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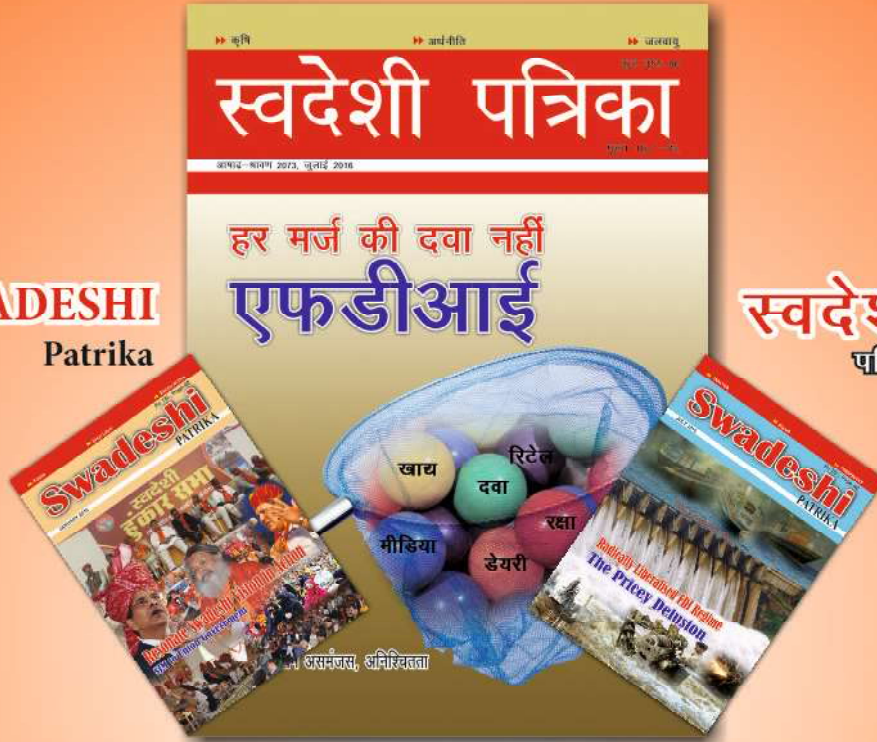


**Not Farmers,
Real Culprit is
PepsiCo**



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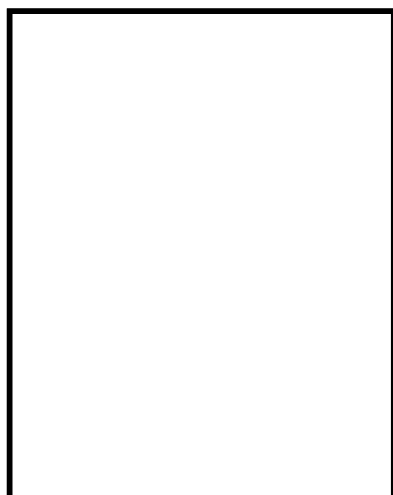
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EDITOR
Ajeet Bharti

ASSOCIATE-EDITOR
Dr. Phool Chand

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EDITORIAL OFFICE
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Revival of Jet Airways

With the advent of UDAAN Scheme: 'Udey Desh Ka Aam Nagrik', present government aimed that even the person who cannot afford to buy a pair of shoes should be given the opportunity to travel in flight at a reasonable fare. The government also encouraged the flight operators to augment the traveller base across the country. Under the scheme, 35 airports were made operational by Ministry of Civil Aviation. To reap the benefits or to gain larger market share, the flight operators to manage their short and long term financial needs in the route of expansion and providing full service travelling at lower cost to their customer could not refrain themselves to procure risky credit options from Banks and other source of Finance. In India, The story of Jet Airways crisis and specially the job risk of 22,000 Employees associated with the entity is worth really alarming. At this juncture it is very important to understand the story in realistic sense. The carrier has been in the red zone for many quarters but It drew the attention of the people after Nareish Goyal was forced to leave the organisation and lenders took over the charge of the organisation. The carrier has been incurring losses from last fiscal. Simultaneously to beat the competition, organisation started providing services with the optimistic view. The entity had to consider a pay cut of 25 percent. Analyst have been saying that If the Indications were there, that there may be distress, the management should straight away have consulted 'Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board' for the help as the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code assures the quick action on insolvency and bankruptcy. The loyal employees of Jet Airways who have lost their jobs deserve a dignified life. Many of the companies like Spice jet, Indigo etc. have already started hiring employees from Jet Airways and it may be hoped that in due course bad times will last soon. But what is the way forward, that the companies and their employees do not face such situation in future? Lenders and Shareholders should find a solution at the earliest. There is a need to bring high Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under GST. The Banking sector should also cross check the situation of Balance Sheet very diligently before granting credit. Other carriers should also come forward for hand holdings. The country is optimistic that the bad days of Jet Airways will end soon and collaborative efforts of Shareholders, lenders, government and other carriers will bear fruits.

— Sanket Shekhar, Delhi

EDITORIAL OFFICE

SWADESHI PATRIKA

'Dharmakshetra', Sector-8, Rama Krishna Puram, New Delhi-22

■ Tel. : 26184595, E-Mail: swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com

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Quote-Unquote



This is a new India, which will strike terrorists in their den, within the border and outside it.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, Bharat



On National Interest and Ideological Politics, We are firm like a rock.

Amit Shah
President, BJP



Article 370 will surely be reviewed.

Rajnath Singh
Home Minister of India



The forecasts of the RBI on inflation have become a joke as they usually go wrong. The economy is paying a heavy price due to its high-interest rate policy in the name of inflation targeting.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
National Co-convenor, SJM

Not Farmers, Real Culprit is PepsiCo

Recently, a unique case has come where 11 potato growing farmers of Gujarat have been, sued by a multinational company PepsiCo for allegedly using potato seeds material (tubers) of FC5 variety, claimed to be registered by the company. Though, after suing the farmers for cultivating this potato variety, so far grown exclusively for PepsiCo by other farmers, supposedly under contract with the company, the company is now saying that it wants to "amicably settle" the issue; the fact remains that company's case is not only not prudent ethically, it's very weak legally too. Fact is that PepsiCo was coercing the farmers by using legal action to force them to either sell their output to the company or to stop growing the FC5 potato variety at all. It's notable that this company has arrangement with farmers in Gujarat and other parts of the country, to produce this variety of potatoes exclusively for the company for its Lay's potato chips. The farmers, under contract with PepsiCo are provided with the potato seed material (tubers) with a buy-back arrangement (contract) to buy the potatoes (produce) so that it can be supplied to the potato chip contract manufacturers working for the company. The potatoes produced by the farmers are used by the factories undertaking contract production for PepsiCo to make chips as per the specifications given by PepsiCo. Ultimately, the potato chips are marketed throughout India by PepsiCo. This is a typical MNC model where the production and manufacturing both are outsourced to reduce overheads and risks.

Company has alleged that these 11 farmers have been cultivating FC5 potato variety illegally, as these seeds are registered by the company. The company says that this is a case of infringement of company's rights over the variety. The company argued that it was compelled to take the judicial recourse as a last resort to safeguard the larger interest of thousands of farmers that are engaged with its collaborative potato farming programme. The company has alleged that farmers in Gujarat were illegally growing this breed of potato after obtaining its seeds from the licensed farmers of PepsiCo in Punjab. PepsiCo in their plaint has stated that the examination of the samples collected by the company discreetly from the farmers showed that they were growing the registered variety without license. In this suit the PepsiCo had sought a permanent injunction to restrain the four farmers from infringing its plant variety. It had also sought an ad-interim injunction and damages of Rs. 1.05 crore from each of the four farmers.

Sec. 39(1)(iv) of PPVFR 2001 clearly protects rights of farmers vis-a-vis even registered varieties. Prima facie, what PepsiCo is attempting is not tenable at all. At the outset, it is necessary to clarify that PepsiCo's potato variety is not covered (rather cannot be covered) by patent, as misreported in the news articles that a multinational company's patent rights are being violated by the Indian farmers. The plant varieties introduced in India are protected under PPVFR Act, subject to registration of the variety. If PepsiCo has registered the variety with PPVFR Authority, Section 39(1)(iv) of the PPVFR Act provides exemption to the farmers from the above provisions of the Act even in the matter of a plant variety, registered under the PPVFR Act. Section 39(1)(iv) reads as follows

"A farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act." However, the farmer cannot sell branded seed of a protected variety. Further we need to understand that FC-5 has been registered as an "Extant Variety", which is also a "Variety of Common Knowledge", in other words, this variety of potato was already available in the country before it was registered and that there was "common knowledge" about this variety. This implies that PepsiCo's variety would surely have been produced in the country before it was registered. The farmers, who have signed contract with PepsiCo, are bound by the said contract (if any as this can be applicable only to contract growers of PepsiCo for growing potatoes for their manufacturing) under the Contract Act. It is a pure civil dispute and does not cover IPR aspects. However, it is worth examining, whether the said farmers were misled by PepsiCo's false claims of IP rights.

From the reports, it is evident that PepsiCo is using both the Contract Act and the PPVFR Act to sue the farmers. As such even if the contract prohibits the farmers from using the seeds as provided in section 39(1)(iv) of the PPVFR Act, all such clauses become void since the contract cannot override a provision of a law. Since Section 39(1)(iv) is unequivocal and very clear, there cannot be violations by a farmers if he is selling the tubers of PepsiCo variety to any other farmer to use as seed or use to produce potato crop (potatoes) on his own farm and sell the produce.

The whole exercise by PepsiCo seems to be an attempt to bar farmers to sell their farm produce (potato) to other potato chip manufacturers. PepsiCo may also try to sue other potato chips manufacturers, to stop them to purchase from the farmers. Launching action by PepsiCo against the persons or chip manufacturers, would amount to preventing the farmers from legitimately exercising their rights under Section 39(1)(iv). Therefore, it is misuse of Contract law or the PPVFR law by PepsiCo in trying to stop the farmers from selling their produce to anybody of their choice.

[Continued on page no. 38]

MPC and its views on inflation

Recently, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI reduced the repo rate by 0.25 per cent, thus bringing it down to 6 per cent. In its previous meeting too, it reduced the repo rate by 0.25 per cent.

The repo rate is the rate at which banks borrow from the RBI. Depending upon this, the bank's lending rates are decided. Therefore, reduction in the repo rate paves the way for lowering of interest rates—the rate at which people can borrow from banks for their consumption and investment needs. In the past, the MPC was resistant to the idea of reducing the repo rate citing inflation targeting; there were demands from various quarters, including the Centre, asking the RBI to reduce the repo rate to ease flow of credit.

It has to be noted that the MPC has been obsessed with inflation targeting while deciding interest rates, ignoring even growth. Given this MPC has chosen a band of 4 per cent plus/minus 2 per cent inflation. Before the constitution of MPC, it was decided to use Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than Wholesale Price Index (WPI), for inflation targeting, on the basis of the recommendations of a committee under the chairmanship of the then RBI Deputy Governor Urjit Patel in 2014. This change impacted the decisions of the RBI about inflation targeting then, as there was a huge difference between CPI and WPI. Notably, CPI had greater weight of 46 per cent for food products compared to only 30 percent (including manufactured food products) in WPI. Food inflation used to be much higher then, and therefore, repo rate based on CPI inflation targeting continued to be high despite cooling down of WPI-based inflation. However, in



RBI's Monetary Policy Committee has been obsessed with inflation while deciding interest rates, ignoring even growth.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



the last three years of the NDA government, even CPI has fallen significantly, and has remained low, at less than 3 per cent.

However, initially, the RBI governor and later even the MPC continued to undermine falling inflation, based on their inflationary expectations. They say there is danger of spike in inflation. They therefore refused to reduce to the repo rate in the name of inflation targeting based on their expectations about inflation, which continued to be proven wrong in every subsequent review.

Therefore, one can say that repo rates were kept high not because inflation was high or there was a real danger of inflation in the country, but because the RBI maintained its stance that inflation may go up. However, the MPC was not ready to mend its methodology to determine its stance.

It's acceptable that while determining repo rate, we must ensure that real rate of interest remains reasonably positive. Real rate of interest is the nominal (that is, rate of interest prevailing) minus rate of inflation. We know that in 2013, repo rate was 7.75 per cent, while rate of inflation was 11 per cent; thus the real rate of interest used to be negative. However, since then inflation rate came down to less than 2.5 per cent in 2018, while the same is not true of the repo rate, which remained between 6 per cent and 6.5 per cent. That exactly is the issue, that real rate of interest remained between 3.5 per cent and 4 per cent.

If repo rate increases, it will increase cost for banks borrowing from the RBI. On the one hand, the MPC aims at keeping repo rate high, targeting inflation. Businesses



The inflation is low for so long, and economic activity is constrained due to high interest rates, the MPC should have changed its stance to accommodative to give a policy guidance as per the need of the hour.

would always want repo rate to go down, so that they can reduce their cost of borrowing. For household borrowers, their EMI on housing and other consumer loans would drop. Fall in interest rates also helps in promoting infrastructure growth.

It is important to note that in the past six-seven years, investment has not been picking up, resulting in lower capital formation, which was 39 per cent of GDP in 2011-12. It has come down to 32.3 per cent in 2017-18. Based on the past experience, high rates of capital formation coincides with lower interest rates.

Inflation targeting by monetary authorities is fine, but having opinions, which are proved wrong repeatedly, raise doubts about the direction of the monetary policy and therefore need serious rethinking. It is notable that the MPC in its April 2019 meeting has continued with its 'neutral' stance, which it adopted in its earlier meeting on February 2019, shifting from the stance of 'calibrated tightening'. In that meeting too MPC had reduced repo rate by 0.25 per cent.

Though, MPC has reduced the repo rate by 0.5 per cent since February, it was expected that it would have changed its stance to 'accommodative'. This is so because the global economy is showing signs of slowdown and indicators show that consumer demand in the country is also not picking up. The same is the case with investment demand.

Given the fact that inflation is low for so long, and economic activity is constrained due to high interest rates, the MPC should have changed its stance to accommodative to give a policy guidance as per the need of the hour. Markets were expecting a change to accommodative as global banks have also adopted a dovish stance about monetary policy in their respective countries.

The MPC needs to understand that apart from inflation targeting, they also have a duty to give a boost to growth and be accommodative when the situation is ripe. It had all the reason to do so given the weakening of domestic demand—both consumption and investment—with inflation remaining consistently low. □□

The Great Indian Defence Sector Mess



In mid-March, far from the high decibel political discourse, Indian Air Force commissioned recently acquired four Chinook helicopters at their Chandigarh Airbase. By the next year, IAF will get another 11. July last year, India bought these heavy-lift choppers at a cost of \$1.5 billion, and IAF is expecting to add another 22 AH-64E Apache twin-turboshaft attack chopper by September. Simultaneously, IAF is beefing up the squadrons with home-grown Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas next', with firm commitment of buying 123 these aircrafts, and 201 of their Mark-II variant. We haven't counted on the two squadrons of Rafale, which are expected to reach India in next 3-4 years.

These developments are happening, amid criticism that India's inventory for fighter planes along with artillery weapons is not only depleting, but are also ageing very quickly. The February air strikes at the terrorist's hideouts at Balakot in mainland Pakistan, and subsequent skirmish in the skies of Jammu and Kashmir brought the eyeballs back on the preparedness. The air force is left with 31 squadrons, when most of the warfare experts suggest that country require 42 squadrons to collusively take on hostile China as well as Pakistan. Worse part is most of them are four decade old MiG 21.

India continues to capture 13 per cent of the global trade, and remains at the top in the list of arms importer countries. This suffices 70 per cent of the requirements of our defence forces. For last two decades, India tried to create this as a business opportunity for the indigenous players as well as make country as a lucrative market for the foreign investors. The bête noire China successfully substituted their arms imports with indigenous products, but India remains dependent on the weapon technology from various jurisdictions; like the USA, Europe, Israel and South Korea. Even in the new age digital warfare and use of unmanned aerial vehicles; India is dependent on their friends across the world both for technology as well as for equipments.

The indigenous Hindustan Aeronautical Ltd, manufacturers of Tejas took 36 years to deliver the plane. And now the Air Force gave them the confirmed order of 123 LCAs, with a commitment that further 201 fighter planes will be much advanced Tejas Mark-II. Currently this plane is on the drawing board. This is also business opportunity. "But to convert this, government need to come out with the orders," says a CEO of a top Aerospace MNC. In fact, Tata plans to manufacture F-21 planes with their US based partner Lockheed Martin eyeing the orders.

The bureaucratic hurdles, inefficient decision making and fixation of developing the technology indigenously is holding up this space for businesses. The corporate houses are cribbing that they are deprived of big contracts. Most of the orders above \$500 million dollars are either going to the public sector enter-



From red tapism to excessive focus on control, Indian defence procurement has everything to keep investors away.

Anilesh S Mahajan

prises or to the foreign vendors. The industry experts say that there are very few orders, bureaucratic hurdles delay the processes, and delay leads to emergency purchases. These purchases are both expensive as well as counterproductive in developing the capabilities back home. The performance of FDI in this sector is further dismal. In last two decades India could attract less than \$6 million funds.

The artillery manufacturing is not in great shape either. Ordnance Factory Board took almost a decade to develop the Dhanush gun—reverse engineered to Bofors Haubits FH77—in the March 2019 got go ahead for series production. The NDA regime shown some intent of revamping the infrastructure and re-piling up of the weapon's inventory, but it requires series of reforms to improve the participation of the private capital and foreign investments.

In last five years, there were opportunities, a joint venture is formed between Bharat Forge and BAE to manufacture for indigenous manufactured—among private players—artillery gun and will compete with the public sector's Dhanush. Then Tata Group restructured their defence business to team up with the global majors, like Lockheed Martin, Boeing et al. Meanwhile, L&T bagged several projects from the naval agencies; including construction of hull of India's first nuclear submarine—INS Arihant along with pitching for the strategic partnership programme for submarines. They have also joined hands with HAL and ISRO to manufacture Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle—first such public-private venture for space. Meanwhile, Bharat Forge bags orders for artil-



"The domestic players have to struggle right from RFQ to disbursal of payments. If these issues are ironed out, the Indian defence sector can flourish," says Ashok Atluri, CEO of Hyderabad based Zen Technologies.

lery guns. Mahindra Group regrouped with BAE systems to set up of the guns assembly facility as a part of the offset obligations. Along with this the group also tied up with Israeli company Aeronautics for naval shipborne UAVs and with Japanese ShinMaywa Industries Ltd for naval seaplanes.

Investors' Black Hole

In March 2018, the french naval Group, the erstwhile DCNS, the manufacturer of Scorpene submarines, grabbed headlines by seeking approval for 100 per cent foreign direct investment, or FDI, to manufacture Air Independent Propulsion, or AIP, systems, which give submarines substantially greater endurance. For a country which has managed to attract only \$5.13

million foreign funding in defence manufacturing in the last two decades, this was a big deal.

It was a test for policy changes Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government had been making to attract investment in local defence manufacturing that included abolishing the cumbersome process for Cabinet Committee on Security's (CCS's) approval for all FDI proposals above 49 per cent. However, it hit the wall of Nir-mala Sitharaman-led defence ministry after the DRDO convinced it that this was not "modern technology" saying it, along with the Naval Group, was already working to install AIP in the last two of the six Scorpene P-75 submarines. This when India's armed forces are trying doubly hard to catch up with neighbours in defence preparedness and are desperate to induct more and better artillery guns, warships, fighter planes, submarines and missiles to their arsenals.

In the last five years, the NDA government has increased the FDI limit in defence from 26 per cent to 49 per cent (in 2014) and then to 100 per cent (in 2016) on a case-by-case basis. Still, the country has been able to attract only \$1 million FDI in defence manufacturing since 2014/15. It attracted \$60 billion in other sectors during the period.

The Control Question

Clearly, India's attempts to attract foreign capital in local defence manufacturing have fallen flat. While one reason is the good old bureaucratic red tapism, the bigger reason is excessive controls the FDI policy imposes on foreign players. The policy, for instance, keeps technology at the centre of the decision-making process. "Transferring technology is not in the hands of the corporate. It requires government approvals," says the CEO of a top MNC interested in India's aerospace sector.

In fact, the US is on record stating that the 49 per cent FDI limit is a hindrance in transfer of jet engine technology, while New Delhi has said it is willing to remove the cap on a case-to-case basis if there is a compelling case. "It is unrealistic to believe that countries will share state-of-the-art technologies with any other country, irrespective of friendliness," says R.K. Tyagi, former Chairman of Hindustan Aeronautical. This was one argument naval experts had given in support of the French Navals proposal before the government rejected it.

The government might have changed its policies but has failed to get past the bureaucratic hurdles and reform the process for acquisition of crucial weapons. This is not only impacting funds from foreign shores but also investments from home-grown corporate houses. "The domestic players have to struggle right from RFQ to disbursement of payments. If these issues are ironed out, the Indian defence sector can flourish," says Ashok Atluri, CEO of Hyderabad based Zen Technologies.

Hobson's Choice

There is always a debate on foreign vs indigenous players and

which ones should be given preference. Like Atluri, there are several who say indigenous players should be given opportunities to grow. "Just imagine, even in liberal economies like the US, all strategic assets are with domestic companies. Even the British BAE is asked to fill their management with US nationals. We will have to develop models to use our iconic organisations such as ISRO and DRDO to help domestic private sector players," says Rahul Chaudhry, former CEO of Tata Power SED; he chairs the industry lobby group, the Defence Industry and Innovators' Association. The views are echoed by Atluri, who says innovators will eventually develop technology and not only hold intellectual property rights but also help the country develop products for its own requirements. "At present, there is no process to accept single bidders. This doesn't compliment innovation," he says.

In 2016, India shifted to a policy to buy indigenously designed, developed and manufactured products. The intent was to develop domestic players and substitute imports before seeking more FDI. Is this goal discouraging investors? While this seems true in case of FDI, the reality is more complex, as local Indian players seem to be getting a piece of the pie. The factories under the Ordnance Factory Board and defence public sector enterprises increased production from Rs 43,277 crore in 2013/14 to Rs 58,160 crore in 2017/18. "Out of this, 40 per cent is outsourced to the private sector," says a defence ministry official. However, in FDI, it is a different story. "At present, the ticket size is too low to excite foreign players with technology to come in," says a

market insider.

In the last two decades, only 33 FDI proposals have been approved, six of them in the last five years. The list includes a Rs 40 crore investment by Mauritius-based Aegus Mfg Investment Ltd and Canadian firm CAE's Rs 37.82 crore investment to support a helicopter training firm. Consultants blame lack of orders for such poor numbers. "FDI will not come without purchase commitments," says Dhiraj Mathur, Partner, Leader, Aerospace & Defence, at Indian chapter of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Waiting for Orders

On February 12 this year, the defence ministry issued an expression of interest to shortlist Indian strategic partners and foreign manufacturers for procuring 111 Naval Utility Helicopters. These will replace the 1960 vintage Chetak helicopters. Before this, in July last year, the Defence Acquisition Council, or DAC, of the defence ministry started the process to buy 110 fighter aircraft. Both these projects are part of the recently adopted Strategic Partnership Policy for manufacturing defence platforms and equipment such as aircraft, submarines, helicopters and armoured vehicles.

The policy has come after several lessons learnt over the last two decades - a) it is difficult to convince manufacturers and their home countries to share cutting-edge technology, b) defence investments have long gestation periods and many foreign investors are not ready for that, c) as a buyer government has a monopoly, it makes the project risky for foreign players.

So, the new policy allows domestic companies to collaborate

[Continued on page no. 38]

Money bags influence free poll? Sensex shrouds realities, Nota uncovers nexus

The stock market is exactly not an indicator of realities. The sensex is rising even as new issues seem to hit the economy. Does it mean that sensex at 39,000 is not impacted by the political situations? Are the issues of nationalism and patriotic dispensation able to cover up critical situations that are affecting the people?

The answer is not easy. But 'none of the above' (Nota) ballot option has caused a new concern. Political parties have been telling voters not to press the button. Even non-political RSS chief Mohan Bhagvat gave a call to "select a candidate, not reject any". The election commission (EC) figures say that the highest 2.5 percent Nota were registered in Chhattisgarh and 0.5 percent in Mizoram during 2018 state polls. It affected prospects in 22 constituencies in Madhya Pradesh; 15 each in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

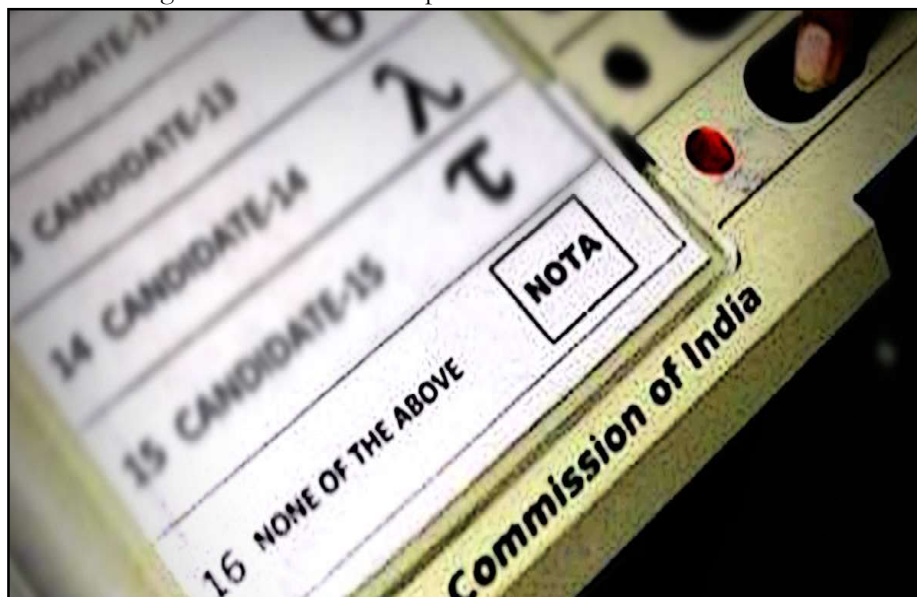
Five states – Chhattisgarh, MP, Rajasthan, Mizoram and Telangana – registered 8.44 lakh Nota votes in 2018.

Nota secured a total of 1.33 core votes in elections held between 2013 and 2017, according to an analysis of Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). It is becoming a game changer much to the chagrin of political parties.

Even the present elections are having a large number of Nota. It has become a problem for managing the polls. Parties are spending huge sums to manage votes. But a section of the people are playing spoilsport. Many of the Nota voters are firm cadres of some parties. They may be dissatisfied with the candidate or in most cases the party itself or for the non-fulfillment of the promises they made. It was noticed in parts of western UP, across the spectrum unsuitable persons were put up in some constituencies. Voters ended up pressing the Nota button in disgust. It is more so as polls are no more a matter of free choice.



The nexus between votes and cash has been uncovered by
NOTA will strengthen internal democracy.
Shivaji Sarkar



During the late 2018 assembly, it was said, that some parties opened money bags to “help” voters. In some constituencies, it was said, each vote cost Rs 5,000 or more in cash.

The EC cancelled polling in Vellore LS seat in Tamilnadu after detecting “systematic design to influence voters through large-scale distribution of cash. It would severely jeopardize the conduct of free and fair election”. The EC wrote to President on April 16.

In 2016, assembly polls in two constituencies, Thanjavur and Aravakurichi, in TN were cancelled for the same reason.

Despite demonetization, which was supposed to have eliminated black money, the seizure of cash during polls is on the rise. In Vellore alone over Rs 11.48 crore packed in plastic bags, with ward-wise details, was seized from a DMK functionary.

The TN, where Rs 552.23 crore in gold, silver, cash and other valuable items has been seized, is not an exception. Cash, drugs and liquor valued at over Rs 2500 crore have been seized across the country since the beginning of the Lok Sabha poll process till April 15, 2019. It is stated to be double that of 2014 polls.

Gujarat recorded the maximum seizure valued at Rs 509 crore. A seizure of liquor off the state's coast is estimated at Rs 500 crore. The figures for Andhra Pradesh are Rs 158.61 crore, Punjab Rs 144.39 crore, Nagaland Rs 92.26 crore in cash 62000 litres of liquor – total of Rs 3.02 crore and UP Rs 135.13 crore. The figures from other states are trickling in.

According to an estimate EC seizures are estimated at Rs 100

Despite demonetization, which was supposed to have eliminated black money, the seizure of cash during polls is on the rise.

crore a day. It also shows that across the states, those contesting the polls come with good financial support be it the family of HD Deve Gowda or various other candidates from Congress and BJP. Even smaller parties like Trinamool Congress are no exception. It hints at cash playing key role in the polls. Can poor man really contest elections unless he creates a clout?

Some candidates are not seen to be so affluent. But they have support of the parties. So where does the parties get their funding. According to National Election Watch, 8.9 percent of the income of parties is from unknown sources, 2.16 percent from the electoral bonds. The Congress earns 82 percent from unknown sources and the BJP 73 percent. They say these are through voluntary contributions or sale of coupons.

Data show that six electoral trusts donated about Rs 105 crore to national parties between 2005 and 2012 before transparency guidelines were introduced in 2014 mandating disclosure of donors.

From 2014 and 2017, nine registered electoral trusts donated a total Rs 637.54 crore to political parties. The contribution to political parties rose from Rs 85 crore in 2014 to Rs 325.27 crore in 2017.

The BJP was the most beneficiary. About Rs 10 crore went to

the cash-strapped Congress and Rs 5 crore to Odisha's Biju Janata Dal and other parties including Shiromani Akali Dal, Samajwadi, AAP and Rashtriya Lok Dal. Thus fund raising is a difficult issue. It helps the ruling or larger parties at the Centre and states. Congress had benefitted earlier and now the BJP is having an advantage.

Money plays crucial role. The corporate-type functioning of the parties, tight-fisted approach of the leaders, reminiscent of the Indira Gandhi era, raise many questions.

If money flows in, external influence is natural. Are the parties really having a democratic functioning though all say they adhere to it? In 1990s, Congressmen raised it and demanded election of office-bearers through ballot. Party spokesman VN Gadgil then said that an all-India party needed an EC type organisation to hold polls and it was expensive.

The grip of the ‘high command’ increased since then. All parties love the autocratic structure. Smaller it is, more is the stranglehold. Lobbies penetrate these as one or the other has importance in different regions.

This mocks internal democracy. So buying votes as has been alleged in Supreme Court now is the custom to save huge investments. A change in government can make or mar companies. Since all are beneficiaries, none raises the “political” issue.

Deep cleansing of the system is needed. Stock sensex may be a ruse for covering up political malfunctioning. Neta is possibly exposing the unholy nexus. That's the vibrancy of democracy. EC has taken the right step in Vellore, now it needs to popularise Neta. □□

Poverty of Dynast Politics

India is known for dynast politicians and their dynast political parties. Their 'politics of poverty' for last 70 or more years is also widely known as these dynast politicians and their dynast Political parties, irrespective of their declared political ideologies, have failed to keep up their promise to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Indian commons now seem fed up with this 'politics of poverty' as this has not resulted in eradication of Indian poverty though enriched dynast politicians, their families and their close friends. Indian dynast politicians and Indian dynast political parties also seem frustrated for every of their efforts failed to address this problem of Indian poverty and unemployment. And therefore, India is seeing an era of 'poverty of politics' where dynast politicians and their dynast Political parties are manically announcing measures that are not originated from economic policies but from whims and fancies of their leaders. Many of these measures are not economically feasible and are not socially desirable. The example is of Congress manifesto where congress promised a huge money transfer to poor. True, this is the election time and what politicians talk need not be taken seriously. However, poverty of dynast politics needs some attention.

Failing 'Politics of poverty'

The origin of Indian poverty and unemployment problems can be traced in colonial India and in colonial policies that destroyed Indian stable and sustainable village economic system. These problems were very well visible during British Raj and gave foundation for Indian freedom struggle. Indian politicians immediately after independence thought of addressing this problem and accepted the public sector led economic growth model. This model created substantial employment and tried to boost Industrial sector so to expand urban economy. However, the



Pro-poor slogans by Indian dynasty politicians have not helped poor farmers nor MSP has alleviated rural unemployment.
Anil Javalekar



cost of this model was borne by Indian agriculture and rural sector aggravating the poverty and unemployment problems in rural India. This model finally collapsed in 1970s and then their dynast politicians thought of dealing with poverty and unemployment independently with some direct action. This came in the form of a slogan 'Garibi Hatao'. Banks were nationalized and loans were freely disbursed so to create self-employment. IRDP was the name. Failure of public sector and failure of IRDP apart from government interventions in every aspect of socio-economic life of citizens led to heavy corruption and excessive inefficiency in all the sectors of economy leading ultimately to a collapse. The result: The Poverty and unemployment problems stood in aggravated form. The 1990s saw economic reforms for globalization of Indian economy. Globalization was nothing but dismantling of the public sector and opening of economy to private sector mainly to corporate and MNCs. As is known, private sector was not interested in social services or solving Indian poverty and unemployment problems. Automation helped them to reduce employment and profit helped them to control Indian dynast polity. Indian economy thus started serving corporate and MNCs and ignored Indian poor and unemployed. This made the poverty and unemployment problem aggravate further. In between, green revolution came and helped solve the food problem. Food production surpassed the requirement but failed to help farmers to prosper. Small and marginal farmers though paid the cost of green revolution gained

nothing. Dynast talked about raising MSP (minimum Support Price) to the level more than the cost but never thought of its actual implementation. Farmers are now being promised direct cash benefits. This has not solved the poverty and unemployment problem of India. Thus, the failed 'poverty of politics' with all types of slogans and all types of efforts through economic policies has caused frustration among Indian dynast politicians.

Frustration of Indian dynast politicians

Firstly, Indian dynast Politicians and their owned political parties ruled this country after independence for a considerable period and framed all the economic policies so far. They are now frustrated because Indian democracy has matured and people no more follow dynasts blindly. Their economic policies enriched only dynasts and their governance served ruling elite and their kith and kin and worked to protect their interest. Dynast politicians fear the loss of power more and thus frustrated.

Secondly, Indian dynast politicians are now unable to fool people of India. Till recently, these dynast politicians were sure of fooling upper caste Hindus by becoming 'jenuadhari' during elections, sure of fooling lower caste Hindus by visiting their temples and throwing flower garlands at them and were sure of fooling Indian Muslims by posing their savior. This fooling is becoming more and more difficult and frustrating dynast politicians.

Thirdly, Dynast politicians believed in one theory that Indian majority community 'Hindu' will

never unite and will not vote unitedly; Another community of Muslims will never vote to Nationalist forces and poor will always be attracted to slogans like 'Garibi Hatao' or free food or free cash payments. Rise of BJP proved that this theory is wrong and that has frustrated dynast politicians.

Fourthly, Dynast Politicians believed that certain welfare schemes will help eradicate poverty and unemployment problem. These policies were in the form of money transfer and dig and fill employment generation. Half-hearted implementation, corruption and inefficiency of governance failed these policies and became a fourth cause of frustration.

Fifthly, Indian dynast politicians and their political supporters presumed that the idea of nationalism will die down as people will be more worldly and will merge their identities with global identity. They believed that nationalist parties like BJP will never get ground support. However, BJP emerged strong with rise of nationalism world over. Frustration of feudal dynast politicians was therefore natural.

Frustration is resulting in fake promises and false narratives

Frustration of Indian dynast politicians and dynast political parties is now resulting in fake promises and spreading of false narratives. Dynast Politicians, their supportive journalists and pseudo intellectuals coordinatively doing it. Their fake promises include direct money transfer to poor, loan waivers for farmers, government jobs to unemployed and citizenry rights to immigrants. False narratives in-

clude spreading of the idea of safe from terrorism so to get minority community votes, doubting the brave Indian military response to terrorism, spreading false conflicts of Indian majoritarian society, questioning Indian majoritarian faiths and beliefs and proving them discriminatory, questioning neutrality of Indian top institutions like Supreme court and election commission and spreading the narrative that Indian democracy is failing. The modus operandi is simple: Dynast politicians blame BJP and RSS for everything that is bad in society forgetting that they ruled this country for long time and all problems are their gift to nation; Indian journalists pick and choose BJP politicians and quote or misquote them without reference and context so to help dynast politicians and Indian pseudo intellectuals debate with quotes and misquotes of

Indian politicians and draw a convenient narrative to confuse Indian commons.

This is a poverty of dynast politics

Rise of BJP and Modi's politics of good governance seems a real problem for most dynast politicians as it threatens their politics of utility governance. And this is leading to a worst crisis of Indian politics. Indian dynast politics is for power and plays negative politics. As there is no vision or ideas for future, dynast debates individuals and removal of elected government by any means and as there is no confidence of economic policies, there is a talk of doles and deals. This politics see hope only in social disintegration of Indian majority community and believe in using social conflicts for political purpose. Indian dynast started with

'Politics of poverty' but ended in 'poverty of politics'.

Indian commons need to vote decisively

Indian commons need to awake and rise to vote to throw dynast politicians and dynast political parties for that alone will ensure survival of Indian democracy and ensure their right to live with social justice. Indian commons need to support nationalism and nationalist political outfit for that alone will help India survive in the world of competing nations. Indian commons need to understand divisive designs behind false narratives and fake stories spread by Indian pseudo intellectuals and pseudo journalists for that alone will help national integration of Indian communities. Indian commons therefore need to vote and vote decisively. □□

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Does UBI a Panacea for Economic Inequality and Employment?



“No power on earth can stop the idea whose time has come.” Victor Hugo, a French poet, made this remark in one of his outstanding writings in the late 17th century, manifested in multiple disciplines and used by political rhetoric across the globe to circumscribe the power of an emerging idea. India, being part of the globalized world and emerging as a growing large economy, the relevance of Hugo’s words has a strong foothold. The notion of universal basic income is raising ground internationally. It has propagated by different political ideologies as well as opponents of the free market economy. The idea is simple: the government should pay every cit-

izen a fixed amount of money on a regular basis irrespective of any condition as such. This gives tremendous onus to the government to deliver it not in full measure but substantially. Universality, unconditionally and agency are the three basics of UBI in India as suggested in the Economic Survey of 2016-17. It is a form of social security which helps in reducing inequality and eliminating poverty.

UBI Challenges

For providing a basic minimum income to its people is a long thought idea which requires both fiscal prudence, monetary discipline and good governance along with well-implemented machinery. For a country like India, this becomes even more challenging and cumbersome. The foremost challenge is to first identify the legitimate beneficiaries for the payment and then to transfer the stipulated amount impartially to them. Since it cannot be delivered to the people who are sharing the larger part of the economic pie. Meeting the demands of millions of unemployed people, extremely poor, tribal and vulnerable sections of the society and others is not an easy exercise. In the process of identification of beneficiaries, it may lead to huge corruption in the country, poor and vulnerable people will be sufferers in this process. Moreover, UBI alone can’t be a panacea to the idiosyncrasy of the market forces. It is surely not possible in bridging the gap of income inequality, regional imbalances, creation of employment and fulfilling aspirations of the young minds through the implementation of UBI and also it can’t be a substitute for universal health and free and quality education.

Additionally, the examination of the stipulated amount is also required to be taken into account. The experiences of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Odisha show a gloomy picture in this regard. The trend of consumption on food articles and vegetables has shown a downside over a period of time. Instead, conspicuous expenditure on bad goods like alcohol and other harmful substances has spurred in the same time period. Its spill over effects on health and family are well known. According to the Organisation of Economic Coopera-



Universal basic minimum income for people needs fiscal prudence, monetary discipline and good governance and well implemented machinery.

**Dr. S. Lingamurthy
& Harshit Gupta**

tion and Development (OECD) report released in May 2015 alcoholism has increased by about 55 percent during 1992 and 2012. Similarly, Telangana State government revenue has been increased 52 percent over the last three years owing to heavy consumption of liquor and alcohol. Alcohol-related deaths and deaths caused by diseases due to alcoholism has increased to 3.3 million in 2012 which amounts to 5.9 percent of the global death that year. It is quickly raising concerns among the youths of the country. Thus, the challenge of the utilization of the money given is equally vital as it has socio-cultural ramifications.

Despite having a long term plan, the possibility of gradualism and Meta opportunism could intensify the inefficiencies. Keeping in mind the psychological factor coupled with the moral hazard associated with labor supply might also raise eyebrows. The economic survey of 2017-18 has made a strong attempt to highlight the 'eventual goal' for a well-planned UBI. They argued, and rightly so, that instead of providing an UBI in addition to current schemes, it may be useful to start off by offering UBI as a choice to beneficiaries of existing programs. It can not only add to the standard of living of the beneficiaries but also create an effective framework with fewer leakages and more transparent governance. This would be administratively cumbersome as it might give an opportunity for corrupt players.

Global Experience

No country so far has done a full-fledged Universal basic income. There have been pilot studies in various countries including India. The well-intended objec-

tives of targeted minimum income claimed many global experiences. Firstly, for major oil economies, originally this idea was first proposed by Nigeria and Iraq to address natural resource curse like more corruption, fewer exports not generation of taxes. To overcome these pathologies they gave the money to the people earned through oil trade straightway. Subsequently, other players like Iran also joined in by replacing all other subsidies (subject to various factors like fluctuations in the oil prices, number of budgetary reasons) with a direct cash transfer, an unusual step. Secondly, the place where this discussion is actually very now alive is in advanced economies. The motivation factor in these countries is very different and interesting. The motivation essentially is that they fear a future in which technology and robots will replace people so that employees become very difficult therefore decouple income from employment by giving everyone a basic income and then the aspect of employment can be addressed separately. Thirdly, in low-income countries; especially Sub-Saharan Africa, a big experiment in taking place Kenya, where Give Directly, an organization, funded by donors, has adopted a number of villages and giving money to everyone while monitoring the impact of this exercise over time. The amount roughly is \$30 million for 10 to 15 years.

But the problem with the aforementioned experiences are that they all are pilot studies and not completely implemented on ground experiences. Remember, the problem lies is very pragmatic as when any pilot study is conducted, by definition, there is no ques-

tion of the phase-out (in Kenya, if donors are ready to give money, one can give it and see what happens). Thus it can work in India only if we focus on the fundamentals (fiscal affordability, reducing some schemes, etc.) and do our homework well. It would be a good lesson for us if some states in India do this across the states and then we can get some learning from that.

How far can we go?

In principle, if we want to make UBI affordable, UBI will have to replace some of the social welfare schemes otherwise that would be very expensive for a country like India. Provided the fiscal space, if implemented in its original form, it might cost up to 4-5 % of the GDP to cover 70% of the population by providing Rs. 650 per person per month, according to one estimate.

Given the Indian structure of union state finance relations and its socio-economic framework, UBI is not free from anxieties which might convert into vulnerabilities which require to be addressed if we want to move ahead with UBI. It is argued that India slowly building a safety net in the form of PDS, MNREGS, etc. but UBI might undermine it. Additionally, UBI will expose the poor to market risks associated with food, kerosene, fertilizer, etc. Above all, it is felt that UBI might reduce pressures on states to provide essential services such as health and education. Moreover, the expected inflationary impacts due to the transfer of money, and its effects on agriculture, small industries, and non-farm labor force will be well established. The employment generation in these sectors will be washed-out due to inflation and a hike in wage

rates. Therefore, UBI will be a curse to the creation of employment and aspirations of young force will be a huge dilemma.

Some studies have shown the trend of inflationary pressure due to UBI on agriculture in long term policy implication. It has suggested liquidity pressure in the banking system does not arise thus, the expected impact on inflation could be eliminated. Of course, its impact on the demand-supply side has to be closely examined. As far as agriculture and the non-farm labor force is concerned, the existing welfare schemes, especially MGNREGA, has ensured the minimum work for the workers. Provided its leakages and large administrative costs, the anxiety that the rise in wages due to the rise in income in these sectors due to cash transfer is superficial. This is because the rise in wages is not induced by the total work done in a given time period rather the change is drawn by the 'transfer' of money. Thus the elasticity of wage rate would not be at par with its demand. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that a minimum guaranteed wage programme has spur the rural wages which have in turn affected the fundamentals of market forces. The choice between 'guaranteed the income' and 'guaranteed the work' is critical as its repercussions are long lasting and impactful. It is also true for the fact that in the backdrop of well- functioned UBI if operated, future monetary and fiscal policies will be formulated. Thus the larger question of efficient governance mechanism with a focus on achieving redistributive objectives is pre-requisite.

There is another element of the psychological impact of get-

ting a minimum basic income by doing nothing at all. If we target the poor in general as beneficiaries of the scheme, then we also must try to closely investigate the economic lives of them. No one will dispute the fact that poor people have limited access to efficient markets and quality infrastructure. Lack of access to credit, more downside risks with agriculture, little specialization coupled with low consumption per capita is some of the factors, among others, which provide sheer inadequacy to sustain a healthy life which further can translate into effective decision making.

Due to the lack in labour supply, the moral hazard problem might generate in the economy with exposure to market risks where the choice lies between cash and food. The Indian economy has incorporated the notion of underprivileged and their behaviour in a very structured manner which need to be adequately modified. Munshi and Rosenzweig (2004) argued that lack of long term migration reflects the value of remaining close to one's social network, in a setting where the social network might be the only source of (informal) insurance available to people (Economic lives of the poor; Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2006). The whole idea of treating poor as 'agents' not as 'subjects' is thought-provoking.

Alternative way...

Implementation of basic income on the principle of universality may not be a good idea for an economy like India. Instead of universal basic access can be an alternate. The idea is to provide accessibility, affordability, and sustainability to the people which would increase their capability

which in turn would facilitate the behavioral approach. It's about giving powers back to the people. The universal and effective access to market, credit, health, education, sanitation among others in the basic necessity of the people. Any government should play the role of a facilitator to generate and maintain capabilities to the people and provide infrastructure to them. The challenge of global competition especially with the developed world could be answered more comprehensively by making people, institutions and governance more people oriented rather than populist temptation. The social and economic implications of UBI can be far-reaching which especially with regard to fiscal sustainability and capacity building which, if not addressed appropriately, might be detrimental to the Indian economy.

Implementation of universal access of credit, equipped infrastructure, technology, the upgraded skill could help in developing capabilities which in turn beneficial for enhancing the role of people in participatory democracy and making more self- reliance economic framework. The key is to show magnanimity by both the central and state governments to incentivize the masses by providing more socio-economic opportunities in its true spirit. Basic income, as an idea, is welcome but requires more specific study and long term planning to roll out. States can take the initiatives in this regard. The approach of the governments should be self- reliance of the people with having an eye on the sustainable fiscal framework with minimum slippage. □□

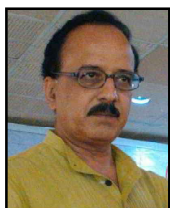
Dr. S. Lingamurthy, Assistant Professor, Department of Economic Studies and Planning, Central University of Karnataka & Mr. Harshit Gupta, Research Scholar, Department of Economic Studies and Planning, Central University of Karnataka.

Toiling to be heard

WHEN The Tribune reported on March 1 that nearly 47% of the country was in the grip of a severe drought, with at least 16 % falling in the category of 'extreme' or 'exceptional', and knowing that drought could further worsen farm distress, lead to increased migration from rural to urban areas, I thought the misery being encountered by roughly 500 million people or 40% of the population would shift the focus, even in an election year, to provide immediate relief measures.

My belief that the dominant narrative would change, with each party trying to outdo what the other promised, and perhaps move its cadre to the rural hinterland, providing a helping hand to the drought-affected, too, remained wishful thinking. To make it still worse, Skymet Weather Services, a private agency, has forecast a deficient monsoon ahead, and the Indian Meteorological Department has shown that the country has received 36% less rainfall between March 1 and March 28 compared with the long-term average. Another report by IndiaSpend points to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand, parts of Northeast, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan being the worst hit. 'In 31 reservoirs in the southern states, water availability stands at 25% of total capacity, which has gone down by 36 percentage points over five months from 61% of the capacity in November 2018.' There is more trouble ahead.

In another report, IndiaSpend speaks of the plight of the drought-hit Rayalaseema region of Andhra, comprising four districts of Anantapur, Kurnool, Chittoor and YSR Kadapa. The region has faced 15 droughts between 2000 and 2018. Quoting the district administration, the report says the region has faced nine consecutive years of drought. This year again, the drought continues. An estimated 7 lakh people moved out in 2018, looking for menial labour. Village after



Nothing but lip service for nearly half the country facing severe drought.

Devinder Sharma

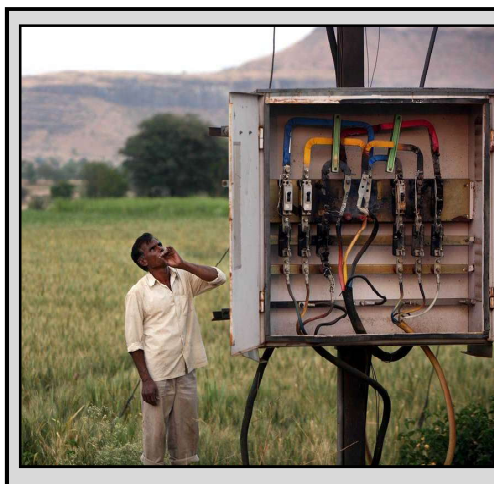


village is empty, with only the elders and children left behind by couples who have migrated. This year, there is hardly a field which doesn't look barren and abandoned.

Even in the drought-affected areas in Maharashtra, where the continuing agrarian crisis is expected to cast its shadow on the ensuing elections, news reports point to how the ruling party is trying to instead build up a campaign based on muscular nationalism, quietly bypassing the central issue of farm distress in the region. Opposition parties are, however, focusing on the neglect of the farm sector over the years. So much so, seeing that the real issues are being swept under the carpet, a farm widow, Vaishali Yede, has decided to take the battle to the ballot. She is contesting from Yavatmal-Washim constituency in eastern Maharashtra, a farm suicide-prone region. Her simple message is: 'Mahyavar laksh asudya ji' (keep me in your prayers and thoughts), ostensibly telling voters to remember the distressed farmers.

In Telangana, too, there are 170 farmers contesting against K Kavitha, daughter of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, a candidate from the Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency. Reports also say that 111 Tamil Nadu farmers, who had earlier campaigned in New Delhi, will be contesting against PM Modi from Varanasi. While the intent in both cases seems to be rather symbolic, it does, however, signify the anger sweeping the countryside.

At a time when farm incomes have plummeted to its lowest in the past 15 years and rural wage growth has seen a steep fall —



The cities have a 24-hour power supply, ask a farmer how many hours does he get electricity?

from 11.8% in 2013-15 to 0.45% in 2016-18, the National Sample Survey Office estimates say 3.2 crore casual rural workers lost their jobs between 2011-12 and 2017-18. Of these, 3 crore were farm labourers.

Despite the news and a few analyses, the dominant narrative has again shifted back. Agricultural crisis that took so long to emerge at the centre stage of the political debate has once again been relegated to the background. 'The effort to bring emotions (nationalism) in the elections will lead to all other issues going under the carpet. The farmers will continue to die,' says farmer leader Vijay Jawandhia from Maharashtra.

One reason why people in cities do not feel concerned, and that is why the prominent discourse remains impervious to the suffering in rural areas, is because of unequal development woven through the process of economic growth. To illustrate, why only water shortage, the problems that a crippling drought would normally bring are rarely felt in the cities. Simply because all efforts have been to build the cities and make them drought-proof over the years. Rivers flowing in rural areas

can go dry, the soil become parched and crops wither, but the development design ensures regular tap water supply in cities, or for at least a few hours during the day. While cities have a 24-hour power supply, ask a farmer how many hours does he get electricity?

A few hours away from Mumbai, life comes to a standstill. Go to Bangalore, it is rare that you can even get a distant feeling of a severe drought that prevails just a few kilometres outside of it. It is this kind of insinuation that keeps the urban population disconnected with its rural hinterland.

Why only blame the urban-centric media, which hardly has any roots in mofussil towns, even the academia and bureaucracy remain oblivious. When the urban elite and the middle class is least interested, it is futile to expect politicians to fill the gap. Unless each one of us, irrespective of political ideology, thinks of the farmer when talking of elections or when voting, farming will never swing political decision-making.

As the Prime Minister said in an interview, thinking of the farmer is nationalism too. □□

https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/toiling-to-be-heard/757590.html?tid=1wAR3dNIWp_4OGK1zJP0u6UqZAdK7Wd15-A7gkVrH12cG6m_A7HIKVVsgt3E

Busting several myths



The collapse of the Samjhauta Express bomb blasts case against anti-conversion crusader Aseemanand and his “co-conspirators”, Lokesh Sharma, Kamal Chauhan and Rajinder Chaudhary, on the March 21 Samjhauta Express Case, has trounced attempts by a previous regime to establish the bogey of “Hindu terror.” Aseemanand allegedly mentored people seeking revenge for attacks on Hindu temples (Akshardham, Gujarat; Raghunath Mandir, Jammu; and Sankat Mochan Mandir, Varanasi). The National Investigation Agency’s (NIA) failure to

present even an iota of evidence in the court has battered its reputation.

Aseemanand has already been acquitted in Hyderabad’s Mecca Masjid and Ajmer’s dargah blast cases. Living among tribals in Dangs, Gujarat, his ability to inspire terror attacks with trifling amounts like Rs 25,000 and Rs 40,000 seems laughable; no other sums are attributed to him.

The NIA case revolved around Sunil Joshi, who was murdered in December 2007 in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. As no credible corroborative evidence was forwarded, the case collapsed once Aseemanand withdrew his confession, claiming it was coerced. As his plea of innocence before one judge clashed with his confession before another judge, special judge Jagdeep Singh upheld the forced confession plea. The shoddy probe thus helped those behind the killing of 68 people on the night of February 18-19, 2007, to get away scot-free.

Interestingly, the US Department of the Treasury informed the 1267 committee of the UN Security Council that Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) was behind the attacks and that Fazeel-A-Tul Shaykh Abu Mohammed Ameen Al-Peshawari; Arif Qasmani; Mohammed Yahya Mujahid; and Nasir Javaid had carried out train bombings in India. The 1267 committee stated on June 29, 2008, that these people were financed by proclaimed offender Dawood Ibrahim. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered an FIR and Safdar Nagori of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) admitted in October 2008 that the Samjhauta blasts were executed by SIMI activists with the help from LeT from Pakistan. The judge observed that the NIA did not follow these leads. Survivors reported that some people had got off the train midway but this line of investigation was totally neglected.

In 2010-11, the investigators began to pursue the “Hindu terrorists” theory. Aseemanand “confessed” in January 2011 that on February 16, 2007, he met Sunil



The NIA’s failure to present even an iota of evidence in the court in the Samjhauta Express blasts case has battered its reputation. There is no proof of funding either.
Sandhya Jain

Joshi and Bharat Rateshwar at Balpur and was told to expect some “good news”; Joshi later told him that his (Joshi’s) men were behind Samjhauta and other incidents. Even prima facie, this does not suggest Aseemanand’s involvement in any conspiracy.

In NIA vs. Naba Kumar Sarkar @ Swami Aseemanand and others, Aseemanand denied confessing any crime to convict Abdul Khaleem in Chanchalguda Jail, Hyderabad. The judgement agreed that this was unlikely as Aseemanand was in solitary confinement. It noted that while the “confession” said Indresh Kumar, Pragya Thakur, Bharat Rateshwar and others also attended meetings (denied by them), the NIA had not charged them as co-accused.

According to the retracted confession, in March 2006, Sunil Joshi met Aseemanand at Shabridham and asked for money to purchase a SIM card and pistol from Jharkhand and received Rs 25,000. However, the NIA failed to prove that the SIM card or pistol was used to execute the Samjhauta Express blast. Besides, as the judgement observed, no material evidence was recovered from places associated with the alleged conspiracy, namely, Thakurghar, Shabridham and Balpur Mandir; instead the NIA took Aseemanand to unrelated places like Daman.

The prosecution claimed that Lokesh Sharma, Rajinder Chaudhary, Kamal Chauhan and Amit Hakla came to Old Delhi Railway Station from Indore on February 18, 2007, and stayed in railway dormitories but offered no evidence in this regard. There was no evidence (train tickets/reservations or other records) to establish

The NIA failed to prove that the SIM card or pistol was used to execute the Samjhauta Express blast.

that the accused people travelled from Indore to Nizamuddin station and then to Old Delhi Railway Station. Similarly, they allegedly escaped to Jaipur by train and then travelled to Indore by bus; but no evidence was furnished to support their journey.

The prosecution claimed that the bombs were transported in two suitcases, whose covers were stitched by tailor Iqbal Hussain of Kothari Market, Indore. Suitcase covers of two unexploded bombs were recovered from the crime scene. However, the NIA did not bother to conduct a Test Identification Parade (TIP) to establish if any of the accused people had got the covers stitched at the said shop. More glaringly, the report of the finger print expert was not matched with the fingerprints of the suspects or accused people to get vital clues.

The prosecution claimed that the accused people were trained in Bagli Forest area in 2006. Sand samples from the alleged site were reportedly taken in December 2012 from a pit created at the time of training. The judgement observed that it was highly improbable that any pit would remain in the same condition after more than six years, especially when the site was a hill slope; soil erosion and weather wear and tear would change the

complexion of the site.

More pertinently, scientific literature states that after six months, RDX turns into Nitrite; after the explosion, RDX would turn into carbon in the shape of ash. Hence, the prosecution’s claim of finding “traces of RDX” in the alleged sand samples collected from Bagli Forest area suggests that the investigating agency “went whole hog in order to create fake evidence to ensure false implication of the accused ... by any means, whether scientific or not and that, too, with a totally irrelevant piece of evidence”. Lt Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit is accused of providing the RDX in this and other “Hindu terror” cases; this verdict may help him.

Thus, after five years of investigations and seven years of trial, the NIA failed to furnish any evidence regarding any agreement to commit the crime among the accused people. There was “no concrete oral, documentary or scientific evidence” regarding motive to indulge in the crime; nothing to show how and from where raw materials for making bombs were procured; who collected the material; who assembled the bombs; how and from where technical know-how was arranged; who planted the bombs in the train.

Above all, there is no evidence regarding the funding of this gigantic exercise. The NIA built its edifice on extracted confessions revolving around the culpability of the deceased Sunil Joshi. Little wonder the judge bemoaned the “gaping holes in the prosecution evidence”; this is a blistering indictment of the NIA. □□

(The writer is Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; the views expressed are personal)
<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/columnists/busting-several-myths.html>

Public funding of elections

The role of money—whether black or white—in elections cannot be eliminated. But it certainly can be reduced. The makers of our Constitution were aware of this issue. Therefore, they provided that the Election Commission would be independent of the Government. Our law also places an upper limit on the expenditures that can be done by the candidates. However, these provisions have proven woefully inadequate.

The ability of a voter to use discrimination in casting his vote is predicated on the availability of information. This information is supplied by the media. Thus, a wealthy candidate can persuade the media to provide one-sided news to the voters and lead them into voting for a particular candidate. It is necessary to break this stranglehold of money on our electoral process to protect our much cherished democracy.

This could be done by encouraging honest and public spirited persons to contest elections. Presently, they are shy of contesting because they cannot withstand the might of money and misinformation. One way of bringing them into politics that has been tried in many countries is to provide public funds to candidates. Since 1984, Australia has used a system of public funding of federal elections. Political parties and candidates are reimbursed for their election expenses in proportion to the votes they secure, provided they poll at least 4 percent of the votes cast. States in the United States have put in place various types of public funding. Arizona and Maine require candidates to raise about United States Dollars (USD) 1000 from 200 persons contributing USD 5 per person in order to qualify. The candidates qualify to receive a grant of about USD 25,000 after having raised this qualifying money. Hawaii and Minnesota require candidates to raise USD 1500 from minimum 15 persons contributing USD 100 or less each in



The examples of public funding of elections in Australia and same parts of USA have been found to have positive impact.

Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala



order to qualify. Wisconsin requires them to raise USD 1750 from contributions of USD 100 or less. These qualifying requirements ensure that frivolous candidates are kept out. The subsequent grant enables them to enter the electoral fray in some seriousness.

These public funding programs have been found to have positive impact. A study by University of Wisconsin has listed their impacts. One, public funding programs increase the pool of candidates willing and able to run for state legislative office. Many who did not think of contesting elections have entered the contest. Two, public funding increases the likelihood that a candidate seeking reelection will not be elected uncontested. Weak candidates are hesitant to enter the fray if they have to put up their own money. They are more willing to contest if they get public funding. Entry of these “weak” candidates led to reduction in the numbers of incumbents who got elected uncontested. Three, public funding has reduced the numbers of candidates getting reelected in Arizona and Maine, although the effects are marginal. This happened because the number of contestants increased and new issues were raised. The study concludes that public funding programs increase the competitiveness of state legislative elections.

Another study by Duke University says that public funding has fostered competition and created a more democratic process. People who would never have thought of contesting elections have gotten into the fray. Many potential candidates were turned off by the idea of having to ask friends for mon-

ey or did not have the connections necessary to raise enough money to be competitive. Such persons have been encouraged to contest because they can be reimbursed from public funds. Thus, public funding has diversified the field of candidates. This had led to issues closer to the voters being raised in the elections. I understand that more than 100 countries provide some form of public funding to the candidates today.

The funding programs generally provide equal funds to the strong and weak candidates. For example, in Australia every candidate gets reimbursed in ratio of the votes cast for him. Thus the strong and winning candidate gets more money than the weak and losing candidate. Yet, the amount of public money received by the strong candidate would be a small fraction of the total money spent by him; while the amount of public money received by the weak candidate would be a large fraction of the total money spent by him. Thus public money provides oxygen to the weak candidates and helps strengthen democratic processes.

The idea of state funding has been mooted repeatedly in our country as well. According to a report by Vivake available on the net, the Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) endorsed public funding of elections in order to establish a fair playing field for parties with less money. However, the Committee recommended that public funds should be given only to national and state parties allotted a symbol and not to independent candidates. Secondly, it said that public funding should be given in kind, in the form of certain facilities such as

time on national TV to the recognized political parties and not in cash. The Law Commission of India Report of 1999 concluded that total public funding of elections is desirable so long as political parties are prohibited from taking funds from other sources. The “Ethics in Governance” report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission of 2008 also recommended partial public funding of elections for the purpose of reducing “illegitimate and unnecessary funding” of elections expenses. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, 2001 concurred with the 1999 Law Commission report that the appropriate framework for regulation of political parties would need to be implemented before public funding is considered. More recently in November 2016 in the aftermath of demonetization, while addressing an all-party meeting before the Winter Session of the Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi broached the possibility of public funding of elections in India.

The new government must put in motion the process of public funding. Perhaps the problem is that established parties are not comfortable with this idea. They prefer to deal with a known enemy in the opposition rather than an unknown enemy from among the public. This may be the reason that the proposal has been lying in cold storage despite many Committees having recommended the same. One can only hope that our leaders will rise above their personal interests and implement public funding so that financially weak persons are encouraged to contest the elections. □□

WTO and e-Commerce: India's stance

Recently, China has agreed to be part of the ongoing negotiations on E-commerce at WTO. China has joined the list of countries like United States, EU among the other countries negotiating new rules for E-Commerce. China had till then restricted the talks on E-Commerce rules being discussed in the WTO. With China agreeing, the member countries negotiating E-Commerce proposals become 76 and account for 90% of Global Trade¹. At the last Ministerial conference, WTO members couldn't consolidate on some 25 proposals on e-Commerce. The WTO has faced its main opposition from India and South Africa. India has maintained that WTO should finish the Doha round of talks before venturing into new areas. What are e-Commerce proposals being discussed in the WTO? And , What should be India's stance towards the E-Commerce proposals?

WTO E-Commerce Proposal

When WTO came into existence, e-Commerce was not a phenomena in world economy. Therefore, when the e-Commerce came much later in 1998, the ministers at the WTO started a 'work programme' on global e-Commerce in general council of WTO. Twenty years later and after several rounds of negotiations, work programme still continues and negotiations have still been going on. The delay is attributable to the fact that e-Commerce involves a wide range of issues such as customs, market access, cross border data-flows and also for the fact that negotiations involve various trade bodies such as Council for Trade in Services, Council for Trade in Goods, TRIPS Council and Committee for Trade & Development. The following are the various E-Commerce issues being discussed in work programme.

Although the following issues have been part of discussion points, consensus on these has not been reached so far. Apart from these, data localisation,



WTO should focus on addressing the current issues rather than starting new negotiations.

Harshwardhan



Trade Bodies ²	Issues
Council for Trade in goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Market access for and access to products related to Ecommerce Issues relating to quality standards * Customs valuation issues * Rules of origin * Classification issues * Customs duties, other duties and charges * Import licensing issues
Council for trade in services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Scope (incl. modes of supply)* Protection of privacy and public morals and prevention of fraud * Most favoured nation treatment * Transparency * Market access commitments * Customs duties * Competition issue
TRIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Protection and enforcement of copyright and related rights * Protection and enforcement of trademarks* New technologies and access to technology
Trade and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Effects on trade and prospects of developing countries; especially on SME's Financial implications

restriction on cross border data flows and forced technology transfer which are an impediment to e-Commerce are also being considered.

India's E-Commerce policy

India has made considerable strides in E-Commerce Policy making. Recently, India has successfully implemented the guidelines of Press Note 2 of 2018. The guidelines have been applicable from February 1st, 2019. The main objective has been to protect the interests of small traders and MSMEs who have been exploited by the predatory pricing and price distorting discounts of the E-Commerce giants. E-Commerce policy makes a clear distinction between marketplace model and inventory-based model. While in the inventory-based model companies can own the inventory of goods and services, marketplace is just a platform to act as facilitator between buyer and seller. While 100% FDI is permitted through the automatic route in marketplace model, FDI is not permitted in inventory-based model. Further, the policy has made it clear that under the mar-

ket place model the companies cannot hold stake in the seller entities. This is in contrast to the policy where e-Commerce giants like Amazon have their own self-grown brands and own the inventory. The e-Commerce policy has been well appreciated among the small traders and MSME who now believe governments vision in this sector.

India's stance on E-Commerce Policy

The draft e-Commerce policy states that India has thus far not yet been the party to the negotiations on e-Commerce. India has been maintaining that developing countries need policy space in aspects related to E-Commerce. "E-commerce rule-making won't be done at WTO, we will make sure

there are no monopolies," said Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu.³ India cited a huge potential in sunrise sectors such as cloud computing, data storage and also facets related to hosting servers and big data. The draft policy being prepared by the commerce ministry has said "if these attempts were to succeed, developing countries would be left with little flexibility to nurture domestic digital economy.

"E-commerce rule-making won't be done at WTO, we will make sure there are no monopolies," – Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu.

A key issue where India is at loggerheads with the WTO is regarding the classification of digitalised products. India along with South Africa has raised issue of "impact of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions", which is part of the Work Programme on E-Commerce. Apart from the well-known service sectors where digital technology is being used such as IT, financial and business services and health services, there has been increased use of digital technology in manufacturing industry. The digitalised manufacturing products are called digital products⁴. "The digital products therefore are divided into 3 categories –

1. tangible goods which are ordered through internet which come under the gambit of GATT
2. electronically transmitted products which were earlier deliverable as tangible goods but now delivered through internet. Such products are called electronically transmitted products – ET products.
3. remote additive manufacturing

The ecommerce policy has been well appreciated among the small traders and MSME who now believe governments vision in this sector.

(AM) manufacturing process which operate by applying consecutive layers of specific materials onto a flat surface until those layers form a 3D product. Simply put AM is a technique which enables creation of complex 3D products.

While the category (a) has been under framework of GATT and e-services have been clearly been part of GATS, classifying ET and AM products is going to be huge challenge. For example: hard-bound book or compact disk (CD) is subject to customs duties but not e-book of the same hard-bound book. A wide range of once such tangible goods such as music, video games, movies, software are now traded digitally. In 1998 WTO member have agreed for moratorium on customs on Electronic transmission which from then on is being postponed biennially. In regard to this, countries such as US, Singapore and Korea have asked for temporary moratorium on customs union to be permanent. The issue assumes significance since recently India and South Africa have asked WTO as to why customs should not be levied on electronic transmission as more products traded in physical form are getting digitised and delivered through electronic transmission which would result in higher revenue loss.⁵ A recent estimate of World bank report suggests that a Indian imports of digital products would increase \$50 million each year if the temporary moratorium would be made permanent⁶.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, if India would have been a manufacturing hub, we would in fact reap the ben-

efits of joining the negotiations of e-Commerce proposals. But the manufacturing to GDP ratio is at abysmally low levels which is around 15%. In comparison, China has a manufacturing to GDP ratio of 33%. In current scenario, we would not only be net importers but also a market for dumping goods in India. India may lose any flexibility in terms of protecting the domestic industry through domestic policy. Therefore, if India signs the E-Commerce joint statement, it will be a death knell on SMEs and big dent to 'Make in India' initiative.

The reason for growing protectionism is due to the fact that multilateral trading systems like WTO were not able to address basic issues such as unemployment

and inequality. E-Commerce negotiations will have far reaching implications doing greater harm than good. Therefore, for WTO to be relevant, it should focus on addressing the current issues rather than starting new negotiations. □□

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Educational Reforms by Modi Government

An education system is the backbone of a nation. It is like a factory which churns out professionals e.g. doctors, engineers, teachers, etc. required for the smooth functioning of the country in different spheres. If the foundation of education system is weak, then the economy and security of the nation will be endangered.

In 2017, the Modi government abolished CCE system and introduced compulsory Board exams for Class 10th and 12th. There had been few unfortunate incidents of paper leakage in CBSE Board exams in 2018. The class X maths paper was leaked and the class XII economics paper had to be held again. To plug the loop holes of paper leakage before exams, CBSE has recently adopted many stringent measures such as –

1. Re-introduction of multiple sets of question paper
2. QR code for each set of question paper
3. Different question papers for different regions
4. Encrypted papers as backup
5. Tracking of superintendants carrying paper to the centres
6. Ban on late entry of students in exam rooms

These are laudable steps taken by CBSE to upgrade the quality of education which had deteriorated under CCE scheme.

The BJP government deserves a pat on the back for bringing about these revolutionary reforms which have helped strengthen the education system of our country. — **Varuna Kochar**

Future students or Bonded labor - An idea which needs to be arrested at its infancy

We are living in a boundary less world. There are many situations when this boundary less world creates epidemic and hence is a threat. In recent past, the suspects of Ebola virus had been quarantined at airport itself. So, it motivates us that the source of the disruptive idea needs to be detained at its infancy stage irrespective of its place of birth. Whether it is terrorism or trade or disease- if it has taken shape and entered the human system or civilization it affects everyone. Their modus operandi has a trend- (1) initially it is projected as a service to the people who are at the bottom of the pyramid, (2) it is democratic in character i.e. those who are interested can avail the facility or services, (3) slowly it kills substitutes of their product as well as other business models and aims to establish monopoly, and (4) finally it makes survival of non participants difficult- whether it be buyer or seller or end user. This article is about creating awareness of a destructive idea which has taken birth and needs critical analysis. It is related to the student community- the community responsible to mend ways of the future generation and human civilization.

The students are the future of the humanity, the future of the nation and the future of the family, apart from many other responsibilities. The education is becoming expensive and has provided space for financial products to sustain the education system - sometimes as a business and sometimes as an investment, and sometimes as a support. The student loan program is a banking business and banks compete among them to sell education loan to prospective student. These loans are a form of debt and the student's payback once they start earning. This runs the banking business of facilitating student's loan. The other channel is need based scholarship and merit based scholarship. The need based scholarship is



The practice of students' loan to finance their higher education keeps them in perpetual bondage.
Alok Singh



provided to deserving students based on their family income and the merit based scholarship is provided as an encouragement or reward to deserving students irrespective of their family income. There are many varieties of need based and merit based scholarship. It can be promoted by government or by institute or by society or by corporate or by others. All the existing form of support to students who are struggling to finance their studies is based on idea of debt or idea of social support or idea of incentivizing to work in a particular field of study. But recently an idea has taken birth which in extreme case -is as deadly as pushing the student community into- slavery. Slaves do not decide what to do, rather their master dictates what to do, when to do and how to do.

The story of a college graduate who sold her future earnings to her investors was published by a financial news company named Bloomberg /Quint on 9 April 2019. She studied at Purdue University. This university is a public research university in West Lafayette, Indiana, United States of America. The investor paid part of her education expense and in return wants her to pay back proportion of her monthly salary to her investor for certain period of time. If she is unemployed she pays nothing but if she is highly paid employee or highly earning individual then she will have to pay back in that proportion. At first glance the business model seems to be student friendly, but there has been occasions when people friendly business models has later given ways to monopolistic and greed driven businesses.

***The students
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stock by its investor
have in fact sold
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to their investor.***

The idea is to deem students as stocks - just like the stocks which are traded in stock exchanges. The owners of the stocks decide what to do with the earnings. The majority shareholders runs the show- whether to pay dividends or whether to invest or whatever to do next. In the current scenario the whole stock is owned by a single entity, if there is a single investor for a single student. There is scope of many other varieties, like- multiple owners to multiple students or multiple owners to single students. There are ways for stocks to change ownership, and this idea can give birth to ownership change of students. The other financial engineering tools like hedging, insurance, options, long, short, and many other standardized or customized products can also be imagined. If it can be imagined then the implementation of this idea creates path for other financial engineering products to follow and replicate it worldwide. The students who are deemed to be a stock by its investor have in fact sold their future earnings to their investor. Now suppose that the investor has invested in a student during school days, then it's obvious that the investor will have a say in deciding the college education of the deemed stock/student, the investor will influence the choice of

colleges and choice of subjects or profession as the investor will always wish to maximize his returns. As per this idea all the risk is being owned by the investor and the student/stock is bearing no risk at all. If the deemed stock do not performs well and is unemployable then the investor will be compromising on his earnings. So by that logic it is justified that the investor have a say to influence the choice of life, choice of colleges or choice of subjects or choice of profession of the student. The health insurance company charges premium from customers if they do not maintain healthy life style. Same way the investor of such students will restrict the student's life.

In the older system, whenever a student takes loan, it's just a simple debt and the debtor is responsible to return as per the prescribed terms and conditions and there is no role of creditor to dictate new or additional terms to debtor. The creditor can't ask the students which college to go, what subjects to choose and what to do for livelihood. But as soon as the students are deemed to be stocks the whole liberty of choosing colleges, picking subjects, deciding what to do for livelihood is severely compromised. It's the responsibility of the citizens of the world and leadership to stop the promotion of idea of considering students to be a deemed stock or a deemed company. It's a type of bonded labor or bonded slavery and will pave way for other financial innovations to push student community into bonded labor for majority of years of their productive life. □□

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Medieval Hindu Bhakti Movement and Societal Integration

Bhakti transformation of the Hindu religion accomplished a great task. It integrated and incorporated all castes and classes of Indian society into an unified bond and gave us a cohesive identity. Hinduism underwent a great transformation during the medieval centuries (13th—17th centuries) the way some of the world religions flowered in the same period. Saints, philosophers and followers shifted their focus from a panel of Gods and Goddesses to one great Hindu God and his avatars. Specially the avatars of Vishnu; Krishna and Rama became very popular. The term Bhakti meant unilateral surrender to one's chosen God. This surrender was based on spiritual love, emotions, one to one direct communication and relation with God. Forms of religious expression changed. Devotional songs dedicated to Ishtadevata (one's personal God) became very popular and brought people of a locality and region together. This new popular cultural form, bhajans and Kirtan continue to be a strong religious and cultural tradition in our society. Saints and gurus, their songs and biographies soon became a new scripture. Because these Bhakti songs were written in vernacular. Hence, this literature gained not only popularity fast but also attained the status of a new scripture. Earlier theories that Bhakti possibly originated either in the north or the south under the impact of Islam have been debunked. The historical sources from South India clearly indicate that devotional bhakti poetry of Tamil Nadu precede the coming of Islam. Sufi influences were felt much later. The cult of Krishna and Rama can be traced back to the early Christian era. The philosophy of Bhagavad Gita is devoted to a devotional and surrender to a personal God. It is interesting to note that the epic figure of Krishna underwent significant changes in the Puranas. The focus shifted to the marvels of Krishna's birth-stories and



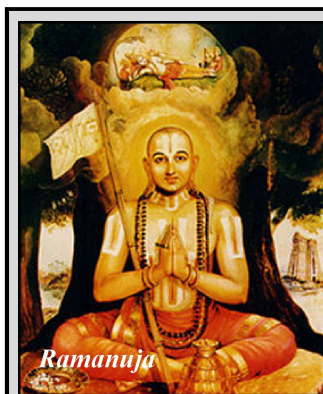
Bhakti movement in medieval India witnessed a new genre of Hindu religious practices that cut across castes and class. It was based on personal devotion to God, specially Krishna and Rama.

Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur



infancy and to his heroic exploits as a youth among the cowherds and cowherdesses of Gokula. Entire Bhakti literature dealt with people and not with the elite/ruling class. From the seventh to the tenth century a very extensive hymnal literature came to light in Tamil Nadu. It was soon considered a very important literature. The spread of Bhakti philosophy to the northern India and Deccan was mainly through the travels of Vaishnavite Brahman scholars.

Bhagvata Purana (ninth century) travelled the highroads of Sanskrit tradition and soon became the principal text of Vaishnavism all over India. The tenth book of Bhagvata Purana is centred on Krishna's childhood and youth, a new Bhakti. This is one of the truly great works of Hinduism, and its innumerable translations into the vernaculars (forty into Bengali alone) testify to its great popularity and influence. The Puranic development of the new Bhakti was paralleled by its growth in the work of the great theologians, both Shaivite and Vaishnavite. They formed religious orders, and their monks carried their message all over India. The first and greatest among them was the Vaishnava mystic Ramanuja (died in AD 1137), founder of the Shri Vaishnava sect. Madhava (AD 1197-1276), a Kannada brahman, founded the Madhava sect, and the Telugu brahman Nimbarka (13th century) settled near Mathura singing the praises of Krishna and Radha. Vallabhacharya (AD 1479—1531), a Telugu-born in Varanasi, had tremendous influence through his sect in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Among the Shaivites, the sect of the Lingayats was one



Bhagvata Purana (ninth century) travelled the highroads of Sanskrit tradition and soon became the principal text of Vaishnavism all over India.

whose influence reached several North Indian saints. In northern India, the Bhakti movement started not around the figure of Krishna but around Rama, and found its leader and organizer in Ramananda (AD 1400—1470). In his early days he probably resided in South India and was at first a follower of Ramanuja's Shri Vaishnava sect. He ultimately settled in Varanasi and founded the sect of Ramanandis. The old Valmiki Ramayana was followed over the centuries by a series of works on Rama. He looks upon Rama as the supreme God, who is to be adored with his Shakti, Sita and his life-long associate Hanuman, a deity to be venerated. Kabir (AD 1440-1518) started out as a disciple of Ramananda, but later developed his own characteristic eclecticism. His poetry is essentially a poetry of people, it is a poetry of epigrams and short verses, easily remembered, that has penetrated the life of North India nearly as much as the poetry of Tulsidas. Tulsidas (AD 1532-1623) was the other most famous spiritual heir of Ramananda. His Ramcharita Manas continues to be a central text in the lives of northern India. This was a new Ramayana in the vernacular, a conception which challenged the hegemony of the brah-

man caste and people considered Tulsidas a reincarnation of Valmiki. It is the favourite book of a hundred million people. It is the main source of religious inspiration for people. He devoted himself wholly to the Ramabhakti. Tulsidas's ever-lasting influence on Hinduism in north India was three-fold. He inspired an intense devotion to Rama that touched upon every aspect of life, and highly influenced and inspired Gandhiji. He proved a great force in strengthening the structures of the Sanatana Dharma at a time when external forces were threatening age-long traditions. Mirabai (AD 1503-73), a Rajput princess was the most famous woman Bhakti saint-poet of northern India. She was widowed at an early age and left the court of the Rana to devote herself to the worship of Krishna. Her spiritual marriage to Krishna is celebrated in devotional songs composed by Mirabai. Finally, Surdas (AD 1483-1563) was one of the main disciples of Vallabha. Born in a brahman family and blind, he was a musician attached to the temples at Agra and Mathura. He composed a great number of songs, collected in Sursagar, inspired by Bhagvata Purana. He particularly took delight in the child Krishna. □□

Apac services exports won't make up for imports of goods

RCEP is a regional trade agreement spanning the 10 Asean countries and the group's six free-trade agreement partners. — Kirtika Suneja

India is likely to gain only \$2-10 billion by exporting services to 15 Asia-Pacific countries under the proposed mega regional trade agreement, a premier think tank has told the government. The likely gains from services exports will not compensate for the higher amount of goods imports, especially from China, under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact, it said. India exported \$38 billion worth of services to the grouping last year.

The government last year appointed Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore, independent think tank Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the Centre for Regional Trade, a think tank under the Department of Commerce, to work separately to prepare a roadmap for negotiating RCEP by holding stakeholder consultations.

"The gains in services could only be in the range of \$2-10 billion. It is unrealistic to expect higher liberalisation of services," said a member of one of the institutes. RCEP is a regional trade agreement spanning the 10 Asean countries and the group's six free-trade agreement partners — Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Korea and India. Though negotiations on seven of the 16 chapters of the agreements are complete, the key areas of goods, services and investment are still being negotiated.

In the April-January period of 2018-19, India's merchandise exports to the region were \$55.3 billion while imports were \$145.9 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$90.6 billion. The trade gap with China alone was \$53.4 billion for the whole of FY19.

"An assessment of the services negotiations indicates that the progress has been asymmetrical with disinterest in moving forward in services while in goods, the ambition continues to be at a significantly high level, quite contrary to what has been envisaged in the guiding prin-



ciples," said an official aware of the negotiations.

India's major proposals, which have been rejected by the RCEP countries due to their fears over migration and loss of jobs, include a more business-friendly visa regime through a visa-fee waiver on a common reciprocal basis, and an RCEP Business Travel Card aimed at facilitating liberal move-

ment of professionals and tourists in the region.

"There is a lack of diversification of trade in this region, and even the gains in information technology, which is our largest service export, are limited," the member said.

Movement of professionals

Besides IT, there is scope to expand business services which include management and consultancy, hospitality, travel and tourism, health and education.

However, India is not competitive in infrastructure and manufacturing services such as logistics, transportation and construction, and is unlikely to make gains in these under the pact, as per the think tank.

Another complication has arisen with Singapore, Malaysia and Japan joining the ranks of Thailand, the Philippines and Brunei to come out with a negative list from the positive list. Under their respective 'negative' lists, countries will state the exceptions to services they want to open up." Although, India initially objected to this early transition on the grounds that the verification process is time consuming, we have also decided to transit from positive to negative list by mid-2019 .. the official added.

Given the situation, India has intensified its bilateral engagement with several countries in an attempt to seek further improvements in their offers, particularly on movement of professionals and IT-related Services. □□

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PepsiCo wants to 'amicably settle' issue of suing four farmers; coercing, intimidating farmers says SJM



An influential Hindu nationalist group with close ties to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has accused PepsiCo Inc of coercing four Indian farmers who have been sued by the US company for allegedly infringing a patent. After suing four farmers for cultivating the FC5 potato variety, grown exclusively for PepsiCo's popular Lay's potato chips, the snack food and drinks maker on Friday said it wants to "amicably settle" the issue.

The Purchase, New York-based company said the four farmers had to either sell their potatoes to PepsiCo or stop cultivating the FC5 potato variety. In return, PepsiCo said it would withdraw the suit filed against the farmers.

Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-convenor Swadeshi Jagran Manch, said PepsiCo was "coercing" the farmers by using legal action to force them to either sell their output to the company or to stop growing the FC5 potato variety at all. The dispute comes at a particularly sensitive time in India, which is about half-way through a 39-day staggered general election, in which its rural population still has a dominant voice. Modi and the BJP are seeking a second term and most political strategists think they will likely get it.

"Other than coercing these farmers, PepsiCo is also intimidating and exploiting them. It is a clear case of a large MNC (multi national corporation) arm-twisting India's poor farmers," Mahajan told Reuters.

The federal government should step in to ensure that the farmers do not get harassed by PepsiCo, he said. In response, a PepsiCo India spokesman said in a statement that it "has already proposed to amicably settle with people who were unlawfully using seeds

of its registered variety."

Adding: "The company was compelled to take the judicial recourse as a last resort to safeguard the larger interest of thousands of farmers that are engaged with its collaborative potato farming program."

The FC5 variety has a lower moisture content required to make snacks such as potato chips. PepsiCo maintains that it developed the FC5 variety, which has a lower moisture content required to make snacks such as potato chips, and registered the trait in 2016.

In April, the company filed the lawsuit in a court in Ahmedabad, the business hub of Gujarat, requesting the court to retrain the four farmers from growing the FC5 variety. The court has asked the farmers not to use the variety until the next hearing scheduled for 12 June. The court also appointed an officer to examine the issue. Other than filing the lawsuit, the company has also sought more than 10 million rupees (\$142,840) each from the four farmers for alleged patent infringement.

PepsiCo shouldn't have gone to the court seeking heavy damages from farmers and a large corporation cannot be allowed to take on a handful of farmers, Mahajan said. PepsiCo, which set up its first potato chips plant in India in 1989, supplies the FC5 potato variety to a group of farmers who in turn sell their produce to the company at a fixed price. The state government of Gujarat has assured the farmers that it will help them, Nitin Patel, deputy chief minister said last week. The opposition Congress party has also criticised PepsiCo for suing the farmers.

"Pepsi's decision to take Gujarat's potato grower farmers to court is ill-advised and brazenly wrong," senior Congress party leader Ahmed Patel, who comes from Gujarat, said in a Tweet.

<https://www.firstpost.com/business/pepsi-co-wants-to-amicably-settle-issue-of-suing-four-farmers-coercing-intimidating-farmers-says-swadeshi-jagran-manch-6541791.html>

PepsiCo faces political heat over taking farmers to court

Political discontent is rising against US beverage and snacks major PepsiCo after its local arm took Indian farmers in Gujarat to court for allegedly infringing a patent by growing a particular variety of potato. After the BJP and the Congress parties hit out against the New York-headquartered maker of Mirinda, Mountain Dew and Lay's potato chips for the act, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) flayed the multinational's move to sue the farmers.

"This is nothing but an act of extortion by PepsiCo. Seeds, plants and lives cannot be patented. PepsiCo's move is highly illegal and unethical and it will be in their own interest, not the farmers', to resolve the issue amicably. We will take care of our farmers," SJM's co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan told TOI.

PepsiCo India sued farmers in Gujarat for alleged "rights infringement" for growing FC5 potato variety used to manufacture the popular Lay's potato chips. While the company said it has already agreed to settle the issue amicably, the farmers sought time till June 12 to respond. Monday's development comes after executives at Pepsi-Co's global headquarters expressed concern at its local unit's handling of the situation. "The local team at Pepsi-Co India are fully empowered to "act as owners" and equipped to take decisions based on local market conditions," a Pepsi-Co India spokesperson said.

Mahajan, however, said, PepsiCo's move has set a wrong precedent that may be followed by other MNCs to forcibly coerce Indian farmers to fall in with their demands.

"The government should take a strong stand against such companies and it should serve as a deterrent for global players," he said.

"PepsiCo continues to maintain that they may become part of its collaborative potato farming programme. This programme gives them access to higher yields, enhanced quality, training in best-in-class practices and better prices. In case, they do not wish to join this program, they can simply sign an agreement and grow other available varieties of potatoes," the PepsiCo India spokesperson said. He said the company was compelled to take the judicial recourse as a last resort to safeguard the larger interest of thousands of farmers that are engaged with its collaborative potato farming programme.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/pepsi-faces-political-heat-over-taking-farmers-to-court/articleshow/69106043.cms>

Hindu nationalist group close to BJP accuses PepsiCo of coercing farmers

Swadeshi Jagran Manch has accused PepsiCo Inc of coercing four Indian farmers who have been sued by the US company for allegedly infringing a patent. After suing four farmers for cultivating the FC5 potato variety, grown exclusively for PepsiCo's popular Lay's potato chips, the snack food and drinks maker



on Friday said it wants to "amicably settle" the issue.

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The dispute comes at a particularly sensitive time in India, which is about half-way through a 39-day staggered general election, in which its rural population still has a dominant voice. Modi and the BJP are seeking a second term and most political strategists think they will likely get it.

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<https://www.businesstoday.in/current/corporate/pepsi-lays-potato-chips-bjp-swadeshi-jagran-manch-sjm-gujarat-ashwani-mahajan/story/341797.html>

Forum calls for boycott of PepsiCo products

The State unit of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, a political and cultural forum, has called for a boycott of all products manufactured by the US-based multinational PepsiCo to protest against the company's decision to sue farmers in Gujarat for using its patented seeds to grow potatoes. State convener of SJM M.R. Ranjit Karthikeyan said PepsiCo, manufacturer

of the Lays brand of potato chips, had filed the suit against four farmers from Sabarkantha district in Gujarat, accusing them of intellectual property rights infringement for buying seeds and selling a variety of potato registered by the company under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001. In a press note, Mr. Karthikeyan said it was the duty of the State to protect the interests of the farmers and shield them from the so-called breeders of plant varieties. "This is an indicator of what is in store for farmers who are not willing to be bound by the contract farming trap laid by foreign corporates. It is not acceptable at all in a country like India which has a rich and vast history of an agrarian economy."

Mr. Karthikeyan also urged the government to withdraw the IPRs to foreign companies and to protect farmers' rights. The SJM has called on the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority to intervene in the issue and protect the farmers rights.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/forum-calls-for-boycott-of-pepsico-products/article26977874.ece>

Indian firms feel the pinch amid falling inflation, high interest rates

Indian businesses are getting squeezed. As economic growth slows and inflation sinks they have little ability to raise prices without losing sales, and yet they are getting almost no relief from borrowing costs with lending rates remaining high.

The result: profit margins get crushed. And that helps to explain why companies are not confident enough to significantly boost capital spending or hire at a robust pace. The rise in India's real interest rates - the comparison between the inflation rate and the rate people pay to borrow - will be a major headache for whoever wins India's general election which lasts from April 11 to May 19. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party are expected to get a second term. It is also an immediate problem for the monetary policy committee of India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as it decides wheth-

er to cut its official benchmark interest rate, and by how much, at a meeting on Thursday.

"Had the borrowing costs declined by 3-4 percentage points along with inflation, we would have made investments and created thousands of new jobs," said Sudarshan Sareen, president of the All India Manufacturers Organisation.

Indian manufacturers pay 12-14 percent bank lending rates annually, he said, the highest among the emerging market economies. The government pays a subsidy of 3-4 percentage points to banks to lower the costs for farmers. The facts are simple. India's retail inflation rate has dropped to below 3 percent from more than 10 percent in 2013. In the same six-year period, bank borrowing costs for manufacturers and retailers have declined only marginally by about one percent from over 13 percent, business leaders say. That means real interest rates have gone up in last five years. Many economists, including Ravinder Dhoolakia, a member of the RBI's MPC, have said that real rates in India are too high.

World Bank data shows that real interest rates in India went up to 6.2 percent in 2017 from 2.5 percent in 2012, while real rates fell in many other Asian countries, including China. India's economy lost momentum in the October-December quarter, reducing the annual rate of growth to 6.6 percent, the slowest pace in five quarters.

New investment proposals declined to 14-year low of \$138.72 billion in 2018/19, falling for the fourth straight year, according to data collected by the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy, a Mumbai-based think tank. Modi has announced an increase in the state interest rate subsidy on bank loans for small businesses, while pushing the central bank and state-run banks to cut rates.

<https://www.vccircle.com/indian-firms-feel-the-pinch-amid-falling-inflation-high-interest-rates>

Chinese e-commerce firms fudge invoice prices to evade duties: Report

After trying to avoid Indian duties by sending goods as 'gifts', Chinese e-commerce firms are now trying to do so by undervaluing products on their invoices, the Economic Times reported. An unnamed senior excise official in Mumbai told the newspaper that the price printed on the invoice can sometimes be half the price displayed on the company's website. The report said companies such as AliExpress, Club



Factory and Shein were evading duties using the Courier Bill of Entry, or CBE-13, which allows the import of goods valued at up to Rs 1 lakh.

By using the gifting route, Chinese companies had earlier sought to exploit an exemption on the import of gift items worth up to Rs 5,000. But in January, the government said it was considering removing this exemption or limiting the benefit to a single consignor to prevent firms from misusing it, PTI reported. It was also considering a limit on the number of such consignments to four per person per year.

In February the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking that the government create barriers for Chinese companies operating in India. Chinese companies should also not be allowed to log Indian user data, SJM said, because China had refused to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist after an attack by Azhar's Jaish-e-Mohammad killed more than 40 Indian soldiers in Pulwama, Kashmir.

The SJM said that Chinese companies were profiting from Indian customers and that India should not support China's economic growth as it "supports such terrorists". It also raised concerns about the host of Chinese social media and ecommerce companies that had Indian users. The SJM said that India should "curtail the operations" of Chinese companies in India to enforce national security.

In December 2018, SJM's research had found that Indian users were placing over 2 lakh orders on Chinese e-commerce websites every day. It added that these companies were delivering via courier and postal gift shipments, violating Indian laws related to payment gateways, custom duties and GST, and harming the Indian MSME trade market.

It said that China was promoting its own small industry through subsidised delivery via China Post. It said that since these companies were not registered in India, there was no grievance redressal mechanism and that there was a risk of "hazardous, prohibited, unsafe or substandard goods arriving in India".

<https://www.medianama.com/2019/04/223-chinese-e-commerce-firms-judge-invoice-prices-to-evade-duties-report/>

SJM asks people to vote for 'Naya Bharat'

A voters awareness drive started in Punjab for Lok Sabha polls by Swadeshi Jagran Manch, an RSS affiliate, is asking people to vote for 'Swachh Bharat, respect and pride of the Indian army, building a Naya



Bharat (new India), Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas...?' through leaflets that are being distributed in residential colonies of Ludhiana and other cities in Punjab.

The target is to distribute at least 10,000 leaflets a day till May 17 (two days ahead of voting on May 19) and for that RSS pracharaks and sewaks who attend shakhas daily have been put on the job. A temporary wing – Matdaata Jagran Manch, Punjab has been created under Swadeshi Jagran Manch to coordinate this drive. The volunteers have been asked to go beyond handing over leaflets to voters, and try to 'convince' against pressing NOTA (None of the Above Option). They have been mandated to voters to keep in mind 12 points which have been written on the leaflet before casting their vote.

The 12-points written on the handout, in both Hindi and Punjabi, urge voters to cast their 'keemti vote' (precious vote) for: Swachh Bharat, Ek shreshtha rashtra ke liye (for an incredible country), Swabhimani evam shaktishaali desh ke liye (for a powerful and self-reliant India), Apni sabhyata sanskriti ko bachaane ke liye (to save Indian culture and values), Bharat ko vishwaguru banane ke liye (to make India a world leader), Sena ke samman ke liye (for respect of Indian Army), Kisaano ke aarthik laabh ke liye (for financial prosperity of farmers), Sabhi mahilaayon ki suraksha ke liye (for safety of all women), Bharat ko aarthik shakti sampann banane ke liye (to make India a powerful economy), Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas ke liye (for welfare of all), Sarwapanth samadar ke liye (secularism) and Naye Bharat ke nirmaan ke liye (for building a New India).

Speaking to The Indian Express, Yash Giri, general secretary, RSS, Ludhiana said: "It is a voters' awareness drive. We are telling them not to waste their vote by pressing NOTA. We are not campaigning for any party but just listing some points which they must keep in mind before making their choice."

He added that a total of 100 RSS shakhas run in Ludhiana city daily and sewaks are distributing pamphlets after shakha with a target of 10,000 daily.

<https://indianexpress.com/elections/in-punjab-rss-affiliate-asks-people-to-vote-for-naya-bharat-5701829/>

Big pharma war: India slams US for crusading against cheap generics



Washington's push for intellectual property rights in the pharma industry is an attack on India's generic drug trade, New Delhi says as a US government report accuses India of distributing counterfeit drugs worldwide. Authorities in New Delhi were appalled as the "Special 301 report" published by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) on Saturday pinpointed India – alongside China – as the leading global sources of counterfeit medicines. The document, which reviews the state of intellectual property protection around the world, also alleges that up to 20 percent of drugs sold on the Indian market are fake and represent a danger to public health and safety.

Meanwhile, the Indian health care official slammed the findings of the report asserting that the accusations are meant to put pressure on affordable generic drugs. "We strongly disagree with the observations made by USTR. We do not know the genesis and methodology of their findings. Instead, we view this as opposition to low-cost generics and the thriving Indian drug manufacturing industry," health secretary Preeti Sudan told local media.

The official argued that generic drugs are low-cost but quality products and assured that only certified medicines are exported from India. The USTR report, however, puts India on a 'priority watch list' for violating the rights of the US patent holders, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry.

The sentiment that India has been treated unfairly by the US government was in the meantime shared by MSF (Médecins sans frontières) or Doctors Without Borders. In a press release issued on Saturday, the medical NGO stated that the report findings are "in line" with the demands from the big pharma players to tighten intellectual property standards. These calls, however, may eventually deprive many people world-

wide of affordable health care, MSF warns.

India is the largest producer of generic drugs in the world with its exports covering 40 percent of generic demand in the US and 25 percent of all medicine market in the UK. Its pharma market was valued at \$33 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach \$55 billion by 2020.

<https://www.rt.com/news/457757-india-generics-us-counterfeit/>

U.S. adds another Chinese e-commerce site to "notorious" IP blacklist

The United States added China's third-largest e-commerce platform to its list of "notorious markets" for violations of intellectual property rights and kept China on its priority watch list for piracy and counterfeiting concerns.

The U.S. Trade Representative's Office placed Pinduoduo.com, which USTR described as third largest by number of users, on its blacklist of commercial marketplaces that fail to curb the sale of counterfeit products. It also kept Alibaba Group's taobao.com, China's largest e-commerce platform, on the list. USTR's annual review of trading partners' protection of intellectual properties rights and so-called "notorious markets" comes as the United States and China are embroiled in negotiations to end a tit-for-tat tariff battle that has roiled supply chains and cost both countries billions of dollars. The two countries are due to resume talks in Beijing next week.

China's inclusion on the list "reflects the urgent need to remediate a range of intellectual property-related concerns," a USTR official told reporters on a call to discuss the report.

<https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/e-commerce/e-tailing/u-s-adds-another-chinese-e-commerce-site-to-notorious-ip-blacklist/69051272>

Amazon bids adieu to China, will India be its lucky mascot?

It's bye to China, from Amazon. The world's largest e-commerce player has finally decided to shut shop in the world's most populous country – and the second-largest consumer economy. So, what's up next? Logic suggests the US giant would focus on India, which is tipped to be the third-largest consumer market valued at \$6 trillion by 2030, from \$1.5 trillion in 2018. More so because Amazon is already the largest e-commerce firm in India, which is home to 1.3 billion people, the second largest in the world.

What really forced Amazon's hand in China?

First, there is intense competition from local Chinese players such as Alibaba and JD. Second, Amazon could not cope with China's protectionist regulatory policy that favoured domestic firms and restricted access to global companies, something the communist country has been practising for decades.

Will India prove to be Amazon's lucky mascot? The e-commerce policy, which is in the works, hints at a similar approach to China though. In February, India notified the draft e-commerce policy that takes a protectionist view. India believes that data is a "national asset" if generated within the country and wants foreign-funded e-tailers to have computing facilities and data centres within domestic borders. It has also put restrictions on cross-border data flows and sought "disclosure of source code".

The e-commerce companies in question have also been barred from operating inventory-led model, apart from other curbs. The policy is yet to see the light of day. In case it gets finalised in the current form,

that may slam brakes on the designs of Amazon and Walmart-Flipkart – the top two in one of India's fastest growing sectors.

Despite its fast growth in India, Amazon has expressed its concerns about the regulatory environment both in India and China. In a filing to the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) in September 2014, the US e-retailer said: "Our Chinese and Indian businesses and operations may be unable to... operate if we or our affiliates can't access sufficient funding or in China enforce contractual relationships with respect to management and control of such businesses... if interpretations of those laws and regulations were to change, our businesses in those countries could be subject to fines and other financial penalties, have licenses revoked, or be forced to shut down entirely."

Amazon's worst fears came true for China. As for India, it's too early to predict. No doubt, Amazon will try its best to make India a success story, but that's far from easy. □□

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/companies/e-commerce-amazon-bids-adieu-to-china-will-india-be-its-lucky-mascot-3888081.html>

[Continued from page no. 10]

The Great Indian Defence...

with original equipment manufacturers, or OEMs, to acquire niche technologies and set up facilities in India. "This policy is better. Here, the government is coming up with a firm order and a purchase commitment," says the CEO a foreign OEM. But critics say these OEMs are not sharing cutting-edge technologies they offer to their respective defence agencies.

Other than this, there is criticism of availability of funds for these acquisitions. In the 2018/19 Budget, the allocation for modernisation was Rs 74,116 crore, Rs 35,928 crore less than the requirement. In 2019/20, there is an additional allocation of Rs 7,198 crore.

Earlier this year, at the Bangalore Aero Show, US major Lockheed Martin offered to make the F-21 multi-role fighter jet for India locally with Tata Group as a partner. Market insiders say the US com-

pany intends to move the only operational line producing F-16s from Texas to India. US defence forces use the much advanced version of this plane. As per the DAC officials, there are six competitors for this, including Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, Lockheed Martin's F-16 Fighting Falcon, Dassault Aviation's Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon, Saab's Gripen and Russian United Aircraft Corporation's MiG-35.

Meanwhile, by May end, officials at the defence ministry are expecting responses from Indian as well as foreign players for their interest in helicopter orders. Officials told BT that players like Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, Mahindra Defence, Adani Defence, Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Forge are in conversation with Lockheed Martin, Airbus Helicopters, Bell Helicopters and Russian export agency Rosoboronexport. Experts are hoping that these two big orders will be a turning point in the history of Indian defence manufacturing. □□

Editorial [continued from page no. 5 ...]

So we can conclude that PepsiCo is absolutely wrong and there is no tenable case against the farmers and if commercial court in Gujarat has passed any injunctions, it's based on wrong presumptions and possibly due to misrepresentation by the company. Even company knows it and therefore is trying to have a face saving. Their global masters have also shown concerns due to public anger against the company. The whole exercise can be summed up as an act of coercion and extortion; done with an objective of profiteering and has actually backfired. Central and State government need to stand with farmers to safeguard the interests of the farming community and set the record straight, apart from taking a strong action against the erring companies intimidating the poor farmers. □

Swadeshi Activities

Pictorial Glimpses



Swadeshi Activities

Pictorial Glimpses



Lokmat Samvad in Kashi



Lokmat Samvad in Prayagraj



Sampark Abhiyan in Barmer (Raj.)

