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The Indian currency's strong run reflects optimism about the economy

Now's day, there is debate on the issue of appreciation of rupee and its sustainability in the near future. As of now, it's a good time for a vacation in the United States. It's also a good time to invest in Indian equities. This is because the Indian rupee is enjoying a rare, almost uninterrupted streak of appreciation against the US dollar. Consider this: On December 30, you needed about Rs 68 to buy a dollar. Today, you need only Rs 65 on an average. That doesn't sound much in absolute terms, but it is a 5% appreciation. Indeed, the rise has been starker over the past two months. Since the start of this year, rupee has had a steady appreciation in line with other emerging currencies. Moreover, it has also appreciated vis-a-vis Great British Pound (GBP), Euro, Australian Dollar, Singapore Dollar etc.

It is expected that rupee would find some support from its outperformed economic fundamental and less opportunity for speculative trading in currency market. This is due to the appreciation of rupee vis-à-vis other currencies in the market. As a policy framework, it is a breakthrough (from depreciation to appreciation) in the overall trend of Indian rupee. So, it is advisable for the policy makers to frame a positive attitude towards improving the Indian rupee because it is likely to have persistent trend of appreciation.

– Dr. Phool Chand, Delhi

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Quote-Unquote



It is not just that Indian companies are in the US, several big US companies are in India too... They are earning their margins, they are earning their profits, which go to the US economy. It is a situation which is not where only the Indian companies have to face the US executive order.

Nirmala Sitharaman

Commerce & Industry Minister



Gates Foundation have a conflict of interest in expanding immunization in India.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

National Co-convenor, SJM



If the government changed its mind, the Foundation will move to countries that need its help.

Nichiket Mor

India Director, India Director, Bill Milinda Gates Foundation
(Reacting to Swadeshi Jagran Manch allegation)



We say that (our) ice-cream is made of dairy products and frozen desserts are made of vegetable oil.

RS Sodhi

CMD, Amul

Nutrition's Foreign Connection

Recently, an effort is being made by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to ensure that Vitamin 'A' and 'D' are essentially added in the refined edible oils, what's termed as fortification. Argument being given is that vitamin 'A' and 'D' are absolutely necessary for nutritious food, and therefore, it would be good if we could fortify edible oils with vitamin 'A' and 'D'. Interestingly, while taking this decision no opinion is being sought from the research institutes and organizations in the country like ICMR. It seems that FSSAI officials are much obsessed with Bill & Milinda Gates Foundation, that didn't deem it necessary to seek opinion from any other organization (including those of the government) or experts. Even the World Health Organization WHO has also admitted that there do not exist any standards of vitamin 'A' and 'D' fortification. Therefore, it will not be right to apply vitamin A and D fortification in a country like India.

'Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition' (Gain), is a US organisation, pushing for fortified edible oil. Although this organisation talks about mixing of vitamins, minerals and other essential elements of nutrition in food throughout the world, it seems that in the guise of nutrition, this organisation's real intent is to serve interests of some large multinational companies. Organisations and companies like 'Bill Milinda Gates Foundation' (BMGF) and many foreign governments are collaborating in this work of 'Gain'. Not only that, many foreign governments, agencies and companies have also made many frontal organisations to shield their identities, under which such activities are being executed. There are many such front organizations, including 'World Food Program', 'Freedom from Hunger', for which these foreign powers provide funds. A closer look reveals that from all these endeavours, private corporate interests are being served. So far, through these lobbying activities, these institutions have succeeded in accomplishing their evil designs in countries of Africa. Though lack of nutrients in our food items is a reality; however, we need to ensure that in this exercise we not give birth to yet more problems. The first thing is that very few companies in the world make Vitamin 'A' and 'D'. These companies have a practice of forming cartels. In this regard, some years ago, the European Union had imposed a penalty for exploiting the consumers by forming a cartel, which is the highest penalty yet. That is, without assessing the need of these vitamins, are we not falling under trap of these companies? Secondly, we need to be aware of the lobbying and conspiracies of foreign companies in so called nutritional issues. About two decades ago, mustard oil was declared unsuitable for the consumption of humans under conspiracy hatched by multinationals, saying that it contained dropsy; which later proved to be untrue by today's modern science. But due to that conspiracy, the farmers almost stopped producing mustard in our country and our dependence on imported edible oils increased from negligible to nearly rupees 70,000 crores. This push to fortification of refined edible oils in the country would further encourage import of edible oils, as domestically produced edible oil would be forced out of the market due to this mandatory fortification. In the process lakhs of small domestic oil producers will be forced to go out of business as this process of fortification requires plants and machinery of large scale, beyond the capacity of even relatively big producers of edible oil. Today we are importing edible oils of nearly \$12 billion, which also includes low quality deodorised soya, canola etc, which gets mixed up in our edible oils and get added to our food chain. Baba Ramdev has also raised this issue in 'Patanjali's' advertisements. It is unfortunate that FSSAI has not taken any step to deal with this menace of adulteration; however, it seems to be in undue hurry to introduce mixing of vitamin 'A' and 'D' in edible oils. The objective, for which FSSAI was formed, seems to have been forgotten, as no reports seem to be available on the website of FSSAI about the quality and contamination issues in samples collected by it. There are issues about junk food hazards and its nutritional value; however this also does not seem to be on the priority of FSSAI. Thirdly, need for fortification arises because these vitamins are lost in the process of refining of edible oil. Conventional way of filtering of oil can solve this problem, and thus there will be no need for the fortification. Fourthly, we have to keep in mind that there is no mechanism to avoid mixing of excessive Vitamin 'A' and 'D' in edible oils. It is believed that excessive exposure to these elements can lead to irreparable damage to health. We have to remember that due to excessive mixing of iodine (actually iodide) in salt, there has been a huge adverse effect on people's health. In the method of making food in India, oils are cooked on a high flame, so there is a need to look into possible cross reactions between vitamin 'A' and 'D'.



GST, it may be concluded that it is going to unify the fiscal regime of the country and reinforce the federal unity of Bharat from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. It would enhance and improve tax compliance to raise tax-GDP ratio much wanted for increasing needs of development,

Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma

GST Bill Passed

One Nation and One Tax with End to Tax Evasion and Black Money

The Lok Sabha has passed the historic law for a single federal tax, the Goods and Service Tax (GST) by passing four separate bills, paving way for a single unified indirect tax in the country. The government aims to roll out a new and unified tax, regime from July 1 that will subsume a slew of federal and state taxes transforming this nation of one sixth of the global population, into a single market. The four bills, passed by the Lok Sabha, would though now have to be presented before the Rajya Sabha. But, these need not be passed from there, as they are mere finance bills.

The four bills passed in Lok Sabha are the Central GST Bill, 2017; the Integrated GST Bill, 2017; the GST (Compensation to States) Bill, 2017; and the Union Territory GST Bill, 2017 which were passed after negotiation of a host of

amendments moved by the opposition parties. The Proposed tax rates under the new regime range from 5 to 28 percent, with 12 percent and 18 percent being the standard rates. Though it has not yet been decided that which tax rates will apply to which categories of goods. It would be done by the GST council in its meeting scheduled on May 18-19, in Srinagar.

The GST Council is the first federal authority, comprising the Central and State ministers of all the states, together forming an autonomous constitutional authority. The GST Council comprises Finance Ministers of Union and states. It (the council) had also agreed to take a decision on bringing real estate within the ambit of the new tax regime within a year of its rollout. However, the liquor has not been brought under the ambit of GST. On the impact of GST on prices, it has been claimed by the Finance Minister that when they have tax on tax, would vanish the cascading effect would also vanish. So, the goods will become slightly cheaper. On the issue of multiple tax rates that why the Council has decided on multiple GST rates, the finance minister has said, one rate would be "highly regressive" as "hawai chappal and BMW cannot be taxed at the same rate".

He further clarified that food articles are not taxed and will continue to be zero rated under the GST. All other commodities would be fitted into the nearest tax bracket, by the GST council. The GST Council has recommended a four-tier tax-rates regime of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. On top of the highest slab, a cess will be imposed on luxury and demerit goods to compensate the states for revenue

Though it has not yet been decided that which tax rates will apply to which categories of goods. It would be done by the GST council in its meeting scheduled on May 18-19, in Srinagar.

loss in the first five years of GST implementation.

However, the Central GST (CGST) law has pegged the peak rate at 20 per cent and a similar rate has been prescribed in the State GST (SGST) law, which takes the peak rate to 40 per cent which will come into force only in financial exigencies. The new GST will subsume central excise, service tax, VAT and other local levies to create an uniform market. GST is expected to boost GDP growth by about 2 per cent and check tax evasion. The original of taxes to be subsumed and die after GST are as under:

- **SALES TAX (CENTRAL & STATE) Introduced in 1957:** Levied on sale of a commodity, produced or imported and sold for the first time. If sold subsequently without being processed further, the product is exempt from sales tax
- **CENVAT (Introduced in 2000):** Levied on the manufacture or production of movable and marketable goods in India either as a percentage of transaction value or the MRP of the goods.
- **OCTROI:** A local tax collect-

ed by the state government or the municipality on articles brought into a town for local use.

- **EXCISE DUTY:** Indirect tax levied on goods, manufactured in India and are meant for home consumption
 - **SERVICE TAX Introduced in 1994:** Levied on services rendered by a person/ service provider.
 - **ENTERTAINMENT TAX:** Levied on amusement activities, exhibitions, large commercial shows or large private festival celebrations.
 - **VAT Introduced in 2005:** Indirect tax on consumption of goods, paid by its original producers upon the charge in goods or upon the transfer of the goods to its ultimate consumers.
 - **SECURITIES TRANSACTION TAX Introduced in 2004:** Levied on every purchase or sale of securities that are listed on Indian stock exchanges. Including shares, derivatives or equity-oriented mutual funds unites
 - **ENTRY TAX Introduced in 2000:** Levied on movement of the goods from one state to into another and is levied by the recipient state to protect their tax base.
 - **LUXURY TAX:** Levied on luxury goods or premium products and services, not considered essential.
- The GST Council in its meeting on March 31, after the four bills were passed in Lok Sabha cleared the bulk of the framework rules that constitute the implementing guidelines of the goods and services tax regime. The quick deci-

sion by the GST Council within 2 days of passing of bills on Friday the 31st March reinforces the possibility for the new tax system to be rolled out from July 1 as stipulated by government. Though, the industry has stepped up its demand to give more time to it and implement GST from September 1 to give the industry reasonable time for preparation.

However, to meet the official deadline the GST council will now again meet on May 18-19 to take up the last big and major remaining task of fitting individual goods

vealed it after the meeting on March 31. These drafts will be made public so that industry can give inputs and the final draft will be up for approval at the next council meeting to be held on May 18-19 in Srinagar.

However, on account of the impediment of the Article 370 of the constitution the GST, as on date would not be applicable for the Jammu and Kashmir unless the J&K assembly passes separate bills. The bills passed in the Lok Sabha have excluded the J&K state explicitly from its scope. Jammu &

levies its own taxes for services provided in the state. This is because Article 370 of the Constitution grants special autonomous status to the state and Parliament has power to make laws only on defence, external affairs and communication related matters of the state.

As a result, when the CGST and IGST Bills would become Act, be applicable for the entire country except J&K. The J&K Assembly would pass a legislation saying the two laws were applicable to the state. This approval by the state Assembly will be



***Article 370 of the Constitution grants special autonomous status to the state
As a result, when the CGST and IGST Bills would become Act, be applicable for the entire country except J&K.***

into the four tax slabs, already decided. The council has already approved five rules dealing with registration, refunds, returns, invoice-debit and credit note payments that have been amended in line with changes to the GST laws on March 31. In addition, it approved the draft of four remaining set of rules as well, out of the total nine, Thus, the draft rules for input tax credit, valuation, transition and composition scheme have been approved by the council, according to the finance minister Arun Jaitley, who stated has re-

Kashmir will have to pass special laws to implement the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as its current constitutional status does not mandate the applicability of the new indirect tax reform in the state. So, in the Central-GST (CGST) and Integrated-GST (IGST) Bills, introduced and passed in the Lok Sabha on March 29, read that the provisions extend to the whole of India, except J&K. The bills have excluded the J&K explicitly.

The service tax was also levied all over the country since 1994, is not applicable in J&K. The state

in addition to the requirement of all states to approve the GST law. Once the J&K Assembly passes the laws, the Union government will have to amend the CGST and IGST laws and delete the phrases that they do not apply to the state of J&K, as per experts. The deletion of the phrases will make the laws applicable to the state. The bills passed in the Lok Sabha on March 29 say, they extend “to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir.” A separate law for levy of cess on select goods to make

up for a kitty to compensate states for any loss of revenue in the first five years of GST roll-out, extends, however, to whole of India, including Jammu and Kashmir. The GST (Compensation to States) Bill “extends to the whole of India”.

Indeed the Article 370 was incorporated into the constitution of India, inspite of explicit opposition of all prominent statesmen of that time in particular and nation as a whole in general. It was added solely in pursuance of the sinister design of Lord Mounbatten, Sheikh Abdulla and Jawaharlal Nehru in gross contravention of national interests.

Baba Saheb Ambedkar, the architect of our constitution had not only refused to draft this anti-national provision, but even abstained from attending the meeting on the day, when this Article was proposed and discussed. Baba Saheb had abinitio refused to oblige the trio to draft such an anti-national provision.

Indeed when Jawaharlal Nehru directed Sheikh Abdullah to consult Baba Saheb, the (then Law Minister) to prepare the draft of a suitable article to be included in the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar refused to oblige and said, **“You want India to defend Kashmir, cater its people, undertake its all-round development and give Kashmiris equal rights all over the country. But, you do not want the rest of India and Indians (to have) equal rights in Kashmir. I am (the) Law Minister of India, I cannot betray my country.”** On his refusal, Nehru got this controversial Article 370 drafted by Gopalaswami Iyengar, an IAS and a State Minister



“You want India to defend Kashmir, cater its people, undertake its all-round development and give Kashmiris equal rights all over the country. But, you do not want the rest of India & Indians (to have) equal rights in Kashmir. I am (the) Law Minister of India, I cannot betray my country.”- Ambedkar

without portfolio.

On December 27, 1947, Sardar Patel when Article read by Mr. Iyengar, sharply opposed it, and even offered to resign. Matter had then once gone to Mahatma Gandhi to reproach the two colleagues (Patel and Nehru). But later on he was reconciled to it on the pretext that it is only a temporary provision. There was uproar in the constituent Assembly as well on

this issue. The most sinister aspect of this attempt of the trio was the provision made in the Article 370, that any changes could be brought in it only by the concurrence of J&K assembly. This malicious provision was altogether unwarranted.

Coming back to the core issue of the GST, it may be concluded that it is going to unify the fiscal regime of the country and reinforce the federal unity of Bharat from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. It would enhance and improve tax compliance to raise tax-GDP ratio much wanted for increasing needs of development. It would plug the loopholes leading to tax evasion and generating black money, as all transactions in the value chain, from procuring raw material to final sale, on a common digital platform. As on date 140 countries have the GST system.

France was the first country in 1954 to bring this system. The US is yet to adopt such a system. So, Bharat is now the largest democracy of the world, having a unified federal tax structure with a unitary federal authority, the GST council, as a constitutional authority representing the centre and all states of the nation. □□

GST relief may be pipedream; It is many taxes & to raise prices

The indirect taxes are likely to come down as preparation for GST roll out begins. But the GST in reality will not be one tax but a combination of many taxes and cess. The rates also will not be one. The GST Council has decided on a four-slab structure – 5, 12, 18 and 28 percent. In addition there will be an additional cess of 12 to 15 percent on luxury and sin goods, including luxury cars! “The cap on cess on demerit goods on top of peak rate of GST has been kept at 15 percent, but effectively it will be only 12 percent”, says Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who is also the chairman of the GST Council.

The GST is said to bring uniformity in taxes across states. But the definition of demerit goods leaves a wide chasm. Sin tax is to be levied on goods like tobacco and alcohol. The current taxes like excise duties, service tax, custom duty etc will be merged under central GST (CGST). The taxes like sales tax, entertainment tax, VAT and other state taxes will be included in state GST (SGST) and inter-state deals under Integrated GST. A compensation draft law to enable centre to compensate the losses for the first five years has also on the anvil. But it would not include the very basic of the lifeline – petroleum products. It is likely to leave a wide window for the states and centre.

In short the indirect taxes would be around 40 percent and on petroleum type products, not covered by GST, taxes are likely to go up. For instance, UP is planning to hike it by 5 percent more as it plans to waive farms loans worth about Rs 27,000 crore. It may happen in other states as well since the window for levying taxes come down. Petroleum products may have higher levies in some states. It is likely to add to inflation when the crude prices are coming down.

The government has decided to abolish 16 cesses that bring Rs 65,000 crore



The consumer may not have any relief.

He may have to pay higher price for almost every good, opines

Shivaji Sarkar



revenue in its preparation for GST roll out. This includes krishi vikas and swachh bharaat cesses. It seems it would reduce tax burden. In reality, it may not be so as the new laws have enough provision to maintain the rates near the high current level to “neutralize the losses to the states and centre”.

The GST is collected on value-added goods and services at each stage of sale or purchase in the supply chain. The GST paid on the procurement of goods and services can be set off against that payable on the supply of goods or services. The manufacturer or wholesaler or retailer will pay the applicable GST rate but will claim back through tax credit mechanism.

It is a consumption-based tax targeting the “destination” the final consumer. So whatever the levies at whatever stage, it would finally burden the common man. It is not easy to estimate the total impact on him.

The multiplicity of taxes may add to the problem of traders and industry. Finally the rates on individual goods may not be one. If goods are traded from one state to another the provision of interstate tax under IGST can end up having different prices at different places. Add to this the various tolls that local bodies impose. This could make it more complicated. The industry is apprehensive that the uniformity that was supposed to be the base of GST may not be its strength.

Different cess has been proposed on cigarettes, tobacco products under the GST regime above the highest rate of 28 percent.

Cigarettes, currently taxed at 53 percent, would attract a cess rate of 15 percent. But if cess rate



The cesses are supposed to be removed after five years – the period states are supposed to be compensated for losses.

of 15 percent each is levied by the centre and state and say there is also one per cent IGST, the total taxes would be around 28 plus 60 plus one percent, that is 89 percent.

The basic principle is to have taxes at the current level. So, if the current rate of taxation on a product is higher than the GST rate, the cess will make up the difference. At the moment, the government levies a different rate of tax on items such as luxury cars, high-end watches apart from tobacco. The highest proposed tax slab is likely to be equal to the difference between current tax incidence and the highest tax slab along with a cess.

This means that there will be a separate cess on each of these items. It is likely to complicate the GST tax structure. Even gold is likely to have a tax of 4 percent. If there are six different cesses, it means 10 different rates of GST. Then the taxation on cars and automobiles is likely to be more complicated at state levels. The GST was aimed at having a uniform rate. Even now the NCR regions have different rates in Haryana, Delhi and UP. That would continue.

The non-luxury cars are virtually non-existent. Except 800 or below 1000 cc every vehicle is a luxury - a queer socialistic definition in a market-oriented econo-

my. If there is a separate cess on petrol cars above 1200 cc and diesel cars – another Quixotic idea – there may be more than four cesses for cars alone. According to the government’s own calculations, told to the council, the proposed GST structure would bring down prices of pan tobacco and intoxicants by 0.22 percent. The category has a two percent weightage in the consumer price index.

The cesses are supposed to be removed after five years – the period states are supposed to be compensated for losses. But this country does not have a good record on removing the cesses. The lure of having more revenue also impacts decision making.

One good aspect is that it allows the business to take credit on taxes, a new concept. It is aimed at reducing the burden. It all the same complicates book keeping.

Another aspect bothers small traders. Many goods are now under the tax net. After the multi-level GST, the exemption list would have few items. The impact will be felt by the consumer as he would have shell more. It is not clear whether over 25 percent taxes a consumer pays at restaurants would at all come down.

The consumer may not have any relief. He may have to pay higher price for almost every good. □□

End of the lure of engineering



Human Resources Minister Prakash Javadekar has laid a new philosophy of higher education. Until now the government provided the funds to engineering colleges and they churned out graduates while charging nominal fees. The Minister has challenged this proposition and has brought in the new factor of competition. Speaking at a function at Jalandhar, he said, “We feel, whether government or private, only good institutions will flourish and bad will go. Survive through competition and

that is 21st Century India.” This market-driven approach is welcome. But competition can be either killing or invigorating depending upon the underlying conditions. Competition leads to invigoration and innovation if the market is growing. Business persons find new ways of producing better and cheaper goods. The same competition becomes killing in a slowing economy. Business persons have to cut costs in order to survive. They compromise on quality of the goods produced by them. A destructive cycle is set in motion. A slowing economy lead to less demand, which leads to losses for businesses, which forces them to cut costs, which leads to them producing low quality goods, which impose hidden costs on consumers, which kills the economy.

The impact of competition on our engineering colleges will similarly depend on the underlying economic conditions. The portents are not good. Large numbers of these colleges are already in trouble. The number of students taking admissions has dropped from 89,000 to 79,000 in Maharashtra. Around 70 per cent of the total seats in engineering courses are lying vacant in the state. Many engineering colleges have been put on sale in Andhra Pradesh. They are finding that their graduates are unable to secure jobs. New applicants have vanished and colleges are in trouble.

The employers blame this on poor quality of the graduates being churned out of the private colleges. While that is true on the surface, the malaise lies deeper. This can be understood by looking at the controversy regarding H1B Visas. Companies in the United States say they are not able to find skilled workers hence they have to employ foreign nationals. But this often is a ruse used by private companies to access cheaper imported labour. A report in the Los Angeles Times gives the example of Qualcomm, an American multinational semiconductor and tele-



Dr Bharat Jhunjunwala underlines the need to improve quality of engineering education in public sector institutions, to make engineering graduates more employable.

communications equipment company. The Company claimed that they “face a dire shortage of university graduates in engineering.” But only a few weeks later it cut its work force by 5,000 people. Qualcomm was making a phony plea of shortages to put pressure on the US Government to allow more foreign nationals on H1B visas that are willing to work at lesser wages. Another study quoted by the Atlantic Magazine says, “No one has been able to find any evidence indicating... widespread labor market shortages or hiring difficulties in science and engineering occupations... Were there to be a genuine shortage, there would be evidence of employers raising wage offers to attract the scientists and engineers they want.” These examples show that there is actually reduced demand for engineers and the talk of shortage of skilled engineers is more due to the unwillingness of the employers to pay the salaries demanded by the graduates. The situation in our country is similar. Employers complain that they face difficulty in finding candidates of good quality. What they mean to say is that they are not willing to pay the correct price for a candidate of good quality.

There is a dynamic connection between the demand and supply of any item in the market. Consider the supply of potatoes in the market. Good quality potatoes are available at Rs 30 a kilo while those of poor quality are available at Rs 15 a kilo. Now a buyer wants good quality potatoes at Rs 20 a kilo which is not available in the market. So he complains there is “shortage” of good quality potatoes in the market just as Qualcomm complained that there was

***Competition
between the
private colleges is
taking a toll
because jobs are
not available.***

shortage of engineering graduates. Now, let us say there is a huge demand for good quality potatoes in the market. Customers are willing to pay Rs 40 a kilo for them. The increase in price is proof that there is a shortage. The message will go back to the farmers. They will produce more of good quality potatoes and the price will come down to Rs 30 a kilo in the next season.

The same applies to engineering graduates. Let us say there is a huge demand for good engineering graduates. Employers would then be willing to pay higher salaries, say, Rs 50,000 per month. The message will go back to the youth that engineers can get high salaries. They will apply for admission in engineering colleges in large numbers. The colleges will be swamped with applicants. They will increase the fees which the students will be willing to pay in expectation of high-paying jobs after graduation. The colleges will be able to pay good salaries to the faculty, and the supply of good engineering graduates will increase in a few years. The fact that there is no increase in the salaries offered to good quality engineers in our country today in proof that is problem is lack of demand for the graduates.

We must understand the saying of the Mr. Javadekar in the

above backdrop. Let us consider the private sector first. Competition between the private colleges is taking a toll because jobs are not available. An owner of a private college in West UP said that they are getting more applicants in their diploma courses. Employers prefer diploma holders to degree holders because they are willing to do all types of jobs. Degree holders have a sense of superiority. Thus, both diploma and degree holders get the about the same salary in the market. That shows the state of the market. There simply is no demand for higher skilled degree-holding graduates. Competition among private colleges in this situation will only lead to the production of more low-skilled diploma holders and fewer high-skilled degree holders. That will not take the country forward. But the Minister of Human Resources cannot do much. The state of the economy is outside his domain.

He can do much in respect of government colleges, however. They have less constraints of money. Teachers are paid according to the scale. But teachers have no interest in teaching. Thus graduates of government colleges often get lower salaries than graduates from private colleges. This is where the Minister must focus his attention. The way forward is to make student evaluation of teachers mandatory in all government institutions. All teachers should be subjected to an external review and the lowest 10 percent should be dismissed every year. That will revive government colleges and provide good quality engineers to the country. The private sector will follow suit. □□

*Author was formerly Professor of Economics at
IIM Bengaluru*

New Trade System in Trump & Brexit Era

Recently, WTO's Director General, Roberto Ezvedo, visited India. During one of his meetings with some experts and organizations, associated with trade & commerce, he was asked about the WTO's future, after Trump's taking over as US President and how will he deal with his (Trump's) disenchanting free trade system? His quick response was that if a member nation violates the WTO rules, the affected members could make a complaint against the member nation; and on the basis of this complaint, action can be taken on that country under the WTO dispute settlement provisions. The WTO itself cannot take suo moto action about this.

Significance of President Trump and Brexit

After the WTO came into existence in 1995, the world's trade began to be operated under (WTO's) rule based system. Tariffs started decreasing and non-tariff barriers began to move away. But due to these rules, all the countries did not have the same effect. Although the reduction of import duties and removal of obstacles had increased the trade of all the countries; however, the trade balance of most of the countries had worsened.

Although American industries faced the heat, however, business of big American corporations continued to grow throughout the world due to US's diplomatic influence and economic power. The revenue of the American government was also growing due to this reason, as these corporations were contributing hugely to US public exchequer. The new patent system was also benefiting American companies. So, the United States was a main beneficiary of globalisation and WTO. The US dollar also strengthened vis a vis other currencies. However, this honeymoon with globalisation did not last long in developed world and



Though, supporters of globalisation look upon protectionism with contemptuous attitude, there is no better way to save employment and industry than the protectionism, opines
Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



America and other developed countries started getting disillusioned from globalisation. The participation of these countries in WTO meetings started diminishing and WTO meetings were also gradually reduced to rituals. After the economic recession since 2007-08, the USA and other developed nations apparently started adopting a conservationist approach.

Last year, in the UK, the referendum took place and Britons decided to part with European Union (EU), what was termed as exit of Britain from EU or in short 'Brexit'. In the meanwhile, Donald Trump started gaining popularity in the United States and was subsequently elected as president of USA. These changes reflected changed attitude of developed countries towards globalisation. Now, whereas, Britain is moving forward towards bilateral agreements, after its imminent exit from EU and the US's attempts to impose heavy import duty on imports from China. All these developments depict dumping of WTO by the same set of countries, who were its fierce supporters. With America separating itself from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and adopting protectionist approach, it seems that the WTO is taking a back seat now. In such a case, when the country that advocated for free trade and multilateral trade agreements the most, is withdrawing itself, naturally a debate about the new trade system has sprung up.

Arguments of WTO Supporters

Naturally, with new developments in US and Europe, and changed thinking of the policy makers there, nervousness is quite visible amongst supporters of WTO and globalisation. They are

also scared that this trend will further accelerate. However, at the same time, they are busy explaining that the WTO and multilateral trade agreements would ultimately survive. They give three arguments :

First, after the WTO came into existence, the alternative trade system ceased to exist; and the biggest change came when China also subscribed to the WTO. Earlier European integration also contributed to strengthening of the WTO. WTO supporters argue that due to the abandonment of TPP by the US and the absence of any alter-

With new developments in US & Europe, and changed thinking of the policy makers there, nervousness is quite visible amongst supporters of WTO and globalisation.

native trade system after Brexit, European nations will have to accept the WTO as readymade forum for trade agreements. In such a situation, WTO will become important again, because this is the only forum for trade negotiations.

The second argument of the WTO supporters is that while the United States under the leadership of Donald Trump has decided to impose tariff and non-tariff barriers on imports from different countries, the affected member nations of the WTO would complain against US only at WTO forum. And WTO can only effectively curb the protectionist attitude of

the US. Therefore, WTO will gain prominence once again and emerge as a more robust institution directing world trade.

Their third argument is that although it is true that regional trade agreements will move forward in Asia and other countries in the near future, but this requires a new leadership at the global level. Since there is no such capacious leadership in the world today, nations will again have to turn towards WTO. These supporters of the WTO say that many countries including India, South Africa, Brazil, China, Australia and Indonesia will come to the rescue of the WTO, because their interests coincide with free trade as nurtured by multilateral agreements.

Voice of Democracy

We have to understand that due to the unemployment, poverty and inequalities in United States, Britain and other parts of the globe (generated by trade led globalisation), people's sentiments are getting reflected in upsurge against globalisation democratically. In France too, similar feelings are being revealed. Not only the people, the governments have also started realising that due to free trade, there is not only an imbalance in foreign trade, industries are shutting down and employment opportunities are eroding due to heavy imports in the name of making available cheap products from China and other countries. Rise of poverty and unemployment is the natural outcome. Therefore, protection of industries by way of import restrictions is important. Though, supporters of globalisation look upon protectionism with contemptuous attitude, there is no better way to save employment and industry than the protectionism. □□

Liberal India and Indian pseudo liberals



India is an ancient country and is known for its liberal philosophy, liberal ideas, liberal attitude, liberal people and liberal institutions. However, recently, after BJP taking over the reins of Indian government in 2014, there is a rise of neo pseudo liberalism all over India. This neo pseudo liberalism is primarily against the consolidation of Indian national forces desirous of protecting Indian ethos and Indian basic liberal attitude inbuilt in Indian culture and Indian constitution. These pseudo liberals are intolerant of BJP government and its nationalist policy insistence. The neo pseudo liberalism believes not in liberalism of any kind as such but

intend to destabilise the stable government and stable Indian society with a hope to replace it with a chaotic society where democratic government cannot function. This, the neo liberals are sure, will open the doors for their centralised dictatorial one party government, which alone, as they believe, can solve the problems of chaotic society. As is known, their modus operandi is very simple. Demean everything that is Indian—every Indian principle, every Indian thought, every Indian idea, every Indian tradition, every Indian religious outfit, every of Indian life practice and every Indian binding force that so far stabilised Indian society—and allure Indian youth and young Indian minds with illusory ideas of freedom and socio-politico-economic liberty and equality. Indian society, however, is familiar with such modus operandi for hundreds of years and survived all such onslaughts. The current phase will also pass and the propaganda against Indian society and its culture will die down naturally. BJP winning in a state like UP is the evidence.



Nationalist forces thus need to expose pseudo liberals more and help Indian youth understand their hidden divisive agenda, suggests
Anil Javalekar

Forces behind Neo pseudo liberals

There are three forces behind this neo pseudo liberals and their pseudo liberalism. **First** is of leaders and their families desirous of ruling India with dynastic and feudal mode. Their failure to win elections and resulting frustration is making them to oppose everything that is represented by rising BJP and its supportive nationalist organisations. **Second** force is of certain regional-religion-cast-class based political parties and organisations including Indian communists and their supportive organisations. These parties and groups are more interested in keeping Indian societies divided in to casts, sub casts, religion and region so to dictatorially rule it socially, politically and economically. Most of these forces intend to confuse Indian people about their faith, their lifestyle practices, their religion, their godly idols, their institutions and their respectable and trusted people. Some hope to rule India dictatorially with one party government and mostly give false promises of liberty, equality and prosperity. These groups and parties basically question

present Indian socio-political-democratic setup and Indian socio-political-economic policies implemented so far since independence and try to make issues out of every isolated incidents and events for the purpose. **Third** force is of frustrated religio-political groups that have survived Indian partition but feel partition not yet complete and dream for more divisions of Indian territories on religious grounds. This force is being sponsored and supported from neighbouring countries. Many neo pseudo liberals play in the hands of all above forces knowingly or unknowingly.

Illusory Fear is the base for pseudo attitude

The base of this pseudo liberalism is the denial of history and an illusory fear about national forces and nationalism. This pseudo liberal groups confuse Indian mind and spread their fear among Indian Muslims, Indian castes-sub castes and Indian youth by distorting facts and by changing historical perspectives so to destabilise Indian society.

First is the spread of fear among Indian Muslims about the Hindu nationalism. As is known, Indians received a powerful blow in the form of partition at the time of independence and that still carries its blood dust and spread hatred among Indian society. Additionally, Indian democracy and its electoral vote bank politics never allowed partition's blood dust to settle down. Indian National Congress and its leadership, who ruled independent India almost for 60 years and more, carried the impression and spread a fear psychosis among Indian Muslims that nationalist Hindu forces

Many Indian political parties therefore, followed the same strategies and consolidated Muslim support so to gain Political power.

are against them. The idea of protecting Indian Muslims and keeping them in constant fear of Hindu nationalist forces remained their main ruling strategy. Most of the period it worked and Congress won elections and ruled India. Many Indian political parties therefore, followed the same strategies and consolidated Muslim support so to gain Political power. As time passes and number of power claimants increased, there was a need to create more fear among Muslims because they had the organised voting capabilities. They intentionally spread rumour & misinformation about RSS and all other Hindu outfits so that more fear can be spread among Muslims. Growing media helped them in this adventure. This also worked very well till recently. In the meantime, Indian Muslims started realising that they are being used by political parties for political gains and started understanding the fact that their fate is equally linked with the fate of Indian Hindus and neighbouring Hindus neither doubt their national spirit nor treat them differently as being propagated. Most Hindus and most Muslims in rural areas live like brothers and participate in each other's festivals enthu-

siastically and stand together in neighbourly crisis. Therefore, the need arises to make events and incidents happen to create fear among Indian Muslims. Neo pseudo liberals are adventuring in to the same now.

Second is the spread of fear among lower castes and sub castes about the supremacy of higher castes. The pure purpose of this fear spread is to divide Indian Hindu community. There is no denying that Castes exist in Indian society and have remained a binding force for many of Indian sub-communities for long. Indian constitution makers, leading Hindu Institutions and great Indian personalities consistently made conscious efforts to reduce the importance of castes and the result is positive as can be seen from declined sense of belonging to caste. Now the castes remained mostly limited to marriages. RSS can be termed as the first one among the organisations that practically followed the strategies to eradicate the caste system. RSS practices casteless system in its functioning and in its treatment to members and has created a standard practice of behaviour without reference to the castes. However, the system of Indian elections brought back the importance of castes, even of sub castes and presently, the vote bank politics is ruining the Indian social fabrics. As is known, Indian pseudo liberals are ahead of all in creating this divide. They constantly and consistently provoke lower castes against the upper castes by quoting and referring to isolated instances, the ancient Indian literature without context and old historical evidences of exploitation. Indian political parties also must take blame

apart from some of the government policies that continued cast based treatment to Indian citizens.

Third is the spread of fear among Indian youth about the Hinduism and its orthodox religious practices. Indian youth is backbone of Indian society and this youth is born after independence. They enjoyed the freedom of almost all types as defined in Indian constitution. Emergency by Congress government first freeze these freedoms in 1975 and with great fight, Indians got it back. Many of today's pseudo liberals supported emergency and are now crying for every incident and every event. These groups provoke youth on isolated incidences and use every media for propagation so to create an atmosphere of fear that the religious fundamentalism is on rise and will control every of modern lifestyle. They spread the messages that BJP and its sister organisations are promoting all orthodox socio-religious practices of old days that may harm the future of Indian youth and their modern life styles. They thus confuse Indian youth by illusory definitions of freedom. JNU incidence and Ramjas College row are examples. These neo pseudo liberals are basically against Hindus and Hindu organisations, their spiritual philosophy and their material life practices. Surprisingly, they never dare to talk against other religious groups, their philosophies and their life practices. Triple Talaq case, conversions by christens or killing of RSS volunteers in Kerala are some examples. The height of pseudo attitude is that these neo pseudo liberals dare to damage the Hindu beliefs and images of Hindu gods and goddesses but dare not to do

Nationalist forces therefore, need to be careful & strategic so to counter the spread of fears psychosis among Indian Muslims, Indian lower casts & Indian youth.

such things in the case of other religions. They distort and misquote Indian history and define the nationalism conveniently. The glorification of Mughal period is one example.

Indian youth need to understand the hidden agenda of neo pseudo liberals

Right from the days of Indian freedom struggle, Indian nationalists conflicted with Indian left ideologists reason being their outside loyalties and their denial of religiosity. After Independence, Indian left ideologists have consistently failed in their socio-economic political activism even after getting opportunity to rule one or two Indian states. It was thus natural for them to do something more to survive and their choice was limited to their intolerant dictatorial philosophy and belief in violence. Indian neo pseudo liberalism has mainly been supported and sponsored by failed Indian left ideologists and their target as usual is Indian nationalism. They intend to confuse Indian youth and enthruse them to speak and act against government. Indian National Congress is out of power because of their

faulty policies and vote bank politics and are eager to get back to power anyhow. Theirs is limited agenda of dynastic mode of democracy and therefore ready to support anyone who is against BJP. Same is the attitude of other political parties and outfits. This is how these parties are coming together just to overthrow nationalist forces and rule India with their dynastic mode and divisive baseline policies.

Nationalist forces need to care

Nationalist forces therefore, need to be careful and strategic so to counter the spread of fears psychosis among Indian Muslims, Indian lower casts and Indian youth. India is not liberal only because of its constitution nor because of its certain known political leaders from freedom struggle who ruled this country. India has been a liberal country throughout its history right from Vedas and before. 'India' as Swami Vivekananda put it 'is the land where alone religion was practical and real, and here alone men and women plunged boldly in to realise the goal, just as in other lands they madly plunge in to realise the pleasures of life by robbing their weaker brethren. Here and here alone the human heart expanded till it included not only the human, but birds, beasts, and plants; from the highest gods to grains of sand, the highest and the lowest, all find a place in the heart of man, grown great, infinite. And here alone, the human soul studied the universe as one unbroken unity whose every pulse was his own pulse'. Nationalist forces thus need to expose pseudo liberals more and help Indian youth understand their hidden divisive agenda. □□

Press Note issued on April 7, 2017 at the occasion of Press Conference addressed by Dr. Vandana Shiva and Dr. Ashwani Mahjan

Unapproved release of Roundup Ready Flex (RRF) cotton by Monsanto: Demand to ban Monsanto and start legal proceedings against the company

Monsanto brought the GM cotton Roundup Ready Flex (RRF) variety transgenic seed into India in the year 2008 as per the information on the GEAC website. As per the approvals they have obtained from RCGM and GEAC, the regulatory bodies functioning under the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), the importing company is responsible for the safe custody of the genetically modified organisms as it can pose serious risks to the environment. The GM crops are regulated under The Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous micro-organisms Genetically engineered organisms or cells, issued under sections 6, 8 and 25 of the EPA. Sections 6 & 8 are to regulate highly toxic substances.

Monsanto conducted trials under contained conditions (to prevent the Transgenic variety from escaping into environment accidentally or deliberately) with the approvals given by GEAC or RCGM as well as the concerned State Governments. The permissions given by these authorities also mandates Monsanto to ensure that no escape of the genetically modified seeds into the environment.

It is surprising to see that Monsanto has released the RRF cotton seeds into lakhs of acres in various districts of Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It appears Monsanto had released RRF trait after transferring it into several local varieties, into India environment so that they will be able to induce the farmers to grow herbicide resistant cotton to sell their herbicides roundup in large quantities. It also appears to be a ploy by Monsanto to pressure the Government / GEAC to approve the RRF trait to make it popular and then get approval from GEAC based on the popular demand by the cotton farmers. Similar tactics they have deployed in 2002 when they used the farmers who are using Bt cotton seeds unknowingly to pressurise the Government for approval of Bollgard trait prematurely.

Release of seeds for sowing lakhs of acres with unapproved genetically modified traits in vast areas of 5 important cotton growing States like AP, Telan-

gana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and MP is a violation of various provisions of the EPA which is punishable under Section 15 of the EPA. The Swadeshi Jagaran Munch collected samples from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and they are tested in the laboratory of CICR, Nagpur. As per the test results, bolbs collected from six fields tested positive for roundup ready flex. Monsanto needs to be investigated for such serious breach of the conditions of which they are supposed to adhere to, while handling the hazardous micro organisms and genetically modified traits while conducting trials. Serious action shall be taken against the company and also to recover the amounts that are required to clean the environment from the pollution that is caused by the unauthorised release of RRF trait in cotton which is expected to run into thousands of crores of rupees.

In addition to this they also shall be charged under relevant sections of Biodiversity Act which also they have violated as in case of Bt Brinjal as they have used Indian cotton Germplasm without approval of biodiversity Authority to transfer trait and released them into environment

On the occasion of the world health day 7th April Swadeshi Jagran Manch appeals to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ban Monsanto on account of illegal contamination with herbicide tolerant GMO Roundup ready Bt cotton and start legal proceedings against the company. Round up, a glyphosate based pesticides has been declared a “carcinogen” by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Sri Lanka had banned glyphosate after 28000 reported deaths directly linked to the use of this herbicide.

This is the second time Monsanto since '95 has illegally contaminated India and native cotton varieties with its toxic seeds. After reports of contamination, we with help of farmers collected sample from different areas and sent them to the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), and they confirmed the presence of roundupready (RR) Bt cotton, which is not only illegal but a massive on the faith of Indian government and Indian people. □□

UP poll results mirror media disconnect with people

Satta bazaars seem to have a larger reach among the people than exit polls or journalists who haunt dhabas and tea stalls to feel the pulse of the voter. More than the exit polls which predicted a BJP lead in the UP polls, it was the satta bazaar, particularly in Mumbai and Delhi, which foresaw Narendra Modi topping 300 seats in the state. If the UP polls brought out anything spectacularly, it was the disconnect of not just the opposition which thought that it had Modi cornered but also of the media. The media almost unanimously reported that in this 'waveless election', there was discernible Jat anger, sharp demonetisation hostility against Modi and that the Mini Mahagatbandhan of the Samajwadi Party and the Congress would be a threat to Narendra Modi. It even made it a point to report Ahmed Patel as saying that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra intervened and sewed up a tie-up after talks between the SP and Congress had hit a rough patch over seat-sharing - so as to credit her with the possible victory over Modi in UP. The SP-Congress strategy was that as neither could be credibly seen as a victor over Modi, they should ally and the alliance should be projected as a winner from day one. The media virtually volunteered to be co-opted into the strategy.

Jat anger or Jat wave?

See how the media began its campaign against Modi in UP. 'Angry Jats have moved away from BJP' - this was the unanimous report of all media, visual and



During recent elections, media failed to gauge the pulse of the voters,
says
S. Gurumurthy





How wrong the media could get on Modi was self-evident even earlier, in its assessment of the impact of demonetisation.

print, weeks ahead of the poll. But what happened in the poll? In the first phase in Jatland, the BJP won 66 of the 73 seats - a strike rate of over 90 per cent.

The BJP performed best in Jatland where the media reported that it would lose. In the second phase, it won 50 out of 67 seats; in the third, 55 out of 69; in the fourth, 40 out of 53; in the fifth, 44 out of 52; in the sixth, 32 out of 46; When the sixth phase closed, it is now known that the BJP had won 287 seats. It was at this point Narendra Modi said that the BJP had already won and he was a going through the motions of the seventh phase, in which, eventually, the BJP got 25 more out of 40 seats - making a final tally 312, not including its allies' share of 13 more. When Modi campaigned for three days in the last phase, the media went to the extent of saying that he was perhaps uncertain about winning and so he was straining and risking himself so much. The SP-Congress alliance was bound to claim that Modi would be defeated. But it was silly to see the media almost trumpeting for them. Finally the report of Jat anger against Modi only concealed the fact that the 2014 Modi magic was still on, including the Jat wave in his favour.

Modi's de-mon, Sastry's fast

How wrong the media could get on Modi was self-evident even earlier, in its assessment of the impact of demonetisation. The media was overwhelmed by visuals of millions queuing up before banks shown by TV channels.

When crores of people had stood in queues for days and hours, many had died while in the queue, even the Supreme Court talked of anarchy, and TV channels were showing the opposition crowding the well in Parliament and shutting down a whole session on the issue of mass suffering for cash, the media and opposition parties concluded that Modi had lost the demonetisation game and wrote his political obituary. But the point they missed was that unless the crores of people who stood in the queue and suffered hardship were convinced that Modi was doing the right thing, they wouldn't have been as enduring and peaceful as shockingly they were.

Despite the media, opposition and even the Supreme Court saying and warning - as if they were wanting - there could be riots, there were none. This ought to have given a deafening message to them that the people willingly suffered the hardship and supported demonetisation.

It needed trans-political, sociological and psychological perspective to know that the people also can endure suffering for the good of the nation even in normal times, not just in war time. But they would suffer hardship only when they see the leader who asks them to suffer, also works hard and suffers selflessly, for them. But when they see, as they normally do, leaders looting the nation, the very same people would not want to undergo hardship for the nation.

Today's father and grandfathers of the present generation would recall why crores of people did happily forego one meal a week and fasted on Monday nights when Lal Bahadur Shastri asked them to do so in the larger national interest. Many continue to do so even now, five decades after the short little honest man departed. Only morally upright and confident leaders can ask the people to suffer for the nation. The current example of such leadership is Modi asking the people to undergo suffering which was much worse than the one weekly meal that Sastry asked them to forego - to suffer for want of cash for two months, and the people enduring the suffering as he wanted them to.

Hostility to de-mon or support?

But see how the media projected demonetisation. Take just a few anecdotes. A well-known journalist tweeted a day before the sixth phase (Feb. 7) on his behalf and on behalf of fellow journalists, "most jurnos travelling in UP say notebandi and its negative impact remains a big issue. Economic realities are dawning".

Another journo tweeted,

“Travelling in UP and the anger with demonetisation is one thing that consistently stands out. Wonder how Delhi analysts missed that.” Another retweeted that and commented, “The mood seems to have evolved. From euphoria in Nov, to no euphoria, no hostility in Dec, to sharp hostility now”. This report of hostile anger was when the ground reality was entirely the other way. It was clear that the 2014 NaMo wave was turning into a tsunami in 2017. How did that escape the keen eyes of the journos and how, on the contrary, they discerned, “sharp hostility” to Modi’s demonetisation? Hostility to de-mon and wave for Modi cannot coexist.

Now look at how a well-known writer wrote in a leading English newspaper that the SP-Congress alliance was bound to give BJP a run for its money. He listed the reasons why the BJP would lose. One, Congress vitality was bound to come to the fore if Priyanka took up the campaign in right earnest; two, the BJP was up against two major obstacles - rejuvenated Akhilesh and the political astuteness of the Congress to decide to play a secondary role; three, the main advantage of the “secular” SP-Congress combine was that the Muslims would see them as the only one who could defeat the BJP and block-vote for them; four, the BJP suffered the disadvantage of not having a leader of stature in UP and having to rely on only Modi; five, the failure of the economy to generate employment had dampened Modi’s chances; six, demonetisation had complicated Modi’s task and jury was still out



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whether the people have forgiven Modi for their inconveniences; seven, Modi would be pitted against Akhilesh, a young leader who had understood the value of economic growth and was not hamstrung by the BJP’s communal tag or his own party’s caste-based approach to politics. These are only a sample of the media promotion of the SP-Congress combine. The largest circulated English daily in Delhi headlined: “Congress fails in UP but Rahul Gandhi succeeds in Dalit mission”. What was the result? BJP won 76 of the 86 SC/ST reserved seats, and 325 of the total 403 seats. Now these journos are in purdah.

An Epilogue

Now the very media that reported Modi was in distress in UP has U-turned, at least for the time being. It is now talking of a mys-

terious invisible Modi wave, expounding on the scale of the BJP’s victory in UP and Uttaranchal, on how it has shocked even its admirers, on how Narendra Modi’s stunning victories have silenced his adversaries, on how he did he achieve it, on the causes of his success, on the reasons of his adversaries’ failure, on whether Akhilesh Yadav was right in aligning with the Congress, or splitting with his father, to almost wailing about how the split in the opposition led to the BJP win, and about how the secular vote - read block Muslim votes - got divided and enabled the BJP win even in Muslim majority seats.

The media analysis goes on endlessly. But what most media has missed - seemingly deliberately - are the news of visible Muslim, particularly Muslim women, support for Modi even in Muslim-dominated constituencies in UP. Otherwise the BJP could not have won most of them. Some media opine that the BJP won because the Muslim votes split between SP-Congress alliance and BSP. But the presumption of two way split is only partially true.

There was a three way split with the BJP getting a significant stream of Muslim votes. This should have been welcomed instead of being suppressed by the media. But if they admit it how to call the Muslim votes secular votes, as they normally do? So much for the media reportage before and after the UP polls. Even now the media disconnect from the people seems too continue. Will they introspect? □□

S Gurumurthy is a political and economic analyst

Sacred cow: A milking machine?

Ecologically, the cow has been central to Indian civilisation. The integration of livestock in farming has been the secret behind India’s centuries-old sustainable agriculture systems. Farm animals sustain our soils by providing soil fertility. They sustain the agrarian economy with renewable energy. As K.M. Munshi, India’s first minister of agriculture after Independence, and a dear friend of my late parents, wrote: “The Mother Cow and Nandi are not worshipped in vain. They are the primeval agents who enrich the soil — nature’s great land transformers — who supply organic matter, which, after treatment, becomes nutrient matter of the greatest importance. In India, tradition, religious sentiment and economic needs have tried to maintain a cattle population large enough to maintain the cycle, only if we know it.”

Like our seeds, India’s animal breeds were bred for diversity — diversity of breeds and functions. The best cattle breeds of the world have been bred in India — the Sahiwal, Red Sindhi, Rathi, Tharparkar, Hariana, Ongole, Kankrej and Gir. Indian breeds are multi-taskers. Both the female and male offspring have value. The cow provided nutrition through dairy, and the bullocks provided energy for transport and farm operations and this sophisticated breeding was done by indigenous experts.

Just as farmers breeding of seeds, and crop diversity, has been ignored by industrial crop breeding, breeding genetic diversity of livestock with multiple uses has been ignored by the industrial animal breeding “factories”, which have reduced cows and their progeny to milk machines and meat machines. The industrial model, based on what I have called the Monocultures of the Mind, breeds uniformity and one dimensionality, it breeds standardisation and mediocrity. Indigenous breeds in India use 29 per cent of the organic matter provided to them



Animals on a farm sustain the soil, and lives and livelihoods of small farmers and are therefore indispensable for sustainable agriculture, concludes

Dr. Vandana Shiva



compared to only nine per cent in US industrial farms. Indian cattle use 22 per cent of the energy, compared to only seven per cent in the US. India's holy cow is much more valued, and valuable than "pounds of flesh".

Traditionally cows and farm animals have used organic matter — like straw — while the grain goes to human consumption. The Green Revolution dwarf varieties deprived animals of their food, and the aata from these varieties being tasteless — deprived people. Most grain from industrial crop production is now used as animal feed, depriving humans of food. A new competition has been created between food for animals and food for humans. Seventy-five per cent of corn grown in India is for animal feed. In addition, we imported 500,000 tonnes of corn in 2016.

Yet, the highly efficient, sustainable indigenous food system, based on the multiple uses of crops and cattle, has been dismantled in the name of "efficiency" and "productivity". Integration has been replaced by fragmentation and separation. Dynamic complementarity has been replaced by a forced one-way competition. Cyclical and circular processes — based on mutuality and the law of return — have been replaced by linearity, violence and exploitation. India's multidimensional, multi-functional systems have been replaced by single commodity output systems using high inputs.

The sacred cow has thus been reduced to a milk machine. As Shanti George observes: "The trouble is that when dairy planners look at the cow, they just see her udder; though there is much more to her. They equate cattle only with milk,

and do not consider other livestock produce — draught power, dung for fertiliser and fuel, hides, skins, horn and hooves." In the industrial-exploitative paradigm, of the cow as a milk machine, our super-efficient and resilient Indian breeds are declared (quantitatively) inefficient, sans qualitative assessment. The pure indigenous breeds are replaced by homogenised hybrids of the Zebu cow, with foreign branded strains like the Jersey, Holstein, Friesian, Red Dane and Brown Swiss, supposedly to improve the Zebu's dairy "productivity".

Other contributions of farm animals are forgotten in the mechanistic reductionism paradigm. When I wrote *Staying Alive*, more than two-thirds of the energy needs of rural India were met by 80 million work animals, of which 70 million were the male progeny of indigenous breeds. When I worked in the IIM Bangalore in the late 1970s, N.S. Ramaswamy was the director. He was famously known as "Cartman" — for his work on the contributions of animals to India's economy. According to him, animals ploughed 100 million hectares and hauled 25 billion km tonnes of freight in 15 million ox-carts. He estimated that 74 million oxen and eight million buffaloes make available 40 million horsepower of energy (worth `100 billion per year). Animal energy saves six million tonnes of petroleum (worth `120 billion per year). The asset value of our pashu dhan is Rs 250 billion. The replacement of animal energy by mechanised systems would require an investment of \$200-\$300 billion.

Just when we need our farm animals to play an important role in meeting the UN Sustainable

Development Goals to which India is committed, we are destroying our animal wealth, and with it the ecological and economic contributions they make. For the first time in the history of Indian agriculture, the male calves have been declared useless. And this is what has led to the explosion of slaughterhouses, and the "pink revolution" of meat and beef exports. The livestock policy — made as part of the World Bank-driven structural adjustment policies — to promote the meat industry states "religious sentiments against cattle slaughter seem to spill over also on buffaloes and prevent the utilisation of a large number of surplus male calves". India today is the top beef exporter of the world. Between 2009-10 and 2014-15 alone buffalo meat exports grew more than fourfold, from 4.9 lakh tonnes to 13.14 lakh tonnes; from \$1163.54 million to \$4068.64 million. But these export earnings hide the losses to the soil fertility, the nutrition of children and lost renewable energy.

Animals on a farm sustain the soil, and lives and livelihoods of small farmers. As the Viniyog Parivar calculated, in the case of the foreign-owned Al Kabeer slaughterhouse in Andhra Pradesh, if the animals had been allowed to live, they would save foreign exchange worth Rs 910.25 crore. Just in terms of fertility of soil, the slaughtered farm animals would have provided Rs 36.41 crore of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium (NPK), for which we pay the "fertiliser" industry. We are not just exporting our animal wealth. We are exporting our soil and water. We are trading away our future. □□

The writer is the executive director of the Nardanya Trust

Monsanto sneaks in banned GM seeds

Agriculture multinational, Monsanto, that is doggedly pushing Genetically Modified (GM) seeds in India despite the spectacular collapse of Bt Cotton, has been fraudulently introducing Round-Up resistant GMO Cotton in a number of States, without the knowledge and approval of the statutory bodies, most notably the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). The affected States include Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat.

Monsanto is aggressively marketing its products in the hope of securing a post-facto approval, as when it entered India in 1995 and marketed Bt Cotton and lobbied the then government for approval, which it secured in 2002. Environmental activist, Vandana Shiva, had then gone to the Supreme Court, but the case was closed when Monsanto managed to secure government approval for Bollgard-I Bt Cotton. Recently, confident of managing approval for GM-Mustard with the help of a vocal lobby, it planned a merger with Bayer (which was buying it out); share prices began to rise when the Competition Commission of India put a spanner in the works.

The discovery of Round-Up resistant Cotton has been scientifically validated by the Central Institute for Cotton Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Maharashtra, which tested samples of seed-cotton from nine fields of seven villages in Nagpur district. All tested positive for Bollgard-II and EPSPS, Round-Up-Ready-Flex (RRF).

Further, seeds from the samples were subjected to 270 tests (Cry1Ac and Cry2Ab) and found positive, barring a handful. RRF is Bt cotton with the addition of a herbicide-resistant gene, which has specifically been banned by the Supreme Court.



Monsanto should also be charged under relevant sections of the Biodiversity Act which has been violated, as in case of Bt Brinjal, as it has used Indian cotton Germplasm without the approval of the Biodiversity Authority to transfer trait and released them into the environment, says
Sandhya Jain



Enraged at Monsanto habitually bypassing the mandatory screening and scientific processes before releasing new forms in agriculture, and getting them approved post facto, the RSS think tank, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, and leading environment organisation, Navdanya (of Vandana Shiva), have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to order a criminal investigation into the matter and ban Monsanto from operating in India, after exacting fines and due compensation for the damage done to farmers whose soil has been contaminated.

On World Health Day (7 April) it is pertinent to point out that Round-Up, a glyphosate-based herbicide, has been declared a “probable carcinogen” by the World Health Organisation; it is banned in several European countries in all forms and combinations. Sri Lanka banned glyphosate after over 20,000 people died and two lakh experienced kidney failure in a short period. Scientists linked the deaths directly to the use of this herbicide.

RRF Bt Cotton represents a major health hazard for citizens as well as the soil which, once contaminated, could infect other crops grown in the same fields. SJM co-convenor, Ashwani Mahajan, says Round-Up is highly toxic and is known to cause cancer, kidney failure, autism, DNA damage, and even disrupts the endocrine system. Argentina has seen a sharp rise in birth defects, cancers, kidney failures, infertility and other diseases due to unchecked use of Round-Up.

Vandana Shiva says GM crops do not have higher yields or better nutrition. In fact, they render the soil dead, destroy biodiversity and cause death and diseases in plants,

animals and human beings. Monsanto has deceived Indian farmers and the Government by illegally introducing RRF Bt Cotton, and must be brought to account for its reckless profiteering.

Indian agriculture rests on biodiversity. The Indian farmer harvests and uses every bit of biodiversity, from the grass on the boundaries of farms to feed cows, to eating seasonal green leafy vegetables. Round-up will not only kill all this biodiversity, but will bequeath cancer to farmers and consumers, besides robbing India of food self-sufficiency and ruining the food culture of millions of rural Indians.

This is why the Technical Expert Committee of the Supreme Court had concluded that Herbicide-tolerant crops should not be allowed in India as they kill all plants. In a land of rich biodiversity, they can destroy the food security and livelihood of small farmers. Herbicide-resistant traits can also contaminate crops of which India is a centre of Diversity.

Since its entry in 1995, Monsanto has extracted Rs 7000 crore from poor cotton farmers and is directly responsible for pushing farmers into debt and suicide. Since 1995, over 3,10,000 farmers have committed suicide, most of which are from the cotton belt of India.

India regulates GM crops under The Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous micro-organisms, Genetically engineered organisms or cells, issued under sections 6, 8 and 25 of the EPA. These permissions mandate Monsanto to ensure that there is no escape of genetically modified seeds into the environment.

It is therefore shocking that

Monsanto released Round-Up-Ready-Flex (RRF Bt Cotton) seeds across lakhs of acres in various districts of Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It seems to have released RRF trait after transferring it into several local varieties, to induce farmers to grow herbicide resistant cotton so as to sell the herbicide Round-Up in large quantities. This is a prelude to pressure the Government/GEAC to approve the RRF trait on grounds that it is popular with cotton farmers.

The release of seeds with unapproved genetically modified traits in vast areas of important cotton-growing States violates various provisions of the Environment Protection Act and is punishable under Section 15 of the EPA. Monsanto must be investigated for such serious breach of conditions they are supposed to adhere to while handling hazardous micro organisms and genetically modified traits. It must also be made to pay fines to clean the environment from the pollution caused by unauthorised release of RRF trait in cotton, which could run into thousands of crores of rupees.

Monsanto should also be charged under relevant sections of the Biodiversity Act which has been violated, as in case of Bt Brinjal, as it has used Indian cotton Germplasm without the approval of the Biodiversity Authority to transfer trait and released them into the environment. India with its rich biodiversity does not need GM crops; however, those committed to the claims of this fraudulent science should first develop a robust and independent biosafety assessment system to evaluate and monitor the same. □□

Does the Banking System Really Want to Help Farmers?

The Gujarat government gave a loan of Rs 456.79 crore to the Tatas to set up the Nano plant at Sanand, near Ahmedabad. The Gujarat government has acknowledged that the massive loan was given at an interest of 0.1%, to be paid back in 20 years. In other words, this huge loan was virtually an interest free long term loan. In another case, Steel tycoon, Laxmi Narain Mittal, was given Rs 1,200 crore by the Punjab government to invest in the Bathinda refinery. He also got the loan at a 0.1% rate of interest.

On the other hand, if an extremely poor woman in a village wants to buy a goat worth Rs 5,000, she goes to a micro-finance institute (MFI), which provides her a loan at an interest rate of 24% to 36% or even more. This paltry loan has to be returned at weekly intervals. This poor woman is also an entrepreneur and wants to sustain her livelihood rearing a goat, the milk of which she can sell. Millions of livelihoods can potentially be sustained if banks were to provide loans like the ones the Tatas and Mittal received, for poor entrepreneurs.

Farmers, for instance – suppose they buy a tractor at an interest rate of 12%. Big entrepreneurs can buy a luxury car at an interest rate of 7%. For a farmer, a tractor is necessary to improve crop production, which directly contributes to an increase in his income. The role of mechanisation to improve farming has never been in question, but for the rich, luxury cars are more of a status symbol. Therefore why is the banking system designed to favour the rich who already have many perks, while the poor pay a higher price to sustain their livelihoods?

Discrimination against the poor doesn't end here. The Public Accounts Com-



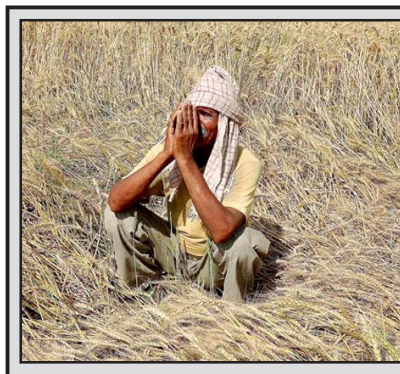
Much of the farm credit that is provided every year is also taken advantage of by the agribusiness companies and a very meagre sum actually reaches needy small farmers, exposes

**Dr. Devinder
Sharma**



mittee of the parliament has estimated that the total outstanding loans of public sector banks – Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) – stands at Rs 6.8 lakh crores. Out of this, 70% belongs to the corporate sector, whereas only 1% of the defaulters are farmers. The chief economic advisor, Arvind Subramanian, has already stated that the bad debts for the corporate sector should be written-off. According to him, the capitalist economy is designed so that the bad loans of these corporates have to be waived. India Ratings has estimated that more than Rs 4 lakh crore of the NPAs will be written-off. Writing-off of such enormous amounts of bad loans for the corporate sector makes economic sense, if the chief economic advisor is to be believed. On the other hand, the chairperson of State Bank of India, Arundhati Bhattacharya, laments that writing-off the outstanding loans of farmers is bad economics – it will lead to credit indiscipline. This when of the total NPAs, farmers were responsible for only 1%.

Much of the farm credit that is provided every year is also taken advantage of by the agribusiness companies. In the Budget 2017, finance minister Arun Jaitley had announced a farm credit of Rs 10-lakh crore. But while such a huge outlay for farm credit gives an impression of governmental concern about farmers, a study by Ram Kumar and Pallavi Chavan (from Tata Institute of Social Sciences) found that less than 8% of this actually goes to small farmers. And small farmers constitute roughly 83% of the entire farming community. Nearly 75% of the Rs 10-lakh crore farm credit is



What needs to be seriously considered is that a terrible agrarian crisis is being allowed to prevail, primarily because of systemic efforts to keep farmers impoverished.

reaped by agribusiness companies and big farmers who get the advantage of 3% interest subvention. Over the years, the definition of what constitutes a farm loan has been expanded to include warehousing companies, farm implement manufacturers and other agribusiness companies.

It is primarily because of the bank's indifference towards the farmers that the election promise of writing-off of farmers' loans in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have become such a contentious issue. Since prime minister Narendra Modi had promised to waive off farmers loans in UP, the ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare has already announced that the Centre will take care of the financial burden of waiving farm loans in UP. Whereas in Punjab, where Congress has formed the government, state finance minister Manpreet Badal, has come out with an innovative way to bear the burden of farm loan waiver. He says the state will 'takeover' the farmers outstanding loans, and work out a long-term agreement with the banks under which the state government will repay the farmer's dues.

In Punjab, an estimated Rs 35,000 crore of bank loans were defaulted on by farmers. In Uttar Pradesh, the total amount that needs to be waived for farmers

owning less than 2 hectares of land stands at Rs 36,000 crores. While the Centre has agreed to reimburse the UP government for the farm waiver, the question is, what about the other states? Maharashtra, for instance, is demanding Rs 30,500 crore for a loan waiver. Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has told the Maharashtra assembly that 23,000 farmers have killed themselves since 2009. In Tamil Nadu, which faces drought for the third year in a row, the state government has already declared a drought. Farmers are demanding a compensation package of Rs 25,000 per acre. Meanwhile, farmer suicides have been on the rise in Orissa and the Northeast, where they have nearly quadrupled over the past few years.

What needs to be seriously considered is that a terrible agrarian crisis is being allowed to prevail, primarily because of systemic efforts to keep farmers impoverished. By denying farmers the right price for their produce, the credit policy too is designed wrongly so that it benefits the rich at the cost of farmers and the rural poor. But will the banks accept their fault and redesign the credit policies? The rich corporates will continue to get tax incentives and massive subsidies in the name of incentives for growth. □□

Devinder Sharma is an expert on Indian agriculture.

Is Tamil Nadu going the Bengal way?



NGOs, mostly funded from USA and Europe, are very active in these protests. TN, like Bengal earlier, will be shunned by industrialists and this will only increase its sense of “victimhood”, feels **Prof R. Vaidyanathan**

Many will recollect that Bengal was a leader in several industries in the fifties and sixties. It was known for chemicals, pharmaceuticals and engineering industries. It had huge Salt Gholas in and around Kolkata and Howrah. The first computer was installed at Indian Statistical Institute at BT road. It had a vibrant handloom industry and was known for its dyeing skills. But Partition had given rise to a refugee wave and many from the East embraced the Left ideology. It was a sense of victimhood and expressed itself against Delhi. Actually the Left ideology of Bengal was a regional voice cloaked in ideology. Many bhadralok in-

tellectuals felt the shifting of the capital from Kolkata to Delhi was the beginning of discrimination against Bengal. The political class identified the business class as “oppressors” and entrepreneurship was frowned upon. The Left rule from the seventies re-enforced these biases and Bengal was shunned by industrialists except some from the old school like RPGs and Bangurs. The new entrepreneurship shifted to western India. The last straw was Nandigram where Tata’s proposed car factory was thwarted by the Trinamool Congress which carried “victimhood” to extremes. It was presented as agriculture versus inhuman capitalists. The project abandoned, got relocated to Gujarat, and the rest is history.

Interestingly, Tamil Nadu, one of the most advanced states, is currently exhibiting the “victimhood” mindset. Most political leaders are forced to accept this discourse. Koodankulam was a major nuclear energy project. Due to agitating NGOs, funded by foreign forces and supported by the Church, the project was stalled for years and costs escalated by over Rs.1000 crore. Even a mild mannered Manmohan Singh—then PM—had to express his anguish about this senseless intransigence. Then came the Jallikattu issue decided by the Supreme Court. Again a huge anti-Delhi sentiment was created, and now, the Hydrocarbon project at Neduvasal.

In the recently concluded Discovered Small Fields auctions, two contract areas — Karaikal in Puducherry and Neduvasal in Tamil Nadu (TN), having an in-place volume of 4.3 lakh tons of oil and oil equivalent gas (oil plus gas) — were awarded to private contractors. These two areas are expected to generate gross revenues of Rs 300 crore as well as a royalty of Rs 40 crore for the state governments. Officials have dismissed the allegation that the TN government

Counter View

was not informed or permission sought. An official pointed out that the mining lease approval is given by the State government and that it was aware of oil discovery and exploration.

ONGC was given the area under the petroleum exploration license in 1986. Exploration permission from the State government was given in 2008 and the mining lease was awarded in 2013 for seven years.

On December 30, 2016, ONGC wrote to the district administration of Neduvasal seeking to convert the mining lease from seven years to 20 years. Throughout this period we find Congress and DMK ministers at the Centre giving assent, but now the agitators are blaming PM Modi. Hydrocarbon projects are not new to TN, where over 100 projects are functioning. The opposition varies

from environmental concerns to bizarre issues of “grabbing” fertile lands by “central forces”. The process of drilling and production requires very limited surface land area (generally 120X120 square metre) which will not affect agriculture or the soil, the above official noted, adding that operators are required to follow strict environmental norms. Regarding the groundwater table, the official said that extraction is being carried out from deeper earth, (generally beyond 1,000 m), and thus aquifers, located at shallower levels are not affected.

Whenever the central scientists or bureaucrats go to Neduvasal to explain the issues they are gheroad and intimidated. The “victimhood” is taken to heights and is now turning into anti-industrialisation. The argument given – supported by local ministers – that local consent

is paramount, is dangerous. This can be replicated in Jharkhand or Chhattisgarh. No extractive industry can be started. What is below the surface belongs to the entire Indian society and not to local villagers. TN is facing an employment crisis due to lack of new industries, the West Asia crisis and the IT sector’s decline. Meanwhile, political parties are stoking linguistic fanaticism and a sense of victimhood against Delhi.

NGOs, mostly funded from USA and Europe, are very active in these protests. TN, like Bengal earlier, will be shunned by industrialists and this will only increase its sense of “victimhood”. Moreover, TN has enough secessionist forces supported by terror groups like the LTTE. An explosive cocktail is brewing. □□

The author is the Cho S Ramaswamy Visiting Chair Professor of Public Policy at Sastra University.

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NHRC'S Verdict on Kashmiri Pandits

After four years of prolonged discussions and hearings, arguments and counter arguments, NHRC of India has finally given its verdict on three hundred thousand internally displaced Kashmiri Pandits. It has dismissed both of their pleas, genocide and internal displacement. The actual text of the verdict is not with us and we have only seen its excerpts in national and local newspapers.

A cursory glance on the verdict reveals that the NHRC has very cleverly tried to play safe and avoid telling the bitter truth. It is a clear bid to please everybody and every party involved in the tragedy that overtook the Pandits. A close study of the verdict shows that political considerations have become a strong constraint for the Commission to call a spade by its name. The question is whether by trying to play safe, the Commission has really achieved its objective of being projected as impartial? Impartiality of a body that has been constituted on the premise that it will only take into account the human rights aspect of issues before it, stands eroded when it chooses to be friends to all, the oppressor and the aggrieved. Let us substantiate it.

By juxtaposing the numbers of people of two communities, Hindus and Muslims, killed in Kashmir, the Commission has tried to convey that the Muslims have suffered more than the Kashmiri Pandits have. The Pandits never made any plea that the number of the members of their community was more than that of the Muslims. The Pandits had made simply two cases (a) genocide was unleashed against them (b) they were internally displaced people, as they had not crossed the



NHRC's verdict shows that political considerations have become a strong constraint for the Commission to call a spade by its name, feels
Dr. KN Pandita



international border. Therefore, to bring in the number of the Muslims killed in Kashmir is an extraneous matter, which the NHRC has linked up with the case of the Kashmiri Pandits only to win the goodwill of the State government, the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims and their sympathizers like APHC.

The NHRC has made an allusion to the communal harmony among the two communities in Kashmir in the past and has made it synonymous with 'Kashmiriyat'. This assertion is certainly outside the legitimate jurisdiction of the NHRC. It is not the business of the NHRC to pronounce judgement on controversial issues of history, which even the recognized historians have not tried to adjudicate to their finality. One would like to ask the NHRC which authentic works of Kashmir history did it consult by way of recorded evidence in support of their assertion? We would help the Honorable Commission to consult at least three histories authored by the Muslims and considered as the most dependable histories of medieval and modern Kashmir. These are (1) Baharitan-e-Shahi, AD 1622, written by an anonymous author (now identified as Sayyid Muhammad Mehdi by more recent researches), translated from original Persian MS into English with annotations by Dr KN Pandit and published by Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta 1991, (2) Tohfatu'l-Ahbab or the Biography of Shamsu'd-Din Araki, Persian MS written by Muhammad Ali Kashmiri in AD 1632 and translated and published by Muhammad Reza Akhund Zadeh, in Khaplu, Baltistan (Northern Areas of Pakistan) in

1998. (3) Tarikh-e-Kashmir by Prized Ghulam Hassan Khuihami in Persian in 1891 and published by JK Academy of Art, Language and Literature in Srinagar in 1971.

All the three histories are most important source material for Kashmir history of mediaeval (Sultanate) times. Had the Honorable Commission cared to go through this fund of source material compiled by the local Muslim historians, we are sure it would have never passed the verdict of prevalence of communal harmony among the two communities in Kashmir. Nor would they have landed in the to-

The Honorable Commission should have taken note of the fact that no residential house of a Muslim migrant was either looted or set on fire or destroyed & vandalized.

tally misleading concept of 'Kashmiriyat'. After reading the above mentioned three sources of mediaeval Kashmir, the Honorable Commission would have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that 'Kashmiriyat' is synonymous with 'Islamization' in Kashmiri parlance.

To be only brief, Tohfatu'l-Ahbab, for example, devotes one full chapter to the story of destruction of temples in the length and breadth of Kashmir valley by Mir Shamsu'd-Din Araki and his Kashmiri disciples. Had the Honorable Commission studied these works with patience and in detail, it would have certainly found a new dimen-

sion of genocide. Look at the superb cleverness of circumventing the core issue. The Honorable Commission says what happened in Kashmir were genocide-like activities but not genocide.

Where is the dividing line between genocide-like activities and actual genocide? In regard to the question of numbers among the Hindus and the Muslims killed in Kashmir, we have to be very clear in what it means. Where the Muslims killed with the avowed objective of bringing about ethno-religious cleansing of the Muslims in the valley? No not at all. Most of it was personal vendetta, old feuds and rivalries, disputes over property and women etc. How can the motives of these killings be equated with the motives behind the killing of the Pandits or handing out threats to them from mosque tops and through paid ads in the print media? The militant leadership made repeated statements that the Pandits can come back but only on condition that they will join the movement against India and fight side by side with the insurgents. No such condition has even been imposed on Muslims of the Valley who leave the Valley and have bought property (houses and land) in different parts of the country.

The Honorable Commission should have taken note of the fact that no residential house of a Muslim migrant was either looted or set on fire or destroyed and vandalized. On the contrary, nearly 25 thousand houses of the Pandits were looted, vandalized and then set on fire. Not a single house or property of the migrated Muslim has been illegally or forcibly occupied in his absence. In comparison to this, all the Pandit houses have

been forcibly and illegally occupied along with their property and immovable household effects. How sad that the Honorable NHRC should have surrendered to political expediency while it was expected to be impartial, just and forthright. What does it mean that the Pandits demand for an inquiry into the entire rise of militancy and the exodus of the community is understandable 'Why this understatement'.

The Honorable Commission, if convinced of violation of human rights of the Pandits, as it appears to be, should have issued instructions to the central and the state governments to constitute a commission of inquiry with clearly defined terms of reference and a time frame within which it should submit its report. By making a casual and half-hearted reference to the issue, the Honourable Commission has only tried to play safe with the government. The recommendation that living conditions of the internally displaced people be improved, is what every ordinary visitor to the refugee camps has been saying. That is what foreign pressmen or human rights organizations visiting the camps have very often told the government. The Honorable Commission has just completed the formality by writing down a soothing sentence in the verdict. The Honorable Commission, fully aware of the living conditions in this country and the state, should have specified the amount of relief, the specific improvements in living conditions like the specifications of the one-room tenement, sanitary requirements, protection against heat and rain, repairing of the hutment, healthcare facilities, education, environmental security etc. What is shocking is that the

Honorable Commission has not even made the slightest reference to the enormous air pollution caused by the brick kilns which influential local businessmen have established within the refugee camps. It has failed to realize the health hazard. The Commission should have at least said a word about the supply of drinking water to the remote camp in Batar Bali in Udhampur where the refugees are thirsting for a mug of water from one morning to the next morning. Instead of taking up these serious issues of human beings, the Honorable Commission

It is sad that a politically motivated report instead of one squarely based on human rights considerations has emanated from the NHRC of India.

has sought to travel safe and secure along the political road indicator.

It is sad that a politically motivated report instead of one squarely based on human rights considerations has emanated from the NHRC of India. But the most unrealistic of all the assertions is the pious wish of the Honorable Commission that a day in God's eternal calendar will ultimately dawn when the Pandits will go back to their respective places and live in harmony with their Muslim neighbors who will manage flow of streams of milk and honey for them. Nothing can be more amusing. This clearly shows how super-

ficially the Honorable Commission has been treating and understanding the entire Kashmir issue. It betrays its lack of vision that demands linking the return of Pandits to national security and the security of India's northern frontier.

It shows deliberate attempt of understating the massive Islamization of Kashmir brought about by the so-called secular as well as non-secular forces in Kashmir. This is an unadulterated wish of ransoming the three hundred thousand member of a religious minority to the diktat and arbitration of a majority whose loyalties do not at all synchronize with the ransomed group. Does the Honorable Commission want us to tell the world in plain words that the land of Kashmir may be with the Indians, her people are not? The Pandits salute the tricolor and sing the national anthem. In Valley the tricolors are set on fire and replaced by green star and crescent and takbir replaces national anthem. This is the scenario into which the Honorable Commission piously desires the Kashmiri Pandits to move into. The Honorable Commission has very subtly tried to circumvent the writing on the wall in Kashmir. That does not mean the Pandits can be blackmailed.

We politely suggest the Honorable Commission to withdraw its verdict immediately and treat the Kashmir Pandit case on the merits of human rights and not as a matter of political expediency. The Pandits should strongly protest against this politically oriented verdict and should also approach the UNHRC and the Supreme Court against summary dismissal of their case of genocide and internal displacement. □□

China renames 6 places in Arunachal on its official map

China has unilaterally renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh in standard Chinese in what appears to be the first sign of retaliation against the 14th Dalai Lama's visit to India's easternmost state earlier this month. The names were changed to show to India the "sovereignty" of the region, said the Chinese state media, which on several occasions warned India of consequences for allowing the Tibetan spiritual leader to visit the "disputed area". "China has standardised the names of six places in South Tibet, a region that is part of China's territory but in which some areas are currently controlled by India," a state media report said.

Beijing claims large parts of the Northeast state as South Tibet, with close Buddhist links to the Tibet Autonomous Region and calls the Dharamsala-based Dalai Lama a separatist out to carve an independent Tibet within Chinese mainland. (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/>)

Vijay Mallya arrested In London, Granted Bail

Vijay Mallya, accused of defaulting on loans worth crores, was arrested in London today in what the government counted as a major win in its attempts to bring the business tycoon to India to face trial. But sources close to Mr Mallya asserted that it was a voluntary arrest and he was let off on bail within three hours. The 61-year-old, wanted for loan fraud and also facing charges of money-laundering, tweeted:

Confirming Mr Mallya's arrest earlier, the Scotland Yard said in a statement: "Vijay Mallya was arrested on behalf of the Indian authorities in relation to accusations of fraud..." He has been granted conditional bail pending a deposit of 650,000 pounds or Rs. 5.3 crore, say sources. A hearing in a Westminster court was the first step in what could be a long legal battle for extradition. Mr Mallya can challenge his extradition in lower and higher courts, which can take months. "India needs to set a precedent - this will be a test case and an important one," top government sources told NDTV.

The government had requested the UK in February to extradite the flamboyant entrepreneur, who left India a year ago amid attempts by a group of banks to recover around Rs. 9,000 crore in loans to his collapsed Kingfisher Airlines. (www.ndtv.com)

SC Forms Constitution Bench To hear The WhatsApp Case

On April 18, 2017 the Supreme Court's five-Judge Constitution bench will hear from 3 p.m. the appeal against the Delhi High Court verdict in the WhatsApp case, Karmanya Singh Sareen & Anr v Union of India and Ors. The bench comprises Justices Dipak Misra, A.K.Sikri, Amitava Roy, A.M. Khanwilkar, and Mohan M.Shantannagoudar. Today, as the bench is likely to spend only an hour to hear the case, it is likely that it will address itself to the preliminary issues to be argued by the counsel, and continue consideration of the substantive issues later.

In their appeal, Sareen and Shreya Sethi challenged the August 2016 privacy policy of WhatsApp. In September 2016, the Delhi High Court directed WhatsApp to delete the data upto September 25 last year. Senior Advocate, Harish Salve, appearing for Sareen, had argued that WhatsApp had begun to illegally share its data with Facebook. The Government is duty-bound to protect the right to privacy of the people", Salve had argued. (www.livelaw.in/)

Record global harvest of cereals, India too heads for a new high

Humanity harvested the largest ever cereal crop in its history in 2016-17 — a staggering 2.6 billion metric tonnes, according to the latest estimates of the UN-affiliated Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The year is ending with the largest ever global stock of foodgrains in history, some 682 million tonnes. India too is heading for a record cereal crop as the previous year's final wheat is harvested and counted in. The second advance estimate of the government put cereal production for 2016-17 at nearly 250 million tonnes, crossing the record of about 246 million tonnes set in 2013-14. (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

Aadhaar Pay takes off with 7 lakh shops already on it

With over 7 lakh merchants already on-boarded by 27 banks—each of the 96,000 branches of PSU banks had a target of getting five shops but surpassed this—and a plan to triple this over the next six months, Bhim-Aadhaar is off to a flying start. At its launch at Nagpur on Bhimrao Ambedkar's 126th birth anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that while

people have ridiculed the illiterate as ‘angoothachaaps’ — those who sign with their thumb prints — “today, that same angootha will empower you”.

Apart from banks, others such as fintech start-up Benow — it is incubated by Mastek — are also enrolling merchants and helping develop B2B solutions. Benow, which is working with retailers in Mumbai and Thane, is also trying to convince large distributors to move on to its platform — Thakkar Trading, one of Hindustan Unilever’s eight distributors in Mumbai, has already encouraged 100 of its 6,000 retailers to accept payments through UPI and hopes to get a fifth to adopt it in six months. (www.financialexpress.com)

Fresh PIL In Supreme Court For Uniform Civil Code

Advocate Farah Faiz, has filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking the Centre to enact the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to bring all communities on the common platform in the light of diverse personal laws in different religions. Filing the PIL, the petitioner lawyer said the Uniform Civil Code is the urgent need of the day “to abolish the discrimination among citizens on the basis of region and to end the vote bank politics.” The recent issue over the practice of triple talaq has sparked debate as to whether the age-old practice should be there or not. The petitioner has referred the issues of divorce under personal laws particularly under the Muslim Personal Law, saying a “UCC will help the society to move forward and take India towards its goal of becoming a developed nation.” That the various personal laws are basically a loophole to be exploited by those who have the power. (www.livelawin/)

UN experts denounce ‘myth’ pesticides are necessary to feed the world

The idea that pesticides are essential to feed a fast-growing global population is a myth, according to UN food and pollution experts. A new report, being presented to the UN human rights council on Wednesday, is severely critical of the global corporations that manufacture pesticides, accusing them of the “systematic denial of harms”, “aggressive, unethical marketing tactics” and heavy lobbying of governments which has “obstructed reforms and paralysed global pesticide restrictions”. The report says pes-

ticides have “catastrophic impacts on the environment, human health and society as a whole”, including an estimated 200,000 deaths a year from acute poisoning. Its authors said: “It is time to create a global process to transition toward safer and healthier food and agricultural production.” (<https://www.theguardian.com>)

Solar power pushes growth in India’s electricity generation

Green power is driving the growth in India’s electricity generation as total installed solar capacity, including rooftop and offgrid projects, has crossed 10 giga watts (GW), latest government and market data show. Generation from conventional sources showed an annual growth rate of over 5% in the 11-month period of 2016-2017 financial year, while output from renewable power projects rose more than 26% during this period. Together, the total growth in generation is in excess of 6% from a year-ago period, latest government data shows. Power Ministry officials say the net growth figure will be higher as generation data from renewable power projects comes with a time lag, and therefore, does not reflect in the Central Electricity Authority’s latest report. The officials said the total generation this February showed marginal decline than the year-ago period on account of 2016 being a leap year. Since February 2016 had 29 days as against 28 days in the month this year, it had an additional day’s generation. (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

After Moily, now Capt Amarinder from Congress says EVMs cannot be tampered

After senior Congress leader and former Union Law Minister Veerappa Moily broke ranks with his party on the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh also seems to have taken a different line.

The chief minister was quoted as saying by NDTV that if EVMs were tampered with, the Congress would not have won the recently held Assembly election in Punjab. “If EVMs were tampered with, Akalis, not me, would be sitting here,” Amarinder Singh told NDTV. The Congress had won 77 seats out of 117 in the Assembly election. Earlier, just hours before a delegation led by the Congress approached President Pranab Mukherjee on the EVM issue, Moily

had said, "Among all the countries, our electoral system is the best and for that, the credit should go to the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) and the Congress. We can have a committee to look into the issues of EVMs, but there is no question of going back to manual methods." The Congress leader added, "There are some apprehensions in the mind (of some leaders) and they are asking for an upgradation. Such things have happened in the past too. So many testing occurred when I was the Law Minister, but we didn't find anything wrong in it. We can't go back to ballot papers, but if technical upgradation is possible, then it is okay."

As the Congress expressed its displeasure over the remarks, Moily, in an exclusive chat with India Today TV, changed his stand. "Yes, I said all that but this (meeting with President) is also important. The delegation is going to meet President and after that our spokesperson will give his reaction," he said. The EVM tampering issue has gained momentum after a video went viral on social media showing the EVM displaying same result even after the officials pressed different buttons, during a demonstration conducted by the Election Commission in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district.

The Opposition leaders, including Congress president Sonia Gandhi, met the President on Wednesday on the EVM issue and to raise their concern over what they dubbed as an "environment of fear and insecurity" in the country, asking him to "protect the constitutional democracy and fundamental rights" of the citizens. Other political parties including Mayawati's BSP and Arvind Kejriwal's AAP have also been crying foul over the EVM tampering issue, after their defeat in the recent Assembly elections. (www.indiatoday.intoday.in)

Each day 7 kids are rescued from railway stations around Delhi

Every day, as many as seven children on an average are rescued from the clutches of traffickers at various railway stations in Delhi, according to senior railway officers in the Delhi Division. In 2016-2017, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) rescued 2,582 kids, who were then reunited with their families with the help of local police or NGOs. Senior officers said most of these kids ran away from home on their own but later landed in the traffickers' trap.

"In many cases, traffickers lure these kids, who are then transported either to border areas of the country or to far-off villages, where they are deployed

as labourers," the officer said. Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Arun Arora said they carry out regular drives to ensure that no suspect manages to escape. "Our efforts have reduced the number of trafficking cases to minimal. Regular patrolling along the line and railway stations is ensured and watch is kept on any child in the vicinity," he said. (www.dnaindia.com)

U.S. drops 'mother of all bombs' on rural Afghan IS compound

The U.S. Air Force dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb for the first time in combat on Thursday, targeting an underground Islamic State complex in a desolate portion of eastern Afghanistan, military officials said. The 21,000-pound bomb is known as the Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb, or MOAB. In military circles, the acronym is known better as the "Mother of All Bombs." CNN, which first reported the bomb's use, said the MOAB bomb was selected because the area targeted was in an extremely remote portion of the country, meaning risk to civilians was minimal. The sheer power of the blast would also be more effective in destroying underground tunnels carved out of the rocky terrain that other conventional bombs might not penetrate. The MOAB is so heavy it is carried over the target by a MC-130 cargo plane, then essentially shoved out the back when it's ready to be deployed. The target was in Nangarhar province, which borders Pakistan's tribal area, a porous border that extremists have exploited in eluding coalition forces. A U.S. Marine was killed in that province last week amid ongoing counter-terrorism activities. (www.upi.com)

Where is The Civil Rights Mob When Court Says System Fixed Aseemanand

Late last month, a Jaipur court acquitted Aseemanand, aka Naba Kumar Sarkar and six others in the 2007 Ajmer blast case at the shrine of the Sufi Saint Moinuddin Chisti. Three other accused were convicted for the blast but not Aseemanand, who was also an accused in the Mecca Masjid, Hyderabad blast case and the Samjhauta Express case.

Aseemanand was the central character in the drama scripted by P Chidambaram for the then government in which he was home minister to coin the phrase "Hindu terror". Aseemanand walked out of Chan-

chalguda Jail in Hyderabad on April 1 after the National Investigating Agency chose not to appeal the trial court order. (www.khabare.com/)

TN Farmer Suicides – Silence Is Not The Answer: SC To TN Govt.

Supreme Court of India on asked the Tamil Nadu Govt. to take up certain ameliorative measures to address the agony of the farmers in Tamil Nadu. The Bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra was hearing a petition seeking the Court's intervention in matters relating to farmer suicides in the state of Tamil Nadu. The petitioner submitted that the Madras High Court has failed to appreciate the real grievance that was highlighted in the writ petition and has disposed of the same by directing the petitioner to obtain information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

It is highlighted in the petition that it is the obligation of the State to address the distressing conditions of the farmers who are compelled to commit suicide for many a reason. The Bench said the petition depicts a picture which has the potentiality to disturb the conscience of any sensitive soul, for it relates to deaths of farmers, which has its significance in a society where agriculture is of paramount importance and most of the farmers exclusively depend upon the same for their sustenance. (www.livelaw.in/)

India's Ban on Foreign Money for Health Group Hits Gates Foundation

The Indian govt. has blocked one of the country's largest nonprofit public health organizations from accepting money from foreign donors, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The cancellation of the health organization's license to accept international financing is the latest move in an aggressive government crackdown on nongovernmental organizations that receive money from outside India. More than 11,000 nongovernmental groups have lost their licenses to accept foreign financing since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014. Many are small organizations, but the government has taken action against some whose activities it has deemed against the national interest.

The public health organization, the Public Health Foundation of India, is a public-private partnership

that was started by the government in 2006. It receives considerable income from both the government and Gates Foundation. The organization was notified by letter last week that the government had canceled its license to accept international donations, Rajiv Chhibber, a spokesman for the group, said.

"The letter says that we have utilized funds from tobacco and H.I.V. projects for lobbying amongst media and parliamentarians," Mr. Chhibber said. The Gates Foundation provides most of the financing for the tobacco and H.I.V. programs, he said, and both operate in partnership with the Indian government.

A right-wing group known as Swadeshi Jagran Manch has accused the Gates Foundation of having a conflict of interest in its efforts to expand immunization in India. The group claims the foundation is connected to pharmaceutical companies, said Ashwani Mahajan, a senior member of the organization, which is putting together research detailing its assertion to present to the government and to request government action against the Gates Foundation. Kuldeep Singh Dhatwalia, a spokesman for the Ministry of Home Affairs, confirmed the cancellation of the public health organization's license to receive foreign financing. He declined to specify the grounds for the cancellation, aside from what he called "irregularities" in some of its programs. The Gates Foundation said in a statement that it "funds a variety of partners to undertake charitable objectives and requires these partners to comply with all applicable laws." Responding to the criticism that it had a conflict of interest in its public health work in India, the foundation said that "ensuring the adequate production and affordability of vital and safe vaccines for the world's poorest populations is of the utmost importance." (www.nytimes.com)

Triple Talaq Is Patriarchal Notion That Impedes Social Democracy: Centre To SC

Oposing vehemently the Muslim Personal Law Board's support to practice of triple talaq, the Centre told the Supreme Court that this practice of divorce denies equal status and dignity to Muslim women, which is available under the Indian Constitution.

Gender equality is a Constitutional goal, and gender equality and the dignity of women are non-negotiable, it said. Filing a 23-page written statement, the government said triple talaq is a patriarchal notion that

impedes social democracy. Allowing such practice would impact not only “women, but also have a ripple effect on the rest of the community”, preventing women from enjoying the liberties guaranteed to every citizen by a modern Constitution, it said.

Earlier, the CJI's bench had asked all parties to submit their written submissions so that the Constitutional bench can hear the issue during court's summer vacation starts from May 11 to July 2. Freedom of religion is subject to fundamental rights and Constitution confers the right to practice, preach and propagate religion, but these are subject to Articles 14 and 15 that guarantee equality and non-discrimination. It was submitted that the practice of polygamy is a social practice, rather than a religious one and, therefore, would not be protected under Article 25. (www.livelaw.in/)

S. Korea may file complaint against China

South Korea will consider filing a complaint against China to WTO over what it described as trade retaliation for the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile system outside of Seoul, the ruling party said. South Korea in July decided to install the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in response to missile threat from North Korea, despite China objecting that THAAD's radar can penetrate its territory. South Korean companies in China have since reported cyber attacks, store closures and fines, while state-controlled media has called for a boycott of South Korean goods and services. It is the reason why South Korea is evaluating whether China's action is in violation of the South Korea-China free trade deal, while stepping up efforts to minimize damage on South Korean industries. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, when asked about the matter, reiterated China's stance that law-abiding foreign companies are welcome and will be protected. (www.upi.com/)

China says supports WTO after U.S. trade threat

China supports the work of WTO according to the country's foreign ministry. This came as a reaction to U.S. President Donald Trump's administration stating that, it might defy WTO rulings it viewed as interfering with U.S. sovereignty. Maintaining a fair and open multilateral system with the WTO at its centre benefits global economic growth and is in the interests of ev-

eryone, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

In an annual trade policy agenda document released to Congress, the U.S. Trade Representative's office said the administration “will not tolerate” unfair trade practices that distort markets. These range from currency manipulation & unfair government subsidies to intellectual property theft, it added. The document signals that the administration may try to push the limits of what is acceptable under WTO rules in its quest to make good on campaign promises to slash U.S. trade deficits with China and Mexico, and bring home manufacturing jobs. It marks a departure from the Obama administration's strict adherence to WTO compliance in its challenges to unfair foreign trade practices. (in.reuters.com/)

Merkel, leaders of five multilateral agencies seek answers to globalization challenges

Chancellor Merkel played host to her annual meeting involving the chiefs of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. “The cooperation of multilateral organizations is of the highest importance for good economic growth. Under the circumstances of globalization and digitalization we need to work together for development of all parts of the world,” said Chancellor Merkel.

The Chancellor, who will chair the meeting of G20 leaders in Hamburg on 7-8 July, led a discussion which focused on how to make trade and globalization more inclusive and how to assist those whose jobs have been lost due to automation, innovation, other technological advances and in some cases trade. All the participants meeting in Berlin agreed that what is needed is a mix of policies involving enhanced education and training and social policies that can help bring the unemployed back into the job market.

“We need to recognize that many people out there hold a negative view about globalization and trade. We need to work hard to make sure that the benefits of trade are more widely held,” said WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. “But we must not lose sight of the immense gains that trade has brought to people around the world and we must resist protectionist ‘solutions’ that will not bring back jobs that have been lost and which will in fact hurt many of the citizens we are trying to help.” (<https://www.wto.org/>) □□