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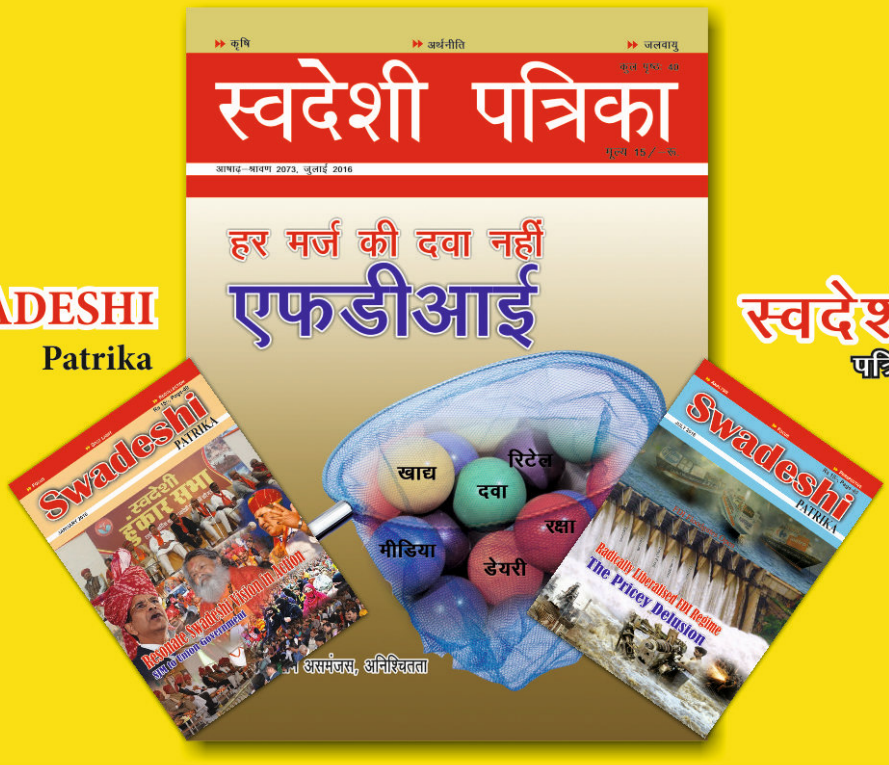


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# पढ़ें और पढ़ायें


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## Union Budget 2021

*The union budget 2021 presented by the finance minister on the first of February 2021 touched upon vast areas and many sectors. The production linked incentive (PLI) is something which has boosted the confidence and hope of manufacturing units in the country- although it was announced much before the budget date. It's good that the government didn't wait for the budget day to offer schemes like PLI. The idea of special zones for textiles is also something that should help the textile sector to regain its glory. The ongoing farm protest against the three farm laws is an opportunity for the government to do something significant and life-changing to the agriculture sector. The government announced a lot of budgets for procurement related commitments and for fertilizer related subsidy apart from other commitments in the agriculture and social sector. The one area where the finance minister didn't talk exclusively is about organic farming. The government did talk about improvement and significant investment in logistics and government has many schemes to support and encourage the rural economy. Despite that, some talk and some plans for enabling the fortune of farmers in organic farming and traditional agriculture practices were missed in the budget speech. The government should budget for organic farming and traditional agriculture practices- which are dying or are in serious survival challenges. The government should note that pesticide dependent food crops are the major source of many diseases. The budget from fertilizer subsidy can be diverted to organic farming and in the future, the healthcare support expense will decrease. There is a lot to be done to regain traditional agricultural practices. The budget despite being very strategic and having long-term plans lacked this component.*

— **Kumar Gaurav,** *Samastipur, Bihar*


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## Quote-Unquote

**India has shown in the past year that the challenge of Virus or Border, India is capable of taking every step to protect itself. Today we are also self-sufficient in the case of Vaccine and are trying equally fast to modernize our army.**

**Narendra Modi** (Prime Minister, India)

**This is a budget to improve the lives of common people. In this budget people of every category have been taken care of. Economic activities will also accelerate due to the provisions made in the budget for infrastructural development.**

**Amit Shah** (Home Minister, Bharat)

**Despite a fiscal deficit of 6.8 per cent next year, we will be able to not only have high growth of GDP, but also bring back employment opportunities, hampered during pandemic last year and killed in the last two decades due to onslaught of Chinese imports.**

**Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**
National Co-convenor, SJM

**I don't know about anyone else but when my turn comes I'll happily roll up my sleeve & get a COVID vaccine. This damn virus has been far too disruptive & if a vaccine helps bring about a semblance of normalcy after all the chaos then sign me up.**

**Omar Abdullah** (Former CM, J&K)

# Budget to bring economy back on track

It would not be right to judge this budget, presented after an unprecedented pandemic according to the general budgetary analysis. The general budget is criticized when the fiscal deficit increases. Though, the fiscal deficit was kept at 3.5 percent of GDP in the budget for the year 2020-21, and revised estimates put the same as 9.5 percent of the GDP; and it is estimated to be 6.8 percent of GDP in the coming year 2021-22, it can't be or is not being questioned. Despite this huge fiscal deficit in revised estimates for current year and budget estimates for next year, there is no reason to criticize this budget, because this deficit in the current year is not due to wasteful expenditure of the government or due to populist policies, but it is due to government's efforts to save the lives of the people who have lost employment, providing food and other material for their livelihood, and to bring the economy back on track, both agriculture and industrial. The fiscal deficit is due to provision of more funds for infrastructure, health and livelihood.

The reason behind keeping this fiscal deficit almost double than normal for the coming year is that there is a need to give a big support to the economy in view of the worst pandemic. For this, the allocation of more funds for infrastructure, the announcement of new infrastructure projects, efforts to rebuild the industries ruined by Chinese imports, unprecedented 137% increase in expenditure on health, allocation of additional funds for research and development (R&D). More resources have also been allocated to the states to deal with the extraordinary situations.

Despite being a developing country, the way in which India has been more successful than most of the countries in dealing with the pandemic, we can perform equally well in dealing with its economic effects. All such efforts are visible in this budget. Despite the pandemic, the government's focus on infrastructure did not wane. The performance of the current year in infrastructure development is nowhere less in any way. And this year too the huge increase in infrastructure spending in the coming year can be considered a welcome move. For the last three decades, there has been almost stagnation in health spending in the budget every year. Although the pandemic could be dealt with this year due to national resolve, the need to increase expenditure on health was felt for a long time. This year unprecedented increase in expenditure on primary health centers in both rural and urban areas, is welcome. Allocations for nutrition programs indirectly linked to health, and provision of Rs 2.8 lakh crore for five years for clean drinking water can be a game changer.

Production linked incentives worth Rs 1.97 lakh crore are a major step to promote manufacturing for self-reliant India, many of which had already been announced. The long-term financing institutions were demolished in the obsession for the new economic policy. An attempt has been made to rectify this mistake in the budget this year, and the provision of a share capital of rupees 20 thousand crores has been made for setting up a long-term development financial institution (DFI), which is a welcome step.

Due to all these efforts, the capital expenditure in the current year has reached Rs 4.39 lakh crore in the revised estimates, ag against the budget estimates of Rs 4.12 lakh crore. As compared to this, an allocation of Rs 5.54 lakh crore for capital expenditure in the coming year is a significant and welcome provision. Provision of capital expenditure of 1.08 lakh crore rupees for roads, apart from provision of capital expenditure of 1.07 lakh crore rupees for railways, efforts for metro, waterways, water supply petroleum and natural gas can be said to be commendable.

The announcement to carry forward the controversial decisions of disinvestment this year is a matter of grave concern. In the past as well concerns had been raised about the disinvestment of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, Pawan Hans, etc. The government should reconsider its proposal of the privatization of two public sector banks and one insurance company, about which concerns are being raised. It is better that instead of making strategic disinvestment of these institutions, their shareholding should be sold to the common people in the long run, after improving their performance. Though there is no problem in selling unused land or assets for the nation building, but selling assets which have been built from the hard earned money of tax payers, to fill revenue deficit in the past, in the name of strategic disinvestment is not a correct policy. Their divestment, through equity route would be a far better option, after improving their performance.

On the other hand, raising the FDI limit in the insurance sector from 49 to 74 at present is also a matter of concern. It is no good to increase foreign dominance in the financial sector. This increases foreign dominance over the financial resources of the country and affects the development of the country in the long run. The government needs to reconsider this step.

# Budget 2021:
# The FM incentivise farmers

Not that finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman thought that farmers' protests would melt after hearing her budget proposals, but she did try to allay their chief concerns. Through her budget, she tried to reassure the nation's agriculturists that the government was not walking away from the assured procurement mechanism for various crops at MSP (minimum support price) or disbanding the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) network.

These are two of the biggest apprehensions that farmers in Punjab and parts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have, for which they are adamant that the government repeal its new farm laws which clear the path for an alternative marketing mechanism. In her budget speech, the finance minister picked up the two crops primarily procured from these states, namely wheat and rice, and highlighted how the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government has a better procurement record than the United Progressive Alliance government. It disbursed Rs 75,050 crore in the 2020-21 season to buy wheat, in comparison to the Rs 33,874 crore paid in 2013-14. Similarly, the value of rice procurement has gone up from Rs 63,928 crore to an estimated Rs 1.72 lakh crore in the same period. She said that government agencies procured wheat from 4.34 million farmers compared to the 3.56 million the previous year. And not just these two crops, farmers growing pulses and cotton also benefitted in this time. The Centre lifted 40 times more pulses (worth Rs 10,532 crore) from the market and paid Rs 25,975 crore to cotton farmers (from Rs 90 crore in 2013-14).

*Sitharaman extended the Tomato-Onion-Potato scheme to another 22 perishable crops and renamed the plan Operation Green. This scheme provides funds to strengthen production clusters of these perishables and connect them to the markets.*

**Anilesh S Mahajan**

With the global sentiment turned against China, this an opportune time for India to give a big boost to its textile sector

With regard to APMCs, the finance minister announced allowing them access to the Rs 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund set up last year and

integrating an additional 1,000 APMC mandis with the electronic national market, or eNAM. Already, some 1,000 out of the overall 7,000 APMC mandis in the country are linked to the digital platform. Punjab has just 37 integrated markets while Haryana and western UP have 81 and 125 respectively. The finance minister also reiterated her commitment to develop 22,000 APMCs.

As per the devolution formula, the Centre has to share 42 per cent of tax revenues with the states, but can retain cess collections. This budget, Sitharaman announced an Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess by reworking the basic customs and excise duties. The new cess will be levied on petroleum products, imported alcoholic beverages (scotch, whiskey, wine), gold, silver, crude palm oil, crude sunflower oil, crude edible oil, heating agents like coal, lignite, peat, specified fertilisers, peas, pulses, cotton.

Yet the announcements are unlikely to appease the agitating farmers or encourage private capital to invest in agriculture infrastructure. The Supreme Court has already stayed the implementation of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 and the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. Agriculture minister Narendra Tomar has also offered to extend the moratorium to 18 months. However, the uncertainty will deter private capital from investing.

Meanwhile, Sitharaman extended the Tomato-Onion-Potato scheme to another 22 perishable crops and renamed the plan Operation Green. This scheme provides funds to strengthen production clusters of these perishables and connect them to the markets. In the past 20 months, several states have allowed the trading of these perishables outside the APMC markets.

Alongside, the finance minister enhanced the allocation for rural infrastructure development by Rs 10,000 crore and doubled the micro irrigation corpus to Rs 10,000 crore. ❑❑

**Source:** *https://www.msn.com/en-in/money/unionbudget2017-18/budget-2021-the-fm-s-carrot-to-farmers/ar-BB1di3f02li=AAgfW3Sc&srcref=rss*

## What got costlier?

- Electronic items
- **Mobile Phones:** some parts of mobiles will move from the 'nil' rate to a moderate 2.5%
- **Chargers:** a few exemptions on parts of chargers and sub-parts of mobiles will be removed.

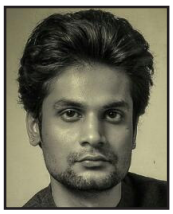
- Synthetic Gemstones
- Imported leather items
- **Solar invertors:** duty raised from 5% to 20%.
- **Solar lanterns:** duty raised from 5% to 15%.
- **Auto parts:** customs duty on certain auto parts to be increased to 15%.
- **Steel screws:** Duty raised from 10% to 15%
- **Plastic builder wares:** Duty raised from 10% to 15%
- **Cotton:** Customs duty to be raised from 'nil' to 10%
- **Raw silk and yarn silk:** Customs duty to be raised from 10% to 15%.
- Gold, Silver and dore bars
- Alcoholic beverages (falling under chapter 22)
- Crude palm oil
- Crude soyabean and sunflower oil
- Apples
- Coal, lignite and peat
- Specified fertilizers (Urea etc)
- Peas
- Kabuli Chana
- Bengal Gram/Chick peas
- Lentil (Mosur)

## What got cheaper?

- **Naptha:** Customs duty on Naptha reduced to 2.5% to correct inversion.
- Caprolactam
- Nylon Chips
- Nylon fibre and yarn
- Iron and Steel melting scrap, including stainless steel scrap
- Primary/Semi-finished products of non-alloy steel

- Flat products of non-alloy and alloy-steel
- Long products of non-alloy, stainless and alloy steel
- Raw materials used in manufacture of CRGO Steel
- Copper Scrap
- Components or parts, including engines, for manufacture of aircrafts by Public Sector Units of Ministry of Defence
- Platinum, Pallidum
- Waste and Scrap of Precious Metals

# With the ECA gone, should India welcome Food Oligopoly?



*The days of traditional tools to check competition in the food sector are redundant, CCI needs to evolve too if it wants to safeguard food of the Indians from an onslaught of food oligopolies. India needs a systemic approach to tackle this new threat.*

**Indra Shekhar Singh**

As India dismantled her Essential Commodities Act allowing for – removal of food items from its purview, end to stocking limits, and inviting FDI into the food and farming sector, one question remains unanswered, are Indian competition laws mature enough to prevent a food oligopoly in India too?

Perhaps the government's advisors over-looked 2.5 lakh crore Dal scam of 2015, and also the highly concentrated global scenario. Today 4 commodity traders without owning any land (through contracts) control over 85% of the world's grain. Add to it total revenue of leading six agricultural commodity traders was $377 billion in 2018 versus $295 billion of the combined revenue for the global markets for seeds, pesticides, farm equipment and fertilizer in 2018. Cargill minted $115 billion in 2018, far exceeding global sales of the entire farm machinery sector ($90.7 billion). Meanwhile, Chinese state-owned COFCO International, already a major commodity trader, plans to aggressively increase its global presence and Smithfield Foods/WH Group (China-owned) is also the world's largest pork processor.

But when it comes to food oligopolies, the US is our lodestar, as 4 corporations control over 84% of the total food. For example the US meat industry, apart from terrible working conditions and under paid workers, does also boasts that "79% US beef, 65% pork, and 57% poultry" come from 4 corporations. Thousands of brands at the grocery supermarkets are owned or supplied by the same companies, in fact many of the supermarkets are also owned by the same people. So the complete link from seed to plate is vertically integrated and owned by a handful.

But are the American farmers better? Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry of North America, answers this question, "most of them don't really own the animals they raise. Virtually all the chickens sold in the United States are grown under production contracts to a handful of companies, who own the birds from egg to supermarket." Further in last ten years retail meat prices increased by over 40% and simultaneously gross farm income for small- and medium-sized pig and cattle farmers fell by 32% and 71% chicken farmers lived under the poverty line. It's no secret that many Iowa farmers own about 20 percent of the land they farm, while 80 percent is rented. They are tenants and farm-hands on good days.

The US government did bring out Sherman Anti-trust Act in the 1890 to prevent monopolies in the beef, meat, etc industry, but Ronald Reagan administration changed this to accommodate relaxations if the "proposed merger promised to lead to greater marketplace "efficiency", Barry C. Lynn, Cornered: The New Monopoly Capitalism and the Economics of Destruction is a good read to understand these changes.

Unfortunately, Reagan's measures were counter-productive. For by 1995 Department of Justice (DOJ) had filed 126 criminal cases against 73 corporations and 80 individuals in 18 states, resulting in fines totalling $59 million. 29 saw jail time. The corporations were alerted and changed their "efficiency" tactics. They started using vertical integration and mergers to escape anti-trust probes.

Big Ag new tactics involved "deals" of various kinds - joint ventures, strategic alliances, intellectual property swaps, employee swaps, cartel arrangements and more. But the trump card was horizontal shareholding by giant institutional investors aka asset management firms. With the information of their shareholder private, the top six of asset management firms together own majority stakes in the global seed to agrochemical to grain supply. They are buy shares of competing companies and also aggressively increasing their investments in all segments of the food chain. Vandana Shiva's Oneness vs the 1% gives a detailed analysis of new threats to the food system.

But US is not alone, all across Europe, North America and even in Japan a handful of corporations control the major super markets and grocery stores. 2014 OECD report on Competition Issues in the Food Chain Industry highlights "countries like Japan, Finland, Italy and Hungary consider that traditional competition policy tools are not enough to deal with issues of buyer power and unfair trading practices." Thereafter special laws are enacted to even consider 30% share as dominant position in some countries.

Given our laurels on the hunger index, India must be very cautious for food is not industry and "agri-dollars" only, it is a matter of survival and national security. India need to reconsider FDI policy in retail and food sector by inviting companies to invest in India, but make majority ownership strictly Indian and also introduce clauses for compulsory regional partnerships in states of operations. The CCI after understanding the global scenario needs to adopt a maximum of 25% market share as dominant position, bring rules against vertical ownership/integration to allow for a healthy competition and real time assessment of market share. As most of these firms are invested in the seed to the supermarket, the new paradigm is needed to prevent monopolies and ownership of the food sector by a handful of assets management firms. Plus, CCI has already had an acidulous tryst with a foreign seed company refusing to comply; the case is being heard in the courts. One begs the question will the CCI have powers to effectively probe foreign corporations in the future too? The days of traditional tools to check competition in the food sector are redundant, CCI needs to evolve too if it wants to safeguard food of the Indians from an onslaught of food oligopolies. India needs a systemic approach to tackle this new threat. ❑❑

***(Views are personal.)***

***(Director – Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India)***

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# Green Signal from Union Budget 2021

The government of India presented the union budget 2021-22 on 1 February 2021. It seems that the budget has pinned the environment at its profile. The environment is somewhere deep inside the budget-making process. It started right from the budget speech. The finance minister for the first time read the budget speech using a computer tablet. It is a paperless budget. It's a signal of care for the environment. The budget of 2021-22 is written on a fresh slate and is not just an add-on or toping or glazing to the budget of the year 2020-21. The 2020-21 budget saw many estimates being revised.

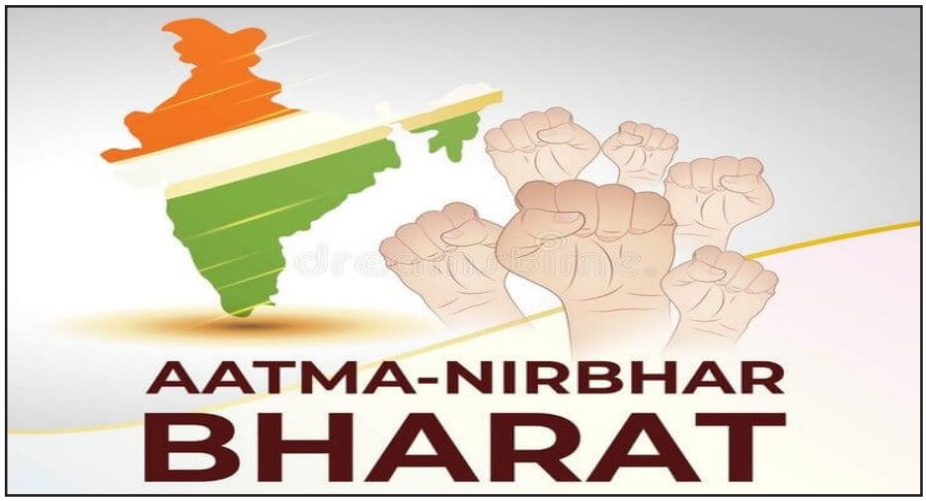
The time interval to perform i.e. 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, assigned to the union budget for 2020-21 started during the lockdown and is still counting its remaining days in pandemic mode. The last year's budget saw many supplementary budgets, necessary modifications, and the changed mission. The changed mission is 'vocal for local' and 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' along with the environment-friendly sustainable economy. The environment is at the core of the budget's aim and actions. These are long-term goals but at the same time, urgent intervention is a necessity.

*The government made many important announcements such as 'production linked incentive' during the financial year without waiting for the budget day is a signal that India is going to change and practice strategies as per the necessities of AatmaNIrbhar Bharat.*

**Alok Singh**

The finance minister's budget speech reassured and was loud and clear about vocal for local and AatmaNirbhar Bharat. The terms like 'strategic sales' (of public sector units) and 'clean' are the two keywords that need to be watched, the way it materializes.

The clean water, the clean air, the aim for physical and mental health reflects that India is no more an economy that is fighting just for survival. It is not the India of the year 1990-91. So the budget should not be looked at with the outdated lens of the year 1991. The 1991 budget was a budget for survival. During 1991 other nations were on favorable wickets and India was on weak wickets. India was the one that was arm-twisted by the world. In 1991 India was so-called rescued by international agencies who were proxies of those who dictated terms and conditions of business. But today India is a rescuer to the world and not the



rescue. The whole cycle has reversed. The balance of power has swung or more carefully there is no more anyone or two balance of power. Today the world listens and the world accepts what India says and what it offers. Whether that be operational knowledge or strategic knowledge or Scientifics knowledge. Whatever India offers passes through a tough litmus test before the world accepts it.

For a few of our citizens, India has arrived while for many India is yet to arrive. We have developed but the availability of universal facilities to the deserving is missing. It is the budget of transition to a developed economy from a developing or advanced developing economy. It is the budget of India which is struggling for transiting to a developed nation. A developed nation aspires to clean air, clean water, clean surroundings, and healthy citizens. To attain the cleanliness of air and water sometimes the developed nations let the polluting industries shift to third world countries. But India is aspiring for being the factory to the world and at the same time care for the environment. The business model has to be novel, unexplored, and sustainable. Every citizen of the world is made accountable for the pollution which they create because of their work style and lifestyle.

The establishment of 100 Sainik schools across the nation reflects the government's intent and acceptance that the value of developing strong physical and mental health is as important as that of education standalone. The establishment of central University at Leh reflects the government's commitment to reach far and marginalized whether that be due to geography or due to history or any other reason. The establishment of many more EkalVidayalya- which is a concept supported by VanwasiKalyan Ashram- reflects the government's commitment to the welfare of the last person standing in the social ranking.

Health and wellbeing was the first topic elaborated on in the union budget. Robust health infrastructure and the availability of desirable nutrition is not sufficient for a healthy life. It needs a healthy environment. So, a clean environment is a necessity.

The Finance Minister talked about environment-friendly construction and demolition waste management and scrap management for older vehicles. These are the new areas that need newer skills and the government is making India ready for the future. There are opportunities for many new jobs in an environment-friendly economic system.

The capability versus logistics is the debate for a business to be a success or a failure. India has demonstrated that its capability is acceptable to the world. Whether that be in science, technology, management, or culture. The logistics is the area where India is performing poorly in comparison to others including its most talked-about peer China. India's innovation in many sectors which emerged on urgency during the pandemic saw the light of mass production and distribution. It happened across the world and was not restricted within the country. The shared knowledge and shared manufacturing facilities proved themselves to be a boon. It seems as if the pandemic has given a new identity to the Indian business community and Indian scientists and researchers who worked for the world using Indian facilities and Indian people. Even in a normal world, logistics have an important role in the cost factor- both for the manufacturers as well as for the distributors and the end-user customers. It is the logistics that drive the business of the modern world.

The finance minister talked a lot about the program of the government to attain the logistics across the nation- from big metro cities to rural villages to tribal areas- through airways, through roadways, through waterways. As early as the government is able to create a globally competitive logistics system in India- within India, across India - the sooner India is going to emerge as the factory to the world and job generator to the youth. The easy illustration to understand the role of logistics is the cooking gas, the 14.2 kg domestic LPG cylinder costs Rs. 694 in Delhi and per kg cost to the end-user consumer is Rs. 48.87 per kg, while the domestic gas consumed through the gas pipeline channel cost to end consumer in Delhi is Rs. 27.50 per standard cubic meters, and One kg is equivalent to 1.164 standard cubic meters.

The government made many important announcements such as 'production linked incentive' during the financial year without waiting for the budget day is a signal that India is going to change and practice strategies as per the necessities of AatmaNIrbhar Bharat. The world is looking at us with deep hope, we have no choice other than to perform and defend the trust of the world. ❑❑

# Budget 2021: Setting the blueprint for Economic Recovery

The budget of any country is crucial for many reasons. Not just that it provides a balance sheet of the government but it also shapes the macroeconomic environment of the state based on the proposed road map for resources accumulation and its expenditure. It also provides the scope for new economic reforms as it lays emphasis on proposed changes and role for new actors in the economy. Following a contraction in economy it was never too easy to prepare a budget in times of economic stress like this year. Having said so the new budget does lays key emphasis on the path to economic recovery based on increased public expenditure and focus on growth.

The new budget 2021 unveiled by the Finance Minister Nirmala aims to build up the Indian economy in the post coronavirus pandemic phase. It sets the path for economic recovery and is primarily based on six pillars, as said by finance minister, like as Health and Well-being; Physical and Financial Capital; Inclusive Development for Aspirational India; Reinvigorating Human Capital; Innovation and R&D; and Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. The Economic Survey 2021 has already given the blueprint of the proposed budget, which was likely to be focusing more on public investment expenditure to revive the economy. This also necessitated holding up fiscal consolidation goals, keeping in mind the immediate economic interests and priorities.

*To sum it up, budget 2021 has taken a long-term view for economic recovery in India, by focussing on increasing public expenditure and boasting infrastructure growth.*
**Abhishek Pratap Singh**

As the data suggests, the Indian economy is seen to be recovering with positive GDP growth rate in the last two economic quarters. This trend is likely to move upward given post vaccination, leading to rebound in consumer demand and investments.

At the foremost, the issue of affordable health care has become of utmost importance in the times of Corona pandemic. The allocation to the health sector has seen huge jump in the budget 2021. The government is expected to spend Rs. 223846 Crore in the coming years on health care and well being, covering both preventive and curative health care. Moreover, the 35000 crore allocation for Corona vaccination program is a welcoming step in right direction, as economy looks to rebound in post vaccination phase. The industry estimates this to be sufficient for India's vaccination drive. On the education front, in the light of New Education Policy (NEP) budget proposed for Rs 50,000 crore allocation over next 5 years towards the creation of National Research Foundation (NRF)

to promote the ecosystem of research in country. The policy aims to boast and utilise the human capital to develop research capacity in the country.

Moreover, budget has chosen for economic growth over populism, which is a good policy choice in the long run. The proposal for increase in capital expenditure is more likely create short and medium-term employment, also helping for the macroeconomic growth. The proposals on bad loans, like setting to set up Asset Reconstruction Company will facilitate flexibility to finance the economic recovery in the longer run. The proposal for fresh capital infusion of Rs 20,000 crore to the Public Sector banks (PSBs) is good step towards more credit availability for the economy.

Another major development in the budget relates to pushing the establishment of dedicated manufacturing zones and locating budget head for the same. These zones are primarily aimed at curbing the Chinese imports in the power generation sector. Power is a strategically important and lucrative sector in India, and the move is aimed to delink the increased China influence in the power distribution ad transmission in India. The new proposal is part of the larger campaign to encourage self-reliance and reduce dependence on Chinese imports. Given the call for *Atmanirbhar Bharat* by the PM Narendra Modi, the budgetary proposals in power sector set the path in right direction. On the other hand, the budgetary proposals for disinvestment and economic reforms set the target very high, and needs to be taken up with due care and concern of all the stakeholders as they roll out in future.

To sum it up, budget 2021 has taken a long-term view for economic recovery in India, by focussing on increasing public expenditure and boasting infrastructure growth. ❑❑

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## Highlights of Union Budget 2021-22

**General**

1. First digital Budget in the history of India
2. Vehicle Scrapping Policy. Vehicle Fitness Test after 20 years in case of Personal vehicle and 15 years in case of commercial vehicles
3. 64,180 crores allocated for New Health Schemes
4. 35,000 crores allocated for Covid Vaccine
5. 7 Mega Textile Investment parks will be launched in 3 years
6. 5.54 lakh crore provided for Capital Expenditure
7. 1.18 lakh crore for Ministry of Roads
8. 1.10 lakh crore allocated to Railways
9. Proposal to amend Insurance Act. Proposal to increase FDI from 49% to 74 %.
10. Deposit Insurance cover (DICGC Act 1961 to be amended). Easy and time bound access of deposits to help depositors of stress banks.
11. Proposal to revive definition of 'Small Companies' under Companies Act 2013. Capital less than 2 Cr. and Turnover Less than 20 Cr.
12. Disinvestment: IPO of LIC, Announced Disinvestment of Companies will be completed in FY 2021-22

**Direct and Indirect tax**

1. Senior Citizens: Reduced Compliance burden. 75 years and above. Proposal not to file ITR if only pension income and interest income.
2. Reduction in time for IT Proceedings: Reopening of Assessments period reduced from 6 years to 3 years except in cases of serious tax evasion cases
3. Proposal to constitute 'Dispute Resolution Committee'. (Taxable income 50 lakhs and disputed income 10 lakh).
4. National Faceless Income Tax Appellate Tribunal Centre
5. Relaxations to NRI: Propose to notify rules for removing hardship for double taxation.
6. Tax Audit Limit: Proposal of tax audit increased from 5 Cr. to 10 cr. (Only for 95% digitized payments business)
7. Propose to provide relief on advance tax liability on dividend income.
8. Propose to include tax holidays for Aircraft leasing companies
9. Prefiling of returns (Salary, Tax payments, TDS etc.) Details of Capital gains from listed Securities, dividend income, etc. will be prefilled
10. Small Charitable Trusts. Increased from 1 crore to 5 crores (Compliance limit)
11. Late deposit of employee's contribution by employer will not be allowed as deduction
12. Incentive to startup: Tax holiday exemption for one more year
13. Duties reduced on various textile, chemicals and other products
14. Gold and Silver (BCD reduced)
15. Agriculture Products: Custom duty increased on cottons, silks, alcohol etc. ❑

# Budget with a mission

The third consecutive Union Budget presented by finance minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman is a deviation from the budgets presented since 1990. It is a budget with mission, direction, theme and things for aspiring India. It stresses on economic growth and intends to make Ataminarbhar Bharat by turning India into a production hub. It is expected to escalate demand in the market. It will make (V) shaped growth possible for the economy andwill help to achieve the target of 5 trillion economy. The budget stresses on investment in infrastructure, bearing high multiplier effect, is going to create more jobs for the youth. The budget conveys that government stands for more governance and less government. It is going to bea stepping stone for New India.

*The sensitivity of the government towards unforeseen challenges becomes clear by its intension to raise contingency fund from Rs. 500 crore to 30,000 crore. The finance minister has drafted the budget with utmost care for the good of people, without any pressure from protestors or the adverse economic situations.*

**Prof. MK Bhat**

The finance minister has charted the road map of the economy by spending more than the income. The fiscal deficit deficit was expected to be 3.5% of GDP in 2020-21 but the actual fiscal deficit stood at 9.5% of GDP due to the Pandemic, Lockdown, relief work and the already existing economic slowdown in the economy. The total spending in 2021-22 will be Rs.34,83,236 lakh crore against the estimatedamount of 30.42 lakh crore and actual expenditure of 34.5 lakh crore last year. The fiscal deficit for 2021-22 will be 6.8 % as against 9.5% in the previous fiscal year. The government expects to reduce the fiscal deficit to 4.5% by 2025-26.

The budget has not come out with any punitive measure like covid cess, as was expected by people, to escalate its revenue. It has proposed no change in the income tax rates for individuals and corporates howeverthe tax exemption on interest income contribution to PF will be limited toRs. 2.5 lakh. The extension has been given on tax incentives upto the end of fiscal 2021-22. This includes tax deduction upto Rs 1.5 lakh on interest on housing loan, and tax holiday for affordable housing projects, profits of start-ups and investing capital gains in start-ups.Cess will be levied on some imported items including gold, silver, alcoholic beverages, coal, and cotton, and basic customs duty will be reduced by an equal amount. The cess will be levied on petrol and diesel at the rate of Rs 2.5 and Rs 4 per litre respectively, with equivalent cuts in excise duty. The net impact on the price of petrol and diesel will be negligible. The custom duty has been increased on some items such as cotton, silk, some auto and mobile parts. Time limit for the re-opening of income tax assessment will be reduced from 6 years presently to 3 years. In order to promote digitalisation, businesses which carry 95% of their transactions digitally and whose turnover is less than five crore rupees, will be exempted from keeping audited accounts. The threshold will be increased to Rs 10 crore.

The government expects to fill the gap between revenue and expenditure with a higher tax buoyancy, increased monetisation of assets including public sector assets, land etc. and government borrowingof Rs 80,000 crore from market. Rs.20,000 croreto 25000 crore investment is expected to come as a result of

increase in FDI in insurance sector from 49% to 74% in two to three years. This was raised from 26% to 49% in 2014. The budget requires the companies to plough back earnings in India rather then repatriate the earnings as dividend. Indian partners want investment and foreigner felt shy due to the control and management in Indian hands. It is worthwhile to mention here that certain thinkers like Kashmiri Lal of Swadeshi Jagran Manchfeel that theshares of these companies be made available for Indian companies only.

The decision to raise Rs1.75 lakh crore by privatising ineffective units like Air India, shipping corporation, IDBI, Bharat earth movers ltd and two public sector banks, is a welcome step. Private sector will be allowed to have electricity distribution centres to avoid corruption in the state electricity Boards.

The weak health care sector, exposed during COVID-19 received highest attention worth Rs 2.23 lakh crore from government. This investment is further justified due to the second wave of COVID having started in many countries. Rs.35000 crore are allocated for covid 19, Swatch Bharat with 1.41 lakh crore for 5years, 1.47 lakh crore for 5 years on waste water treatment, pollution etc, Swasth Bharat Yojana will get 64180 crore. Scrapping policy has been thought of to remove the inefficient vehicles to reduce pollution.

The second biggest sector that got maximum attention from the finance minister has been the infrastructure. The national infrastructure is expanded to cover 74000 projects. The attention given to roads, ports, metro, railways, urban and rural infrastructure will boost the construction sector which in turn will boost 250 allied industries. Construction is critical for jobs, it directly employs 54 million people and stands as one of India's largest nonfarm employers. The expenditure for this sector in 2021-22 will be around Rs 5 lakh crore compared to Rs.4.1 lakh crore last year. An additional amount of Rs.25000 crore have been earmarked for Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and 1000 crore for solar energy.

***The budget has doubled the allocation to micro small and medium enterprises to Rs. 15700 crore which stood at Rs 7572 crore in 2020-21. A major portion of itis going to be spent on emergency credit line scheme which will help this sector to revive.***

The budget has doubled the allocation to micro small and medium enterprises to Rs. 15700 crore which stood at Rs 7572 crore in 2020-21. A major portion of itis going to be spent on emergency credit line scheme which will help this sector to revive. A reduction of custom duties on steel and non-ferrous scrap will bring down raw material cost. The government also proposes to establish 7 textile parks that will be another big boost in generating employment.

In order to have funds for infrastructure a development financial institution will be setup with Rs.20000 crore as government equity fund to catalyse for infrastructure funding, as banks fail to provide funds for the infrastructure. In order to streamline the banking sector with a whooping NPA of 14.8 % - a Bad Bank/asset restructure company will be established. The companies act 2013 will be amended to revise the definition of small companies by increasing the threshold for paid up capital from Rs50 lakh to Rs 2 crore and turnover not exceeding over 20 crore.It will help nearly 2 lakh companies. The SEBI act 1992, Depositors act 1996, Government securities act 2007 and Contracts regulation act 1956 will be consolidated in to a single securities market code. This will help in Ease of doing business, duplicity of information, make rules simple, business friendly and will reduce compliance cost. In agriculture sector MSP has been escalated to 1.5 times of the cost of commodities and 1000 mandis are going to be integrated.

The sensitivity of the government towards unforeseen challenges becomes clear by its intension to raise contingency fund from Rs. 500 crore to 30,000 crore. The finance minister has drafted the budget with utmost care for the good of people, without any pressure from protestors or the adverse economic situations. The Sensex has reacted with positivity and industry leaders also feel the same. It is a sincere attempt to address the ever-growing aspirations of people without playing any jigsaw with their income.The budget can be summed up as a bold initiative towards economic growth but the-question: why it took India seventy years to think of basic necessities for its people remains to be investigated? ❑❑

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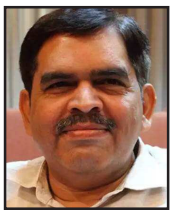
# Controversy over petrol-diesel tax

While the increase in petrol-diesel prices had been a matter of controversy for long, but recently the controversy has deepened further due to the unprecedented increase in the retail price of petrol-diesel in the last two months. It is worth noting that at one point of time the international prices of crude oil had skyrocketed, which later came down drastically. During the Corona period, the prices of crude oil had dipped significantly. But for some time, crude oil prices have started rising again and now they have reached $ 66 per barrel. In the last two months, crude oil prices have increased by 28 percent. In the past, petrol-diesel prices used to be changed after a gap, but for some time, now petrol-diesel prices are changed on daily basis, depending upon the international price of crude oil.

In such a situation, due to continuous increase in the retail price of petrol-diesel due to the increasing international crude prices, there is a huge burden on the people's pockets. Naturally, the central government bears the brunt of their anger. In such a situation, this anger is increased more when it is said that prior to this government, when the price of crude oil was more than $ 100 per barrel, the price of petrol-diesel was even less. For example, the opposition parties say that even when the price of crude oil was $ 110 per barrel in April 2014, the price of petrol in Delhi was only 72.26 rupees per liter. Today, when the price of crude oil is only $ 66 per barrel, the price of petrol in Delhi has reached more than Rs 91 per liter and the price of diesel has reached more than Rs 81 per liter. So, the question is whether central government is responsible for this? But the facts tell something different.



*There are indications of the Central Govt proposing to bring petroleum products under the purview of GST, this does not seem to be practical due to opposition from the State Governments. However, after the proposal of the Central Govt, there will definitely be some restrain on political parties politicking on the issue.*

**Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**

### Truth of petrol-diesel prices

It is true that petrol-diesel prices have been increasing in accordance with international prices of crude oil for some time. But the truth is that only 34 percent of the market price of petrol-diesel is the cost of production and nearly 4 percent is dealer's commission, the rest of the price is shared by central government and state governments by way of taxes included in it. For example, if we look at the price of Rs 91 per liter of petrol in Delhi, the state government's share

in tax is 23 per cent and the central government's share in tax is 40 per cent. But even though apparently the central excise duty and surcharges is 40 percent, we have to understand that 42 percent of all taxes collected by the central government goes to the states and Union Territories, as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission. But there is definitely an issue in the tax imposed by the central government. Before this year's budget, the central government was levying a central excise duty of Rs 2.98 per liter on petrol, a special additional excise duty of Rs 12 and infrastructure surcharge of Rs 18. That means a total of 33 rupees per liter. Surcharge does not have to be shared with the states. Therefore, in addition to the surcharge of Rs 18 per liter with the Central Government, only Rs 8.70 is left after taking out 42 percent of the states from the Central Excise duty of Rs 15 per liter. That is, the central government's share in the price of petrol is actually 26.70 rupees per liter, while the state governments VAT is currently Rs 21 per liter in Delhi. Additionally state governments get Rs 6.30 per litre as their share in central excise duty. The conclusion is that out of the price of Rs. 91 per litre of petrol in Delhi, the Central Government gets Rs. 26.70, the State Government gets Rs. 27.30, whereas the cost of production in the petrol price is only Rs. 33, and appropriately Rs 4 is the distribution cost. Situation in diesel price is more or less the same. But it has to be understood that states where petrol-diesel prices are higher than Delhi, VAT is more in those states. But its true that a large part of the increase in petrol-diesel prices goes to the treasury of the Center and the states and states get slightly a larger part of that.

### Can this much tax be justified?

This question is a bit difficult to answer. As far as the consumers are concerned, since they have to bear the burden of this tax directly, they would definitely want tax to be reduced. Protests against taxes are taking place on social media in general. Comparing with other countries, prices of petrol and diesel is much lower in other countries due to lower tax on petrol-diesel. This makes consumer even more disturbed. Some other economists believe that the increase in petrol-diesel prices leads to inflation for two reasons. One, is the cost of distribution and production in the economy increases directly and indirectly. Two, increase in the prices of petroleum products causes price index to go up. Therefore, increase in petrol diesel prices can become the major reason for increasing inflation.

But on the other hand, some fiscal experts believe that the revenues of governments have been greatly impacted in the past (especially due to pandemic). Since petrol and diesel are sold in huge quantity, this can easily increase government revenue (both central and state government), thereby making it possible to increase spending on public welfare (education, health) and development (infrastructure). Due to reduced revenue, either this expenditure will have to be curtailed or the government will have to increase its deficit, due to which again inflation is expected to increase. Apart from this, it is also argued that greater use of petrol-diesel increases our dependence on foreign countries and increases the country's trade deficit. If people are attracted to electric vehicles due to high prices of petrol and diesel, then we will not only save valuable foreign exchange, but will also protect our environment.

### As Need to bring GST under the purview

Irrespective of the arguments in favour or against petrol diesel taxes, it cannot be denied that the tax on petrol diesel is very high, whether compared to the past or to other countries. The question is, how can the same be reduced? One solution to this is being suggested is that petroleum products should be brought under the purview of GST. With this, the tax on petroleum products (GST) will not be more than 28 percent. Out of which 71 percent will go to states. Even after this, infrastructure surcharge and agriculture surcharge can be continued to be imposed by the central government. In such a situation, a drastic reduction in the prices of petrol and diesel can be expected. But the problem in this is that when the GST was implemented, at that time the state governments were not ready to cover petroleum products and liquor under the purview of GST. The same situation remains today. Though there are indications of the Central Government proposing to bring petroleum products under the purview of GST, this does not seem to be practical due to opposition from the State Governments. However, after the proposal of the Central Government, there will definitely be some restrictions on political parties politicking on the issue. ❑❑

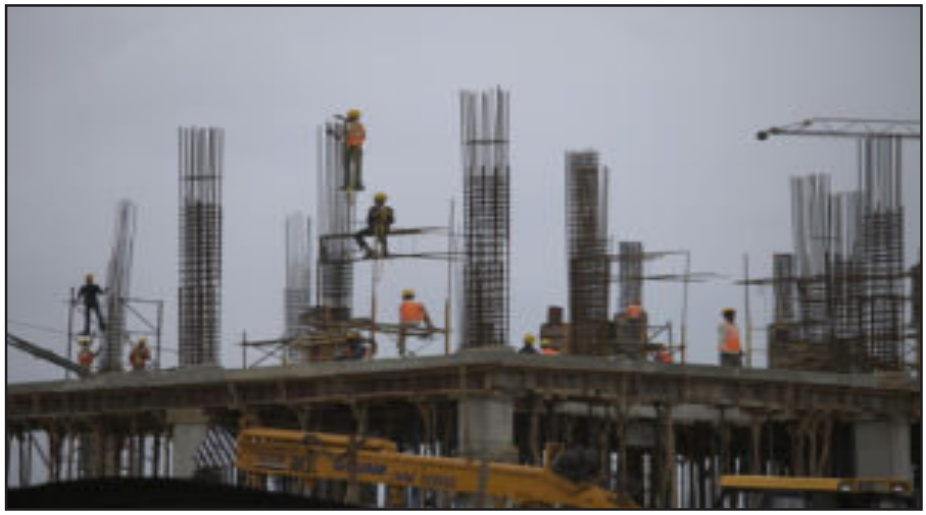
# A placid Budget—for the issues at hand

The Budget has a number of plus points. Investment in infrastructure such as in urban metro rails has been increased. A target of strategic disinvestment of public sector undertakings such as Air India, Shipping Corporation, IDBI Bank, Bharat Earth Movers Limited and even two Public Sector Banks has been set to garner a huge amount of Rs 1.75 crores in the coming year. Private companies are to be encouraged to set up electricity distribution companies so as to save the consumers from the inefficiency and corruption of the State Electricity Boards and to give the consumers a choice of suppliers. These are all good. However, the fundamental problem of providing employment has been given a miss. Employment is needed not only for its own sake, that is, in order to implement the "right to work," but also to create demand in the economy. The earnings made by a youth puts money and purchasing power in her hands. That leads to the generation of demand in the market and, in turn, encourages the businesses to invest. The budget has missed taking steps towards meeting this fundamental requirement.

The country is on the boil on the farmer's issue. The Finance Minister has rightly drawn attention to the fact that the purchases under the Minimum Support Price Programme have increased 1.5 times between 2013-4 and 2019-20. However, the Capital Gains Index increased from 220 to 289—or 31 percent—in this same period according to the figures published by the Finance Ministry. Thus, the "true" increase in the purchase price was a meager 19 percent in six years. Even this does not translate into a 19 percent increase in incomes of the farmer because the costs of inputs such as diesel, labour and seeds have also gone up. Let us assume the increase in the incomes of the farmer was 10 percent. This is pittance compared to the avowed objective of the Finance Minister to have doubled the farmer's incomes by 2020. There was a need to implement strong steps to secure the doubling of farmer's incomes. That will be difficult to obtain by enhancing the MSP because the production of the supported crop increases disproportion-

*Budget has commendable achievements related to investment in infrastructure, strategic disinvestment of public sector undertakings and participation of private companies in electricity generation.*

**Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala**



ately leading to over production. The Finance Minister then has to spend further money in storage and the disposal of the surplus stocks at low prices.

The Finance Minister should have taken steps to diversify our agriculture towards high-value crops. Large-scale cultivation of crops like mangoes, flowers, walnuts and bananas for export should have been encouraged. Our research establishment has utterly failed to develop the strains for the international market and the system has shown no interest in developing the infrastructure such as cold chains for exports. The Finance Minister should have given contracts to NGOs and corporate houses for undertaking research and extension, developing the cold chains and then exporting the produce. The contractor, for example, should be given the responsibility to bring the desired strains of cocoons, spread it among the farmers, get silk produced and export it from Mandya in Karnataka. That would have led to higher incomes for the farmers. The Finance Minister has missed the bus.

The Finance Minister has allocated Rs 35,000 crores for research on vaccines. These are in the right direction. However, we have not overcome the Covid pandemic on the strength of the vaccine. We have succeeded on the strength of our life style, that is, consumption of turmeric, ginger, giloi and other immune-boosting spices and by the practice of yoga and the like. Therefore, the need was to undertake research on the immune-boosting properties of these spices and other life styles and then globalize that knowledge. Further, a number of researchers have suggested that the low prevalence of Covid infection in India could be due to the poor cleanliness and health conditions under which our people live. Our bodies are more used to living with bacteria and viruses. It may be that large numbers of our people are dying from diseases developed due to poor quality of drinking water and sanitation. Those same numbers are now dying in the Western countries due to the Pandemic. That said, our people deserve clean drinking water and good quality sanitation. Therefore, the outlay of Rs 2,87,000 crores made for providing clean drinking water and improving sanitation in the next five years is welcome. But this may lead to reduction in our immunity hence parallel steps to increase immunity were needed.

***The only path towards providing productive employment to our millions was to develop our services sectors—translations, music, movies, online education, online medical advice.***

The third area is that of education. Large number of our youth are entering and will enter the job market in the coming decade. The numbers of jobs in agriculture and manufacturing are declining due to the use of machines like harvesters in agriculture and the use of robots in manufacturing. A number of studies show that the total employment in the organized manufacturing sector has been declining. The informal sector too has been blown away by the triple whammy of demonetization, GST and lockdown. There is no hope for these millions. These youth will take to crime and other destructive activities in absence of productive employment as the saying goes, "an empty mind is a devil's workshop." It also will not be possible to absorb these large numbers in agriculture because the share of agriculture in the GDP is seen to decline as a country develops. In the developed countries the share of agriculture is today less than one percent. The only path towards providing productive employment to our millions was to develop our services sectors—translations, music, movies, online education, online medical advice, and the like. The Finance Minister, therefore, has moved in the right direction in establishing institutes of translation to make available the Government documents in the regional languages. But there was a need to go much further. It was necessary to establish institutes in every district, for example, to train the youth in undertaking translations in foreign languages, making music, movies and computer apps, and in running portals for providing online tutorials and medical advice. The Budget has failed to take any steps in this direction.

This is an ordinary budget. The increased investment in infrastructure and the resolve to jump-start the process of privatization including of the Public Sector Banks are most welcome. However, they fail to address the pressing problems of employment. I expect social tensions to increase as we are seeing in the ongoing farmer's agitation because of the underlying increase in unemployment. ❑❑

*Formerly Professor of Economics at IIM Bengaluru*

# Unending tragedies & travails of the Baloch

When the Frontier Corps picked up Balochistan Students Organisation-Azad (BSO-A) chairman Zahid Baloch in broad daylight, in the presence of three female colleagues and other local persons on March 18, 2014, Karima Baloch stepped in as acting chairman to fill the vacuum. She pioneered women's political activism in the troubled region and bequeathed future generations a role model to emulate in the Baloch peoples' grim struggle for political autonomy, dignity, indeed, their very lives.

Little wonder that her death on December 22, 2020, in mysterious circumstances, in Toronto, Canada, where she was living in exile with husband, Hammal Haider, for the past five years, sparked off women-led protests across Balochistan, Islamabad, Karachi and other Pakistani cities, revealing an alacrity among women to mobilize and articulate political grievances. More protests are being planned in different world capitals, including Washington D.C.

Karima had gone for a walk on Toronto's Centre Island on December 21; she never returned and her body was found there the next day. The initial statement by the police that the case is not being investigated as a criminal incident drew protests from her husband and brother. She is the second Baloch dissident to die in suspicious circumstances this year.

On April 23, journalist Sajid Hussain who had been living in exile in Sweden since 2017 was found dead in Fyris River after having gone missing on March 2, 2020. Hussain, chief editor of the online Balochistan Times, wrote about drug trafficking, forced disappearances and the insurgency, and worked part-time as a professor in Uppsala University. Colleagues at Reporters without Borders suspect that his death was linked to his work as a journalist.

In Pakistan, Karima Baloch's death was seen as part of a new trend of tracing and assassinating Baloch dissidents overseas. Dr. Murad Baloch, secretary general of the Baloch National Movement to which she belonged, pointed out that Pakistan had intervened in Karima's asylum application and demanded her

*In Pakistan, Karima Baloch's death was seen as part of a new trend of tracing and assassinating Baloch dissidents overseas.*
**Sandhya Jain**

deportation to Pakistan. He said that Pakistan had kidnapped, disappeared, and martyred many of Karima Baloch's family members and political colleagues; her home was raided several times in order to arrest her, and her paternal home was shelled with mortars by the Pakistani army.

Karima earned much praise for a Raksha Bandhan video message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whom she addressed as "brother," and appealed for help for the Baloch people, after Modi unexpectedly mentioned Baluchistan in his 2016 Independence Day speech. It raised still simmering hopes among the Baloch that India could change its policy toward Balochistan at some future date. In a unique gesture, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava condoled her death.

Justin Trudeau's silence over the incident has irked the Baloch. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have demanded an investigation into her death.

Pakistan's saga of "disappearances" began in the mid-1970s. Its first victims were Asadullah Mengal, son of Ataullah Mengal, and his friend Ahmad Shah; they were abducted on February 6, 1975. Duleep Dass, son of Air Commodore (retd.) Balwant Dass, and Sher Ali Marri, were picked up by army intelligence at Belpat in early 1975. None of them were ever seen again.

The Baloch set up various resistance groups to fight for their rights, including resisting the exploitation of their vast mineral resources without fair compensation and development of the region. Gen. Musharraf, however, was especially belligerent, and a violent standoff in the Bugti area led to the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti in August 2006. It drew international attention to the phenomenon of forced disappearances that had grown exponentially under Musharraf.

***The Baloch set up various resistance groups to fight for their rights, including resisting the exploitation of their vast mineral resources without fair compensation and development of the region.***

When the Supreme Court tried to take up a petition of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan on the issue of disappearances in 2007, Musharraf ordered the dismissal of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and arrest of the judges. (This triggered a lawyers' movement that led to the restoration of democracy and reinstatement of all judges).

The investigation was reopened and in May 2010, a Commission of Enquiry on Enforced Disappearances was set up under Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal. By October 1, 2013, the Commission had traced 473 disappeared persons. But despite Chief Justice Chaudhry's efforts, the Supreme Court could not bring members of the military and security agencies allegedly responsible for the forced disappearances to account.

In May 2009, the bullet-riddled bodies of BNM president Ghulam Mohammad Baloch, his colleague Lala Munir, and Sher Mohammad Baloch of the Baloch Republican Party (BRP) were found dumped in a mountainous region 40 km from Turbat. They had been abducted by unidentified armed men from the chamber of advocate Kachkool Ali in Turbat on April 3, 2009, after the Anti-Terrorist Court Turbat dismissed charges that they were instigating political unrest in Quetta and Karachi over the growing numbers of missing persons.

Sameer Rind was picked up from his home in Turbat on the night of October 14, 2010, by armed men in Frontier Corps uniforms. At a television talk show hosted by Munizae Jahangir in Quetta in 2012, his sister, Samia Rind, asked Ayatullah Durrani, PPP president in Balochistan, why people disappeared instead of being arrested and tried. He replied: "I wish I had the authority to find these people, but the fact of the matter is, I do not".

The International Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, set up by Mama Abdul Qadeer Baloch, Farzana Majeed Baloch and Nasrullah Baloch in October 2009, claimed in 2014 that there were as many as 18,000 missing Baloch, of whom more than 2000 were killed between 2001 and 2013. Qadeer and some lady relatives of missing persons marched 3000-km in 106 days from Quetta to Islamabad, to highlight the tragedy.

Qadeer's son, Jaleel Reki Baloch (23), a political activist, was abducted from the door of his home in Quetta, on February 13, 2009, after returning from Friday prayers. His body was found three years later, riddled with bullets and holes drilled into his bones and joints, and burn marks across his back. The then chief minister of Balochistan, Aslam Raisani, blamed the ISI, in a

statement to the High Court.

In 2009, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan claimed to have received complaints of 600 missing persons, of whom 40 had been killed and 240 verified. Most of the disappeared belonged to Baloch Republican Party (BRP), Baloch National Front (BNF), Baloch National Movement (BNM), Baloch Student Organization (BSO) and Balochistan National Party (BNP). In July 2011, Human Rights Watch noted an upsurge in the number of missing persons and 'Kill and Dump' policy.

The violence spread to Sindh. In December 2011, Faisal Mengal, who worked for a German NGO, was killed while going from Karachi to Hyderabad, Sindh. Many Baloch who migrated to Sindh for safety, were abducted from Karachi, Hub and Khuzdar, and recovered from Lasbela district.

On February 5, 2012, Jhumer Domki, wife of Sardar Bakhtyar Khan Domki, Member, Balochistan Assembly, and elder sister of Baloch Republican Party president Brahamdagh Bugti, her 14-year-old daughter, and driver, were gunned down in Gizri area of Karachi while going to attend a wedding. On February 11, 2012, Jan Muhammad Marri, right hand man of Khair Bakhsh Marri, was abducted from Karachi; his mutilated body was found in the Hub area of Balochistan.

In October 2013, the attorney general informed the Supreme Court that Rs 400 million from the Intelligence Bureau's secret fund was used for counter-insurgency in the province, during 2008-09. Possibly the funds were used to set up death squads as there was a quantum jump in abductions and killings in 2008.

In September 2013, Chief Justice Choudhry, heading a bench at Quetta Registry of the Supreme Court, on a petition filed by Balochistan Bar Association, said there was evidence against Frontier Corps (FC) personnel in some 'missing' person cases. The same month, the provincial government's Home and Tribal Affairs Department stated that 592 mutilated bodies, mainly of Baloch political activists, had been found in the previous three years in Quetta, Kalat, Khuzdar and the Makran belt.

On January 17, 2014, mass graves were discovered in the Tootak area of Khuzdar district. Justice Muhammad Noor Meskanzai of the Balochistan High Court, who investigated the case, was told by witnesses that Shafique Mengal, son of former federal minister Naseer Mengal, had set up a militia (Baloch Musla Defai Tanzeem) in 2008 and was behind the camp where the graves were found.

A high court lawyer assisting Justice Meskanzai said Shafique Mengal protected Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives in Balochistan and worked closely with the anti-Shia Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Former chief minister Akhtar Mengal, head of the Balochistan National Party–Mengal (BNP-M), blamed Shafique Mengal for the murder of several of his party cadre in Wadh and Khuzdar.

On January 30, 2016, Dr. Abdul Manan, secretary-general of the Baloch National Movement, was killed by security forces in Mastung. He was vehemently opposed to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Bilal Anwar Kasi, president of the Baluchistan Bar Association, was shot dead on August 8, 2016. When lawyers and journalists arrived at the Emergency Ward of the Civil Hospital, Quetta, a suicide bomber triggered a blast that killed more than 70 persons (including 54 lawyers) and injured 120 persons. Earlier, on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016, 75 persons were killed in a blast near a park in Lahore.

On May 14, 2019, Muhammad Naseem (27), a final year student at Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto University of Law, Karachi, and his fiancée Hani Gul, a student of medicine, were picked up by plainclothes officials in the city. The International Human Rights Council (IHRC-HK) reported that Naseem, an ex-central committee member of the Baloch Republican Student Organisation, was abducted along with BRSO general secretary Aftab Ahmad. Hani and Aftab were released in August, but Naseem's whereabouts are still unknown.

Lawyer and retired colonel, Inamur Rahim, was abducted from his home on Adiala Road, Rawalpindi, at midnight, December 17, 2019, by several persons in black uniform with a Pakistani flag stitched on the sleeves.

In the last two decades, several Baloch political activists, intellectuals, doctors, engineers, artists, journalists and tribal elders have been taken away by intelligence agencies and the military. Despite meticulous documentation by the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, International Committee of Red Cross, Asian Human Rights Commission, United Nation High Commission for Refugees, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and various Baloch human rights groups, the Baloch saga of missing-found-dead continues, with no reprieve in sight. ❑❑

*https://chintan.indiafoundation.in/articles/unending-tragedies-and-travails-of-the-baloch/*

# Food chain consolidation limiting choices

*A convergence among the technology/ trading companies and the big retail is taking place — to exert a greater influence in drawing appropriate policies at the national as well as international level to help with consolidation. The policy of 'get big or get out' has reframed public policies in agriculture to usher in consolidation across the entire food chain. This is perhaps what the Indian farmers are worried about.*

**Devinder Sharma**

Every time you walk into a super market or an average looking grocery store, you are likely to be overwhelmed by ample choices. The retail shelves are packed with abundant supplies of food products – coming in attractive packages and with alluring sale offers – which give you an illusion of widening choices.

In reality, the choices are getting restricted. Most of these products are being produced by a few companies, their numbers decreasing over the years. The reason — food processing and retail business is getting concentrated — dominated by a handful of companies. So much so, some agribusiness companies have been known to put on the shelves similar kinds of product under different brand names.

If you think consolidation is happening only in the food retailing industry, hold your breath. Concentration and consolidation is not only happening in food retail but across the food value chain, thereby reducing choices, and leading first to monopolies and subsequently to building conglomerates that control the value chain. As Dr William Heffernan of the University of Missouri had forewarned way back in 1991, the control is going to be from 'the gene to the supermarket shelf'.

This is exactly what has happened. With first horizontal and then vertical integration, followed subsequently by global expansion, the very fundamental of the market economy — that more choices means more competition — has got severely limited. In fact, with an increasing spate of acquisitions and mergers that the world is witnessing, more so since the mid-1980s, competitiveness has been the biggest casualty. As Heffernan and some other economists had shown, when four companies gain dominance over 40 per cent of the market, it no longer remains competitive. The choices then disappear.

The concentration of ownership leads to concentration of wealth and power. In the food value chain, it is this unwieldy concentration of power that decides

what to produce, and what to eat. With the decision making a shift from the communities to the board room, even the food choices are getting limited. The romance with traditional foods is slowly fading away. The exponential growth in junk foods, leading to a spurt in obesity and lifestyle diseases, is a classic example. Lab-grown food will further take away food choices and bring more corporate control over food. As if this is not enough, reports say the United States now wants the private sector to act as an educational agent for food and nutrition.

Over the years, the world is witnessing a convergence among the three major players — technology companies, trading companies, and the big retail — to exert a greater influence in drawing appropriate policies at the national as well as international level so as to help with consolidation. The policy of 'get big or get out' that the US pushed since the early 1970s has reframed public policies in agriculture to usher in consolidation across the entire food chain. This is perhaps what the Indian farmers are worried about, the protest actually aiming at protecting the farm livelihoods by ensuring an assured income by way of an assured price. What they are asking for holds the key to reclaiming the power imbalance in the food systems that has built in over the decades.

Whether it is land, seed or livestock, the consolidation that has happened in the US has set a global trend. While small farmers abandoned agriculture, an interesting study entitled 'The Food System: Concentration and its Impacts' for the Family Farm Action Alliance in the US, tells how the

***Over the years, the world is witnessing a convergence among the three major players – technology companies, trading companies, and the big retail – to exert a greater influence in drawing appropriate policies at the national as well as international level so as to help with consolidation.***

share of farms above an average of 2,000 acres has doubled in 40 years, from 15 per cent to 37 per cent; and dairy farms have grown in size, with the average number of dairy cattle increasing from 80 to 1,300 in the same period.

According to the 2020 Land Report, Bill and Melinda Gates are now America's top farmland owners with 242,000 acres. The next in the list is the Offutt family, owning 190,000 acres. Considering that Ted Turner and David Rockefeller have been recipients of massive farm subsidies in the past (they too own large tracts of farm land), it will be interesting to know how much farm subsidies the Gates family is entitled to. This also points to a different form of land consolidation.

Coming back to agriculture, with the big six seed companies seeing mergers and acquisitions, reducing their number to four, their share of the global seed market is around 59 per cent. With Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement, and many countries now bringing in policies to stop or restrict the use of traditional seeds, the consolidation of the seed industry is further strengthened. IPR policies are also leading to privatisation of genetic resources. Seed biotech companies insert a gene in a plant species and it becomes a new variety, with ownership shifting to the company. The genetic uniformity that the seed industry is ushering in raises concerns over the destruction from monocultures.

The three agro-chemical giants — Bayer/Monsanto, ChemChina/Syngenta and DowDupont — have 64 per cent share of the global pesticides market. First, the seed industry dovetailed pesticides usage in the varieties developed, and now the genetically-modified seed varieties with genes for herbicide tolerance leads to increasing sales of the particular herbicides. The use of pesticides has in fact grown after the introduction of GM varieties despite claims to the contrary.

Similarly, consolidations have happened across the entire food chain.

All this leads to the question as to who controls food? Consolidation is aimed at keeping food cheap, by externalising the socio-economic and environmental costs. This is going to exacerbate further with increasing concentration of food power in the hands of a few companies. The true cost of cheap food is not only health and environment destruction, but also in the resulting sufferings of farmers who are denied their rightful income for what they produce. This leads to a worrying situation where farmers quit agriculture and the companies take over. And this is what the protesting farmers are worried about. ❑❑

*https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/food-chain-consolidation-limiting-choices-204874/*

# Maintain & Raise MSP to Protect the Rivers

The farmers are agitating for ensuring the continuation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) by legislation. One aspect of this demand is that they be assured of minimum remunerative prices for their produce. Another aspect is that MSP can become the instrument for saving our rivers.

According to the Consortium of the Indian Institutes of Technologies that made the Ganga River Basin Management Plan, the rivers are the best measure of the overall health of our environment. The condition of our land is reflected in the rivers through agricultural runoff. The river water will become poisonous if the land has become poisonous due to the use of pesticides. The same will happen if the air is polluted. Maintenance of the health of the river requires that it has sufficient water just as maintenance of the health of a human being requires that her body has sufficient blood.

There are two claimants to the river's waters. The first claim is of the farmers who want the water for irrigation. The second claim is from the river herself and the fishermen, fish, turtles, aquatic vegetation, and the human beings who want to enjoy the beauty of the river and taking a dip in her waters. A river may be considered to be "alive" if she has enough water to provide for these uses. The Government has to decide how much water may be given to the farmers and how much to the river, fishermen and turtles. The water allocated to the river is called environmental flows or e-flows for short. A number of studies have been made to assess the amount of e-flows that are required to keep the river alive. I will discuss these in relation to the Ganga although the same logic applies to all the rivers.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) based in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in which Government of India also has a stake, had suggested in 2006 that the rivers can be classified in various categories from "A" to "F," that is, from the best to the worst. IWMI recommended that 67 percent e-flows must be

*Since rivers are the best measure of the overall health of our environment, the govt. must assess the burden of volumetric pricing of water on the farmers and raise MSP accordingly.*

**Arun Kumar Gupta & Bharat Jhunjhunwala**

released if the status of the Ganga River was A-class, 44 percent if the status was B-class and 29 percent if status was C-class and so on. It then classified the status of Ganga in 2006 as C-class. Thus, 29 percent e-flows should be released even if the status was maintained as it were in 2006. However, the Government has declared the Ganga as our National River in 2009. One would expect that we should raise her to A-class. In that case 67 percent water should be released as e-flows.

The High Court at Allahabad, in a matter that was argued by Senior Advocate Arun Kumar Gupta co-author of this article, passed an order in 2011 that 50% of the water should be released from Narora into the main channel as e-flows. Then, the World Wildlife Fund recommended in 2012 that 47% of the water should be released from Bithoor located upstream of Kanpur. Then in the Consortium of Seven Indian Institutes of Technologies recommended that 55% e-flows should be released from the Pashulok Barrage at Rishikesh that diverts water to the Chilla hydropower project. The IITs had been asked by the Ministry of Environment to make a Ganga River Basin Management Plan. The IITs did not asses the amount of water to be released by the irrigation barrages in the plains. However, the Pashulok Barrage is located only 15 kilometers upstream from the Bhimgoda Irrigation Barrage at Haridwar. Therefore, we can take the recommendations for Pashulok Barrage to be applicable for Bhimgoda Barrage as well. Then an article published in the scientific journal *Current Science* published by the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, suggested that 50 to 60 percent e-flows should be released as e-flows into the Yamuna River. The Ministry of Water Resources also issued a report in 2015 which supported the recommendations of IITs that 55% e-flows should be released.

***The Ministry of Water Resources also issued a report in 2015 which supported the recommendations of IITs that 55% e-flows should be released.***

Now comes the catch. The ministry of Jal Shakti, which was earlier called Ministry of Water Resources, issued and Notification in October 2018 requiring the release of 36 cubic meters per second (cumecs) water from the Bhimgoda Barrage in the non-monsoon period and 57 cumecs in the monsoon period. For the downstream barrage at Bijnor, Narora and Kanpur, it stipulated the release of 24 to 48 cumecs water as e-flows. This works out to 6 percent or less of the water available at these locations. Thus, the Ministry has ignored order of the High Court which is still operative and the numbers of the studies mentioned above and instead of requiring the release of about 50 percent e-flows, it has required the release of only 6 percent water. The Ministry has bent backwards to supply water to the farmers; and ignored the river herself and the fishermen, fish, turtles, aquatic vegetation, and the human beings who want to enjoy the beauty of- and taking a dip in her waters.

We are confronted with a difficult tradeoff between food security and environment. Our farmers are often misusing the canal water which is supplied to them on per-hectare land that is irrigated irrespective of the amount of water used. Therefore, they flood the fields more than what is necessary. The solution is that the farmers must be required to pay for the volume of the water that they use. This will lead them to use the water judiciously and ensure food our security with the use of much less water. However, volumetric pricing will lead to an increase in the cost of production. This can be managed by making a proportionate increase in the Minimum Support Price. Then the farmer will have will have to pay more for the water but he will get more money from the sale of the crop.

The ultimate burden will fall on us the city-dwellers who buy food grains from the market. We will have to pay higher prices for the grains since the Minimum Support Price would have been increased. The choice before us is whether we want cheap grains or we want living rivers. We the people have to take a decision what is it that we want. It seems to us that livelihood of the fishermen; life of fish, turtles and aquatic vegetation; and the happiness of us human beings who want to enjoy the beauty of the river and taking a dip in her waters is far more important and the price of food grains. Therefore, the Ministry of Jal Shakti must not implement the High Court order for the release of 50 percent e-flows and follow the numbers of studies that point in that same direction. At the same time the Government must assess the burden of volumetric pricing of water on the farmers and raise MSP accordingly. ❑❑

Mamata changes turf from Bengal to Bengali elections!

# A fight to finish begins?

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Mamata Bannerjee, has changed the turf from Bengal to Bengali elections on the 125th birth anniversary of "Deshnayak" Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

The West Bengal chief minister used the Jai Shri Ram war cry to take away the wind out of the sail from her "outsider" rival's bid to capture state people's love and devotion to Netaji. (It may be recalled that during the Ramanmabhoomi *bhoomipujan*, prime minister Narendra Modi had said "Jai Siaram", the usual northern Indian salutation).

Her one-minute speech stoked the Bengali emotions and pride so high that her arch rivals - CPM and Bengal Congress threw their plank behind her. CPM leader Mohd Salim in a press conference and Congress leader Adhir Chaudhury have agreed with Mamata that it was an official function and such party slogans were inappropriate. It would be too much of a speculation to imagine that all the three parties would form a combine. But when it comes to the northern rival, their opposition might create a common unannounced platform.

Mamata's supposed anger was planned or not, she, since the morning of the January 23, has been paving a separate path. Before commencement of the 7-km procession from Shyambazar Netaji statue she blew a conchshell at 12.15 pm, the time when Netaji was born on 1897, a tradition Bengal has been following since his mysterious disappearance in 1945.

There she also stoked another Bengali soft corner of shifting of the capital from Calcutta (Kolkata) to New Delhi in 1911 by the British, post-1905 anti-Bengal partition movement, considered as a punishment to Bengalis that led to its impoverisation as well as communalising politics and Muslim League's 1946 "di-

*TMC leader Mamata Bannerjee has changed the turf from Bengal to Bengali elections on the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.*
**Shivaji Sarkar**

rect action" slaughter of Hindus in the city and Noakhali forcing the Partition of the country.

Her demand for four national capitals and roving Parliament sessions has support for regaining that pride. Bengalis see it as restoration of their long-pending due as well as a move to decentralise from a heavy-headed Delhi centre and seem to agree with her, "I believe that India must have four rotating capitals. The English ruled the entire country from Kolkata. Why should there be only one capital city in our country."

Her questioning of why Deshnayak Diwas as celebrated in West Bengal to Parakram Diwas has wide support as she says, "Rabindranath Tagore (another Bengal icon) had described Netaji as 'Deshnayak' and that is why we have today used the name to link the two legends of Bengal".

"What is the meaning of 'Parakram'? They may dislike me politically but could have consulted with me. They could have consulted with Netaji's great-grandsons Sugata Bose or Sumantra Bose on choosing a word," Banerjee says.

She has been calculative. She apparently wins the emotions. But there are voices in the state echoed by a magazine Swarajya that speaks of the other views too, "the Bengal CM could have ignored slogans, or could have silenced the *Jai Shri Ram* sloganeers with Netaji Zindabad by flying off the handle, she only confirmed her intemperate nature". She is also not being pardoned for this state of affairs today on the *Ram* slogan, "and it is of Mamata Banerjeee's own making. Since 2016, *Jai Shri Ram* has become an acutely political one and the TMC chief was quick to order the state administration to obstruct BJP and its affiliates organising Ram Navami celebrations through covert means and administrative curbs on such processions or banning it to appease her valuable Muslim vote bank," Swarajya says.

***Mamata is using the Netaji anniversary to change that by creating a pan-Bengal sentiment as she finds it not easy to counter the BJP's political aggression and poaching on the leaders of her party.***

The perception strengthened after denial by her government to hold Saraswati pujas in some schools and even Durga pujas at some places though religious events of minorities were allowed to be observed.

Mamata is using the Netaji anniversary to change that by creating a pan-Bengal sentiment as she finds it not easy to counter the BJP's political aggression and poaching on the leaders of her party. She has also not found it easy to come out of the accusations of promoting her nephew Abhishek Bandyopadhyay and his alleged unsavoury deeds.

Astute politically, having risen from the ranks of Chhaatra Parishad, students' wing of the Congress during former CM Siddharth Shankar Ray's times, she took up the challenge to contest symbolically from Nandigram, which is the supposed bastion of Shubhendu Adhikary, who defected to BJP a few days back, known for organizing the protest against CPM government and bringing TMC to power.

Despite this it is not easy to checkmate the rise of the BJP, a result of minority aggrandisement, alleged graft of Mamata's aides, a number of scams – Saradha, Naarada and Rose Valley type - and deteriorating law and order situation.

Bengal is not happy with her intemperate and unpredictable behaviour nor does it support her gesture to minorities or her offering of prayers in their style. She is aware of it. She needs an image correction.

She uses the Netaji anniversary to refurbish her 'Bengali' image. It has caused ripples in the society leading many of her critics to visibly come to her support. It has certainly thrown a spanner in her rival's tactics. But elections are still about three months away. The main rival is not a political novice. It may come out with counter strategies during the Saraswati puja, Ramakrishna Paramahansa jayanti, Holi called Dol in Bengal or Baishakhi. The electoral battle will be colourful and how other parties and Mamata counteract in the state would be interesting to watch. Whosoever goes down would fight to the finish. ❑❑

# Ending Macaulayism and Regaining Ancient Glory with New Education Policy-2020 (Part-1)

British rulers have used English as a tool of imperialism to dominate their colonies like India. In 1835, leading to the English Education Act, Thomas Babington Macaulay produced his famous memorandum on Indian Education, which was scathing on the inferiority of native culture and learning, "while western learning was superior which could only be taught through medium of English", there was therefore need to produce Indians with English morals and intellect who could become tools to transmit western learning in vernacular languages of India. With this recommendation of Macaulay, the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books and funding was immediately stopped by East India Company of Britain. British thus discontinued the traditional education and did not supported the vernacular language education.

British administrator Governor General Thomas Babington Macaulay was instrumental in making English as the medium of education in India. The cultural and ethnic inferiority was felt by people of India with a belief that cultural values of the colonizer are inherently superior to their own. Through cultural hegemony they were to support establishment by teaching a western curriculum with English language of instruction followed in administration and in law courts.

*Macanlay's education policy created differences among Indian regions and languages, and contributed in their preferences to English over their mother tongue. After independence the legacy of Britishers combined and created more rifts among different regions on language basis.*

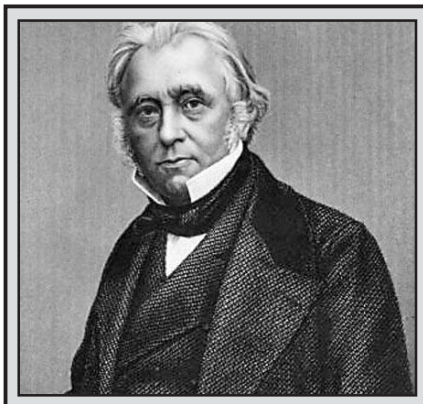
**Dr. Rekha Bhatt**

Macaulay's wish to make Indians their slaves reflected in the minutes addressed by him about Indian Education system. He said, "to have found great people sunk in the lowest depth of slavery and superstition, we may educate our subjects to have made them capable of all the privileges of citizens, would indeed be a title of glory all our own into a capacity for better government". He also said "English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic, that the natives are desired to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or

Arabic, neither as language of law nor as the language of religion, that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars. This led eventually to English becoming one of the languages of India rather than simply being considered as language of foreign rulers.

With the onset of Macaulayism, native language Hindi was degenerated and vernacular Indian languages like Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Telugu were discouraged, establishing them as competent to Hindi inspite of the fact that regional languages have the similar Sanskrit origin as Hindi. Macaulay system of education was thus successful in prevailing a fearful thought among people of southern regions of India about the question of regional languages to survive over preference to Hindi. Besides English was thought to be the language to become progressive and hence they insisted that only English language needs to be promoted in Education.

British Education Policy resulted in violence, agitations, strikes and arrests in Tamil region to completely rule out Hindi from the Education system. In 1937, the Indian National Congress was elected to power and termoil of British power has begin The first Indian National congress Government of Madras Presidency led by C. Rajgopalachari passed an order for compulsory Hindi language in Secondary schools of Madras Presidency. The order was immediately opposed and statewide protests against mandatory Hindi lasted three years. Violence continued till British Governor of Madras Lord Erskine in 1940, ordered to withdraw compulsory Hindi and make Hindi an optional language in education. Even then opposition of students continued against the use of optional Hindi in Education.



***British Education Policy resulted in violence, agitations, strikes and arrests in Tamil region to completely rule out Hindi from the Education system.***

The movements became more furious in 1946 after the formation of regional government of DMK (Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam). In the year 1950, the constitution of India came into effect which stated the adoption of Hindi as an official language of India while English to be continued as an associate official language of India for a period of fifteen years after which Hindi would become the sole official language. Many non-Hindi Indian states did not agree to make Hindi the sole official language, after the period of fifteen years which was to get over in 1965. To ally their fears, Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the official language Act two years earlier in 1963, to ensure the continuous use of English after 1965. But this text of Act could not satisfy the regional government of DMK. As a result anti-Hindi movement gained momentum and full scale riot broke out on January 25, 1965, in south city of Madras.

Following the policy of bilingualism, Hindi was completely abolished and English was continued accompanied by regional Tamil language. The same bilingual policy was adopted in various states of southern region and emphasized the use of regional languages like Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi and Telugu inspite of Hindi being second language.

Macaulay's education policy created differences among Indian regions and languages, and contributed in their preferences to English over their mother tongue. After independence the legacy of Britishers combined and created more rifts among different regions on language basis. Mutual riots continued for urgency of English language to bridge the linguistic gaps created among various regions

The Indian constitution committee in 1949 arrived at a compromise that while Hindi would be the official language of India, English would be used in courts, services and communication between one state and another from then onwards, Hindi became 'Raj Bhasha', an official language as well as a medium of communication all over India. Hindi has gained popularity since its adoption as an official language of the Indian union in 1950. Hindi is considered as public language or common's language ('Lok-Bhasha' or 'Sampark Bhasha') among the speakers

of more distantly related languages such as Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali and Nepali. Therefore Hindi is more prominent language not at just local, regional, national and international levels but also in administration, governance, education, media and literature in twenty two of the twenty eight Indian states and also three union territories.

Hindi is not only an official language but Hindi has become the prominent language now used as mother tongue of over five hundred million speakers in India alone and to increase regional dialacts which otherwise are getting extinct with advent of English resulting in lose of regional language which has been used in India for centuries. To curb the linguistic resentment of multilingual masses. After 1971 India's language policy focused on promoting regional languages, by enlisting them in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India which meant that those twenty two languages would be entitled to the representation on the official language commission.

The unifying role of Hindi against British rule has long been proved as binding force for different regions of India. After colonization, the hegemonic imposition of English as language of administration and language of higher education created a separate mass of non-Hindi speaking people in south-India. This polarisation on language issue caused arrogances and protest in south over national usage of Hindi still in 2014, when Government ordered its officials to use Hindi on social media accounts and in Government letters.

After the colonization and subjugation of India in last millennium, English was the language of administration and the language of higher education. Indian masses were illusioned by the gimmicky and the dazzling lifestyle of few English speaking aristocrates groups isolating themselves from general masses, and got their education in convent missionaries. English speaking people with prestigious positions at various public and private institutions were seen as leading thinkers of India. English was thought to be capable of providing intellectual leadership and ability to rule, maintaining law and order. On the other hand, majority of people who couldn't speak English, they were termed ill-educated and ill-mannered. In addition, skewed history created inferior psychosis about our ancestral culture and language.

***The new education policy NEP- 2020, brings an end to British imperialistic Macaulayism deeply seeded for last century in Indian Education System and begins a new era of education system based on ethics.***

On the other hand, English being a foreign language can never be spontaneous language for mutual expression and interactive conversations. The mainstay of Hindi vocabulary (in Devnagri Script) is Sanskrit, Tamil has 40%, Sanskrit vocabulary and most of the regional languages are closer to Sanskrit influences. It constitutes Hindi as common language among speakers of closely related languages such as Brij, Bhojpuri, Maithilli, Bundel, Maghai and large number of languages spoken in the plains of Punjab and Haryana and the Hills of Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal.

Using a foreign language led people to place greater weight on outcomes of action and less emphasis intentions in making moral judgements. Several recent studies have focused on how ethics in a non-native foreign languages might take place. The findings suggest that when people are confronted with moral dilemmas, they do indeed respond differently when considering them in a foreign language than when using them in their native tongue. The research illuminates that our moral compass is a combination of the earliest forces that have shaped us but when using a foreign language with muted emotional response, diminish the impact of noble intentions. Emotional association might colour moral judgements made in our native language based on potent memories of our earliest transgressions.

By comparison, languages acquired late in life enter our minds bleached of the emotionality. Memory intertwines a language with the experience and interactions through which that language was learned. Our childhood languages learned in the threos of passionate emotion - abundance of love, rage wonder and punishments become infused with deep feeling. The new education policy NEP- 2020, brings an end to British imperialistic Macaulayism deeply seeded for last century in Indian Education System and begins a new era of education system based on ethics.

**(Continues……)**

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## Reconstructing Identity and Contesting History

# The Meenas of Jaipur-III

The foremost legend that constitutes the history of Meenas is that of Rajput treachery and the Meena foster father. The story not only reasserts the Meenas' jurisdiction over the territory of Jaipur state but also links their past with the Kachwaha ruling family Dhola Rae, the founder of Kachwaha state, was brought up by the Meena king of Khohgong, 8 km from modern Jaipur The mother, along with her son, the fugitive prince (Dhola Rae). joins the Meena royal household as a cook. Pleased with the food cooked by her, the Meena king enquires and discovers her illustrious past. He adopts her as his sister, and Dhola Rae as his nephew When Dhola Rae attains the age of 14 years, he is sent to the court of Delhi as a Meena representative, with a tribute from Khohgong. The Kachwaha young prince remains there for five years, where he conceives the idea of usurping his benefactor's authority On the fateful night of Diwali.

Dhola Rae along with his Rajput allies from Delhi, enslaves a number of Meenas and takes over Meena country (DhundharDhola Rae's son Maidal Rae, later captures Amber (the subsequent capital of Kachwaha state of Jaipur) from the SusawataMeenas (Amber being the capital of their chief Rao Bhato, the head of the Meena confederation In fact, the story of Rajput treachery had been popular throughout those tribal regions of Rajasthan where the process of regional state formation crystallized over a long period of time in the pre-colonial times. A similar story can be seen in the traditions of the Bhils of Mewar (southern Rajasthan).42 The Meenas of Bundi, too, claimed the treacherous killing of their ancestors by the Hada-Chauhans to establish Hada power in Bundi. " It is important to note that the Meenas of Bundi had started narrating their history' as early as the seven teenth century. The idea of treachery spread from Bundi to Jaipurbetween the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and evidently became popular in the territory of the Meenas of Jaipur.

*Tribal Legends point towards Rajput state formation which succeeded the tribal chiefdoms and transfer of power from tribes to state-society.*

**Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur**

The above-mentioned story clearly reveals the attempt of the Meenas to highlight the loss of their territorial rights and resources because the Kachwaha state had already integrated the Meena settlements and Meena chiefs into its territorial and political set-up without driving them away The humiliation of military defeat and submission had to be compensated by Meena chiefs reminding themselves of their pre-Kachwahasupremacy in the region. Hence, arose the idea of the Meena foster father (Dhola Rae) of the Rajput prince, implying Kachwaha suppression of Meena chiefs. An element of struggle and military defeat can be clearly discerned in the treacherous killing of the Meena foster father, evoking popular sympathy. Reminiscences of Kachwaha success due to their Mughal connections are also disguised in the story of Dhola Rae conspiring against the Meenas along with his Rajput allies at Delhi.

The other important aspect of the legend of Rajput treachery is the projection of Meenas' close links with the local royal house (resultant of interaction over a long period of state formation. This is clearly an attempt by the Meenas to raise the status of their community in the local society. In a society where Rajput dominated the socio-political scenario, old connections with the royal house would undoubtedly enhance one's prestige in the present. Jan Vansina observes a similar phenomenon in the kingdom of Kazembe (Zambia), where the historical tradition of descent or local groups, apart form their stories of origin and foundation, all featured kings along with a forebear of the group in question. Thus, the whole historical perspective was shaped by the existing political structure. This situation obviously flows from the dynamics of social stratification. Any connection with royalty Teflects on the status of descent or local groups, especially if the anecdote recalls a service rendered to dynasty, or even more when descent from a king is claimed. Such anecdotes went beyond these obviously flattering memories.

***The above-mentioned story clearly reveals the attempt of the Meenas to highlight the loss of their territorial rights and resources.***

The Meenas of Jaipur measured the social significance of theirhistory using the Kachwaha royal family as the standard of reference.

We next examine the legend of Meena kingdoms and symbols of royalty Following their connection with the royal family, the Meenas obviously lay claim to the pre-Kachwaha kingdoms of the Meena sovereigns and their forts in the Jaipur region. Colonel James Tod recorded the following legend, popular amongst the Meenas of Nain:

*Bawankot, chappandurwaza,*
*Mynamurd, Naenka raja,*
*Booroo raj Naenko,*
*JubBhoos men bhutto manga*

General A Cunningham of the Archaeological Survey of India translates it as there were fifty-two forts and fifty-six gates to the Meena man, who was Nain's Raja. It was sorry time for the realm of Nain, when they were glad to beg their share of chaff When ACL Carlleyle, assistant to General Cunningham, visited the ancient temple in the deserted township of Nain in 1871-2. the priest repeated a similar saying

*Chappankot, bawandarwaza*
*Ja men raheNaenka Raja"*

There were fifty-six fort and fifty-two gates. where the Raja of Nain did hold his state. implying Meena control over 56 forts Hence, Meenas claimed proprietorship over the kingdom through the control of the forts. ❑❑

## SJM wants govt to 'reconsider' disinvestment push, flags FDI rise in insurance too

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) congratulated Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for presenting a Budget that "will help revive the economy" from the Covid-19 hit but raised concerns about the government's disinvestment plans.

"Announcement of carrying out disinvestment of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, Pawan Hans, Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), manufacturer of rolling stock for Metro etc. is a cause of major concern," SJM said in a statement issued hours after the Budget.

"The government should reconsider this decision. The announcement of privatisation of public sector banks and an insurance company is also worrying," he added. "It would be better that instead of doing a strategic investment of these undertakings, efforts are made to improve the performance of these enterprises; and after that only their equity is disinvested in the market," SJM said.

Union Budget 2021-22 is the Narendra Modi government's most ambitious plan to privatise government enterprises.

The government will maintain a bare minimum presence in only four strategic sectors, Sitharaman said in her Budget speech. The four sectors are atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services.

The strategic disinvestment of the enterprises "created by taxpayers money is not right", Mahajan said. "Sale through equity route would be a far better and transparent option, after improving their performance," he added.

The SJM also took objection to the government's decision to raise the FDI limit in the insurance sector to 74 per cent from 49 per cent, describing it as "worrisome". "…Increasing foreign dominance in the financial sector is not a prudent step," SJM said. "This increases foreign dominance over the financial resources of the country and impacts the development of the country."

Even so, it appreciated the other parts of the Budget. "Despite a fiscal deficit of 6.8 per cent next year, we will be able to not only have high growth of GDP, but also bring back employment opportunities, hampered during pandemic last year and killed in the last two decades due to onslaught of Chinese imports," SJM added.

"Allocation of more funds for infrastructure, the announcement of new infrastructure projects, the efforts for the revival of industries closed due to Chinese imports, an unprecedented increase of 137 per cent in spending on health, the allocation of additional funds for research and development (R&D) are all welcome measures," it said.

*https://theprint.in/economy/rss-affiliate-wants-govt-to-reconsider-disinvestment-push-flags-rise-in-insurance-fdi-too/596852/*

## Swadeshi Jagran Manch for legislation against 'Halal brand'

The Kerala unit of Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) has called upon the Central government to bring in a legislation to ban quality control, certification and marketing in the name of religious beliefs.

The SJM, in a statement here following a virtual conference, said it is unconstitutional for different sections to bring in different product certification systems.

"Halal certification is enforced when food is exported to Islamic countries due to the compulsions of the government in that country. The need for the same in India will be tantamount to the creation of parallel systems within the country, which we will oppose at any cost," SJM Said.

The SJM said those who market Swadeshi goods will have to see the emergence of different types of certifications as a transition to foreign systems.

Karthikeyan further said: "It is not acceptable for a category of food products to become foreign. Also, it is not acceptable to give religious preference to food items made under the same law."

"The claim that Muslims should not eat food prepared by non Muslims should be seen as another form of untouchability and is not at all acceptable, we have already forwarded the resolution to the central government," SJM added.

*https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=790073*

## GST collections, filings scale new highs in January

Goods and services tax (GST) collections touched a new high of nearly Rs 1.2 lakh crore in January, indicating a sharp recovery post lockdown and better compliance, manifested in record returns of 90 lakh.

The annual filing of GST returns by the extended deadline of December 31 may also have resulted in some businesses clearing their entire liability and paying higher tax, experts said.

While finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to lower the revenue estimates for the current financial year when she presents the Budget on 1st Feb, the latest data will provide cheer to policymakers grappling with the worst economic challenge in recent decades. The numbers based on December sales, with returns filed in January, show that revenue from imports went up 16%, while the mop-up from domestic transactions, including services imports, was 6% higher.

"This is much better than anyone's expectations. Usually, the end of a quarter (December in this case) is better than the initial months as companies push sales to meet quarterly targets. It seems imports have improved considerably. Christmas holidays would have seen marked improvement in people going out and on vacations. Some companies, particularly IT firms, are on a hiring spree, which would have meant more disposable income in the hands of people," said Pratik Jain, who leads the indirect tax practice at consulting firm PwC in India.

Government sources said the recent crackdown against fraudsters has helped improve compliance and bolstered collections. Since mid-November, 274 people have been arrested with 2,700 cases lodged against 8,500 bogus entities. The drive, which leans heavily on data analysis, has helped collect Rs 858 crore from these entities.

"Closer monitoring against fake-billing, deep data analytics using data from multiple sources including GST, income tax and Customs IT systems, and effective tax administration have also contributed to the steady increase in tax revenue over the last few months," the finance ministry said.

According to experts, the rising trend will continue in the coming months. "The surge in GST collections observed during the past four months is expected to be sustained in the coming months of the current fiscal with more service sector activities like aviation, hospitality, entertainment opening up," said MS Mani, senior director at Deloitte India.

While anything over Rs 1 lakh in monthly collections is seen to be positive, for the last four months, the average monthly mop-up has been to the tune of Rs 1.1 lakh crore.

The average year-on-year growth in GST revenue over the first four months in the second half of the financial year has been 8% compared to a 24% fall during the first half of the current financial year.

*https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/gst-revenues-touch-record-high-of-rs-1-20-lakh-crore-in-january/articleshow/80616375.cms*

## IPL is a platform for money laundering, says Bishan Bedi

Former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi questioned the source of big bucks being spent during the Indian Premier League auction and alleged that the tournament is a platform for "money laundering".

The former left-arm spinner could not have timed his attack on the league with millions spent on day one of the IPL-XI auctions in Bengaluru.

"IPL is also responsible for bringing in somebody called Justice Lodha Commission. I have never known anything so cheap going so expensively. People have accused me that I am maligning IPL as I don't get anything out of it. I said see if you can rope me in, you can try.

"Can anyone justify one wicket's price at Rs one crore and Rs 97 lakh for one run. I am not against the money part of it as players deserve to get more money playing for the country than playing for a wretched club.

"But do we know where all this money is coming from and where it is going? If this is not money laundering I don't know what is," Bedi said on the concluding day of the Kolkata Literary Meet here.

"You find a person like Virat who has been retained by 17 crore… He deserves it. But in the same dressing room, there will be a youngster who will fetch Rs 10-15 lakh.

"Now he will try to catch up with Kohli. Now how does he do it? There are ways and means to do it and there is a platform which encourages you to do it which is match-fixing. IPL is an easy target," he said pointing out the spot-fixing scandal of 2013.

Bedi spoke highly of Nawab Pataudi and also named MS Dhoni as a gentleman on the field who "never swore".

"My favourite cricketer was Pataudi. He was the

greatest thing that has ever happened to Indian cricket. Besides Pataudi, the other gentleman was Dhoni who never swore on the cricket field."

"He (Pataudi) was my first captain and all credit to him as I learnt a lot from him. He was the first Indian captain to bring in a fair amount of Indianness in the dressing room. He always used to tell, we are not playing for Maharashtra or Delhi or Bengal. We are playing for India."

In the same vein, he also mentioned about Sourav Ganguly: "He is one of the finest Indian captains we have had and he was also responsible, in many ways, for the culture that prevails today."

"The golden period of Indian cricket was when Sourav Ganguly was captaining the side. He had at his disposal Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Laxman," he concluded.

*https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/ipl-is-a-platform-for-money-laundering-says-bishan-singh-bedi-5041499/*

## Freedom of speech not absolute, says SC, denies relief in web series case

The Supreme Court refused to grant interim protection from arrest to makers of web series 'Tandav', who are seeking quashing of FIRs against them for hurting religious sentiments, while observing that "freedom of speech and expression is not absolute".

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R Subhash Reddy and M R Shah turned down the plea made by senior advocates Fali S Nariman, Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra to stay the FIRs, but said the petitioners could approach other fora, including the trial court, for relief. The court said a person cannot claim "an absolute right to freedom of speech and expression" and it is subject to restrictions.

The petitioners — director Ali Abbas Zafar, Amazon Prime India head Aparna Purohit, producer Himanshu Mehra and Actor Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub — contended that FIRs had been filed in different states and they would be harassed by their police for the same alleged offence.

Nariman said FIRs were being filed even after the alleged objectionable part had been removed and apology tendered. He said nothing remained in the case and no coercive action should be taken against the makers and cast of the web series. Rohatgi also cited that the apex court had granted similar relief in cases involving MF Hussain and Arnab Goswami. He said the series is a political satire and if people become so sensitive that they cannot take satire in good spirit, there would be no freedom of speech in the country.

The bench was not convinced with the submission and refused to grant the protection. However, it agreed to examine whether FIRs could be clubbed together and issued notice to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar and Delhi where FIRs had been lodged against them.

"We issue notice in the writ petition limited to transfer and clubbing of the FIRs with first FIR. Let notice be issued, returnable within four weeks. We make it clear that the issue of notice in this petition shall not preclude the petitioners to approach the concerned courts for anticipatory bail/bail as per law," the bench said. The bench has sought response from states such as UP, MP, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar and Delhi on the pleas.

*https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/freedom-of-speech-not-absolute-says-sc-denies-relief-in-web-series-case/articleshow/80490464.cms*

## Centre tells HC of concern about WhatsApp policy bias

The Centre told the Delhi high court on Monday that it is concerned about the "differential treatment" WhatsApp accords its Indian users compared to European ones on the new data-sharing policy.

Appearing for the Centre, additional solicitor general Chetan Sharma submitted before Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva that by denying Indian users the option to opt out of sharing their data with other Facebook companies, the messaging service prima facie appears to be treating users with an "all or nothing approach". The ASG said Indian users were being "unilaterally" subjected to the change in privacy policy by WhatsApp and these concerns had been communicated to the company.

"This leverages the social significance of WhatsApp to force users into a bargain which may infringe on their interests in information privacy and informa-

tion security," the government said during the hearing of a petition by a lawyer against the Facebook-owned social networking platform's new privacy policy.

In response to the prayer in the plea that laws should be enacted to govern such messaging services, the senior law officer informed the court that the Data Protection Bill was being discussed and the Central government had sought WhatsApp's response.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Mukul Rohatgi, representing the tech companies, told the court that the communication had been received and the companies would respond.

During Monday's hearing, Justice Sachdeva again pointed out that using WhatsApp was voluntary. "It is not mandatory to download WhatsApp on your mobile, it is voluntary. If you want to choose not to download it, you can," the HC remarked. It also reiterated that not only WhatsApp but every other application has similar terms and conditions and asked the petitioner advocate, Chaitanya Rohilla, to explain his contention that the app was prejudiced against Indian users.

The plea by Rohilla has been filed through advocate Manohar Lal. WhatsApp recently announced it had postponed its planned privacy update, which will give users more time to review the policy and accept the terms of the Facebook-owned messaging app. The decision to postpone the privacy update has been taken due to "misinformation causing concern" among people, the company had said.

*https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/centre-tells-hc-of-concern-about-whatsapp-policy-bias/articleshow/80459204.cms/*

## Govt cow agency cites test report to claim cow dung chips 'reduce' caesium radioactivity

Months after Narendra Modi government's cow agency unveiled a cow dung 'chip', claiming that it reduced harmful radiation emitted from mobile phones, to widespread outrage by the scientific community, the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (RKA) has come up with 'scientific evidence' to back the claim.

According to a test report, accessed by ThePrint, the cow dung 'chips' led to a 60 per cent reduction in radiation. The samples of the chips, which were prepared under the guidance of RKA Chairman Dr. Vallabhbhai Kathiria, were analysed by the Department of Physics in Saurashtra University, Gujarat.

"The samples of different thickness were tested using the Geiger Muller (GM) counter. The Instrument used for this experiment was the Nucleonix GM Counting system GC601A. The radioactive source used for this experiment was Caesium (Cs137) at the applied voltage 450 V constant," the report, which was originally published in October, read.

A Geiger Muller counter is a radiation detection and measuring instrument. According to the test report, the experiment was carried out under a controlled condition and without any substance between the radioactive source and detector.

"After that, the samples of cow dung of different thickness were kept one by one between the source and the detector and the counts in the detectors were observed primarily," it noted.

The counts per 100 seconds were in the range of 325 and 361, according to the report, depending on the thickness of cow dung. Without any cow dung chip, the radiation reading was 798 counts per 100 seconds.

"The data is found from the primary observation; further parameters are still under evaluation. The detailed experiment can be designed on the basis of this preliminary study," the report added.

No controls have been mentioned in the report. Furthermore, according to the report, the thinnest cow dung chip blocks more radioactivity than the thickest one.

*https://theprint.in/india/cow-dung-chip-reduces-cell-phone-radiation-by-60-test-report-by-govt-cow-agency-claims/591135/*

## Revealed: Monsanto owner and US officials pressured Mexico to drop glyphosate ban

Internal government emails reveal Monsanto owner Bayer AG and industry lobbyist CropLife America have been working closely with US officials to pressure Mexico into abandoning its intended ban on glyphosate, a pesticide linked to cancer that is the key ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup weedkillers.

The moves to protect glyphosate shipments to Mexico have played out over the last 18 months, a period in which Bayer was negotiating an $11bn settlement of legal claims brought by people in the US who say they developed non-Hodgkin lymphoma due to exposure to the company's glyphosate-based products.

The pressure on Mexico is similar to actions Bayer and chemical industry lobbyists took to kill a glyphosate ban planned by Thailand in 2019. Thailand officials had also cited concerns for public health in seeking to ban

the weedkiller, but reversed course after US threats about trade disruption.

So far the collaborative campaign to get the Mexican government to reverse its policy does not appear to be working.

The Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has given farmers until 2024 to stop using glyphosate. On 31 December, the country published a "final decree" calling not only for the end of the use of glyphosate but also a phase-out of the planting and consumption of genetically engineered corn, which farmers often spray with glyphosate, a practice that often leaves residues of the pesticide in finished food products.

The moves are for the "purpose of contributing to food security and sovereignty" and "the health of Mexican men and women", according to the Mexican government. But Mexico's concern for the health of its citizens has triggered fear in the United States for the health of agricultural exports, especially Bayer's glyphosate products.

The emails reviewed by the Guardian come from the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) and other US agencies. They detail worry and frustration with Mexico's position. One email makes a reference to staff within López Obrador's administration as "vocal anti-biotechnology activists", and another email states that Mexico's health agency (Cofepris) is "becoming a big time problem".

Internal USTR communications lay out how the agrochemical industry is "pushing" for the US to "fold this issue" into the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal that went into effect 1 July. The records then show the USTR does exactly that, telling Mexico its actions on glyphosate and genetically engineered crops raise concerns "regarding compliance" with USMCA.

Citing discussions with CropLife, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined in the effort, discussing in an inter-agency email "how we could use USMCA to work through these issues".

The documents about the Mexico matter were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and shared with the Guardian.

"We're seeing more and more how the pesticide industry uses the US government to aggressively push its agenda on the international stage and quash any attempt by people in other countries to take control of their food supply," said Nathan Donley, a biologist with the CBD conservation group. ❑❑

*https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/16/revealed-monsanto-mexico-us-glyphosate-ban*

Swadeshi Activities

# Prant Baithak (Delhi)

Pictorial Glimpses


## Zila Sammelan, Fridabad (Haryana)


## Zila Sammelan, Puri (Odisha)

## Start-up program in Delhi

Swadeshi Patrika Posted on 7-8 February 2021 at NDPSO Regd. RNI No. 65799/97, DL-SW/1/4073/2021-22-23
Publishing Date: 2-3 Every Month

## Swadeshi Activities

# Pre-Budget Discussion (Delhi)

Pictorial Glimpses


# Discussion meeting at Bhopal (MP)


# Swadeshi Goshthi at Algappa University (Tamil Nadu)

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