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Sedition Law Justified

A lot of politics is being played over the issue of Laws related to sedition. The arrest of JNU students has troubled opposition parties so much so that they do not care to provide a protective cover around the anti- nationals, Leftist Radicals and Jihadi elements. While the present debate has been triggered by the JNU event organised on February 9, 2016 to lend support to the ideology of the condemned terrorist like Afzal Guru - convicted for attack on the Parliament of India. Typical leftist way of dealing with the ideological opponents is being used to scuttle the debate on the fundamental issue of what constitutes nationalism and anti-nationalism. Instead a host of trivial issues are being raised to derail the basic issue. The fact of the matter is that leftist, socialist and Congress men are finding it very difficult to continue with their divisive politics that they employed for over six decades to remain in or near power. They enjoyed all kinds of comforts and the poor tax payer had to bear the burden of their immoral and corrupt life styles. They manipulated media in a manner that did not allow other viewpoints to be publicised. With the arrival of social media they stand exposed and their lies nailed. It is precisely because of this reason that they are trying every trick in the book to derail the process of unification of the hearts and minds of the people irrespective of their differences.

These self proclaimed champions of free speech are hard core activists of Radical left who practice double standards on every step in their daily life. They deny their opponents what they claim for themselves as a fundamental right. They also spread a lot of misinformation and when confronted with facts they resort to violence. They celebrate killing of soldiers and then tell lies and deny their involvement.

The event, titled "The Country Without a Post Office", was organised to "stand in solidarity with the struggle of the 'Kashmiri' people for their democratic right to self-determination" and, among other things, to protest the 'judicial killing' of Afzal Guru, who was hanged in 2013 after being convicted in the attack on Parliament in 2001. The whole case is nothing but pure untruth. The state of Jammu & Kashmir acceded to India in a manner that is legally, morally and constitutionally correct. Anyone questioning it is a pervert.

— Ajay Pandita, Gurgaon

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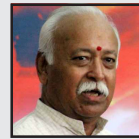
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I feel angry over anti-national slogans raised in some universities.

Mahadevi

Wife of Martyr Lance Naik Hanamanthappa



Let us become responsible and attain that competence and skill needed utmost for the progress of the country.

Dr. Mohan Bhagwat

RSS Chief



For me, good governance is about integrating science and technology into the choices we make and the strategies we pursue.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister



The overall image of India that we have managed to project, even in a short while, is of a country that is serious about meeting its commitments and responsibilities.

Sushma Swaraj

Minister of External Affairs

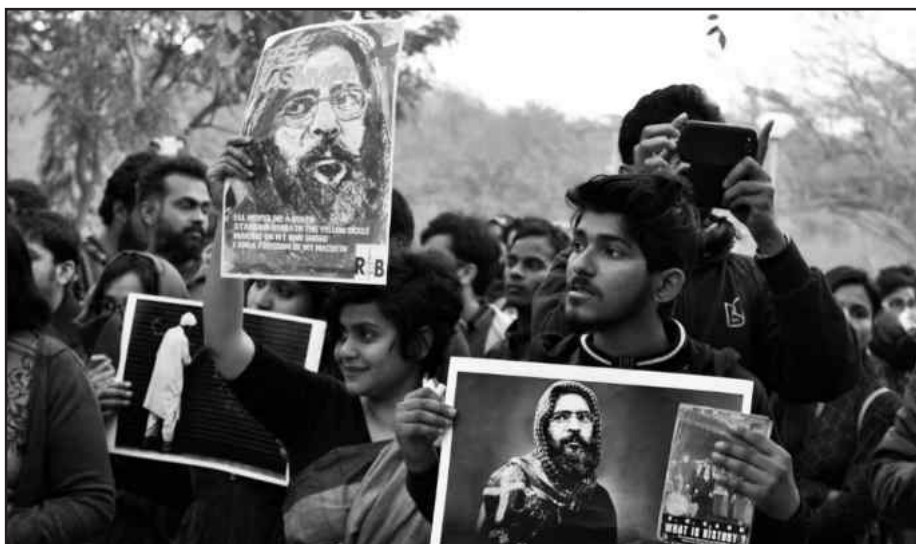
Deal stringently with wilful defaulters

"Patriots don't let their nation default."

— (Gary Ackerman)

Indian economy is primarily based on a 'bank-based' economic model. Indian households prefer bank deposits, insurance and similar less risky instruments. The bank deposit to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio in India in 1991 was 34 per cent. It almost doubled to 67 per cent in 2011. It is also evident that foreign investment has played only a secondary role in the Indian growth story. The Indian economy grew primarily through domestic savings, which rose from 21 per cent of GDP in 1991-92 to as high as 37 per cent of GDP in 2009 and now hovers around 31 per cent. Domestic capital formation rose from 22 per cent in 1991-92 to a high of over 38 per cent in 2011-12. Banks-particularly the Public Sector Banks - play a major role in this respect and are the most important lending source to all types of economic activity in the country. Still owing to various reasons including bad management the entire banking system is crumbling. With the announcement made by the Finance Minister in his Budget speech that the government will infuse Rs.25,000 crore in fresh, He set out clear agenda for what is being termed as 'revival' of the banking sector and an aggressive roadmap for recapitalisation. Recapitalization, we must remember, is a type of reorganization involving substantial change in a company's capital structure. It is done for a variety of reasons and many people fear that it is yet another way of privatising or disinvestment by the government. Indian public sector banks we know are crumbling under the burden of bad loans and or Non Performing Assets (NPA). The standing committee on finance says "a surge in bad loans raises questions about the credibility of the systems in place to deal with the issue" and expressed dissatisfaction over the management of bad loans by the central bank and commercial banks. The NDA government made the first move in this direction last year when it announced a plan to infuse Rs 70,000 crore into public sector banks (PSBs) over the next four years. Soon after the Lok Sabha was told that wilful defaulters owed around Rs 64,300 crore to public sector banks (PSBs) and that 115 cases have emerged where bank officials have connived with the borrowers. The total defaulted loans by them stood at Rs 64,334.59 crore and FIRs have been filed in 1,624 cases involving a total amount of Rs 16,601.90 crore, the minister added. Experts expect Indian banking sector to close this fiscal with a NPA of around a whopping Rs.4 trillion and total stressed assets of around Rs.9 trillion. The story is further scaring when it is believed that just over 90 per cent of the total bad loans of these banks is on the balance sheets of these entities. Their restructured loan portfolio would be nearly double this amount, if one goes by industry estimates. There is also quite a good chunk of bad or near-bad loans banks haven't disclosed yet, fearing provision requirements and bad name. No one has any estimate of these hidden bad loans. Those who are in know of the system believe that every outgoing bank chief of government banks religiously cover up the bad loans at that point in time and pass on the provisioning burden to their successors, who, in turn will do the same to their successor. That chain goes on. If we take very conservative assumption that just 50% of NPAs is because of wilful default and diversion of funds, even then the loss to the exchequer is phenomenal. Parliament was earlier informed that PSBs had written off R1.06 lakh crore in the last 5 years. This clearly is a loss to the exchequer as recovery is not more than 10% while the annual addition to this category is even higher. If recovery is ensured through tough measures including a new law to criminalise the wilful default, country can provide substantial portion of the capital required by PSBs under the Basel III norms. It is therefore necessary to take stern action, that too transparently to ensure that wilful defaulters are booked and money recovered. Targeting elimination of subsidy of various types may be an effortless option. But that affects a substantial portion of the population who find it difficult to make their both ends meet. On the other hand some of these wilful defaulters continue to enjoy lavish lifestyles. Cheating is not the way and cannot be allowed in a civilised society. It cheap, destructive and sabotages trust and erodes the faith in system, without which the nation will find it difficult to survive.

JNU Controversy and Its Inherent Economic Dimension



The entire problem that took place in JNU has both political & economic dimension. The political dimension relates to abuse of academic space, misuse of nomenclature in the name of holding cultural evening, ignoring denial of administrative clearance for the programme and involving outsiders to protest against Indian state and its unity, explains
Abhishek Pratap Singh

Abstract: No public money can be allowed to prosper academic foul-play and intellectual dishonesty.

The recent controversy over 'anti-national protests' in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi has drawn series of responses from different sections of Indian society including political leadership, activists, artists, scholars and academicians, media and even common man. Interestingly, the very ordinary citizen of India has also made his voice 'loud and clear' in protesting against anti-national forces and activities in JNU largely through the use of social media. Except some quarters, most of them have found 'convergence of opinion' in their demands to undertake strong action against these forces in JNU and make sure that academic space provided to our Universities is not diverted to allow 'sectarian and anti India tendencies' to flourish upon in the name of exercising freedom of expression.

Tracing the Origins

The problem in JNU dates back to when Prof. Nurul Hasan, as HRD Minister (1972-1977), made sure that JNU became a bastion of the Left. People from other ideological backgrounds were not hired and were made to be discouraged from work. This was much like leftist rule in West Bengal backed by 'capture of intellectual space' in universities and their further decline as centers of vibrant intellectual thought. Although claiming to be liberal in their approach no alternative view was allowed to flourish in JNU. Certainly, the recent controversy in JNU is the reflection of declining left validity and their lost electoral strength. Faced up with the burning questions of 'employment and choices of career' amidst their bleak responses they keep on trying to divert the agenda by patronizing anti-India tendencies.

Political Dimension

The entire problem that took place in JNU has both political and economic dimension. The political dimension relates to abuse of academic space, misuse of

nomenclature in the name of holding cultural evening, ignoring denial of administrative clearance for the programme and involving outsiders to protest against Indian state and its unity. Also, it was a 'deliberate attempt' by the organizers led by Democratic Students Union (DSU), to misuse the academic freedom for the promotion of divisive agenda against integrity of India. This can be confirmed from their pamphlets circulated before the event which said that, "This is not a nation. It is a prison house of oppressed nationalities".

As the language suggests, no liberal democratic state will ever allow such 'apprehension of Indian nationhood' against the very norms of our stated Constitution goals. It will be interesting to know what these 'left radical groups' will say when the question on absence of political rights in socialist states is posed to them. No doubt, it is truthful to their activities, objectives and political strategies which believe in goal of capturing India by 2050 led by organized armed rebellion and celebrated killing of 76 CRPF army jawans in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh in 2010. In 1999, in the midst of the Kargil war, left-ist students in JNU organised an India-Pakistan mushaira. Abuse and worse was heaped on India and its defence forces. Basically, their 'progressive politics' and 'intellectual freedom' only reflects by means of distorting history and facts in order to abuse majority beliefs and values.

Moreover, how the slogans of freedom for Kashmir can be raised when the very logic for it stands closed with its integration with Union of India under "Instrument of Accession" (1947). These are all

'legal facts' with binding based on documented modern Indian history with no ideological bearing then why not radical left in JNU attempts to learn from them.

Similarly, defending the event in the name of discussing 'death penalty' and terming the execution of Afzal Guru as 'judicial killing' stands in contravention to rule of law. The Indian constitution itself imposes 'reasonable restrictions' on exercise of fundamental rights subject to public order, morality and health. The question whether it 'subscribes to sedition' is subject of judicial process and inquiry rather ideological presumptions based on preconceived notions of freedom and right. No right can be allowed to prevail upon in the absence of duties and it is what our constitution allows.

Economic Dimension

The economic dimension of this problem relates to 'tax payers money' involved for subsidizing higher education in India. Funding for India's central universities mostly comes from the University Grants Commission (UGC), a statutory body under the union human resource development ministry. The UGC is tasked with maintaining the quality of higher education in India. As we already know the problem of 'brain drain' in our Indian Institute of technology (IITs) has been a concern among leadership and policy makers at large.

Due to JNU controversy, the very 'market forces' which have always been against the notion of 'subsidized public education', might find it easy to criticize the government. Moreover, a common Indian citizen can ask the very basic purpose of this kind of ed-

ucation which thrives on anti India agenda. According to one estimate, average spending on a JNU student went upto 12 lakh by year 2015-2016. At a time when 'resource crunch' is matter of concern among public agencies for the promotion of universal education in India one can certainly question the very logic of 'surviving separatist forces' on public money.

Academic freedom and free debate are fine, but surely both teachers and students owe accountability to taxpayers. Moreover, this accountability subject to law and is not fulfilled by 'glorifying terrorists' and calling for the 'dismantling Indian state' when the same Indian republic affords the cost of providing luxury of heavy subsidized campus like JNU. To say, if it involves 'people's money' the larger objective must be 'people's interest' and contribution for 'national progress' rather propagation of divisive agenda.

In addition, JNU also boasts of a 'special fund' under which it raises money from major donor agencies like Ford Foundation, UNESCO, Aziz Premji Foundation, and Sir Rattan Tata Trust to name few of them. Much of that has to do with the university's reputation and its efforts to produce 'knowledge base' for the country. But no educational institute can be allowed to flourish upon 'public money and grants' if it endangers Indian unity and integrity. As the situation reflects in JNU, it largely subscribes to the view by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, living up to his infamous threat: "We will either have a divided India or a destroyed India".

It always takes good time and capital investment to build an educational institution but if the out-

Kanhaiya's bail rider 'Defang Your Thought'

Slogans raised by JNU students can't be considered to be protected under Fundamental Rights.

After multiple postponements, the Delhi High Court granted an interim conditional bail to Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar for six months in the sedition case. However, while granting bail, the court stated that thoughts expressed by the student union leader were like an infection and directed Kanhaiya to give an undertaking that he would not get involved in any anti-national activity from now on and the student leader must also ensure that no seditious activity takes place on the campus.

Justice Pratibha Rani also directed Kanhaiya to cooperate with the Delhi Police in the ongoing investigation as and when required by the Investigating Officer (IO). Kanhaiya will furnish a bail bond of Rs 10,000 and a surety of like amount, which a JNU faculty member took the responsibility of furnishing. The HC also asked the faculty member to ensure that Kanhaiya's thoughts and energy get channeled in a constructive manner. Further, the court asked Kanhaiya to furnish an undertaking that he would not violate any of the conditions mentioned in the bail order.

The HC also stated that the thoughts reflected in some of the slogans raised by JNU students can't be considered to be protected under Fundamental Rights.

"Freedom of speech is guaranteed to the citizens of this country under the Constitution of India to follow their own ideology or political affiliation within the framework of our Constitution," she said.

"The kind of slogans raised by the students may have a demoralizing effect on the families of those martyrs who return home in a coffin draped in the Tricolour.

"Suffice it to note such persons enjoy the freedom to raise such slogans in the comfort of the university campus without realising that they are safe

because our forces are there in the battlefield situated at the highest altitude of the world, where even Oxygen is so scarce, that those who are shouting anti-national slogan holding posters of Afzal guru and Maqbool Bhatt close to their chests, honoring their "martyrdom", may not be even able to withstand those conditions for an hour."

The Judge observed that, "I consider that this is a kind of infection from which such students are suffering, which needs to be controlled before it becomes an epidemic. "The faculty of JNU also has the play its role in guiding them to the right path so that they can contribute to the growth of the nation.

"During his time in judicial custody he might had introspected about the event that had taken place. To enable him to remain in the mainstream, at present I am inclined to provide conservative method of treatment," she said. During the case proceeding, Kanhaiya's counsel argued that the student leader had never raised any slogans against the nation, which the Delhi Police countered this claim stating there was evidence that he and others were shouting anti-India slogans and were holding Afzal Guru's posters. The prosecution also submitted that Kanhaiya was "not cooperating" in the investigation and even came out with "contradictory" statements in joint interrogation by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Delhi Police. On this, defence lawyer Kapil Sibal submitted that the allegations were false and said there were "some outsiders with covered faces who raised anti-India slogans and Kanhaiya was seen in the CCTV footage asking them for their identity cards."

Kanhaiya had sought bail claiming that he had not raised any anti-India slogans but the Delhi Police had maintained before the HC that they have evidence to show that the accused had raised anti-national slogans.□

(Courtesy: Pioneer)

come is 'academic foul play' and 'intellectual dishonesty' then surely the question arises what kind of human resource are we building upon. The outgoing Vice Chancellor of JNU made a statement that, he "believes the university needs *increased funding* for improving facilities and infrastructure".

Conclusion

As we look forward to play vital role in the 'age of knowledge century' one needs to be careful of the fact that public funding of educational institutes like JNU through tax payers money must prove to be

fruitful for national development and not get wasted for anti-India activities. It must be ensured that proper revision of curricula and course structure is done in accordance with the relevant social-political context and not based on ones ideology leanings.

As the popular saying goes, 'one fish has the ability of making entire pond bad', we must not allow these anti national ultra left forces in JNU to dilute its character and reflect 'anti India dissent' rather put effort to make JNU as an institution of premier learning and research. □□

JNU Controversy: CLASSIC CASE OF DOUBLESPEAK



A survey of the various statements of a select group of professors at JNU made over the years reveal a disturbing pattern — they have sided always with forces opposed to India's unity & integrity and have openly advocated secessionism and violence, challenging India's constitutional framework, finds Anirban Ganguly

The JNU controversy reeks of double standards wherein the cry of 'criminalising dissent' cloaks the attempt to legitimise traitorous attitudes and unpatriotic acts. In this, some JNU teachers have colluded to misguide young minds and teach them the art of spiting India. I shall begin with a prefatory observation or point. US Ambassador Richard Verma, who has the habit of shooting of his mouth in a most un-diplomatic ungraciousness, will perhaps agree with most of us when we say that authorities at Harvard University or the University of Pennsylvania would not be particularly welcoming of the idea of holding a *mashaal juloos* — torch march — commemorating the 'martyrdom' of 'Shahid' Osama bin Laden. So obsessed was the US with Bin Laden that they shot him through the head and dumped his body in mid sea.

Instead of joining issues with the Modi administration and hectoring on how to handle dissent and free speech — an act which is, in any case, beyond his diplomatic mandate — Ambassador Verma may rather read John Kenneth Galbraith's biography and take inspiration from how an ideal US Ambassador ought to conduct himself or herself in the Indian milieu.

On a positive side, as part of an affirmative action, Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of International Studies or School of Social Sciences, that Mecca of dissent and free speech, may consider inviting Ambassador Verma to deliver a keynote on the origins, evolution, enactment and content of the Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act). It would be a hugely beneficial public exercise.



Tapasi Mallik, the 18-year-old Dalit girl who resisted her family's land from being grabbed in Singur in 2006, was beaten, raped and her half-burnt body tossed into the fields by Communist Party of India (Marxist) lumpens and *harmads* who were out to suppress and arrest the increasingly 'bourgeois' habits of the proletariat.

Mallik was the victim of the CPI(M)'s violent and inhuman politics in the same way Rohith Vemula had become a victim of the communist Students' Federation of India's subversive brand of politics. One of Vemula's last Facebook post indicates how deeply wounded he was at being turned into a pawn by the SFI in its dialectical politics of violence and subversion. In fact, it was the CPI(M)'s brand of politics that essentially drove Vemula to despair and death.

But then, this is the brand of politics that the CPI(M) and the Left and ultra-Left fronts and militia have always practised in India. Subversion, violence, subterfuge and fascist tactics have always been the handmaidens or chosen tools of left politics in India. The Democratic Students' Union and the All India Students' Association, in line with the CPI(M) and the Communist Party of India, have, in fact, patronised, for long, the separatist brand of politics — A politics which denationalises, deracinates and generates disgust in one's civilisational moorings and origins.

As religious and political activist Sita Ram Goel articulated it, "It is natural and inevitable that communism should come into conflict with positive nationalism in every country. India cannot be an exception. By positive nationalism we mean a nationalism which

draws its inspiration from its own cultural heritage and socio-political traditions. Such a nationalism has its own way of looking at world events and evaluating the alignment of world forces. Such a nationalism is guided by its own past experience in safeguarding its interests and pursuing its goals." For a political ideology which has always derived inspiration and direction from extraneous elements and forces, "positive nationalism" has always been the resisting rock.

The events and developments at the prestigious and leading JNU also brings to mind Goel's assessment of the basic duplicitous "tac-

***CPI(M)'s brand
of politics
essentially drove
Vemula to despair
and death.***

tics" adopted communists of all hues in India. "Communism in India", he argued, has developed a language "which George Orwell has described as doublespeak. In this language the traitorous and totalitarian forces represented by the communist movement are presented as patriotic and democratic forces, collaborators with communism as progressive people, positive nationalism as Hindu communalism and chauvinism." Many people, pointed out Goel, "do not know how to decipher this doublespeak and are, therefore, trapped by it".

The situation in JNU and its exacerbation by a section of students and teachers is a classic case of doublespeak. The cry of "crim-

inalising dissent" is essentially a classic doublespeak to cloak the attempt to legitimise traitorous attitude and unpatriotic acts. In this doublespeak and double-act a section of the JNU teachers have actively colluded and misguided young minds and taught them, not their mandated subjects, but rather the art of spiting India.

When professor Kamal Mitra Chenoy bleats inanities on how the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the BJP are carrying out their "fascist" agenda in JNU, it is again a case of doublespeak where the bleating intellectual is actually trying to hide his own history of kowtowing to separatists and his advocacy of secessionism and India's vivisection.

A select group of professors at JNU have always advocated and promoted separatism of all kinds in India. It is these elements who are at the forefront today in trying to defend those who have raised slogans calling for the break-up of India.

A survey of the various statements that these professors and intellectuals have made over the years reveal a disturbing pattern — they have sided always with those sections opposed to India's unity and integrity, have echoed the demands made by these groups and have openly advocated secessionism and violence, challenging India's constitutional framework.

These professors have also actively participated in conference junkets that were organised by fronts/groups with the intention of championing secessionism in India. It would be worthwhile to look at some points from the plethora of material that has, fortunately, come to light. □□

Astrosat: The Unique Space observatory of India

The Launch of first space observatory, the Astrosat, by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on the September 28 has placed India in the elite club of four advanced countries of the world, who have a space observatory of their own, for probing heavenly objects from the space-orbit into the open space. It is almost a unique feat because, unlike similar missions of Europe and the U.S., it is a multi-wavelength platform which affords a simultaneous observation of celestial objects across different wavelengths, giving it a total perspective.

Hitherto, the Indian astronomers had to rely on alien resources for X-ray and ultraviolet data for want of our own space observatory. But, now with the launch of the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO's) ASTROSAT-telescope on September 28, it would provide a shot in the arm of the Indian astronomers for such space observations. It is all more rejoicing for us in India, as the ASTROSAT-telescope is quite unique. Unlike most other telescopes, the five instruments (payloads) of ASTROSAT can observe a wider variety of wavelengths—from visible light to the ultraviolet and X-ray bands. Even in the X-ray band as well, it can study both low and high energy X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. While most other satellites are capable of observing only a narrow range of wavelength band. Besides, the capability to cover the full spectrum of wavelength simultaneously is another unique feature of the ASTROSAT.

Through it has took nearly 20 years in the making of it, from the day the idea of such a satellite was put forward, and about 15 years since the idea was given a concrete shape, the final realization of what promises to be a true astronomical observatory in the sky, is almost so unique in its concept and operation that, it is



The Rs 178-crore Astrosat hurled into space at lowest cost is India's first attempt at setting up an observatory in space, a place from where it can study cosmological phenomena and give us a truer picture of heavenly objects from the space-orbit into the open space, explains

**Bhagwati Prakash
Sharma**

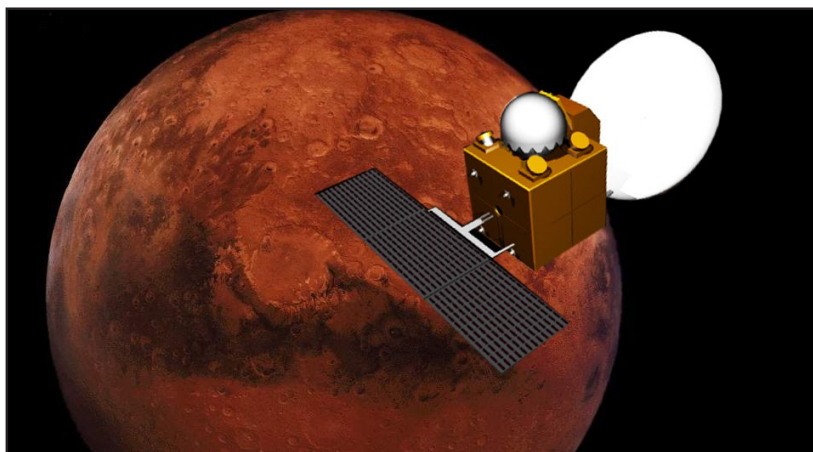


Analysis

expected to make a significant and niche contribution to the important field of X-ray astronomy and the study of the X-ray universe. The Astrosat, India's first space observatory is a well dedicated astronomy satellite and a miniature version of the Hubble, the US-European joint space observatory that has discovered new galaxies and improved understanding of the universe. Indeed this first and unique space observatory of India, the Astrosat is the fourth in space, after the Hubble, Russia's Spektr R and Suzaku of Japan. It was initially planned for 2005, has been delayed by a decade, but, our scientific community has struggled hard to build it up to date with utmost precision which such instruments need for such operations. So, delay does not matter.

The Astrosat, which is India's astronomical satellite with telescopes, is meant for studying objects in the deep sky. It can make observations in ultraviolet, optical, visible, low and X-ray wavelengths simultaneously. It will study stars, quasars, pulsars, supernova remnants, black holes and active galactic nuclei. The instruments on board and spreading across ultraviolet and X-ray wavelengths, will be capable to study black holes, neutron stars, quasars, white dwarfs and pulsars in the space.

ISRO's most trusted rocket and workhorse launch vehicle the PSLV-C30 has indeed carried this satellite in the space to place it into a 650-km orbit and is following its takeoff from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Shriharikota, at 10 am on Sept 28, 2015. As the Astrosat is a major space-science feat of the ISRO and its mission, which envisages an earth-orbiting



scientific satellite with payloads capable of simultaneously observing the universe in the visible, ultraviolet and X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. The satellite is a multi-wavelength space observatory of India, which make it the unique in the world in space research. It carries five payloads including, Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope- UVIT, Large Area Xenon Proportional Counter-LAXPC Soft X-ray Telescope, Cadmium Zinc Telluride Imager and Scanning Sky Monitor SSM.

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has also achieved a significant milestone in commercial satellites launch segment as its trusted workhorse launch vehicle PSLV-C30 has launched not only the Astrosat to be operated as a Space Observatory by ISRO but, along with that six other foreign satellites have also been put into space from SHAR Range on September 28.

With this launch, ISRO would be crossing the half-century mark in terms of launch of commercial satellites ever since it launched the first ever satellite for a foreign customer on May 26, 1999 by using the PSLV-C2. It is for the first time that India has launched a US satellite. The US satellites are the first

ISRO has also achieved a significant milestone in commercial satellites launch segment.

from that country to be launched from India since the two countries signed a technology safeguards agreement in 2009. The scientific objectives of ASTROSAT mission are: (i) To understand high energy processes in binary star systems containing neutron stars and black holes. (ii) Estimate magnetic fields of neutron stars. (iii) Study star birth regions and high energy processes in star systems lying beyond our galaxy. (iv) Detect new briefly bright X-ray sources in the sky. (v) Perform a limited deep field survey of the Universe in the Ultraviolet region.

The five payloads of ASTROSAT are chosen to facilitate a deeper insight into the various astrophysical processes occurring in the various types of astronomical objects constituting our universe. These payloads rely on the visible, Ultraviolet and X-rays coming from distant celestial sources.



Astrosat is a truly multi- institutional project.

- The Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (UVIT), capable of observing the sky in the Visible, Near Ultraviolet and Far Ultraviolet regions of the electromagnetic spectrum
- Large Area X-ray Proportional Counter (LAXPC), is designed for study the variations in the emission of X-rays from sources like X-ray binaries, Active Galactic Nuclei and other cosmic sources.
- Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT) is designed for studying how the X-ray spectrum of 0.3-8 keV range coming from distant celestial bodies varies with time.
- Cadmium Zinc Telluride Imager (CZTI), functioning in the X-ray region, extends the capability of the satellite to sense X-rays of high energy in 10-100 keV range.
- Scanning Sky Monitor (SSM), is intended to scan the sky for long term monitoring of bright X-ray sources in binary stars, and for the detection and location of sources that become bright in X-rays for a short duration of time.

Moreover, the Astrosat is a truly multi-institutional project, invoking collaborations even with foreign institutions and agencies. Apart from ISRO, four other In-

dian institutions involved in payload development are: Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) and Raman Research Institute (RRI). Two of the payloads were developed in collaboration with the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and University of Leicester (UoL), UK. About the International customer satellites that have gone piggyback, along with the Astrosat, are the LAPAN-A2 - a microsatellite from National Institute of Aeronautics and Space-LAPAN, Indonesia. LAPAN-A2 is meant for providing maritime surveillance using Automatic Identification System (AIS), supporting Indonesian radio amateur communities for disaster mitigation and carrying out Earth surveillance using video and digital camera. Second one is NLS-14 (Ev9) is a Nan satellite from Space Flight Laboratory, University of Toronto Institute for Advanced Studies (SFL, UTIAS), Canada. It is a maritime monitoring Nan satellite using the next generation Automatic Identification System (AIS). Four LEMUR nano satellites from Spire Global, Inc. (San Francisco, CA), USA, are non-visual remote sensing satellites, focusing primarily on

global maritime intelligence through vessel tracking via the Automatic Identification System (AIS), and high fidelity weather forecasting using GPS Radio Occultation technology. The Indian Astrosat is special due to the choice of instruments to study in multi-wave lengths — UV rays, visible and X-rays — which even the Hubble don't have. The instruments allow simultaneous observation of cosmic sources, an area in which other observatories currently have limitations. The diameter of Astrosat's optical mirror is around 30 cm, compared with 2.4 m in the case of Hubble. It is expected the US space agency will launch the James Webb observatory, a successor to the Hubble, in 2018.

The Rs 178-crore Astrosat has hurled into space at lowest cost. It is a miracle that barely a year has passed since its first interplanetary mission, Mangalyaan, entered the orbit of Mars, and ISRO has crossed yet another important milestone. The ASTROSAT is India's first attempt at setting up an observatory in space, a place from where it can study cosmological phenomena. Thus, scientifically the ASTROSAT is a very different mission for ISRO as well from its other major missions and will add a new dimension to its scientific capabilities. There are several advantages in having a sky observatory. The atmosphere around the earth interferes with the signals from space and changes their characteristics. So, what the instruments at earth observatories receive are modified signals. These have to be adjusted to bring in accuracy. But this space observatory would give us a truer picture. □□

Tax on entertainment, gaming, and porn can fetch much needed revenue

The union budget is just a few weeks away. The government is saddled with many problems and the concern for raising more revenue amid demands for cut in income tax and TDS. The centre's outgo to states has also significantly increased. So despite some rise in revenue collection, its liabilities have increased. It has to look for avenues to raise additional revenues without drawing the tag of unpopularity.

It is definitely a tightrope walk. As retail inflation rises and the government is committed to increase the salaries of its employees, its direct burden is likely to be over Rs 1 lakh crore. The budget size is also not likely to be much larger than the last year's budget of Rs 17.68 lakh crore as it is constrained by the concern for limiting fiscal deficit. Though the government should be a bit liberal and design for higher deficit so that its developmental concerns can be addressed.

That entails higher revenues. It has to reorient policies and look for new areas to raise taxes and not bogged down by auto and pollution lobbies for cut or reward in excise duties on purchase of new vehicles. A new vehicle does not cause less pollution. The pollution lobbyists supported by car makers are raising false bogies and blackmailing the government to reduce excise duties and duty concessions for buying new cars.

Taxes on luxury cars or larger cars have become a misnomer. Many auto makers have reduced the length or width to come out of the definition. So a higher tax on a vehicle as of now is not a sin.

Instead the government needs to encourage the second hand – used car sales. The US had established long ago that a well maintained used car causes less pollution than a brand new car even with the best specifications. The government



Government should reconsider various cesses and come out with a white paper on how over Rs 3 lakh crore collected since 2006 – equal to the budget deficit of 2015-16 – remained unutilized for years, suggests Shivaji Sarkar



should also remove restrictions on resell of private cars in cities like Delhi and national capital region (NCR) and other metros.

The pollution and car lobbyists in tandem want rise in new car sales at reduced taxes. It would lead to loss of more revenue. Instead the government should consider hiking taxes on new automobiles.

Another way is to look for taxing some of the internet-provided services. The e-commerce portals have become virtual tax free zones. They are not paying most of the taxes. They have advantages of commitments made by the government to WTO. This, however, does not prevent the government from levying facilitation fees as whatever services they provide burdens the government on extending various actual services like bandwidth, transportation, postal department and many others.

As the e-sale volumes are increasing a central fee could be a good earning. The cheap e-sales are due to virtual avoidance of taxes. The sellers earn while the government loses.

The internet is also the carrier for some undesirable products. Unfortunately that cannot be banned. But these can definitely be checked. Various entertainment and porno sites give free access misusing the name of freedom of expression. That freedom under Article 19 has also restrictions. These are rarely used. One forgets that freedom of expression is being used to sell bad products and continue with a trillion dollar industry – some of it extremely exploitative for women and children.

The government has the option. It can levy fee on access even on supposed “free” sites. There is

nothing free. So a tax of Rs 100 per three minutes of access can be levied on all entertainment, gaming, porn, music and similar sites. It would be a big revenue generator.

The government has already made a welcome move for higher tax rate for goods like some items including aerated beverages. It has to take care that the sellers do not befool the government calling it a “health drink” by adding a few fruit juice drops and continue to take the exemption.

Cigarettes, bidis, tobacco products, *gutkhas*, chewing gums and liquor should as usual have more taxes. Food, power, education and health should continue with exemptions. There are many

Entire budgetary approach is inflationary.

loopholes in these areas too. It has to be plugged.

The government should also have reconsideration about various cesses – road, tolls, swachha Bharat, universal service obligation, primary and higher education cesses collected since 2006. Most of these were never utilized. The government should come out with a white paper on how over Rs 3 lakh crore – equal to the budget deficit of 2015-16 - funds remain unutilized for years. These are inflationary cesses and need to be done away with.

Similarly, the government has to state about its good intentions on lowering personal income tax rates. Ideally, it should be done away with at least upto an income of Rs 50 lakh to increase purchasing power and give the market a boost. The loss of about Rs 1.75 lakh

crore can be made with higher sales volumes and production. Indirect tax collection – system that even taxes a non-earner – would boost the government kitty.

The near scrapping of I-T would also reduce government expenditure on collection. Taxes should be affordable and compliance spontaneous. It would further reduce the necessity to have an army of officers and staff in the I-T department. It would reduce tax outgo and also save a lot on litigation. The government has made some right moves in this direction. It has merely to strengthen these with pragmatic approach.

It also has to do away with TDS on bank deposits. The step would increase deposits. Interest payments are not earnings. These are mere hedging against inflation. Even otherwise TDS earning growth has come down to 8 percent from 18 percent.

The outlook of government on increasing its income and expenditure every year also needs to have a relook. Entire budgetary approach is inflationary. The 2016-17 budget should lay down the roadmap for creating a stable price regime, minimize regular wage revision and make available commodities at affordable stable prices through the next decade. It would be a great departure from Manmohanomics. The government would earn the gratitude of the people for this new approach.

Revenue generation and cuts in expenses are possible with innovative approach. The government must not shy away from taxing many untaxed large revenue earning products. A reformed I-T will be a revenue generator as also price stabilizer. □□

Acharya Abhinavagupta: The Forgotten Genius from Kashmir



Despite its Kashmir's geographical location and relative isolation, Kashmir and its people carved out a special place in the history of India. It became a great seat of learning making remarkable contributions to the Indian civilisation and cultural ethos. Great personalities through their hard work, intellectual acumen and terrific tapasya earned the place name Sharda Peeth. Shaivite philosophers like Abhinavagupta and Vasugupta propounded a new theory on Shaivism, called Trika shastra. Even a cursory look and study of the great persons like Acharya Abhinavagupta, we realise what excellence means and why Kashmir is being called the seat of learning- the Sharda/Sarvagya Peeth. The millennium year celebrations of Acharya Abhinavagupta is an excellent opportunity to begin that journey backwards to lighten of our future.

Who was Abhinavagupta?

Christopher Wallis also known as Hareesh answers the query in following words:

"When studying the writings of non-dual Shaiva Tantra, there is one figure who stands out above all others, who appears as the very lynchpin of the tradition, who is the convergence point of much that had come before and the source of much that was to come after: the unparalleled master Abhinavagupta".

"Abhinavagupta was not only a prolific writer, but was also a man of letters, of unfathomable wisdom, deep philosophical insight, an aesthete and above all a yogi par excellence" says M.L. Pandit a renowned expert on the subject.

"Wash your hands and feet, rinse your mouth well and then if you recite the name of Abhinavagupta you shall attain Moksha," says Swami Sri Raam ji Maharaaj, the great mystic, saint and scholar of nineteenth century, who single handedly, undertook upon himself to impart teachings of Shaiva Siddhanta and established a school in Fetah Kadal in downtown Srinagar for the purpose. The Ashram exists till date. In the words of Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman Joo, "In conclusion I would say that Abhinavagupta was the pride of Kashmir. He is even now the pride of Kashmir, as his works and teachings continue to deeply influence the discerning people. Swami Lakshman Joo also quotes the celebrated author of Kavya Prakash, Rajanaka Mammatta who calls Abhinavagupta- the Shankaracharya of Kashmir.

Columnist Bhanu Pratap Mehat in an article published by Indian Express on January 11, 2016 says, "In any reckoning of Indian intellectual history, one figure whose achievement is almost unparalleled is Abhinavagupta. His conceptual fecundity is absolutely astonishing, piling up one fine distinction upon another to illuminate time-worn problems."

Madhuraja from Madurai, Tamil Nadu who travelled 2,000 miles to receive initiation from Abhinava 1000 years back wrote a beautiful description as an eyewitness account in his Gurunaath Paramash, which he composed for meditation on his guru. He writes, "May the glorious Dakshinamurti in the form of Abhinava,



Millennium year celebrations of Acharya Abhinavagupta is an excellent opportunity to know the person who was a great synthesizer of not only different schools of thought but also of various faculties within a human beings also, finds Ajey Bharti

who is an incarnation of Shrikantha and has come to Kashmir out of deep compassion, protect us.

His eyes are rolling with spiritual bliss. The center of his forehead is clearly marked with three line made of ashes. His ears look beautiful with Rudraksha. His hair is tied with a garland of flowers. His beard is long and his body rosy. His neck because of its being besmeared with paste of camphor, musk, sandal and saffron etc. looks splendid. His long thread is left loose. He is dressed in silk cloth, white like the rays of the moon. In the yogic posture called Virasana, he is sitting on a soft cushion over a throne of gold with a canopy decked with strings of pearls, in an open hall full of crystals, beautiful with paintings, smelling extremely sweet on account of garlands of flowers, incense and lamps, perfumes with sandal etc., constantly resonant with both vocal and instrumental music and dance and crowded with female ascetics and saints of recognised spiritual power. Abhinavagupta sits resplendent in the centre of a garden of grapes..... His right hand is wearing a rosary of Rudraksha, and his fingers are in the position indicative of the grasp of the ultimate Reality. With the tip of the nail of his lotus like left hand he is playing on the vina, which is capable of producing the original musical sound (NADA).” (Images of Acharya Abhinavagupta are mostly based on this pen picture)

There are lot of other people of merit who have said and written a lot about Acharya Abhinavagupta. In short we can say that Abhinavagupta ‘born as yoginbhu, earns name Abhinava from his teachers at an early age for his extraordinary talent, dedicates his life to

scholarship and Shivasadhna, writes around 70 books out of which 45 are identified and 28 available and finally enters Samadhi to have communion with Paramshiva.’

As we proceed forward on the path to know Acharya Abhinavagupta we will realise that he is the answer to most of the questions confronting us as an individual as well as a collective.

Personhood of Abhinavagupta

It is very clear that Abhinava’s parents were advanced Shaiva practitioners who conceived him in Kaula ritual; he was thus said to be *yogini-bhu*, ‘born of an awakened yogini,’ and thereby possessing a special capacity for liberation.

Abhinava lost his mother when he was still a child. His father also renounced the world soon after and took to asceticism. These incidents only contributed to his passion for spirituality and learning. When it came to sources of learning he describes himself as a bee, going from flower to flower, collecting the nectar of each of these branches of the tradition in order to make them all into the sweetest honey.

In Vedic dictum of let noble thoughts come to us from every side. आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः (ऋग्वेदः 1-89-1)

Abhinava learned Sanskrit from his father, NarasiChagupta, and received initiation into the Kâlî-worshipping Krama lineage at an early age from his father’s Krama Guru, Bhutiraja, who had been a direct disciple of the famous Chakrabhanu. But later he studied with many gurus—more than fifteen Ćaiva teachers in all, plus teachers of logic, exegesis, Buddhism, Jainism, and Vaishnavism. But it was not until he met his true master (*sadguru*) that his realization

was complete. This guru, for Abhinava, was a man named Siambhu Natha- a master of both forms of the Trika (Kaula and non-Kaula), from the Jalandhara siakti-pîmha. It was to this master that Abhinava attributed his Self-realization though he respected & loved all his teachers.

Why do we still remember and revere this man 1000 years later? What makes him so powerful, so insightful, that some of us alive today would call him our Guru?

In the history of Sanskrit literature, writes Dr. KC Pandey, “We do not come across another writer with such an extensive intellectual background as Abhinavagupta. Though we have not yet discovered all his works to appreciate it fully, yet the available works in themselves are sufficient to give us an idea of vast literature on various subjects that he had thoroughly read so as to criticise the views contained therein or to quote an authority from it” (Page 215).

He was a great synthesizer of not only different schools of thought but also of various faculties with a person also. As said earlier the millennium year celebrations provide us life time opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the ‘well known but little-studied’ philosophical system known under several names like Siva, Trika and Prati-bhijnya along with the person who made it ‘intelligible’.

Shaiva Sidha’s believe that appearance and reappearance of Agams happens at divine will. It is the Divine Will at Work that is blessing us with the task of reproducing the school of philosophy that our great forefathers built. It is also an opportunity to correct the distortions affected on the real identity of Kashmir the place of our origin.□□

Is Selling PSBs to Foreigners Rajan's Agenda?

If news reports are to be believed, the Finance Ministry seems to be caving in to the RBI strategy to sell Public Sector Banks and is raising the limits of FDI in banks to 49% — thus virtually paving the way for handing the PSBs, which are at the heart of the national economy, to global financial interests. If the RBI Governor succeeds, it will be a disaster for India.

PSBs, the core

An obvious truth, but, that hardly figures in public discourse, is that Indian financial economy is bank-driven — more precisely, it is Public Sector Bank (PSB) centric. Economic thinkers and policy makers seem to regard the PSBs as a problem, rather than as the most valuable financial asset of Indian economy. It is undeniable that banking in India almost means PSBs, which hold 80% of the deposits of commercial banks. As the Indian economic establishment looks at only the Anglo-Saxon economies, which are market-driven — read equity market — they do not seem to be conscious that the world's most efficient economy, Germany, too is largely bank-led. Yet another equally efficient economy, Japan, is also equally dominantly bank-led. In both Germany and Japan, unlike in the US or England, stock markets do not have primacy — either to mobilise capital or to distribute it.

Look at India's financial structure. Nine-tenths of Indian savings is in safe investment models. More than half of it in banks. The deposits in PSBs amount to over 50% of the GDP. Besides mobilising four-fifths of deposits, PSBs are involved in building financial architecture for formalising the economy on a phenomenal scale, which the private banks cannot even think of. For example, PSBs have opened some 78% of the 20.7 crore accounts under the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY).



As the Indian economic establishment looks at only the market-driven Anglo-Saxon economies, they do not seem to be conscious that the world's most efficient economy, Germany, too is largely bank-led, points out
S. Gurumurthy



With Regional Rural Banks accounting for 19% of the PMJDY accounts, private banks contributed just 3% of the accounts. The PSBs' share of Mudra loans for micro businesses is 60%. Even though bank deposits yield just half as the stocks do, 40% of the Indian household savings move into banks. The celebrated stock market, which offers double the return as the banks, hardly attracts 2% of the nation's savings. While the public prefer to put their savings in banks, they seem to have enduring trust in PSBs. The Indian economy is not just bank-led, it is PSBs-led. Yet, there is not a word about what good work the PSBs do or about their successes in the economic discourse.

Worse, the PSBs which are at the heart of the national economy are ceaselessly trivialised, derided and demeaned in the nation's economic discourse. Their failings are highlighted and their merits suppressed. The dislike for PSBs appears more ideological — and less logical. The main objection to the PSBs is that they are state-owned.

The ideology is that if the PSB ownership is turned private, they will become efficient — because efficient market theory abhors public ownership. It needs no seer to say that the private global banks regarded as the biggest and the best in US had all but declared bankruptcy in 2008. They had to be rescued by government. Private ownership, while it may promote efficiency, does not assure solvency. In fact, their super efficiency itself led to bankruptcy.

Global banking complexity

Recently (Feb 16, 2016), Bloomberg wrote a chilling analytical story titled, "The European

Banks face a frightening future". They are all celebrated global banks — Royal Bank of Scotland, Barclays, UBS, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, UniCredit and Standard Chartered.

But they had laid off close to 75,000 employees since 2008. In 2008, the experts said that the crisis happened because of lack of regulation. According to Bloomberg, now the banks say that, "regulation has made the world more dangerous". The chairman of the Eurogroup, made up of Euro area's finance ministers, countered, "Don't say we have over regulated the banks" adding that it is the opposite, as what is impeding economic recovery are "the effects of a financial crisis" which was "not caused by over regulation".

The truth is that the banking industry in the West has become complex. The truth again is that they are struggling over how to become simple again! Say Bloomberg analysts: "In the end, the banking industry troubles can be traced to one thing — the cost of complexity. From the moment the banks went global in the late 1990s, skeptics decried these behemoths are too big to manage, let alone too big to fail. But the institutions thrived on the very creation of complexity in their products and in the markets."

Former Deutsche Bank CEO Josef Achermann said, "There's once again a flight to simplicity. That is what the regulators are demanding... The unbundling of banking services is undoubtedly complicated and perhaps even fraught with unseen dangers. And it is really all about getting back to basics." There is a message for India in the Bloomberg report. What

is the problem of these banks? They are not banks as the Indian economy or people or law understand. Indian law defines banking as "accepting for the purpose of lending or investment of deposits of money from the public". This is simple banking. If these global giants, who had complicated the idea of banking and messed up themselves, their and world economy, bought out the PSBs, would they manage them better? Or mess them up as they have messed up themselves?

Sledge hammer approach

The RBI is applying the Basel banking norms developed for the complex banking business of the West on the Indian banking system which is simple but highly regulated. Applying Western banking norms for provisioning for Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in Indian banks is to apply the rules of the rogue Western game of Rugby for the simple local game of Kabaddi. One simple differential is sufficient to show how inappropriate are the provisioning rules of Western banking to Indian banks. The provisioning rules are intended to ensure that depositors and investors are protected.

The Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) and Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) together absorb and protect 27.5% of bank deposits. Actually, Indian banks' investment is almost close to 30% in government securities. Therefore, over 35% of the bank deposits are protected by government securities. Nowhere in the world such actual security cover is available to depositors. Again, the Indian banks protect and de-risk themselves by personal guarantees and collaterals. None of these realities are reck-

oned by the RBI in devising its “sledge hammer approach”, as a leading banker described Raghuram Rajan’s fiat to banks — particularly PSBs — to provide for stressed assets or get lost.

RBI looks to West

What is the extent of NPAs which is making the RBI governor restless? A report in the Forbes magazine (Feb 16, 2016) says, quoting Credit Suisse, that the NPA levels of Indian banks would move to 6.6% by March. The Indian banks have reported much higher NPA levels in the past. NPAs remained around 8-9% from 2003 to 2011. Thereafter, it began declining — to 6.5% in 2012, 4.5% in 2013 and 4.9% in 2014. When the economy was doing very well between 2003 and 2011, the NPA levels have been far higher.

The sledge hammer approach should have been adopted then, when the banks and the economy could well have absorbed it. Nations pass through such phases. The NPAs in Japanese banks ranged from 8% to 9% in the 1990s till 2001 and it was 7.5% in 2002 (BIS paper No 46 May 2009) and only thereafter, it began to fall. Despite the NPAs exceeding a \$ trillion, the Bank of Japan did not take the sledge hammer in hand, like Rajan is doing.

The Japanese banks, which were all private, were not writing off bad loans because of inadequate capital — like the PSBs. Yet, the banks were not compelled to provide for bad loans, because that would have caused imminent crisis of confidence in the banking system. The government stepped in to support the banks with public funds to the extent of 30 trillion yen. Whenever private banks face crisis, the government be-

There is no capital account convertibility which will expose Indian banking to global finance.

comes the ultimate saviour. This was true of the Japanese banking crisis of 1990s and of the US financial crisis of 2008. When the State steps in, confidence gets restored in private banking. That is not the case here. There are three critical differentials which are the protective walls of the Indian financial system and Indian economy.

First, there is no capital account convertibility which will expose Indian banking to global finance. Next, India has rightly not opened the banking system to foreign investment. Third, PSBs are state-owned. These three basic facts ensure that PSBs face no imminent threat. Threat to banks from NPAs is imminent when they are privately owned; they are open to foreign ownership and the currency is full convertible. Disregarding the basic strengths of the PSBs, Rajan appears to turn a prudential issue into a banking crisis. Would Rajan have taken the sledge hammer if the PSBs were privately owned? He would never have because that would have set off a banking crisis. Is he then doing it only because the PSBs are state-owned banks?

Design to sell PSBs to foreigners?

The RBI’s NPA policy appears to be more the outcome of an ideological accountant’s mindset than the product of a practical banker’s wisdom. When the world over, central banks are buying

stressed assets and junk bonds held by banks to de-stress the banks and make them carry on their business, Rajan is doing precisely the opposite. He is coercing the banks to provide for NPAs, when he knows that they do not have the surplus to absorb the loss.

It means the banks will need to be recapitalised to the extent of losses. Here Rajan goes one step further and virtually makes it impossible for the government to recapitalise. He is morally coercing the government to meet the fiscal targets. That is not his domain. That is the sovereign business and Parliament’s function. He knows that if the government were to cut fiscal deficit, it cannot recapitalise the PSBs. Is he then compelling the government to privatise the PSBs? That is, forcing the government to sell them to foreign banks as the scale of capital needed to buy the PSBs is not available with private corporates in India.

If news reports are to be believed, the finance ministry seems to be caving in to the RBI strategy to sell PSBs and is raising the limits of FDI into banks to 49% — thus virtually paving the way for handing the PSBs to global financial interests. If Rajan succeeds, it will be a disaster for India. But it is bound to do good for Rajan, as the world of free market will idolise him for privatising and globalising the hardcore of Indian financial system — the PSBs. His CV will become the most sought after when he retires in the coming winter. Why then should he bother about what happens to India? But surely, the Modi government should be bothered about India. Isn’t it? □□

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Manage Globalisation to Indian advantage

Indian participation in western promoted globalisation has always been questioned. Many Indians believe that the globalisation is thrust and most of global policy contents like freeing of economy for foreign trade, capital and technology, allowing comparative advantage to foreign producers and sellers, accepting foreign competition in every of economic field and supremacy of modern markets in allocation of resources are not beneficial to India. Most consider the westernised approach to Globalisation is a trap that talks illusively of sharing world resources and more so gives a false hope of prosperity to commons. BJP, when not in government, opposed many of globalised contents of Indian economic policies that, in their opinion, harm national interests. However, after formation of government, it has started following globalisation policies. More tragic, BJP seems to be in Shakespearean dilemma of 'to be or not to be' in regard to the implementation of their own policy prescriptions expressed through their 'Integral Humanism'. It is desirable that BJP show confidence in its own policy prescriptions and adopt policies that are nationalist in approach and manage globalisation to Indian advantage.

Take Globalisation seriously

Globalisation is a serious issue as it is not, as many believe, only communication through emails, WhatsApp, twitter and Facebook or travel through packaged tours nor does it mean interactions of goody-goody people like film stars, Singers, cricketers and literary personalities through stage shows, cricket matches and literary events. It is also not e-governance through computerisation of same old policies and complicated procedures in the name of easing of business or improving service to Indian citizen. Globalisation that is preached by western countries is more of a long term change in Indian value systems and living conditions of Indian commons. It is also a change in Indian resource systems and



Globalisation, as preached by the West, is a serious issue that attempts to change Indian value systems, resource systems and altering of its utility options. These changes will have adverse impact on country's people and resources and need a cautious approach, alerts
Anil Javalekar



altering of its utility options. These changes will have adverse impact on country's people and resources and need a cautious approach.

Globalisation is selfish and forceful

Historically, Globalisation had the military backing and all its strategies were forced on enslaved countries with the intention to loot wealth and exploit its resources. Present economic globalisation is led by corporates and MNCs based mainly in powerful developed countries and have profit motif behind all their activities. Their intention is also to loot

development, poverty and unemployment. India has been a long term victim of these selfish forces of globalisation and need policies that will protect Indian economy from further exploitation.

Modern state's role is doubtful

Earlier, globalisation was through wars and mainly for geographical divide or religio-cultural change. Current economic globalisation is for politico-socio-economic change in the systems that affect the lifestyles of commons and therefore, more dangerous. More danger is the modern state that is pursuing and promoting

corporate led globalisation. It is becoming more and more dangerous to allow state to control every of Indian resource and allow its allocation at the discretion of pseudo politicians and bureaucrats. There is definitely a need to revisit the system of participation in economic globalisation through Indian pseudo politicians, bureaucrats and selfish interests that influence policies to serve their interests.

Markets are not efficient

The market is not efficient nor a justifiable tool to run the economy. The presumption that the market settles the economic issues with justice is a false idea; there is no evidence of perfect market conditions anywhere. Most of the time, the market is controlled by major players and speculators. The flow of capital and technology is always controlled by major players that affect adversely the market stabilization process. Market efficiency is doubtful as Volatile markets and collapses of economies are now more common. The need is to localise the economy with small structures so to control and ensure efficiency of markets. More is the Large market more will be large players controlling and seeking large profits creating space for speculators to play major role. This make markets volatile and inefficient.

Globalisation has not helped India

Globalization expects all countries to open their economies and do away with the protection systems prevailing in whatever form. International trade and foreign capital along with their new and innovative technology are considered as important sources of



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wealth and exploit weak and resourceful countries. The comparative advantage will always be with these giant corporates and competitive efficiency of the markets is always beneficial more to them than to any other. They have already destroyed Indian small localised economic structures depriving people from their secured lifestyles and safe living conditions and making them dependent on state or on corporate and companies for their survival. Their controlled Industrialisation has also proved disastrous to human progress and earthly resource systems including environment and has not helped poor countries like India to solve problems of de-

velopment, poverty and unemployment. As is known, after world war II, all freed countries including India aspired for economic development and aimed at western style of industrialisation and became controller of resources and its allocation in the name of welfare state. This modern welfare state is tragically represented by elected people who in turn represent groups within and influence all socio-economic policies, many times favouring their represented class. The fate of Indian economic policies is witness to its manipulation, distortions and corruption. This representation is pseudo in their expressions and decision making and cannot be relied upon for state facilitation of

development and has led to privatization of PSUs and acceptance of Public private partnership model for infrastructure development. This is also leading to government withdrawal from interventionist approach to development. True, Indian participation in globalisation so far helped few Indians to become rich and find a place in the list of world's top rich. Few more could also become members of the ruling elite and are enjoying properties and high incomes by way of socio-political entrepreneurship. However, most Indians remained poor and most Indian youth remained unemployed. Majority of Indians still live in villages with meagre facilities, are dependent on agriculture sector and seek help under various government sponsored welfare schemes for survival. For them, major source of employment is MGNREGS. Most Indian population is having low income and need subsidized food, petrol, diesel, gas, electricity, transport, education and health. Even Indian developed industrial and service sector, including rich companies and corporate, have not grown up and need tax concessions and subsidized support from government. This apart, Indian government is run on borrowings and its revenue deficit is normal feature.

Managed globalisation has successes

Dani Rodrik, Professor of International Political Economy at the John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, said in one of his interviews, that 'every country that has been successful has managed to leverage globalisation with a domestic strategy. It's always been a combina-



tion of a solid domestic growth strategy alongside the forces of globalisation. It is a careful, managed kind of globalisation that has worked. The countries that have simply opened themselves up to world trade and finance without a complementary growth strategy at home haven't done that well.' He further said that 'It's not an argument against globalisation per se, but it's an argument against an extreme form of globalisation or pushing for increased globalisation.

Need cautious approach to globalisation

First, it is necessary to understand that the economic globalization has been propagated by developed world to solve their own financial and development problems and therefore, should not be taken as solution to Indian problems. **Second**, military power is still important in world affairs. India was never a military power and there is no possibility of becoming one in future taking in to account the current polity, philosophy and democratic ideas demonstrated during last 60 years. Thus, globalization is likely to force India to accept the agenda of powerful nations and surrender to their demands. **Third**, the

Military power is still important in world affairs.

current growth rate, demographic dividend, the level of foreign exchange reserves, status of food security, export led growth etc are misleading concepts and not relevant in long run. These may help in short run to solve some urgent problems or meet some urgent demands but cannot be the base for economic model required for long term development of a country and its people. **Fourth**, the foreign trade is complicated one and depends on many factors, sometime beyond control. The export is volatile with the situational markets and its demand. History has shown that the items deemed to be export surplus turned in to net import items. Thus export led model is not a reliable strategy. **Fifth**, Recent Indian frauds and so many scams are witness to the failing institutional set-up and lack of well placed, responsive and efficient institutional set up to operationalize and run the functioning of various participants

in the economy- consumers, exporters, importers, producers, distributors, markets, traders, government agencies, cooperatives, educational and legal structure, revenue and tax system, costing & prices controllers, financial regulators and dispute redresser system etc.

Integral Humanism policies are practical and implementable

The policy prescriptions given through Deendayalji's integral Humanism are simple and implementable. Many of its principles are practiced in Indian societies since long and need some dusting. The policies prescribed are with nationalist approach and meant to serve humanity in a better way.

First, it insists for designing policies to protect Indian Sovereignty and keep Indian national identity intact. For this, important tools considered are strong defence capabilities, self-reliance and 'Swadeshi'. All are interconnected; self-reliance is precondition for sovereignty and it comes through national identity.

Second, it is against thoughtless imitation of West which has become a backbone of Indian economic policies.

Third, on economic front, it pleads for decentralised small economic structures and insists that economic system ensure meeting of everyone's minimum basic necessities of human life apart from maintaining equilibrium of nature and Sustainable Development. This is possible through strengthening of small economies within Indian economy with localised model of development.

Fourth, Integral humanism understands the federal structure of Indian republic and insist for Unitary State and decentralised gov-

ernance system with righteous leadership input.

Fifth, the integral humanism expects Indian polity and State to follow principled Politics and high level of personal integrity in Public life and create national Common desire for development and feeling of Unity among Indians.

BJP need to initiate policy changes

True, no one expects BJP to change policies overnight. In fact, Initially, the Congress preferred socialistic pattern of society and adopted state interventionist ap-

proach strategizing for self-reliance with public sector in lead but later on simply followed globalised model of development in 1990s that asked for liberalisation, privatisation and corporatisation of every socio-economic sector. BJP is aiming to take India to its supreme glory and that need changes in Indian polity and Indian socio-economic systems. These changes are possible not by following old congress policies of imitating western world but by adopting its own policy prescriptions of 'Integral Humanism'. □□

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India must direct seed companies to withdraw and destroy Bt cotton seed.

Nestle, the multinational food giant, was forced to recall and destroy 400 million packets of Maggi noodles when the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) found the lead content to be beyond the permissible limits. Later, Indo Nissin Foods was advised to withdraw its instant noodles brand 'Top Ramen'. Hindustan Unilever too withdrew its Knorr instant noodles pending product approval.

World over food recalls and voluntary withdrawals are a common phenomenon. In the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been regularly issuing alerts that have forced food companies to withdraw its misbranded and contaminated products. Pharmaceuticals and dietary supplements too have witnessed massive recalls in the past few years. Indian drug maker Ranbaxy was twice forced to withdraw its products from the US market besides being made to pay a penalty of \$ 500 million.

In a first-ever recall of a genetically-modified (GM) food product, the US-based Star Link was forced to recall over 300 of its products that was found to be carrying traces of GM corn which was not approved for human consumption. Taco shells manufactured by Kraft Foods and found to be contaminated with GM corn were also withdrawn with \$ 60 million going in settlement. These are only a few of the prominent recalls the world has witnessed. The list is otherwise endless.

More recently, nearly 7 million cars have been recalled in the United States after a defective airbag and propellant device supplied by a Japanese manufacturer Takata, and fitted in cars of nearly two dozen popular brands, were detected. So far there have been two deaths and 139 reported injuries across all brands. According to news reports, some 34 million vehicles in the US are potentially



Consumer Protection Act, 1986, provides adequate protection to consumers. But when it comes to seeds, the law is not as clear as it is for any other manufactured product. In several cases the seed companies have managed to wriggle out leaving the state governments to take on the liability, finds out Dr. Devinder Sharma.



affected. Volkswagen alone had to recall 680,000 vehicles in the US over airbag problems.

In India, the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, provides adequate protection to consumers. It does ensure that a manufacturer does not sell a product that suffers from a major defect, ensures proper service and can be hauled up for excessive pricing, unfair trade practices or restrictive trade practices. But when it comes to seeds, the law is not as clear as it is for any other manufactured product. The existing provisions have been used by farmers at several places to get compensation for lack of germination of the seeds but in several cases the seed companies have managed to wriggle out leaving the state governments to take on the liability.

This brings me to the failure of genetically-modified Bt cotton seeds to control the dreaded pink bollworm pests in cotton. In an affidavit filed on Jan 23 before the New Delhi High Court, the Ministry of Agriculture stated: "Pink boll worm, a major pest of the cotton crop, has already developed resistance in the last 2-3 years; farmers are a worried lot having sown Bt cotton seeds purchased at high prices."

Seeking a reduction in royalty payments to Mahyco-Monsanto Biotech India Pvt Ltd (MMBL), which has a near monopoly on Bt cotton seeds, what the government is merely seeking is the right to regulate prices for farmers at a time when the efficacy of the crop variety goes down. Even if the royalty amount is reduced it would still make the Bt cotton varieties anyway effective to withstand the insect attack against which it was earlier resistant. Since the efficacy of

Why should an inferior seed be allowed to be sold?

Bt cotton seeds has come down, and this has been established by the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), and admitted by Monsanto, I wonder why are the seed companies not being asked to withdraw and destroy the Bt cotton seeds, which have lost its ability to control pink boll worm insects? After all, if Nestle can be directed to recall and destroy 400 million packet of Maggi noddles, seed companies selling Bollgard-II seeds (and I am told there are 49 such companies) should also be directed to recall and destroy 50 million seed samples that are sold every year.

Why should an inferior seed be allowed to be sold? Are these farmers not consumers?

In India, reports say more than 8 million farmers are engaged in cotton cultivation. Nearly 97 per cent of the cotton area in India is under Bt cotton.

Perhaps for this reason, but not as categorical, some States have begun to question the seed companies. Reports *The Times of India* (Feb 13, 2016): "State governments have begun to issue notices to domestic trade channel partners of American seed giant Monsanto, citing failure of latter's GM cotton that was supposed to be pest resistant but is now being attacked by the same pests." Accordingly, these seed companies, which have come together under the banner National Seed Association of India (NSAI) in turn, are questioning Monsanto,

which in turn is blaming farmers for not following the correct farm practices. This tug of war will continue while farmers continue to suffer. Blaming farmers for any seed debacle has been the easiest way to escape responsibility.

In 2009, Monsanto had accepted pink boll resistance to its first-generation Bt cotton – containing one Bt gene. This was replaced by the second-generation called Bollgard-II – containing two Bt genes — and therefore providing more 'robust' protection. The Nagpur-based Central Institute of Cotton Research meanwhile detected pink bollworm developing resistance to Bollgard-II in October 2015. When confronted, a spokesperson for Monsanto replied: "the resistance is a natural, evolving process."

It took almost four years for the insects to develop resistance to the first generation Bt cotton after it was commercially released in 2006, says a news report in the *Hindu Business Line*. In another 5-6 years, the second generation Bollgard-II also developed resistance. The failure of Bt cotton to withstand the fury of insect attack against which it was supposed to be resistant has only aggravated the prevailing farm distress. In such a distressing scenario, when we know hundreds of farmers are committing suicide, and majority of them are from the cotton belt, the question that needs to be asked is why shouldn't the Bt cotton varieties be withdrawn and destroyed? If the seed variety is not able to provide the same service for which it was originally approved, why shouldn't the Ministry of Agriculture advise the seed companies to recall the product? □□

A delicate balancing task achieved



All budgets are in a sense compromises with different stakeholders. Whether it is a housewife making budget for home or a Chief Finance officer for a company or Finance minister for the Government. The core issue is that expenditure is always larger than revenues. Government can rely on Nasik press and Corporates on Banks. But housewives have no such recourse. The Government has significant number of stake holders like corporate—domestic & foreign—farmers, small entrepreneurs, salaried employees, retirees etc. Satisfying all

stake holders is a herculean task. In our system unfortunately the movement of Sensex is equated to Economic progress even though the share in GDP of all listed companies will not be more than 10 percent. Since in USA the role of corporate is very large it is assumed that similar is the case India by the US educated Economists and Experts.

Interestingly after a long time the focus of this budget is on Agriculture and Rural sector and social sector and infrastructure. One of the important areas is irrigation. It is really sad that even after nearly 70 years of independence only 40% of our cultivated land is irrigated and rest depend on vagaries of rains. This budget suggests that more than 28 lakhs hectares will be brought under irrigation in the next few years. A dedicated long term Irrigation und will be created under NABARD with an initial corpus of Rs 20000 crores. Equally important is how prudently the funds are going to be used since past experience in Irrigation is not encouraging particularly even in progressive states like Maharashtra. But this time we hope things will be different since the first Constable of treasury [pradhan Sevak!] is PM. Given the price increase in Pulses and its impact on recently concluded Bihar polls—the Government has allotted Rs 500 crores for Pulse outputs.

Roadways are another area of Focus. Govt has allocated Rs 19000 crore under Roadways schemes. Government has committed to 100% village electrification by May 1,2018—one full year before next election. The philosophy underlying the budget is about water, power and roads. Government rightly thinks that if these three needs are fulfilled then society will take care of other things.

Of course there is an initiative for financing higher education wherein a bank similar to National Housing Finance may come into existence. But the cost of LKG and UKG is equally skyrocketing and perhaps this bank can take care of the needs of all education and skill formation like ITIs.



Interestingly after a long time the focus of this budget (2016-17) is on Agriculture and Rural sector and social sector and infrastructure and One of the important areas is irrigation, finds

Prof. R. Vaidyanathan

On the tax front there has not been any major change other than additional benefit of Rs 3000 to those whose taxable income is below Rs 5 Lakhs and an additional benefit of Rs 50000 for loans up to Rs. 35 lakhs & home buyers up to Rs 50 lakhs worth homes.

Another area is tax exemption of commutation of up to 40% in NPS. But for new entrants EPF becomes EET [exempt/exempt/tax] unlike current EEE—for above 40% withdrawals. This needs re-think since EPF acts as first pillar of old age security scheme in a country like India where more than 80% do not have any mandated pension benefits since large work force is self employed.

Two areas which required attention is pertaining to having a separate regulatory framework for Mudra initiative and steps to curb black money generation and hold-

ing of it. In his Budget speech on Monday, Arun Jaitley reported that an amount of Rs 1 lakh crore was sanctioned to 2.5 crore borrowers by February 2016 under the PM Mudra scheme and has proposed an increased allocation of Rs 1.80 lakh crore for the same. But for this to succeed there is a need to create a Mudra bank similar to NHB for integrating dispersed credit markets. Similarly by demonetizing Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes and by making holding of cash beyond say Rs 20 lakhs an offence—one could have addressed domestic black money.

Most important is that no scheme is named after politicians in power unless the earlier regimes—wherein more than 1000 schemes/universities/roads/airports/hospitals were named after members of Nehru family only. From that point it is a welcome departure. One can

say safely that it is a budget by Modi and he has definitely passed this exam with flying colors—since in his address to children on 28th Feb he mentioned Budget as his exam.

This budget made D Raja of communist party of India to comment that it has given no benefits to corporate sector. This reaction is interesting and intriguing. His late leader A.B Bardhan caustically commented “Let Market go to dogs”—in 2004 when the first UPA government was to be formed—the government which was presumably run from Alimuddin Street of Kolkata [CPIM] and Gopalapuram of Chennai [DMK].

Either CPI has moved far away from its revolutionary roots or BJP has moved away from its big business/Financial markets obsession. May be both! □□

The author is Professor of Finance at IIM Bangalore. The views are personal

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Pathway to Innovation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi must be congratulated for putting innovation in the forefront. The Niti Ayog had established an Expert Committee to prepare the road map for giving impetus to innovation in the country. The Committee has suggested that a “Grand Prize” be established to provide encouragement to innovators. It has also suggested that public funding of startups may be increased. “Startup” is made by young first generation entrepreneurs. A college graduate may have an idea to do business but he may not have the funds for the same. There are specialized investors that provide financial support to such ventures. These are variously called incubator funds or venture capital. They provide financial support without requiring collateral security. The funder gives money if the project appears viable. These funding are high-risk high-gain. One out of ten startups may succeed but the value added by that one startup is so huge that it makes up for the loss incurred in the nine failed startups. The Department of Science and Technology has provided such funds to the tune of Rs 100 crores since 1980 or about Rs three crores per year. The Committee has suggested that the Government increase this to Rs 200 crores per year. Difficulty is that the Government is facing severe fiscal pressures. Global economy is down and revenue collections are under stress. Therefore it is necessary to explore other strategies for jumpstarting innovation that do not depend upon increased funding alone.

The biggest bottleneck to innovation is that our universities are producing non-thinking graduates who can only repeat the teachings like a parrot. They have no analytical or employable skills. Many Committees have pointed to this malfunctioning of our system. This system was set up by the British rulers of India to produce a non-thinking educated class that oppresses the native population and serve the foreign masters. Our politicians have appropriated the system as it is. The Committee set up by Niti Ayog has not gone to the root of this malaise. It



The biggest bottleneck to innovation is that our universities are producing non-thinking graduates who can only repeat the teachings like a parrot. They have no analytical or employable skills,

Dr Bharat Jhunjunwala



has remained satisfied by repeated standard slogans. Report of the committee says that it supports “steady re-engineering of the education system in the country to prepare our youth for the new innovation economy and provide our young enterprises with a large pool of highly-employable workforce... including overhaul of existing school and college curricula, change in existing teaching techniques, better monitoring of school and faculty standards, better access to e-education facilities, and better targeted skilling and training to ensure employability of youth.” All this is meaningless bureaucratic jargon. The basic problem of our University system is that teachers have no incentive to teach, let alone to innovate. They are secured for life in their jobs. The Committee has not given any suggestions to deal with this fundamental problem. Requirement is to convert all University teachers from permanent employment to contract appointments and to institute an external evaluation system to determine renewal of their contract. Then the teachers will have an incentive to teach. Innovation will follow.

The Committee has suggested that Patents should be enforced strictly. That will create incentive for private individuals and business houses to invest in Research and Development, it has said. However, there are two aspects to the matter. The Harvard University had undertaken a study on role of the Government in Innovation in the energy sector. The Report said that Patents protection both helps and harms innovation: “In some cases, broad patent protection contributed to rapid innovation; in others a relatively weak... frame-

work during the early stages contributed to technology transfer and competition, and thus innovation.” Weak patents protection can allow large numbers of small businessmen to copy advance technologies and upgrade themselves rapidly. Once upgraded, they may be in a situation where they can make new innovations and have them patented. It is necessary to make it easier for the weak businesses to access patented technologies. The Committee has ignored this aspect of patent protection and merely restated the need for patent protection that is consistently raised by the developed countries.

The Committee has underscored the need to promote small businesses to generate employment. No one disagrees. Problem is that the economic policies implemented by the Government are wholly arrayed against small businesses. For example, it is proposed to take away the tax exemptions available to small businesses under the Goods and Service Tax. The Government wants to attract large scale foreign direct investment. This means that more production will be undertaken with automatic machines. They will produce at low cost. Small businesses will be killed. One large textile mill may create 1000 jobs but take away the livelihood of 50,000 small weavers. There exists, therefore, a contradiction between two government policies. On the one hand the Government says it wants to support small businesses. On the other hand it is implementing policies that kill these same small businesses. The Committee has failed to draw attention of the Government to this contradiction.

The Committee has remained silent on some other actions that

are necessary to spur innovation in the country. A study by the United Nations University on the role of Government in promoting innovation said that “public subsidies for private sector research and development is quite low” in India. It is necessary, therefore, for the Government to increase direct investment in innovation such as by sponsoring innovative projects. The United States has a system whereby private individuals building upon research undertaken by Government Universities can have the innovations patented in their personal name. This has enabled individuals to take innovations from the university system and build on it. It was necessary for the Committee to suggest a roadmap in this direction.

A study on innovation in the United States found that procurement of hi-tech products by the Government has helped much in innovation. The Committee has failed to make any suggestions in this direction.

India has a large network of scientific laboratories established by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of the Government of India. These labs have large budgets but they have contributed little to innovation. The United Nations University pointed out that the efforts to restructure CSIR have been made since 1996 but with only marginal results. The Committee has chosen to remain silent on this issue. In the result the Prime Minister must focus on reforming the existing university system and economic policies to jumpstart innovation. Providing funds to startups is welcome but it will prove inadequate to the task at hand. □□

GM Brassica and Public Perception

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), a biotechnology regulator of the government of India had recently put on hold the cultivation of genetically-modified (GM) hybrid mustard. The GM hybrid named Dhara Mustard Hybrid 11 (DMH11) claimed to yield 2.6 tons per hectare (t/ha.) i.e. 20-25 percent higher than best check varieties under cultivation in the country. The varieties of mustard like RGN 48 yield upto 2.9 t/ha under rain-fed condition. It may well be emphasized that it's not the first hybrid developed in mustard. The national centre, Directorate of Rapeseed and Mustard Research of India Council of Agricultural Research, (ICAR-DRMR), Bharatpur (Rajasthan) for the first time in 2008 developed and released for cultivation a hybrid namely NRCHB 506 having an average yield of 2.3 t/ha with 40.6 per cent oil content. Hybrids NRCHB 101 and Dhara Mustard Hybrid-1 (DMH 1) are the other two hybrids released for cultivation in the same year.

GM vs Non-GM Brassica hybrids

The Non-GM hybrids have been developed using traditional plant breeding technology evolved since the re-advent of Mendelian principles of genetics in 1900. It utilizes natural occurring genetical phenomenon of pollen grain sterility and fertility restoration. Unfortunately, all around 3000 Brassica species of which 40 are of economical importance were lacking in this natural mechanism. During 1990-92, Belgium scientists C. Mariani and others discovered genes in bacteria *Bacillus amyloliquefacies*. They isolated, cloned, and transferred the genes via genetic engineering technique to Brassica napus plant. One of the genes called 'bar-nase' is cyto-toxing kills the pollen grain making it sterile. While another gene 'barstar' block the barnase gene is hybrid thus, restores it back to fertility. The killer gene is incorporated into female seed bearing plant and restorer gene into male pollen parent plant. The female and male plants are hybridized to produce hybrid seed. Besides, a third gene 'bar' was introduced into female plant to link with sterile gene barnase. The bar gene governs resistance to an herbicide phosphinothricin in short called 'PPT' herbicide. Herbicides normally affect processes like photosynthesis and biosynthesis of essential amino acids impacting quality

The perceived consequences of genetically modified plants are feared to pose biological and ecological risks such as unforeseen metabolic changes giving rise to toxic and allergic metabolites, unexpected new susceptibilities to pests of cotton thus, disturbing the ecosystem and biodiversity, says
Prof. (Dr.) A.K. Saria



and yield. Here, herbicide use is not to control weeds but to differentiate plants in field carrying sterile and fertile bacterial gene. On spray of PPT herbicide female plants survive due to resistant bas gene while pollen plants are killed. The female plants are seed bearing plant, fear is anticipated that bar gene present in it may transfer to weeds and other related Brassica species. It's also contrary to chemical free agriculture at the moment of promotion of organic farming declaring Sikkim as the first organic state by Prime Minister of India. Brassica juncea acquired these genes from napus is easily crossable with number of Cole crops like Brassica nigra (Black mustard), Brassica oleracea (Cabbage), Brassica campestris (Rape seed), Brassica tournefortii (Wild turnip), all diploid having two sets of chromosomes are inter-crossable. During evolutionary processes three polyploid species namely Brassica napus – (Rape seed of Europe), Brassica juncea (Indian mustard) and Brassica carinata – (vegetable /oil seed mustard) were evolved, all having four sets of chromosomes derive from ancestral diploid species. Brassica is also crossable with radish even.

Brassica is often cross pollinated crop and honey bees are main source of cross pollination. Bees carrying pollens from hybrid crop field may contaminate related weeds, its wild and cultivated crop plants. Fear is generated that GM brassica possessing bacterial genes may also impact the quality of nectar and honey. Indian farmers adopting apiary in farming system may suffer until scientific evidence of safety to biodiversity and humane health are presented. In

general, the perceived consequences of genetically modified plants are feared to pose biological and ecological risks such as unforeseen metabolic changes giving rise to toxic and allergic metabolites, unexpected new susceptibilities to pests of cotton like white fly in Northern states, pink bollworm in Karnataka and Telangana and corn earworm in Andhra and Karnataka and transmission of GMO plants for example emergence of Palmer amaranth and 24 other weeds in cotton fields thus, disturbing the ecosystem and biodiversity.

Biotechnology vs Conventional Plant Breeding

Prior to green revolution, productivity of wheat and rice was about 1.0 to 1.5 tons as the trend in oilseeds and pulse crops. Tremendous 2 and ½ fold increase in productivity during sixties was accomplished using conventional plant breeding technology that brought green revolution transforming deficit India into self sufficient. We are ever deficient in oilseeds. The ICAR vision document 2020 estimated 58 million tons of oilseeds. The share of rapeseed mustard has been projected to be around 24.2 million tons. The current production of 6.2 million tons from 5.6 million ha area with 1.1 ton productivity is far below than the achievable average of 2.0 tons/ha in mustard varieties. The potential is still higher upto 3 tons/ha. Leaving wide scope for the gap to be narrowed down through conventional plant breeding and agro-nomic technologies. According to Environment Minister Shri Prakash Javadekar “We need to increase production and productivity in agriculture but through scientific risk free events in the interest of

Bees carrying pollens may contaminate related weeds, its wild & cultivated crop plants.

the lives of our people”. Dr. Dhiraj Singh, Director, DRMR, referred to a conventional bred mustard variety RH 749 yielding 2.5 tons per hectare grown over 6 lakh hectares all across the country. Biotechnological techniques, no doubt supplement conventional plant breeding, however, these cannot substitute the late. Pyramiding of bacterial leaf blight (BLB) genes into basmati rice is a good instance of supplementing conventional technologies. It had been possible due to concerted efforts of plant breeders with sound knowledge of biotechnology and biotechnologists with background of plant breeding. Accelerating plant breeding processes through marker assisted breeding save both time and money.

India is the largest rapeseed and mustard growing countries in the world occupying the first position in area and second in production. Indian mustard is nutritionally very rich and its oil content varies from 37-49 per cent. The seed and oil are used as condiment in the preparation of pickles, flavouring curries and vegetables as well as for cooking and frying purposes. Its oil is used in many industrial products, cake as cattle feed and manure and green leaves for vegetable and green fodder. □□

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Defence Minister Sh. Manohar Parrikar Illuminates DIIA

In what is believed to be a watershed moment for the Indian Defence Manufacturers, key industry players today came together to launch **DIIA** – an industry association with a single minded focus on accelerating Indigenous design & development in the Indian defence sector. DIIA champions the view point that self-sufficiency in defence can be achieved through government policies that pro-actively encourage indigenous R&D.

DIIA will provide a platform for like-minded organizations to rally around, collaborate and co-operate to forge ahead in making the ‘Make by India’ a sustainable initiative. Indigenously designed, developed and manufactured products should be given higher preference is the moot point that the association will propagate.

Till date, this aspect of encouraging and promoting indigenous R&D has never been actively pursued by any industry association. One of the major ideological viewpoint that DIIA stands for and is attempting to promote is that it is an undeniable fact that many Indian companies have been spearheading intense R&D efforts to indigenize defence equipment. These initiatives and success stories need to be converted to fruitful business contracts which not only help the companies sustain themselves but aids the nation in attaining the much needed strength in being self-reliant in its defence requirements.

DIIA will interact with Government decision makers to ensure a policy that encourages design and development of defence equipment with IP ownership in Indian companies. Furthermore, we look forward to expanding our ranks with other like-minded companies and invite them to participate actively in this movement by joining us.”

DIIA's agenda include:

- To provide credible Indian defence innovators and industry players a conducive environment and platform to discuss critical industry issues, with the defence SME's at its core
- To formulate plans to steer the conversation towards ‘Design, Develop & Make in India’ and additionally position indigenous SMEs companies as the cradles of innovation.
- To make a meaningful contribution to the Indian defence requirements by carefully aligning long-



term defence plans and R&D strategy of the Indian Industry to enable larger domestic procurement and also exports from India

- To ensure that Indian defence capabilities that have been developed are nurtured and honed to global standards while preserving them against any predatory tactics.

With the revolutionary key provision of Buy Indian (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured – IDDM) being announced in the new Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), DIIA's efforts seems have started to bear fruit from its inception. For the first time in the history of Indian defence procurement the importance of design and development has been recognised by Ministry of Defence. This category is going to ensure huge inflow of funds into research and development and will ensure that the scientific talent in India is engaged in developing cutting edge technologies in Defence. With such huge investments, going into R&D, India, from being a destination for outdated defence equipment, will become the source for cutting-edge technology in defence.

The inception of DIIA can be attributed to two crucial variables, firstly the positive direction provided by the current Govt policies and secondly the growing confidence of the indigenous players. The catalyst clearly has been the Make in India initiative which has reenergized the defence sector.

DIIA will strive to encourage and identify success stories to steer the Govt policy discussion towards a fruitful conclusion for the industry as a whole. With the Indian defence requirements set to cross \$100 billion in the next ten years, the indigenous defence industry is well poised to address this demand and DIIA endeavours to play a pivotal role in increasing the defence self-reliance index. □□

Budget credit negative for PSBs

Moody's Investors Service today said the Budget for 2016-17 is "credit negative" for PSU banks as the capital infusion road map falls short of the required Rs 1.45 lakh crore.

"The Budget is credit negative for public sector banks because the government has stuck to its capital infusion road map announced in 2015, budgeting Rs 25,000 crore in injection," says Srikanth Vadlamani, Moody's Vice-President and Senior Credit Officer.

Moody's, in a statement, said the Union Budget is moderately credit positive for most sectors, but credit negative for public sector banks because of the insufficient allocation of capital for the segment. "We believe that unless the banks receive Rs 1.45 lakh crore for the four fiscal years ending March 31, 2016 to March 31, 2019, their credit profiles will worsen," added Vadlamani.

Moody's said PSU banks are unlikely to gain access to capital markets for equity capital in the near term, given their low valuations. As for the Indian sovereign, the Budget indicates a continued commitment to gradual fiscal consolidation by bringing down the fiscal deficit to 3 per cent over the next two years. However, the proposals do not contain significant measures to address structural fiscal challenges, it said in a note titled 'Inside India'. □

Something wrong with banking sector

CBI director Anil Sinha in a conference with Banks and Financial Institutions said that the crisis in the banking and financial system ran deep and there was a growing sense of anguish among the public that while banks were strict on retail borrowers, the big borrowers and large scale fraudsters were able to not only evade the law but enjoy the fruits of crime. Speaking at the inaugural session of the seventh conference of CBI with Banks and Financial Institutions, Sinha alluded to the bad loan crisis facing the Indian banking industry, Sinha said: "Something indeed seriously wrong. While I fully understand that loan defaults can happen due to business risk and reasons beyond control of Banks, borrowers and regulators yet a significant part of the defaults are willful and fraudulent. What causes greater concern is that a major part of the NPAs & frauds are in large value accounts".

"Added to this is the unduly slow & long process by which such loans and advances are red flagged, declared Non Performing Assets (NPAs), then as wilful defaulters and finally as fraudulent. This whole process is so time consuming that it allows such large borrowers ample time to walk away with the funds," the CBI director said. A large part of such funds move outside the country to tax havens through hawala and other unofficial channels. As a result of these limitations, investigations by CBI are grossly hampered.

Citing the instances of a case Kingfisher & its erstwhile Management for allegedly defrauding banks to the tune of Rs 7,000, Sinha said: "We registered the case in July 2015, but the loans/advances were taken during 2004 to 2012. However, the banks did not file a complaint with CBI. We had to register the case on our own initiative... The undue delay in reporting such a fraud has jeopardized the cause of justice to the offenders." □

NIA sends letters rogatory to Pakistan

The NIA has sent Letters Rogatory to Pakistan seeking details of four Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists who had carried out the attack on the Pathankot airbase in January this year.

The move comes ahead of the visit of Pakistani Special Investigating Team (SIT) that is likely to take place in the last week of this month. Letters Rogatory is a legal document sent through the special court asking details about the phone numbers dialled by the four terrorists ahead of carrying out the strike at the airbase on the intervening night of January 1 and 2.

The numbers are suspected to be in the names of persons connected with Jaish terror group, including Mullah Dadullah and Kashif Jaan. The numbers shared belong to the Pakistani telecom operators like Mobilink, Warid and Telenor. The NIA has also sought details and picture of sons of Khayam Baber, whose son was part of the suicide squad that carried out the attack. Kashif Jaan, one of the key handlers of the attackers, had accompanied the terrorists till the border and returned to supervise the operations, the sources said. The bodies of four terrorists have been preserved. Out of the four, two of them have been identified as Nasir and Salim. Nasir was the one who had called his mother, brother Babar and an uncle, in Bahawalpur from the phone snatched from Rajesh Verma, jeweller friend of Superintendent of Police of Punjab Salwinder Singh. The NIA has also given details, including the batch number of food packets, used by the terrorists after infiltrating into India on December 30.

Rising crime taints Nitish's 100-day rule

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar completed 100 days in office on the last day of February and a day later he turned 65. In his third consecutive term as Chief Minister, Nitish has pledged to implement his seven resolves but the biggest problem his Government has been facing is law and order. After the murder of two engineers in Darbhanga and one professional in Vaishali in December and January, there had been series of the killings of about half a dozen activists of BJP and LJP in February putting a question mark on the law and order situation. It had given enough ammo to the Opposition to train their guns on the Maha Gathbandhan Government. The LJP had even demanded imposition of President's rule only two months after Government formation.

50% of fall in oil price passed to people

Government on Wednesday admitted it has onpassed the benefit of only 50 per cent of the reduced international crude oil prices to the consumers and kept the remaining half for being invested in the social sector. With the Opposition in Rajya Sabha accusing the government of "appropriating" and "not passing" the benefit of fall in international crude oil prices to consumers, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan insisted that the Government was not hiding anything and asked if it was a "crime" to spend that saved money for the public welfare. Responding to questions, he said "we have returned 50 per cent of fall in international crude oil prices to consumers while we have kept

FDI policy relaxed

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has proposed to significantly relax the FDI policy in several sectors, including insurance and pension and asset reconstruction companies, to attract more overseas investments. "I would like to announce further reforms in our FDI policy. The changes proposed are in the area of insurance and pension, asset reconstruction companies, stock exchanges etc," Jaitley said in his Budget speech for 2016-17. He also said FDI policy has to address the requirements of farmers and the food processing industry as a lot of fruits and vegetables grown by farmers either do not fetch the right price or fail to reach the market.

"Food processing industry and trade should be more efficient. Hundred per cent FDI will be allowed through the FIPB route in the marketing of food products produced and manufactured in India," he said. He hoped this will come as an impetus to the food processing ministry to boost the sector.

"This will benefit farmers, give impetus to the food processing industry and create vast employment opportunities," he added.

The government has already relaxed the FDI policy in over a dozen sectors, including defence, railway, medical devices and civil aviation. FDI into the country increased by 40 per cent to USD 29.44 billion during April-December in the current fiscal. □

the remaining 50 per cent in Government treasury and invested in other sectors like social sector."

"Government has not consumed everything. We have not hidden anything. To have a balanced fiscal strategy, we have invested the money saved in farm sector, infrastructure sector and the health sector," he said and asked if it was a "crime" to spend the money thus saved for the benefit of the people in a welfare state. He also said that Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget speech has also said that the fall in international crude oil prices has helped the Indian Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M) said the benefits of the fall in the global crude prices has not been onpassed to the people. While tax on petrol has been raised from Rs9 to Rs21, that on diesel from Rs 3 to over Rs 17.

"Instead of passing the benefits, you are collecting more excise. Why has it not been passed by the Government and why it has been appropriated by govern-

ment? The difference that has to be passed on to the consumer is consumed by the government who have collected extra money to the tune of Rs54,000 crore and that is why your fiscal management happened," he said accusing the Minister of evading a categorical reply.

Govt. to wind up NMCC

Government has approved winding up of National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council (NMCC), saying the Council has fulfilled the mandate for which it was constituted. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The CCEA ... Has given its approval for winding up of National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council with immediate effect as the Council has fulfilled the mandate for which it was constituted," an official statement said. □□

Terror groups stealing PAK sovereignty

Terrorist groups like LeT and the Haqqani network are “stealing sovereignty” of Pakistan, US Secretary of State John Kerry has warned as he reminded the country of its commitment that it would take action against all terror outfits without discrimination. “Groups like the Haqqani network or Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad, all of these groups are literally stealing sovereignty of the nation. And they are stealing the future of the nation. It is important for us to stand up to them,” Kerry said in his opening remarks at the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which he co-chaired with Pakistani Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz. “Groups like the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba seek to undermine Pakistan’s efforts to foster strong, positive relationship with its neighbours,” Kerry said. “We recognise that every country can do more to intensify, to destroy and defeat violent radical extremists. Aziz, in his opening remarks, reiterated Pakistan’s resolve to “finish and win” the fight against terrorism. Pakistan is taking all necessary measures to launch intelligence-based operations and choke the funding sources of terrorist organisations.

So far, more than one billion rupees worth of accounts have been frozen by the State Bank of Pakistan belonging to the terrorist and extremist organisations, he said. Aziz said multiple actions are underway to defeat the extremist agenda or propaganda of the terrorist organisations through a counter-narrative strategy. □

Clashes in France camp

Makeshift huts went up in flames in an angry backlash as workers, guarded by scores of French police, began pulling down tents and shelters in the sprawling migrant camp in Calais. Police lobbed tear gas in a brief clash with pro-migrant activists and others throwing projectiles at officers forming a security cordon to protect the tear-down operation. There were no reports of injuries. At least three people were arrested, authorities said. As tension mounted, the fragile structures in a southern part of the camp came down one by one and heavy equipment was moved in to scoop up the rubble and junk left behind by weary migrants dreaming of a new life in Britain. Three makeshift homes went up in flames, the fires set either by upset migrants or pro-migrant activists, according to Gilles Debove of the Unite SGP Police FO union, who acts as a police spokesman. At least three people described as pro-migrant activists from the No Borders group were arrested, Debove said. The prefecture said the arrests were made for pelting police with stones and setting fires. The No Borders group, which wants all borders removed, is often blamed by authorities for fanning tensions. Authorities say 800-1,000 migrants are concerned by the evictions. Humanitarian groups contend more than 3,000 are affected.

Sikh soldier sues us military

In a first of its kind lawsuit, a decorated Sikh-American soldier has sued the US military, alleging that because of his religious beliefs he is being subjected to “discriminatory” testing that no other soldier in the US Army goes through. Captain Simratpal Singh, 28 was in December last

year granted a temporary religious accommodation to serve in the US Army while maintaining his Sikh turban, unshorn hair and beard.

The accommodation, a rare exception, was scheduled to remain in effect until March 31 but in an unprecedented step backward, the US Army recently ordered Singh to report today for “extraordinary, non-standard additional testing as a precondition for remaining in the Army”, international law firm McDermott Will & Emery, representing Singh, said in a statement. The firm, along with the Sikh Coalition and the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, filed the federal lawsuit against the Department of Defence on behalf of Singh, who has earned a Bronze Star for clearing explosives from roads in Afghanistan, and received numerous other military accolades in various positions. Singh is scheduled to be sequestered for three days to undergo testing that no other soldier in the US Army has ever been subjected to, including the soldiers permitted to maintain beards for medical reasons and previously-accommodated Sikh soldiers, the law firms said.

UK turns to India for doctors & nurses

UK is turning to India in an attempt to fill thousands of vacancies for doctors and nurses in its state-funded National Health Service, it emerged, but “unwise regulations” and changing visa regime have been making the British medical system less attractive for Indian doctors. Statistics obtained by the BBC as part of a freedom of information (FOI) request indicate severe NHS staff shortages with a majority of NHS trusts across Britain forced to turn overseas to coun-

tries like India and the Philippines. However, visa changes over the years and some proposed changes expected to kick-in soon have been making the British medical system less attractive for Indian doctors.

“Indian doctors should be treated equally as local doctors and not used simply as a pair of hands to service the NHS,” said Ramesh Mehta, president of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO), a representative body of nearly 50,000 Indian-origin doctors in the country. The group had recently taken up the issue of the UK’s plans to impose a new Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT) to give UK and European medics priority in the UK job market. According to the latest figures obtained by the BBC for its ‘Inside Out’ show between 2013 and 2015 nursing vacancies had increased by 50 per cent and open positions for doctors had risen by 60 per cent. In contrast, the number of new Indian doctors registering with the General Medical Council (GMC) in the UK dropped from 3,640 in 2004 to just 534 last year. The Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association blamed poor workforce planning for the problems.

Hackers invited to attack US websites

The US Department of Defense is inviting vetted hackers to test its cybersecurity under a pilot program that is the first of its kind in the federal government. Called “Hack the Pentagon,” the so-called bug bounty program will give cash awards and other recognition to participants who can spot weaknesses on the Pentagon’s public web pages. “I am always challeng-

China to launch over 20 satellite in 2016

China plans to conduct more than 20 satellite launch missions in 2016, which positions China to exceed launches by the US, an official from the country’s Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation said. Among them, a total of 15 launches are significant projects or first flights, People’s Daily quoted the official as saying. The country will send several rockets in space, including Tiangong-2, an orbiting space lab and Shenzhou-11, a manned spacecraft with two people on board. The year 2016 is a big year for China’s aerospace industry, as two new types of rockets will also be launched in 2016. Long March-7, scheduled to be launched in June, will put the country’s first cargo ship, Tianzhou-1, into space in the first half of 2017 to dock with Tiangong-2 and conduct experiments. Furthermore, Long March-5 is slotted to be sent into space in September 2016. This type of rocket has the largest carrying capacity among the new generation of rockets in China, with a maximum payload capacity of 25 tons to low Earth orbit and 14 tons to geosynchronous transfer orbit.

China will also send several experimental satellites into space in 2016. The country’s retrievable Shijian-10 satellite will be launched in April at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre. In addition, China sent a Belarusian communications satellite into space, and will also help the country with its commercial sensing satellites. □

ing our people to think outside the five-sided box that is the Pentagon,” Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said. This “initiative will strengthen our digital defenses and ultimately enhance our national security.” The pilot program is modeled after similar competitions conducted by major firms to improve network and product security. A defense official said the project would be a cost-effective way of recruiting non-malicious “white hat” hackers to probe Pentagon vulnerabilities. The Pentagon did not announce how much money would be paid out, but suggested that the bigger the vulnerability a hacker finds, the bigger the reward.

Donald Trump again blames India

Donald Trump, the controversial Republican presidential frontrunner, has again blamed India for taking away jobs from Americans, pledging to bring them back if elected president even as

the ‘Trump mania’ appeared to have picked up in the US ahead of “Super Tuesday” showdown. The 69-year-old real estate tycoon who became a politician only last summer has been drawing thousands of crowd across the country, hoped to “seal the deal”, coming Tuesday by winning Republican primary in all the 11 states.

Addressing a crowd of roughly 5,000 people, a big by US primary election standard Trump sold the dream of “making America great again” by promising to bring back jobs from countries like India, China, Japan and Mexico. Every promise of his drew a thunderous applause with people cheering “USA, USA” and “Trump, Trump”. One of his die-hard supporters, Mark, who works in the IT sector was of the view that Indian-Americans are not taking away the jobs in his sector. “They bring in quality and diversity,” he said, displaying a banner which read Trump supporters are silent majority. □□

WTO rules against India

WTO has ruled against India's "buy-local" provisions for large solar projects, which are entitled to subsidy and assured government procurement if the equipment is manufactured locally. Filed by the US in 2013, the case was brought to remove any disadvantage to imported solar equipment in India. The National Solar Mission (NSM) is the flagship component of India's climate action plan, as well as essential for the country's future energy security. An ambitious target to scale up solar electricity production from 5GW currently to 100GW by 2022 requires access to affordable equipment. It is widely agreed, including by countries filing anti-climate cases in the WTO, that a domestic clean energy industry would find it difficult to stay afloat unless policy and economic incentives are provided.

The Make in India program aims to provide political and popular support to the Indian economy's transition to clean energy. The core logic is to make clean energy affordable through domestic manufacturing, especially since the recent Paris Agreement on global climate change action did nothing to expedite transfer of clean technology from developed to developing countries. The Paris Agreement also failed to address strongly the alignment of counter-productive international trade agreements with climate imperatives. In response to the WTO case, India has offered to alter NSM's "buy-local" provisions by restricting it to solar equipment for its own use, such as railways and defence, and not for reselling the electricity.

India's stand at WTO flawed

The Economic Survey 2016 has unequivocally questioned India's long-time stance of insisting on a special safeguard mechanism (SSM) and a permanent solution to its public stockholding issue at WTO, arguing that the country's strategy should instead evolve around the need to shift away from tariff armours for producers to domestic support, and that too at an appropriate level and form.

The Survey pointed out that the policies being defended are those that "India intends to move out of in any case" due to well-documented impacts, including a decline in water tables and the over-use of electricity and fertilisers. Given that the real need for an extra protection in the form of the SSM arises

only in the case of a very tiny segment and applied tariffs on most farm items are far below the bound rates, India should discuss SSMs not as "a generic issue of principle but as a pragmatic negotiating objective covering a small part of agricultural tariffs".

"Perhaps, in this instance, lofty theologising about freedom and sovereignty needs to cede to mundane haggling over hides and hibiscuses," the Survey says. India's applied rate is less than 5% of the bound rate for about 4% of tariff lines, and less than 20% for about 16% of its tariff lines.

It also expressed reservations as to whether pressing for a permanent solution to the stockholding issue is vitally necessary, especially when the country has managed to get a "peace clause" in Bali which was reiterated at the Nairobi ministerial in December last year. Prescribing a way forward, the Survey said what India should consider offering a cut in its very high tariff bindings and in return seek more freedom to provide higher levels of domestic support, especially for pulses. It must also desist from policy volatility on trade.

India ratifies TFA

The union cabinet has accorded approval to WTO trade facilitation agreement (TFA) — reached in December. "The cabinet today (Wednesday) approved the proposal for notification of the commitment to the trade facilitation agreement under the WTO," Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters after the meeting. Explaining that the cabinet approval was part of the TFA ratification process by WTO members towards increasing ease of doing business, Prasad said that a committee on trade facilitation is being constituted. "A national committee on trade facilitation will be formed, which will have the secretaries of revenue and commerce as co-chairs," he said. The TFA, approved by 160 WTO members, aims to streamline and harmonise customs procedures to bring an estimated saving of over \$1 trillion annually. The agreement will come into force when two-thirds of the 161 WTO members have ratified it.

India has asked for a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes and not restricted for a period of four years as decided earlier during the WTO ministerial meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in 2013. □□