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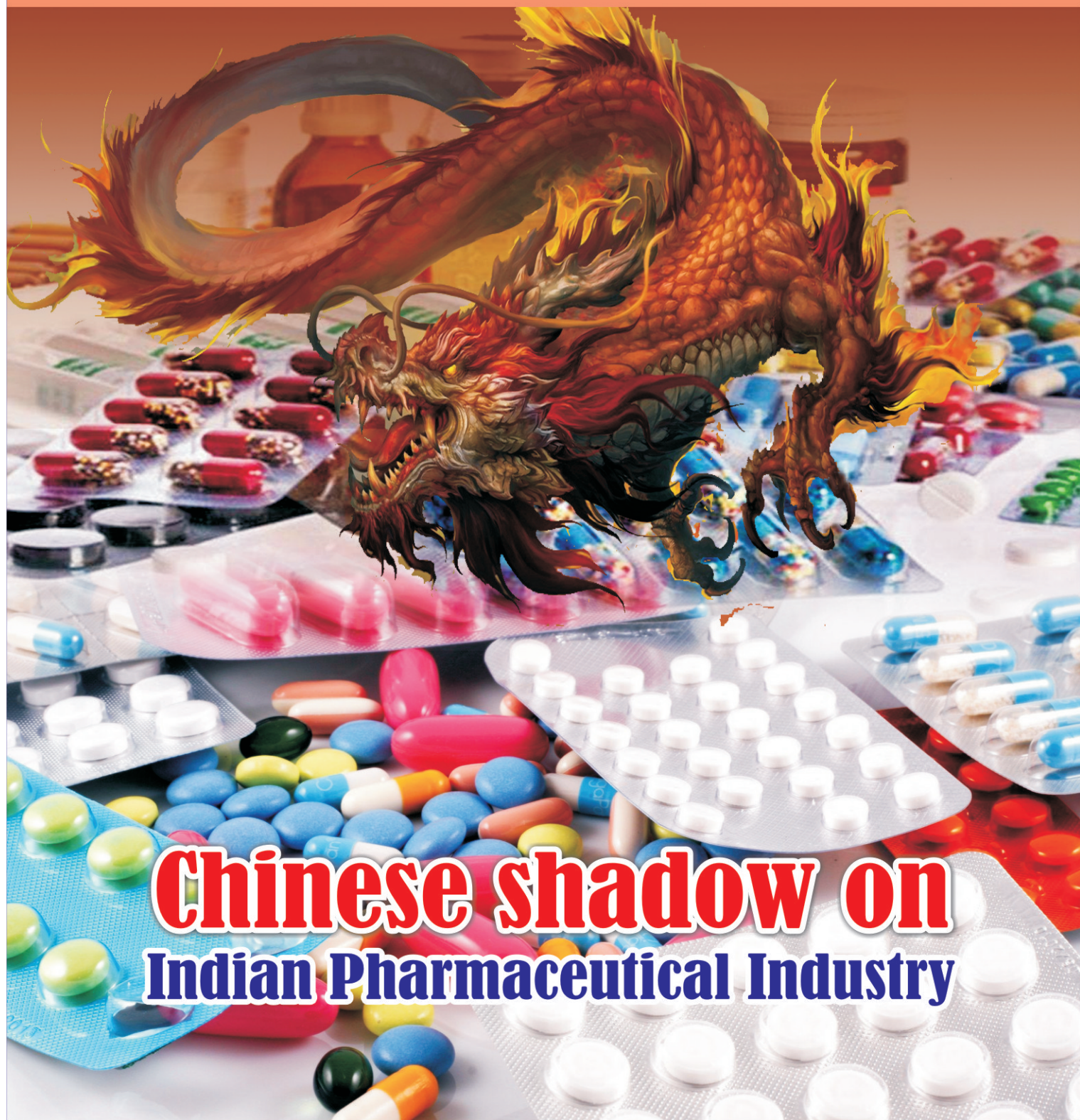
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SEPTEMBER 2021



Chinese shadow on Indian Pharmaceutical Industry

VOICE OF SELF RELIANT INDIA

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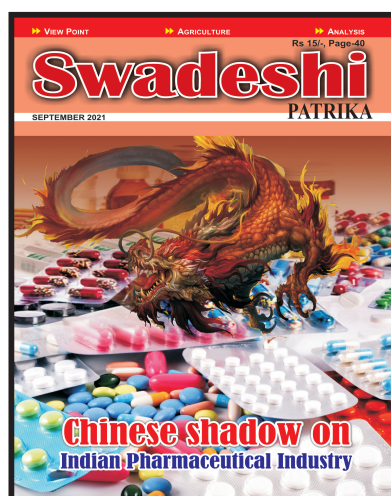
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Tesla's Trap of Clean Mobility

The California-based world's largest luxury electric vehicle manufacturer eyes the Indian market. The concern for the environment and desperate necessity for clean mobility is motivating as well as forcing the policymakers to encourage electric vehicles.

The current share of electric vehicles in the Indian automobile market which is less than 1 percent can't be a factor in deciding the import tariff for companies like Tesla. Tesla serves an ultra-luxury premium segment of customers. Their customers are the topmost segment of the wealth pyramid.

Tesla proposes to import CBU units from America and sell to the top 0.001 percent of the population of the country who are anyway importing them on their own. There are no commitments of local manufacturing, technology transfer, Electric Vehicle infrastructure development, hardly any employment opportunities.

All luxury car makers like Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Volkswagen Audi to name a few have gone through the grind and set up factories for local assembly and local sourcing. Elon Musk is Twitter bully, let him negotiate the tough Indian Automotive market where all American auto companies like General Motors and Ford have hardly survived even after years of presence and are only exporting.

The domestic market is seeing a surge in the desire for electric vehicles, as it is becoming more and more affordable in terms of the overall cost.

The initial purchase cost is dearer, despite the government's policy of incentivizing the new customers to switch to electric mobility. The constraints of battery and its technology are work in progress.

The biggest challenge is to build the charging infrastructure and battery manufacturing. Also in India most of the Electricity is produced using Coal fossil fuel which most harmful to the environment, as Toyota, the World's largest manufacturer says for four wheelers, both personal and commercial, hybrid models and hydrogen cells fuels are the way forward. EV will do well in two wheelers, three wheelers and small commercial vehicles.

We have to go for electric mobility but at our own terms and conditions. In no way the government should fall into the trap of clean energy and give any discount to Tesla for the electric mobility business.

— Vijay Kapoor, Greater Kailash, Part-2, New Delhi

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Quote-Unquote



Through its thoughts and medium of literary texts, Sanskrit helps nurture knowledge and also national unity, strengthens it.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, India



Though I write about Samskrit Week every year in Samskrit language and appeal to Samskrit scholars and students, this year I decided not to appeal to them but to appeal to everybody who love Samskrit, who revere Samskrit and to all those who understand their belongingness to the great Samskrit heritage, because the onus of promotion of Samskrit lies on all of them.

Sri Chamu Krishna Shastry

Trustee-Secretary of Samskrit Promotion Foundation



"It has been observed from the tenders issued by various procuring entities on CPP/ GeM (Central Public Procurement/Government e-Marketplace) portals that PPP-MII (Public Procurement - Preference to Make in India) Order is not being implemented in letter and spirit by some of the organisations."

Rajiv Gauba, Cabinet Secretary

Economy back on the track

According to the GDP data published on 31 August 2021, India's GDP at constant prices (base year 2011-12) in the first quarter (April-June) of the year 2021-22 reached rupees 32.38 lakh crores, up by 20.1 percent over the corresponding quarter of the previous year. If we look at the current prices, then the GDP has reached 46.20 lakh crore with a jump of 26.5 percent as compared to this quarter of last year. When we analyse this boom in this quarter, the sector of the economy that has seen the biggest jump is the industrial sector. In this sector a jump of 49.6 percent is seen in manufacturing and 68.3 percent in construction. Mining registered a growth of 18.6 percent and trade, hotels, transport and communication services registered a growth of 34.3 percent. In fact, this is news of great relief for the Indian economy which has been worst hit due to Covid.

While the government is giving credit to its policies for this jump, the opposition has termed it to be due to low base effect, caused by decline in GDP due to the shutdown of economic activities resulting from lockdown in the first quarter (April-June) of 2020-21 last year. But even if we concede this argument of the opposition, it has to be accepted that the Indian economy is now coming out of the effects of the pandemic. Significantly, due to the economic activities in the country coming to a standstill due to the pandemic, unemployment had peaked a record level.

Manufacturing had almost come to a halt and the workers had migrated to their respective villages. On the other hand, in factories and offices that were still functioning, workers were forced to work for half salary or even less. Transportation was halted, due to which the demand for petroleum products reached the rock bottom. Be it air travel or rail or road transport, everything was closed due to lock down. With the automobile sector accounting for almost half of the manufacturing in the country, there was an unprecedented drop in demand for scooters, cars, trucks and other commercial vehicles. Apart from essential services, all financial and business services were almost closed. This had an adverse impact on both GDP and unemployment.

In the light of the current data, it is becoming clear that the economy is coming out of the impact of that decline in the past. The largest growth (234.4 percent) was registered in sale of commercial vehicles. A relatively smaller but still huge increase (110.6 per cent) was in the sales of private vehicles and steel (103.1 per cent). The production of cement also registered a significant increase (52.9 per cent). Railway passenger traffic (passenger kilometres) increased by 5560 percent. Imports of goods and services grew by 72.8 per cent and exports by 49 per cent. The index of industrial production also rose and index of manufacturing saw a jump of 53.7 percent. The growth in 'cargo' on ports was 26.5 percent and 'cargo' at airports registered a growth of 118.6 percent. There was a 366.3 percent increase in the number of passengers at the airports. All these figures show that in this quarter of last year, since economic activities were badly affected due to the lockdown, the growth of this quarter of 2021-22 clearly shows that it is not only making up for the decline of last year, but also showing a sign of recovery of Covid hit economy; despite the fact that country was facing a partial lockdown due to second wave, even during this quarter. We can say that economy is slowly returning to normalcy.

After this unprecedented decline in the economy, various types of efforts have been by the government. Special employment programs to compensate for migrated labour in their door steps, provision of free ration to 80 crore people, various types of reliefs, supports, policies and measures were adopted for small and medium enterprises. Efforts have also started to take the economy on the path of self-reliance to achieve the avid goal of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Significantly in the last 20 years, the manufacturing sector of the country has been badly hit due to unequal competition from China, unethical practices followed by China like illegal export subsidies, under invoicing, illegal dumping etc. Many industries were closed and unemployment increased manifold. During the Corona period, resentment towards China has also increased in the whole world and there is unprecedented desire for self-reliance in the countries of the whole world. Various measures are being adopted by the Government of India towards the goal of self-reliance. The policy of giving priority to indigenously manufactured goods in government procurement has been going on for the last 4-5 years; and now the government has announced a scheme of production linked incentives (PLIs) to revive manufacturing in India. In which an amount of about Rs 2 lakh crore has been allocated for the next few years. To stop imports from China, import duties are being increased, anti-dumping duties are also being imposed and efforts are being made to stop imports from China through non-tariff measures also.

Due to all these efforts, the manufacturing sector of India can get a new lease of life. We know that manufacturing is a sector which has the highest employment potential as compared to other activities. Manufacturing is an important source of employment worldwide. Due to getting more employment, more sources of income are generated through manufacturing. It can be assumed that due to the large increase in manufacturing in this quarter, the loss in employment and incomes will be compensated. But one cannot conclude from a quarter's results that the economy has come out of the blues. It can definitely be said that these results show that the economy is getting back on track. India will need to make a big push to become a 'manufacturing hub' in the world, turning the growing anger towards China around the world into an opportunity during the pandemic.

Chinese shadow on Indian Pharmaceutical Industry



India is called the pharmacy of the world. In pharmaceuticals' production, India ranks fourth in the world in terms of value and third in terms of volume. India exports medicines to most of the countries of the world, while the share of Indian medicines in the US market is 34 percent. We manufacture medicines for not merely common diseases like malaria, common infections, vitamin deficiencies, diabetes, but even for diseases like cancer, asthma, HIV, heart diseases. India's pharmaceutical industry not only satisfies the public health needs in the country, credit of providing affordable medicines to the whole world also goes to the Indian pharmaceutical industry.

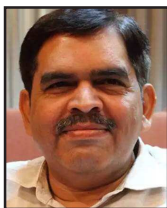
However, for the last few years, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has been under such a shadow of China that its existence itself is endangered. The reason is that China has almost captured the supply chain of the pharmaceutical industry. Due to this, not only the health security of India's 135 crore people could be at risk, it could even eclipse India's ability to provide affordable medicine to the rest of the world.

How did China dominate the supply chain?

Prior to the year 2000, India was a leading country in the supply chain of the pharmaceutical industry, and there was a worldwide demand for Indian made Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs). India was thriving in the field of basic chemicals, intermediate chemicals and APIs. But after the year 2000, though, India continued to be the source of ready-made medicines for the world, but the manufacturing of API and intermediates started slipping from India and went into the hands of China; and India and the world became dangerously dependent on Chinese APIs.

Though this happened almost suddenly for the world, it was a deliberate move of China. They created unimaginable sized production capacities for intermediate chemicals and APIs on the one hand and on the other hand, they started dumping them in the world markets including India at less than half the normal price. For that, the Chinese government was an active collaborator/ conspirator. Low-interest loans, long-term moratorium on debt repayment, credit guarantees by the Chinese insurance company Sinosure, proactive research and development support, export promotion incentives (13 to 17 percent), marketing incentives, cheap electricity and community facilities, deliberately lax pollution regulatory laws, etc. Many such provisions were made, which were also against international trade (WTO) rules. One can say that the Indian API industry was systematically destroyed by China.

This can be illustrated with the example of the price movements of 6-APA (6-Amino Penicillanic Acid, a derivative of Penicillin-G), the basic chemical building block for antibiotics, such as Ampicillin, Amoxucillin, Cloxacillin, Diclocacil-



The Government of India will have to immediately plan and take strict steps to end dependence on China in terms of APIs.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

lin, Flucloxacillin, Oxacillin among others. It may be noted that in 2005, India was completely self-sufficient for 6-APA, as there were four manufacturers of Penicillin-G in India. Today the situation is that India has become 100 percent dependent on China for this input. Not only this, the whole world is 100 percent dependent on China for this input. Until 2001, before the Chinese market aggression, 6-APA was sold for an average price of US\$22 per kg. Between 2001 and 2007, the Chinese suppliers crashed the 6-APA prices by less than half to an average of US\$9 per kilogram, and in the process, China destroyed the production capacity of India and the rest of the world. The effect of which was that all four companies in India which were manufacturing Penicillin-G and 6-APA stopped their production, because they could not sustain production of this key input, with such high losses. But as soon as Indian companies went out of production, China started increasing the prices of Penicillin-G and 6-APA. Since then the price of 6-APA has increased from USD 9 per kg in 2006 to a peak of USD 35 per kg, as per import statistics of July 2021 and it continues to increase.

In fact, China's strategy was that wherever manufacturers were in competition with them in India or globally, the price should be brought down to extremely low level to ensure flushing out of these manufacturers. As soon as these manufacturers are out of the market and China's monopoly is established, then exploitation and eventually blackmailing starts by hiking prices and adoption of restrictive trade practices. The situation is that,

today China has established a monopoly in almost all types of Intermediates and APIs and as result they have resorted to a diabolical state-sponsored strategy, where all the Chinese suppliers have all come together to exploit the situation by hiking the prices significantly of products they export.

If we take the price data from January 2020 to July 2021, it is found that the price of '6-APA', key inputs for all types of antibiotics, has increased by 66 percent. Other examples where the Chinese have increased the prices significantly (over the last 18 months), all in products in which they enjoy monopoly, include 'DBA', the key input for anti-malarial drug which has increased by 47 percent, 'Erythromycin TIOC', key input for Azithromycin has increased by 44 percent, that of 'Penicillin-G' by 97 percent and many such examples.

Even for intermediates (products which are the precursor to the final APIs), China has adopted a similar strategy. That is, it can be said that China is making every effort to destroy the public health security of India. In such a situation, if India is completely dependent on China for these important inputs in the field of medicines, it is possible that if China suddenly stops supplying these APIs, then our public health security can completely jeopardise. In the country every year 15 crore people suffer from malaria, 5.45 crore suffer from heart diseases, 22.5 lakh people suffer from cancer, 125 crore people need antibiotics, 21 lakh are HIV patients and 30 million people suffer from diabetes. In such a situation, the very thought of what will happen to these patients is disturbing.

The possibility of China taking such a step is not a fantasy, but a reality. China has already threatened to stop drug supplies to the US and concerns are being expressed in the US. India's National Security Advisor AjitDoval had also warned that India's dependence on China for APIs could be a serious national security threat.

What is the solution?

The Government of India will have to immediately plan and take strict steps to end dependence on China in terms of APIs. Recently, the government has announced Production Linked Incentives (PLI) plan to encourage API production in the country, under which an amount of Rs 12,000 crore has been allocated. But that alone will not suffice. To defeat China in the price war, the government will have to impose 'Safeguard' and 'Anti-Dumping' duties on all APIs. Where API firms are struggling for survival, funds may be allocated for upgradation of technology. Government's support for establishment of research and development facilities could be helpful. Easing environmental laws for API units and exemption from environmental laws may be appropriate strategy, looking at national security angle of dependence on China, reduction in import duty for testing equipment and allotment of land at cheaper rates, making it a pre-condition that Indian buyers of APIs and Intermediates are required to buy at least 50% of their requirements from domestic manufacturers if those products are available from India, etc. could be some other steps to safeguard national interests and possibly avoid impending crisis. □□

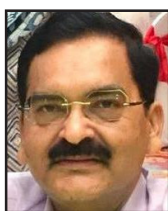
NMP: Unlocking Value

In India, with a deep ideological core of influencers with socialistic mindset, privatization of state owned assets is an emotionally charged and usually controversial issue that triggers immediate intense reaction. The government had announced a plan to monetize public assets in current budget for fundings fresh capital expenditure on infrastructure. Following this recently the government has announced a national asset monetization plan, where Rs. 6 lakh crore of government assets across sectors like roads, railways, power, aviation, sports infrastructure, shipping, telecom, and housing are proposed to be monetized over next four years.

According to Amitabh Kant, “The strategic objective of the program is to unlock the value of investments in brown field public sector assets by tapping institutional and long term patient capital which can thereafter be leveraged for further public investments.” Under the plan, private players can invest in projects for a fixed return using the InvIT route. They can also operate and develop the assets for a certain period before transferring them back to the government. And some assets like warehouses and stadiums can also be leased out on long term basis. According to Nirmala Sitharaman only those assets will be sweated which are either languishing or are being underutilized. The money thus raised will be further invested into infrastructure. The government has emphasized that these assets will not change ownership; these brown field assets will continue to be owned by the government and would come back to the government after the end of the lease period.

Indicative value of the monetization pipeline year-wise

| | |
|---------|------------------|
| FY 2022 | Rs. 88190 crore |
| FY 2023 | Rs. 162422 crore |
| FY 2024 | Rs. 179544 crore |
| FY 2025 | Rs. 167345 crore |



While asset monetization plan sounds good in principle, many loose ends will need to be tied up before it is activated.

Dr. KK Srivastava

| Asset class | Value (crore) |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Roads | 1,60,200 |
| Railways | 1,52,496 |
| Power Transmission | 45,200 |
| Power Generation | 39,832 |
| Telecom | 35,100 |
| Warehousing | 28,900 |
| Mining | 28,747 |
| Natural gas pipeline | 24,462 |
| Product Pipelines/Others | 22,504 |
| Aviation | 20,782 |
| Ports | 12,828 |
| Stadiums | 11,450 |

To be sure, it is not a new concept. India has been monetizing assets in the past through public-private partnership (PPP), like Delhi Airport. However, the government track record of past years is not very inspiring; given that the target seems difficult-if not impossible-to achieve. See table below for its divestment record.

Thus it seems a daunting task. Besides, a lot will depend on market conditions. For example, if the current global liquidity surplus flows into India, it will be so much easier to hit the target. Then, there could be asset specific challenges wherein there may be a lack of clearly identifiable reve-

| Divestment Record (Rs. Crore) | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Financial Years | Budget estimates | Actuals |
| FY 2017 | 56,500 | 47,742 |
| FY 2018 | 72,500 | 100,045 |
| FY 2019 | 80,000 | 94,727 |
| FY 2020 | 105,000 | 50,304 |
| FY 2021 | 210,000 | 32,886 |

nues streams in some assets.

To learn from elsewhere, asset recycling was attempted in Australia with great success. Across Australia the government could unlock more than \$17 billion. So, it can be done if we monetize these assets the right way. If the plan is implemented well, it would also mean optimal utilization of assets, their proper maintenance, provision of high level and quality of service, improvement in efficiency of operation and generation of fresh employment. To top it all, the government will get released and additional resources to spend on social sector. And yet, it may not be cake walk for many reasons.

The private players, to begin with, would like to maximize their profit over the limited time period; so they would perhaps prefer to raise prices, cut back on costs (such as upkeep), and limit competition. We have before us the example of Singapore where the state had to nationalize its suburban trains and signaling systems because the main private operator had underinvested in maintenance; this in turn led to very poor service for the passengers. In New South Wales, post privatization electricity prices doubled and the government had to step in.

Questions are also being raised about (lack of) bureaucratic capability and rigour of regulatory re-

gime. For all one knows this exercise may lead to concentration of power in hands of few business houses. Witness the current concerns being raised about airports (Adani), or telecom (Ambani and Mittal). Moreover, privatization is likely to lead to job losses since most public sector units are over staffed. In brief, if NMP deals are not structured keeping interests of all stakeholders in mind – end users, employees, concessionaire, govt, all of them – while balancing the profit and utility motive, then it would be a bad exercise. In 2014 budget the government had promised to set up an apex body to devise new PPP models, learning from past mistakes; nothing come out of it. If it had taken birth, India's institutional capacity for the NMP would have been more mature by now.

So, how do we ensure that the plan goes for a successful implementation, rather than turning out to be a damp squib. For this a number of prerequisites can be suggested.

One, given the limited execution capacity of the government, Niti Aayog needs to hand hold ministries through the whole process. Together they should finalize, fine tune, and formalize the asset monetization details. Remember, the current year target is stiff, the portfolio of assets across the spectrum very wide and diverse and

there are only 7 months remaining this financial year. And yet a proper and detailed operational plan is needed. Two issues are very crucial. Firstly, the contract needs to be flexible enough to make it attractive for all the parties; this is not easy by any stretch of imagination. Secondly, regulatory framework must be designed to thwart the evil forces of monopoly (like in Railways).

Two, the government must show pragmatism. It must value assets fairly but not expensively, even if it has to exercise restraint. At least for the initial rounds of transactions valuations can make or break.

Three, in many years the state is currently a dominant player. So the regulatory framework must be so devised that it helps the licence/concessionaire deliver what is expected rather than creating a policy and legal quagmire. The regime has to be transparent, impartial, free of government influence, and free of ideological overload. Once autonomy is granted there should be no interference in dealing with unions, etc. Will the govt. be able to adopt a hands off policy?

Privatization has been a disappointment in case of railways. It expected to garner Rs. 30,000 crore from the privatizations of lines, but actually received bids worth only Rs. 72,00 crore. While some say it was because private players were not allowed to lease rolling stock, others suggest that the railways itself wasn't keen on the idea. Whatever, it led to a still born child.

In conclusion, we could say that the government should refrain from abusing its sovereign authority, act more like a partner and be pragmatic. □□

The author is a noted economist and management thinker.

Water Management: Historical Lessons Lost



It is indisputable that we are living in a water stressed world. Pertinent question is, can we draw useful lessons by examining how early society lived in their immediate surrounding and environment. Did they make an effort to strike a balance between nature and human activity? Though the nature and challenges spanning the past and the present are of diverse character and magnitude is it possible to draw some inspiration from the old practices? Population growth, unplanned industrialization, and rapid urbanization have together made virtually all societies water stressed. Can we apply old wisdom to at

least partially remedy the problem? We should try to analyze that although earlier times also water issues did exist, yet how did they create fewer problems in the historical past. What steps were taken then to mitigate the issue? Is it possible to implement the same solutions now?

Rainwater harvesting has been a traditional practice in India since long. Various storage systems were developed, managed, and preserved. These water bodies were built by rulers of the region who also encouraged local communities and individuals to build and maintain these on their own. Some of the ancient and medieval hydrological structures actually proved to be landmark structures employing rainwater harvesting techniques and adding to the efficiency of contemporary water management. Right from Mohenjo-Daro times (Great Bath) to medieval baolis (Delhi), not to talk of water supply mechanism to Rajasthan forts all were notable structures. As early as during Indus valley civilization there existed irrigation and drinking water supply lines. Dholavira, Mohenjodaro, and Harappa had many reservoirs to store rainwater. At other places small bunds were constructed by the local people to store rain water for drinking and irrigation. The Indus settlements were particularly known for their advanced drainage and sewerage systems.

The Mauryan Empire witnessed the construction of several dams and bunds. Around the beginning of the Christian era, during the reigns of satavahanas and later under the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas as too tank and well irrigation was prevalent. The chola dynasty built chain tanks i.e. a number of tanks with connecting channels. And villages used to have tank committees which would be responsible for the maintenance of community water resources. Then the Rajput dynasties promoted irrigation works in north India. In fact, to sum it up in all regions of India be it east India or north-west India, overground and underground storage tanks were built. Waterwheels (king Lalitaditya Muktapada) or extensive network of canals in Kashmir, all are ample testimony to the fact that the rulers



Our rich past is a treasure trove of ancient wisdom and knowledge. Need is to apply it to today's concerns.

Dr. Jaya Kakkar

cutting across the geographies and dynasties were keen to manage the water conditions being created by natural factors. Delhi Sultans constructed numerous water reservoirs, step wells, canals, tanks and similar edifices to efficiently manage the water resources. We can give innumerable examples of Iltutmish, Alauddin Khalji, Tuglaqs, Lodi, Vijayanagara rulers, and so on.

Apart from the water reservoirs, tanks, ponds, artificial lakes, step wells etc. which formed the mainstay of rainwater harvesting and water management, the rulers also created system to manage water in arid, semi arid regions like Rajasthan. Through excellent hydraulic and craftsmanship arrangements water was transported to the forts situated on the hillocks.

Alas overtime due to the forces of 'modernization' these systems are being lost and the knowledge lies unused or even forgotten. To take one example and there are numerous, at the eastern border of Thar Desert (Aravali Hills) there is a water fort. At one point it had 84 water bodies; now only about 22 exist. These water bodies included ponds, wells, step wells, etc. While the ponds had a natural catchment, the wells and step wells were located below the ponds, to protect possible seepage from ponds. 40 percent of the area of the fort was devoted to water bodies, which could collectively store 4 billion litres of water, sufficient to maintain 50,000 people in the fort for four years.

So what led to a loss of such knowledge and its continued application? Well, a short answer would be British colonization.

With the British stepping in to India major transformation start-

ed taking place: First, the economy, which was earlier resource gathering and food production focused, started converting into a commodity oriented economy. Second, there was a decline of traditional community fabric and social cohesion leading to fundamental alterations in long standing social relations and social customs so that local social and community relations became less important. Third, the market system was introduced which placed premium on private property and wealth. Four, traditional and customs based methods of rainwater harvesting and water management were frowned upon; these were consciously replaced by advanced applications of science and technology. But all this led to a detrimental effect on the Indian land and waterscape.

One, commercial production replaced subsistence. Two, exploitation became more important than conservation. Three, in order to promote agriculture and to access coal and timber large scale deforestation took place. And, finally, community ownership over forests, minerals, water bodies, gave way to government control which decided to exploit them for maximization of profits. The alien govt. was of course not interested in investing in social equity, welfare, or community harmony.

So, the British government singularly aimed at destroying the traditional knowledge, methods, practices, and management of rain harvesting. When subsistence existence gave way to large scale trade and commerce, this meant that water resources too become a commodity to be sold in market and to be commercially exploited. Native

community ownership rights and management were found upon instead; a series of legislation replaced them by private ownership.

Moreover, the British rulers did not appreciate the fact that while in England precipitation is distributed the whole year round in India monsoon is seasonal. India would always require water storage and harvesting for usage during non monsoon months. In any case due to tropical climate there is a greater need for water for domestic, agricultural and other purposes. In other words, lack of knowledge about stark difference between cold English climate and hot Indian climate was another contributory factor as to why there was little appreciation of the need for rainwater harvesting and water management. Accordingly the traditional methods were not appreciated and were bled to death.

Then in the zeal to exploit the vast availability of resources from even the hinterland of India, the British government set up rail, road, and telegraph networks, alongside the river bed. But these projects caused obstructions to the natural flow of river water.

Finally, again the colonial government emphasized on perennial irrigation for which barrages, canals, etc. were built. These again would aim at regulating water flow through the rivers. But this would, again, mean interruption in natural flow of river water.

Post independence we have inherited that legacy. But more alarmingly there is no concrete work, barring sporadic ones, to set the historical mistakes right. No lessons learnt from history, alas! □□

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How to Create Cities Without Destroying Villages

Urban areas are generally perceived to be expanding at the cost of displacing villagers and destroying villages. Even if their houses can be retained, villagers still lose their farms, farming and related livelihoods, being left only with cash compensation for purchased/ acquired farmland. Even if they are not cheated, as is quite often the case, and manage to get adequate cash, one time availability of a big sum of money brings its own problems and may not lead to durable, satisfying alternative livelihoods.

Different patterns of expanding urbanization need to be explored, an important aim being to protect village life with its many virtues, including sustainable livelihoods, instead of disrupting and dislocating it. Expansion of urban areas should not be intrusive and alienating, but integrate rural areas in ways which benefit both sides. A related aim is to find ecologically protective ways of expanding urbanization.

Aspects of an alternative path of urbanization are examined here in the context of conditions in India, which may be adjusted according to conditions in other parts of world, if the broad thinking of these alternatives is found useful elsewhere too.

At the risk of some oversimplification, we may say that one leading pattern of sucking rural into urban areas in India has been for either the government or private builders to acquire/purchase the farmland of a village. Let us assume that a village has 1000 households and 60 per cent of them own land while 40 per cent are more or less landless. At the average of 5 acres per household let us assume that this village has 3000 acres land plus common land, pasture land, wasteland etc. amounting to about half of this, hence about 4500 acres of land (other than the land on which houses, school etc. already exist). The common pattern is to try to get almost all of this land for urban housing and related

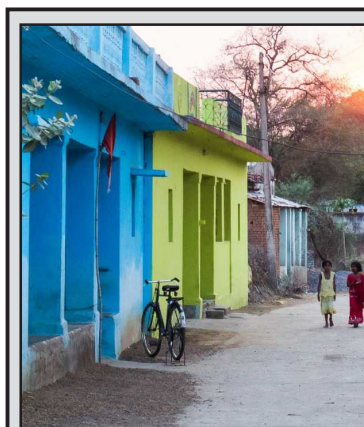


Different patterns of expanding urbanization need to be explored, an important aim being to protect village life with its many virtues, including sustainable livelihoods, instead of disrupting and dislocating it.
Bharat Dogra



infrastructure as per prevailing norms of desirable urban life-style. Simultaneously urban authorities get the responsibility of linking the new urban extension with the wider sewer, sanitation, water, road transport and energy connections, for which the established patterns are economically and ecologically expensive. It is likely that since this is a new urban extension rather far from the city-centre and public transport is not very satisfactory, over-dependence on privately owned cars will be rather high. Overall greenery will be reduced significantly with this urbanization. Dense, ancient trees may be cut and in their place we may see more ornamental trees with very limited ecological role. Animals and birds will be reduced substantially. Along with the planned houses, a slum settlement may come up, housing some of the construction workers or others who may provide some services needed to the newly extended city. This has been a familiar pattern of urban development in India.

However we should explore different patterns in which the urban can co-exist with more of the rural. Out of the nearly 4500 acres of village land, about one half can still remain with villagers although at different sites—as orchards, forest-groves, pastures or even cropland, all of which should be organic. All this is of course linked to ensuring sustainable livelihoods and also to providing fresh healthy food to the new urban as well as old rural residents right in their own backyard. There can be room for a limited number of dairy or other animals, confined to a clean fenced place but having room within it for animals to roam



The new settlement must strive to be self-reliant in meeting its sanitation & water needs, with waste-segregation at source and adequate space left for composting & treatment.

around. Communities can plan well ahead to organize their own daily bus transport, based on a careful survey of daily transport needs.

All this can be part of well-planned but different urban landscaping, much more original, interesting, in keeping with our own conditions and needs, as well as the rising new challenges like climate change, water conservation, reducing air and water pollution.

The new settlement must strive to be self-reliant in meeting its sanitation and water needs, with waste-segregation at source and adequate space left for composting and treatment. Dependence on linking to centralized sewer systems should be avoided. The planning should provide adequately for water harvesting and ponds, perhaps a lake also, as well as for rooftop and other decentralized solar energy (which can meet a part of energy needs to start with). All this should result in many creative, decent livelihoods, and the first preference should be given to the poorer landless households of the original village, with support available also for training.

Some housing units should be set aside for economically weaker sections, who can pay in smaller installments, with preference for

those who can provide some of the essential services. Planning for marketplaces should emphasize meeting all essential needs close to home, combining utility with some exciting surprises, particularly for children, who should get their adequate space for play and picnics as well. Community organizations which link urban, rural and all sections of people would be encouraged.

In this pattern of urbanization there can be opportunities for protecting and preserving village and rural way of life even as city expands and in addition the environment of new urban settlements can be better protected. Sustainable livelihoods of many farmers in organic farming and horticulture can continue to co-exist, although on lesser land, while even the landless can have better opportunities in dairying, poultry, gardening, urban forestry and other livelihoods, even as several new kinds of livelihood opportunities also open up. There are better chances of social harmony and improved community life, as well as mutual cooperation for common goals of improving sanitation, conserving water and increasing greenery. □□

The writer is a journalist and author. His recent books include *Man over Machine* and *Protecting Earth For Children*.

Reviving Indian agriculture is key to jump-start economy

The maiden agriculture budget by Tamil Nadu government has brought a whiff of fresh air in policy planning. Not only dedicating the budget to the farmers protesting against the three central laws, what makes Tamil Nadu's farm budget so special is how the Minister for Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare MRK Pannarselvam has managed to open a new chapter by bringing back the focus on revitalising agriculture.

Tamil Nadu it seems has confided more on economist FE Schumacher concept of Small is Beautiful – emphasising on small and appropriate technologies as well as approaches, and invested on conservation and building up of the natural resource base. Coming at a time when the State tops the national chart in farm indebtedness, in fact three of the top five indebted states hail from the southern region, the integrated approach the separate budget has laid out to rebuild farm livelihoods and to also attract youth in farming, is a pathway which in reality challenges the dominant economic thinking of moving people out of agriculture in the name of economic growth. While mainline economists celebrate this in the name of growth, in my understanding speedy urbanisation actually is a reflection of the neglect and apathy agriculture has suffered over the decades.

According to the 2011 Census, more people in Tamil Nadu have moved out of rural to urban areas than in any other state. This is a trend that needs to be reversed. In fact, the massive reverse migration the country witnessed when tens of millions of daily wage workers walked back hundreds of kilometres to their villages after Lockdown 1.0 shows the dire need to reverse the flawed economic thinking that has pushed people from the rural areas in the first instance. Keeping agriculture deliberately impoverished all these years was the easiest way to do so. No wonder, as per Economic Survey 2016, the average farm income in 17 states of India, which means roughly half the country, hovered around Rs 20,000 a year. With such meagre annual incomes, farmers are left with little choice but to migrate.



The maiden agriculture budget by Tamil Nadu government has brought a whiff of fresh air in policy planning.

Devinder Sharma



Not only showing an intent to reverse this faulty economic design, Tamil Nadu also demonstrate an inclination to do so. Attaining village self-sufficiency in the next five years, for which a project called 'Kalaingar's Anaithu Grama Oruginaintha Velan Valarchi Thittam' has been launched, is a step in the right direction. Although only 2,500 village Panchayats will be covered in the first phase, the aim is to cover the entire 12,524 village panchayats before the state goes to polls again. An allocation of Rs 250 crore has been made for it. This may seem to be insufficient but when seen with the outlays marked for various other related schemes and programmes like village pond restoration, enhance soil fertility, greening of 11.75 lakh hectares of fallow lands in the next ten years, setting up drying yards, encouraging terrace vegetable gardens, to link millets, pulses, and oilseeds cultivation with PDS supplies, setting up farmer markets and providing for agri-processing and value addition, and a horde of other initiatives shows how keen Tamil Nadu is to change the face of its rural landscape. What seems fascinating (and at the same time challenging) is the policy thrust to revive the rural economy, with emphasis on farmer-centric approaches. This became possible after senior officials had gone in for an elaborate and widespread consultative process, involving all kinds of stakeholders, which brought innovative ideas as well as measures that were essential to revive farming. Instead of talking only to economists and business leaders in pre-budget exercises, Tamil Nadu reached out to farmers, activists and civil society organisations. This exercise will only

At a time when the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2019-20 estimates that 44% of the country's workforce is engaged in agriculture, and considering that the size of the farm workforce has expanded in the post-lockdown period, policy makers need to accept that it is no longer advisable to continue with the outdated economic thinking of keeping rural wages low so as to encourage out migration.

remain useful if the stakeholders continue to keep a tab, ensuring that the government focus does not deviate in the years to come.

Perhaps it is primarily for this elaborate consultative process, Tamil Nadu has made allocations for setting up a Nammalvar Organic Farming Research Centre at the TN Agricultural University, and also launched a programme to conserve traditional paddy varieties, naming it after Nel Jayaraman. In addition, a separate wing for organic farming is proposed to be created under the state agricultural department. A provision for subsidy support for organic farmers has also been made. Turning farming into a profitable enterprise is certainly not possible till suitable policies are laid out to retain and attract youth in farming. Although Tamil Nadu has announced a 'Rural Youth Agricultural Skill Development Mission' with the aim to provide the right kind of skills to the youth, and also launched programmes for capacity-building for students passing out from the agriculture university, assured income by way of an assured price remains the hallmark for converting agriculture into an economic activity. The Centre has a bigger role here, first by providing the right prices,

and also must collaborate with states to bring the youth back into agriculture. It's time to know that even in the US, the number of young in agriculture has gone up by 11 per cent between 2017 and 2019. China is planning to send 10 million youth back to the villages by 2022.

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This has to change if the country is to realise the Prime Minister's vision of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas. Let us not forget, agriculture alone has the potential to provide gainful employment to a large section of the population. Tamil Nadu has shown the way. While a lot will depend on how the budget proposals are implemented, it has certainly laid out a roadmap for bringing back the focus on an economically-viable and sustainable small-scale agriculture. □□

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

<https://www.bhaskar.com/story/economy/reviving-indian-agriculture-is-key-to-jump-start-economy-993981>

Beyond E-Rupi

TB is a major disease in our country. Its treatment requires that the medicines be taken continuously for nine months. The bacterium becomes resistant if the medicines are not taken regularly for the specified time. The Government has done well to appoint health workers to reach the medicines to the patients. The Government officials buy the medicines and field workers reach the medicines to the patients. This process opens up a number of opportunities of corruption. The officials can collect commissions in the purchase of the medicines; then, the store manager, the field worker or the patient himself can sell the medicines in the black market. The Government has launched the e-Rupi system to cut such corruption and to reach the medicines directly to the patient without the government officials having to purchase them.

Under the e-Rupi system, the government will simultaneously inform the patient, the specified shop keepers and a designated bank of the issue of a particular e-Rupi voucher. The patient will receive a code on his mobile phone. The patient will go to any of the designated medical store. He will show the code and the medical store will give him the medicine. The medical store will send the code to the designated bank and the bank will transfer the money to the account of the medical store. The government employees will not be required to physically handle the medicines hence the chances of corruption will be less. Another major benefit is that the patient will get a choice of medical stores from where to obtain the medicine. The patient is empowered. The scheme is entirely welcome.

That said, many opportunities of leakages remain. To give an example, an informal market of the food grains distributed under the Public Distribution System (PDS) has been established in most villages. The beneficiaries sell the free food grains received if they need cash more than the grains. They sell the grains at less than the market price. Similarly, the patient may give the code to the medical store but buy some tonic or tooth brush or get some cash instead of the specified medicine. The medical store may pay the patient Rs 70 against an e-Rupi voucher



Under the e-Rupi system, the patient is empowered as he or she would have a choice of medical store to obtain medicine through the e-Rupi vouchers.

Dr. Bharat Jhunjunwala



while he may collect the specified Rs 100 from the bank. The e-Rupi system is good but will not lead to the elimination of leakages and corruption. The corruption will stop only if the patient understands the necessity of taking the medicines continuously for nine months.

The philosophical basis of the government distributing TB medicines—whether directly or through e-Rupi—is that the patient does not understand the necessity of taking medicines continuously. Therefore, the government employees must reach the TB medicine to the patient. It is forgotten that one can take the horse to the water but one cannot make him drink the water. Similarly, the government can reach the medicine to the TB patient either through the government employees as was done previously or through the e-Rupi system as proposed now but the government cannot get the patient to take the medicine unless the patient himself understands the necessity of doing so.

That said, the government is moving in the right direction by empowering the patient to decide the shop from which to buy the medicine. Successive governments have indeed tried to prevent leakages from schemes such as fertilizer subsidy, LPG subsidy, medicines and food grains such as by linking the distribution of PDS grains to the Aadhaar card of the beneficiary. That has led to the elimination of large numbers of bogus ration cards. Yet, as discussed above, the leakage continues albeit at a reduced level. I was once undertaking survey of flood damage in Gorakhpur. The village level worker was taking 20 percent commission to give the relief cheques to the beneficiaries. The point is that leakages

Instead, the people can be given the money in cash and be empowered not only to buy medicines from a shop of their choice; but also empowered to decide whether to buy fertilizers, food grains or medicines.

will continue as long as the government relies on the government employees to reach welfare to the beneficiaries. There is a need, therefore, to reconsider the very basis of these schemes and eliminating all leakages instead of doing patchworks such as the e-Rupi.

The idea of establishing large numbers of targeted welfare schemes is based on the presumption that the targeted people are “fools.” They will not eat food grains, take medicines and apply fertilizers unless the government officers provide these items to them. This approach is contrary to the basic concept of democracy. We believe that the people are sovereign. They understand what is good for them so much so that they can correctly choose the right leader. If that is so, then we must also assume that the people are capable of understanding the need of applying chemical fertilizers, partaking of a nourishing food provided, and taking TB medicines continuously. The only limiting factor can be money, which I shall discuss shortly. And, if people are sovereign, then we must also assume that the people are competent to decide to use the money for the purchase of fertilizers, food grains or medicines. Then there re-

mains no case for making schemes to provide fertilizers, food grains and medicines. Instead, the people can be given the money in cash and be empowered not only to buy medicines from a shop of their choice; but also empowered to decide whether to buy fertilizers, food grains or medicines. The myriad of welfare schemes can be merged and the money provided directly to the people.

The role of the Government is truly to provide information. Instead of establishing a huge bureaucracy to implement the schemes such as the e-Rupi, the government must launch a public education campaign to inform the people of the benefits of taking TB medicines regularly. The same applies to use of fertilizers and purchase of food grains. Such dissemination of information coupled with sovereignty of the people will beget the desired results. The government employees, it seems are less interested in undertaking dissemination of information perhaps because there is less opportunities of leakage here. Then, not having disseminated information, and having denied the people the opportunity of taking decisions about their own welfare; they make a case for themselves buying the medicines and providing to the patients and, in the process, they open up opportunities of corruption for themselves.

The contradiction of the welfare schemes is that the people are considered wise where election of the leader is concerned but fools where taking decisions about their own welfare is concerned. Let us respect the wisdom of the people & give them cash & information.□□

Formerly Professor of Economics at IIM Bengaluru

Herding Local Capital for Local Startup



We are the youngest nation and the biggest market on the face of this planet earth. The aging economies are relying more and more on internet-based technologies- such as the internet of things, artificial intelligence, machine learning processes, unmanned mobility services, robotics-based manufacturing processes, and so on. The Covid-19 pandemic has established these technologies as a boon in crisis and hence their existence can't be ignored in the name of killing the traditional job market. We accept these technologies and we live with them. But there are sources of bane. We have to address them swiftly. The big question is who controls them? The older

legally approved control tools available with the regulators and tax collectors are unable to match the speed of change in business.

The whole debate revolves around control. Innovation, research, creativity, new ideas, and such concepts nurture well in a free environment. An environment that is borderless, no interference from the regulators, no fund crunch, no one to question about what one is developing. But as soon as the product is accepted and control comes into the picture the fight becomes murkier. The freedom to do any business and conceptualize any idea without regulators' interference fails. Individual freedom can't be more than the freedom of society. The 2007-8 financial crisis is the biggest global learning for repercussions of the absence of strong and effective regulators.

The lab leak acceptance and non-acceptance of the 2019 new Coronavirus is the latest example that leads to necessarily regulate the science. Nuclear weapons are the drivers to control applications of nuclear science. Similarly, we have examples from the finance world. The small domestic startups, over a period of time, have become relatively big technology companies. But the bad news is that they are no more domestic companies for all or any, practical or business, or objective purposes. The control has been lost. The tax and trade have been corrupted. The system needs new software and a legal architect to reboot the trade and tax laws.

Finance has controlled technology, innovation, science. Now, the ideas are indebted to finance. Any idea which has applications in business can be produced and executed by the technology. The idea is the foremost important thing. Technology and finance follow them. Someone created "Orkut" the first well-known and broadly used social networking platform, a better idea "Facebook" came and killed Orkut. Today, there is no better idea that is visible, that can substitute Twitter. The cosmetic changes are easier to replicate. We are waiting to witness the



The whole debate revolves around control, innovation, research, creativity, new ideas, and such concepts nurture well in a free environment.
Alok Singh

idea which can kill Twitter.

The good news among all these concerns is that the shelf life of such technology companies is less. A better idea arrives and the older are gone. But the role of finance does not change. The big financial organizations are always in control whosoever the original promoter or the original idea creator be.

We had the illusion that Flipkart is ours, Paytm is ours, Zomato is ours, Swiggy is ours, Ola is ours, Oyo is ours, Cloudtail is ours, and the list goes on. The big question is who controls them. The finance-related companies whether it be financial institutions, commercial banks, private equity, venture capitalists, portfolio investors, or any other form from any part of the globe need to be given due diligence. The domestic promoters for domestic start-ups are pressed for funds for their survival and are easy prey to foreign financing-related companies. In the process, the promoters dilute their stake and the foreign equity owners ride with the profit by bypassing the domestic regulators. The rule of the game needs to be rectified. Till it is corrected the domestic start-up's needs hand-holding in terms of financial obligations. Small domestic startups can rely on small domestic investors for the purpose and the government needs to design a process that is easily accessible. The role of mediators needs to be zero in this new channel of a variant of crowdsourcing finance, a crowd-finance that is not charity but equity. It has to be between the startup promoter and the investor with the government's role being that of a monitor.

We truly need a not-for-profit

We truly need a not-for-profit platform where the financial resource crunch domestic start-ups and the domestic investors can come up together and mutually cooperate for the execution of the win-win game.

platform where the financial resource crunch domestic start-ups and the domestic investors can come up together and mutually cooperate for the execution of the win-win game. The local capital can assure the control of the nation over the business practices of the technology-based start-ups. E-commerce has created troubles both for the trade as well as for the tax. Day after day new stories of such companies making losses but seeing a surge in valuation has become a magic box. This magic is happening on the foundations of foreign money, no responsibility but full control. Our tax laws and trade laws are obsolete to stop such business stunts which are risky to the domestic job market, domestic supply chain, domestic sources of revenue to the local government, state government, and the union government. The solutions have to be discovered and executed.

The solution is that controlling equity should be owned by domestic finance. We have a lot of capital in the unorganized sector and that's the reason that the unorganized sector could support so

many families by offering jobs and opportunities. The government needs to take measures to build the confidence of small local investors so that it motivates the local small investors to partner in local small start-ups. The government has succeeded on many occasions to drive the people in nation-building. The LPG give-up-subsidy campaign is a huge success story of voluntary participation in nation-building. There are stories of crowd-funding during Lok-Sabha elections for candidates who could generate targeted amounts within hours. The local capital is there, it is lying somewhere unutilized and we need a channel to tap it. Local capital is not for charity but is a substitute for external capital and partnering with local start-ups. A platform is needed and a regulator is needed.

A regulator specific for local startup business practices can be the responsibility of the city government or the state government or the union government, as the case be. If the reach of the start-up is within the district it should be the district administration who regulates it, if the reach is within the state then the state administration should own the responsibility to regulate it, and if the reach is across the nation then the union government should regulate it. There is an urgent need to support small domestic startups with small local domestic investors. There are already regulators for global aspirers and we need to support small start-ups with simplicity. The process should be so simple that a local investor can log in and do the transactions with the local start-ups.

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Afghan maze – India needs deft handling to play the game



The murky Afghan situation has raised serious concern for India. It was never a strong player but was able to make a niche among Afghans with its humanitarian aid and \$ 3 billion investments since 2001 US blitzkrieg for rebuilding a devastated country. The geo politics is to have repercussions on the subcontinent not only in trade terms but overall security.

Shivaji Sarkar

Rightly India avoided US prodding to be a military ally, possibly learning from the Sri Lanka peace-keeping experiment. The stakes were always high at this melting pot. But what can India do now? India has been investing in a relationship in unstable regime and Afghans coming for training have always acknowledged the warm gestures. Indian diplomacy played a critical role of emotional security, cultural ties and whatever level of trade and rebuilding mechanism it could provide. Thousands of Afghans are in India for work, training, re-skilling, education and medical treatment. Over 2,200 students of Afghan-origin studying in India on scholarship stare at an uncertain future. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations would continue to extend the help.

Though not unexpected India is hurt that the 20-year US war against terrorism led by Taliban offshoots leading to killing of Osama bin Laden and its top hierarchy strangely ‘ends’ in replacing Taliban with Taliban. It surprises India that Saudi Arabia or Qatar despite having good relations are supporting and Turkey taking a strong position with resurgent religious feelings. Pakistan that was feeling run down by the US for giving preference to India would now not miss an opportunity to embarrass India.

In the melee whatever the reason, the country got distanced with Iran, a friend for decades, loses rupee-petro deals and despite significant involvement in developing Chabahar port, a gateway to Central Asia, is now virtually left in the lurch. Iran even has its embassy open in Kabul along with Russia and China. Iran cannot be faulted. Now Taliban is a concern for it and Iran has to protect its interests.

It would be a natural endeavour for India to reconnect with Iran. The relationships continued despite US sanctions. Sudden withdrawal by India was surprising for Iran too. India has to make efforts to renew the relationship. It would be useful for geopolitics as well as practical economic considerations. A better with Iran would help continue the access to Central Asia with which its business relations



are strengthening.

PM Narendra Modi visited five countries in the region – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – last year. An additional \$ 1 billion line of credit to widen connectivity and energy sectors was issued and a business council was formed. At present, India's commercial presence in Central Asia is led by public sector entities—Punjab National Bank and ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) have operations in Kazakhstan. Private investments include the Sun Group, which operates the Yubileynoye gold mine in Kazakhstan, and companies such as KEC International Limited and Cosmopolitan Builders and Hoteliers Limited, which have executed projects in Tajikistan. The present flight detours and difficult land travels might affect the ties and business deals might become expensive.

That India is not friendless is testified by the safe passage it could arrange for its envoy diplomats and Indian nationals. Still it is a foreign policy setback and national security concern.

An immediate concern is whether its borders with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir would require more investments to secure it or not as J&K remains high on mujahideen agenda. Taliban raiding the embassy in Kabul and consular office in Herat speaks volumes. India has to find out a balancing approach in dealing with Taliban as ostpolitik could not be an answer nor perhaps it getting involved in anti-Taliban western groupings as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has already called for. Even distancing from it would not be easy as India has deeper financial and trade interests with the West.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will bear an adverse impact on India's bilateral trade with it, according to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).

The Afghan failure of the US is reflecting also on dollar. This is adding to global inflation and it would create further troubles for India. Rising petrol prices, RBI pressure to reduce taxes on petroleum products and government revenue conundrum add to the crisis.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will bear an adverse impact on India's bilateral trade with it, according to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT). Trade between the two nations amounted to \$1.4 billion in 2020-21 and \$1.52 billion in 2019-20. It has hit the Afghan traders also. Their exports for now are thawed and restoration depends on how situations normalize.

Confederation of All India Traders says that prices of some commodities may also go up in the Indian markets due to uncertainty over bilateral trade and relations with Afghanistan. Exports from India stood at \$826 million whereas imports amounted to \$510 million in 2020-21. The not so large volume of trade may not look monetarily important but strategically these help both the countries.

India's significant contribution in its rebuilding and investments in Afghanistan too would be missed

there. The fundamentalist regime is still poised against India as the ransacking of consular premises and kidnapping of many Indians from near the airport indicates. For now it is not an easy task to continue the operations.

India had an ambitious plan with the initiative of International North-South Corridor spanning Iran, central Asia and Eurasia. It is supposed to emerge as a major connector with Modi's concept linking the corridor to Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran rail link, now operational. It is also supposed to be linked to Chabahar and dedicated freight corridor having special economic zones on its flanks being built by India. The Chabahar-Sistan-Baluchistan-Central Asia/Afghanistan route till recently was considered less risky than the high-risk provinces of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. With changing political scenario this too is likely to become difficult.

Is China outsmarting India with its "one belt, one road" move? Its continued consular presence in Afghanistan speaks volumes. China is becoming a tough contender not only at the borders but also at the international business arena. China is now the largest trade partner of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the second-largest trade partner of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and the third-largest trade partner of Tajikistan. In 2013, Kyrgyzstan threw a spanner against sale of oil-fields to OVL.

India has to work deftly to reestablish itself and outdo its rivals in and around Afghanistan to carry on its business and diplomacy in a tough world where even the world bodies remain as mere spectators. □□

Taliban moves cautiously to form government

It took Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, co-founder of the Taliban, one week after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan to arrive in Kabul (August 21, 2021) to initiate talks on government formation. Amidst hints of factional strains within the militia, the group hinted that it is seeking an “inclusive” government including members of the deposed administration, with a view to enhance its chances of gaining international recognition at the earliest.

Present indications suggest that the group will not appoint a President to the Islamic Emirate, but will rule via a 12-member Council, the full shape of which is yet to emerge. However, on Tuesday, August 24, it moved to fill some of the power vacuum in Kabul by appointing former Guantanamo detainee, Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, as acting defence minister, according to Al Jazeera that cited a source within the organisation.

The term ‘acting’ is significant and suggests that changes could be made to accommodate other factions within the Taliban or members of previous administrations who agree to join the Emirate government. Other interim appointments include Sadr Ibrahim (acting interior minister); Sakhaullah (acting head of education); Abdul Baqi (acting head of higher education); and Haji Mohammad Idris (acting head of Afghanistan’s central bank).

Gul Agha has been appointed as finance minister; Najibullah as intelligence chief; Mullah Shirin as Kabul governor and Hamdullah Nomani as Kabul mayor.

Former British army officer, Dr Mike Martin, observed that Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir belongs to the Alizai, a sub-tribe of the larger Durrani tribe. The Kandahar group, birthplace of the Taliban, has thus cornered the posts of finance, defence, interior, and Governor of Kabul. This could be a source of strife with the al-Qaida linked Haqqani Network in future.

The Haqqani Network, a distinct entity within the Taliban, has taken charge of the security of Kabul. The United States considers the Haqqani Network “a veritable arm” of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and deems it a “foreign terrorist organisation”. It was believed to be behind several attacks on American bases in Afghanistan.

Overall, the appointments belie Taliban claims regarding a broad based government as key positions have been given to militants from Kandahar. Moreover, the United States is likely to find this government unpalatable. Beijing is most likely to emerge as its main support.

Washington’s primary concern at present is the evacuation of thousands of people from Afghanistan, given the Taliban insistence that it complete withdrawal by the Biden-declared deadline of August 31. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) chief William Burns reportedly met Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Kabul on August 23 with a view to gain some leeway in the matter. However, Suhail Shaheen, Taliban spokesman for political office in Qatar to deal with foreign media, said any US presence beyond August 31 would mean “occu-



Although Taliban is cautious about their movement regarding the formation of government, overall, the appointments belie Taliban claims regarding a broad based government as key positions have been given to militants from Kandahar.
Sandhya Jain

pation” of the country. In Kabul, spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid accused the US of deliberately encouraging skilled people in Afghanistan to leave the country.

Taliban has repeatedly made polite noises about respect for women’s rights, but reports continue of rapes of family members of those who served the old regime, and gruesome murders of men and women in the provinces. Even in Kabul, women news anchors were soon prevented from reporting for duty.

Khalil Haqqani, brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani and uncle of Taliban deputy leader Sirajuddin Haqqani, repeated the pledge to “forgive” former members of the Afghan National Security Forces, but few are convinced and continue to queue outside the airport, hoping to leave the country. Khalil Haqqani is one of America’s most wanted terrorists and has a bounty of \$5 million on his head. America has, however, offered the regime an olive branch by ‘offering’ it a seat on the UN Commission on the Status of Women, if they form a recognized Afghan government.

However, the Taliban is a long way from public acceptance. In an awesome show of defiance, on August 19, the 102nd Independence Day, residents of Kabul replaced the Taliban flag with the Afghan national tricolor at Abdul Haq Square, chanting, “our flag, our identity”. Young men and women marched past Taliban cadres who waved their guns at them, but allowed the protestors to pass.

The Panjshir-based resistance also continues. On August 20, local resistance forces captured the districts of Banu, Pule Hesar and Deh Bala of Baghlan province,

However, the Taliban is a long way from public acceptance. In an awesome show of defiance, on August 19, the 102nd Independence Day, residents of Kabul replaced the Taliban flag with the Afghan national tricolor at Abdul Haq Square.

after resisting house-to-house searches by the Taliban. The Panjshir (valley of five lions) resistance led by former First Vice President Amrullah Saleh, who claims to be Acting President as per the Afghanistan Constitution, and warlord Ahmad Massoud, captured Baghlan province on August 20, after clashes in which 50 Taliban were killed and several wounded. A pro-Taliban account tweeted that the group was betrayed after offering amnesty to the local population.

The Panjshiris are now trying to capture Charikar and the strategic Salang Pass, which would link them to Uzbekistan and make it possible for Uzbek militia leader Abdul Rashid Dostum to join them. Several Afghan Air Force transporters and fighter jets landed in Uzbekistan in recent days. The Dostum camp claims it will be in a position to send 10,000 Afghan army personnel to the region to join hands with the Panjshiris.

Saleh is reportedly disturbed over Taliban’s revenge tactics; it has executed several soldiers, policemen, intelligence personnel, inter-

preters, and Afghans who served the deposed government and Washington. Ahmad Massoud urged Washington and the Western allies for weapons to fight the Taliban, pledging to fight for women’s rights and free press in Afghanistan and to protect the West from terrorist attacks.

Mindful of its international image, the Taliban appealed to the Panjshir militia to surrender peacefully. A bitter battle seems inevitable once government formation is sorted out.

Mullah Baradar had arrived in Afghanistan on August 17, but stayed in Kandahar, where his efforts yielded prime posts for the Kandahar group. Baradar was arrested in Pakistan in 2010 but was released in 2018 under pressure from Washington and made head of the Taliban’s political office in Doha. He oversaw the signing of the agreement that ended American presence in Afghanistan.

Senior Taliban officials told media that Baradar would meet “jihadi leaders and politicians for an inclusive government set-up”. Khalil Haqqani recently met with former mujahidin leader Gulbud-din Hekmatyar, and Anas Haqqani (Haqqani Network) met former president Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the National Reconciliation Council, in the capital. The latter was once an important leader of the Northern Alliance that fought the Taliban between 1996 and 2001.

The prominence acquired by the Haqqani Network has raised Western fears that al-Qaida could make a comeback in Afghanistan. In the Doha deal of February 2020, the Taliban had promised not to allow foreign terrorist groups, in-

cluding al-Qaida, to use Afghan soil to threaten the security of the United States and its allies. But the Haqqani Network has always been close to al-Qaida; they trained together in Pakistan's North Waziristan region after the US invasion. The Haqqani Network helped Osama bin Laden escape from Afghanistan when American forces cornered him in 2001.

In a disturbing move, Noor Wali Mehsud, emir of al-Qaida affiliate Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), renewed allegiance to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It is thus likely that foreign terrorist organisations will continue to be hosted on Afghan soil. Many TTP members were released from Afghan jails by the Taliban in recent days.

Russia and China have not recognised the Taliban regime so far, but are maintaining ties with it. Iran has been friendly with the group,

but the bomb attack on Shia Hazaras in Punjab, Pakistan (main sponsor of Taliban) on Muharram (August 19) will make Tehran cautious.

Neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have rushed to firm up security ties with Russia, for fear of the revolution being exported to their countries. Moscow too is concerned about the security of its borders with its Central Asian neighbours. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia, China, the United States and Pakistan could help mediate the crisis in Afghanistan. "We remain committed to the task of establishing peace and stability on Afghanistan's territory so that it poses no threats to the region," he said. He ruled out allowing Afghan refugees enter Central Asia, or having US troops there.

Moscow will cooperate with Beijing that appears to hold the

trump cards in Afghanistan, given its hold over Pakistan and ability to bankroll development in Afghanistan, especially after Washington froze the Afghanistan Central Bank's assets in America.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the Afghanistan situation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, besides bilateral issues, including India-Russia cooperation against COVID-19. Developments in Afghanistan impact its neighbours, the region and the world, and India is keen to protect its interests in the region. The security and safe exit of minorities is a primary Indian concern.

Much, however, depends on the shape of the government. Mullah Baradar cobbles up in Kabul, and the internal cohesion of Taliban 2.0. □□

[Note – Pakistan Muharram was August 19]
<https://www.sandhyajainarchive.org/2021/08/25/taliban-moves-cautiously-to-form-government/>

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J&K after abrogation of article 370:

Development via Bridging Gaps

Mehbooba Mufti, the president of the People's Democratic Party and former chief minister of JK, recently sparked another controversy with her remarks on Article 370 and 35A being abrogated. She was heard making an inflammatory statement on the 22nd Foundation Day of her party while condemning the central government, "Whatever the central government took away from Kashmiris on August 5, 2019; will be taken back with interest."

Earlier, she pledged not to unfurl the national flag, Tiranga until J&K regains its former status. This irresponsible statement landed her in widespread criticism from within and outside of her own party, ultimately leading to her withdrawing it. She has been propagating separatism and extremism in J&K is a matter of fact. Post-August 5, 2019, developments have made her vulnerable and the PDP on the brink of extinction. Many prominent members of the Gupkar Alliance seemed to adapt to the current situation on the day of their meeting with the Prime Minister in Delhi on 24th June. However, she continued to emit separatist slang synonymous with autonomy, anarchy and violence due to which she was alienated.

In J&K, discrimination has been widespread, and it is being swept under the shield of J&K's special status. The discrimination ranged from corruption in development schemes to unequal participation in the government machinery and disregard for the constitutional rights of marginalized groups and women. Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A was welcomed by the people of JK, especially from Jammu Division. The unification of J&K with the rest of the nation is an outcome of sacrifices of great figures like Amar Balidani Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Shere- Duggar Pandit Premnath Dogra, Maharaja Harisingh, Brigadier Rajinder Singh, and Brigadier Mohammad Usman. The justice for marginalized sections has finally begun following the abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A. J&K has entered a new era of equality and development. Many significant movements by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Premnath Dogra made Jam-

Mehbooba Mufti continues to deliver inflammatory speeches to air separatist tendencies synonymous with autonomy, anarchy and violence. She was alienated because of these trends.

Prof. Rasal Singh



Consideration

mu and Kashmir a focal point of national concern. To ensure justice and equality for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, they had intensified public awareness campaigns all over India.

Today, UT of Jammu & Kashmir is undergoing on-the-ground reforms. A portion of the work has been completed, but there is still much to be done. All these development projects and transformations are being implemented under the able leadership of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and the direction of visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A major change is the implementation of three-tier Panchayati Raj systems in the UT, after a long delay of 28 years. Local bodies have been empowered and provided with resources available to them throughout the country. There has been political reservation for ST classes like Gujar Bakkarwal, Gaddi, Sippy, etc., allowing these classes to develop. By participating in elections for Gram Panchayats, Block Development Councils, and District Development Councils, STs have made significant contributions to grassroots democracy. Reservations have been granted to the Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure social justice. Architect of Indian Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar dreamt of an equal and just society throughout the country without any discrimination based on caste, race, religion, or region etc. Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 A will pave the way for a unified India as envisioned by Dr. B R Ambedkar.

Women who used to get married outside of the state (and were deprived of their basic rights earlier) have welcomed this move. In

independent India, this gender-based discrimination was a shameful example of the constitution failing to ensure equal rights to all citizens. The adoption of Universal Adult Suffrage at the time of Independence has set precedents for many new democracies and was a manifestation of a progressive outlook and democratic values. Throughout the framing of the constitution, liberty, equality, and fraternity served as the guiding principles. The previous governments in J&K relied on the special status to ignore these principles. Nonetheless, this new constitutional amendment will result in radical socio-economic changes in the UT of JK. The new provisions will ensure that millions of settled Dalits (especially Valmiki Samaj, displaced persons of West Pakistan, Gorkhas, and PoJK displaced persons) will have access to basic rights and facilities.

The new industrial policy has been implemented and investor conclaves are organized. This will ensure massive employment opportunities to the local people. To bridge the gap and connect the local people with the mainstream, the new Language Policy has been introduced and Dogri, Kashmiri, and Hindi, the mother tongues of most J&K residents are given official language status. Tourism is also being revamped as it has been subject to frequent terrorist attacks and government negligence. The govt. is paying special attention to potential new locations that were previously ignored. Jointly, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam are constructing Sri Venkateshwar Bhagwan temple, revitalizing the holy river Devika and the Shiv

Khori Cave, etc. To combat widespread corruption in government agencies, strict measures have been taken against many officials. It is believed that many officials worked hand-in-hand with terrorists and were involved in antinational activities. This action put the lives of the locals at risk and bit the very hands which liberated them. There have been many terminations or investigations related to these cases. Especially noteworthy is that terror activities have decreased to 59% after Article 370 was abrogated.

Roads, electricity, water, health, and education are being provided at a very fast pace, especially in remote and inaccessible areas of J&K. The Prime Minister's Employment Package includes employment and housing arrangements for the needy displaced Kashmiris. Approval has been given to construct a residential complex that is safe and has all amenities for rehabilitating Kashmiri displaced persons. All govt. documents and files have been e-filed in place of the costly and heavy "Darbar Move" exercise. The "Citizens Charter" has been implemented to ensure the timely completion of various projects and the resolution of problems. Government officials who have become inactive and deferential will be made responsive thereby speeding up the implementation of development schemes. Efforts are being made to eradicate corruption in government jobs, admissions to medical, engineering, and management institutions and development schemes. Responsibility has been fixed and culprits are being prosecuted for the Roshani act land Scam and arms license scam.

[Continued on page no. 29]

Demographic Dividend as an Opportunity for Economic Development in India

India is having the second largest population in the world. There are various challenges on different fronts; be it current public health emergency, unemployment issues, slow growth rate, and mitigating climate change. But India is also having an advantage in the form of demographic dividends. India's demographic dividend is unique in two aspects; first, it is longer than any other country and second, it is available at a different time in different states because of demographic transition at a different pace in India.

According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), demographic dividend means, "the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the nonworking-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older)". Indian population is characterized by a young population in the aging world. India is having a median age of 29 years by the end of 2020 which is very high in the world, as compared to 37 in China and the USA, 45 in Western Europe, 49 in Japan. Economic Survey 2018-19 stated that the availability of demographic dividends in India will last till 2055-56 which was started in 2005-06 or 37 years since its beginning. It will peak around 2041 when the share of the working-age population, i.e. 20-59 years, the population is expected to hit around 59%.

As the birth rate is declining, the working-age population will overpass the dependent population (children aged 14 and below as well as above 65 years). The more working-age population will be an asset for the country. It will spur economic growth if investments are made in the sectors of education, health, skill development, and innovation for accelerating economic growth and development.



Human capital needs more and more skills and training to reap the benefits for a demographic dividend, else demographic disaster would be a nightmare for the country.
Dr. Subhash Kumar



United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has propounded that India is having two interesting characteristics of demographic dividend. First, the demographic dividend is available for five years starting from 2005-06 to 2055-56 in India which is longer than any other country. Second, this demographic dividend window is available at different times in different states because of the differential behavior of the population parameters.

The demographic dividend has historically contributed up to 15 percent of the overall growth in advanced economies, with several Asian nations- Japan, Thailand, South Korea, and more recently China. Japan was the first country in Asia to experience this demographic dividend which lasted from 1964-2004. Other Asian countries like Singapore and Hong Kong also witnessed a higher trajectory of growth rate.

India's backward states or least developed states like (Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan) will benefit most from the demographic dividend. Southern states which are already in the third stage of demographic transition are already taking advantage of demographic dividends be it Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Northern states especially Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh are having a comparatively higher share of the young population requires more attention and policy perspective to reap the benefits of demographic dividend.

There are various policy perspectives needed to take reap the benefits of demographic dividends:

1. A meager 3 percent of Indian

“The economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 & younger, and 65 & older)”.

workers are formally skilled. Significantly, in most of the labor force in India, about 93 percent who work in the unorganized sector are having no formal training, by way of comparison, 96 percent of the workers in South Korea receive formal skills training. This is 80 percent in Japan, 75 percent in Germany, and 68 percent in the United Kingdom. Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kausal Vikas Yojana should be executed properly to impart skill training among youth.

2. Investment in health and education for creating a more healthy and skilled workforce is need of the hours. Employability is one of the biggest issues in the Indian workforce. Imparting skill training among the young workforce will increase employability skills. At the same time investment in physical infrastructure will create more job opportunities.
3. Policy focuses on social infrastructure and socio-economic development with inclusive

growth make India more profound and strengthen its economic activity.

4. India needs to overcome the burden of overpopulation. Population stabilization is another important policy decision that should be taken earliest to stabilize population growth. More number of the working population will be an asset to the country.
5. Unemployment is another matter of concern. More unemployed people will be dependent on the working population which will slow the growth process. Hence, more and more job opportunities should be created through entrepreneurship, start-up, and innovation.
6. Better economic growth prospects will be there due to the higher workforce. A rise in the women's workforce will balance the gender parity in the workforce. Schemes like 'Beti Bachao Beti Pado' has already a right step in this direction. The demographic dividend will also increase the saving rate in the economy.
7. World Economic Forum (2016) in its study entitled "The Future of Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution" conducted a comprehensive survey from leading experts, from academia, international organization, professional services firms, and heads of human resources of major organizations on current and future skills requirements. The report stated, 65 percent of children entering primary school today would ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't exist. It further states that; “The driv-

er of technological change is artificial intelligence and, machine learning, robotics, nano-technology, 3D printing and genetics, and biotechnology are all building on and amplifying one another. In addition, mobile internet, cloud technology, processing power, big data, and new energy". Therefore, India should also frame its policy in changing environment to get the benefits of IR 4.0.

8. Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant) is another important policy that emphasized more export promotion and import substitution. Various schemes and programs like Make in India, Start-up India, Digital India, Skill India, and Mudra Yojana are already working in this direction. The focus should be to emphasize more on manufacturing in India and developing technological capability. Various initiatives on the different front while keeping demographic dividends at the center of policy, can make India the fastest growing and largest economy in coming years.

There are various challenges associated with the demographic dividend. Asymmetric demography needs to be balanced with employment generation in backward states. Low human capital formation is a matter of concern that should be mitigated through skill development and training before youth entering in the workforce. India needs to fair better in the human development index of UNDP where India ranked 131 of 189 countries in 2020. The informal nature of the Indian economy needs more formalization of economic activities.

NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18, India's labor force participation rate for the age group 15-59 years is around 53 percent. It indicates that around half of the workforce are unemployed. To resolve the unemployment problem, India needs to focus more on those sectors which have potentials for job creation in the economy. India needs to create 10 million jobs every year to provide job opportunities for the young workforce. Schemes like Start-up India and promotion of manufacturing through 'Make in India', and promotion of industrial development would bring the desired result in near future. Rapid industrialization and urbanization in our country will create more and more jobs in the market. Schemes like Smart city

mission and AMRUT should be implemented properly to transform cities with infrastructure development and creating more jobs.

Therefore, to reap the benefits of demographic dividend, invest in education, health, human development, and socio-economic development, high economic growth with inclusion, infrastructure development, skill development and training, entrepreneurship, and innovation are the key policy perspective that must be promoted and encouraged. Human capital needs more and more skills and training to reap the benefits for a demographic dividend, else demographic disaster would be a nightmare for the country. □□

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[Continued from page no. 20]

J&K after abrogation of article 370:

Development via Bridging...

As part of the delimitation process, efforts are being made to create demographically and democratically balanced and justified electoral constituencies. Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai chairs the delimitation commission. It is noteworthy that The National Conference is supporting this exercise, which boycotted it earlier.

'Ekatmata Diwas' honors the sacrifices of great sons and daughters of mother India who made the dream of integration and development come true. Their true homage can only be given by being dedicated to the unity and integrity of India. "Ek Nishan, ek Vidhan; Sabko Samata aur Samman" should not only be the basis of J&K policies, but of all Indian

policies. As a part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that was acceded to the dominion of India by Maharaja Hari Singh on October 26, 1948, the PoJK is no exception to this path of integration and development. Therefore, it automatically became part of unified India. Pakistan's Army and ISI must no longer be spared for their indiscriminate atrocities against the civilian population of Gilgit-Baltistan. The pain and misery of these people must not be ignored or left unheard any more. With the second anniversary of EKATMATA DIWAS, we must commit to strive for unity in diversity and make India a land of harmony, equality and prosperity. □□

(The author is Dean, Students' Welfare, Central University of Jammu)

International concerns on Taliban takeover of Afghanistan



Violence in Afghanistan will impact the spread of violent extremism, movement of jihadis, deluge of Afghan refugees in Middle East and south Asia with increasing logistical, technical and financial support from Pakistan.
Vinod Johri

The Taliban's stunning takeover of Kabul sent shock waves around the world — with immediate implications for the complicated knot of three regional powers in Afghanistan's neighbourhood - Pakistan, Bharat and China. The whole world is keenly watching swiftest Taliban takeover of Afghanistan within 40 days of USA pull out of its armed forces. Already the Taliban has killed around 900 people in Kandahar province in the past month and a half. Advancing Taliban soldiers have been summarily executing detained soldiers, police and civilians with alleged ties to the previous Afghan government. President Ashraf Ghani who fled Afghanistan, claimed at a conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, that 10,000 jihadis had travelled from Pakistan to join Taliban.

Violence in Afghanistan will impact the spread of violent extremism, the movement of jihadis, increase in attacks, influx of Afghan refugees across the entire Middle East and South Asia. Bharat currently presiding over the United Nations Security Council says that logistical, technical and financial support for the Taliban continue to emanate from Pakistan. The U.N. refugee agency says there are nearly 2.8 million registered refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan, the third-largest refugee population in the world besides millions of undocumented people in neighbouring countries.

President Abdul Ghani's escape to Oman is ominous to stability of Afghanistan. The way foreign nationals as well as Afghan nationals are fleeing Afghanistan desperately, this terror ridden country will take decades to regain global faith for restoring economic revival and sustenance. Even entire Afghanistan including Panjshir 125 km from Kabul, is not in control of Taliban. Fierce fighting is going on in Panjshir between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces for gaining control over Panjshir. Taliban is not likely to announce Government until USA leaves Afghanistan. However, 12 member council comprising of present and past Taliban members, has been announced to look after various Departments. There is widespread accusation of Pakistan's active support to the Taliban's offensive. Most recently twin suicide blasts carried out reportedly by ISIS / IS-K (Khorasan) near Kabul Airport on 26th August 2021 killed 75 people including 12 US soldiers and severely wounded 143 people. Former President Hamid Karzai and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have been put under house arrest. US has vowed to punish the perpetrators of blasts. Bharat has criticized the blasts.

Afghanistan's economy is shaped by fragility and aid dependence. GDP in

Afghanistan was expected to reach 20.46 USD Billion by the end of 2021. The illicit economy accounts for a significant share of production, exports and includes opium production, smuggling and illegal mining.

It is pertinent to briefly discuss how different countries having security and strategic stakes in Afghanistan and Global media have viewed Afghanistan situation.

Bharat

In Bharat, there is strong criticism of Taliban takeover in view of Pakistan's direct support. Lives of sizeable number of Hindu and Sikhs who are still living there, are in extreme danger. More than 900 citizens have been evacuated on top priority.

Bharat had completed about 500 projects of vital roads, dams, electricity transmission lines and substations, schools and hospitals, etc. worth \$3 billion. The Taliban regime heightens anxieties from Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad and the TTP about militancy in Kashmir in view of hostilities with Pakistan and China.

Taliban terrorists on directions from ISI, entered our consulates in Kandahar and Herat and took away documents and vehicles. In the all-party meeting held on 26th Aug 2021, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar stated the situation in Afghanistan extremely critical. Mentioning that Bharat is trying to rescue as many persons as possible, he expressed solidarity with the people of the war-torn country. He made it clear that the Taliban didn't stand by its commitment to have a peaceful transition of power as per the Doha agreement, known as the 'Agreement for

Bringing Peace to Afghanistan', signed by the terrorist group and the US on February 29, 2020.

Pakistan

Mixed reactions are coming out of Pakistan. There is denial of interference, sense of victory, concerns of terrorism spilling out in Pakistan, hobnobbing with Taliban, alliance with China to gain control, concerns for refugee problem. For decades, Pakistan has served as a sanctuary for the Afghan Taliban, who have often crossed the countries' rugged, 1,660-mile border with ease. Pakistan host most of the Afghan refugees, estimated at more than 2 million.

For Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban's return delivers a strategic defeat to rival Bharat, but also potentially a boost to an affiliated insurgent group, Pakistani Taliban, that threatens Pakistan itself. Pakistani Taliban (TTP), a banned terrorist group, has carried out hundreds of attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians, including an assault on a school in 2014 that killed at least 145 people, mainly children. Last month alone, TTP claimed responsibility for 26 terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Pak government said that TTP carried out in July 2021 blast at a hydroelectric plant that killed nine Chinese workers and four others.

United States of America

USA is being criticized for hasty withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan thus giving this country in platter to China & Russia. President Joe Biden has stood with his decision of pull out. Former President Donald Trump has made scathing attack against Joe Biden for resurgence of Taliban. The Afghan Taliban had pledged

in its 2020 deal with the United States that it would not harbour extremist groups such as al-Qaeda if the U.S. military withdrew in a timely fashion. In the 20 years since September 11, 2001, the USA has spent more than \$2.26 trillion on the war in Afghanistan. There have been 2,500 U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan, and nearly 4,000 more U.S. civilian contractors killed, beside the estimated 69,000 Afghan military police, 47,000 civilians killed, plus 51,000 dead opposition fighters. Biden blamed Taliban's takeover of the country on the unwillingness of the Afghan army to fight the militant group. Washington has accused Iran in the past of providing covert aid to Taliban fighters against U.S. forces.

USA's hostility with China, Iran and Russia as well as Pakistan in close neighbourhood of Afghanistan has made it difficult for USA to counter Taliban resurgence with the support of these countries.

China

For China, the U.S. withdrawal has raised fears of a widening network of militant groups targeting the ambitious infrastructure projects westward across Eurasia. China's conciliatory posture toward the Taliban marks a stark public turnaround from previous decades, when it voiced concerns that the group was harbouring ethnic Uyghur fighters plotting separatist war in their homeland of Xinjiang. China is tempted to Afghan mineral wealth worth between about \$3 trillion.

Chinese social media blamed USA being unreliable country abandoning Afghanistan at critical time. The Global Times denied sending Chinese troops to fill the vacuum

left by the U.S.

Beijing, has also sought a deal with the Taliban so that militant groups will not attack Chinese targets. As the Chinese presence in countries such as its ally Pakistan, has soared over the past decade, so, too, have attacks against its citizens. In April 2021, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked the Chinese ambassador with a car bomb outside his hotel in Quetta. A suicide bomb ripped through a bus by the Pakistani Taliban, carrying Chinese construction workers in northwest Pakistan, killing 13 as admitted by Pakistan Minister. A massive blast in Gwadar by TTP, Afghan Taliban supported terrorist, killed 6 persons including Chinese engineers on 20th August 2021.

Russia

There is conflicting scenario in Russia over present Afghanistan situation after take over by Taliban post hasty withdrawal of US armed forces. The 1979-1989 Soviet invasion and the subsequent civil war killed more than two million Afghans. The USSR's decade-long intervention in Afghanistan was too a debacle.

With the collapse of the Afghan government, President Vladimir Putin has managed friendly ties with Taliban. The Taliban is however, officially banned by Moscow.

There are reports that the Taliban received weaponry from Russia and paying bounties for killing U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, though vehemently denied by Russia. But with Washington's exit, the Kremlin finally has its long-sought opportunity to enhance its diplomatic and military muscles in the region. Russia is too apprehensive of terror and drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

Iran

Iran, ruled by Shiite clerics, and Taliban, a radical Sunni movement, are at fundamental odds and Iran has long bristled at the Taliban's treatment of non-Sunni minorities. In one incident seared in Iranian memory, Taliban insurgents in 1998 attacked the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan and killed nine Iranians. It is alleged that when United States prepared to invade Afghanistan in 2001, Iran had aided USA with intelligence inputs and other logistic support. Now Washington has accused Iran of providing covert aid to Taliban fighters against U.S. forces in recent takeover by Taliban.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi looks for an opportunity to establish lasting peace in the country after United States' military failure in Afghanistan.

Tehran fears both Taliban rule and Afghanistan civil war likely to imperil the country's ethnic Persian and Shiite communities and consequent more waves of Afghan refugees across the border and empower Sunni militancy in the region. Iran has 2 million Afghan refugees. But Iran's increasingly public overtures to the Taliban has been perceived at home as miscalculation within the country for overlooking Taliban's bloody history of attacking Iranian Shiite minority Hazaras.

Turkey

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey announced that he would work with Pakistan to stem fresh waves of refugees streaming into Turkey. NATO Member Turkey's president said that his country would negotiate with Taliban in a bid to operate

and secure the airport with its 500 troops in Kabul.

Turkey wishes to remain as the main influencer in Afghan affairs, and consequently, increase Turkey's clout in the Muslim world.

Turkish-American relations have been rocky for the past few years over a host of problems, including Turkey's human rights issues, Ankara's purchase of a Russian-made missile system, US support of a Syrian Kurdish group and the continued U.S. residency of a Muslim cleric accused of masterminding a bloody failed coup. Turkey wants to undermine Saudi Arabia as well and inflate its position as a leading Islamic nation vying for a broader role in Afghanistan.

However, to the contrary, Turkey has built a border wall to stop an influx of Afghan refugees from entering the country and also reinforced its border with Iran to stop those fleeing Taliban rule.

European Union

Western governments have been caught off guard by the stunning speed of the Taliban's advance on Kabul. European Union countries are mainly concerned about refugee influx and pressed for a unified international approach to dealing with a Taliban government. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the situation extremely difficult and called the Western countries to collectively work together to get over to that new government. U.K. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Luigi di Maio denied their plans to send troops back to Afghanistan. □□

The Author is Sah Vichar Pramukh, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Delhi Prant,

Reconstructing Identity and Situating Themselves in History:

A Preliminary Note on the Meenas of Jaipur, Pt-IX



It is important to note that Ravat Saraswat in the 1960s claimed a pre-vedic, Harappan origin of the Meenas tracing the origin of the term Meen to the Tamil word Meen meaning fish. However, it is interesting that even Ravat Saraswat quoted Brahmanical sources only to strengthen his thesis.

Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur

Transfer of power from the Khohgong Meenas to the Kachwaha dynasty is presented in the Meena version. The queen (claimed as a sati) of the slain Meena king Alansimha, cursed the Bhat that his descendants won't be patronized/Transfer of power is legitimized through voluntary 'transfer' of the Meena kingdoms of Jaipur Chanda-Khohgong by the widow of the slain Meena king Alansimha, to Dhola Rae. This queen instructed him to worship 'her' as she would be transformed into 'Gurvaya Devi' and every successor of Dhola Rae would receive a tika of blood from the Alansimha's descendants during his coronation. Dhola Rae's widow became a sati and the Meenas began to revolt. Dhola Rae pacified them and declared himself as the 'adopted son' of Alansimha." The cult of Gurvaya Devi may be derived from the cult of Jamua Mata of Ramgarhtahsil. Worship of Gurvaya Devi indicates legitimation of Kachwaha power through appropriation of this cult of the Meenas of eastern Rajasthan. Muniji also narrated some traditions related to Khohgong. Even the surname Singh which is suffixed to Rajput names is claimed by Muniji to originally belong to the Meenas.

Finally, a chronological dynastic history of the royal family of the Meenas of Manchi (Maunch) is narrated, including conquests of three Meena strongholds of Kalikhoh, Getoreghati and Jhotwara by Dhola Rae," transfer of his capital from Dausa to Manchi and its renaming as Ramgarh," and Dhola Rae's successor Kankila Rao's alliance with the Meenas by giving them jagir (land) and enlisting them in his army, leading to the defeat of the Meena king Rao Meda. Thus, the Kachwaha state founded by Dhola Rae was consolidated by Kankila Rao through the subjugation of the Meenas of eastern Rajasthan.

As a concluding note to Muniji's Meena Purana Bhûmikâ, it is important to mention very briefly the contention of the Meena leadership in the 1960s regarding their 'self-identity' and 'image' The movement for writing 'history' and a grand narrative for the Meenas continued after the Reservation Act of ST/SC 1956



which declared the Meenas a ST” The commitment of the Meenas to the writing and publishing of their ‘history’ can be understood from the list of meetings given in Exhibit 1. These meetings which preceded the publication of Ravat Saraswat’s Meena Itihasa in 1967.

If the Meenas claimed Rajput-Kshatriya status in the 1930s, Saraswat rejected any ‘varna’ or Kshatriya status for the Meenas in the 1960s. The change from a ‘Sanskritized’ status to an ‘indigenous’ (adivasi) status can be perceived in the context of tribal leadership and politics following the passage of the SC/ST Reservation Bill in 1956.

Ravat Saraswat refused to accept an Aryan, Rajput-Kshatriya origin for the Meenas and assigned a ‘proto-Dravida’ castestatus, implying that the Meenas originated in the Indus Valley Civilization. The Meenas of Indus valley sported the totem of fish.” This pre-Aryan community also built fortresses for defence. As the Aryans and others intruded into the Indus valley, the displaced Meenas went to the Aravalli Hills and settled there. Saraswat claimed that the word ‘Meena’ was not derived from Sanskrit but from a pre-Sanskritic linguistic group, Tamil. The word ‘Meena’ means fish in Tamil. Hence, linguistic evidence supports the thesis of proto-Dravidian/Tamil origin of the Meenas. Interestingly, Saraswat strengthened his thesis by referring to the Vedas, Brahmanas and classical Sanskrit literature to claim that the ancient Matsyas of eastern Rajasthan Aravallis were the ancestors of the Meenas.⁵⁰ Saraswat concluded that the Meenas were therefore not the descendants of Scythians, Shakas, Kshatriyas and Hunas.”

The movement for writing ‘history’ and a grand narrative for the Meenas continued after the Reservation Act of ST/SC 1956 which declared the Meenas a ST.

They were ‘adivasis’⁵² who might even have come from outside and settled here. Saraswat also opined that the Meenas were militant, held land and therefore, were a part of the ruling elite.”

However, it is equally interesting to note that Saraswat devoted a large part of Meena Itihāṣa to the history of ‘Rajput Meena struggle for political and military supremacy in eastern Rajasthan in the same pattern as Muni MaganSagar in his Meena Purana Bhūmikā. Saraswat narrates the same story of Dhola Rae treacherously killing a Meena ‘king’ and Kankila Rao exterminating the rest of the Meenas to secure the Kachawaha Rajput state. Meenas, thus, present us with an interesting situation in the latter half of the twentieth century. They have contextualized their movement for a share in the political power by an indigenized/tribalized ‘self-image’ in modern, democratic India while retaining a place in the ‘political history’ of pre Rajput Rajasthan. Meenas seem to have been more successful than the Meos in lending an overall leadership to this tribal community encompassing different branches of the Meenas in independent India.

APPENDIX 1

Genealogical trees, including claims to Rajput castes, of some famous Meena families listed by Ravat Saraswat at the end of Meena Itihasa. Ravat has listed the following details on the basis of bardic accounts: bahis written by jagas (bards of the Meena community). Patron deities: Goddess Banjarimata or Pippalajmata. A festival is still held in her honour in every summer and monsoon. Saha’s son NimbuRavat settled the village of Gotha and Gothvals lived in the villages of Gotha, Sikarori and Bhamvaro. Originated from a Brahmana Vamsha of Patanpur, Gurjaradesha (Gujarat). Nadho Rishi worshipped at Galta. This sage granted Rao ChandaMeena of Khohgong a boon of successors with a promise that the eldest child would be dedicated to Nadho Rishi. The eldest child, Illa, was a daughter. Sage Nadho married Illa and their descendants came to be known as Nandhla Meenas. Nandhla Meena established their ‘kingdoms’ at Jamroli, Getoreghati and Jethwara. Kachawaha prince Dulha Rai annexed the kingdom of Nandhla Meenas. Ancestor Bardeva of YaduVamsha reigned Barmar. His descendant Rao Bada lost to Kachawaha prince Raja Rasdeva and founded the Meena ‘kingdom’ at Nahan.

Raja Rasdeva annexed Nahan too. Raja Manchdeva came from Dhar (Malwa), established a kingdom at Maunch in Samvat 252 and built the fortress of Kile Kota. Rao Singoji built the temple and propitiated Goddess Dantamata. Rao Aspala built a temple of Thakurji (Krishna?) Rao Nathu lost his ‘kingdom’ to Kachwaha Kankila. □□

End

'300 years ago there was no unemployment in our country'



A meet of Swadeshi Jagran Manch started at the Madhavseva Nyas Bharat Mata Mandir at 11 am on 28 August 2021. In his address Mahamandaleshwar Acharya Shekhar said that the Swadeshi movement owes its basic ideology to Sanatan. The keynote speaker of the inaugural session, Satish Kumar said, Swadeshi Jagran Manch launched the Patent Free Vaccine Campaign during the Covid outbreak.

We have taken a vow to contribute to the development of the country. Our country is the only nation in the world with youth power but our country is still behind due to poverty. Poverty has still not been eliminated as it has remained a slogan only for politics. Now for the coming 10 years we should aim to strengthen the country's economic prosperity with environment friendly thoughts. We will work till we do not reach above the below poverty line. How can we consider ourselves prosperous unless 100% youth of the country is employed? India will have to take high leaps due to which every city, town, village and every hand can be brought to work and every area can be brought on the path of progress, he added.

On unemployment, Satish Kumar said the workers of Swadeshi Jagran Manch aim to fix the economy of the poor. We take strength from the thought that we can make the country economically prosperous as 300 years ago there was no unemployment in our country. The British destroyed our economy, education and our culture, as a result of this, our country is also suffering from the disease of unemployment. Even the religious and social structure of our country was such that we were neither poor nor unemployed because our basic education was our strength.

During the inaugural session Keshav Dubolia, Manoj Dwivedi, Dilip Singh Chauhan Province Con-

venor, Preeti Goyal Province Convenor Women's Unit, Kamlesh Paliwal, Dr Vishal Purohit, Rahul Vishwakarma and Indore Ujjain division workers were present.

<https://www.frespresjournal.in/indore/300-years-ago-there-was-no-unemployment-in-our-country>

India's overseas listing rules delayed due to tax concerns: Report

India will take around six months to announce rules allowing companies to list overseas, taking longer than some expected as the finance ministry irons out issues related to taxation, two government officials and four industry sources told Reuters.

The delay is likely to dampen hopes of investors like Tiger Global, Sequoia Capital, Light speed and many Indian startups who last month urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to swiftly announce rules governing foreign listings that were given the go-ahead almost a year ago.

Two senior government officials said the rules will only be announced with the February federal budget as there was no decision yet on how the government should tax big investors and retail traders when they trade Indian companies listed abroad.



A key concern is to ensure that big venture capital and foreign investors pay an equal long-term capital gains tax - roughly around 10% - even if they exit an Indian company listed on foreign bourses like Nasdaq, said the six sources familiar with these private discussions.

Three industry sources said that to convince the Indian government, some investors, merchant bankers and startups have suggested that an investor's exit from an Indian company that may list abroad can be taxed as per Indian laws, if that investor has a significant shareholding of 10-20%.

A senior government official said: "We haven't reached a final decision yet or decided the structure ... We would want to get the tax if any investor exits, does not matter where it is planning to list."

India's finance ministry, which is working on the new rules, did not respond to a request for comment. Another concern the government was trying to address was whether it can garner tax from foreign retail investors trading in an Indian stock listed abroad, but it has decided to exempt such transactions, said the two government officials.

The rules though will clarify that Indian nationals making profits on such trades abroad will be liable to face taxation as per local laws, they added.

The debate comes as local firms see improved prospects that they can achieve big valuations with domestic listings following the stellar debut on Indian bourses of Ant Group-backed Indian food delivery firm Zomato which valued the firm at \$13 billion.

But many investors and startups want the option of a foreign listing as they say companies get better access to capital and higher valuations. Some 22 investors and top Indian startups urged Modi in a July letter to expedite the overseas listing rules, calling it an "unfinished reform agenda".

"Further delay in rules will hurt the startup ecosystem as many companies are at the verge of deciding their foreign listing plans," said one venture-capital industry source. Overseas listing is a controversial subject in India.

Its opponents include Swadeshi Jagran Manch – the economic wing of the ideological parent of Modi's ruling party – which fears such listings will mean less Indian regulatory oversight of domestic firms and could hit the growth ambitions of capital markets in India.

"Indian investors also will not get (the) same access to these companies if they only list abroad," the group's co-convener Ashwani Mahajan told Reuters.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/indias-overseas-listing-rules-delayed-due-to-tax-concerns-sources/articleshow/85418769.cms>

Make in India not followed in spirit: Rajiv Gauba

Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba has written to secretaries of various ministries, expressing dissatisfaction over the quantum of local sourcing and procurement done by the government despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's insistence on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' programmes.

Gauba said it was observed that 'Make in India' is not being followed in letter and spirit as he directed secretaries of key ministries to look into the issue forthwith.

"It has been observed from the tenders issued



by various procuring entities on CPP/ GeM (Central Public Procurement/Government e-Marketplace) portals that PPP-MII (Public Procurement - Preference to Make in India) Order is not being implemented in letter and spirit by some of the organisations," Gauba said in his communication, top sources told TOI.

The country's top bureaucrat said "there are instances" where the provisions of the PPP-MII Order, 2017, have not even been incorporated in tenders. "Excessive turnover, requirement of specific brands/ makes, requirement of foreign certification, requirement of unreasonable prior experience, and requirement of prior experience of supplying to specific nations/entities, have sometimes been prescribed as qualifying criteria," Gauba said, highlighting some of the ways by which local suppliers were being denied an opportunity.

He said that secretaries should "advise all the procuring entities" under their ministry/department to "ensure full compliance" of the PPP-MII Order "in letter and spirit". "You are also requested to review the implementation of the order and take all necessary measures/correction actions so that there is no deviation." The PPPMII Order was issued by the department of promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) to encourage 'Make in India' and promote manufacturing and production of goods, services, and works within the country to enhance income and employment.

However, the industry and especially small- and mid-level companies have often complained that they are generally kept out of large businesses, where foreign vendors are preferred. For example, in the telecom ministry's tenders for large projects for mobile communications and installing network in the north-east, left-wing extremist (LWE) areas, and Andaman & Nicobar, there have been instances of local companies being denied an opportunity.

“Often the operators who win the tenders work only with their foreign vendors to procure telecom infrastructure. They are believed to have business arrangements with these partners and thus do not entertain local suppliers, even though they have low-cost requisite technologies suitable for our terrain,” a vendor said, requesting anonymity.

Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) chairman Sandeep Aggarwal said the criteria of ‘past experiences’ is often used to keep domestic suppliers out.

The matter has previously been flagged by commerce minister Piyush Goyal too who wrote to some of the ministries, complaining that domestic industry was often ignored.

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/make-in-india-not-followed-in-spirit/articleshow/85676031.cms?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=TOIDesktop

One Covaxin shot generates good antibody response in those infected: Study



According to the ICMR study, the antibody response was the same as that generated in un-infected candidates who had received both doses

People who have had Covid-19 infection are able to generate the same level of antibodies with a single dose of Covaxin as those with both the doses but un-infected, a recent study by the Indian Council of Medical Research has shown.

The study was done on 114 vaccine recipients, who were mainly healthcare and frontline workers, with a mean age of 35 years, and 62 per cent being male. Of these, 30 had had confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection. For the antibody measurement, blood samples were collected on Day 0 (before vaccination), after 28 days (after first dose) and after 56 days (after both the doses). These samples were sent to the immunology laboratory of ICMR's National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis, Chennai, for analysis.

“Overall, a good vaccine-induced antibody re-

sponse was seen in SAR-CoV-2-infected individuals, except in two, who received a single dose of BBV152 vaccine that was similar to antibody responses seen after a two-dose vaccination course administered to infection-naïve individuals,” the study said.

“Our results on a varied group of healthcare professionals and frontline workers lend support to previous studies that increased levels of SARS-CoV-2 binding and neutralising antibodies are present after a single vaccine dose in previously infected individuals and are comparable to the levels seen after two doses in those without prior infection,” it added.

Lokesh Sharma, a senior scientist at ICMR, told Business Line that it was a pilot done on a small sample set. He said that if it's proven for a large population size, then the problem of vaccine supply will be resolved to a large extent.

“The study was done on a small sample in Chennai. If it is done across 15-16 States and the result is the same, then the problem of vaccine supply can be addressed to a great extent as then those with prior infection would need only one dose, and the remaining can be administered to those who need them more,” Sharma said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/one-covaxin-shot-generates-good-antibody-response-in-those-infected-study/article36157137.ee>

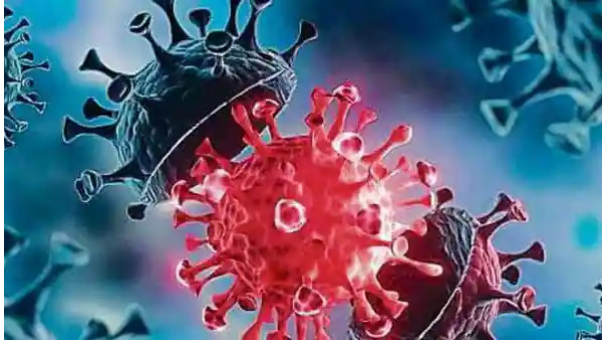
Pfizer, AstraZeneca jabs less effective against delta variant, says study

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines offer less protection against the delta variant of coronavirus, shows a study by researchers at the University of Oxford.

The study, in partnership with the Office of National Statistics and the Department for Health and Social Care in the UK, found that even with delta, the jabs still offer good protection against new infections, but the effectiveness is reduced compared with alpha.

The researchers compared the effectiveness of covid vaccines before and after 17 May when delta became the primary variant in the UK.

Two doses of either vaccine gave at least the same level of protection as having had covid before through natural infection. People who were vaccinated after contracting the infection had even more protection than vaccinated individuals who did not have covid before, it added. Even after two doses, delta infections had similar peak virus levels compared with



the unvaccinated people. With alpha, peak virus levels in people who were infected post-vaccination were much lower, it said. Delta variant was first identified in India and is said to be behind the second wave of deadly covid infections.

The study also looked at how the effectiveness changes over time, and other factors such as previous infection. Researchers analyzed 2,580,021 reports of nose and throat swabs from 384,543 participants aged 18 years and above, between 1 December 2020 and 16 May 2021, and 811,624 test results of 358,983 participants between 17 May and 1 August 2021.

“We don’t yet know how much transmission can happen from people who get covid-19 after being vaccinated. For example, they may have high levels of virus for shorter periods of time,” said Sarah Walker, professor of medical statistics and epidemiology, University of Oxford, and the chief investigator and academic lead for the Covid-19 Infection Survey. “But the fact that they can have high levels of virus suggests that people who aren’t yet vaccinated may not be as protected from the delta variant as we hoped. This means it is essential for as many people as possible to get vaccinated,” added Walker.

The study also showed that a single dose of the Moderna vaccine has similar or greater effectiveness against the delta variant as single doses of other vaccines. “Two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech have greater initial effectiveness against new covid-19 infections, but this declines faster compared with two doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca,” the authors said.

While Pfizer and Moderna are both awaiting approval for India’s covid vaccination programme, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which is being manufactured by Serum Institute of India under the Covishield brand, is being administered since 16 January.

Results suggest that after four to five months, the effectiveness of the two vaccines will be similar, but long-term effects have to be studied. Though the

time between the two doses does not influence the jabs’ efficacy, younger people have more protection than older people, it added.

<https://www.livemint.com/science/health/pfizer-covishield-jabs-show-lower-efficacy-on-delta-strain-compared-to-alpha-11629374729887.html>

Allahabad HC judge to Centre: Make cow national animal

Rejecting the bail petition of a man booked under the UP Cow Slaughter Act, Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday urged the Central government to bring a Bill in Parliament for “protection of cows” and to declare “cow protection as a fundamental right of Hindus”.

Justice Yadav also advised the Central government to declare cow as the national animal.

“Keeping in mind the circumstances, the cow must be declared national animal and protection of cows must be a fundamental right of Hindus because we know when the country’s culture and faith are hurt, the country becomes weak,” Justice Yadav said.

Javed, who was booked for theft (IPC sections 379) and under sections 3/5/8 of the UP Cow Slaughter Act in Sambhal district in February this year, has been in jail since March 8 this year. In his bail plea, he had argued that allegations of cow slaughter against him were false as he was not present at the spot, and a fake case was lodged against him in collusion with the police.

The Bench of Justice Yadav in its 12-page order in Hindi said: “You can’t take away lives for the taste-buds of a few... And the right to life is higher than the right to kill... Eating cow meat can never be a fundamental right... the fundamental rights can’t just be a privilege for those who eat cow meat, but those who rely on cow for income and those who worship cows also have the right to a meaningful life.”

The judge also said that “scientists believe that the cow is the only animal that inhales oxygen and exhales oxygen too”.

“Panchakavyam, which is made from cow milk, curd, butter, urine and cow dung is beneficial in the treatment of some ailments and as per Hindu religion, there are 33 Gods and Goddesses which reside in the cow,” Justice Yadav said, adding that not just the Hindus, even “Muslims understood the importance of cow in Indian culture, and Muslim rulers like Babur, Akbar and Humayun imposed a ban on cow slaughter during their festivals”.

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<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cow-national-animal-india-court-7482909/>

Swadeshi Activities

Vichar Varga (Prant), Himachal Pradesh (8 August 2021)



Vichar Varga (Prant), Mahakaushal (7-8 August 2021)

Pictorial Glimpses



Vichar Varga (District), Bokaro (15 August 2021)



Swadeshi Activities

Vichar Varga (Prant), Odisha (7-8 August 2021)

Pictorial Glimpses



Vichar Varga (Prant), Punjab (8 August 2021)

