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Swadeshi PATRIKA

APRIL 2023

Freedom from the Dominance of Dollar

Swadeshi Activities

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

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Konkan

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Lucknow, UP

Munger, Bihar

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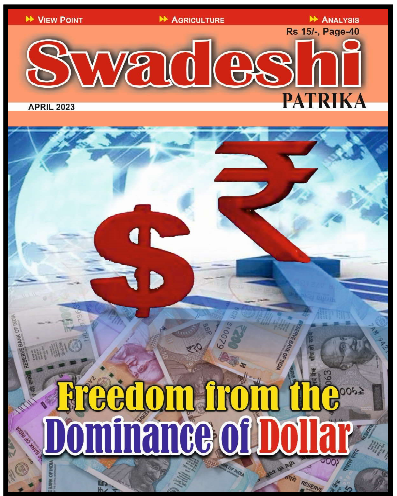
Pithoragarh, Uttrakhand



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Importing Judgements for Interpreting our Constitutional Laws

Two judgements are in news recently, one delivered by a Session Court and one by the Supreme Court. The Session Court order underscores the importance of liberty to speak, but with responsibility. It emphasizes the constitutional right regarding the right to speech. The fundamental right to speech under Article 19(1)(a) is not unfettered and the right has been tempered by restrictions under Article 19(2). Every common man in general, political parties and public figures, in particular, should be aware of that. All political leaders and public figures should speak with a sense of responsibility without hurting the cherished feelings of anyone.

In other significant judgement, the Supreme Court overruled its earlier 2011 judgements in 'Arup Bhuyan vs State of Assam', 'Indra Das vs State of Assam' and 'State of Kerala vs Raneef'. The 3-judge bench headed by Justices M R Shah, CT Ravikumar and Sanjay Karol also upheld Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA under which the continued association of an organisation that is declared unlawful after due procedure is an offence. The bench also held that the Justice Katju-led bench committed a mistake in straightway and directly following the US Supreme Court decisions as the right to freedom of speech and association under the Indian Constitution is subject to reasonable restrictions.

In many other cases like the right to privacy, same-sex marriages and the Sabrimala temple case, the Indian Courts blindly import judgements from the US Courts. This trend of invoking Americanism in interpreting our Constitutional laws undermines the idea of Indian jurisprudence and should be avoided.

— **Kumar Gaurav,** *Samastipur, Bihar*

Quote-Unquote

Our government is committed for the respect and empowerment of women and "Mahila Samman Bachat Patra" is the best example of this.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, Bharat

Indian judiciary can't be influenced by foreign interference. India won't tolerate 'foreign influence' anymore.

Kiren Rijiju
Union Law Minister, Bharat

After the SVB collapse, the government swung into action to handhold Indian startups that had funds or deposits in the bank … we made sure that whatever deposits they wanted to shift to Indian banks … the entire process was flawlessly executed.

Ashwini Vaishnaw
IT & Communications Minister, Bharat

The US dollar is preferred as a foreign exchange reserve and international payment, but now the situation is changing. India is now making international payments in rupees. Its effect will also be visible after some time.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
National Co-convenor, SJM

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Yet another misleading report

The 'World Happiness Report 2023' has been released by 'Sustainable Development Solutions Network' in the third week of March 2023. In this report, India has been shown at 126th position in the World Happiness Index. Although in this report, India is placed on the 126th position, better than the 136th position of the last year, but the surprising fact is that those who are shown to be above India, actually don't deserve to be better than India in terms of happiness in any case. For example, Saudi Arabia, a totalitarian state, is ranked 30th, Ukraine, which is ruined by war, is ranked 92nd; Turkey, plagued by hyper inflation is ranked 106th; Pakistan standing before the world with begging brown is ranked 108th. Sri Lanka is at 112th position and India which is far better than all these countries of the world, not only in terms of food, but in many other ways, is ranked so low. In such a situation, questions are also being raised about this report.

This is not the first time that this type of misleading report has been published. Recently, a German agency named 'Welt Hunger Hilfe' also placed India at 107th position in the table of 121 countries in the Hunger Index. The interesting thing was that in this list countries like Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Jordan etc. have been shown in a better position than India. The truth is that at present India is far ahead of many countries of the world in terms of food grains and other food items. Today, not only the poor but many rich countries of the world are al also facing shortage of food items. India has so far sent lakhs of tonnes of food grains to many countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Israel, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland etc. Not only this, in the context of hunger, different types of indicators have also become better in India than before.

The remarkable progress made by India in the last few decades, which has improved the standard of living of the people and has made her move from being the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest economy in the world, in the last few years, many powers of the world are unable to digest this progress of India. In such a situation, they leave no stone unturned to defame India by adopting various tactics.

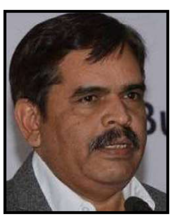
The World Happiness Report was first launched in the year 2012. It is said that this report is made on the basis of a gallop survey from all over the world. But if seen, this type of concept was actually started in 1974 by the then King of Bhutan Jigme Singe Wanchuk in the name of 'National Happiness Index'. He believed that mere increase in GDP cannot be a reason for happiness. Hence happiness should be an important element in the measurement of development. After that the country of Bhutan started giving top priority to the objective of happiness of its people. Since 2006, for few years, the task of ranking countries around the world on the basis of happiness of the people has started. Looking at the ranking based on the happiness, 'Happy Planet Index' published in 2009 shows that the US which is the most developed nation in the world was ranked 114th in the list of 143 countries based on this index. Singapore was ranked 49th, France 71st, Canada 89th, England 74th, Germany 51st and India 35th. Bhutan, which ranked 131st on the Human Development Index based on current indicators of per capita income, education and health, was surprisingly ranked 17th on this Happy Planet Index. In fact, Bhutan was the only developing country among the nations to get among top 20 spots. Interestingly, Finland which currently ranks first in the World Happiness Index was ranked poorly at 59th position as per 'Happy Planet Index'. It is worth considering that in the happiness index which was first published in the world, as Happy Planet Index, USA and the countries of Europe were far behind in the happiness index. But after this work came into the hands of western countries, since then Asian countries have slipped behind and European countries have come in the first row. Means it can be said that material wealth and income have again been considered as the measure of happiness and low income countries are being placed up and down as per their wish (or agenda).

India, which has been ranked at 126th position, today is not only self-sufficient in terms of food, but is also providing food grains to the world, where housing facilities have been provided to more than 3 crore homeless people and those living in kutcha house in the last few years; which has faced pandemic in most efficient manner, where almost all people have been given corona vaccine; where it is ensured that no one goes hungry, and for that 80 crore people have continuously been given free food by the government, where unprecedented development is taking place in education, health, drinking water, electricity, sanitation etc. If India is being ranked behind Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, it does not reduce the prestige of India, but it definitely raises doubt on the credibility of the institution which says so.

Freedom from the dominance of dollar

We have seen the continuous rise of dollar since the First World War. After World War I, in exchange for supplies, the Allies began paying in gold to the United States, due to which America became the world's largest gold reserve. After the end of the war, various countries linked their currencies with the dollar and with this the 'Gold Standard' ended in the world and thus dollar became the world's most preferred currency. All countries started keeping more and more of their foreign exchange reserves in the form of dollars. By 1999, up to 70 percent of the total foreign exchange reserves of the countries of the world, were kept in dollars.

The European common currency 'Euro', emerged in 1999, and in most of the European countries Euro replaced their own respective currencies. This also affected the dollar too; and in place of some European currencies, the euro was now preferred for foreign exchange reserves and by the beginning of the year 2021, the dollar's share in foreign exchange reserves was reduced to only 59 percent. But this share is further reduced to nearly 55 percent by the third quarter of the year 2022. Despite reduced attraction towards US dollar, interestingly, the dollar has still not weakened in value; rather it has been getting stronger and stronger year after year, compared to almost all other currencies in the world, barring a few. Compared to the British pound, where today one US dollar is equal to 0.81 British pounds, in the year 2014 it was equal to only 0.59 British pounds on average. The condition of other currencies was almost similar. One US Dollar which was equal to 0.75 Euro in the year 2014, today it has reached nearly 0.93 Euro. Today one US dollar is equal to nearly 131.51 Japanese Yen (JPY), which in 2014 was equal to an average of 121 JPY. In September 2022, it was near 150 JPY.



All countries started keeping more and more of their foreign exchange reserves in the form of dollars. By 1999, up to 70 percent of the total foreign exchange reserves of the countries of the world, were kept in dollars.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

Due to the attraction of countries around the world towards dollar throughout history, the dollar has become increasingly strong against other currencies of the world, especially the currencies of developing countries. Where in 1964 one dol-

lar was only equal to rupees 4.66 and now it has reached nearly rupees 82. Compared to the currencies of many other countries, it has become even more stronger. Perhaps that's why all the countries of the world have been interested in keeping dollar as reserve currency and making all their international payments in dollars only. Due to this increasing demand for the dollar, the dollar has become stronger year after year.

But for some time, the demand for dollar as a reserve currency has started declining. Those in the know are calling this trend 'de-dollarization'. Like in the past the whole world was dollarized, but now de-dollarization is happening around the world. There is a need to understand why the US dollar as the reserve currency of the world is waning even when the US dollar is at its strongest position in history.

One important reason is ongoing Russia-Ukraine war since February 2022. USA and European countries say that Ukraine has been invaded by Russia, therefore, all the countries of the world should impose sanctions on Russia. The US has not only imposed various types of sanctions on Russia but has also ousted it from the global payment system SWIFT. It is believed that due to the dominance of the US and European countries in the payment system, Russia is barred from withdrawing its own foreign exchange reserves in dollars. That is, the payment system is being weaponised by the US and European countries to weaken Russia economically. Naturally, Russia and its friendly countries are no longer interested in keeping their foreign exchange reserves in dollars under any circumstances.

Due to the sanctions of the USA and European countries, pressure is also being put on the countries of the world not to buy crude oil from Russia. Russia is ready to sell crude oil at cheap prices due to the sanctions imposed on it by western countries.

In such a situation, India has started buying more and more oil from Russia, defying the sanctions of the western world. Where the share of Russian oil was only 1 percent in India's oil imports, it has now increased to 35 percent. Russia has even said that it is ready to make settlement of its oil exports in rupees. Not only this, due to the sanctions imposed on Russia, now other countries are barred from using shipping and insurance services of the US and the European countries. In such a situation, India and many other countries have now started using the services of Russian and other non-US and non-European shipping and insurance companies. That is, due to the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and Europe, now western countries are themselves suffering huge losses due to their bullying of economic sanctions. The role of Indian banks is also increasing in international payments.

Rupee now allowed for payment by 19 countries

While there is a decline in the dominance of US dollar at the international level, India has also started making efforts to reduce its dependence on the dollar. Significantly, after the US and European countries used the payment system as a weapon, post Russia-Ukraine war, India has started moving towards paying in rupees for oil imports from Russia. In July last year, the Reserve Bank of India through a circular, allowed international payment settlements for imports and exports to be made in rupees. This is believed to be the first step towards making the Indian rupee an international currency, followed by payment settlement in rupees with Russia for the first time in December. Due to the efforts of the Government of India, so far banks of 19 countries including UK, New Zealand, Germany, Malaysia, Israel, Russia and the United Arab Emirates have been permitted to make settlement in rupees by opening 'Special Vostro Rupee Accounts' (SVRAs). Significantly, there are many countries in this list of 19 countries with which India has significant trade relations. If the payment settlements are now made in rupees, with these countries, then the demand for dollars in the country will definitely go down. This effort of India towards de-dollarization in the world may be small, but can surely prove to be a milestone for India, showing path to other countries as well.

After we liberate the world from the dominance of dollars, it will surely have an impact on the value of dollar in the world. With this, now the trend of strengthening of dollar will also be restrained. It can be beneficial to all the countries of the world, whose currencies will now be better vis a vis dollar. What will be the global scenario post de-dollarisation, only time will tell, but this scenario will definitely be auspicious for all those countries which are constantly going through the tragedy of devaluation of their currencies vis a vis US dollar. ❑❑

FTAs: How useful?

While Free Trade Agreements are flavour of the season, India needs to tread cautiously, especially since a badly stitched one is likely to be inimical to our commercial interests!

KK Srivastava

A new report by the World Bank has ominously hinted at the faltering prospects of the global economy. The world economy is likely to plummet to a three decade low of 2.2% a year between 2023-2030, down from 2.6% in 2011-21 and 3.5% in 2001-2011. Apart from the immediate causes Covid, Ukraine war, commodity prices – from long term perspective capital accumulation, growth in labor force, or growth in labor productivity all have suffered acutely. All of these are likely to slow down further during the remainder years of the current decade. The potential growth rate could be impacted negatively further if financial crises crept in major economies and/or a global recession is triggered.

While slowing growth rate is bad for all, it is particularly injurious to countries like India, though India may be slightly better off in its group of emerging economies. But geopolitical tensions, reduced openness to trade, policy uncertainly and such like reasons would make it tougher for India to traverse along its desired growth trajectory. For instance, demand for India's exports, a crucial engine of domestic growth, will likely stay subdued. The government aims at boosting India's exports to $2 trillion by 2030. This the government hopes to achieve through free trade Agreements (FTAs), import substitution, import diversification and other measures like Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, production linked incentive scheme, National Infrastructure Pipeline, resilient financial institutions, etc. India also aims at (some would say wishfully, as of now at least) becoming an alternative to China as India is considered apt for friend shoring – being a reliable global supply chain partner by major would economies.

But we cannot ignore the unpleasant facts. According to Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) India's merchandise imports are expected to rise 15% to a record $710 billion in 2023. Indeed, India's imports now exceed its exports for 22 of its 25 trading partners. Howsoever much against our wishes, China remains India's largest source of imports ($102.6 billion) with an adverse trade balance against India of $87.5 billion. India has not been able to take advantage of the trend among MNCs of pursuing a 'China plus one' strategy which seeks to cut reliance on manufacturing production in China by exploring alternative destinations such as India. Instead smaller countries like Vietnam, Thailand, etc. have marched ahead. Despite the availability of resources and planning India has failed to relocate the MNCs moving away from China into our country. Though overall Indian economy will be moderately impacted by weak global demand due to geopolitical events, high prices, supply disruptions, etc. (in turn causing recession in large economies) nonetheless its exports are likely to be adversely instructed.

The deepening of economic engagement between any two (individual/group of) countries is undertaken (and this is what is aimed at while forming FTAs) with a view to nurture new growth avenues beyond the realm of conventional trade. Many countries including UAE, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, GCC, and the European Union are keen to sign economic cooperation agreements with India. India is looking benignly at this enhanced level of relationship across the bevy of countries as an outcome of our shared vision for the future, both at the multilateral and bilateral level. India is on the cusp of reaching the inflection point in its quest to become a middle income country which will be the third largest, after US and China, India's economic clout no doubt is growing. And with external economic relations India has decided to adopt a somewhat unique approach towards free trade and multilateralism. While it does want to be a part of a more collaborative, globalized world, participating in the global business value chains, it has carved out a unique path to travel along. Production linked incentive (PLI) scheme is one such example. However, the world overall is retreating from integration globally and India is not unaware. We wish to be atmanirbhar, and want to take advantage of our vast domestic economy. Hence India has decided to tread cautiously; instead of practicing an all out opening of our markets it has decided to go in for, among others, free trade agreements. Though India is not alone.

We wish to be atmanirbhar, and want to take advantage of our vast domestic economy. Hence India has decided to tread cautiously; instead of practicing an all out opening of our markets it has decided to go in for, among others, free trade agreements.

It is somewhat benignly assumed that FTAs are win win deals for contracting parties since they increase trade and/or help a country become part of global value chains. That is why there are above 350 FTAs worldwide that are currently in force. However, a closer scrutiny (as recently one by Global Trade Research Initiate) would warn us that most beliefs that support signing of FTAs are actually myths arising out of ideology; these beliefs are contrary to what due diligence of data could point at. These myths need to be busted and exposed for the trading nations, especially for India (which is on a spree to sign economic agreements with a host of nations) so that we take a decision in a level headed manner and not fall in a trap of our own making. Let's note certain cautionary facts.

One, countries are not rushing into signing FTAs. Certainly not USA or EUs which sign such agreements with raw material suppliers or small nations. Major industrial economies/regions are very selective in doing FTAs.

Two, FTAs will not necessarily promote investment. The quality of investment generally depends on efficiency – a relative one – of countries. A country which is more efficient is likely to become a manufacturing hub, and not merely due to signing of FTAs.

Three, just about one sixth to one seventh would trade happens through the preferential route, excluding the bilateral trade that would have otherwise taken place anyway. According to GTRI, 70% of Indian exports to ASEAN enter at zero MFN and not due to FTA. So many a time the trade taking place through FTAs is overestimated.

Four, FTAs donot necessarily lower prices. If at all prices may be reduced only to the extent that an FTA exporter (to say India) wants to overcome competition in India from domestic firms.

Five, zero duty import of finished goods through the FTA route may actually disrupt many domestic manufacturing programs, rather than promoting them. This issue of finished goods imports thus needs to be looked at with more caution.

Six, many developed countries very conveniently ask developing countries to follow WTO norms (if they suit them) plus obligations of other issues like intellectual property, environment, etc. In short, many non-tariff barriers are put against developing country exports. Thus FTAs are certainly not building blocs of WTO.

Seven, if our partner country has low import duties anyway for the rest of the world, we are hardly likely to witness an accelerated increase in exports from India to the FTA partner countries.

Eight, FTAs may or may not lead to enhanced participation in global value chains since under FTAs comply rules of origin conditions must be satisfied. Free movement of goods is best possible under zero MFN duties.

Are we then suggesting that FTAs should not be signed? No. Instead, that we should be more calculating. For example, we need to learn from Vietnam which focusses on trade creation and not trade diversion. Thus India should become a manufacturing destination for exporting countries that set up base here and export finished goods to developed markets as well as other countries; in other words it should aim at capturing a greater share of the value addition. Presently, individual FTAs have had a very limited effect on enhancing our export competitiveness.

We need to tread carefully.❑❑

Higher Education: Tread with caution

During 2020-21 student enrolment in higher education institutions (HEI) touched 4.1%, a hike of 7.5% from 2019-20 and 2.1% from 2014-15. The gross enrolment ratio too hit 27.3%: female enrolment was 2.1 crore. The number of universities increased in 2020-21 by 70 compared with 2019-20 while the colleges freshly added were 1453. There were 1043 HEI, out of these 184 are centrally funded, while the rest are state funded.

However, poverty of investment in India, which seeks to be a knowledge society, is rather abysmal. India spends only 2.9% of its GDP on average on education. India has got its priorities muddled up. Education or even health and nutrition by way of investment has no takers in the ruling dispensation, even though there is conclusive evidence that investment in these areas are fundamental to the growth of economy, society, and culture of our nation. Widespread education can not only add to our overall prosperity but also has the capacity to bridge the gap between haves and have-nots. Perhaps even ideological transition in the society overtime has contributed to neglect of education, including in the tertiary sector: under the neoliberal thinking state is gradually withdrawing from public welfare; this has led to privatization of education, including, now, an invitation to foreign universities in India.

Education can't be treated as a private good; instead, it should be considered as a merit good. Impliedly therefore State cannot abdicate from its responsibility of providing high quality University system.

Dr. Jaya Kakkar

Many economists view education as 'public good' with loads of positive externalities, or at least 'merit good' (that is a good that can be supplied through market, but in the best interest of society is provided as a public good, divorced from profitability consideration). But in India now it is considered as a private good, standardized, commodified, packaged, and sold on the basis of demand and supply principles. Those who do not have the purchasing power may not be able to sample the good since it will be beyond the reach. On one hand this has led to opening up of private domestic universities (Jindal, Shiv Nadar, Ashok and

many more), and on the other there is an open invitation to foreign universities to come and make their offers.

Yet the fact remains that education is not a homegenised commodity which consists of identical ideas that can be imported on any soil with equal efficiency and effectiveness. Simply untrue. If a UK or US university comes to India then will it teach the works of Dadabhai Naoroji or an RC Dutt? Will it agree with the established view that underdevelopment has linkage with imperialism? Colonialism will not likely be a part of the curriculum. Even in sciences since we have our own unique set of problems (providing water, sanitation, inexpensive electricity ….) our course contents will need to be necessarily different from those that find place in foreign universities' curriculum. If we are finding pearls of wisdom and knowledge in our ancient past (say, vedic mathematics, naturopathy, ayurveda …) will these foreign universities make these a part of their teaching? Indubitably, no.

Thus, the need is to vocalize the need for better public education, including at the tertiary level.

If we go by NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework) ranking of HEI we find that most Indian universities perform abysmally, particularly the state run HEIs. This is mainly due to their poor financial health. This is turn adversely affects their scores on all parameters teaching, learning, and resources, research and professional practices, graduation outcomes, outreach and inclusively and therefore overall perception. They suffer from very poor academic and administrative infrastructure. Even in Delhi University, from where this author comes as a student and teacher, a class may consist of 100-150 students while the classroom may not be able to accommodate more than 50 students!

Most universities inherently suffer from having poor academic performance indicators, including faculty strength, teacher student ratio, learning resources, physical infrastructure … the list is endless. Handholding by reputed universities and active collaborations to provide academic assistance, research guidance, etc. can partially ameliorate the problems faced by their poor cousins. This should stop brain drain and save previous foreign exchange.

Instead, we are moving in the direction of establishing a three tiers system. At top will come the foreign universities (as and when they come) which will have almost unfettered freedom in appointing their own staff (local or foreign), on their own terms, and devise their own curriculum. They will of course fix their own admission process and fee structure. Then come the private universities (some of them no doubt doing great job, and most others in business of money minting) which enjoy most privileges extended to foreign universities, though not all: for example, they may not override political compulsions. Finally come the publicly funded HEIs which have many restrictions imposed on them. Thus, first of all of course they always suffer from resource crunch. They cannot appoint foreign faculty. Nor, the appointment of domestic faculty is free from controversies their course structure and curriculum contents are prescribed by UGC guidelines. Research funds are tied to set domains and topics and grants are inadequate and falling.

Public universities have traditionally charged very low fees. Now the Union government is advocating a falling dependence on state funds; instead, fees should be hiked and resources should be privately generated, it is suggesting. This has led to protests on one hand and meritorious (but underprivileged) students dropping out due to financial constraints. Private universities, many of them, adopt suspect practices as regards admissions, catering mainly to well off students, indigent students have to stay away. And now foreign universities are being invited which will plant an unfamiliar – and perhaps unsuitable – seed on Indian soil. This model is moving in the direction of a three-tiered HEIs where access will be dictated by 'ability to pay' principle and not 'need to have' basis. The potential learners will be divided by inequalities of class and wealth. Majority would be deprived of 'quality' education rooted in Indian ethos and needs of the society. We will suffer in developing human resources suited to our needs. Unfortunately, education philanthropy in India is not half as widespread as, say, for religious purposes. To an average wealthy Indian, the way to go is to donate to a religious charity/temple rather than funding the educational needs of a deprived child.

Having said it all, still the fact remains that our public university system has been organically adopted to the needs of our nation; it has developed a suitable ecosystem. We need to admit and reform its shortcomings and not supplant it by another 'market-based education' model. ❑❑

Technology at your service

Until a few years ago, access to technology was considered a privilege restricted to the urban elite. The internet was unaffordable for people in rural areas. Only 25 crore Indians used the internet till 2014, which increased to 84 crore in 2022. Earlier, the cost of 1GB of data was about Rs 300. Now it has come down to about Rs 13.5 per GB, making it affordable. This is a snapshot of how Prime Minister Narendra Modi has driven inclusion through technology in New India.

The pandemic was a testing time and Digital India minimised the impact of disruption. The affordability of the internet led to accessibility of services. When education in schools went online during the pandemic, Suhani Sahu, a student in Balrampur, UP, attended her course curriculum online via the Diksha platform. Shubham Kumar living in a village in East Champaran, Bihar, ensured uninterrupted treatment of his ailing mother, saving on travel time and cost by taking teleconsultation from a doctor on the eSanjeevani app. Over 10 crore such teleconsultations have happened so far.

Hari Ram, a taxi driver in Dehradun, had a ration card from Hardoi in UP. The One Nation One Ration Card framework helped him access food supplies even in Dehradun. The Gramin Dak Sevaks of India Post provided financial service assistance at doorsteps using the Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS) to people in the remotest corner of the country.

PM Modi's thrust on turning technology into a tool against poverty and improving the ease of living has benefitted the Indian masses.

Digital technologies have come of age. They have become an integral part of our lives. AI, 5G, and quantum technology have matured to a level where they are becoming mainstream.

This makes 2023 an inflection point. In these exciting times, India has assumed the leadership of the G20. Atmanirbhar Bharat is ready to showcase its technology platforms to the world with the philosophy of using them for the

The digital revolution has transformed lives of ordinary citizens, given power to the poorest and marginalised, and offered the young the ability to create.
Ashwini Vaishnaw

greater good.

PM Modi has said "today, people do not see the government as an obstacle; rather, people see our government as a catalyst for new opportunities. Certainly, technology has played a big role in this." These words echo across the nation and this vision-led transformation is visible in every nook and corner of India. India went on a complete digital transformation. The country is focused on creating public digital platforms which are open source, available to everybody, of large scale and born-digital.

That's how CoWIN was developed. The entire process of onboarding vaccine manufacturers, clinics, hospitals, registration of citizens, and scheduling, till the final certificate of vaccination, is digital. This enabled India to administer 150 crore doses within the first 12 months of the vaccination drive. India has now delivered close to 220 crore doses. Today, CoWIN has become a ground-breaking example of democratising digital technology.

It is no coincidence that India has shown a unique way to use technology to benefit society. Today, street vendors, vegetable carts, small shops, and big showrooms across India have QR (quick response) code stickers for digital payments. Payment QR codes randomly placed for scanning in the midst of piping hot tea and snacks at a roadside small tea stall have become an everyday sight.

Using public funds, we created a platform where banks have joined, as have insurance companies, e-commerce companies, MSMEs, startups and most importantly 120 crore people have joined. In this public private partnership, no single entity has complete control over the platform, making it democratic.

This game-changing digital and tech-led revolution powered by PM Modi's vision empowers and transforms the lives of ordinary citizens. It gives power to the poorest and marginalised sections and offers the ability to create something in the hands of the creative minds of the young and talented generation.

Launched in 2016, UPI now does $1.5 trillion worth of transactions every year. The average settlement time for each transaction is two seconds. This has led to an increase in transparency and convenience. This is why India's UPI has become a global standard for digital payments.

Technology's role in enhancing the ease of living is becoming increasingly visible by the day. The FASTag technology has ensured that our vehicles continue blazing through the highways without stopping. This use of technology has reduced congestion and the waiting time at the toll plazas, providing smooth movement within our borders, while boosting digital payments.

Technology has taken a giant leap with the roll out of 5G. While launching 5G services in India, PM Modi shared his vision of using 5G in healthcare, education, agriculture, construction sectors etc., to make living easy for people. India is also relentlessly working towards becoming a 4G and 5G technology exporter in the coming three years.

We have proved the prowess of our engineers and scientists with these scalable digital public goods. Now we're developing the OCEN (open credit enablement network), which will raise credit penetration by transitioning the system to cash flow-based lending. OCEN will lead to competition among various banks for giving loans to a person, lowering the cost of credit. According to Morgan Stanley estimates, this will propel the credit to GDP ratio from the current 57 per cent to 100 per cent by 2031.

This game-changing digital and tech-led revolution powered by PM Modi's vision empowers and transforms the lives of ordinary citizens. It gives power to the poorest and marginalised sections and offers the ability to create something in the hands of the creative minds of the young and talented generation. This model is now being replicated across different sectors. Be it the health sector, education, logistics, agriculture or defence, similar platforms are being created on which a vibrant ecosystem of startups or any enterprise can build solutions.

India has entered its Amrit Kaal in times of global uncertainty. Moving forward, under the far-sighted, decisive and action-oriented leadership of PM Modi, India's G20 Presidency will be pathbreaking, serving and sharing our scalable public digital infrastructure with the world. ❑❑

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https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/minister-of-railways-communications-and-electronics-it-ashwini-vaishnaw-writes-technology-at-your-service-8520448/

Missing the future

The long-awaited Foreign Trade Policy 2023 (FTP 2023) was unveiled at a time when India's merchandise export performance is a mixed bag. While several technology-intensive sectors are showing dynamism over the past year, with the electronics sector leading this group, labour-intensive sectors, especially the textiles and clothing sectors, are downbeat. In general, exports have been affected by a slowing global economy, and this situation could get worse if the projections for the next two years are any indication.

Given the challenges Indian exporters could be up against, FTP 2023 needed to go beyond its standard format, which has remained unchanged since the policy was introduced in 2004. At the outset, every Foreign Trade Policy informs us that the policy is "notified by [the] Central Government, in the exercise of powers conferred under Section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992". This Act empowered the Centre to "make provision for the development and regulation of foreign trade by facilitating imports and increasing exports" and to "make provision for prohibiting, restricting or otherwise regulating… import or export of goods or services or technology". So, the 1992 Act was set in the 20th-century mindset of regulating and restricting trade and had accordingly included trade policy instruments. The framework of trade policy in the 21st century has since moved to development and facilitation of trade, but there is no reflection of this in FTP 2023. Instead of recasting this vitally important policy, FTP 2023 is a compilation of "Foreign Trade Procedures" in which the words, regulate, prohibit, and restrict find more mentions than "facilitate".

Focus on the latter would have given FTP 2023 an entirely new character, one that includes strategies needed to adopt 21st-century trade policy instruments. Today, most countries rely on improvements in product quality and production

The framework of trade policy in the 21st century has moved to development and facilitation of trade, but there is no reflection of this in FTP 2023.
Biswajit Dhar

efficiencies by rapid infusion of technology to expand their presence in global markets instead of using export incentives. This approach meant that product and process standards are the new trade policy instruments. This is evident from the bilateral/plurilateral trade negotiations India is currently engaged in. The negotiating draft of the EU includes a plethora of these regulatory standards. Similarly, the three pillars of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework in which India is participating are about these standards. These standards are increasingly being used by most member countries of the WTO. Thus, the ability of India's businesses to meet these standards would eventually determine the benefits that they can garner.

FTP 2023 was an ideal platform for the government to prepare India's exporters to cope with the challenges in the global market. This would require the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to coordinate with all the standard-setting agencies of the government, the export promotion councils, and the relevant institutions in the private sector to prepare a roadmap for upgrading institutions and production facilities. This means that the DGFT's primary role would have to be that of a facilitator while the regulatory functions should be small but effective. In contrast, FTP 2023 would like the DGFT to continue playing the role of imposing import "prohibitions" or "restrictions", one example being the list of "Principles of Restrictions" .

Export promotion schemes were rejigged after a WTO dispute settlement panel ruled against India in 2019 following a complaint by the US. The panel's finding was that these schemes, especially the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme, provide export subsidies, which are not allowed under WTO rules. A new scheme was launched in 2021 to neutralise the effect of taxes and duties that are included in exported goods, namely, the Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) Scheme. When it was introduced, the RoDTEP Scheme covered 8,555 tariff lines. In December 2022, the Scheme was extended to cover 10,436 tariff lines.

Developing districts as export hubs is a novel idea mooted in FTP 2023. If it can be implemented effectively, the objective of balanced regional development, once an integral part of development programmes, can be realised.

The Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee on Commerce examined the Scheme and, in its report, presented in December 2022, found several weaknesses, especially the fact that rates of remission of duties were lower than desirable. In view of its salience for exporters, FTP 2023 could have responded to the recommendations of the Standing Committee, which it has not. This lacuna has continued possibly because the description of the RoDTEP Scheme has not been updated from an earlier version of the Foreign Trade Policy: Paragraph 4.5(x) of FTP 2023 says that the "Scheme will take effect for exports from 1st January 2021" (emphasis added).

Developing districts as export hubs is a novel idea mooted in FTP 2023. If it can be implemented effectively, the objective of balanced regional development, once an integral part of development programmes, can be realised. However, FTP 2023 merely speaks of export promotion committees that are to be set up at the level of the districts and states/UTs. What is missing is a commitment to support the critical component of such a programme, namely, efficient infrastructure.

E-commerce, a focus of FTP 2023, is an area in which India has looked less comfortable in the past for at least two reasons. First, a subset of WTO countries has initiated discussions on e-commerce for extending the rules of the organisation in this area, but India opposes this process. Second, advanced countries have been seeking data portability, which India has refused to accept. Does the mention of e-commerce in FTP 2023 imply that India is ready to engage in the WTO? ❑❑

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https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/missing-the-future/3034089/

Is Wheat in Trouble Again?

After a promising Rabi sowing, the wheat crop was looking good. By January 14, farmers across the north from Punjab to Madhya Pradesh were reading signs of a good wheat crop. There was good moisture and the winter had not been harsh either. But the current spell of rain and hail across north India have reversed all gains.

Reports are already in from Madhya Pradesh signalling major crop damages, resulting in poor harvests. After hail and rain for over two weeks affected crops significantly, chief minister Shivraj Chouchan came on the record, offering compensation and coverage under the crop insurance scheme. The agriculture minister also launched a "Digiclaim" app for farmers in six states, so that they can claim crop insurance through mobile phones recently.

But those still do not do much for the actual wheat harvest losses. Last year, Punjab and Haryana lost about 15-20% of their wheat crop due to excessive heat and untimely rain, ending India's wheat export dreams and now this year it appears that climate damages have also reached MP. And that is why wheat is selling way below MSP in MP. Due to untimely rain, the grains have darkened and the moisture invites disease too.

While MP is suffering, dark clouds circle Punjab and Haryana too. Over the past week, the weather hasn't been kind to farmers in the region. Various regions around Punjab, from Ferozepur and Tarn Taran to Barnala and Ludhiana, have been hit by hailstorms, high speed winds and rains.

"There was no notification on the weather and many farmers, not expecting rainfall, had irrigated their fields. Now with excessive rain and hail, farmers are running to drain their fields. In Ferozepur and Moga areas about 15-20% of the wheat crop has been damaged. Many vegetable farmers have also been hit, as a result summer vegetables from Punjab may be priced higher this year. In case no

Hailstorms and rain could have reversed an otherwise healthy wheat crop this season.

Indra Shekhar Singh

more rain happens, there is still some chance of recovery, otherwise all will be lost," said Rajdeep Sandhu, sarpanch of the village Ratta Khera in Ferozepur.

Rajdeep also pointed out that a new problem, also caused by excessive rain, is emerging in the area. "As the farmers' fields were already flooded, many farmers are draining the water directly into the boring pipes. This water is laden with agri-chemicals and can contaminate the groundwater further. The government needs to ensure all farms, like cities, have pipe drainage to take out excessive water to canals or percolation ponds."

From Ferozpur, we moved westward towards the Pakistan border to meet retired Captain Kashmir Singh who was born in 1948 in Chandu Wadala village of Gurdaspur. Like many other villages, Chandu Wadala has also been hit with untimely hail storms and winds. "We had seen this kind of weather in 1987, but that time the crop was near harvest," Kashmir Singh explained.

All around him you could see that the wheat fields had lodged. Lodging is when crop stems buckle, signalling a degree of damage in the crop.

Singh said, "Hails along with high speeds winds have lodged the crop. The wheat kernels are still green, and due to higher moisture in our area, they will go damp soon. The air will not be able to pass through them, this will lead to disease and abnormal growth. All this will result in weight loss of wheat produce."

"On an average we expect 22-25 quintal of wheat per acre, but this year we may not even get 15-16 quintal per acre. Overall we have lost about 1/3rd of the harvest," he added.

Hopefully, farmers will be ready to face the clouds this time, otherwise India will have to brace herself for another bad wheat harvest this year, pushing us further toward wheat price inflation and food insecurity.

Next we caught up with Manbhavan Singh in his village on the Hoshiyarpur-Gurdaspur border. The village Meghian has the Beas river flowing beside it. "The hailstorm has affected the wheat farmers the most. One can say there are 10-20% losses. Luckily, our area has diversification, and we grow sugarcane, mustard, etc. These crops were not damaged, as we had already harvested the mustard."

After taking a stock of things, we travelled to Sangrur district and stopped at Duggan village to talk to Sukhwinder Singh Pappi. He showed us his lodged wheat fields and then said, "Wheat lodging is a big problem in the entire region. This will lead to lessened yields. Harvesting the lodged wheat is also a problem. 70-80% of the wheat crops have lodged in the area."

What effect will this have? "See, the kernels are still green and forming. The lodging as per our earlier knowledge will lead to discolouration. Right now, the wheat needed the sun and not hailstorm and high winds. We will harvest around April 10, let's see what happens till then," Pappi said.

We spoke with Ajmer Singh Dhatt, Director of Research (Additional Charge) at Punjab Agriculture University (PAU). "There have been hailstorms in pockets, but the rain and wind have led to lodging in wheat. The areas with irrigation or that were irrigated have reported more cases of wheat lodging, and non irrigated areas report less lodging. 2-4% would be the total losses, but there is more rain to come, so let's see what happens," he said.

I probed further about mustard, he did express concerns and said, "The next one or two days are critical for mustard. We can make estimates only after that."

Punjab has been under the weather, and if we look at the weather predictions the rainy spell is not ending anytime soon. The IMD has issued alerts over Majha, Doaba, West Malwa and East Malwa regions. The alert covers pretty much the entire state, causing further alarm for wheat farmers.

Hopefully, farmers will be ready to face the clouds this time, otherwise India will have to brace herself for another bad wheat harvest this year, pushing us further toward wheat price inflation and food insecurity. ❑❑

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https://thewire.in/agriculture/is-wheat-in-trouble-again

Carbon Credit for Farmers

The world is being controlled, and centralized, and is driven by the branding, and marketing of products and services using the power of financial wealth. Our daily life is a victim of such business processes as taxi booking, food delivery, telecommunication services, hotel booking, flight booking, medicine purchasing, entertainment services, education services, health services, banking services or food we consume, and many more. All these are ruled or are aspired to be led by a few giant technology companies. We need to awaken and demolish the conspiracy to control our food on an urgent basis. The big companies cover making life easy but their ultimate target is to create an indispensable world system for their business and establish themselves as irreplaceable.

The way the climate-friendly manufacturing is rewarded by carbon credit and carbon trading; the policymakers should explore ways to reward our farmers who practice natural farming, organic farming, and traditional farming which leads to reduced carbon footprint by rewarding cash in lieu of their efforts or in some format of carbon trading.
Alok Singh

The people of the world choose their leaders through a democratic process. If the leader fails to perform as per the commitment to their people, then such leaders are replaced in the next election, maybe after four years or after five years. But who will change the dominant big few technology companies, that wish to rule the world without participating in a democratic election process?

These technology companies model their business to attract users, kill competition, and finally dictate terms to live, change lifestyle, change food habits, to change the education system, and also delete the traditional assets, traditional knowledge, and traditional habits of their targeted empire. The new business conspiracies are being modeled around the issues of environmental concerns and climate change.

Climate change is the most discussed global issue today. The developed as well as developing countries are committing themselves to chase the benchmarks which support the climate and in the process are remodeling the trade policies and business policies which are climate-friendly. Few players see it as an opportunity to discourage and discard the technology development process of develop-

ing nations and argue that since their technology is more climate-friendly so the developing countries should either match the climate-friendly benchmarks of technology access or not rely on polluting indigenous technology but should buy the technology from the already established global technology players who are in a better position to produce and meet the benchmarks of climate-friendly production.

Technology adaption is usually a step-by-step process but there are routes to jump to higher and better technology from nowhere. There are sectors where the traditional is the best way, the knowledge already exists, a mass awareness campaign needs to be created. In the agriculture sector we have assets which are spread over fifteen agriculture-climatic zones namely- Western Himalayan Region comprising of Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh; Eastern Himalayan Region comprising of Assam, Sikkim, West Bengal and all North-Eastern states; Lower Gangetic Plains Region comprising of West Bengal; Middle Gangetic Plains Region comprising of Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar; Upper Gangetic Plains Region comprising of: Uttar Pradesh; Trans-Gangetic Plains Region comprising of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan; Eastern Plateau and Hills Region comprising of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal; Central Plateau and Hills Region comprising of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh; Western Plateau and Hills Region: Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan; Southern Plateau and Hills Region comprising of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu; East Coast Plains and Hills Region comprising of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry; West Coast Plains and Ghat Region comprising of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra; Gujarat Plains and Hills Region comprising of Gujarat; Western Dry Region comprising of Rajasthan; and The Islands Region comprising of Andaman and Nicobar, and Lakshadweep. These fifteen zones are not homogenous and are further classified into seventy-two other sub-zones to attain homogeneity of agriculture climatic zones.

The diversity of our assets is reflected in these classifications. The big companies engaged in the food business; the other non-food technology companies are aspiring to control this business. In the economies of a scale model of profiteering i.e., high-volume standardized products are the enemies of our agriculture sector. They have already done huge damage and our policymakers are engaged in damage control. The world has realized this conspiracy, Sri Lanka tried to execute organic farming in one stroke and our central leaders are moving towards promoting migration to natural farming.

In the agriculture sector, we are the leaders in producing foods that meet climate-friendly practices and we have an opportunity to emerge as the food supplier to the world by satisfying the constraints of climate-friendly practices. We are capable to change the food habits of the world by promoting natural farming, traditional farming, and chemical-free farming.

The manufacturers of the world are rewarded with carbon credit if they are able to meet the benchmarks of climate-friendly emission norms for the manufacturing processes. The same carbon credit reward system can be designed to reward our farmers that practice climate-friendly agriculture practices. The contemporary agriculture practice is market-driven, subsidy-driven, minimum support price declaration driven, differential price offer scheme driven, or in one word money-driven. Despite all these policies, the majority f the farmers are at a loss and dependent on government support for survival.

It's painful that again the climate change-dependent reasons are being seen as an opportunity by the big seed and chemical fertilizers companies as an opportunity to replace the contemporary chemical fertilizer-dependent agriculture crops with new climate-resistant but chemical fertilizer-dependent other latest crops, seeds, and new chemical fertilizers.

Health and food are the two biggest sectors for profiteering by global companies. We need to act swiftly. The way the climate-friendly manufacturing is rewarded by carbon credit and carbon trading; the policymakers should explore ways to reward our farmers who practice natural farming, organic farming, and traditional farming which leads to reduced carbon footprint by rewarding cash in lieu of their efforts or in some format of carbon trading. We need sustainable food supply model and not a model driven by marketing budget and profiteering by standardizing the foods for global citizens. ❑❑

(Alok Singh is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management Indore, a freelancer academician, and associated with AGET Business School, Jhajjar.)

A salute to the true-blue 'Millet man of India'

At a time when the world is celebrating 2023 as the International Year of the Millets, the story of a courageous person who single-handedly brought the international focus on reviving millets – the forgotten ancient food – is a story of grit, determination and perseverance. It is a story of one man's remarkable and relentless struggle to bring back the magic millets on the high table.

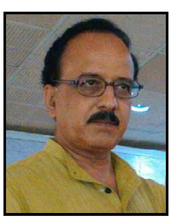
P.V. Satheesh, one of the founders and director of Deccan Development Society (DDS) in the sleepy village of Pastapur in Zaheerabad district of Telangana, passed away last week.

He was the person – some rightly call him the 'millet man of India' – who very early could see a future for millets, otherwise relegated as a poor man's food. When I see all the excitement over the food transformation that is expected from the entry of millets in the food supply chains, it reminds me of the remarkable and relentless struggle waged by thousands of marginalised women over the years in the dry regions of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, and under the dynamic leadership of Satheesh, as he was popularly called, who made that possible.

Satheesh not only gave them a voice, but also brought in far-reaching reforms that changed the power equation in a caste-dominated society. Many of the rural development programmes that we see now trace their roots to Pastapur. The concept of village sanghams that he introduced, where women of a village could sit together, was a unique development pathway that strengthened community participation. The tribal women, associated with DDS, introduced the system of balwadis, which has since grown into a national programme of anganwadis.

It was interesting to see how the sanghams were involved in biodiversity conservation & played an important role in documenting biodiversity registers at a time when the debate around Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) was hot.

A month before he died, Satheesh had invited me to be the chief guest at the



PV Satheesh single-handedly brought the magic of millets on the global high table.
Devinder Sharma

valedictory function of the week-long annual ‘Biodiversity Mobile Yatra’ on bullock carts passing through villages.

The objective was to encourage biodiversity conservation and also protection of the traditional seeds. During the programme, I was taken by surprise when one of the tribal women in her brief welcome speech, said something like this: “We have now become rich.

The rich have now become fond of the food that we poor used to eat. This gives us a feeling that the rich in the cities have begun to appreciate the richness in our food. It means that we have rich food habits.” The richness in poor man’s food – millets, the nutri-cereals – is what the world has now begun to celebrate. Being environmentally-resilient, and rich in nutrients, the nutritionally rich millets are being recognised as the answer to nutritional security and of course for averting climate change disruptions.

“I didn’t do anything extraordinary,’ he told me when I asked him how he felt at the world finally recognising his efforts. “Yes, when I started talking about the inherent strengths of millets, I must have been among the few voices. But because I was clear that millets not only could supplement food nutrition but also play a significant role in reshaping the food security needs, my biggest challenge was to educate my own colleagues in the civil society as well as the policy makers.”

Thenceforth, bringing economic security to the marginalised communities that lived and protected the traditional seeds and cultivars became a passion for him. “At some stage, I realised that the uneducated women were more literate than the city folks, and therefore the best way to bring them onto the centre stage was to empower them and make them self-confident,” he said.

A former journalist himself, having worked with Doordarshan and Deccan Chronicle, he knew the power of communication. He gave TV cameras to tribal women, made them handle and learn the techniques of video recording and later set up a community radio station. To ensure that the message goes into the community, the radio programmes were later discussed in the village sanghams. Besides the seed banks, he also introduced the concept of alternate PDS by setting up a Community Grain Fund. Farmers get 10 per cent higher price for their produce when they bring their harvest to the alternate PDS that DDS had developed. He was also able to set up a Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) with focus on organic farming. This is the only KVK in Telangana that looks at non-chemical farming practices.

The self-confidence that he was able to inculcate enabled a few of them to globe trot and speak at numerous international platforms. I myself have shared the stage with Laxmiamma, a tribal seed saver, at a couple of conferences in UK, and let me acknowledge the rich applause she had received from the audience. People like her became the voices of the marginalised communities. Several years ago, I was interviewed by the DDS community radio, and what came as a surprise was the interaction that followed in the village sanghams. They debated on what I said and came back the next morning with queries.

Satheesh was part of the South Asia Network for Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC) based at Tangail in Bangladesh. Being invited at the SANFEC meetings, I remember the collective efforts put in by members from Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India at building a lifestyle that drew strength from the cultural values and focused on protecting ecology and food habits special to the region.

His role in questioning the imposition of genetically-engineered crops, not only in India but also in western Africa, was supplemented by drawing on the alternate cropping patterns suited to the region. He had earlier set up the Millets Network of India (MILI) that became a collective strength to promote the virtues of millets. Always peeved at the economic insecurity that farmers face, his efforts were to provide an assured and guaranteed price for farm produce at the local level.

At the last supper that I had with him, I recall his parting words: “I admire your efforts to ensure a guaranteed income for farmers. Let me assure you, we agree with your call for providing legal sanctity for Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers. We will back your efforts. You’ll succeed.” Satheesh has gone away. But his life, dreams and works has left behind a strong legacy.

As the world celebrates the International Year of the Millets, it is time also to applaud the immense contributions of the ‘millets man’ from Pastapur, who has left behind a powerful socio-ecological footprint for the world to walk on. ❑❑

(The author is a noted food policy analyst and an expert on issues related to the agriculture sector. He writes on food, agriculture and hunger)

ONDC: A game changer in e-commerce

For more than a decade, e-commerce has seen exponential growth in India and around the world. About 6.5 percent of India's retail business happens through e-commerce. E-commerce has made life easy, as people get commodities and services conveniently with the click of a button, sitting at home. In today's world, whether it's a rail, bus or plane ticket, a hotel reservation or taxi, or auto commuting, everything has become very convenient. Not only this, various domestic and business services can be easily accessed through e-commerce.

Today, numerous types of businesses are conducted using e-commerce—consumer goods, e-pharmacy, e-grocery, delivery, payment, travel, hotel booking, taxi, vehicle pooling, car rental, household, financial, employment, matrimonial match-making services, etc.

However, at the same time, the dominance of some big e-commerce companies has increased, causing huge losses to conventional businesses. Due to their monopoly over data, these e-commerce companies discriminate against different sellers and give preference to their favorite sellers, thereby creating a disadvantage for other sellers.

Though these companies claim to provide cheaper goods and services, apparently through technology, this isn't due to their efficiency, but to their cash-burning business models. Due to their financial muscle, these companies offer hefty discounts to consumers to destroy the businesses of small, traditional shopkeepers, travel agents, etc.

If we look at cab aggregators, we find that in the initial phase, they also made people travel for free with their own money. They also gave huge incentives to attract drivers. But now, after establishing their business, consumers are made to pay through the nose, and almost one-third of drivers' earnings are snatched by these aggregators.

ONDC provides an outside-the-box solution to e-commerce problems to ensure that buyers and sellers are not exploited.
Swadeshi Samvad

E-commerce companies, acting as aggregators, eat into the incomes of small vendors and poor workers, leaving them with only two options, either get exploited or leave the business. Be it grocery shops or garment shops or electronics and home furnishings showrooms, or traditional travel agents, the employment of people in different types of retail business has been affected by e-commerce companies. These companies can do so because they have more information about consumer preferences, purchasing power, location, etc.

Due to all this information, they can reach consumers more easily than conventional businesses, and with artificial intelligence (AI), they gain an undue advantage. Sometimes e-commerce is also exploitative, resulting in job losses. Apart from this, it is also seen that to maximise their profits, e-commerce giants procure from anywhere in the world, mostly from China. Indian products are flushed out by these e-commerce giants, with the result that our youths are reduced to becoming delivery boys.

We can't stop e-commerce and there is no need to do so; the issue is the protection of vendors' and consumers' interests. Can we put a limit on the greed of e-commerce giants? The answers to these questions are found in the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), started by the Government of India, as a not-for-profit company, registered under Section 8 of the Income Tax Act.

ONDC provides an outside-the-box solution to the problems of e-commerce. Buyers and sellers are provided with an interface that isn't exploitative in any way. In this system, e-commerce companies cannot discriminate between sellers through monopoly over data and AI. Overall, ONDC will be a channel where consumers can easily find sellers, service providers, etc. It is possible for sellers and buyers to be promoted based on competition instead of monopoly in the e-commerce market.

What is ONDC

ONDC is not a platform like normal e-commerce companies. E-commerce companies work through a platform. Vendors or service providers register themselves on respective platforms and must register on multiple platforms. As a result, these platforms try to attract consumers and sellers by luring them with discounts and incentives, riding on their deep pockets. However, once their business is established, consumers and sellers exploit both to maximise their profits.

Platforms and consumers connect through ONDC, which does not work for profit. Currently, in normal e-commerce, sellers and service providers must register on the platform, so they depend on those platforms. Consumers see only those sellers on the platform who are registered on that platform.

ONDC is a system which provides the facility of taking on different types of platforms. But ONDC's condition is that the goods and services offered by all the vendors or service providers who have registered themselves on any of these platforms are seen by all the customers visiting ONDC. That is, ONDC is a system which is not opaque.

This system works through GIS, and therefore, location plays a crucial role in the ONDC system. This can provide convenience to lakhs of vendors and crores of consumers. For example, if a consumer wants to order food from a restaurant sitting at home, then in the ONDC system, all the nearby eateries will be presented to him, who can provide what he wants. If he wants to buy groceries, he will see the vendors around him first.

All these vendors and service providers, despite being registered on different platforms, will be visible to prospective buyers on ONDC. E-commerce platforms on which vendors are registered can continue to charge fees as per their agreement with the vendor. However, competition among platforms to attract business may automatically reduce commissions. If a platform charges a higher commission, then its goods and services will become more expensive and it will lose its business. In such a situation, every platform wants to keep its commissions low in order to attract maximum business. Once ONDC expands fully, all types of e-commerce can come under the same.

Thus, ONDC frees e-commerce from the monopoly of platforms and encourages healthy competition. It makes goods and services cheaper for consumers by reducing commissions, with transparency. ONDC can change the rules of the e-commerce market.

E-commerce companies, though, have shown interest in joining the ONDC regime and some platforms and payment companies are also registered with ONDC. Taxi services like Ola and Uber have not registered themselves on it yet, but some new e-commerce mobility companies are showing interest in ONDC.

As ONDC was introduced recently, only a small amount of business has been done, but it is expected that it will grow exponentially in the near future. This can help small e-commerce platforms reach consumers without heavy advertising expenses. All registered sellers will be equally visible to consumers in the ONDC system, as the ONDC protocol cannot differentiate between different sellers.

Significantly, so far all technology-supported efforts by the Government seem successful. Today online payments through UPI are convenient and free. More than 40 per cent of all online transactions happen in India. In the same way, ONDC is also being seen as a system that may not only prevent exploitation of consumers and sellers but also be able to increase GDP and employment enormously, by providing convenience to local businesses. ❑❑

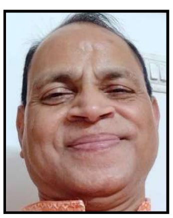
Milk Production – Facts and Misplaced Controversies

Bharat is the largest milk producer with 221.06 million tonnes production in 2021-22 contributing 23% of global milk production. The evolution of the dairy sector in Bharat and the pivotal role played by dairy cooperatives since the launch of Operation Flood formed an integral part of the country's remarkable growth story after Independence.

Dairy is the single-largest agri-commodity in our country. It contributes 5% to the national economy and directly employs 80 million dairy farmers. Improvement in economic activity, increase in per capita consumption of milk and milk products, change in dietary preferences, and increasing urbanization in Bharat has led the dairy industry to grow by 9-11% in 2021-22. The cooperative societies have not only made the farmers self-sufficient but have also broken the barriers of gender, caste, religion, and community. The milk production in the country is sufficient to meet the domestic demand. Women producers form the major workforce of the dairy sector in the country. The sector is an important job provider, especially for women, and plays a leading role in women's empowerment. This sector needs a strong integration with the market.

The dairy sector has been a major contributor to the growth of the rural economy. The government has facilitated the dairy farming infrastructure through its initiatives such as the development of the National Dairy Plan, a sustainable development-focused framework for the sector, along with general empowerment schemes such as the Jan Dhan Yojana and the Start-up India initiatives. In the past eight years, the animal husbandry and dairy sector have received a great deal of push under Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', and the journey of this sector is indeed a remarkable reflection of self-reliance.

Every year, since 2001, June 1 is observed as World Milk Day by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations to acknowledge



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Vinod Johri

the importance of milk as a global food and to celebrate the dairy sector. In Bharat, the birthday of Dr. Verghese Kurien, on November 26, is observed as National Milk Day.

Recent controversies emanating from WHO report and Amul - Nandini controversy in Karnataka in the dairy sector are worrisome as these adversely affect the local cattle breeding, milk & dairy production and business in every metro, city, suburb and rural area.

However, it has witnessed a slowdown in output growth recently. In the three years to 2021-22, the average annual growth rate was 5.5%. In each of the preceding five years, output grew at over 6%. Preliminary indications are that output was stagnant in 2022-23. Almost half the milk produced is consumed locally. The rest enters the urban market, which is the growth area. The Government sources reveal that milk cooperatives and private players' share of the liquid milk market is expected to touch 54% by 2026, from 41% now.

The Amul (Gujrat) vs Nandini (Karnataka) battle has taken political overtones in poll-bound Karnataka, with the opposition claiming that the ruling party seeks to merge Nandini with Amul, causing fears for the local economy and emotional connections that the people of the region have with Nandini. Amul's milk and curd already sell in the state, as do several other dairy brands. The proximate cause is that Amul took to social media to announce online deliveries in Bengaluru. This advertisement was interpreted that cooperation between Amul and Nandini can do wonders. Such controversies are not in favour of dairy sector in our country. The dairy sector needs synergy to grow.

The Government termed a media report "false", that said WHO has issued an advisory to the government stating if adulteration of milk and milk products is not checked immediately, 87 percent of citizens would be suffering from serious diseases like cancer by 2025. The government is taking all possible steps to help the supply of safe and good quality milk to consumers, the Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Ministry said in a statement. The dissemination of this kind of false information created unnecessary panic among consumers. The issue has already been examined in the department in consultation with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of Bharat (FSSAI) and it has been said. "WHO country office confirmed to FSSAI that no such advisory has been issued by WHO to the Government of Bharat ever." The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying and FSSAI is taking all possible steps to help the supply of safe and good quality milk to consumers across the country.

Dairy is often the primary source of income of many landless households and marginal farmers. So, it's in their best interest if successful brands like Amul, Paras, Saras, Verka, Ananda, Dudhsagar, Gowardhan, Milma, Namaste India, Param, Mother Dairy and Nandini etc. procure and sell across markets.

Milk production and per capita availability of milk in Bharat

Year	*Production* (Million Tonnes)	*Per Capita Availibilty* (gms/day)
1991-92	55.6	178
1992-93	58.0	182
1993-94	60.6	186
1994-95	63.8	192
1995-96	66.2	195
1996-97	69.1	200
1997-98	72.1	205
1998-99	75.4	210
1999-2000	78.3	214
2000-01	80.6	217
2001-02	84.4	222
2002-03	86.2	224
2003-04	88.1	225
2004-05	92.5	233
2005-06	97.1	241
2006-07	102.6	251
2007-08	107.9	260
2008-09	112.2	266
2009-10	116.4	273
2010-11	121.8	281
2011-12	127.9	290
2012-13	132.4	299
2013-14	137.7	307
2014-15	146.3	322
2015-16	155.5	337
2016-17	165.4	355
2017-18	176.3	375
2018-19	187.7	394
2019-20	198.4	406
2020-21	209.96	427
2021-22	221.06	444

The quality of milk and milk products sold in the market is governed by standards laid down and enforced by the FSSAI. According to the nationwide National Milk Safety and Quality Survey conducted by FSSAI, out of 6,432 samples of milk taken, only 12 samples (0.19%) were found adulterated which renders the milk unsafe for human consumption. While this may be a concern, it is not true that liquid milk in the country is largely adulterated.

With a series of measures being taken by the Government as well as the growing role of the private sector in dairy development, our country is expected to sustain its growth in milk production and milk processing in the coming decades. Further, to encourage farmers to take up productivity enhancement of indigenous breeds of milch animals in a scientific manner and to motivate Cooperative and Milk producer Companies, our Government is conferring the prestigious National Gopal Ratna Awards on the occasion of National Milk Day.

Issues of backward integration in the dairy sector include reduction in grazing land, and lack of quality fodder due to rain-fed conditions, regional imbalances in transport availability and quality, and veterinary diseases with less presence of veterinary clinics in rural areas. Increasing incidence of, low productivity of indigenous breeds and nutritional deficiencies in the milk of foreign breeds, low availability of quality breeding bulls and semen and comparatively less success in the cross-breeding of indigenous and foreign breeds, antibiotics in animal growth Excessive use of agricultural produce, lack of marketing facilities for farmers are serious problems that slice away the farmers' profit.

Market growth in the dairy sector requires basic investment in processing, cooling, logistics, animal feed, etc. In addition, there are new lucrative opportunities in sectors such as dairy products, organic/form fresh milk, and exports. To facilitate infrastructural development in this sector, various incentives have been provided by the Central/State Governments to attract investments.

Dairy is often the primary source of income of many landless households and marginal farmers. So, it's in their best interest if successful brands like Amul, Paras, Saras, Verka, Ananda, Dudhsagar, Gowardhan, Milma, Namaste India, Param, Mother Dairy and Nandini etc. procure and sell across markets. It will be particularly helpful for farmers in states that lack both a sound cooperative movement and incentives for private players. The hilly states have better prospects of growth in dairy sector. ❑❑

Vinod Johri, Retd Additional Commissioner of Income Tax.

World Health Day

Common root cause to Health and Ecological Crisis

We are coming from a century that was characterised by massive use of chemical toxic compounds. Later they were re-adapted and re-sold on the market as chemical compounds for agriculture, making us believe that without chemicals there would be no food security. We are now discovering that the agricultural system that is based on chemicals and fossil fuels entails high costs for the planet: water pollution, soil contamination, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gases which produce climatic instability. Even the emerging chronic diseases, such as cancer, autism, infertility have been associated with agrotoxins present in the food we consume daily. Any chronic disease can be connected to toxins and nutrient-less food.

The chemical compounds used in agriculture are damaging our guts, killing the beneficial bacteria that we need. In our intestinal microbiome there are billions of bacteria that enable miraculous transformations thanks to the good food that we eat. These transformations then result in good health. This is the reason why our intestine is defined as our second brain.

The health of the planet and the health of the people are one. Alternatives do exist and are based on regenerating health of the earth through agro-ecology, conservation of biodiversity, promotion of local economies and food systems "from field to table". Health, starting with the soil, to plants, animals and humans must be the organising principle and the aim of agriculture, commerce, science, of our lives and of international trade."

https://navdanyainternational.org/international-health-day-2023/

The health of the planet and the health of the people are one.
Dr. Vandana Shiva

Beijing moving closer to Moscow

Washington's increasing pressure on Beijing to distance itself from Moscow in its ongoing hostilities with Ukraine could have the contrary effect of driving both powers closer, mainly due to mutual resistance to American hegemony and stakes in a multipolar world. The setback seems inevitable as, at a time when the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine is not going well, Washington has escalated its rhetoric against China vis-à-vis Taiwan despite having accepted the One China Policy vide the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972.

In an interesting development, following the recent visit of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to Washington, the US and German media have reported that a pro-Ukraine group was responsible for the bombing of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea in late September of 2022. The Kiev regime has strenuously denied the allegations.

Observers view the near synchronous reports as a near-official denial of American journalist Seymour Hersh's investigative report that the United States was behind the sabotage, and a prelude to Washington stepping back from the conflict and allowing the European Union and NATO to wash their hands off the Kiev regime. Thus, hung out to dry, President Zelensky will be forced to negotiate terms with Moscow, or make way for a leadership that will end the conflict.

The setback seems inevitable as, at a time when the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine is not going well, Washington has escalated its rhetoric against China vis-à-vis Taiwan despite having accepted the One China Policy vide the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972.

Sandhya Jain

This would enable Washington to focus on Taiwan as the symbol of its larger competition with Beijing in trade and in the Indo-Pacific. Should this happen, Beijing will not have to cross the rubicon by supplying Moscow with armaments and other support, but it will have more incentive to draw closer to Russia.

Sino-US relations became especially fraught in February when Washington accused Beijing of using spy balloons over North America; one was later shot down by US fighter jets. Beijing retorted that the object was a weather monitoring balloon that was blown off-course by winds.

One of the two other balloons shot down around the same time belonged to an Illinois-based hobbyist club, the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade

(NIBBB). Possibly embarrassed over the shooting down of "pico balloons" used by ham radio enthusiasts, the authorities refused to answer any enquiries regarding the missing balloons.

First indications of Beijing's hardening attitude came with President Xi Jinping lambasting a Washington-led campaign against China, "Western countries – led by the US – have implemented all-round containment, encirclement and suppression against us, bringing unprecedentedly severe challenges to our country's development."

He was addressing the annual legislative sessions of the National People's Congress (March 5-13, 2023) in Beijing; it will confirm Xi's third term as President, ushering in a new economic leadership. The charge of "containment" refers to Sino-US differences over trade, technology, geopolitical influence and perceptions of Russia's action in Ukraine. He warned the delegates that China "faces profound and complex changes in both the domestic and international landscape."

Last month, US President Biden referred to the historic rivalry between democracies and autocracies in his national security strategy. This was perceived as a sign that Washington favours regime change in China, and could push it closer to Russia. Observers believe that President Xi's diatribe against the US could also be an attempt to deflect domestic criticisms of his policies, especially the tough Covid controls that hurt the economy and affected the growth of technology companies.

On March 5, outgoing Premier Li Keqiang informed the NPC that included representatives from China's national chamber of commerce, of the lowest GDP target in decades, a pointer to a difficult economic recovery. In fact, the Chinese economy posted its second worst annual growth rate in nearly half a century. Customs data showed China's exports fell nearly 7% in the January-to-February period, as global demand weakened. Imports dropped 10.2%. China's exports to the US fell 15%, while imports increased about 3%. The US is China's single largest trading partner.

The President tried to assuage private sector anxieties caused by regulatory crackdowns and pandemic lockdowns, assuring that the Communist Party "has always regarded private enterprises and private entrepreneurs as our own people," and would support them in their difficulties. He urged them to participate in boosting growth, jobs and tech innovation to hasten economic recovery.

Despite its relatively small size versus the State sector, China's private sector contributes more than 60% of the GDP and over 80% of employment, according to official statistics. President Xi directed the government to remove institutional barriers that inhibit private businesses from entering certain industries, and to protect the property rights of private companies and entrepreneurs and ensure parity between state firms and private companies to "boost market expectations and confidence."

Addressing concerns that top elites made asymmetric gains from the economic boom, President Xi urged the business community to strive for wealth with a sense of responsibility, in consonance with his plan for "common prosperity", that is, more equitable redistribution of China's wealth.

Taking cognisance of western sanctions and trade restrictions, President Xi emphasised self-reliance and said China must escalate science and technology development, open up new areas in development and foster new growth drivers in the face of fierce international competition. He called upon Chinese industry, academia and research institutes to join hands to support "original and pioneering research".

China's principal concerns relate to US restrictions on access to US semiconductor and Artificial Intelligence technology, on national security grounds, and foreign sanctions or restrictions on some Chinese companies and officials over crackdowns in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, and possible support to Russia in Ukraine.

The leadership reportedly enunciated "the two must-haves", that is, manufacturing and a dependable grain and food supply. The draft budget figures announced when the session began on March 5 saw increased funding of over 13% for national stockpiling of grain and other base items. The finance ministry and state planner also announced modest budget increases for the technology sector, and acceleration of hard tech infrastructure construction, including in AI, 5G and big data.

Observers believe that these announcements bring an end to government crackdowns on the technology sector and entrepreneurs like Jack Ma. The focus now is on supporting internet companies to grow globally, create jobs and expand consumption. ❑❑

https://www.sandhyajainarchive.org/2023/03/13/beijing-moving-closer-to-moscow/

Bharat: Vision for 2047

(Part 1: Economic Scenario)

Bharat is endowed with largest youth population, highest area of arable land and largest number of MSMEs in the world. The Country is home to nearly a quarter of the world's working-age population of 15 to 64 years. By 2030, the working-age population is estimated to grow from 90 crores at present to around 100 crores. As per the estimates of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and several other agencies the country can become a $40 trillion economy by the year 2047, if the entire working-age population is economically engaged in work. "Jobs for all, through proper skilling along with sensitising people towards entrepreneurship" policy of the government can help the country to attain the goal of $40 trillion economy.

Much before the centenary of India's Independence in 2047, the nation stands poised to mark a momentous milestone in its illustrious history. The ensuing 25 years' period termed as the 'Azadi ka Amrit Kaal', by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is of profound significance for India's future trajectory, as the government seeks to propel the country towards becoming a poverty-free, and fully developed with technological self dependence. To this end, the Indian government has instituted a comprehensive array of policies, including the identification of key strategic domains in which India can assert global leadership, as well as the creation of a time-bound roadmap for realizing these ambitions. Although the definitive plans outlining India's aspirations for the centenary celebration are still in the developmental stages, the government has preliminarily outlined a series of broad objectives that will be subjected to further refinement and elaboration.

The pace of skilling entrepreneurship, accelerating pace of start-ups and unicorns along with the growth of farm sector would further enhance incomes to get rid of poverty, malnutrition and unemployment.

Dr. Jaya Sharma

Commendable Achievements and Encouraging Trends

India's progress in the past one decade has been very significant, particularly in the economic sector, where India has become the fifth largest economy on the basis of nominal GDP in the world, while leaving behind Russia, Brazil, Italy, France and UK. On the basis of purchasing power parity, India is already the third largest economy. The country has moved ahead from its agrarian economy on the eve of independence and has made considerable strides in multiple sectors, be it service sector, IT sector, renewable energy sector manufacturing sector, or healthcare sector. Services sector, over the time has become a dominant contributor to the country's GDP. In addition to the service industry, India has demonstrated progress in manufacturing. The government has undertaken several initiatives to promote manufacturing, such as the "Make in India" campaign, which aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. As a result, India has become a major producer of goods such as automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and textiles. India has also shown significant growth in the information technology (IT) industry. The IT industry has been one of the key drivers of India's economic growth in recent years, and the country is now recognized as a global IT hub. Indian IT companies are renowned for their software development, business process outsourcing, and IT consulting services, and have a significant presence in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In the renewable energy sector, country has set an ambitious target of achieving 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022, which includes 100 GW of solar power. India has already made significant progress towards this target and is now one of the largest renewable energy producers in the world. Improvements can be seen in the healthcare sector as well. The government has undertaken several initiatives to improve healthcare infrastructure and increase access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. India has established a robust economic foundation and is currently positioned to attain developed nation status in the forthcoming quarter century.

Highly Encouraging Estimates

As per a study conducted by the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory titled "Pathways to AatmNirbhar Bharat", India has the potential to attain energy self-sufficiency by the year 2047, coinciding with its 100th year of Independence. The study further suggests that significant investment of USD 3 trillion is required for India's energy infrastructure in the forthcoming decades. The study concluded that attaining energy self-reliance will have substantial economic, environmental, and energy-related advantages for India, such as an estimated consumer savings of USD 2.5 trillion through the year 2047. A significant reduction of 90% in the expenditure on fossil fuel imports equivalent to USD 240 billion per annum, an improved global industrial competitiveness for India, and the ability to fulfill its net-zero target ahead of schedule.

On a little lower side of estimates, the Ernst & Young, the leading professional services organisation, has predicted that Indian economy is poised to reach at a GDP size of US$26 trillion by 2047, the 100th year of the country's Independence.

On a little lower side of estimates, the Ernst & Young (EY), the leading professional services organisation, has predicted that Indian economy is poised to reach at a GDP size of US$26 trillion (in market exchange terms) by 2047, the 100th year of the country's Independence. The per capita income is expected to increase to US$ 15000, enough to put the country among the ranks of developed economies.

In line with the similar estimates, the Railway and IT minister of GOI has launched a report entitled, India @100: Realising the Potential of a US $ 26 Trillion Economy on the sidelines of the world economic forum at Davos. This report underscores the growth trajectory of the Indian economy that is projected to be the highest for any large economy over the coming decades. It also cites key enablers that will underpin the country's development over the next 25 years that will unleash business opportunities across sectors and will significantly enhance India's global competitiveness. It recommends ensuring macro-economic stability and resilience and continued thrust on reforms, which will be especially relevant in the backdrop of on-going geo-political conflicts, inflationary pressures and slowing global growth.

This aforesaid report launched by Ashwini Vaishnav is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, that India has commenced its journey into 'Amrit Kaal', a uniquely auspicious period, representing India's opportunity to herald a new world era. There is an unparalleled impetus on developing world-class infrastructure supported by growth and investment-oriented policies and reforms to establish India as a manufacturing and technology hub. Over the next decade, India will not only be the fastest growing economy but will also play an integral role in leading the world into a sustainable future."

Growth Enablers

In view of the estimates made by the Ernst and Young, under the most preferred scenario, India is likely to cross the critical thresholds of US$5 trillion, US$10 trillion and US$20 trillion in market exchange rate terms in FY2028, FY2036 and FY2045, respectively. EY has identified key growth enablers for the economy, to propel the growth. These growth enablers are -

- World's Information Technology and Services Hub: According to EY strong services exports of US$254.5b in 2021-22, would give India a strong foothold especially in the IT and BPO services exports. India can seize an opportunity to fill in the talent gap as developed economies are likely to face shortage of skilled talent due to demographic changes. India has the potential to become a services and technology talent hub for the world.
- Digitalisation: Rapid digitalisa-

tion would result in improved governance, financial inclusion, and an efficient framework for market outreach. The digital economy has grown by 15.6% over the period 2014 to 2019, 2.4 times faster than the growth of the Indian economy.

- Accelerated credit growth: An accelerated credit growth and development of the corporate bond market and digital lending, an optimal financial architecture can help address the critical demand and supply gap in credit to individuals and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises ("MSMEs"), reduce cost of capital, and increase the share of private debt to sustain high growth. Some other enablers are as under:
- Thriving entrepreneurship spurred by private capital
- Reaping the demographic dividend
- Making domestic manufacturing competitive
- Building the infrastructure of the future
- Transition to sustainable energy

To conclude, inspite of slight varying estimates, as highlighted above, India should embark on a path to achieve a USD 12 trillion economy by 2030. Simultaneously, the country should change the mission from 'Make In India' to 'Made By India' to attain a USD 25 trillion economy by 2040 and USD 40 trillion economy by 2047.

The Ambitious Export Target of a Trillion Dollars

The union minister of commerce and industry, Piyush Goyal has set an annual target of exports of 1 trillion dollars by 2030. The exports have already been expected to touch USD 750 billion in this Fiscal 2022-23 from USD 650 billion. According to government estimates, India would soon touch the mark of USD 5 trillion and would emerge as the 3rd largest economy in the world by 2027-28. The commerce minister appears to be more optimistic than the aforesaid report presented by the railway minister on the sidelines of Davos. According to him, besides being a developed economy by 2047 the economy can touch USD 32 trillion. He is seen even more optimistic where he has asserted that India could even dream of building a USD 40 trillion economy by 2047. It would be no wonder, if our exports fetch a figure of $12-15 trillion by 2047.

Rupee on Path to Become an International Currency

India has already embarked on a path of technological self reliance and is emerging as a major arms exporter. The bold initiative of the Modi government to commence international trade in Indian rupee is likely to boost the exchange value of rupee and give further impetus to exports. India can usher in an era of exports-led growth. Eighteen countries have already agreed to trade in rupee terms with India. Soon the number is likely to reach thirty. Indian rupee is edging closer to becoming an international currency with more and more countries working to de-dollarise global trade. Several nations have expressed interest in facilitating international trade in INR and to make the process smooth, India's central bank RBI has given approval for opening 60 special rupee vostro accounts in 18 countries including Russia and Sri Lanka. India's Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad informed parliament that as per records, India's central bank Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had granted approval to "domestic and foreign AD (Authorised Dealer) banks in 60 cases for opening SRVAs of banks from 18 nations" for settling payments in Indian rupees.

Largest Recipient of Private Transfers

India is the largest recipient of income transfer remittances from abroad. In the last fiscal of 2021-22, India has received $89.12 billion from world as remittances from abroad. With fast ageing of population in US, EU, UK and South East Asia, Indians would be the key source of technical manpower worldwide. So remittances from abroad would also grow by 10% per annum. It would also enhance the national income.

Conclusion

The pace of skilling entrepreneurship, accelerating pace of start-ups and unicorns along with the growth of farm sector would further enhance incomes to get rid of poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Much before the centenary of independence, India can become a $20 trillion economy between 2035-37, with full employment and zero poverty, if employment generation through skilling, entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem picks up and we tap our full agriculture potential. With largest arable land, India can feed two-thirds of global population. Agriculture has the capacity to enhance the fortunes of more than half of our population. The production linked incentive scheme would usher the manufacturing in a new era. In services, India is poised to lead the world. ❑❑

Mewar as focus of Guhila State (Part-X)

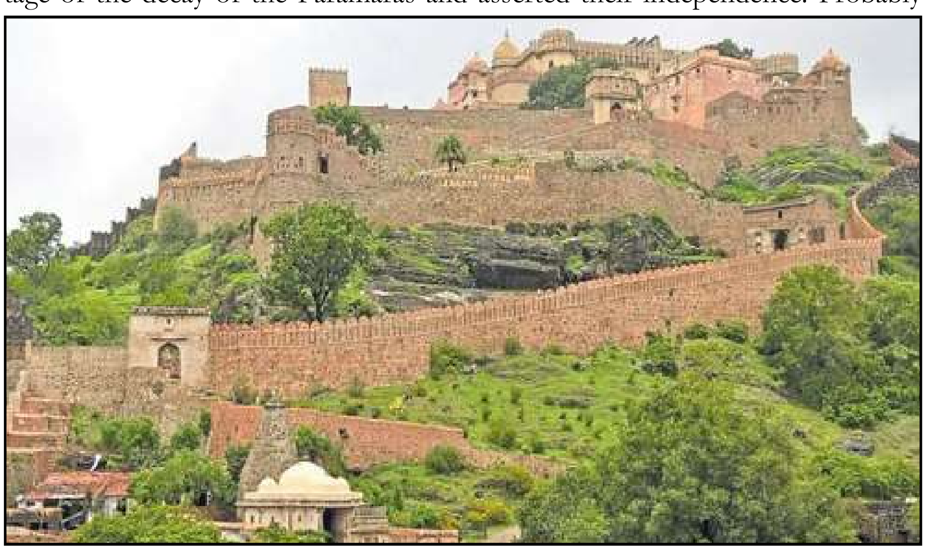
The next epigraph Thakarda (Dungarpur district) Inscription of AD 1155 records the grant of land of one plough to the god Siddhesvara by Maharajaputra Sri Anangapaladeva, Vijayapaladeva's grandson,This record too refers to the title of Bhartrpatta for Prthvipäla but not to the Guhila lineage The above two records give us an idea of the area of control under this ruling family. Prthvipala's successors seem to have controlled an area between Vagod (districts of Dungarpur and Banswara) and Inganapata (modern Ingnoda) in western Malwa, In view of the decline of the Paramara power in Malwa in the twelfth century, Vijaya- paladeva seems to have extended his sway up to the western part of Malwa. The last of the records, Virpur (in southern part of Udaipur district) inscription of AD 1185 refers to the grant of a well (araghatta) called Lasadia and a land of two halas (ploughs) in the village of Gata- uda in the province of Saht(a)-pañcasat (Chhappan in Udaipur district) to a brahmana, Madana by Amrtpäla, son of Vijayapãla alias Bhart[patta of the lineage Guhadatta (dri guhiladattavamsa úrimadbharty- pattabhidhänamahârâjâdhiraja úrî vijayapalasuta mahârâjädhiraja úri am[tapaladeva). Thus, the three records demonstrate the gradual process through which the ruling family of Vagod in the twelfth century claimed lineage connections with the Guhilas. It is significant that Vijayapala too bears the title of Bhartrpatta in Virpur record.

I shall now mention the views of the epigraphists and historians who have extensively discussed the above records, to make our position clear on the Bhart[pattabhidhâna Guhilas. Asoke Kumar Majumdar, on the basis of Ingnoda and Thakarada inscriptions opines that an independent line of kings existed within 80 km of Ujjain.

These two inscriptions show that members of a petty dynasty took advantage of the decay of the Paramâras and asserted their independence. Probably

The newly proliferated Guhila royal houses away from Mewar began their own political, territorial and military history.

Prof. Nandini Kapur Sinha



they brought under their control territories in western Malwa, but were later driven. out and forced to assume their humbler rank in their now obscure principality near Dungarpur...most likely driven out of Malava by Siddharaja or Chandella Madanavarman and content as feudatories.

R.R. Halder, the editor of the Thakarda Inscription of the time of Maharaja Surapaladeva, comparing this record with Surapaladeva's Ingnoda Inscription, observes that the genealogical lists are common to both the records. But Thakarda Inscription does not mention the epithets of mahäräjädhiraja, parameœvara and parambhaGaraka. Halder opines that they were probably, though not necessarily independent kings at first, and ruled over certain parts of Rajputana and central India. He finds it difficult to assign a dynastic origin to them as none of the records mentions the name of the family. Gauri Shankar Hirachand Ojha initially included them in the Kacchaväha rulers of Gwalior but later on changed his opinion and remarked in the Annual Report of the Rajputana Museum that these kings were possibly the descendants of the Pratihära kings of Kanauj and ruled over parts of central India and Rajasthan. Halder accepts the latter view, D.C. Ganguly opines that Vijayapala was a governor of the Paramaras in control of Ingnoda and its surrounding localities, 220 Vijayapala seems to have declared his independence after the death of his master, Paramâra King Naravarman.

Pratipal Bhatia, discussing the Ingnoda Inscription of Vijayapala, observes that since Ingnoda is only 80 km to the north-west of Ujjain, this record reveals the presence of a kingdom, the princes of which seem to have claimed independent position. Not only the Chandellas but also the family of Vijayapala were encroaching upon the borders of the Paramâra kingdom of Malwa.

Our suggestion that Bhartrpattabhidhâna Guhilas extended their sway over western Malwa from Vagod in the twelfth century during the decline of the Paramara power does not contradict the views of Majumdar, Ganguly, or Bhatia. But none of the three inscriptional records of the Bhart [pattabhidhana Guhilas supports Ojha's contention or Halder's views that this ruling family was a descendant of the Pratihâras of Kanauj.

The rise of the family of the Bhart[pattabhidhâna Guhilas seems to be an instance of formation of a dynasty from an obscure background, claiming Guhila lineage, and controlling an area south of the territory of the Nagda-Ahada Guhilas The area under the control of the Bhart[pattabhidhana Guhilas is likely to have stretched from the south- eastern part of Dungarpur to western part of Malwa. Possibly they also held parts of Chhappan-south-eastern part of Udaipur district. The fact that the ousted Guhila King Sämantasimhadeva could found a principality around the locality of Dungarpur in the end of twelfth century indicates that the Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada were yet to control Vagod.

A major house of the Guhilas of Nägdä-Ahada that was born in late twelfth century was that of Dungarpur. This branch, known to have originated with Guhila Samantasimhadeva, continued to hold the whole of Vagod as a separate kingdom throughout the medieval period. G.S. Ojha in his monumental work, History of the Dungarpur State constructed the following genealogical table on the basis of epigraphic records, legends and gazetteers of the colonial period: The Jagat (AD 1172) and Soloj (Dungarpur district) Inscriptions (AD 1179)225 show that Samantasimha ruled in Mewar and Vagod respectively in the eighth decade of twelfth century. How did he acquire Vagod? Was it territorial extension of the Guhila state of Nagda-Ahada or was it another case of segmentation of the royal family due to kinship pressures? To answer these questions, we shall examine the evidences of two royal sources, Achaleœvara Inscription of AD 1285 and Kumbhalgarh Prasasti of AD 1460. Achaleœvara Inscription states that Samantasimha snatched away everything from the samantas and that Kumarasimha had to win back the royalty for his ancestral kingdom which had been lost to the enemies. Kumbhalgarh Prasasti states that Rânâsimha was succeeded by Kcemasimha, the younger brother of Mathanasimha who evidently predeceased his father and then Samantasimha became the ruler of Mewar. It records further that Samantasimha was succeeded by his brother Kumarasimha who threw a person called Kitu out of Mewar because the latter had somehow taken hold of the country. He also made Aghatapura his own by acquiring the favour of the ruler of Gujarat. Thus, some external factor seems to have influenced the course of political history of the reign of Samanta- simha and accession of Kumarasimha. ...

Is RSS pressurizing RBI to stop rate hikes?

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sithraman is keeping a close watch on the interest rates, while experts seen close to the government are arguing against an increase in the rate. The idea is to convince the RBI that another rate hike would be a bad idea. It may be recalled that the RBI hiked the repo rate, which is the interest rate at which the central bank of a country lends money to commercial banks, by 250 basis points or 2.5 per cent between May 2022 and February this year. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting is likely to be held in the first week of April. The MPC comprises three RBI officials and three external members. The government is trying to pressure the RBI to pause any hike, if not slash the rate, political sources told Bizz Buzz. The high interest rate regime followed soaring prices last year. Though retail inflation was still 6.44 per cent in February 2023, higher than RBI's tolerance band of 4-6 per cent, the central bank expects it to decline in the near the first quarter of the next fiscal.

Therefore, the government thinks that RBI should not increase the repo rate at this juncture, the sources said, adding that the government is feeling pressure from the ground. Concern over the high interest rate was expressed at the recent meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS). The ABPS is the apex decision-making body of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Heated debates took place during close-door deliberations of the ABPS. The ABPS' recent meeting was held in Panipat, Haryana, earlier this month. It was attended by about 1,800 representatives of the various RSS bodies. Prominent among those clamouring for lower rates were the Laghu Udyog Bharti and the Swadeshi Jagran Manch. While the former represents micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the latter is focused on self-reliance and, more importantly, against foreign investment. Meanwhile the government has started building pressure on the RBI to give up the hawkish stance. For instance, Bibek Debroy, Chairperson of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), recently told a newspaper that inflation concerns do not warrant any additional interest rate increases. Further, economists and experts seen as sympathetic to the government are also arguing against any further increase in the repo rate.

https://www.bizzbuzz.news/industry/banks/is-rss-pressurizing-rbi-to-stop-rate-hikes-1206323

China spent $240 bn on 20 countries in rescue lending

China has developed a system of "Bailouts on the Belt and Road" that helps recipient countries avoid default, and continue servicing their BRI debts, at least in the short run, a new report has found.

In total, more than 20 debtor countries have received $240 billion in Chinese rescue lending since 2000. The scale of China's global bailout lending programme is also growing fast. More than $185 billion was extended in the past five years alone (2016-2021), as per a report by researchers from the World Bank, Harvard Kennedy School, AidData, and the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Thirteen countries made total drawings of $170 billion in situations of economic or financial distress. Examples include Argentina (2014-2021), Mongolia (2012-2021), Suriname (2015-2021) and Sri Lanka (2021), which drew on their RMB swap lines right before and/or after sovereign defaults on their external creditors.

Other important users include Pakistan (2013-2021), Egypt (2016-2021) and Turkey (2021), which made large drawdowns during protracted balance of payments crises, as demonstrated by their crashing currencies in the face of dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Another group, including Russia (in 2015 and 2016) and Ukraine (in 2015), activated their swap lines in the face of sanctions and deep geopolitical crises.

China's role as an international crisis manager can therefore be compared to that of the US Treasury during previous Latin American debt crises or to a regional financial institution like the European Stability Mechanism, which helped to avert, delay, or resolve defaults by highly-indebted borrowers, rather than to a global financial backstop with "deep pockets".

The global swap line network put in place by the People's Bank of China is increasingly used as a financial rescue mechanism, with more than $170 billion in liquidity support extended to crisis countries, including repeated rollovers of swaps coming due.

The swaps bolster gross reserves and are mostly drawn by distressed countries with low liquidity ratios. In addition, the report shows that Chinese state-owned banks and enterprises have given out an additional $70 billion in rescue loans for balance of payments support. Taken together, China's overseas bailouts correspond to more than 20 per cent of total IMF lending over the past decade, and the bailout amounts are growing fast. However, China's rescue loans differ from those of established international lenders of last resort in that they are opaque, carry relatively high interest rates, and are almost exclusively targeted to debtors of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the report found. China's swap line network has become an important tool of overseas crisis management. In total, the report found that $170 billion have been extended by the PBOC to central banks of countries in financial or macroeconomic distress. This amount involves a large number of rollovers, as short-term PBOC swap loans are often extended again and again, resulting in a de facto maturity of more than three years, on an average.

https://m.dailyhunt.in/news/india/english/lokmat08408565043306-epaper-dhfd5012174f5c4159918eaf51ebc42a19/china+spent+240+bn+on+20+countries+in+rescue+lending-newsid-n484741966

No More Royal Treatment for Indian Arms of MNCs

The Indian arms of the US and UK based multinational companies such as Hindustan Unilever, PepsiCo India, and Coca- Cola India will now be subject to a higher rate of tax on royalty payments to their parents. India Friday doubled its withholding tax rate on royalty and fee for technical services to 20%, from 10% earlier, by moving an amendment to the Finance Bill, 2023. Apart from hitting companies with pa- rents in jurisdictions that do not have a tax avoidance treaty with India, the move also makes it possible for the government to impose the higher treaty rate of 15% on local arms of companies from the US, UK and other countries with whom India does have a tax treaty.

These companies have until now enjoyed the lower rate of 10% even though tax avoidance treaties with these countries provide for a 15% rate as India's domestic law provided for the lower rate. The US and UK receive more than 60% of royalty payments from India and the move deals a big blow to companies with parents in these countries.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/no-more-royal-treatment-for-indian-arms-of-mncs-as-govt-doubles-tax-on-royalty-fee-for-technical-services/articleshow/98982426.cms?from=mdr

UAE not the only one interested in Indian rupee trade

India and the UAE have initiated talks to establish payments through a rupee dirham mechanism. The issue is also likely to find prominence as talks between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and New Delhi on a possible trade agreement gain momentum. What was seen as an exercise aimed at setting up an alternate payment system by pushing rupee trade in the wake of suspension of SWIFT payments by the US following the Russia-Ukraine war has not only gained momentum but is now being seen as an independent system. An analyst working for an industry body noted that with many countries now looking at setting up alternative supply chains in India, there is an "openness in accepting rupee trade."

A year ago, rupee trade — as a concept, was primarily on paper. But today as many as 18 countries have already agreed to trade in rupee and many more are likely to join the bandwagon. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is also aggressively pushing for globalisation of the rupee. For India and other countries, the exercise helps in saving precious foreign exchange reserves amid rising global economic risks. While de-dollarisation has been on the radar for many countries, the US currency continued its dominance in the global economy. Dethroning the US dollar is not an easy task. Analysts said that the dominance of the dollar will continue in the times to come. During the last one year following the Russia-Ukraine war, "the world has keenly witnessed seismic shifting trends across economic, geopolitical and cultural lines," the International Banker noted.

Last year, the International Monetary Fund revealed that the dollar's share of global foreign-exchange reserves fell below 59 per cent in the final quarter of 2021, extending a two-decade decline, according to the IMF's Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves data.

"Payments system can be weaponised today and we cannot depend on other countries' mercy..India must look at this issue and even work towards making the rupee more acceptable," National Co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan told India Narrative. "It is of utmost importance to have self reliance in the payments system and we need to work towards that," he added. An analyst said that the US move has only brought the focus back on the necessity of de-dollarisation of global trade.

https://www.indianarrative.com/?p=123541

DCA sends legal notice to e-pharma startup Pharmallama

The South Chemist and Druggist Association (SDCA), a Delhi-based body of pharmaceutical distributors, has sent a legal notice to e-pharma start-up Pharmallama, which received investment on the popular show Shark Tank India. The association has also sent a legal notice to Sony Pictures, and all the five investors, who invested in the company, alleging a violation of the provisions of law regulating the pharma industry. SCDA is a registered association of distributors and retailers of drugs and prescription medicines whose members operate in South Delhi. The pharma distributors body has opposed the investments made in the start-up on the popular show and claimed that the involved parties are in violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and the Drug Rules 1945. The SCDA has claimed that running an e-pharmacy is against Indian laws and there is 'no rule' in the country that allows the repackaging of medicines. Earlier, the association had sent a letter addressed to the founders of the start-up and the Health Ministry, in which it alleged that Pharmallama's operations are illegal and should be immediately shut down in the public interest.

Founded in 2020, Pharmallama is the online platform of Mera Dawai Pvt. Ltd. Pharmallama is a 'full-servicing pharmacy and comprehensive medication management platform' which provides medication to users in pre-sorted sachets. These sachets are printed with the dosage and timing of the medication to simplify the timing of taking the medicines. The start-up bagged an investment of Rs 2 crore for 5 percent equity from all five sharks of the show— Anupam Mittal, Aman Gupta, Namita Thapar, Peyush Bansal and Amit Jain. In the legal notice, SDCA has claimed that Pharmallama is in gross violation of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 (D&C Act) and the Drugs Rules, 1945 (D&C Rules) and the network including all five sharks are liable to face legal action.

The notice states that the drugs and medicines supplied through Pharmallama without their original packaging are considered 'misbranded', 'adulterated' or 'spurious' or 'adulterated' drugs as defined under the DC Act. Thus, the manufacturing, sale or distribution of the alleged adulterated drugs is punishable and if such drugs harm a person, then the company shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of over ten years and will be liable to a fine of over Rs 10 lakh or three times the value of the drugs confiscated.

SDCA also alleged that Pharmallama does not have any licence, which is mandated as per law for dispensing medicines by way of retail sale. Thus, by removing medicines from their original packaging, Pharmallama removes the information that is mandatorily required to be disclosed to patients. The legal notice stated that if found guilty, Pharmallama and all directors and shareholders including the sharks as well as Sony Pictures Networks India are liable for prosecution.

https://www.cnbctv18.com/healthcare/delhi-chemists-association-sends-legal-notice-to-e-pharma-startup-pharmallama-that-received-funding-on-shark-tank-india-16247531.htm

Delhi Budget: Time ripe for mindless freebies to make way for higher capex

Perhaps this is the first time in history that budget proposals of the Delhi government have been returned by the Government of India, with suggestions for amendments. The state government is trying to present it as a violation of its constitutional rights. But along with this, the budget proposals of the Delhi government are coming under the scanner. It is noteworthy that Delhi's Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinay Kumar Saxena has questioned the proposed budget by saying that out of the capital expenditure of Rs 78,800 crore allocated in last year's budget proposals, if loan repayment of Rs 5,587 crore is kept aside, Rs 16,230 crore capital expenditure has been made, which is merely 20 percent of the budget.

The Central government's argument is that apart from being the national capital, Delhi is also a metropolis, where civic amenities are fast deteriorating and infrastructure needs to be fixed. But along with that, another thing which has been underlined by the Central government is that in the proposed budget, Rs 4,789 crore has been allocated for free electricity, water and travel for women, which is non-revenue generating. Apart from this, a huge amount has been allocated for the operational expenses of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). For all these reasons, a loan of Rs

10,000 crore has been proposed from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to make up for this deficit, which has to be repaid in the coming years. That means its payment burden will also fall on the exchequer. The LG has written that this type of loan should be used only for infrastructure building etc. and not for uneconomic subsidy. The LG has also objected to the fact that while Rs 272 crore has been spent on advertisements as per the revised estimates of 2022-23, the allocation of Rs 557.24 crore under this head proposed for 2023-24 is incomprehensible and unjustifiable. It is notable that freebies being given by Kejriwal Government have long been a subject of controversies in the past.

https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/delhi-budget-time-ripe-for-mindless-freebies-to-make-way-for-higher-capex-10288271.html

Massive efforts needed to reduce salt intake & protect lives

A first-of-its-kind World Health Organization (WHO) Global report on sodium intake reduction shows that the world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30% by 2025.

Sodium, an essential nutrient, increases the risk of heart disease, stroke and premature death when eaten in excess. The main source of sodium is table salt (sodium chloride), but it is also contained in other condiments such as sodium glutamate. The report shows that only 5% of WHO Member States are protected by mandatory and comprehensive sodium reduction policies and 73% of WHO Member States lack full range of implementation of such policies.

Implementing highly cost-effective sodium reduction policies could save an estimated 7 million lives globally by 2030. It is an important component of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of reducing deaths from noncommunicable diseases. But today, only nine countries (Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Uruguay) have a comprehensive package of recommended policies to reduce sodium intake.

"Unhealthy diets are a leading cause of death and disease globally, and excessive sodium intake is one of the main culprits," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "This report shows that most countries are yet to adopt any mandatory sodium reduction policies, leaving their people at risk of heart attack, stroke, and other health problems. WHO calls on all countries to implement the 'Best Buys' for sodium reduction, and on manufacturers to implement the WHO benchmarks for sodium content in food." A comprehensive approach to sodium reduction includes adopting mandatory policies and WHO's four "best buy" interventions related with sodium which greatly contribute to preventing noncommunicable diseases. These include:

1. Reformulating foods to contain less salt, and setting targets for the amount of sodium in foods & meals
2. Establishing public food procurement policies to limit salt or sodium rich foods in public institutions such as hospitals, schools, workplaces and nursing homes
3. Front-of-package labelling that helps consumers select products lower in sodium
4. Behaviour change communication and mass media campaigns to reduce salt/sodium consumption

Countries are encouraged to establish sodium content targets for processed foods, in line with the WHO Global Sodium Benchmarks and enforce them though these policies. Mandatory sodium reduction policies are more effective, as they achieve broader coverage and safeguard against commercial interests, while providing a level playing field for food manufacturers. As part of the report, WHO developed a Sodium country score card for Member States based on the type and number of sodium reduction policies they have in place.

"This important report demonstrates that countries must work urgently to implement ambitious, mandatory, government-led sodium reduction policies to meet the global target of reducing salt consumption by 2025," said Dr Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, a not-for-profit organization working with countries to prevent 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease over 30 years. "There are proven measures that governments can implement and important innovations, such as low sodium salts. The world needs action, and now, or many more people will experience disabling or deadly—but preventable—heart attacks and strokes." ❑❑

https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2023-massive-efforts-needed-to-reduce-salt-intake-and-protect-lives

Swadeshi Activities

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

Yuva Sankalp Divas

23 March 2023

Pictorial Glimpses

Bhopal, MP

Champavat, Uttrakhand


Hardoi, UP


Hisar, Haryana


Uttarkashi, Uttrakhand

Shahdra, Delhi


Vasant Zila, Delhi

Narmadapuram, MP

Swadeshi Patrika Posted on 7-8 April 2023
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Swadeshi Activities

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

Yuva Sankalp Divas

23 March 2023

Pictorial Glimpses

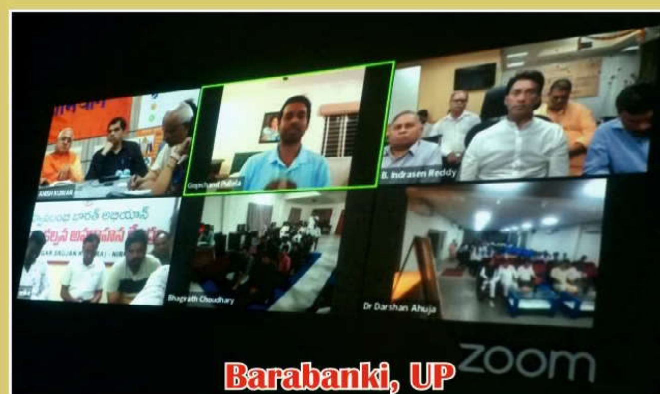
Central Office, Delhi

Odisha

Agra, UP

Baitul, MP

Barmer, Rajasthan



Barabanki, UP

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