overwhelm industrialists. This has led to a very adverse outcome. Due to inadequate growth in manufacturing, people have failed to move out of agriculture even if it is a low productivity and low return area for a larger majority of farmers with small holding. Till the time the political class will continue to subordinate entrepreneurial spirit to their political interests, the vilification of capitalism will continue. Industrialists will perpetually be labeled as profiteers and rent seekers. Larger units will be accused of cartelization. All this combined with the fact that there is not much reason for cheer in the immediate future. To add fuel to the fire, inflation – food and commodity both – is rearing its ugly head, fiscal stimulus has not been enough, supply chains have been disrupted, both domestically and globally. All these and other factors signals towards a larger but catalytic role of Indian state. How does the Govt. act is to be seen, however.□□

Agri-market reforms are inevitable

Indian Government has recently passed certain laws to reform the Agri-produce market system and farmers in certain pockets are protesting it. Indian Agri-market reforms have a long history right from British era and most of the time the reforms were within the established regulated market system. Recently the reforms crossed these limitations and went beyond regulated markets to allow farmers a choice of selling produce in either regulated markets lead by APMCs or to private traders outside the regulated markets. This cannot be said as major change as the private markets were there and private licensed traders were operating their business in regulated markets. The reforms are a continuation of this process which needs to be revived and new changes should be brought in based on experience. Thus, it is time to review the agriculture produce market system and understand the sequence of new reforms.



Indian government after independence tried to organize the agriculture produce market by regularizing it in the form of APMCs. Agriculture Marketing being a state subject, most of the States enacted Agricultural Produce Markets Regulation (APMR) Acts during sixties and seventies and put these in operation.
Anil Javalekar

Historical perspective of Agri-produce market

Agriculture and farmers remained victims of political dictatorial ruling systems throughout the history. Most of the time it was in the form of direct loot of farm produce. Later, the loot was through exploitative revenue system. Farmers were rarely left surplus produce for selling in market and their farming was mainly for surviving. True, there were cash crops like cotton and sugarcane but their markets were localized with linkages with higher markets. The idea of organized regulated markets was to bring farmers to markets. As is known, British came here for trade and they thought it necessary to change the market system to their favour. Indian cotton was their initial target - they wanted the pure cotton as raw material to their cotton industry at cheap prices. The first legislation was the Berar Cotton and Grain Market Act of 1887, which empowered British Resident to declare any place in the assigned district a market for sale and purchase of agricultural produce and constitute a committee to supervise the regulated markets. Then came the Royal commission (1928) which recommended regulation of



marketing practices and establishment of regulated markets. The intention was to eliminate malpractices in the disorganized market system.

After Independence APMC was thrust area

Indian government after independence tried to organize the agriculture produce market by regularizing it in the form of APMCs. Agriculture Marketing being a state subject, most of the States enacted Agricultural Produce Markets Regulation (APMR) Acts during sixties and seventies and put these in operation. All primary wholesale assembling markets were brought under the ambit of these Acts. Market yards and sub-yards were constructed and for each market area, an Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) was constituted to frame the rules and enforce them. The basic objective was to ensure reasonable gain to the farmers by creating environment in markets for fair play of supply and demand forces, regulate market practices and attain transparency in transactions. Slowly, this market system became monopolistic and reforms were necessary. Amended Model APMC Act was suggested in 2003. Some states allowed trade of fruits and vegetables outside the APMC yards. Bihar scrapped the APMC structure in 2006 and allowed PACs to be the agent of reforms. In 2017, the central government released the model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2017 so that states enact new legislation and bring comprehensive market reforms in the agriculture sector. The 2017 model Act aimed

Agriculture and farmers remained victims of political dictatorial ruling systems throughout the history. Most of the time it was in the form of direct loot of farm produce.

to allow free competition, promote transparency, unify fragmented markets, facilitate the flow of commodities, and encourage the operation of multiple marketing channels.

Farmers remained unhappy with APMCs

The farmers were not happy with APMC structure for various reasons like the markets were fragmented as the all-India average area served by a regulated market was 487.40 sq km, against the recommendation of a radius of 5 Km by the National Farmers Commission (2004); lack of infrastructure like the auction platform, drying yards, cold storage facilities, electronic weighbridges etc; high Incidence of Market Fee/Charges; monopoly of licensing of commission agents etc. Studies show that long supply chain (normally 5-6) incurs disproportionate marketing cost and affect the remunerative prices to the farmers. There was a demand to allow farmers to sell their produce outside the APMC mandis. These Market reforms were on agenda for last 20 or more years and finally found its place in 2020 in the form of new farm laws.

E-NAM platform

In between, the Government has implemented National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) scheme, an online virtual trading platform, to provide farmers with opportunity to directly sell their produce at remunerative prices through competitive online bidding system. 1000 wholesale regulated markets across 18 States and 3 Union Territories (UTs) were integrated with e-NAM platform. Tradable parameters for 175 commodities were promoted for trade in e-NAM platform. As on 31.08.2020, a total of 1.67 crore farmers, 1.44 lakh traders and 83,958 commission agents and 1722 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) were registered on e-NAM platform. A total trade value of Rs. 1,04,313 crore was recorded on e-NAM platform. This is growing and expanding platform and can be said as successful.

Other initiatives towards reforms

Government of India has adopted market reforms to promote alternative marketing channels such as private markets, direct marketing, contract farming, development of Gramin Agriculture Market (GrAMs) closer to farm gates as well as development of integrated supply chain infrastructure. Government of India has also been promoting storage, cold storage, cold chain and other marketing and value addition infrastructure through its scheme of Agriculture Marketing Infrastructure (AMI), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana-Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied Sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR) etc.

Direct market intervention

After independence, Indian government started intervening in the Agri-market so as to stabilise the market prices, ensure food security and support farmers with remunerative prices. Food corporation of India (FCI) was created mainly to maintain satisfactory level of buffer stock of food grains and ensure food security apart from supporting farmers by way of procurement at MSP declared by Government. It also ensured the supply of food grains to Public distribution system and intervene in the markets when markets are volatile. Another agency National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) was also established to help farmers by procuring their produce like Food grains, Pulses, Oilseeds, Spices, Cotton, Tribal produce, Jute & Jute products, Eggs, Fresh Fruits & Vegetables through the established cooperative network all over the country with active involvement of marketing societies at mandi level. Nafed at the behest of Govt. of India also serves the consumers' interests through supply of various essential items such as, Onions, Potatoes, Eggs etc. during scarce marketing situation or when the prices of such commodities rise abnormally. This apart, the interventions were also in the form of higher duties on farm produce and even ban on the import or export of certain Agri-produce whenever the domestic markets are volatile. With these policies, India is now comfortable with the stock of food grains. FCI is full of stock to its 70 % godown capacities which is sufficiently high compared to the requirement.

Further market reforms are inevitable

It is important to understand that with all reforms so far, Indian farmers are not happy as they are unable to meet their cost of production necessitating further Agri-market reforms.

1. The APMC structure and its system failed to protect the interest of farmers and found more inclined towards helping the interest of middlemen to monopolise the markets of agriculture produce. Therefore, it was necessary to make the APMC mandies competitive, transparent in their functioning and help minimise the cost to farmers. This apart, markets need to be nearer to farmgate and APMCs has limited scope in expanding its network. The opening of APMC to private sector and allowing farmers to sell produce outside the APMC structure was therefore inevitable.

2. Since the opening of economy in 1990s, the agriculture sector was waiting for reforms. Many reforms were discussed and recommended but due to various reasons could not be implemented. The market reforms were one and needed action. Opening of Market system at least domestically by allowing private sector was necessary. One nation one market was the right move.

3. Technical development and digital marketing are going to have a major share of marketing in the coming years. Online sale purchase needs to be smoothened. e-NAM platform is helping farmers to utilise the all-India market. It has reach to all corners of the country which neither APMC structure nor private sector could achieve. Market reforms that help farmers and traders interact with fair information can be beneficial to all.

4. Economy is expanding and consumers are served with various

modes. Direct wholesale purchase from farmers outside the market yards at farmgate by Processors/ Exporters/ Bulk Retailers/ End user, etc will help all, the traders, consumers and farmers. This will reduce the waste also.

5. Trade is becoming more organized but farmers are not conversant with complexities of marketing system and has remained handicapped by many disabilities, forcing to sell their produce at hostile place and hostile price. Information therefore is the base of profitable trading. The wide media coverage and linking of mandies to e-NAM platform along with e-trading facilities gives enough information to farmers regarding the prices etc. and will help farmers make choice of suitable crops and better markets etc.

The reforms are a continuous process and timely reforms are important. India is a country of small farmers with small uneconomic holdings and their survival is important to Indian economy and, in the present circumstances, farmers cannot survive without government support through procurement at MSP. However, it should be remembered that the MSP system alone cannot help all farmers of India as it is available for limited crops nor the procurement of entire marketable surplus of all crops is possible with the best of institutional system as the storage and its maintenance is a costly affair. There is a need to search for alternate mode of compensating the loss on farming to farmers. It is necessary that farmers and farming systems adopt to technology driven market reforms that will open the markets and give farmers a choice to choose the best. □□

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Requesting government's proactive intervention to ensure continuous access to millions of books and articles to the research community including students and teachers

Digital technology offered new hopes for the quick dissemination of knowledge with a few clicks on your mouse. However, it may become impossible if four leading publishers having ownership of little less than half of the content in the world have their way.

In the latest episode, four leading publishers viz. Elsevier, Willy India Pvt. Ltd, Willy Periodicals LLC, and American Chemical Society approached the Delhi High Court seeking a dynamic injunction to shut down two websites viz. Libgen and Sci-Hub. These two websites provide free access to millions of books and articles to the research community including students and teachers. If the injunction is granted, the internet service providers (ISP) would be forced to block these websites in India. This will seriously undermine the ability of Indian science and social science researchers to access scientific and academic articles for their research and learning purposes.

Though the government of India spends Rs. 1500 crores to subscribe journals in various national and state universities including premier research institutes like IIT, IISER, IIMs, etc.. but a very large number of researchers and students are heavily dependent on repositories like Sci-Hub and Libgen to access the journals and other research publications. According to a study published in the Science magazine, during six months starting from 1st September 2015 to 31st March 2016 users from India downloaded 3.4 million articles from Sci-Hub. Another study published in Lancet Global, the highest downloading of medical journal articles is taking place from India. This shows that there is heavy dependence of the Indian research community on a digital library like Sci-Hub.

There is a huge concentration of the market in the publication of academic journals. If we take the 5 top publishers, they control more than 50% of the publications in science and social sciences worldwide. Even the leading university libraries like Harvard University's Library cannot afford the subscription fee. Our research institutes and universities are also finding it difficult to procure these journals due to their exorbitant cost.

It is important to note that the publishing industry is not paying for the content. Content is generated by the academic community working in research institutes and universities which are mostly Government funded. Most of the peer reviewers are also not paid. As a result, the publishing houses' expenditure is very low, and they earn high profitability. Publishing houses ask the researchers to assign their copyrights to the publishers as a pre-condition to publish articles. Then use these assigned copyrights to maintain a monopoly over the scholarly works.

It is argued that each time a reader reads a digital copy on his or her device, it is considered as reproducing the work, which is an exclusive right granted to the copyright owner under the Copyrights Law. In other words, enforcement of the exclusive right of reproduction in the digital context prevents the reader from reading the digital copy of the book or articles. A substantial percent of the research articles are now available only in digital format. The application of the exclusive

Though the government of India spends Rs. 1500 crores to subscribe journals in various national and state universities including premier research institutes like IIT, IISER, IIMs, etc.. but a very large number of researchers and students are heavily dependent on repositories like Sci-Hub and Libgen to access the journals and other research publications.
Swadeshi Samvad

right of reproduction, a legal concept developed in the physical copy context, in the digital context results in the denial of the right to read and access to knowledge.

It is also important to note that the vast majority of users of Libgen and Sci-hub are research communities and the nature of the use is non-commercial in nature such as study or research. Thus, there is no direct commercial use of these websites. Therefore, it is a non-commercial library where a research scholar can access the work. Section 51 of the Copyrights Act states: "Nothing in Sub-clause IV shall apply to the import of one copy of any work for the private and domestic use of the importer". Thus importing one copy is not treated as an infringement. Thus the Indian researcher is not making any infringement.

Further, Section 52 of the Copyrights Act treats the following acts as not the infringement of the copyrights. (a) a fair dealing with any work, not being a computer program, for the purpose of—(i) private or personal use, including research; (ii) criticism or review, whether of that work or of any other work; (iii) the reporting of current events and current affairs, including the reporting of a lecture delivered in public; Explanation.—The storing of any work in any electronic medium for the purposes mentioned in this clause, including the incidental storage of any computer program which is not itself an infringing copy for the said purposes, shall not constitute an infringement of copyright. Thus the individual downloading and storing is protected under the Act.

In view of the above legal position, it is submitted that treating reproduction of the work in a digital context at par with physical copy results in denial of access to read

the book, which is not part of the exclusive rights of the copyright owner.

It is further submitted that blocking of digital libraries like Libgen and Sci-Hub would result in denied access to read and compromises the right to science guaranteed under the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 15.1 (b) obligates the Member Countries of ICESCR to ensure the right "to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;" The General Comment No 25, which is the interpretation of the obligation by the body in charge of the implementation of ICESCR, states the core obligations under Article 15. It states that "Core obligations related to the right to participate in and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications require States parties to: "Eliminate laws, policies, and practices that unjustifiably limit access by individuals or particular groups to facilities, services, goods and information related to science, scientific knowledge and its applications;"

In General Comment, No 17 dealing with Article 15.1 (c) stated: "Ultimately, intellectual property is a social product and has a social function. State parties thus have a duty to prevent unreasonably high costs for access to essential medicines, plant seeds or other means of food production, or for schoolbooks and learning materials, from undermining the rights of large segments of the population to health, food, and education". Thus, the awarding of a dynamic injunction compromises India's obligations under Article 15. Similarly, Article 21 guarantees the right to life with dignity. This right to dignity imposes a duty on states to create an enabling environment to pursue knowledge.

In conclusion, the Delhi High Court may not grant the injunction on the following grounds:

1. Interpretation of the word 'reproduction' used in the copyright laws for physical objects cannot be applied to 'digital mode'.
2. Use of free libraries like by students and researchers for non-commercial use cannot be considered as infringement of the copy right laws.
3. It would be considered as against the public interest.
4. Granting injunction would also be considered as compromising India's obligation under the ICESCR.
5. The content owners (publishing companies) should not be allowed to use legal tools to prevent the dissemination of knowledge.

It is also suggested that—

1. Government should urgently amend 'Section 52' of the Copyrights Act to make the functioning of non-commercial initiatives like Libgen and Sc-Hub legal in India.
2. The Department of Telecom, which is a respondent in the petition should convey the public interest implications of denial of access to these websites before the court and oppose the granting of such injunction including the application of ex-parte injunction.
3. The Copyrights Act should be suitably amended to acknowledge the claim of universities and institutions in the rights on research published by the researchers and students while working there.

No order against Libgen for now from Delhi HC. Need government's (@GoI_MeitY @rsprasad) proactive intervention to ensure continuous access to millions of books and articles to the researchers, students and teachers. □□

Food and Farming Policy Which is Urgently Needed

In recent years there has been a big debate on agriculture and food in many parts of the world as more and more people realize that the existing farming and food system is going more and more in the direction of corporatization while the interests of small farmers and environment protection as well as production of safe and healthy food on a sustainable basis are being increasingly sacrificed and neglected. Hence it is very important to examine carefully alternative policies from the perspective of ensuring secure livelihoods of small and medium farmers, production and availability of safe and healthy food, elimination of hunger and malnutrition, protection of environment and protection/compassion for all forms of life. Increasingly it is necessary to explore and advance the big potential of farming systems contributing to checking climate change while at the same time also adapting to more erratic and extreme weather.

Here we examine the most important aspects of a desirable food and farming system.

1. Production of Safe, Nutritious and Adequate Food for All on Sustainable Basis

Policies should be directed towards cropping systems and rotations which give top priority to production of adequate, nutritious and safe food for all now and in future. More specifically, we need adequate amounts of grains, millets, legumes, vegetables, nuts, fruits and fodder combined with moderate amounts of salt, spices, sugar, milk, milk products, edible oils, tea, coffee, eggs, chicken and fish. Red meat and beef should be reduced as much as possible. The consumption and production of high sugar, high fat, high salt processed foods should be much, much lesser. Tobacco and intoxicants should be curtailed to an even greater extent. In fact the aim should be to reduce the consumption of tobacco in all forms and all kinds of alcoholic drinks by 90 per cent or more. All this has to be achieved by strong policy measures and even stronger campaigns within a strong democratic framework where all voices are heard.



Trade and other agreements which are detrimental to sustainable production of safe foods, and livelihoods based on this, should not be pursued, or where these already exist, these should be cancelled.

Bharat Dogra



The highest priority should be for ensuring safe drinking and cooking water to all people, while also emphasizing water conservation and water saving practices. In addition ensuring safe and easy, healthy and environment friendly cooking fuel should be emphasized.

All the food should be safe. This should be ensured by production and processing methods, legal provisions and educational campaign. In particular food should not be affected and contaminated by dangerous agri-chemicals harmful for health. Food should not come from genetically modified (GM) crops. All GM crops should be banned.

Some of the restrictive policies suggested are in keeping with the needs of health and environment protection at world level as well as requirements of animal welfare. This recommendations may differ for certain climate and geographical zones. The recommendation here is for broad worldwide trends.

First priority in farmland use is for the production of safe, healthy and nutritious food. Second priority is for growing essential raw materials like cotton. Any other priority can be considered only after these two needs have been met.

Public distribution system for providing healthy food at subsidized price to all those who need this subsidy, as well as nutrition schemes play an important role in reducing hunger and malnutrition and should be adequately supported.

2. Ensuring Sustainable and Satisfactory Livelihood For Small Farmers and Farm Workers

Small and middle-level farmers should be highly respected and

honoured in their capacity as the providers of safe and nutritious food. The prevailing attitude in many countries that their number should be necessarily reduced in the course of time should be given up. Their livelihood based on production of safe and nutritious food should be strengthened in various ways. All the world's farmland should belong to small and middle-level farmers or their co-operatives. Land in excess of what can reasonably be cultivated by small and middle-level farmer households should be distributed among those landless farm workers and rural people who are willing to practice sustainable farming for producing safe food. Hence present-day farm workers can also become small farmers. Till this happens other steps to improve their livelihood and welfare should be taken by the government and communities. A fair wage should be ensured to farm workers. They should have a place of honour. Landless persons who provide support to sustainable farming in artisan and ancillary activities should get the same respect as farmers and their welfare and sustainable livelihoods should be ensured.

All those who produce safe food using sustainable methods should be assured of satisfactory selling price and marketing opportunities, including government procurement as well as direct sales to consumers, and this should be strongly helped by public policy and community action. Small and medium traders who play non-exploitative and helpful role, providing useful services based on experience, should be accepted as integral parts of marketing system, but exploitative and speculative traders and

hoarders should be firmly checked.

Rural livelihood opportunities in healthy and nutritious food processing should also exist in villages. This can be supported initially by public funds. Suitable small-scale technology for this should be supported. Self-help groups and co-operatives can also take up this work.

Rural livelihood opportunities in diverse areas which do not harm local environment should be promoted widely so that members of farmer households have access to supportive additional livelihoods in or near their villages. In particular livelihoods in decentralized renewable energy, water conservation, afforestation, cottage-scale industry and information technology can be promoted but such efforts should be additional to and supportive of prioritizing production of safe and nutritious food. Also farm livelihoods should be made sustainable for future generations by protecting the basic natural resource base (in the form of soil, soil-organisms, water, greenery, supporting other forms of life and knowledge base (particularly traditional knowledge of farming, seeds and related issues).

3. Protection of Soil, Saving Fertile Land for Producing Safe Food

Land has been degraded very badly and natural fertility has been eroded over vast areas due to several factors including harmful farming practices and inputs, deforestation, soil erosion, harmful activities in nearby areas, waterlogging, salinization, spread of desert and other factors. Fertile land has been lost to land erosion by rivers, brick-kilns, mines and quarries as well as to industrial and urban use

on a massive scale. Fertile land should be protected as much as possible for producing safe food on sustainable basis.

Farm practices which are able to protect and/or restore natural fertility and organic matter should be followed. Maintaining and improving organic content of soil, based on local on-site decomposition of biological material, is crucial. Steps should be taken to prevent water logging and salinity and to reclaim land for farming if possible. Loss of fertile farmland to other uses should be minimized. Use of chemical fertilizers and poisonous, harmful agri-chemicals should be minimized or avoided altogether.

Mixed-farming and crop rotations in keeping with sustaining farm fertility should be encouraged. On land not suitable for agricultural crops as well as on degraded forest land, efforts for tree and bush growth of indigenous species, imitating local natural forest, can be taken up in a big way in ways which provide sustainable livelihoods to landless people. .

4. Conserve Water and Ensure Clean Drinking Water

High priority should be given to protect this most need and the most essential resource base of farmers and villagers. Rain harvesting and water conservation with community effort should get high priority to maintain proper water table. Highly water-intensive cropping systems or diversion for industrial or other uses beyond the carrying capacity of a region should be checked by public policy and community action before it is too late. Highest priority should be for ensuring clean drinking and

Learning from traditional knowledge, protecting traditional seeds and bio-diversity will further improve this ability.

cooking water to all people. Next priority should be to provide for hygiene needs and drinking water needs of all animals. Third priority should be for meeting needs of sustainable farming for producing safe food. All wasteful and non-essential excessive uses of water should be discouraged by public policy and community effort.

5. Protecting Traditional Seeds and Biodiversity, including Forest Food

A great diversity of seeds of food crops and trees, as well as other useful crops and trees, has flourished on earth, nurtured by over a hundred generations of farmers. Much of this has been lost in more recent times which emphasized monocultures of a very narrow genetic base. The rich diversity of traditional seeds should be saved and grown on ordinary farms. These should be widely encouraged among farmers. After a few years of such efforts, a few years later, most farmers will not have to buy any seeds from commercial market. Such efforts should be strongly supported and rewarded by public policy. Free food received from nature, particularly from natural forests,

should be highly valued and protected. The knowledge of local communities of this food should be valued, respected and saved.

6. Low-Cost and Low External Input Use Technology

Farm technology should avoid or minimize external inputs such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and weedicides. There should be efforts based in local innovations to reduce use of expensive machinery and diesel to the extent possible. For example a farmer's innovation Mangal Turbine (in India) can help greatly to reduce diesel use. Farm animals can contribute greatly even now to reduce costs and external inputs. Dependence on commercial market for seeds can be minimized. The effort should be to continue efforts to reduce costs and increase self-reliance and protect environment.

7. Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Increasing organic content of soil helps in absorption of carbon dioxide. Increasing green cover, protecting forests and creating new forests of indigenous species which seek to imitate natural forests will help in absorbing greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing chemical fertilizers and pesticides helps greatly in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide (including emissions in manufacture and farm use). Diesel and machinery use should be reduced whenever possible. Long-distance marketing and wasteful packaging should be discouraged.

8. Adapt to Climate Change

Self-reliant farming systems which are also low-cost and low external use systems will find it

much easier to adapt to climate change. Learning from traditional knowledge, protecting traditional seeds and bio-diversity will further improve this ability.

8. Ban GM Crops

All genetically modified crops (or so called variations in the form of gene-edited crops) should be banned as there are harmful for human and animal health and can be very disruptive ecologically.

9. Protecting Animal, Bird, Insect and Micro-organism Friends of Farmers

A special effort should be made to protect pollinators, also all birds and insects who help farmers in various ways. Farm animals should be protected with concern for their welfare. Bullocks can still play an important role in ploughing and other farm activities. Mechanization is not inevitable and should be adopted only when it appears essential and that too in a restrictive and careful way. Dairy and poultry activities should be taken up in an integrated way with farming whenever possible and should give adequate care to welfare of animals and birds as well. Earthworms should be valued greatly and protected, along with other soil-organisms which enrich soil.

10. Observe Nature and Try to Live With Nature's Ways Instead of Disrupting Them

Perhaps the best way of promoting sustainable farming and sustainable growth of safe food is to observe carefully the ways of nature and carry out farming in tune with nature's ways, without trying to disrupt them. Exactly the opposite of this happened while promoting industrial-style agricul-

ture and this is how most of the damage to health and environment (as well as to sustainability of farms) was inflicted. We now need to get the basics right.

11. There is No Single Formula or Single Person to Follow

Millions of farmers of world have contributed and are contributing to sustainable production of safe and nutritious food. Several scientists have also contributed to this. There is no single formula, or single leader. The entire effort should be to learn from and build on the contribution made by millions of farmers and some scientists. Region-specific solutions are necessary, so a highly decentralized approach will be needed.

12. Decentralized Approach to Research and Extension

A highly decentralized and participative approach involving close cooperation of rural communities is needed. Farm scientists can certainly help but they should also be willing to learn from farmers, including the work of previous generations of farmers. Above all they should accept the basic perspective of sustainable and self-reliant farming for safe food in which external inputs are extremely low. Farmers' visits to areas of promising work, their grassroots seminars, workshops, fairs and get-togethers should be encouraged by public policy and community efforts.

13. Less Food Miles

Efforts should be to link local markets with farmers while avoiding very long-distance marketing except in case of special needs. Decentralized procurement by government to procure a part

of food crops within a village to support public distribution system and nutrition schemes within the village should be encouraged.

Public policy should encourage and help in promoting close links of farmers with neighboring urban consumers of safe and nutritious food. The government should pay a fair price to purchase safe and nutritious food from farmers to supply to public distribution system and nutrition programs.

14. Promote Nutrition Schemes & Kitchen Gardens

Nutrition schemes to end hunger and malnutrition should get adequate support. Kitchen gardens, particularly among the poorest sections who suffer more from hunger, should be promoted. Food should not travel a very long distance except in case of special needs. The emphasis should be on linking local needs and production.

15. Check That International Trade Which Exploits Farmers and Harms Environment, Cancel Land-Grabs

Trade and other agreements which are detrimental to sustainable production of safe foods, and livelihoods based on this, should not be pursued, or where these already exist, these should be cancelled.

Various agreements of land grab which have captured or try to capture the land and water sources necessary for sustaining rural communities should be cancelled. There should be a big public campaign for this. □□

The writer is a veteran journalist and author. His rural reporting has been honored by several awards. He is Honorary Convener of Campaign to Save the Earth Now and its SED Demand. His most recent books are Protecting Earth for Children and Planet in Peril. More details on web site bharatdogra.in

The Pandora's Box of Agri Reform, Subsidies and Tariffs



Who is it that wishes to deny our farmers their proper due, as they brave 4.1°C temperatures at the borders of Delhi?

Is it the ‘middle men’ or the ‘robber barons of India’? Or is it perhaps someone more sinister – a plan that will allow heavily subsidised agriculture commodities to be dumped into India, destroying the livelihoods of small farmers?

Let us take the example of maize and try to understand the dynamics and stakes at play here.

While the farmers were marching towards Delhi against the farm laws, the government decided to import 5 lakh tonnes

of maize at a concessional import duty of 15% (down from 50%). The government bought imported maize for about Rs 3,200 a quintal. Meanwhile, it was giving Rs 1,850 a quintal to Indian corn farmers. Telangana farmers were so alarmed at the discrepancy that the Telangana high court intervened and asked the Centre to “spell out its maize import policy”.

Currently, Bihari maize farmers cannot get Rs 5 a kg. India has 3.53 crore tonnes of maize in stock against the annual consumption of 2.42 crore tonnes.

In the same period, the government also reduced masoor dal import duty by 20%. Some industry experts feel that move “benefitted foreign farmers and traders as global prices of lentil rose after India reduced the import duty.”

The doublespeak on edible oil was also exposed recently when industry body Solvent Extractors’ Association (SEA) of India, in a pre-budget memorandum, inveighed on the reduction of import duty on crude palm oil from 37.5% to 27.5%, citing welfare of mustard farmers. This seems unfair to farmers as the government – to protect Indian solar to telecom industry – has been imposing high import duties.

Meanwhile, US senators wrote to the Modi government to reduce import tariffs further on US farm products. “Over the last 10 years, exports alone have pumped an additional \$1.25 billion in economic activity into rural America. Reducing trade barriers into India is an opportunity to strengthen the economy of rural America,” wrote Senators Kelly Loeffle, David Perdue, Doug Jones, John Boozman and Tom Cotton. They were only regurgitating goals of the trade talks between Modi and Trump, which demanded India buy “at least another \$5-6 billion worth of American farm goods.”

Historically India has been ‘most favoured agri-dump’ for the ‘US Big Ag’



India cannot have protectionism for corporations backed by tariffs and a free market only for Indian farmers.

Indra Shekhar Singh

From 'P.L.-480' in the 1960s to 1998 – soya was dumped on India at \$200 per tonne, killing off oilseed farmers and small processors. In 2005, 74 metric tonne of wheat was dumped as part of the US-India agreement on agriculture, at \$400 per MT from Cargill. For 2005, the FAO report pegged prices of wheat at \$152 per MT. Vandana Shiva's *Why is every 4th Indian Hungry*, records this debacle.

But how are US imports cheaper than Indian products?

American direct payment subsidies overpower negative subsidies given to Indian farmers. As per the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) which was introduced in the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (agriculture was never part of GATT), developed countries had to end export and other subsidies to their farmers. The Global South was told to remove import and export restrictions, give market access, stop price support for farmers and dismantle public distribution systems. But EU and US, created new clauses such as "green box" subsidies that allowed them to bypass the World Trade Organisation and continue direct payments to their farmers or the 'Big Ag'.

The result was that in the US under Clinton administration, \$15.3 billion was given through direct payments. For example, US government paid US soy bean farmers or Big Ag, \$193 a tonne when the market price of soy was only \$155 a tonne. By giving direct payments, the commodity prices were unaffected, yet the farmers got money. This artificially cheap soy was then exported to countries like India. Under pressure from the US,

India also removed quantitative restrictions (QRs) on import in 2001 with the US for 719 items.

US farm and EU farm subsidies were a major reason for the failure of the Doha round of talks. Yet in 2020, Trump administration gave \$46 billion in farm subsidies. This sum amounted to 40% of farm income as the farm debt stood at a staggering \$434 billion. But have these payments gone to real farmers or Big Ag or banks in 2020?

Like always the farmers got crumbs at best, as the top 1% got 26% of the payment. So roughly, \$1.7 million per company. Between 1995 and 2019, the top 10% of recipients got 78% of the \$223.5 billion. This included 50 people on the 'Forbes 400' list of the wealthiest Americans, while 62% of US farms did not receive any subsidies. Out of the 10 top beneficiaries of farm subsidies 2020 eight are banks or credit unions.

The way out

The Modi government's agri-export mania will not go down well at WTO as other nations will demand free trade agreements or import duty relaxations from India too. There is no export without import. And putting the fate of 60% of the country on export centric policy only feeds into the agenda of external liberalisation created by Big Ag corporations like Cargill.

India needs to reorient its agriculture policy towards local consumption and planning should be done so that India can be self-reliant in key crops like oilseeds, pulses, etc. Next step should be to increase agri-import duties to the

highest level possible and when possible, to ban imports of crops that can be grown in India. EU has already, at various times, banned produce from countries including the US, and the WTO has not prevented them from doing so.

India, instead of encouraging agri-dumping, should enact new laws that prevent this. Not joining the RCEP was good initiative, but the government needs to build on this and also swerve off the bullying by Big Ag. We should impose a stricter QR list and have blanket policy, where all surplus items in India cannot be imported. The government may consider also having stricter anti-trust and anti-monopoly laws within the grain trading and food sector to prevent another Dal scam.

As US, EU and developed countries' agri-products are highly subsidised; a report by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development says governments support 40 to 45% of farm incomes in US, EU and Japan. Many of these subsidies are received by big corporations, and hence they should be taxed at entry and upon sale, so Indian farmers have a fair playing field.

In the end, India cannot have protectionism for corporations backed by tariffs and a free market only for Indian farmers. Our government has a moral imperative to stand with farmers, protect their interest with import duties and ensure higher prices for them. Farmers are our *annadattas*, it's about time we save them from agri-dumping and make policy conducive for them, and not Big Ag. □

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Views expressed in this article are personal.
<https://thewire.in/agriculture/the-pandoras-box-of-agri-reform-subsidies-and-tariffs>

Reclaim Economic Sovereignty

Since November 26, New Delhi has been under virtual siege by perhaps half a million farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, who are protesting three newly-minted farm laws, rammed through Parliament during its monsoon session. While reports frequently boil the protests down to a single issue, MSPs (minimum support prices), there are actually several points of contention. These include fears that the new laws herald a not-so-distant future without APMCs (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees), which will disrupt not simply a settled way of doing business but also take away the familiar protection mechanisms of the old system. There is also dissatisfaction with the new dispute-resolution system and issues relating to terms of payment and buyer identification. Protests have been steadily gathering steam since the so-called reforms were first announced as ordinances in early June, and despite three meetings since between the Centre and farmer group leaders, at the time of going to press on December 2, a resolution of issues was nowhere in sight.

The issue of price and purchase guarantees is clearly the most emotive. Under the APMC-MSP system, farmers have a guaranteed buyer, the central and state governments, for certain crops, with prices fixed in advance. While the new laws do not do away with this system, the private markets they make room for have no legally mandated minimum prices. Farmers fear this will, in the short term, leave them at the mercy of large corporates with disproportionate price-setting power and, in the longer run, make the APMC system redundant and MSPs irrelevant. A related aspect is the feared consequences of farmers being allowed to sell produce anywhere in India. Under the APMC system, mandis in a given state would procure crops almost exclusively from that state; under the new system, it is possible for farmers in Uttar Pradesh, for example, to sell to mandis in Punjab, weakening state agricultural safety nets. This is especially contentious in Punjab, the biggest beneficiary of the APMC system. In the last rabi and kharif seasons, grains worth Rs 52,000 crore were procured from Punjab



Protests have “been steadily gathering steam since the so-called reforms were first announced as ordinances in early June, and despite three meetings since between the Centre and farmer group leaders, a resolution of issues was nowhere in sight.

Anilesh S. Mahajan



alone, 25-30 per cent of the total procurement by the Food Corporation of India.

Further, under the new system, civil disputes are to be resolved by a conciliation board, with sub-divisional magistrates as the final authority. This prevents farmers from taking cases to courts. The fourth contentious issue relates to buyer identification and payment terms. Farmer groups argue that since the new system only requires buyers to have a PAN (Permanent Account Number), which does not include tracking information like addresses or phone numbers, they will be unable to track down absconding buyers in the case of a default. And since the laws also allow buyers up to 30 days to make payments, there are apprehensions of payment fraud as well.

Farmers' groups are therefore demanding either a complete roll-back of the reforms or amendments to the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act and the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act. The changes they are demanding include the setting up of special farmers' tribunals to deal with disputes, legislation requiring upfront payment for crops purchased, increased disclosure requirements for buyers and legally guaranteed floor prices for crops.

The Centre has, so far, been unwilling to budge, insisting that the reforms are both farmer-friendly and essential to reforming India's agricultural sector. At a rally in Varanasi on November 30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly said, "These reforms are being done in the interest of

farmers," alleging that opposition political parties were spreading propaganda about unintended "consequences that haven't happened or will never happen". What was left unsaid is that even NDA supporters oppose the reforms, for instance, the protesting farmers' groups include the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh. The BJP's political partners have also made it clear that they are not on board—on September 17, as a result of protests in Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal's Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned her position in the Union cabinet. In Haryana, the Manohar Lal Khattar government is on the back foot, with independent MLAs Balraj Kundu and Somveer Sangwan and the Indian National Lok Dal's Abhay Chautala withdrawing their support, and even Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) coming under increasing pressure from farmers' groups to do the same. The JJP's Digvijay Singh Chautala has said the party is, for the moment, waiting to see how negotiations with the Centre go.

At the time of going to press, the stalemate continued, with the farmers sticking to their guns and continuing the siege of Delhi and the Centre unwilling to climb down. After their march to the capital was halted at the NCR's borders, farmers have settled in for the long run, vowing to disrupt road traffic to and from the capital until a settlement is reached. On November 28, home minister Amit Shah appealed to group leaders to shift their protest to the Sant Nirankari grounds in Burari, assuring them that if they did so, the Centre would be willing to "discuss all issues" at a meeting with

agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on December 3. "If farmers' unions want to hold a discussion before December 3, I assure you that as soon as you shift your protest to the designated place, our government will hold talks the very next day," he reportedly said. However, that offer was rejected by farmers' groups. "We will stay put at the Delhi borders," Bharatiya Kisan Union-Dakunda (BKU-Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjigill was reported as saying. "We do not want any preconditions, [but] we are ready for talks," added BKU-Kadian president Harmeet Singh Kadian.

Sources say the Centre has found it almost impossible to build consensus among the farmers' organisations that have come together for the protest, saying there is a severe trust deficit, which is also apparently why they rejected the Centre's proposal to set up a committee with farmers' representatives and officials from the agriculture ministry. They add that while the Centre is mulling some concessions, including tightening norms for buyers and setting up farmer's tribunals, it is entirely unwilling to consider the central demand, making MSPs a law. In this, there is also an international context; India has been under considerable pressure at the WTO (World Trade Organization) to do away with MSPs, with western nations arguing that they block free trade.

With such a tangle of contrary pulls and pressures, it is unlikely that a solution will be found quickly. And with farmers seemingly prepared to lay extended siege to the capital, pressure is likely to mount in the days to come. □□

<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/np-front/story/20201214-np-front-1746435-2020-12-05>

Is Khalistan the reason for farmers' march to Delhi?

At a time when farmers should be fully engaged in sowing the rabi crop to the exclusion of all other concerns, a large number of farmers have left their fields in Punjab and moved to Delhi, carrying abundant provisions for a prolonged stay in the capital. Some conclusions are warranted from this nonchalance.

First, affluent Punjab farmers no longer work in their fields at all, but function as absentee landlords, delegating all work to migrant labour. This delinking from farm work by landowners has caused the younger generation to move away from agriculture and farms are increasingly being given on rent by absentee owners. Incidentally, these large farmers had earlier opposed MGNREGA as they had to match wages or lose farm labour.

The Centre should investigate the extent of this absentee landlord phenomenon and decide if income from rented fields can be considered as income from agriculture and made exempt from income tax. After all, urban citizens pay tax on income from rented property. Hopefully, our Marxist intellectuals (remember, land-to-the-tiller-of-the-soil) will have no objections.

Second and far more disturbing is the possibility that the protests have been organised by long-dormant Khalistan sympathisers in concert with Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) that supports an unofficial referendum 2020 to separate Punjab from India. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) can be expected to be involved, as Khalistan was the brainchild of Gen. Zia ul-Haq.

It may be mentioned that after the new laws were passed in September, the Centre procured rice and wheat at the minimum support price (MSP), which should have scuttled the propaganda that small and marginal farmers would be shortchanged under the new farm laws. Certainly, no farmer has claimed that his harvest is unsold to this day, or that he was denied remunerative prices at the time of sale. The farmers who have marched to Delhi have come after burning the



This delinking from farm work by landowners has caused the younger generation to move away from agriculture and farms are increasingly being given on rent by absentee owners.

Sandhya Jain





rice stubble in their fields, which are now being sown by migrant labour. Above all, a farmer in Dhule district, Maharashtra, has successfully invoked the new laws to make a Madhya Pradesh trader settle his dues of over Rs. 3 lakh, expeditiously.

Clearly, any flaws or shortcomings in the new farm laws have not manifested in this short period. However, since most procurement was done by the Food Corporation of India, it is likely that the cess collected by the State mandis (Rs. 3,642 crore in 2019) was not paid this time, which could have caused angst to the government.

None of this explains the presence of posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and pro-Khalistan slogans in the so called farmer protests. Neither the organisers of the protests, nor the Punjab Government, have dissociated from these posters and slogans. A particularly despicable video that has gone viral on social media shows a middle aged man gloating over the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and threatening to deal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in like fashion, if their demands were not met at the meeting fixed for December 3, 2020.

It is true that the man looked

None of this explains the presence of posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and pro-Khalistan slogans in the so called farmer protests.

too effete to carry out his threat, but the point is that he was serving as a willing mouthpiece for actors behind the scenes, and could well have been a Khalistan sympathiser (even activist) at the height of the movement in the 1980s. The idea that the Khalistan movement could have dormant sympathisers, like terrorist sleeper cells, that could be activated on command, has not adequately engaged the attention of India's security agencies, and poses a new danger.

In their brief presence in the capital so far, there have been other videos of crowds chanting hostile slogans against the Prime Minister. Most of these gatherings featured a Punjabi film actor, Deep Sidhu, who was posing as a farmer until outed by social media.

Sidhu became famous when a video surfaced of him urging the police to open the Punjab-Haryana border as the farmers' movement was an 'inquilab' (revolution) that would prove to be a "defining moment" of the geopolitics of India and all South Asia.

Sidhu is pro-Khalistan. Media reports suggest that some weeks ago, lawyer Hakam Singh had objected to a youth raising pro-Khalistan slogans at a rally, and handed him over to the police personnel deployed there. Enraged, Sidhu expelled Hakam Singh from his Shambhu Morcha and uploaded a video stating, "Taking such a decision was very necessary because our quam has made scores of sacrifices for the cause of Khalistan. If anyone raises a slogan in its favour, our reaction to it cannot be so ruthless." He added, "I would like to say again that neither armed Sikh struggle was wrong, nor a declaration of Khalistan. Raising pro-Khalistan slogans was also not wrong".

Clearly, the dominant voices in the current farmers' protest are signalling their arrival in the capital to forces outside our borders. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh will not like these actors to operate inside Punjab, but seems content to allow them to become the Centre's headache. Even after 48 hours of provocation, he has maintained silence.

The Captain is a mature politician. He should know that it is he and his State that are in the crosshairs of the Khalistanis. This is not the time for games: all good men should come to the aid of the nation. □□

<https://chintan.indiafoundation.in/articles/is-khalistan-the-reason-for-farmers-march-to-delhi/>

Systemic Corruption is the problem, not merely GST

I had expressed concerns five years ago that black economy will increase after the implementation of GST. The earlier system required a black marketer to negotiate with three inspectors of excise, sales tax and octroi. The GST system requires him to make setting with only one GST inspector thus making it easier to undertake black transactions.

Businesses are engaging in such transactions because the GST officials are hugely corrupt. A parallel black economy has come into being. The businessperson buys raw material, electricity and labour; the transporter reaches the goods; and the shopkeeper sells those goods—all do this in black, outside the books. The Government made the e-way bill system to be able to check whether tax has been paid on the goods during transit. This has been circumvented. The e-way bill between Delhi and Ghaziabad provides a window of 24 hours. Businesspersons are transporting 3 or 4 consignments on the same e-way bill within that time. Secondly, they are under-valuing the goods. A Hawaii Chappal is billed at Rs 50 and GST is paid on Rs 50 while the actual price is Rs 200. The seller takes Rs 150 in cash from the buyer and saves tax on the amount. The Government is planning to connect e-way bills with fastags so that the movement of the vehicles can be tracked. This will only open up yet one more source of corruption at the barriers. Black economy will continue to roll.

These black transactions cannot be controlled by reliance on technological solutions such as e-way bills. The purchase and sale of goods in cash can only be checked by inspectors. The use of same e-way bill to transport three consignments can only be checked by questioning the driver. The under pricing of the goods can only be controlled by an officer comparing the price with similar goods available in the market.

The Government will have to control the corruption of the tax bureaucracy. The Government has implemented a number of good measures in this direction. The most effective step has been to retire corrupt officials. However, the IAS



The e-way bill between Delhi and Ghaziabad provides a window of 24 hours.

Businesspersons are transporting 3 or 4 consignments on the same e-way bill within that time.

Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala



Officers are not willing to identify the corrupt among them.

We will have to think differently. Professor John Joseph Wallis of University of Maryland says that less bureaucratic corruption in the United States owes itself to the concern of the founding fathers with “representation, access, equity and fairness.” The framers of the US Constitution wanted to empower the people against the tyranny of the Government. An article in “World Development” reviewed the anti-corruption experiences with a focus on civil servants. It found that anti-corruption organizations (such as our Police and Central Vigilance Commission) are not effective while “corruption audit” is effective. The underlying premise is that corruption takes place by cooperation between the civil servant and the businessperson. Anti-corruption organizations can know of the corruption and become active only when there arises a dispute between the giver- and taker of the bribe. Ordinarily corruption does not even come into the radar of such organizations, let alone they control it. Audit, on the other hand, involves an official to proactively audit an office. We know that a common strategy adopted by civil servants is to sit on a file until their palms are greased. An auditor can uncover this by examining the time taken for disposal of files on a particular desk. Such an audit, however, would be fruitful only if it is undertaken by an external agency and not by the officials of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India that have been merrily overlooking the corrupt practices.

Professor Errol D’Souza of Indian Institute of Management,

"World Development" reviewed the anti-corruption experiences with a focus on civil servants. It found that anti-corruption organizations are not effective while "corruption audit" is effective.

Ahmedabad says that the role of the press and civil society is crucial in controlling corruption. I would add the judiciary. These organizations can flag corruption. The People’s Union for Civil Liberties, for example, exposes the high-handed actions taken by the police officials.

The Fifth Pay Commission had said that its recommendations for increase in salaries of government employees should be implemented only with instituting an external evaluation of the Class “A” officers. The common thread in all these suggestions is the empowerment of independent persons—improving access of the people; corruption audit; empowering the press, civil society and judiciary; or external evaluation of officers. These are fundamentally different than the top-down measures such as retiring corrupt officials—that the Government has been sincerely trying to implement and that have proven ineffective.

The difficulty in empowering independent oversight is that the empowerment also leads people raise questions about the policies and actions of the Government itself—not just the corrupt officials. The enabling of people to bring a case against a wrong challan issued by the Road Transport Officer also enables the same person to ques-

tion the Motor Vehicles Act. Or, the judiciary starts asking questions about the policies of the Government. It is for this reason that the Governments, unlike that envisaged by the founding fathers of the United States’ Constitution, are reluctant to improve representation of the people; institute corruption audits; empower the press, civil society and judiciary; or require external evaluation of officers. On the contrary Governments want to suppress the voice of these independent players so that they have a free unobstructed run. In the process, the capacity of these independent institutions to raise their voice against corrupt officials is impaired. If, for example, the Government empowers the Truck Owners’ Association to raise voice against corruption by the GST officials; the Association also starts raising its voice against certain provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act.

The Government cannot repair the system on its own from the top-down actions such as retiring corrupt officials. No wonder, one senior Minister in the UP Government confided to me, “What to do? We have dismissed and suspended many police officers. But they just do not behave.” He should have sought the help of People’s Union of Civil Liberties. Systemic reform can succeed only if the Government acts from the top and the public acts from the bottom. One cannot hold the electric wire with only one arm of the pliers. The choice before the Government, therefore, is either to live with corruption and lose its power altogether; or to allow the people to question its policies and maybe survive. □□

Formerly Professor of Economics at IIM Bengaluru

Treat to Maharajah Air India



Air India adopted Maharajah as its mascot during the year 1946. The airline has a superb timeline. It started its journey in the year 1932 under the leadership of J R D Tata and was named Tata Airlines before it became a public limited company and renamed as Air India after the Second World War. The other endeavour to retransmit Air India- the public limited company to a private company started during the year 2000. For the last twenty years whenever the government of India has to manage its fiscal deficit the radar of ideas points to privatize the Maharajah and it keeps popping out year after year because of one reason or the other.

Privatization has many variants. Privatizing a public sector unit has many models. The public-private partnership is one such model among many variants. Again, the public-private partnership itself has many variants- which can be standardized or can be customized. The Indian aviation sector has few examples of public-private partnerships. These are related to airport infrastructure. The Airports Authority of India and private companies GMR and GVK has transformed airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. The infrastructure sector is a good area to illustrate variants of public-private partnership. The public-private partnership model which has been implemented in the infrastructure, sector are bid-build, design-bid-build, design-build, design-build-finance, design-build-finance-maintain, design-build-finance-operate, design-build-finance-maintain-operate, build-finance, build-operate-transfer, build-operate-finance-transfer, design-build-operate- finance-transfer, build-lease-transfer, build-own-operate, build-own-operate-transfer, operations-maintenance, operations standalone, maintenance standalone, and any other customized property by creating a special purpose vehicle.



Any hurry by the government to use Air India as a tool to manage fiscal deficit will be disastrous to the country and we will have to live without a national carrier for a long-long time.

Alok Singh

The contracts and auction process has also a role in the public-private partnership models. The contracts of public-private partnerships are sometimes short-term, sometimes midterm, and sometimes long-term. A lot of combinations and permutations of public-private partnerships, contracts, and auctions have a role to play in this business assuming that the game is fair and transparent. Fairness means the medicine has been given for the correctly diagnosed disease. The disease needs to be treated, the untreatable part which is spreading poison to the healthy part has to be amputated and not the whole body.

The government can also raise assured money through the listing of Air India in the domestic stock exchanges. The success, failure, fear, hopes, and revival of Jet Airways is a classic case study in the airline's history. The takeoff of Jet Airways is still a work in progress. But there were times in the stock market during the pandemic when this Indian airline company was gaining price and no other airline company was matching its performance in the stock market in which-

ever exchange be it listed.

During the current pandemic when the travel and tourism industry has and is still facing the maximum amount of uncertainty among all the sectors, the Indian aviation sector has behaved differently. Multiple new airports have been made operational for passenger traffic during the pandemic time itself, for example- Darbhanga airport in Bihar and soon to be operational Deoghar airport in Jharkhand. Many corporate leaders tried to create a perception that the airline business is a money-burning-losing business and with a maximum amount of uncertainty regarding its sustainability. The risk-reward ratio is unfavourable in the sector. Despite that, the former employees of Jet Airways consistently believed that their airline will fly and they even attempted to create a consortium to make it operational again. The front-end staffs of the airline's operations are very committed and know the business of operations better than the higher management. The higher level management makes strategic mistakes and the lower level management who runs the operations are labelled as cost centre. The level of hope that was demonstrated by the Jet Airways people to run Jet airways is equally applicable to the people of Air India.

The advocates of the privatization of Air India can argue on the foundations of the revival of Jet Airways that it is the best time to privatize Air India and the success of Jet Airways can be replicated. The counter-argument can be that the pandemic time is the worst time for the travel and tourism industry and hence bad time for the aviation sector, so the priva-

The higher level management makes strategic mistakes and the lower level management who runs the operations are labelled as cost centre.

tization at this time won't maximize the return on sales of assets or services. The rational argument is that the employees of Air India be asked to put their money, change the incentive criteria, create and avail the stock options, and let the new model work for a few years, plug the loopholes of wastage, and change the process and product to attain better profitability.

India's aviation industry has a long path to travel and most importantly it has a lot of potential for growth in the upcoming future. The rising wealth as the number of the middle class and the higher cost of land acquisition fit the public as well as the government to let the aviation sector bloom to its full potential. The tough, costly, and time-consuming land acquisition is against the expansion of railways and roadways networks but it relatively favours the expansion of airways and waterways networks. Aviation as a sector is a good sector to do business; it's the emerging sector and not the outdated sector. It's the sector that is going to follow the business principle of replicable, scalable, and sustainable in the Indian business environment.

Air India Employees Consortium and Tata Sons are the two

entities whose expression of interest needs to be watched. The government should not be in a hurry to attain the disinvestment process during the current financial year at any cost. The goal should be to optimize the asset, create the best business practices, and look for a most suitable public-partnership model, rather than just another tool to bridge the fiscal deficit. The interest of the country should come first, followed by the interests of Air India, then the interests of the employees of Air India, and lastly the interest of the investors. The privileges offered to top-level government officials and politicians by Air India should not be anything more than what other private airline companies offer to their top-level management or politicians.

The Maharajah Air India has to live king size and maintain its legacy and identity of being the Indian airline. The nascent revival story of Jet Airways can't be forgotten while dealing with Air India. The government should move slowly but steadily in this mission Air India. The Air India employees and the general public of India are prudent enough to sustain the Maharajah. Any hurry by the government to use Air India as a tool to manage fiscal deficit will be disastrous to the country and we will have to live without a national carrier for a long-long time. It's not the time to repeat the nationalization-privatization game. Whatever is important for national interest has to be owned by the nation. The discount can be made whether it's owned by the government or is owned by individuals of the nation through the stock exchange. The Maharajah needs with all due respect- legacies treat. □□

Silk Route

The Silk Route was a historic trade route that dated from the second century B.C. until the 14th century A.D. It stretched from Asia to the Mediterranean, traversing China, India, Persia, Arabia & Greece. It was dubbed the Silk Route because of the heavy silk trading that took place during that period.

Originating at Xi'an (Sian), the 4,000 mile (6,400 km) road, actually a caravan tract, followed the Great Wall of China to the northwest, bypassed the Takla Makan Desert, climbed the Pamirs (mountains), crossed Afghanistan, and went on to the Levant; from there the merchandise was shipped across the Mediterranean Sea. Few persons traveled the entire route, and goods were handled in a staggered progression by middlemen.

There are over 40 countries today alongside the historic Land and Maritime Silk Roads, all still bearing witness to the impact of these routes in their culture, traditions and customs.

The Silk Road's eastern end is in present-day China, and its main western end is Antioch, the Greek City on eastern side of Orontes River, founded near 4th Century BC by Seleucus 1 Nicator, one of the Alexander's General.

It expanded China's foreign economic trade and made the world know China. In addition, silk also brought about the progress of the world.

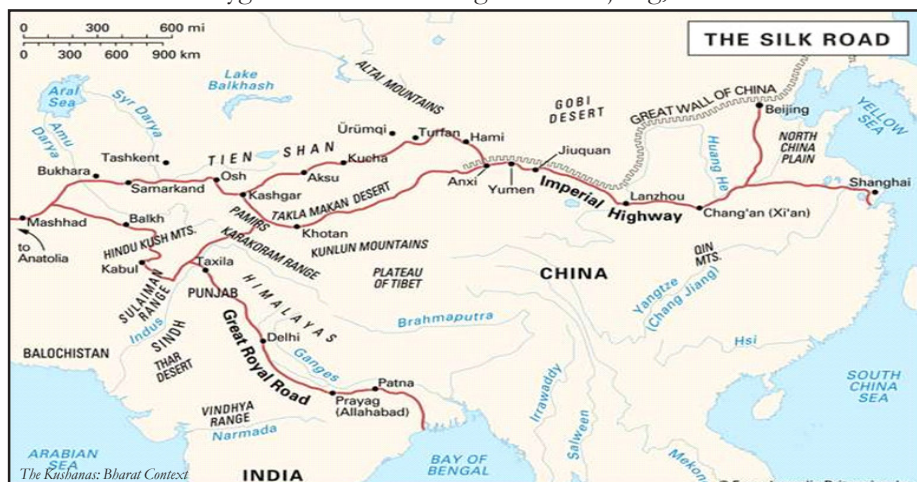
The Silk Road derives its name from the lucrative trade in silk carried out along its length, beginning in the Han dynasty in China (207 BCE–220 CE). The Han dynasty expanded the Central Asian section of the trade routes around 114 BCE through the missions and explorations of the Chinese imperial envoy Zhang Qian, as well as several military conquests.

Silk Road sites in India are sites that were important for trade on the ancient Silk Road. There are 12 such places in India. These are spread across seven states in India (Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh).

Part of the Silk Road still exists, in the form of a paved highway connecting Pakistan and the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, China.



Knowledge among people on the silk roads also increased when Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty (268-239 BCE) converted to Buddhism and raised the religion to official status in his northern Indian empire.
Vinod Johri



History of Silk Route

The Silk Roads were a “complex network of trade routes” that gave people the chance to exchange goods and culture. A maritime Silk Route opened up between Chinese-controlled Giao ChÉ (centred in modern Vietnam, near Hanoi), probably by the 1st century. It extended, via ports on the coasts of India and Sri Lanka, all the way to Roman-controlled ports in Roman Egypt and the Nabataean (ancient Arabian people who around 312 BC, formed kingdom with capital at Petra, now in Jordan. It was allied to Roman Empire) territories on the north-eastern coast of the Red Sea. The earliest Roman glassware bowl found in China was unearthed from a Western Han tomb in Guangzhou, dated to the early 1st century BCE, indicating that Roman commercial items were being imported through the South China Sea. According to Chinese dynastic histories, it is from this region that the Roman embassies arrived in China, beginning in 166 CE during the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Emperor Huan of Han.

The unification of Central Asia and Northern India within the Kushan Empire in the 1st to 3rd centuries reinforced the role of the powerful merchants from Bactria (an ancient region in Central Asia, Bactria was centre of Iranian resistance against the Macedonian invaders after fall of the Achaemenid Empire in the 4th century BC, but eventually fell to Alexander) and Taxila (Taxila is situated about 32 km (20 mi) north-west of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, along the historic Grand Trunk Road, near the important Sikh pilgrimage centre of Hasan Abdal,

The sacks of merchants were filled with ivory, rhino horns, turtle shells, spices, ceramic and iron items, glaze and cinnamon, ginger, bronze weapons and mirrors. India was famous for its fabrics, spices and semi-precious stones, dyes, and ivory.

and the Mughal-era Wah Gardens. Ancient Taxila was historically referred to as Takshashila in Sanskrit, and Takkasila in Pali). They fostered multi-cultural interaction as indicated by their 2nd century treasure hoards filled with products from the Greco-Roman world, China, and India, such as in the archaeological site of Begram.

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The main maritime route started at Guangzhou, passed through Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and then reached Alexandria.

The Kushana dynasty ruled over central Asia and north-west India about 2000 years ago. They had the best control over the ancient silk route compared to any other ruler of that time. Their two major centres of power were Peshawar and Mathura. The great

silk-route to the Indians was opened by Kaniskha. Cultural and religious exchanges began to meander along the route, acting as a connection for a global network where East and West ideologies met. Additionally Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism (*a dualistic religious system with Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements, founded in Persia in the 3rd century by Manes c. 216– c. 276*) and Nestorianism (*the Christian doctrine that there were two separate persons, one human and one divine, in the incarnate Christ. It is named after Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (428–31), and was maintained by some ancient Churches of the Middle East.*) were all introduced to China and parts of India because of the Silk Roads influence.

Transmission of Buddhism

The transmission of Buddhism to China via the Silk Road began in the 1st century CE, according to a semi-legendary account of an ambassador sent to the west by the Chinese Emperor Ming (58–75). During this period Buddhism began to spread throughout Southeast, East, and Central Asia. Mahayana, Theravada, and Tibetan Buddhism are the three primary forms of Buddhism that spread across Asia via the Silk Road.

The Buddhist movement was the first large-scale missionary movement in the history of world religions. Chinese missionaries were able to assimilate Buddhism, to an extent, to native Chinese Daoists (*Taoism also known as Daoism, is a Chinese philosophy attributed to Lao Tzu*). These people moved through India and beyond to spread the ideas of Buddha. Extensive contacts started in the 2nd

century, probably as a consequence of the expansion of the Kushan empire into the Chinese territory of the Tarim Basin (*endorheic basin in Northwest China occupying an area of about 1,020,000 sq. km. Located in China's Xinjiang region*), due to the missionary efforts of a great number of Buddhist monks to Chinese lands.

One result of the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road was displacement and conflict. The Greek Seleucids were exiled to Iran and Central Asia because of a new Iranian dynasty called the Parthians at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE, and as a result the Parthians became the new middle men for trade in a period when the Romans were major customers for silk. Parthian scholars were involved in one of the first ever Buddhist text translations into the Chinese language. Its main trade centre on the Silk Road, the city of Merv, in due course and with the coming of age of Buddhism in China, became a major Buddhist centre by the middle of the 2nd century. Knowledge among people on the silk roads also increased when Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty (268–239 BCE) converted to Buddhism and raised the religion to official status in his northern Indian empire.

From the 4th century CE onward, Chinese pilgrims also started to travel on the Silk Road to India to get improved access to the original Buddhist scriptures, with Fa-hsien's pilgrimage to India (395–414), and later Xuanzang (629–644) and Hyecho, who traveled from Korea to India.

This movement of Buddhism first gained influence in the Khotan region. Some Mahayana scripts

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were found in northern Pakistan, but the main texts are still believed to have been composed in Central Asia along the Silk Road.

The merchants supported Buddhist monasteries along the Silk Road, and in return the Buddhists gave the merchants somewhere to stay as they traveled from city to city. As a result, merchants spread Buddhism to foreign encounters as they traveled. Thus these communities became centers of literacy and culture with well-organized marketplaces, lodging, and storage. The voluntary conversion of Chinese ruling elites helped the spread of Buddhism in East Asia and led Buddhism to become widespread in Chinese society. The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism essentially ended around the 7th century with the rise of Islam in Central Asia.

Expansion of the arts

Many artistic influences were transmitted via the Silk Road, particularly through Central Asia, where Hellenistic, Iranian, Indian and Chinese influences could intermix. Greco-Buddhist art represents one of the most vivid examples of this interaction. Silk was also a representation of art, serving as a religious symbol. Most importantly, silk was used as currency for trade along the silk road.

The mixture of Greek and In-

dian elements can be found in later Buddhist art in China and throughout countries on the Silk Road.

The production of art consisted of many different items that were traded along the Silk Roads from the East to the West.

Decline and disintegration

With the gradual loss of Roman territory in Asia and the rise of Arabian power in the Levant, the Silk Road became increasingly unsafe and untraveled. After the Silk Road's temporary decline during the Mongol Empire, Tiemeur, a descendant of Genghis Khan established the Tiemeur Empire in 1368, the Silk Road became prevalent in trade once more. However, when the Tiemeur Empire collapsed in 1404, the Silk Road ultimately decayed and finally fell into disuse. At that time the Venetian Marco Polo used it to travel to Cathay (China).

The fragmentation of the Mongol Empire loosened the political, cultural, and economic unity of the Silk Road. Turkmeni marching lords seized land around the western part of the Silk Road from the decaying Byzantine Empire. After the fall of the Mongol Empire, the great political powers along the Silk Road became economically and culturally separated. □□

Reconstructing Identity and Contesting History The Meenas of Jaipur-II

The much maligned image of the Meenas of Rajasthan remained intact till the twentieth century. The image of criminality of the Meenas may have been constructed by the colonial administrators by equating the Meenas with the Meos through the story of the marriage of Darya Khan (Meo) to Sasbadni Meena, but interference into the livelihoods of pastoral and tribal groups was not made by the colonial state for the first time. Mobilization of resources, extension of agriculture, and strategic reasons necessitated interference, however limited, by the pre-colonial states in their regional contexts. Hence, the Meenas were not treated much differently in the pre-colonial period. Whether influenced by Persian chroniclers of economic interests or due to belief in the Meo-Meena equivalence and criminality of these mixed ethnic groups, colonial portrayal of the Meenas did not make any meaningful departure from seventeenth-century royal records of Rajasthan. Lt. Col. Locket, as early as 1831, observed the criminality of the Meenas of Kotputli, Jaipur and Shekhawati. He wrote. The Meenas of Buttress have practiced robbery as a profession from time immemorial, and in skill, dexterity and in their predatory calling, they were considerably inferior to no gang. What Major Powlett records about the Meena (possibly not just Meenas but gangs of mixed ethnic backgrounds) is nothing but acts of plunder arson and looting in the state of Mewat, city of Firozpur and adjacent villages in the British territory. D. Ibbetson in his Census Report of 1881 (paragraph no. 583) observes

The Meenas are the boldest of our criminal classes. Their headquarters so far as the Punjab is concerned are in the village of Shahjahanpur, attached to the Gurgaon District but surrounded on all sides by Rajputana territory. There they until lately defied our police and even resisted them with armed force. Their enterprises are on a large scale, and they are armed with small bows which do considerable execution They travel great distances to gangs of from twelve to twenty men practising robbery and dacoity even as far as the Deccan.



Meenas of Jaipur laid claim to political supremacy in the locality in the pre-Rajput period in view of their participation in the long process of Rajput state formation in Eastern Rajasthan.
Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur



L. Gov. Sir Donald Macleod refers to the heavy robberies and dacoities (which had) long been rife in Hyderabad and elsewhere in the Deccan (and) almost invariably perpetrated by the Minas of Punjab and Jaipur' but provides no specific information of crimes committed.

In fact, the 26 per cent decrease in non-bailable offences in Gurgaon district recorded in the Punjab Police Report 1868 questions the very idea of surveillance since the (non-bailable) crimes. Which they (Meenas) are said to be addicted to have not increased' "Again, the Bharatpur Police Report 1868, mentions.

We know the probabilities are that before their (Meenas) return (from thieving expedition) some deed of blood or torture will be perpetrated though in justice to them it must be allowed that they rarely shed blood if it can be avoided, yet sooner they fail in the enterprise they are on, no scruple on that score will stop them. Again the reason for their robbery is that it is their profession for the Meenas themselves claimed that God had decreed that their tribe should live by plunder.

The fall in the number of Meenas convicted in Gurgaon was explained by their predatory habit: they rarely committed robberies locally, preferring to travel long distances to perpetrate crimes. References also made to complaints received against Meenas from Jaipur, Bharatpur and Berar. Except in the case of Bharatpur, the police records do not detail any significant increase in the activities of Meenas which could be related to the withdrawal of the surveillance measure. The political agent of Jaipur reported that "the increasing depre-

The Meenas were finally declared a criminal tribe and covered under the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871.

dations of this class have been verbally complained to me during the past season throughout all the northern states of Rajpootana.

The Meenas were finally declared a criminal tribe and covered under the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871. Although scholars suggest that the chaukidari Meenas (dubbed as erstwhile guerrilla fighters' who possibly assaulted travellers and traders on the highways, in forests and hills and later on were employed as watchmen by the Jaipur state) and not the zamindar Meenas were classified as 'criminal tribes' yet the fact is that the Meenas of Jaipur, at least till the fourth decade of the twentieth century persistently complained about the blanket coverage of the entire community by the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871. The caste was seen as unchanging and constant, an entity which was amenable to classification and quantification by the colonial administrators. What we thus see is a colonial classification strategy that reworked the inherited perception of the Meenas while branding them as a 'criminal tribe'. In fact, as late as 1911, the Meenas were being categorized as animists and hill tribes along with the Bhils, Baurias and Girasias' as well as cultivators-cum-freebooters."

The Meenas of the state of Jaipur were no exception to the above portrayal. However, we dis-

cuss a narrative in the following section that is dated much earlier than the branding of Meenas as criminal' of the colonial state between 1831 and 1871. An earlier claim by the Meenas to glorified "history", however, supports our contention that the pre-colonial perception of the Meenas was not much different from that of the Meos. Hence, the history of the Meenas of Jaipur has to be analysed in the regional context of the state of Jaipur. Their 'history' cannot be entirely attributed to colonial 'inventions' as in the case of Zimbabwe. Besides, Almost all of the major adivasi jatis of the middle Indian region, stretching from Bengal in the east to Gujarat in the west, have during the past century made such collective efforts to change their established way of life." Hence, it would be inappropriate to apply Alan Dundes' "Theory of Nationalistic Inferiority Complexity to the Meenas. More appropriate would be Eric Hobsbawm's concept of 'invention of tradition' that arose out of a long experience. The context was Rajput state formation in Jaipur locality known as Dhundhar in ancient times). Therefore, many claims that the Meenas made in the early nineteenth century were definitely the result of their long experience of living in state-society" as well as with intruding state apparatus. But their experience was not necessarily that of territorial loss and deprivation. It was not a mere sense of being 'exploited that gave rise to narrative history. The sum total of Meena-Kachwaha interaction that seems to have precipitated the construction of a particular self image by at least the Meena chiefs of Jaipur can perhaps be. □□

SJM wades into Sci-Hub row, urges govt to ensure access to books, articles online



The national convenor of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Dr. Ashwani Mahajan, has urged the Modi government to ensure that researchers continue to have access to books and articles.

He was reacting to the latest Sci-Hub case in India wherein top academic publishers have sued two foreign websites for copyright infringement and requested the court to block them.

In December 2020, top academic publishers Elsevier, Wiley and American Chemical Society filed an injunction request in the Delhi High Court against Sci-Hub and Libgen, the largest providers of ‘free downloads’ on research material.

The publishers requested the court to block the two websites that provide free access to millions of books and articles to the research community including students and teachers. This comes at a time when most colleges and universities across the country are shut due to the Covid-19 pandemic and students have been dependent on online content for their research and studies.

“If the injunction is granted, the internet service providers (ISP) would be forced to block these websites in India.

This will seriously undermine the ability of Indian science and social science researchers to access scientific and academic articles for their research and learning purposes,” Mahajan wrote in his letter to the government, which is also published on his blog.

Mahajan further said that even as the government spends money on research journals for IIMs, IITs and IISERs, a good number of students still depend on these websites for their study material. “Though the government of India spends Rs 1500 crore to subscribe journals in various national and state universities including premier research institutes like

IIT, IISER, IIMs, etc.. but a very large number of researchers and students are heavily dependent on repositories like Sci-Hub and Libgen to access the journals and other research publications,” he added.

Mahajan has written that sections of the copyright act are not violated if researchers access publications from the two websites, as it’s not for commercial purposes.

“Vast majority of users of Libgen and Sci-Hub are research communities and the nature of the use is non-commercial in nature such as study or research. Thus, there is no direct commercial use of these websites,” his letter reads.

It also lists Section 51 of the Copyrights Act, which states: “Nothing in Sub-clause IV shall apply to the import of one copy of any work for the private and domestic use of the importer”.

Thus, according to Mahajan, importing one copy is not treated as an infringement. “In conclusion, the Delhi High Court may not grant the injunction on the following grounds — interpretation of the word ‘reproduction’ used in the copyright laws for physical objects cannot be applied to ‘digital mode’; use of free libraries like by students and researchers for non-commercial use cannot be considered as infringement of the copyright laws; it would be considered as against the public interest; granting injunction would also be considered as compromising India’s obligation under the ICESCR; the content owners (publishing companies) should not be allowed to use legal tools to prevent the dissemination of knowledge,” he added.

He also urged the government to urgently amend Section 52 of the Copyrights Act to make the functioning of non-commercial initiatives such as Libgen and Sci-Hub legal in India. Section 52 of the Copyrights Act details the exceptions to copyright infringement.

“The Copyrights Act should be suitably amended to acknowledge the claim of universities and institutions in the rights on research published by the researchers and students while working there,” his letter reads.

<https://theprint.in/india/rss-affiliate-wades-into-sci-hub-row-urges-govt-to-ensure-access-to-books-articles-online/578259/>

SJM backs CAIT

The complaints have the backing of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM).

“We have been demanding, since the entry of Amazon and Flipkart, that the government should ensure a level-playing field for small traders,” SJM convenor Ashwani Mahajan told ThePrint.



“In our pre-budget meeting with the finance minister, we also told her that this big corporation model of growth will not not empower our villages. Flipkart, Amazon and Facebook don’t pay tax to the Indian government even though they make money in India. This is a bizarre situation. It is good that the government has taken the case seriously.”

The ‘swadeshi lobby’ has been putting pressure on the government in recent years to prevent what they say is e-commerce giants destroying small traders.

Bowing to pressure from the small traders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi refused to meet Amazon Inc. chief executive Jeff Bezos in January this year, even though the latter announced his e-commerce giant’s massive investment plans for India.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal went a step further, saying companies like Amazon and Flipkart were not doing any “favours” to India by investing billions of dollars in the country. He also warned them to follow the rules rather than finding any loopholes in law.

<https://theprint.in/india/govt-asks-ed-and-rbi-to-take-action-against-amazon-flipkart-for-fdi-fema-violations/577298/>

New Year resolution must be to use local products, says PM

In his last ‘Mann kiBaat’ radio address for 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to make a New Year resolution to substitute foreign-made products for indigenous goods in 2021 “for the sake of the country”.

Mr. Modi also asked manufacturers to make sure that Indian-made products are up to global standards, as a part of the government’s Atmanirbhar Bharat or self-reliant India push and “Vocal for Local” campaign.

He reiterated his earlier appeal to Indians to make a list of products used daily, identify which ones are made abroad and look for Indian substitutes.

“...think of things manufactured abroad that have permeated into our lives unknowingly, in a way, shackling us down. Let us find out their substitutes made in

India. and decide that henceforth we shall use products made with the hard work and sweat of the people of India. You make New Year resolutions every year...this time one has to certainly make a resolution for the sake of the country,” Mr. Modi said, according to an English translation of his address released by the government.

Later in his address, he urged people to buy saffron from Kashmir, which he said had a unique flavour.

Mr. Modi said while there were many challenges in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country had learnt a lesson with every crisis. He said due to the pandemic, the topic of single-use plastic was not discussed much this year, but ridding India of single-use plastic should be another resolution for 2021.

Amid the on-going agitation by farmers from Punjab on the farm laws, the Prime Minister spoke of the sacrifices of Guru TegBahadur, Mata Gujari, Guru Gobind Singh and his sons, remembered as the four Sahibzade, and Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, adding that it was these kind of sacrifices that kept the fabric of India intact.

Mr Modi also spoke of the increase in the leopard population from 7,900 in 2014 to 12,852 in 2019.

Referring to the “uniqueness” of the Bhagavad Gita, the Prime Minister reminded listeners that it was Gita Jayanti two days ago. He lauded efforts to clean up Someshwar Beach in Karnataka by a couple, Anudeep and Minusha, and different areas in the Himalayas by PradeepSangwan, but said there was a need to question why so much plastic and garbage ends up at these places to begin with.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/people-have-supported-vocal-for-local-modi-on-mann-ki-baat/article33429682.ece>

Atmanirbhar in Data Management

On December 14, 2020, Google online services yesterday suffered disruption. The outage lasted almost 45 minutes across all Google services with users unable to login. Most of the services are now back online. Users faced problems with all Google services and were unable to access Gmail, YouTube and Google Docs during the global outage.

Google had a clear monopoly on the mobile search engine market across India with a share of 99.29 percent as of May 2020. According to data from the Reston, Virginia-based digital marketing intelligence firm Comscore, Gmail’s market penetration in India stands at 62%, the highest in the world. In India, Google Play has around 94% market share and ac-



counts for 360 million unique visitors, according to Comscore data released in August 2020. This clearly impinges Bharat to reduce dependence on google.

India's digital transformation opportunity and anticipated 850 million smartphone users by 2025 have made the country a desirable market for big tech companies like Facebook, Amazon and Google. The market opportunities for online commerce in the country are expected to touch \$200 billion by 2028 from \$30 billion in 2018. Also, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, more Indians are getting online. These transformations are also generating huge amounts of data.

Recently, a joint parliament committee (JPC) looking into the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, examined the stakeholders including Amazon, Facebook and Google to get their perspective about personal data protection issues.

Why we must have "Atmanirbhar Bharat in Data management"? In January 2019, at the World Economic Forum, Japanese Prime Minister Abe espoused this new concept of Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT). The WTO member countries that value rule-based digital economy should define and implement Global rules for data governance. Globally accepted data governance rules shall pave the way for DFFT - essential for successful cross-border e-commerce.

With US hegemony DFFT was already there. As the US used to control the Internet space, so is the data.

However, the trustee's of DFFT themselves are in trouble. The US, who controlled the internet space, has seen the repercussions of data free flow in the form of negative impact on elections. Similarly, UK who initiated the digital single market concept in the EU is facing one of the biggest crisis in history, i.e. Brexit. Brexit again shows a manipulated use of data on social media to influence public opinion negatively. The whole narrative of the nation has been changed and diverted, i.e. from developmental issues to Brexit issues. This is the level of harm data free flow can do.

Secondly, when we say DFFT which category

of the data we are talking about. For sure, no country will allow government data to flow freely across the border. Thus, classifying the data like government data, business data, personal data is also a gigantic and complicated task. Data broker like oracle already has more than 30000 attributes of user's data stored in their system. How will policymakers segregate and ensure that this data is not misused? Further, Cyber troop's ability and numbers are increasing rapidly. Access to data will further strengthen the influence of cyber troops on individuals and public perception. This influence can be terrifying as this may lead to horrifying creation of data colonies and data slaves. Creation of Data slaves will threaten the principles of democracy. Any foreign country can destabilise internal peace and harmony of a country based on the negative or biased use of data intelligence through propaganda, trolls, search manipulation, and advertisements.

Democratic country like India cannot afford this risk of misuse of the citizen's data that may not only harm them individually but also the whole country's security and peace. Because of the devastating cases of data manipulation, more countries are in favour of data localisation. There are few bilateral agreements like between China and Russia (non-aggression treaty) related to data localisation

Data is the new oil. Many countries, including India, supports data localisation- storing data within the country's jurisdiction. The Law enforcement, geopolitics, individual data protection and human rights are the major factors that drive the demand for Data Localisation. The politics (e.g. Controlling public opinion) and economics (e.g. enforcing companies to invest locally on data centre and data processing) shape the data localisation policies of a country.

In 2020 budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rightly proposed to roll-out a new policy for building data centre parks. In 2021 budget, Finance Minister should push this further and announce initiatives like boosting local App stores, email service providers etc. Bharat urgently needs a short and long term strategy to be "Atmanirbhar in Data management."

<https://www.organiser.org/Encyc/2020/12/24/Atmanirbhar-in-Data-Management.html>

Economy to reach pre-COVID-19 levels by end of FY2022: NITI

India's economic growth is likely to reach pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal as the GDP contraction in this financial year is expected

to be less than 8%, as per NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also revised its forecast of economic growth for the current fiscal year (2020-21) to (-)7.5% as against its earlier forecast of (-)9.5%.

“We should reach pre-COVID-19 levels at the end of fiscal year 2021-22 for sure,” Mr. Kumar told PTI when asked about growth projection for the next financial year. He added that the GDP contraction this fiscal is expected at less than 8%.

India’s economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in manufacturing helped GDP clock a lower contraction of 7.5% and held out hopes for further improvement on better consumer demand. Replying to a question on asset monetisation, he said this is ongoing work and it has received attention at the highest level. “We will continue to pursue this and make sure that the targets of asset monetisation are reached,” Mr. Kumar stressed.

The government is looking to raise Rs. 2.10 lakh crore through disinvestment in the current fiscal. This includes Rs. 1.20 lakh crore from Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) stake sale and Rs. 90,000 crore from sale of government stake in financial institutions.

Talking about banking reforms, he said the sector needs further expansion and an increase in competition because India’s private debt to GDP ratio remains limit to mid 50s. Stating that in case of other emerging economy, private debt to GDP ratio is well beyond 100%, Mr. Kumar said that “so we need to increase private debt and this will happen when our banking sector will expand”.

On the Indian agriculture sector, he said the NITI Aayog now is very strongly pushing the programmes for chemical free natural farming which has a potential to reduce cost for agriculture production dramatically and also has very positive impact on the environment. Kumar said the expansion of natural farming all over the country will make Indian agriculture more competitive and it also promises to have a significant positive impact on farmers’ income.

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/economy-to-reach-pre-covid-levels-by-end-of-fy2022-says-niti-aayog/article33262529.ece>

Probe into instant loan apps fraud throws up China link

Criminal Investigation Department sleuths probing the alleged data theft by instant loan apps said they have sufficient circumstantial and scientific evidence to link the scam to China.

SWADESH PATRIKA
JANUARY 2021



According to the officers, the application server is based in China, the dashboard accessed through the app is located in the neighbouring country and directors of three of the four companies recently raided by CID are also from there.

Confirming the China connection, superintendent of police, CID-cybercrime, MD Sharath, said: “Operations of the companies which were raided are controlled from China. This includes handling of the hacked mobile phones’ data.”

The probe comes in the wake of complainants alleging their details were stolen and leaked by firms running instant loan apps. Using the stolen data, the accused would threaten the customers with dire consequences, including rape. In many cases, they created new WhatsApp groups using the victim’s phone book and sent lewd messages to the members.

Earlier this week, CID police had raided four companies in Bengaluru — Mad Elephant Technologies, Borayanxy Technologies, Profitise Technologies and Wizzpro Solutions — and arrested two people, including a Chief Financial Officer and a human resource manager. Alerted about the gravity of the scam by CID, officials from Intelligence Bureau have collected documents from the arrested duo and are questioning them. Explaining the Chinese link, an investigating officer from CID said: “The director of Borayanxy Technologies Pvt Ltd is also the owner and director of the Chinese company Honghu Information Technologies Pvt Ltd. Mad Elephant is a fully owned subsidiary of a company called Rumingtech Pvt Ltd, one of whose owners is a Chinese citizen identified as YanpengQu,” he said.

Asked whether more arrests are likely in the near future, CID police said, “We have traced one more fraudulent firm which owns around 10 instant loan apps. We will raid it soon and if necessary, will arrest the suspects,” he said.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/probe-into-instant-loan-apps-fraud-throws-up-china-link/articleshow/79971255.cms>

RBI cautions public against unauthorised digital lending apps

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday has issued a note of caution to the public against the use of “unauthorized” lending apps citing recent media reports on unethical collection practices along with arbitrary interest rates being charged by some of these apps.

“There have been reports about individuals/small businesses falling prey to growing number of unauthorized digital lending platforms/Mobile Apps on promises of getting loans in quick and hassle-free manner,” said RBI. “Members of public are hereby cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities and verify the antecedents of the company/ firm offering loans online or through mobile apps,” it added in the statement.

Only licensed banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) given authorization by the central bank can do public lending activities, the central bank said. Earlier this year, RBI had issued a detailed set of guidelines over acceptable lending practices that can be followed by fintech apps.

Aggregators tying up with licensed banks and NBFCs would have to disclose upfront, the nature of these tie-ups, to improve transparency, the central bank had said. Recently several reports have surfaced of excess interest charged, additional hidden charges and unethical collection practices including misuse of agreements to access data on the mobile phones of the borrowers by the collection agents of these fintech lenders.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/rbi-cautions-public-against-unauthorized-digital-lending-apps/articleshow/79924991.cms>

‘Centre to set up development finance entity in 3-4 months’

The government plans to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) in the next three to four months with a view to mobilise the ₹ 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline, according to Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda.



“We need a development financial institution as infra financing needs patient capital, and banks are currently not suited for lending for long-term projects which do not generate any cash for years,” he told PTI.

Even deepening the bond market with regard to infrastructure financing was a matter receiving the Centre’s attention and there was a need to do something more in order to have a robust bond market for infrastructure financing, he said.

“To provide funding, to enhance credit rating of projects, a DFI is needed, and we are actively working on it, and soon such an institution will be in place. We are in the process of finalising details such as shareholding of the government and whether such a body will be formed through a statute.

“The DFI will be a catalyst, and would fund projects where others are not willing to enter because of the risks involved,” he said. The DFI should become a reality may be by the end of the current financial year or early next year, he added. In her last Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed to set up DFIs for promoting infrastructure funding. About 7,000 projects have been identified under the National Infrastructure Pipeline with projected investment of ₹ 111 lakh crore during 2020-25.

The DFI, Mr. Panda said, would have a key developmental role apart from the financing role. Prior to liberalisation, India had DFIs engaged in development of industry. ICICI and IDBI, in their previous avatars, were DFIs. The country’s oldest financial institution IFCI Ltd. too had acted as a DFI.

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/centre-to-set-up-development-finance-entity-in-3-4-months/article33397089.ece>

India frees up export of medical goggles, nitrile gloves

The government freed up the export of medical goggles and nitrile/NBR gloves.

“The export policy of medical goggles and nitrile/NBR gloves is amended from ‘restricted’ to ‘free’ category making all types of medical goggles and nitrile/NBR gloves freely exportable,” Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

In October, the government eased the exports policy for Nitrile/NBR gloves from ‘prohibited’ to ‘restricted’. India had banned their exports in June.

Medical goggles were kept in the restricted category with a monthly quota of 2 million units since July as the country was combatting the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-frees-up-export-of-medical-goggles-nitrile-gloves/articleshow/79877388.cms>

Swadeshi Activities
Swadeshi Meeting

Pictorial Glimpses



Aligarh, Paschim Uttar Pradesh



Amroha, Paschim Uttar Pradesh



Dehradun, Uttarakhand



SJM (Batala) submitted memorandum against China Door to DSP City



Swadeshi Meeting at Rajgarh (MP)

Swadeshi Activities **Swadeshi Meeting**

Pictorial Glimpses



Delhi



Paschim Mednipur, WB



Paschim Vardhaman, WB



Nandia, WB



Participants in Nandia, WB



Participants



Riva, Mahakaushal