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GM Seeds:

A Danger to our Eco-system

The special issue of June '17 focusing "Curse of science" is providing a vast knowledge about imposition of tempered seed/soil toxination on our existing cultivation system and diversity of native seeds.

The articles from all the five writers with relevant reference statements from latest Academic Journals and Reports have revealed the fact that Governments and MNC's are introducing a dependency on corporate inputs in our self sustaining agricultural system.

Swadeshi Patrika should produce some more issues to protest the policy of commercialization in agriculture and agro commodities, to save the interest of our innocent farmers. This issue has not only underlined evil effects of GE seeds, but has also strengthened the importance of native seeds.

We need to hand over the sustainable environment to our future generations. I wish the magazine will inculcate a strong will to oppose such "Curse of science".

Your issue reminds me a beautiful quote by Ayn Rand "You can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality."

– Vijay Sharma, Delhi

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Quote-Unquote



There is no place for violence in India. Let us create an India that would make Gandhi Ji proud.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister



Both our nations have been struck by the evils of terrorism, and we are both determined to destroy terrorist organizations and the radical ideology that drives them. We will destroy radical Islamic terrorism.

Donald Trump

President, USA



India today is very different from what it was in 1962, when the countries fought a war over Arunachal Pradesh.

Arun Jaitley

Finance Minister



Indians admire the courage with which tiny Israel has held forth against hostile neighbors out to exterminate the Jewish homeland.

Madhu Purnima Kishwar

Indian academic & writer.

GST, Growth and Government - RBI Face off

Finally, GST is rolled out and is being presented as a major economic reform. There is long history preceding the advent of GST. Issues which came in the way of introduction of GST were ranging from 'revenue neutrality', that is, introduction of GST should not affect the revenue of the centre and the states adversely; 'federal' that was related to centre state financial relations and pure political. In the last leg of the exercise, the Congress party wanted that it should be included in the GST Act that the rate of GST would not be more than 18 percent in any case. However, this was not acceptable to the Narendra Modi government. Later, the Congress party gave up its stance, and after that the stage was set for GST. As per the rate structure decided by the GST Council, agricultural goods and exports have been kept in the category of zero tax and apart from zero, 4 types of rates have been proposed. Five percent tax on general consumption goods, whereas luxury and non merit goods, such as tobacco have been slated to attract a high rate of 28 percent. The remaining items are supposed to be taxed at 12 percent and 18 percent.

On the one hand government is saying that new regime is a biggest reform in the history of independent India, small industry and business is frightened by its introduction, though big corporate, MNCs and big interstate operators are the happiest lot. Swadeshi Jagran Manch has shown its solidarity with these small scale entrepreneurs and traders and has urged the government to address their genuine concerns. Given the complexities attached with the new regime, and the fact that every businessman and industry will have to make multiple registrations and fill up various types of returns and a multiple tax structure, making the system even more complex; its not very certain that whether GST will actually be beneficial or not, the prices will fall or not, the tax system will simplify or not, increase or the revenue of the government will increase or decrease, all these issues carry big question mark.

On the other hand a major problem haunting our economy is that demand is not really taking off, may it be consumer, investment or government demand. And when our economy needed a big push to demand by way of reducing rate of interest to make the loans cheaper, recently Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has one again decided, not to reduce policy rate of interest. This decision of the MPC has drawn a lot of criticism, especially from the Finance Ministry. There is nothing new about tussle between central government and RBI about interest rates. It is well known that central government generally wants RBI to reduce policy interest rates to boost growth. This is so because, if interest rates decline, demand for houses, cars and other consumer goods will increase, with cheapening of loans. With lowering of interest rates, investment increases not only in industry and businesses, even new infrastructure also gets encouraged. Dream of purchasing a house or of a car, could easily be accomplished with cheaper loans. Moreover, largest borrower in our country is government, low interest rates reduce cost of borrowings by government, and lower interest burden may help in larger outgo for welfare expenditure by government. But the Reserve Bank does not agree with the government about interest rates. It says that the monetary policy is not only about growth but also price stability. The Reserve Bank says that since the inflation is yet not stabilised, therefore, the reduction in interest rates is a risky proposition, and it may lead to inflation by increasing the demand.

Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Arvind Subramanian says that since CPI inflation rate had dipped to merely 3.73 percent in May 2017, economy could have been easily given a boost by reducing interest rates, or in other words one can say that MPC has wasted an easy opportunity to boost growth. It is notable that target rate of inflation was earlier fixed by RBI at 6 percent before February 2016 which was reduced to 5 percent and ultimately to 4 percent in April 2017. Therefore since CPI inflation had come down to 3.73 percent, therefore repo-rate was obviously expected to be reduced.

RBI may have a hitch that this reduction in inflation rate may not sustain in the long run. RBI's recent monetary policy statement says that in the second half of 2017-18, inflation may increase. However, point to be noted is that, actual inflation rate has generally been lower than the inflation rate projected by RBI. For instance RBI projected an inflation rate at 5.0 percent in the third quarter of 2016-17, which actually turned out to be only 3.7 percent. Consistently erratic projected inflation rate given by RBI, underlines the need to improve the projection process and also change the adamant attitude, not to reduce repo rate. Given widespread recession in the world today, there are very little prospects for export driven growth. An increase in investment (whether in business or in infrastructure), is also very important. In such a situation, it's imperative to reduce interest rates. However, consumer inflation targeted monetary policy on the one hand and Reserve Bank's consistent misunderstanding of inflationary trend on the other, have been coming in way of reduction in repo rate. RBIs adamant attitude towards rate cut has been coming in the way of growth, which is not good for the country's health.



GST - Worries Ahead



In 140 countries, where GST or VAT tax system is there in some form or the other, there is generally single rate of GST. However, in India, apart from zero, four more rates of GST have been approved, says

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

Overcoming political barriers in the path of Goods and Service Tax (GST), government is presenting its introduction as a major economic reform. After a long lasting exercise for the over 8 years, GST has finally been implemented. Although efforts to implement GST had started at the time of Congress-led UPA government, but after the formation of the NDA government, Congress wanted the same on to its own terms. The Congress wanted that it should be included in the GST Act that the rate of GST would not be more than 18 percent in any case. However, this was not acceptable to the Narendra Modi government. Later, the Congress party gave up its stance, and after that the stage was set for GST. Today not only has the GST bill become a law, but GST Council has prepared the GST tax structure also. Agricultural goods and exports have been kept in the category of zero tax and apart from zero, 4 types of rates have been proposed. Five percent tax on general consumption goods, whereas luxury and non merit goods, such as tobacco have been slated to attract a high rate of 28 percent. The remaining items are supposed to be taxed at 12 percent and 18 percent.

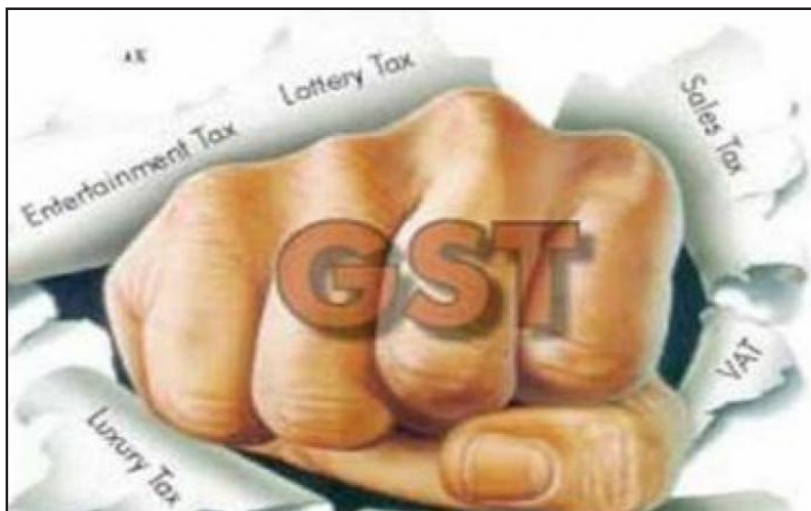
What is GST?

At present, India's indirect tax structure is extremely complicated. Different

types of indirect taxes are imposed on the goods and services by the Central and State Governments. In the Constitution, the economic powers have been divided between the Center and the States, according to which the Central Government has the right to collect custom duty and impose excise duty on products, except a few such as liquor, toiletries etc. Apart from this, the Central Government has been imposing service tax for almost 23 years. On the other hand, the state governments have the right to impose sales tax, entertainment tax, stamp duty, tax on electricity consumption, tax on transport of goods and passengers etc. After GST is implemented, barring a few exceptions, all other types of indirect taxes will be subsumed with GST.

GST is a consumption-based tax and imposed on the point of final sale. However, GST is imposed and collected at each level of value addition and at every point of purchase credit is paid on the next point of sale. On the last point of sale, that is consumer, full tax is collected and deposited with the exchequer.

Amit Mitra, Finance Minister of West Bengal has opposed GST in its present form. His opposition is also to the imposition of 28 per cent GST on leather, regional cinemas and books. He also opines that the GST Network (GSTN) is not fully prepared. There are many who share his opinion about lack of preparedness for GST. There is a general feeling that industry and business are not fully prepared for this big tax change, and in the event of the implementation of GST, there may be lot of confusion and disruption.



Multiple rates to reduce efficiency

It is being said that GST is a globally accepted system, but we must keep in mind that in 140 countries, where GST or VAT tax system is there in some form or the other, there is generally single rate of GST. However, in India, apart from zero, four more rates of GST have been approved. Not only this, whereas same rate applies to hotels, restaurants, transport etc. across the world, tax rate has been fixed in India based on hotel tariffs and turnover etc.

Small industry and business is frightened

As the date of implementation of GST is approaching, the heartbeats of small entrepreneurs and small traders are increasing. Although big companies are a happier lot with GST taking over, small enterprises feel that GST may cause huge loss to them. Significantly, currently there is a provision for exemption in excise duty for production of up to Rs 1.5 crore in small scale industries.

However, according to the provisions of GST, any entity whose business is rupees 20 lakh or more, must register itself for

The ability and willpower of the central & state govts would test the efficiency of the GSTN and therefore would decide the success of the GST.

GST in the state where it carries its business. In the special category states, this limit is only 10 lakh rupees.

Apparently, India's small entrepreneurs will be subject to discrimination and confusion. Worldwide, we find exemptions for Small Scale Industries. Though in Canada SSIs are exempted up to 30,000 Canadian dollars (Rs 15.6 lakh), this limit is 48 million rupees in Singapore and rupees 7.5 million in Malaysia, however it's only Rs 2.0 million in India. With small industries presently exempted up to rupees 15 million, GST does a gross injustice to SSI.

Not only this, we find that most of the commodities produced by SSIs have been taxed at

Press Release

The new tax regime in the form of Goods and Service Tax (GST), to be launched at midnight on June 30, is being called a biggest tax reform/change.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch has been saying for long that though GST will make compliance easier for big businesses, multi state operators and TNCs, but at the same time onus of compliance for small scale industry may cause a host of problems, putting them at loss vis a vis their competitors from big industry and businesses.

Further, taking away of the exemption up to rupees 1.5 crores, would further put them at disadvantage.

While deciding about the rates of GST, due care has not been taken to keep rates low for commodities being produced by SSIs and providing huge employment. Beedi, crackers, beverages. Biscuits, pickles, confectionery, scissors and host of other products produced by SSIs and cottage industries are attracting higher rates of GST, which is likely to affect their competitiveness.

Beedi industry which provides direct and indirect employment to nearly 5 crore people, needs to be protected. In the new GST, Beedi attracts highest tax rate of 28 percent endangering the employment of crores of tendu patta collectors and Beedi rolling workers, especially women.

We need to keep in mind that SSIs are of core importance for our country in terms of output, employment and exports. Moreover we also need to keep in mind that our SSIs despite various disadvantages have been giving tough competition to Chinese onslaught. If new tax regime works against their interests, influx of Chinese products will increase, causing huge balance of payment deficit.

A large number of SSIs and traders organisations, belonging to different sectors, commodities and regions are opposing GST in its present form and rates of GST, seeking redressal of their concerns. Swadeshi Jagran Manch shows solidarity with genuine demands of these groups and urge upon the government to favourably work upon to address their concerns for a balanced GST, and help smooth transition to a new tax regime.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

All India Co-convenor, SJM

Dated: **28-06-2017**

higher rates (15 percent, 18 percent and 28 percent) making the life difficult for SSIs.

Apart from this, we know that for big industries it is relatively easy to get tax-paid bills. Therefore, tax credits can be easily taken by large businesses. In large-scale business and MNCs, transactions are mostly between their branches, due to which they have no difficulty in their accounting and tax credits.

Will it be less inflationary?

Wherever GST was implemented worldwide, rate of GST

was less than the previous tax rate, and due to this, the traders and industries also benefited. However, this benefit of lower tax in GST regime was not passed on to consumers. Today, when GST is being implemented in India and its rate is also higher than the present tax rate, there is no guarantee that inflation will actually decrease.

GST is a big tax reform, its being claimed that the tax system will become simple. However, it does not appear to be, as every businessman and industry will have to make multiple registrations and

fill out various types of returns. In addition to this, the complexities of GST will increase further due to the multiple tax rates. Therefore, whether GST will actually be beneficial or not, the prices will fall or not, the taxpayers' problems will decrease or increase or the revenue of the government will increase or decrease, all these issues carry big question mark. The ability and willpower of the central and state governments to deal with the difficulties arising from time to time and also the efficiency of the GSTN would decide the success of the GST. □□

Let great GST roll out begin the end of barriers; Four freedoms can boost internal trade

“India’s internal trade GDP ratio at about 54 percent is comparable to that in other large countries. India for nearly 70 years has affirmed and reaffirmed political ‘idea of India’, is de facto and de jure one economic India”, observed Economic Survey 2016-17.

“The inter-state trade is 1.7 times larger than the country’s international trade of 32 percent of GDP”. India’s trade profile is thus more similar to that of China at 1.6 times its international trade but less than the US whose internal trade is 2.5 times its international.

The observation is significant on the eve of the ceremonial launch of Goods and Services Tax (GST) from the Central Hall of Parliament House. It means Indians have ingenuity and passion in integrating the country. Language or the political regionalism is not a barrier in internal trade expansion. Despite many hurdles more bureaucratic or rule-based the integration is amazing, the Survey notes. It has come down heavily on impediments on truck movements on state borders “with their drivers haggling for official clearances or subject to extortion”. The GST possibly is not addressing these issues as of now. It may gradually pave the way for smoother movement. But the new GST – one national tax with four different components or taxes – is ignoring it.

Ideally, it should have done away with highway and other tolls (municipal etc) despite multiplicity of road, parking and fuel cess on transport movement. “The consequent damages to trade and economic activity too have been exten-



The GST in its present form is not the end. It would be a beginning of the real future reforms to boost internal trade, says
Shivaji Sarkar



sively catalogued”, the Survey notes. This is despite the fact the Indian society is extremely mobile, a dream of father of the Constitution, Dr B R Ambedkar, for conveying a change.

But the costs of movement are about twice as great. The Survey attributes it to the current indirect taxes. It, however, does not refer to the inter-distinct police barriers and jumbling of vehicles at inter-city borders due to tolls levied by local bodies. The GST presently is not addressing the issue apparently. The Survey hopes that the GST “by ironing out oddities may normalize inter-state trade”.

According to a recent report published by Transport Corporation of India (TCI) and IIM-K, such delays impose transaction costs of over Rs 1 lakh crore (\$21 billion) annually on India’s businesses. In addition, it increases average transit times and makes supply chains inefficient. Enabling seamless movement of goods across India is, in fact, is considered to be one of the most important aspects of GST-related reforms. The rules of transport-related documentation and administrative procedures for checking and inspection of trucks, though usually unnecessary and often severe duplication, so far has not received attention.

The National Highway Authority of India says that it is digitalizing the toll gates. It conceals the fact that the tolls are additional and unnecessary tax as already several kind of road taxes are levied on truck, bus and other transport movement. It is an additional cost. Each toll gates, despite supposed electronic control, adds to travel time and creates barriers.

With one GST, check posts at

state borders need to be completely eliminated. Presently, a plethora of forms are needed to be filled up to satisfy the state road transport authorities and also pay an additional road tax, in some cases even with a national permit.

The system of inspectorate – that thrives of what the Survey notes as extortion – has to be done away with. Apart police and RTO posts levy “taxes” amounting to about Rs 28,000 crore a year

The GST Network (GSTN) that has already come out with an IT architecture has to broaden it to include the goods movement. Instead of each time demanding a hardcopies of invoice and forms, it should create an automatic ID to end the discretion of inspecting officials. A system of trust has to be built. The official system is based on the concept of mistrust. The human element is missing in it. The distrust apparently is the creation of the not so honest officials so that extortions can go on. Even the GST has to be widened beyond taxes to creating a system of having seamless movement across states.

The GST bill has provisions for substantive powers for stoppage and seizure of vehicles, which can be potentially abused. The nation has witnessed how the local police abuses these provisions leading to lakhs of vehicles being turned into the junks at police stations often just for the reason that someone has not paid the slush money. This is a severe penalty and soar business costs, causes uncertainty and hampers trade.

Such clauses should gradually be out the law books so that the business and trade can thrive, jobs are created and the happiness that India aspires for may become real.

Yes, that would boom national and state GDP. There is no rationale for holding goods at police posts for non-payment of a small amount of tax. This can be sorted out in ways other than punitive. President of Global Trucks Anuj Kathuria at the recent zonal conference told media he hoped that tolls and restriction on movement is set to go with GST and goods could move with ease. Such ease of rules has larger benefits. It not only makes movement easier, it also increases demand and boosts manufacturing at all levels including automobiles.

Removal of barriers can help the laggards. The Survey says the so called laggards like UP and Haryana are the manufacturing powerhouses not just Tamilnadu and Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh is a net exporter, and hence competitive in manufacturing. There is a strong correlation between a state’s manufacturing share of state’s GDP (GSDP) and its trade volumes (as percent of GSDP). The manufacturing prowess of states is associated with higher inter-state trade.

The fundamentals of India’s provincial trade compare with the best in the world – Canada, European Union and the US. These are governed by the four freedoms – allowing unfettered movement of goods, services, capital and people. India’s internal trade data is understated as it does not include agricultural products.

So the road to progress in India is enormous provided the man-made barriers are eliminated. The GST in its present form is not the end. It would be a beginning of the real future reforms. One hopes the dream of one economic India would succeed with it. □□

Mixed impact of GST

The Goods and Services Tax is to be implemented from July 1st this year. At present manufacturers have to separately pay excise duty and VAT on the goods sold by them. The two taxes will be combined into one GST levy. This will make life easier for businesses. They will have to fill in only one return. Interstate trade will become easier. The requirements of obtaining forms for entry of goods into various states will be eliminated. These are positive features of GST and will help increase the growth rate.

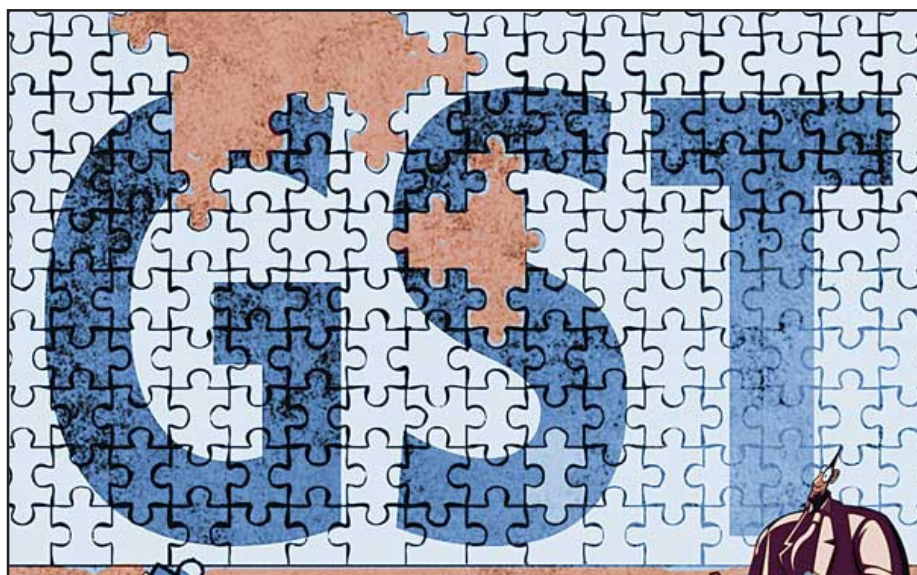
The impact of GST on the people depends upon the classification of goods. The Government must be congratulated on taking a largely pro-poor approach in the classification. To give a short list, printed books and newspapers have been placed in zero GST slab; garments of less than Rs 1,000 and footwear of less than Rs 500 have been placed in 5 percent GST slab; ghee, butter and namkeen have been placed in 12 percent GST slab; footwear costing more than Rs 500, ice cream, steel goods, and large number of other items have been placed in 18 percent GST slab; and bidi, chocolate, pan masala, washing machine, cars and bikes have been placed in the highest 28 percent GST slab. The basic approach is good. There are some anomalies, however. Mobile phones have been placed in 12 percent slab. Ordinary mobile phones and smartphones of lesser price should be shifted in 5 percent slab to encourage more use of these devices. Smartphones of higher price should be shifted to the 28 percent slab. Another anomaly is that umbrella, sewing machines, medical diagnostic kits and note books have been placed in 12 percent slab. These are “merit” goods and the indirect benefit to the economy from their increased consumption is very high. These must be shifted to the 5 percent slab.

The classification of services follows the same pattern. To give a short list, hotels with a tariff of less than Rs 1000 have been placed in zero GST slab; rail



In the impact of GST will be mixed in nature, however the real beneficial will be large industries

Dr. Bharat Jhunjunwala



and air travel have been placed in 5 percent GST slab; business class air travel has been placed in 12 percent GST slab; air-conditioned hotels have been placed in 18 percent GST slab; and 5-star hotels have been placed in the highest 28 percent GST slab. However, there are some anomalies here as well. All rail travel has been placed in 5 percent slab. There is a need to shift unreserved tickets to zero percent, leave sleeper tickets at the presently proposed 5 percent, and shift air-conditioned travel to 18 or even 28 percent. Also telecom services have presently been placed in 18 percent. These too are merit goods. The Government must encourage the people to use data services so that they become net-literate and they are better prepared for the opening vistas in the internet world. Most jobs in future may come from this sector. These services, especially data services up to a specified limit or 2G services should be made exempt from GST. That said the overall classification of goods and services is satisfactory. Therefore, I reckon the impact on different sections of the society will largely be neutral.

The other impact of GST depends on the overall tax collections. Presently different goods are being taxed at different rates in the states. The GST rate on the same item may, therefore, increase in one state and decrease in another. It is not possible to make an overall assessment of the total impact of GST on tax collection for this reason. GST has been implemented by about 160 countries in the world. The experience is varied. Malaysia, for example, implemented GST in 2015. A study conducted by National University of Ma-

laysia on the impact of GST concluded that 64.1 percent people had reduced their consumption with the increase in the price of goods and services. This means that there was a net increase in the tax burden on most households. Another study from Australia showed that the bottom 20% of households paid an additional 4.4% of their income; while the top 20% of households only paid an additional 1.4% of their income. This means that the increase in GST on the items consumed by the poor was more than on the items consumed by the rich.

On the other hand, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Vietnam have experienced beneficial impact on the weaker sections. The classification done by them was progressive. They placed most of the essential goods in zero rate of GST.

The way GST will play out in India is not known as of now. The impact on different sections of the people will be generally neutral because the classification of goods has overall been done decently. However, the level of total tax collection is open as of now. The total collection of GST may be more than the combined collection of excise duty and sales tax at present; or it may be less. We will know only, say, after one year when the dust settles down. The impact of GST on the economy will be negative if total tax collections increase because that will increase the tax burden on the people, reduce their purchasing power and their standard of living. On the other hand the impact will be positive if total tax collections reduce because that will increase the tax burden on the people, increase their purchasing power and their standard of living.

In my assessment, two expected outcomes of GST will not materialize, however. The expectation that GST will lead to less black economy is totally misplaced. Actually it will make it easier to undertake business in No 2. Under the present system a businessman undertaking No 2 business has to enter into an arrangement with two sets of officials from the excise and sales tax departments. Under the new dispensation he will have to make an arrangement with only one set of GST officials.

Consequently it will be easier to do No 2 business now than previously. The reported benefit from catching No 2 transactions by bringing all transactions under one platform will not be attained because this arrangement was already in place under VAT system and excise duty. The tax paid on inputs was set off against the tax payable on output. There is no change in this system.

The second expected outcome of benefit to the common man from increased economic activity is also misplaced. It is true that inter-state movement of goods will become easy. But this benefit will accrue mostly to large industries that have the capacity to sell their goods across multiple states. Small businesses mostly sell their goods within their own state. Let us say 'A' is a small scale namkeen manufacturer located in UP. He sells his goods mostly in UP. Previously it was difficult for a namkeen manufacturer 'B' based in Nagpur to sell the namkeen in UP. Now it will become easy for 'B' to supply in UP. That will lead to intrusion of 'B' in the market area hitherto controlled by 'A' and impact him adversely. □□

Why are multinational companies so keen to push hazardous GM/GE crops?



Eminent scientists who have examined the technology of genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified (GM) crops have come to a clear conclusion that it is a highly hazardous and risky technology. For example eminent scientists from several countries who comprise the Independent Science Panel (ISP) have drawn this conclusion after studying various aspects of GM crops, “GM crops have failed to deliver the promised benefits and are posing escalating problems on the farm.GM crops should be firmly rejected now.”

Prof. Marcello Buiatti (Plant Genetics Dept., University of Florence) has summarised the experience of two decades of genetic engineering - “Plant and animal genetic engineering has devel-

oped only two products in more than twenty years - despite the research work of hundreds of thousands of highly skilled technologists and huge financial investments. It can, therefore, be considered the worst failure of the whole history of innovation in agriculture.”

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

In fact if we look at the trends in world food and agriculture in recent decades then these have been dominated by the increasingly desperate efforts by huge multinational companies to increase their dominance of the world food and farming system. The way in which patents were incorporated into the WTO agenda and so in a very clever way almost all countries were forced to change their patent laws in keeping with the interests of developed countries provides a glaring example of the high-powered forces at work to implement this agenda of dominance. The new patent laws helped the food and farming giants to tighten their grip on plants and seeds resources of the developing countries.



Bt proteins, incorporated into 25% of all transgenic crops worldwide, have been found harmful to a range of non-target insects, still MNCs are so keen to push hazardous GM/GE crops, says
Bharat Dogra

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

Today several experts agree that most of collected genetic diversity is stored in gene banks in Europe and North America. In a handful of high-security institutions of these and a few other countries, the world's most valuable raw material is stored, and it is unlikely that the countries of origin from where most of this material came will have free access to it.

Pat Roy Mooney brings out the glaring injustice of this situation, "It is a raw material unlike any other in the world. It has not been bought. It has been donated. It has been donated by the poor to the rich. The donation has been made under a noble banner proclaiming that genetic resources form a part of the heritage of all humanity, and thus can be owned by no one. But

as the primary building blocks of agriculture, genes have incalculable political and economic importance. Industrialized governments - often overruling the intentions of their scientists - have come to hoard germplasm and to stock seeds as part of the arsenal of international power diplomacy. Private companies in North-although glad to receive free genes - are loath of divulge or share the adaptations they draw from these donations."

It was noticed about two decades back that the nature of the seed industry was changing in several countries, particularly the rich western countries (although similar changes were soon noticed also in several developing countries). The seed industry had earlier been based on small firms. These firms were now being gobbled by big companies, especially companies which already had big stakes in agri-chemical industry - within a single decade, chemical corporations spent over \$10 billion in buying up seeds companies. In fact the American Seed Trade Association even organized a special symposium on 'How to sell your seed company.' Apprehensions were rightly voiced that a small number of giant companies will control seeds as well as agri-chemicals, and that the production of seeds can be given such an orientation as to require high and increasing amounts of agri-chemicals. According to one widely quoted estimate at least 27 corporations had initiated 63 programs to develop herbicide tolerant crops. Already a few multinational companies control a very considerable part of the international seeds sector and pesticides.

These trends were strengthened further by the developments

in the controversial technology of genetic engineering. A very important part of genetic engineering research has been devoted to herbicide-tolerant plant varieties, for example cotton which is tolerant to a herbicide called bromoxynil.

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

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

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

GM Mustard

A scientific fraud on Indian farmers

Genetically engineered or modified (GE/GM) crop technology is being peddled as an innovation, but it violates the law of natural evolution: Section 3 (j) & (h) of the Indian Patents Act, 1970; the Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers Right Act, 2001 (PPVFR Act), and fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Indian constitution, of the small farmer community.

India imported 11.96 million tonnes (mt) of edible oil, 60 per cent of its needs, during 2015-16. Our productivity level is less than canola and rapeseed mustard varieties being grown in Canada, Australia, USA. Or so the supporters of GM Mustard are misinforming the Indian farmers and government. Even the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the regulatory body under the Union Ministry of Environment & Forests & Climate Change has befooled the nation.

It is true that India is one of largest edible oil importers. Our mustard productivity is less than developed countries, which is a common problem of Indian agriculture rather than a problem of mustard alone. We are almost self-sufficient in mustard oil. The share of mustard oil in the total imported edible oil is a mere 2.72 per cent in terms of volume. The major import of edible oil is of palm oil and soyabean. Even according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) data, the highest yields in mustard are from the five countries which do not grow GM Mustard. There are formidable socio-economic, political and environmental reasons to not introduce GM mustard in India. Let connect the dots.

Where the area under mustard has gone

In the aftermath of the Green Revolution, most of our pulses and mustard area shifted to wheat. Supplementary irrigation and fertilisers, procurement policy



Honey producers fear release of GM crops, by measuring the expected negative impact on the survival of bees,

Vipesh Garg





Bt Cotton may have been good for the biotech companies, but it was a disaster for farmers.

and a well-integrated value chain system in the form of the Food Corporation of India (FCI), higher minimum support price (MSP) for wheat further encouraged farmers to grow wheat rather than mustard and pulses.

We are not only deficient in edible oils but also import pulses. The question is whether we need to flood Indian agriculture with GM crops controlled by a few companies? Or should we look at the highest yielding nations without introducing GM Mustard?

In crops like mustard, farmers save, share and swap their seeds to grow next season. Under GM cropping, farmers cannot save, share and swap the gene construct [*barnase-barstar*] hybrid seeds for the next season. Instead, every year new seeds have to be purchased from the markets.

This is a hidden trap for poor farmers and will increase rural indebtedness, increase the cost of cultivation along with chances of crop failure, triggering suicides and social disharmony. The story that GM Mustard will increase production, productivity, yields and profit is a completely lie. The Bt Cotton pushed by Monsanto-Mahyco is a live example of this fact. The cost of production increased manifold in terms of high costs of seed, increased need for fertilisers,

increased need for pesticide sprays due to breakdown of resistance of bollworm, and emergence of superweeds and new insect pests. Overall, the benefits to farmers were niggardly; Bt Cotton may have been good for the biotech companies, but it was a disaster for farmers. Since the introduction of Bt cotton, the price of cotton seeds has increased exponentially and over three lakh farmers have been driven to suicide.

Biodiversity and bio-safety

Canada released GM Canola in 1996 and has become its largest exporter, but it does not suit our agricultural system and our farmers. Indian farmers generally grow local varieties which have been well acclimatized to local climate, soils, diseases and pests over years of cultivation. These local varieties have the capacity to sustain in inclement weather, poorly fertilised soils, and withstand disease and pests. Saving, sharing and swapping of seeds by farmers leads to conservation, preservation and creation of biodiversity. GM Mustard would destroy our priceless biodiversity and endanger wild flora and fauna. This is completely incompatible with the government's promise to promote organic farming.

Bt Cotton was introduced as a non-food crop, but soon became

a major edible oil crop in some states as its seeds were used to extract edible oil which was mixed with other edible oils in the country, in the absence of strict labelling laws and laws against mixing. Though there has been no socio-economic study of the impact of this development – it is not even officially admitted that this has been going on – farmers at grassroots level noticed many ill-effects on the health of insects, animals and human beings. When Bt Cotton waste was burnt as fuel, the smoke was experienced as poisonous. When Bt Cotton oilseed cake was fed to cattle, it resulted in abortions, still births, and sharply reduced milk yields. Agricultural scientists need to study this phenomenon and not ignore it.

Mustard is a very important crop in much of north India. It is consumed directly in the form of oil, leaves as '*Sarson ka Saag*', the seed as condiment, and is widely used in Ayurvedic medicines. All GM Mustard genes [*barnase, barstar and bar*] are found in the leaves which may have lethal effects on human health, besides endangering the food chain irreparably over the years.

Distorted studies on mice or guinea pigs for a limited time do rule out the dangers and hazards (Eric Seralini fed mice for over 90 days to get the lethal tumours and cancers that GM foods produce). Moreover, the bio-safety data of GM Mustard has not been placed in the public domain on grounds of business confidentiality, third party patents and copyrights, which is absurd and illegitimate. Finally, concerns regarding bio-safety and the opaque regulation mechanism are pending before the Supreme Court since 2005.

Hidden herbicidal/terminator/zombie seeds

GM Mustard has the *bargene* to provide resistance against the carcinogenic *glufosinate /basta*. At present, the deployment of herbicidal, terminator and zombie seed technology has been suppressed, but will come out once GM Mustard is commercialised.

GM Mustard is a terminator seed as farmers cannot save the seed for the next season. *Basta/RoundUp* resistant crops are becoming susceptible to superweeds and superpests, so zombie seeds in form of LibertyLink technology would imprison the Indian farmers further. Greater evolutionary pressure via more toxic genes results in faster emergence of resistance. Superweeds, superpests, environmental contamination, higher cases of cancers and health hazards were reported where Roundup/LibertyLink resistant canola, soybean, maize is grown. Three seed giants, Monsanto and Bayer, Dow and Dupont, and Syngenta and ChemChina control more than 65 percent of global pesticides and 61 percent of commercial seed sales. These companies have the capacity to design and deploy genes which would require seeds and chemical spray from the same company, creating a perpetual monopoly for the seed industry. LibertyLink, for instance, is a Bayer technology providing resistance to Liberty and glufosinate herbicides.

Impact on honey bees

Intra- and inter-species transfer of *barnase* gene to non-GE Mustard will lead to male sterility among the latter, due to expression of *barnase* gene. This will lead to poor pollen availability or for-

aging to pollinators, particularly honey bees. This will contaminate the local varieties and would impact their yield due to sterility problems. Honey production and honey bees would be badly affected once GM Mustard is released. The majority of pollen in honey comes from Mustard.

Glufosinate ammonium/basta is a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide which is highly poisonous to insects and pollinators. CCD (colony collapse disorder) in honey bees has been well-documented the world over due to the increase in the cultivation of GM crops. Honey producers fear release of GM crops, which have led to the extinction of feral colonies of bees and are hitting bees, butterflies and other insect fauna.

No public-farmer-states representation

The GEAC is an undemocratic club of scientists with vested interests. There is no representation from the farmer community or *amicus curiae* from the public. India is a signatory to Cartagena Protocol which bound parties to take public opinion on board while approving or releasing any GMO.

Agriculture is a state subject. So how can a handful of people in the GEAC and Environment Ministry take such an important

decision unilaterally? You cannot bulldoze GM technology in to the country, particularly when it is linked to the food chain and health of a billion-plus people.

Lax regulation, no legal liability laws

In India, the manufacturing, import, use, research and release of GMOs are governed by archaic rules of 1989 under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Our regulations and oversight mechanisms are not transparent, are outdated, and unsuitable to today's advanced GM technologies like Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURT) or zombie seeds. There is no bio-safety and food and environmental (FES) data of GM food crops in the public domain. How can data related to GM crop trials that poses potential risk to public health be considered as confidential?

More vexing is the opaque legal framework and laws in case of liability, compensation and punitive measures. Despite the Supreme Court moratorium, gene contamination has been reported in traditional foods grown in farmers' fields. How the seed of GM crops has reached into the hands of farmers? When unapproved LibertyLink rice lines contaminated non-GM rice in USA, Bayer had to pay



Agriculture is a state subject. So how can a handful of people in the GEAC and Environment Ministry take such an important decision unilaterally?

GM Crops

US \$750 million as compensation and punitive fee to 11,000 farmers. But, we are helpless when Indian food is being contaminated with non-approved Bt lines.

Way forward

1. Farmers do not require new varieties and hybrids; they need better policies in form of irrigation and market infrastructure, better prices, integrated and procurement value chains.
2. Most of our mainstream agricultural R&D is concentrated on wheat and rice. We need to strengthen R&D in oilseeds, pulses and fodder to make India really food sufficient.
3. We need to broaden the genetic pool of Indian Mustard through traditional breeding in the form of varieties rather than hybrids. Public sector and indigenous R&D should be strength-

ened to escape the hijacking by seed giants.

4. Our scientists must be social scientists first. Most scientists do not understand how their work will impact farmers in socio-economic terms. There is need to teach patent laws, PPVFA 2001, TRIPS, bio-piracy etc. to our research scholars and scientific community to make them understand the hidden game of seeds multinationals who are hijacking seeds.
5. We need to make GEAC democratic by integrating it with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), agricultural experts, and farmer community.
6. GM crops are Frankensteins and require stringent rules and guidelines, smart policies, and sophisticated legal liability laws in place before, and if, allowed. The opaque and non-transpar-

ent mechanism of food and environment safety [FES] needs to be fixed under the Supreme Court's jurisdiction.

7. We need better coordination between state agricultural universities and ICAR to understand and solve of Indian agriculture in real time, such as the problems that arose in areas when GM Cotton were grown, in terms of humans & cattle. □□

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The GM Mustard crossroad



India is on the verge of a very critical decision - to sell out *swadeshi* mustard to Bayer's Mustard or not? The GM Mustard question is secretly causing splinters all over India, as this one step has the capacity to destroy millions of livelihoods and irreversibly damage India's biodiversity. In short, this decision will enslave Indians to Bayer, as Bayer/Monsanto will have total control of the mustard crop, from seed to oil. Apprehending this grave threat to India's sovereignty, a cabinet minister has already spoken out against GM Mustard; the late Minister of State for Environment, Anil Madhav Dave,

devoted his life to defending India's seed sovereignty. The RSS think tank, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, one of India's largest economic democracy organisations, is opposing the introduction because they know the real dangers of this Bayer's mustard.

It is pertinent that the Supreme Court is also hearing a case on the "agronomical fraud" in GM Mustard and has even given an interim injunction against approval of this herbicide-tolerant (HT) GMO; yet some forces within the government are pushing for a speedy clearance. There are rumours that powerful persons in the PMO and Niti Aayog support GM Mustard; some have articulated their support in public and are believed to have exerted pressure on the late Anil Madhav Dave and the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC). Aruna Rodrigues, lead petitioner in the GM Mustard case in the Supreme Court, told the media that the Niti Aayog is directly involved in pushing this HT GM Mustard. To understand the danger posed by GM Mustard, this writer spoke with Anil Madhav Dave just before his demise; Ashwani Mahajan, national co-convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch; Dr Krishan Bir Chaudhary, president Bharatiya Krishak Samaj and an expert witness at the Monsanto Tribunal at The Hague in October 2016; renowned scientist and biosafety expert Dr Vandana Shiva, and Aruna Rodrigues.

Vandana Shiva said, "The first danger of GM mustard is monopoly on India's mustard seeds, just like Monsanto established a monopoly on cotton seeds. The second danger is the spread of toxins in our agriculture, both through the spread of the herbicide glufosinate as well as the genetic modification which are toxic in and of themselves". Shiva has worked to draft national and international laws on biosafety and ardently opposes the Bayer Mustard. She has done a detailed review of the fraudulent assessment of GEAC.



Introduction of GM Mustard is a sign of threat to a Swadeshi Bharat,

Inder Shekhar Singh

Far from being *swadeshi*, the seeds, technology, patents belong to Bayer-Monsanto and even the biosafety assessment report was written by the MNCs, Bayer/Monsanto, themselves. She emphasises: “Let me tell everyone: There have been no feeding studies conducted on animals or humans. Plus, there is no blood analysis available of the animals. Barnase, Barstar, Bar Genes have not tested for safety in GMO Mustard. The GMO will cause devastation to not only biodiversity but also irreversibly impact Indian native mustard, bees, soil organisms”. Ever since these corporations entered India, we have seen this in the case of Bt Cotton, where the cycle of rural debt has pushed three lakh farmers to commit suicide.

On the one hand, the government is claiming that it has doubled farmers’ incomes, but on the other hand, it is rushing to approve GMO Mustard, which steals farmers’ livelihoods and pushes them towards extreme steps. Shiva concludes, “GM Mustard equals farmers suicides in Rajasthan and other mustard growing states. That is why states like Rajasthan have been resisting it and making statements against the introduction.”

It is feared that if released, GM Mustard will destroy the indigenous food culture as millions will be eating toxic plant parts such as leaves, etc. The herbicide glufosinate (a known neurotoxin) will be sprayed in India and will not only destroy our mixed farming and intercropping practices, but may trigger a larger cancer epidemic in the country.

Does the herbicide tolerant (HT) GM mustard really give higher yields? The straight answer ac-

cording to Aruna Rodrigues, lead petitioner in the Supreme Court case, is NO.

GM Mustard has - over a period of at least 10 years - been promoted as a hybrid product that will provide superior yield as compared to its non-GMO counterparts in agriculture, both varieties and hybrids. Following the GEAC approval on 12 May, virtually all media, especially print media, has focussed on this “supposed” superiority (higher yields) along with the other “supposed” issue of the presumed biosafety of GM mustard variety called HT DMH 11 (Bayer Mustard).

***NITI Aayog
without any
scientific
homework at all
believes that
GMOs provide
superior yield***

Rodrigues says, “The fact is that the government themselves in their “reply” (to our application) admitted on 88, page 56, “No such claim has been made in any of the submitted documents that DMH 11 outperforms non-GMO hybrids. The comparison has only been made between hybrid DMH 11, National Check (NC) Varuna and the appropriate zonal checks (ZC). A maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of 2,670 kilograms per hectare has been recorded over three years of Biosafety Research Level (BRL) trials which were 28 percent and 37 percent more than

the NC and ZC respectively”.

India’s best varieties and non-GMO hybrids outperform HT Bayer Mustard hands down. Therefore, this GM Mustard fails the first test of a GMO risk assessment protocol, which is of need. There is no point to this mustard. As for the yield claims above, the story uncovered in public documents reveals that the statistics are unreliable. There has been active fudging of data and wholesale deviation from scientific norms in field testing, from which no meaningful conclusions can be drawn.

Rodrigues explains, “They have even stated again in the government’s reply (at 65, page 45): ‘The developers have nowhere claimed that the yield increase is due to the three transgenes’. So why is there still a debate on the issue? There are no higher yields, and this GMO will not reduce imports of edible oils.”

The fact is that the NITI Aayog, which has not done its homework at all, believes without any science to back that belief that GMOs provide superior yield, even though no GMO at present has any trait for yield and the two technologies of HT and BT, currently 99 percent of plantings worldwide, have proven to be unsustainable. In India, BT Cotton has failed on the Central Government’s own admission in the Delhi High Court in 2016. HT GM mustard also, decisively, has no yield superiority.

Rodrigues believes, “the claim of superior yield is the basis of the NITI Aayog’s endorsement of GMOs in their national agriculture policy for India’s food security. Therefore, that this is also the advice that has been received by the Prime Min-

ister or Prime Minister's Office would be a natural conclusion."

Bayer Mustard

"Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a very honest and hard-working man, who thinks in India's best interest. He will never allow unleashing this poisonous junk technology in India. We trust him one hundred percent," said Ashwani Mahajan. He was clear that there was no swadeshi GM Mustard, as claimed, but Bayer's Mustard. "If you simply look at the patents and ownership of the technology used in making this mustard, it all belongs to Bayer/Monsanto. This GMO has been made resistant to Bayer herbicide glufosinate. Now the question to ask is: why would Indian scientists make/engineer a mustard tolerant to a foreign herbicide?"

Globally, Europe is about to ban glufosinate as it is a known neurotoxin. Mahajan, like millions of devout *swadeshi* activists, doesn't want India to be looted again by western corporations and MNCs. It is feared that not only will the GM Mustard destroy India's native mustard, but it will unleash irreversible damage to public health, biodiversity and the rural oilseed economy.

So who is pushing GMOs in India? Mahajan says, "I know personally the Prime minister is not involved, but there are people in the Niti Aayog and PMO who are pushing this corporate agenda in India. SJM has already at various stages challenged the decision of these "bureaucrats" who are committing fraud with India and with the PM. They are the ones responsible for demanding GMO to placate their foreign masters."

International racketeers for GMOs

Veteran farmer leader and intellectual, Dr Krishan Bir Chaudhary, president of Bharatiya Krishak Samaj, has vast experience with "international racketeers". He explains, "It doesn't matter which government there is, a group of International racketeers funded by corporate money place themselves in key positions... They have links from the smallest to the highest corridors of power, the PMO and Niti Aayog included".

Chaudhary feels these people are misleading the Prime Minister because of pressure from corporations such as Monsanto/Bayer. "It is all a game of money changing hands, because if you look at the scientific and agronomical data, all of it is against Bayer's Mustard. The yields are much lower, it is herbicide tolerant and not Indian, so why should one go for GM technology?"

Chaudhary has visited the National Mustard Breeding Centre at Bharatpur, Rajasthan, and compared the yields and fields personally. He terms the whole debate as a fraud and even today demands White Papers. He wants a CBI inquiry to uncover which pro-GM scientists, bureaucrats and others are on the payroll of these corporations, so they can be exposed as traitors.

Interestingly, during my last meeting with Anil Madhav Dave at his residence on 12 May, he said he had not yet seen the GEAC clearance files but the news was already out in the media!

Chaudhary astutely points out that the central question which links the GM puzzle is: who gains maximum if GM Mustard is passed? The answer is: only Bayer and

Monsanto. But who are the middlemen who get kickbacks? As Monsanto illegally extracted Rs 7000 crore in royalties from India, one wonders how much its agents and lobbyists earned in kickbacks. Even at a modest rate of 4 percent, it would be a few hundred crores. For such compradors, it is of no concern that India again falls prey to a new MNC Raj that will control the last seed and food on our *thalis*.

Swadeshi Bharat

We have to make a choice between *swadeshi* Bharat or MNC India. Swadeshi Bharat cannot be built on dependence on foreign seeds, poisons and MNCs. Since the East India Company, MNCs have exploited us and taken their profits using patents and royalties back to foreign banks. Even today, their agents are working to exploit us and profit from our deaths.

While their own children in America and Europe eat organic non-GM foods, they want the children of Goddess Annapurna to eat junk food and GMOs. In reality, GMOs are not fit even as animal feed, and can at best be used for making biofuels, if that.

We are a land of hard working small farmers, of fertile lands and biodiversity of seeds, we are a civilisation of over 10,000 years, and we will not let our Bharat be sold to a poison cartel for a fistful of euros or dollars. Every man, woman and child must resist, for the colour of our *Basant* is at stake, the soul of Bharat is at stake. □□

The author is a freelance writer and environmental activist working with organic farmers across India, and has written extensively on GM crops. He was invited to represent Indian farmers at the Monsanto Tribunal at The Hague in 2016, and to brief Parliamentary Standing Committees on GM and environmental issues. He can be reached at indrashekharsingh1@gmail.com or @IndraSSingh (Twitter)

Ancient Caste Harmony and Shoodras as Rich Producers

Caste-Indifferent Equanimity of Ancient Bharat

The ancient vedic civilisation across the country had been devoid of any caste discrimination, caste stratification or the evils like untouchability. The core tenet of the ancient Hindu philosophy has been to perceive all living beings as the divine manifestation of the Almighty. The caste discrimination and stratification that erupted and perpetuated in the last millennium, under the evil influence of the Arabic, Turk and other foreign invaders, followed by jehadi persecution and British colonial rule, has led to the worst social evil of untouchability in the country. This evil had no place in the fabric of social life, prior to the advent of Arab invasion in the 8th century. Scores of archeo-genetic studies based on the study of gene pools of castes reveal that the current tradition of intra-caste marriages is found to have existed only in last 60-70 generations across a span of last twelve centuries. The genome studies indicate that the marriages were not confined with castes around 1200 years ago. The study conducted at National Institute of Bio-medical Genomics (NIBMG) in west Bengal (The Hindu, Dated January 27, 2016 Bangalore - Mohit M. Rao) and several other agencies, after having studied the genes of various communities corroborate the fact that intermarrying was quite common 1200 to 2000 years back among all castes. According to Anilabha Basu, assistant professor at NIBG and lead author of such a study is reported to assert that the Iyer Brahmins of southern Indian state Tamilnadu and Irula tribals of Nilgiri Hills have ancestral North Indian genes, but in varying degrees. According to this study, the ancestries mingled in India until caste based endogamy (practice



The descendents of the ancient Hindu polity Hindus should behave and act as a seamless cohesive caste like true brethren and sistren, says

Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma

of marrying within the caste) was introduced about 1600 years ago [www.scidev.net/south-asia/genomics/news/tracing-the-indian-genome.html]. Most of the archeogenetic studies reveal that endogamy was not in vogue in India in ancient past. The time from varies from 1000-2000 years. But well within the era after the Mahabharat period and lasted beyond Gupta period. Endogamy has begun only in last 1600 years. Thus intermarriages inter se Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shoodra castes were prevalent before 1600 years. This rules out the prevalence of any birth based caste system.

There had been no place for any ethnic or caste discrimination, social stratification of superiority-inferiority of castes in the ancient past in the country, before the advent of the 8th century. Rather, the Vedic scriptures, the Upanishads, the tenets enshrined in the epics and the sermons of Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, all instruct every individual to deal every living being with compassion, cohesiveness of divine fraternity and the way, one wants to be treated himself or herself by others. It is enshrined as “**Aatma-vat Sarv Bhuteshu**” (आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु) in the upnishads and in the same way but in different words in various other major Hindu scriptures. It means every living being be treated like himself or herself. Our scriptures do not allow contempt towards any living being.

Shoodras: The Producer Class of Valuable Goods

One of the common and oft-repeated allegations on Hindu traditions is that the ‘Shoodras’ had been treated contemptuously, alleging that ‘shoodra’ word has been

derived from the word as ‘Kshudra’ (क्षुद्र) meaning mean people with menial occupations, deprived of dignity. It was not so in the ancient past. The nirukti (etymology) of the word ‘shoodra’ in Brahminical auxiliaries of Atharv Veda speaks that Shudras are the producers of valuable goods by the sweat of their labour. The nirukti (etymology) reads as under:

Shramasya sveden utpadan rat ev shoodrah

श्रमस्य स्वेदेन उत्पादन रत एव शूद्र

Meaning in Hindi: अपने श्रम के स्वेद (पसीने) से मूल्यवान वस्तुओं के उत्पादन उत्पादकीय कार्य में रत या संलग्न वर्ग को ‘शूद्र’ कहा गया है।

Meaning in English: Those who produce various valuable goods by the sweat of their labour i.e. by their physical efforts are termed as shoodras

Thus, shoodras had been producer class to produce all kind of products, which can fetch a price. This means that the shoodras produced valuable products, to be traded at a price with profit by the Vaishya (वैश्य) who then used to pay tax to the king. In pursuance of this doctrine, the ‘**Kamandak Neetisaar**’ recommends that **while setting up a new township (नगर), the king should ensure that it is inhabited by a larger number of Shoodras, who produce valuable products, and equally large number of Vaishyas who indulge in trading and commerce of these goods, produced by Shoodras and so they pay higher amount of taxes from such a higher level of trade. This Neetisaar emphatically states that number of Brahmins and Kshatriyas**

should be in relatively lesser number, as they are dependent upon the state exchequer for their livelihood. This system of production and trade had been prevalent till the invasion of the Arabs and even beyond, till the turn of the eighteenth century, when the European goods under British rule flooded to erode the Shoodras, the productive entrepreneurial-class of India, engaged in the decent realised production of valuable goods. So, Bharat was a very rich nation till all goods were produced indigenously by various craft guilds of shoodras.

Since, Brahmins were supposed to study and teach, and to

Shudras are the producers of valuable goods by the sweat of their labour.

live on beggary with mendicancy who had lived an impoverished life, without collecting any personal wealth. The Kshatriyas also had to protect the society from unjust atrocities. Kshatriya means ‘Kshatrat rakshati iti Kshatriya’ (क्षत्रात् रक्षति इति क्षत्रिय). Since, Shoodra Class used to produce goods to be traded at a price, had access to abundant wealth. Therefore, they had the responsibility to extend hospitality to state guests in Mahabharat era. The relevant verses of Mahabharat is quoted in the succeeding pages. Likewise, even the measuring tape of Shoodras was gold embedded in pauranik era. Citation is given in later section.

Our Past Riches were from the Economic Value Added by Shoodras

India had been the richest nation on the planet, with around one third contribution in the world GDP till the onset of the sixteenth century. It was from the economic value added by Shoodras as the producer of all kinds of goods, to be traded at a price. India had the system of decentralised production of various goods of value, with widest participation of the Shoodras. So, India remained the richest country of the world till the turn of 18th Century. This has been testified by Angus Madison, the renowned British Economic historian in his book, entitled 'World Economic History - A millennium perspective', published by the OECD headquarters at Brussels, capital of Belgium in Europe, wherein he has stated that India had 33 percent contribution in world GDP in 1 AD, 30% in 1000 AD, 25% in 1500 AD and 22% in 1700 AD. Europe, Russia, US, Latin America, Japan and China had not been anywhere near India in their contribution to the world GDP, till the Shoodras had been the productive entrepreneurs of ancient MSME (Micro, small and medium scale Industrial Enterprise) sector (see Table: 1).

Collaborative Reciprocity of Castes for Decentralised Production

In fact, the ancient Indian system of production of all goods was based upon highly advanced wisdom and production technology, in diverse fields with reciprocal interdependence of the Brahmins and Shoodras. Indeed, the scriptural descriptions, etymology

of terms in niruktas or nirvachans and scriptural shlokas on production technologies have been the basis of production processes and techniques being undertaken by the Shoodras in consultation with Brahmins. Even the archeological excavations being undertaken across the country speak of well advanced production technologies. The archeological excavations undertaken at Kodumanal in Tamilnadu have revealed production of Iron & steel, textiles, gems (processing) etc 2500 years back by such reciprocal dependence of the Brahmins and Shoodras (Comprising Khaniks i.e. Miners & excavators, Paridravaks i.e. metallurgical blasters & smelters, Luhars i.e. blacksmiths etc). The rust proof Vitri-fied crucibles found there, prove, India had mastered vitrification process, 2000 years back. Likewise, the evidence has come to surface about mining and production of Zinc at Zawar in Udaipur district and Copper at Khetri in Alwar district of Rajasthan about 4000-5000 years back. These production processes were a result of collaborative co-operation between the Shoodras and Brahmins. It was an integral reciprocity of scriptural intellect of

Brhaminical scriptures and technology driven skills of shoodras.

A representative example of collaborative knowledge sharing and employment for production would help the readers to understand the reciprocity of Shoodras and Brahmins in technology based production which being the key to production in the country in joint collaboration and ongoing association between Brahmins, Brahminical scriptures and Shoodras. In this case the reciprocity of khaniks (miners) dhatukarmis (metal smelters) and kanseras (metallurgical product producers) and Bhrahmins especially gramnerians is being taken here. The niruktas give the etymology of the term yashad i.e. Zinc as 'Tamrah Yash Pradayate iti Yashadah' (ताम्रः यश प्रदायते इति यशदः). It means Zinc is one which gives credit to the copper. This word-etymology of zinc is based on metallurgical chemistry used in the production of Zinc in the ancient times in 2000-3000 B.C. by the producers of zinc at Zawar etc. Since Zinc melts at 820°C and oxidises at 910°C. To prevent oxidation the khaniks and Metal Producing Shoodras are said to be covering the crucible by a

Table: 1

The position of India in the world economy since 0 AD till 18th century GDP (PPP) in millions of dollars					
Country/ Region	1	1000	1500	1600	1700
Western Europe	14,433	10,925	44,183	65,602	81,213
Eastern Europe	1,956	2,600	6,696	9,289	11,393
Russia	1,560	2,840	8,458	11,426	16,196
USA	272	520	800	600	527
Total Latin America	2,240	4,560	7,288	3,763	6,346
Japan	1,200	3,188	7,700	9,620	15,390
China	26,820	26,550	61,800	96,000	82,800
India	33,750	33,750	60,500	74,250	90,750
World	105,402	120,379	248,445	331,562	371,428

Source: World Economic History - a millennium perspective by Angus Maddison

Copper plate. Thus, this knowledge was codified by Brahmins and applied by Shoodras, which constituted a major basis of India's riches, as India was the only producer and exporter of Zinc in the world till the medieval period. Basically, the ancient wisdom enshrined in Indian scriptures compiled by Brahmins was applied in production technology by the Shoodras. Thereby, in the ancient times, the Shoodras, who used to produce all kinds of goods were the richest community till 700 CE. Another example to elucidate, how changing dynamics of occupations with time has led to ups and downs among the relative affluence of castes over a broad span of time. The example is of the Banjara Community.

Prosperity of Shoodras in the Ancient Past

Coming back to the past life of the Shoodras in ancient times Shoodras must have been a very rich class by virtue of their engagement in producing various goods of high value. Therefore in the Mahabharat era, the shudras had probably been so affluent people in the country to be given the responsibility for extending hospitality to the state guests.

In the Anushasan Parv of the Mahabharat, one of the major role for Shudras has been stated to provide hospitality, including lodging and boarding to the state guests. The Shloka reads as under:

**Sashoodrah sanshit tapa
jitendriyah. sushrodshutritim
tapah sanchinute mahat**

(Mahabharat at Anushasanparv)

सशूद्रः संशिततपा जितेन्द्रियः।
सुश्रुतिं तपः संचिनुते महत्॥

(महाभारत-अनुशासन पर्व)

To corroborate this fact of hyper affluence of Shudras as

MSME entrepreneurs in that era, most of the Vaastu Granth and several Puranas state that in the ancient past the measuring tape for construction of housing unit of Shudras was embedded with golden fabric. A shloka from Vishwakarma Prakash reads as under:
**Brahmanasya sutra darbhajam
maanajanta ta kshtiriyasya.
karpasiam cha bhavedvaishya-
am svarnimitam shoodraya
sootram.**

(Vishwakarma Prakash)

ब्राह्मणस्य सूत्र दर्भजं,
मौजन्तु त क्षत्रियस्य।
कार्पासं च भवेद्वैश्ये,
स्वर्णनिर्मितं शूद्रस्य सूत्रम्॥

(विश्वकर्मा प्रकाश)

It means that the house measuring tape or the lining and sizing thread of Brahmins was of Kusha or Darbh category grass, for Kshatriya it was made of Munj category grass. For Vaishya it used to be a cotton thread and for Shudra it was a gold embedded or golden thread in that era.

Study of Vedas was well Accessible to Shoodras and Tribes

There is lot of misgivings about the access of Vedas to Shudras, which is not true. The Yajurveda in its chapter 26 mantra 2 clearly states that Rishis to teach Veda to all the four Varnas. The mantra reads as under:

“यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि
जनेभ्यः।

ब्रह्मराजन्याज्या शूद्रायचार्याय च
स्वाय चारण्याय।

प्रियो देवानां दक्षिणायै दातुरिह
भूयासमयज्मे कामः समृद्धतामुपमादो
नमत् ॥”

(यजुर्वेद अ. 26 मंत्र 2)

**Yathemam vacham kalyanim
adadami Janebhya;**

**Brhma rajanyabhyam Sudraya
cha Aryaya ch Svyacharanaya
ha priyo devanam ...**

(Yajurved Ch. 26 (2))

It means that “Just as I am speaking these blessed words of Vedas to you people (rishis), you should teach these to all the men and women, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vishayas. Shudras, tribes and all others irrespective of they being our own people or aliens.” The words ‘Shoodra’ and ‘Aranyay’ i.e. forest dwellers are there.

***During
Mahabharat, one
of the major role
for Shudras has
been stated to
provide hospitality,
including lodging
and boarding to the
state guests.***

Nondiscriminatory Access to sources of water and Food for All

In the ancient past, all Hindus had access to places of water and food, without any discrimination. This ancient practice of non-discrimination and uniform access to all as enshrined in the vedic hymns must have perpetuated till the early medieval period, as is evident from the Ramcharit Manas of Tulsidasji authored in 1574 CE i.e. Vikram Samvat 1631. Thus, even 442 years back when Tulsidasji composed Ramcharit Manas, he had stated that Rajghaat on the Sarayu river of Ayodhya was equally accessible for water to all the four Varnas i.e. all

castes. This Choupai reads as under:

**Raajghat bandheu param
manohar. Tanha nimajjiu.
varan chaariu nar.**

(Ramcharit Manas Uttar Kaand)

राज घाट बांधेऊ परम मनोहर।
तहाँ निमज्जिउ वरण चारिउ नर।।

(रामचरित मानस उत्तर काण्ड)

Likewise, Atharva Veda also clearly directs all the people i.e. human beings, indifferent of their castes or varnas to have equal access to water and food together through its shlok 3.30.06

**Samani prapa saha voannab-
hagha samane yoktre saha vo
yunajmi**

***Banjara being a
evolved from sanskrit
word Vanijyara
(वाणिज्यारा) meaning
the “one dealing in
Commerce” i.e. those
dealing in cross
boarder trade and
activities associated
with trade.***

**Samyachognim saparyataara
naabhimivabhitah ... Athar-
vved 3.30.06**

It means: Let the source and place of your drinking water be the same, let your food be taken together, let your yoke to be the same united like spokes of the cart wheels and you all people worship of god as a symbol of knowledge.

समानी प्रपा सहवोऽन्नभागः समाने
योक्त्रे सहवो युनज्मि।

सम्यं चैः गिन् सपर्य तारा नाभिमिकाभितः।।

अथर्व. 3.30.06

भावार्थ : तुम्हारी जल शाला एक हो, अन्न एवं भोजन भी साथ-साथ हो, एक ही जुए

में तुम प्रजाजन जुड़े हुए हो। जैसे पहिये के अरे नाभि (केन्द्र) में चारों ओर जुड़े होते हैं, वैसे ही तुम सब प्रजाजन मिलकर ज्ञान रूप प्रभु की पूजा करो।

Likewise all persons should treat each other as brother & sisters.

**मा भ्राता भ्रातरम् द्विक्षन मा स्वसर
मुत स्वसा।**

**सम्यांचा सव्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत
भद्राया।।**

**ma bhrata bhrataram dwiks-
han ma swasara muta swasa.
Samyanchah savrata bhutva
vacham vadata bhadraya.**

**Let not a brother hate a brother,
nor a sister hate a sister;
unanimous, united in aims,
speak your words with friend-
liness.**

Thus our tradition, before the foreign invasions, which began from 8th century, had been of egalitarian and benevolent equanimity and parity to all. In this regard the most common Mantra from Upnishad reads for bliss for all, healthy life to all and emancipation from all sorrows. It reads as under:

**Sarveutra sukhinah santu
sarve santu niramayah. sarve
bhadrani Pashyantu ma
kashchid dakhbhagbhavet
सर्वेऽत्र सुखिनः सन्तु सर्वे सन्तु
निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा
कश्चिद् दुःखभाग्यवेत।।**

It means “May every being be happy on the earth May every being be free from all the diseases and deprivations, May every being should give a benign response to every other being. May there not be any trace of sorrow anywhere and let the bliss prevail everywhere.

Example of Rise and Decline of Castes: The Banjara Community

With the change in time, how

the modus operandi of any craft, trade, commerce or business changes and how it brings change in the wealth and well being of any group or community, can be best understood from the rise and decline of economic status of the Banjara community in India. Even, the ‘Roma People’ spread across the globe who have also, probably descended from the mobile commerce of Banjara community of India have suffered. It can well explain the economic rise and decline of people engaged in any craft or business. Even the Gadia Luhars (Blacksmiths moving on the carts i.e. bullock carts) of Rajasthan too had been quite affluent 5-6 decades earlier. But now with the advent of modern technology in making Iron implements, they are getting marginalised. Let us now take the example of ‘Banjaras’.

The term Banjara has evolved from sanskrit word Vanijyara (वाणिज्यारा) meaning the “one dealing in Commerce” i.e. those dealing in cross boarder trade and activities associated with trade. Banjaras had been the most affluent class in part, whose hundies had been quite popular. Till the advent of European traders, Banjaras had been very active to undertake the trade on the back of the herds of vast number of bullocks. They were hyperactive even before the advent of Arab traders. On account of their pre-dominance in understanding cross boarder trade and commerce with vast herds of bullocks and ships with up to 100 oars (called ‘Shataritra in Rigved) from far east to far west, they had spread across the globe in past. The Rigved mentions for cross boarder trade through Shataritra (‘Shat’ means hundred and Aritra means

Oars in Sanskrit language). Their trade being based, predominantly on the back of herds of bullocks. Very vast sized lakes, probably made by them for their herds of bullocks (for drinking water) are found all over from South East Asia to Europe. For instance, the lake Pichhola of Udaipur, Lake Banjari of Ajmer and so on. Their role and ancient affluence is well depicted in several folk tales and folk dances. For instance, the 'Gauri' or 'Gawari' an annual spiritual dance-drama or ballet of the Bhil tribe played for fortnight and across the 15 days based on historic evolution portrays Banjara as the richest category above the king and najarsch. They were the mobile cross boarder traders known for trading from South - East Asia to Iran and beyond, even up to Europe and (may be even up to America) through their herds of vast number of bullocks and large boats.

Today, with the advent of new era trade and commerce to which probably they could not adapt, they are now listed in the category of Scheduled castes, tribes and other backward castes in different states. No one knows, they could be part of the vaishya community undertaking the trade and commerce since time immemorial.

Romas: The Descendants of the Banjara styled Trading Class

It would not be out of place to mention that the 11 million (1.1 crore) Roma, Romani or the Roma Gypsies (i.e. travelers) may be in all possibility the descendants of these ancient globe trotters, travelling to undertake cross boarder trade and commerce i.e. mobile-

commerce. In the later age, they might have settled, wherever they were engaged in trade before the new mode of international commerce took over.

Common Gene Pool A recent study published in 2010 has also drawn a conclusion that Romani populations i.e. Romas have a high frequency of a particular Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA that are only found populations from South Asia. So it may now be well accepted that the Roma people must have migrated to Europe from North India about 1,500 years ago as traveling traders. Broad groups of all such people, settled across the globe are collectively classified as "Roma" or "Roma Gypsy". Throughout the Europe and the US, the Romani people comprise ethnic groups who are spread out all over the world, having common ties and traits. These groups of Roma are referred to as Romanichals in England, Beyash in Croatia, the Kale of Wales and Finland, Romanlar in Turkey and Domari in the Palestine and Egypt.

As per the age-old convention, necessitated by the nature of their occupation, the Romanis were continuously on the move to cross border trade conduct with a nomadic lifestyle and a highly insular culture. Because of their outsider status across the globe at most of the places and migratory nature for cross-boarder trade across the globe, few used to attend school and consequently in the later age literacy was not widespread among them. Much of what is known about their culture has come through stories told by singers and oral histories which are replete with Indian

legendary tales.

Need to Restore Ancient Equanimity or and Decentralised Production

Now, to restore the same equanimity, samarasata (समरसता) and divinity of every soul, as preached by our ancient scriptures, there should be perfect equality in our behaviour towards each other as true brethren and sistren.

India is home to one sixth of global humanity and an ancient nation, and rather with ever-perpetuating nation-hood since time immemorial, where every living being is seen as the divine manifestation of the Almighty.

The caste stratification and discrimination as a transient evil should have no place, when we have done away with the untouchability. In light of this now there should be no caste discrimination in any form and all Bhartiya citizens should behave with each other with total egalitarian equanimity and parity, to build a strong and Samras Bharat, based upon casteless and a cohesive cooperation. When the Indian or Hindu Philosophy asserts that the same divine Almighty is pervading across all living beings, how an individual can be untouchable or superior or inferior on the basis of his birth. Why this evil practice should have any place in our social life?

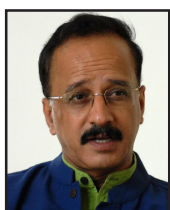
All Bhartiya or the Indians the descendants of the ancient Hindu polity Hindus should behave and act as a seamless cohesive caste like true brethren and sistren. Besides, we should also revive the decentralised production of goods and services for inclusive growth, sustainable development and full employment. □□

Farm Protest Rages Across India

Farmers' anger is spilling over. The violent agitation that erupted in the Malwa belt of Madhya Pradesh, resulting in the death of five farmers in police firing, has now spread to Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh. The demand for farm loan waiver, accompanied by higher crop prices, is now gaining momentum. More than 3.18 lakh farmers have committed suicide in the past 21 years. Every 41 minutes a farmer commits suicide in the country. While I agree that farmer suicides are a symptom of a bigger malaise that afflicts agriculture, policymakers have failed to take the massive death toll as a sign of terrible economic depravity that plagued the rural landscape. How long could we expect farmers to take the hit silently? It had to happen one day, and no one knew what will trigger it.

For nearly three decades, more so after the economic reforms were ushered in, agriculture has been a victim of neglect and apathy. Following the World Bank's prescription of moving 400 million people from the rural to the urban areas by the year 2015, successive governments deliberately created conditions to turn farming unviable, thereby forcing an increasing number of farmers to abandon agriculture and migrate to cities. To keep food inflation under control, farmers have been routinely paid less, not even to cover the cost of production, thereby driving them against the wall.

With each passing year, the crisis worsened. The 2016 Economic Survey tells us that the average annual income of a farming family in 17 states, roughly half the country, is a mere Rs 20,000 or less than Rs 1,700 a month. Such a dismal income, merely enough for subsistence, was the outcome of economic policies



Public sector investments must be directed for constructing Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee mandis and also for storage godowns, says
Devinder Sharma



over the years. I shudder to think how these farming families must be surviving all these years. After all, it is not even possible to rear a cow in less than Rs 1,700 a month.

But I doubt if such details mean anything to mainline economists and policymakers. With the markets crashing after every harvest, and with the government reluctant to save farmers by ensuring that they get at least the Minimum Support Price (MSP), farmers are pushed deeper and deeper into a never-ending cycle of debt. Even the MSP is often less than the cost of production. In Maharashtra, the production cost of tur dal has been worked out at Rs 6,240 per quintal. The MSP was Rs 5,050 per quintal, but the price at which farmers were able to sell tur, and that too after waiting for nearly a week in the 'mandis', was between Rs 3,500 and Rs 4,200 per quintal.

Take another case. A farmer in Haryana toils hard for three months, putting all his labour to reap a bountiful harvest of potato only to find the prices crashing, thereby forcing him to sell 40 quintals of potato for just 9 paise a kg. The shock often turns fatal. But the fact remains that the government has rarely come to his rescue. Compare this with the fall in stock markets, and the finance minister promises to monitor the crisis on an hourly basis, holding a press conference to assuage the investors. Have we ever seen the finance minister or the agriculture minister monitoring the deplorable condition when farm prices crash?

The poor farmer has been left to live in indebtedness, which keeps multiplying with every passing year. The crisis is compounded by the denial of a rightful income

The MSP should be structured to factor in four allowances being paid to farmers – house allowance, medical allowance, educational allowance & travel allowance.

to farmers for their produce. To keep food inflation under control, it is the farmers who have paid the price. In reality, it is the farmers who have been subsidising the nation all these years. Successive governments have therefore deliberately kept agriculture impoverished. An estimated 58% of the farmers go to bed hungry every night.

After Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a farm loan waiver worth Rs 36,359 crore, which will benefit 92 lakh small and marginal farmers, Maharashtra announced a loan waiver worth Rs 30,500 crore. Punjab is expected to take over at least Rs 30,000 crore of the bad loans. Though I am not in favour of loan waivers but in a deplorable situation that agriculture has been pushed into, a waiver is a short-term relief.

It is an emergency measure to bail out millions of small and marginal farmers in distress. Indiaspend estimates a total of Rs 3.1 lakh crore of farm loan that needs to be waived. This is still far less than the Rs 4 lakh crore bailout package that the telecom industry alone is seeking. Another Rs 1.7 lakh crore of bad debt is what the steel industry hopes will be written off.

Holistic approach

Loan waiver must be followed by policies that ensure loans don't pile up again. A tinkering here and there is not going to address the crisis. It needs a holistic approach and a paradigm shift in economic thinking.

To begin with: The effort should be to make farming economically viable.

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, which works out the MSP for crops, should be directed to factor in four allowances being paid to farmers – house allowance, medical allowance, educational allowance and travel allowance. So far, MSP only covers the cost of production. Government employees get a total of 108 allowances.

Since MSP benefits only 6% of the farmers, it needs to be understood that the demand for providing 50% profit over MSP will benefit only these 6% farmers. For the remaining, who are dependent on the exploitative markets, the need is to set up a National Farmers Income Commission, with the mandate to provide a minimum assured monthly income package of Rs 18,000 per farmer family.

Public sector investments must come in urgently for constructing Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee mandis and also for storage godowns. At present, there are only 7,700 APMC mandis. What India needs is 42,000 mandis for every 5 km radius. And like in Brazil, where it is mandatory for a market yard to procure anything a farmer brings, APMC mandis should be equipped to do the same. □□

(The writer is a commentator on issues relating to farmers and agriculture)

Current conflict is essentially between Global and Local



The western world view has dominated for the last 200 or so years and hence their idea of “modern man” is accepted as the “idea”. It is supposed to transcend territories and cultures. It assumes that “one size” fits all and enunciates “one model” works for all. In many seminars I am asked by foreigners about India becoming “Europe” or USA after a few decades and how it will impact Indian “values”. Basically it is assumed that the whole world needs to have or follow one model since all humans are same “rational” animals. The main Abra-

hamic faiths like Christianity and Islam evolved out of this belief. So they went around conquering the world to fashion it in their own mirror image. The Marxian model also believes the same.

The concept of sovereignty evolved as Westphalian consensus in 1548 after the thirty Years’ War, in which the major continental European states – the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, France, Sweden and the Dutch Republic – agreed to respect one another’s territorial integrity. This obviously did not include later colonies. Christianity and Islam wanted to spread all over the world by sword or colonies or deceit. Both wanted to be global religions.

Hence there was a fierce battle between these globalisers for “converting” people to their way. There is the idea of my way or Highway. The colonization project was justified since it was to “civilize” the world and converting faith/religion of people was encouraged in the name of “freedom to choose”. Of course that freedom should be exercised to choose the desert faiths. Some times with swords sometimes with subterfuge and inducement.

From the Church evolved the modern corporations which in the Post 2nd world war wanted to be “global” and institutions like IMF and World Bank were created to facilitate the process. These institutions reinforced the theory of one size fits all. Modern Globalization project got accelerated in the seventies by multinational corporations tried to formulate theories which are applicable to all societies with perhaps some local variation as a concession.

Ernst Kantorowicz, in his well-argued and celebrated essay *‘The King’s Two Bodies: A study in Medieval Political Theology’*, analyses how the mystical body of Christ, which is central to Christian liturgy, acquired sociological meaning in the later



Differences between Globalisers –be it corporate or Radical Islam or evangelists and “localisers” both right wing and Left wing are the essential conflicts for the betterment of a country, says

Prof. R. Vaidyanathan

middle Ages. The *corpus mysticum* became the organized body of Christian society and created, in due course, the greatest of artificial persons, namely, “the state.” Out of this modular structure or building block, Western capitalism emerged, along with other fictional entities such as the ‘Joint Stock Company’ and ‘public corporation’ (Princeton, 1957).

Hence, it is a medieval Christian Anglo-Saxon construct that says that ‘corporations’ are more evolved forms than, say, joint families or cooperatives or trusts. One is not sure why India should continue to accept this European medieval evolution, which was essential for colonial conquests, driven by joint stock companies such as the East India Company, which considered India ‘unorganized’ and went about organizing it, with results known to us. So Church handed over idea of “globalization” to corporate.

In these days of political correctness, perhaps the so-called unorganized sector can be termed “corporate challenged”, while corporates themselves are “disclosure” and “transparency-challenged”.

They even propounded an idea of “glocal”. This is mainly global models but will try to take into account local sensibilities. Whether it is market efficiency or asset valuation every human being in the world should behave as per western models. If not there is a problem with that person or group. They were to be identified as “deviation” from norm.

The entire edifice of modern economics/Finance assumes market to solve all problems since all men are “rational”—in the western sense- and profit maximizers. They have homogenous expectations etc.

The poor segments when they become rich behave exactly similar to the current rich people. That assumption helps in “forecasting” income and consumption growth.

Societies were expected to behave as per model rather than modeling societal behavior.

Wounded civilizations like India suffered a double whammy. Its youngsters were taught about the superiority of the Renaissance rationality and they began to fully imitate the homogenous model. Most got educated in Western Universities and this helped a lot for the globalisers.

Hence we have Christian globalisers/Islamic globalisers/Multi-

Societies were expected to behave as per model rather than modeling societal behavior.

national corporate/Marxists. All using the premise of a global man and one size fits all. All of them can be called homogenizers. Among them Marxists are on the retreat after the fall of Berlin Wall.

But there is a problem. All these Homogenizers are run by a clique or elites who look down upon masses with contempt. Why so? Because they are confident that they have the solutions available in their books or models. The modern corporations have modeled academic institutions to suit their requirements. Recruitment/promotion etc. are dependent on reinforcing the belief system through

research and training.

Within this so called left wing and right wing have evolved. Both are homogenizers. One is state based and other is big corporate or so called “market “based. But of late left wing has got twisted due to being politically right—it became friendly to Radical Islam and also to other “modernities” like LGBTQ groups. Interestingly soviet model of Stalin shunned these categories.

The Globalisers also created categories like economically “conservatives” but socially “liberal “or socially conservative but economically Liberal –but all within their framework of homogenizing. Also the Christian leaders would accept “Islamic Contribution” and nothing more than that.

For instance Obama claimed in Cairo (June, 2009) that algebra, the decimal system and printing technology were the inventions of the land of sands[Arabia] when these accomplishments owe as much to India and China.

Assertion of the Average:

But the Globalisers are on retreat. One is the conflict or rather war waged by Radical Islam which would like to establish a Caliphate in Europe. Church is in retreat in Europe since many are becoming agnostic. Modern versions of Church getting active-in the form of Evangelicals like Pentecostal etc. Post economic crisis of 2008 the big corporates are on the retreat. The average school educated person is unhappy and angry. He is unhappy about unemployment which is running high in G-7 countries—more so in Europe. He is angry about mass migration and what he perceives as Islamic invasion of Europe and even USA.

EU which is one of the earliest “Project Europe” to bring together “globalization” within Europe is under threat. The rural/school only educated/unwashed in Britain rejected the rule from Brussels. The Sophisticated elite of London wanted to be in EU. In France and Italy similar situation is developing. In the USA the assertion of average was extra-ordinary. All elites and financial system supported Hillary but she was defeated by again school only educated/poor segments.

Globalization crowd is desperate. Davos meet this year had of all persons Chinese President Xi and he was requested to “lead” globalization. One can imagine the level of desperation of the Davos crowd. Homogenization/one size fits all and Western model is THE model— is the major mantras of globalisers. Radical Islam says the same thing except using its own book.

Tony Blair the then Prime Minister of UK in his famous Chicago Address -1999-suggests:

“The most pressing foreign policy problem we face is to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other people’s conflicts. Non -interference has long been considered an important principle of international order.... “But the principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects”. The NATO intervention in Kosovo and Afghanistan as well as US intervention in Iraq provide recent examples of breakdown of idea of Westphalia.

Interestingly Radical Islam also considers that the world order based on Westphalian consensus will collapse. “In the aftermath of the 11 March 2004 Madrid at-

tacks, Lewis ‘Atiyyatullah, who claims to represent the terrorist network Al-Qaeda, declared that “the international system built up by the West since the Treaty of Westphalia will collapse; and a new international system will rise under the leadership of a mighty Islamic state.”

The spread of ISIS across countries and activities of Boko Haram based in Nigeria in Kenya and Chad re-emphasise this point. Radical Islam does not accept territorial boundaries since it works for a global regime for global Ummah. The talk about Caliphate indicates that they are trans-border organizations.

On the other side we find

Radical Islam considers that the world order based on Westphalian consensus will collapse.

global corporations transcending sovereignty in search of global profits. For this they use tax havens as a tool. Tax havens—numbering more than 70 jurisdictions—facilitate bank facilities with zero taxes and no-disclosure of the names and in many cases anonymous trusts holding accounts on behalf of beneficiary. In the case of Bahamas one building seems to have had tens of thousands of companies registered there.

USA is literally waging war with major Giants like Amazon/Google/Microsoft etc. for not paying adequate taxes in USA in spite of being US based compa-

nies. Most of these companies have moved their profits to other Tax Havens.

A simple method of trade mis-invoicing by global companies using tax-havens have impacted developing countries nearly 730 Billion USD in 2012 says Global Financial integrity. There is an increasing clamour in USA and EU about closing down these tax havens.

Most of America’s largest corporations maintain subsidiaries in offshore tax havens. At least 358 companies, nearly 72 percent of the Fortune 500, operate subsidiaries in tax haven jurisdictions –

- All told, these 358 companies maintain at least 7,622 tax haven subsidiaries.
- The thirty companies with the most money officially booked offshore for tax purposes collectively operate 1,225 tax haven subsidiaries.

Fortune 500 companies currently hold more than \$2.1 trillion in accumulated profits offshore for tax purposes. Just thirty Fortune 500 companies account for 65 percent of these offshore profits. These thirty companies with the most money offshore have booked \$1.4 trillion overseas for tax purposes. Only fifty-seven Fortune 500 companies disclose what they would expect to pay in U.S. taxes if these profits were not officially booked offshore. In total, these fifty-seven companies would owe \$184.4 billion in additional federal taxes. Based on these fifty-seven corporations’ public disclosures, the average tax rate that they have collectively paid to foreign countries on these profits is a mere 6 percent, indicating that a large portion of this offshore money has been booked in tax havens. If we

apply that average tax rate of 6 percent to the entirety of Fortune 500 companies, they would collectively owe \$ 620 billion in additional federal taxes.

Some of the worst offenders include: Apple/Nike/American Express/PepsiCo/Pfizer/Morgan Stanley/Citi Group/Wall Mart/Bank of America/Google/Microsoft/Goldman Sachs etc.

So Globalisation is stuck between Tax havens and Terrorists.

The middle class in UK revolted against EU –seamless borders and trade and in US the victory of Trump is a big blow to Globalisers. He is unenthusiastic about Davos. The rise of Le Pen in France and *Geert Wilders* in Holland represent back to national sovereignty. Le Pen recently said in Koblenz “nation state” is back.

In this, the traditional division of Left and right has lost its meaning. In BREXIT we saw left supporting EU and part of right opposing it. Now, the new divisions are Globalisers versus Nation states both from left and right.

There was an agitation by supporters of Gorbun the rabid left wing leader of Labour party in UK against the most venerable left wing intellectualism personified “New Statesman”

[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/new-statesman-protest-jeremy-corbyn-momentum_uk_58e73c75e4b058f0a02dd696]

Actually this extreme left-winger Corbyn opposed BREXIT and wanted Britain to be in EU.

While as the conservatives in large numbers supported Brexit and from that point the calling of referendum by Cameron was even questioned. Corbyn was supposed to be part of “Remain and Re-

form” EU group. Anyhow Britain and labour force of Britain overwhelmingly voted for going out of EU which is perceived as a “Globalizing menace”

Le Pen in France wants to come out of EU since it is impacting “French” characteristics. She is considered “extreme” right by the main stream media in France. She wants France to come out of EU; opposed to Radical Islam; opposed to immigrants and against large French Govt. Interestingly one of her opponent Melonchon who is considered as left extreme also wants to re-negotiate EU and

Currently, the USA has divided with respect to Russia. The Trump supporters viewing Russia favorably while as Democrats are upset with Russia.

possibly pull out. He is also against large central French Govt. and surprisingly not for the “veil” for the women!! Both Extreme right and Left are against large global corporations and Globalization by the Davos crowd.

In the USA the divisions are becoming interesting with large number of Trump supporters viewing Russia favorably while as Democrats are upset with Russia. Trump supporters view Russia as a good ally against radical Islam. Not that Russia is any more “socialist”. Trump is as unhappy as

Obama was about large US companies like Google/Amazon/Microsoft etc. not paying adequate taxes in the USA but showing large profits in Tax havens like Cayman Islands.

Large portions of left in Europe are split regarding its attitude to Radical Islam. One segment arguing for total “understanding” of Islam while another segment wanting to uphold traditional values of Europe on women issues, on Homo-sexuality and contraception.

This single model groups are being opposed by smaller “national and Community” sovereignty groups. For instance in Britain poorer rural segments /less educated segments and working class segments voted for BREXIT since all of them felt big Government at Brussels is trampling on their sovereignty. Similarly School educated/older aged/less income segments supported Trump. Both cases it is against “globalization” and “large corporate”.

Similarly one witnesses raise of such political forces in Holland/France/ Italy and Germany. All these will have far reaching impact in the coming year due to elections in France and Germany.

Hence today the world is divided between Globalisers –be it corporate or Radical Islam or evangelists and “localisers” both right wing and Left wing. Globalisers wants homogeneity –all wear Jeans and all drink Coke or all women have Burqa and all men pray 5 times. Localisers want variety and pluralism. Respect for local tradition and customs and recognition of small businesses. □□

Prof R. Vaidyanathan; Cho. S Ramaswamy Visiting Chair Professor of Public Policy SASTRA University; Professor IIMB/Rtd

Nestle, Reliance milk powder has chemicals

Tamil Nadu Dairy Development Minister K.T. Rajenthra Bhalaji on Tuesday alleged that the milk powder supplied by Nestle and Reliance in the State contained chemicals like caustic soda and bleaching powder that were “silent killers”. Mr. Bhalaji claimed that adulterated milk supplied by private companies in Tamil Nadu could cause several diseases, including cancer.

On June 27, 2017, he said such adulterated products could cause problems in the kidney, liver and heart, besides leading to ulcers and diabetes.

After the private companies condemned him for his earlier statement as he could not provide any proof, the Minister convened a press conference on Tuesday to allege that Nestle and Reliance were supplying milk powder containing chemicals. Asked if both brands would be banned in the State, Mr. Bhalaji said he would consult the Chief Minister and Health Secretary, and efforts would be taken to ban the products.

“When we tested samples at the Aavin laboratory in Madhavaram, no one believed us. We sent the samples to the Pune lab, which refused to test our samples but leaked information to the media. Therefore, we have indirectly tested the samples in a Central government-certified lab in Chennai,” the Minister said.



He then released copies of the test report from Chennai Mettex Lab, Guindy, on the ‘dairy whitener’ of Nestle and Reliance.

Asked whether more such adulterated products were being distributed, Mr. Balaji said the results of a few more samples were yet to come, and whenever he had information about adulterated products, he would share the details. “As there are legal loopholes, the companies could pay fines and get away with it. I’m informing the media to create awareness and to warn people,” he said. (<http://www.thehindu.com/>)

Stent prices: Firms, hospitals, doctors got away with looting

The Modi government’s efforts to cap the price of cardiac stents exposed the nexus between stent companies and hospitals in looting the public by overcharging them. But no action has been taken against either companies or hospitals. None of them paid penalties



or faced charges for colluding to cheat the public. Contrast this with the US government which has, over the years, fined the three biggest stent companies, Abbott, Medtronic and Boston Scientific, millions of dollars for charges ranging from bribing doctors to use their products to hiding defects in their device.

Yet, on the eve of PM Modi’s visit to the US, lawmakers in that country supported these companies by urging India to reconsider its decision to cap stent prices. This is despite the fact that before the price cap, India was paying among the highest prices for stents globally, even higher than in the US. Not only have stent companies been forced to cough up millions, the US department of justice (DoJ) also cracked down on more than 500 hospitals and reached settlements amounting to about \$300 million on charges of inappropriate implantation of cardioverter defibrillators and stents. Several cardiologists too have been fined and jailed for their role in such improper treatment.

According to the US DoJ website, the department has recovered more than \$16.4 billion in cases involving fraud against federal health care programmes since January 2009. The US attorney stated that physicians should be making decisions on medical devices based on what is in the best interest of patients without being induced by payments from manufacturers competing for their business.

In the US, the price of a drug eluting stent (DES) ranges from Rs 62,000 (\$950) to Rs 78,000 (\$1,200). Before price control, hospitals in India were charging

almost twice as much with prices typically ranging from Rs 65,000 to Rs 1.7 lakh. In the case of bioabsorbable stents, the US paid about \$100 to \$200 more than the price of the most expensive DES, or roughly \$1,200—\$1,500. In India, patients were charged Rs 1.9 lakh (over \$2,900) for Abbot's bioabsorbable stent.

By printing highly inflated maximum retail prices, stent companies in India helped hospitals make huge margins by charging double or even triple the cost at which they procured stents. The hospitals in turn turned a blind eye to cardiologists known for very high rates of stenting as it brought in huge revenue for them. Some hospitals in India have been likened to stenting factories, implanting several hundred stents each month. There has been no medical audit of angioplasties and other cardiac procedures done by these hospitals despite senior cardiologists seeking such an audit of the 900-plus cath labs and suggesting that well over a quarter of the stenting done in India could be unnecessary.

The huge recoveries in the US have been made possible chiefly through the False Claims Act, which permits recovery of funds from anyone who knowingly presents or causes to be presented a fraudulent claim for payment to the government. Other laws used include the Stark law, which prohibits the practice of physicians referring patients to medical facilities in which they have a pecuniary interest. The Anti-kickback Statute prohibits anyone from offering, paying, soliciting, or receiving remuneration in cash or kind to induce or reward referrals or generate business for any entity participating in a federal programme.

The penalties under each of these laws can be crippling and in extreme cases those responsible could face criminal charges. Using these three laws, the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), a special team constituted by the US government in 2009, has recovered billions of dollars and booked offenders. However, in India, the government has not cracked down or recovered the money on behalf of the people and nor have any laws been enacted to deal with the situation. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>)

Swadeshi Jagran Manch Says GST Will Hit Small Businesses, Push Chinese Imports

Days ahead of the launch of GST, the RSS's economic wing SJM has said the new indirect tax regime



will “badly hit small businesses and push Chinese imports”. As the date of implementation of GST is approaching, the heartbeats of small entrepreneurs and traders are increasing, Swadeshi Jagran Manch National co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan said. He claimed that there was exemption on excise duty for production of up to Rs 1.5 crore for small scale industries.

“But now, according to the provisions of GST, any entity whose business is above or equal to Rs 20 lakh must register itself for GST in the state where it carries its business,” Mahajan told PTI.

Small scale and cottage industries which are labour intensive will be severely hit by this law, as many of them are in the higher tax bracket, he said. With the negative impact on these small industries, people in rural areas will lose jobs and at the same time imports of Chinese products will jump due to a slump in domestic production, Mahajan claimed.

The government has said the Goods and Service Tax (GST) could add two percentage points to economic growth. It is termed as India's most ambitious tax reform, creates a single economic zone with common indirect taxes. There will be four tax slabs - 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. The new tax regime will be launched at midnight on June 30 in the Central Hall of Parliament. (<http://www.businesstoday.in>)

Agriculture ministry rendered hollow the plant trait patents of companies like Monsanto

The authority for protection of plant varieties is set to dispense with the requirement of a no-objection certificate (NOC) from patent-holders for use of their genetically-modified (GM) traits. This might trigger fresh litigation between Monsanto and companies like the Hyderabad-based Nuziveedu Seeds, an erstwhile Monsanto licensee, founded and man-



aged by M Prabhakara Rao. The notification will particularly hit Monsanto because its bollworm-resistant GM trait is found in almost the entire GM cotton crop grown in the country. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPVFR) Authority passed the resolution after office-hours on May 31, which was chairman R R Hanchinal's last day in office. The meeting was held late in the day because of a delay in the only flight from Palampur in Himachal Pradesh, where Hanchinal had inaugurated a registry office of the Authority the day before. The meeting itself was not sudden. Advance notice of 15 days had been given. The NoC issue was one of 16 items on the agenda, R C Agrawal, registrar-general of the Authority said. The resolution is based on the opinion of additional solicitor-general Tushar Mehta. On a reference by the Authority, he said, the requirement of NoC from the patent-holder for registration of a variety or hybrid containing a patented trait had no basis in the PPVFR Act. The Authority has been insisting on it since 2011 though the requirement was formally approved later, in 2015.

Mehta said the PPVFR Act only required a declaration from the applicant seeking registration of a plant variety or hybrid that they had "lawfully acquired" the genetic material or parental material for breeding, evolving or developing it. A declaration, Mehta said, cannot be stretched to mean a NOC from the creator of any plant trait. Whether the trait developer had a patent on it was not relevant for registration of any variety by the PPVFR Authority. The National Seeds Association of India, of which Prabhakara Rao is the president, is of the view that NOCs give Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (MMB), the joint venture which licenses the GM insect-resistance trait in cotton, virtual monopoly powers by imposing tough terms and conditions on usage. Rao is also a member of the PPVFR Authority. On a writ petition by the Seedsmen Association of Hyderabad challenging the stipu-

lation of a NOC, the Andhra and Telangana High Court in September 2016 directed the Authority to pass an order within four weeks. "Now we will proceed with registration of application without NOC," said Agrawal. (<http://www.financialexpress.com/>)

Sustainable fishing, climate change among issues aired at trade & environment committee

At the 20 June 2017 meeting of the Committee on Trade and Environment, several WTO members highlighted the importance of global efforts to better manage the world's oceans and marine resources, to address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and to negotiate an outcome on fisheries subsidies at the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference in December. Members were also briefed on climate change discussions at the United Nations and efforts for climate action. This was the first meeting of the CTE chaired by Ambassador Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan) and the first time that Kazakhstan is chairing a committee following its accession to the WTO in 2015.

The Ambassador of Fiji, Mrs. Nazhat Shameem Khan, briefed members on the United Nations Ocean Conference held on 5-9 June in New York and the commitment shown there towards implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources. Fiji was the co-host of the conference with Sweden. The call for action adopted at the conference included strengthening capacity building for small-scale and artisanal fishing in developing countries, supporting sustainable ocean-based economies, as well as taking decisive action and accelerating WTO negotiations to tackle fisheries subsidies.

Members were also briefed on efforts at the WTO's Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR) to forge disciplines on fisheries subsidies. The WTO Secretariat said the SDGs are very much in the mind of negotiators and work would be intensive throughout the autumn in the run-up to the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires.

Canada, meanwhile, provided an update on the plurilateral negotiations on fisheries subsidies launched in September 2016 involving 15 WTO members. Negotiations are open to any WTO member willing to participate and are complementary to the ongoing multilateral talks, Canada added.



The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) representative briefed members on its legal instruments and tools to combat IUU fishing, to which some US\$10-23 billion is lost annually according to latest estimates. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) briefed members on its Fishery Support Estimate (FSE) Database, which compiles information submitted by 31 countries, with more being added. The database will cover 50% of global fishing activity by the end of 2017, the representative said.

Representatives of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) briefed the Committee on UNCTAD's Trade and Environment Review focusing on fish trade. They noted that developing countries have become the main exporters of fish since 2010. The representatives further noted the increase in technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that are being applied to fish products, which have implications on the capacity of developing countries to engage in fish trade.

Climate change: The Chief of Staff of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Daniele Violetti, briefed delegates on the status of climate change discussions. Korea, New Zealand and Peru updated members on their respective pledges under the Paris Agreement, which entered into force on 4 November 2016. New Zealand's acting Climate Change Ambassador, Jo Tyndall, noted that climate change discussions were starting to put more emphasis on the growing opportunities from climate friendly technologies, investment and behaviour.

China's Ambassador to the WTO, Mr. Zhang Xiangchen, briefed delegates on the latest developments in China's renewable energy sector. China obtained almost 13% of its energy from renewables in 2015, up from 6% in 2005, he said. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan informed members about the ministerial

conference that had taken place from 11 to 14 June 2017 in the margins of the 2017 Expo held in Astana under the banner of "Future Energy". (<https://www.wto.org/>)

WTO records moderate rise in G20 trade restrictions

The WTO's seventeenth monitoring report on Group of 20 (G20) trade measures, issued on 30 June, shows that trade restrictions in G20 economies have risen at a moderate rate similar to that of previous years, despite the uncertainty facing the global economy. The report calls on G20 governments to show leadership in supporting open and mutually beneficial trade as a driver of economic growth and development. A total of 42 new trade-restrictive measures were applied by G20 economies during the review period (mid-October 2016 to mid-May 2017), including new or increased tariffs, customs regulations and rules of origin restrictions. This is an average of six measures per month – slightly higher than in 2016 but below the longer-term trend observed in 2009-2015 of seven per month.

G20 economies also implemented 42 measures aimed at facilitating trade during the review period, including the elimination or reduction of tariffs and the simplification of customs procedures. At an average of six new trade-facilitating measures per month, this represents a similar level compared to the previous reporting period (mid-May to mid-October 2016) and is in line with the declining trend observed in 2016.

It is notable that the estimated trade coverage of trade-facilitating measures implemented by G20 economies (US\$163 billion) significantly exceeded the estimated trade coverage of trade restrictive measures (US\$47 billion). In addition, liberalization associated with the 2015 expansion of the WTO's Information Technology Agreement (ITA) continues to feature as an important contributor to trade facilitation. (<http://www.scoop.co.nz>)

WTO marks 20 years of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA)

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the ITA, the WTO launched a new publication today (27 June) entitled "20 Years of the Information Technology Agreement: Boosting trade, innovation and digital connectivity". The publication describes how this



agreement has evolved over the past two decades and the significant impact it has had on worldwide trade in IT products.

The ITA entered into force in July 1997. Since then, it has committed participants in the Agreement to eliminate tariffs on a wide range of IT products with a current annual value of approximately US\$ 1.7 trillion. Its membership has grown to 82 WTO members, which currently cover 97 per cent of world trade in ITA products. Since the elimination of tariffs is included in their WTO schedules of commitments, ITA participants have extended duty-free treatment to all members on a most-favoured nation (MFN) basis, thereby bringing the benefits of the Agreement to the entire WTO membership.

Launching the publication, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said: "In addition to the significant economic impact, the success of the ITA is notable because of what it says about the WTO. It shows that members can work together – in different formats – to tackle the obstacles that they face and bring solutions to the table. I think there are important lessons to learn from this deal. And that's why we have produced the new publication that we are launching today. It reviews the impact of the ITA and its expansion, and shares insights on the role of ICT for development, including its contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda."

The publication charts how world ITA exports have more than tripled in value over the past 20 years and now represent 15 per cent of total merchandise products, exceeding the shares of automotive products, textiles and clothing, and pharmaceuticals.

The publication underlines how the lower cost and greater availability of computers and mobile phones has resulted in increased access to the Internet and the growth of the digital economy, creating new opportunities for trade. It also looks into the role of the ITA Committee and provides extensive analysis of the evolution of trade under the ITA. The publica-

tion also highlights how the recent expansion of the ITA is reducing tariffs on a further 201 high-tech products, such as touch screens and medical equipment, with an annual value of about US\$ 1.3 trillion. (<https://www.wto.org/>)

70 Per Cent Of Pakistan Is Ideal Breeding Ground For Jihadis

Poverty statistics of Pakistan for fiscal year 2014-15 appear to suggest that at least 70 per cent of the country is an ideal breeding ground for militants and jihadis. While the country's armed forces continue to seek ways to neutralise this threat, the civilian administration has not been able to effectively raise the standard of living of a majority of the people after it was weakened by more than a decade of militancy and terrorism.



Last year, an estimated 60 million Pakistanis were said to be living below the poverty line, posing a significant development-related challenge to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his government. According to data from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) survey for the 2014/15 period, the country's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) stands at 0.197, which means that the poor people in Pakistan experience 19.7 per cent of the deprivation that would be experienced if all people were deprived in all indicators.

Using the same data from the 2014/15 PSLM survey, it was found that 38.8 percent of the population of Pakistan is poor, according to the MPI, and average intensity of deprivation per poor person was 50.9 per cent. The observers and experts who have analysed the connection between poverty and the eventual surfacing of militant and jihadist elements, are convinced that Pakistan's religious schools, madrasas, play a role contrary to what they were originally intended to do. Some of these schools have very close ties with radical militant groups which essay critical roles in sustaining existing international terrorist networks. (<https://swarajyamag.com/>) □□