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Swadeshi Activities

Vishav Jagariti Divas (20 June 2021)

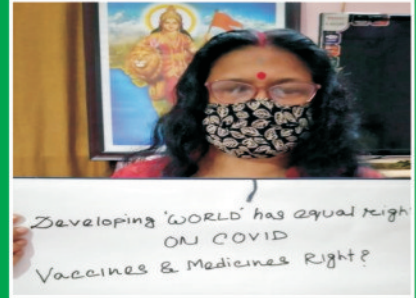
Pictorial Glimpses



North Bihar



North Karnataka



Nagaland



Odisha



Punjab



South Bihar



South Karnataka



Saurashtra



Sikkim



Telengana



Tamil Nadu



Tripura



Uttarakhand



West Maharashtra



West Maharashtra



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LETTERS 3

NEWS 35-38



CONTENTS

COVER STORY 6
Universal Access to Covid Vaccines and Medicines Necessary
Swadeshi Samvad



1	Cover Page
2	Cover Inside Page
08 COVER STORY	Rationale for Redesigning the Global Financial Architecture Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma
10 COVER STORY	Will US politics bury or expose truth? S. Gurumurthy
13 COVER STORY	IPR waiver and poor countries Prof. MK Bhatt
15 COVER STORY	Corona Vaccine for All: A Case for Universal Access Dr. Rajeev Upadhyay
17 DISCUSSION	Declining incomes-increasing inequalities Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
19 E-COMMERCE	E-Commerce: A Note of Caution KK Srivastava
21 REMEMBERING	Remembering Sundar Lal Ji Vandana Shiva
24 ANALYSIS	Public money write-off calls for accountability Devinder Sharma
26 EDUCATION	Education System Leading India Down the Hole Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala
28 ECONOMY	RBI wants PSUs to lead economy Shivaji Sarkar
30 TECHNOLOGY	Economizing 5G Technology Alok Singh
32 SCRUTINY	Swami Vivekananda's 'Plague Manifesto' Vinod Johri
33 HISTORY	Situating Themselves in History and Reconstructing Identity: A Note on the Meenas of Jaipur-VII Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur
39	Back Inside Cover
40	Back Cover



Illusion of Social Media Companies

India will be the only country other than China that will have one billion people online. This is a very big market for social media companies which they would be unwilling to forego. They don't wish to lose India as they are already banned in China. For publishers and other marketing experts, India is seen as an enormous digital market. For individuals, it is a great platform to express their ideas and opinions and to network with other people. It's because of such technology companies that political parties like Aam Admi Party could form government in Delhi in such a small time of its formation. So, it is also the platform for a huge voter base to reach out to by political leaders. In India, information wars are fought on social media platforms and these platforms have now become a place to battle out for influencing people, policies, ideologies, and politics.

These technology companies can't be so powerful that it wishes to control the nation. The law of the land should strictly deal with technology companies that attempt to override the democratically elected government. Without participating in electoral politics these companies wish to control everything of importance to society. They might have been motivated by the fact that by depending on their platform if a claimed social worker can suddenly become a politician who forms the government on his own within a year of existence of its party then why not dictate terms to the government. These technology companies forgot that politicians and democracy existed before their birth. The law of the land and the democracy is supreme over these technology companies.

— Kumar Gaurav, Samastipur, Bihar

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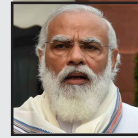
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Quote-Unquote



If there are threats to humanity, yoga often gives us a way of holistic health. Yoga also gives us a happier way of life. I am sure, Yoga will continue playing its preventive, as well as promotive role in health-care of masses.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, India



People all over the world are acknowledging China as the cause of this epidemic, but for the first time in the G7 conference, it was realized that powerful countries are vigorously mobilizing against China, and those issues are being brought to the center, which is the Communist of China. The rulers do not like it at all.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
National Co-convenor, SJM



Stressing on the need to upgrade the health system, AIIMS Chief Randeep Guleria asserted that with changing times, we have to change our public health system.

Randeep Guleria
Director, AIIMS

Uttar Pradesh shining among BIMARU states

A few weeks ago, NITI Aayog published the performance report of 36 states and union territories of India with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the year 2020-21. According to this report, the overall score of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all India has increased from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020. In terms of SDGs, Kerala has maintained its top position, with 75 points, while lowest in the ranking is Bihar, as previously, with 52 points.

Uttar Pradesh, which was an 'Aspirational State', with a very low score of 42 points in 2018 has moved up to 60 points (a big leap forward by 18 points in just two years). Last year only it came into the category of a 'Performer State'. If we see, the other 'Aspirational State' Bihar has moved up from 48 points to 52 points only in these two years (that is, an increase of only 4 points). The performance of Assam was little better, as it moved up from 49 points to 57 points in these two years, that is, an increase of 8 points. Other states in the bottom rank are Jharkhand which improved from 50 points to 56 points, Madhya Pradesh improved from 52 points to 62 points and Rajasthan improved from 50 points to 60 points.

For a long time our country has been grappling with regional economic inequalities. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) formula has long been used to rank countries based on their level of human development. The SDGs incorporate many factors that were not included in the Human Development Index (HDI). Human Development Index included the per capita income, health indicators and education indicators to arrive at the estimates of HDI.

On the other hand, 17 goals have been incorporated in the SDGs at present. These goals include poverty alleviation, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, good work and growth, reduction of inequalities, strong institutions for peace and justice, responsible consumption. and production etc. 117 indicators have been used to assess the performance of these goals by NITI Aayog's Report.

The backward states of our country included Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa with huge population; as well as some north-eastern states. Many times, using first letters in the names of these states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh) they have also been named as 'BIMARU' states. If we assess the performance of these 'BIMARU' states in the last nearly three decades, then we see that between 1990-91 to 2004-05, the rate of growth of Bihar was -1 percent, Madhya Pradesh's 1.78 percent, Assam's 3.18 percent, Uttar Pradesh's 2.79 percent, however, the growth rate of Rajasthan was 5.11 percent and for Odisha it was 5.52 percent. Against growth of forward states, which was 6.03 percent, growth of backward states was only 2.7 percent during this period. More or less similar situation existed even prior to 1990. But the growth of backward states after 2004-05 was somewhat respectable. Between 2004-05 and 2019-20 growth was recorded as 8.6 percent in Bihar, 7.9 percent in Madhya Pradesh, 6.5 percent in Uttar Pradesh, 6.9 percent in Rajasthan, 5.9 percent in Orissa and 6.7 percent in Jharkhand. But it is also true that since the per capita income is very low in these states, even after the faster economic growth, these states are still far behind in terms of per capita income, due to which there is more poverty, hunger etc. Not only this, due to paucity of government revenue, the level of education and health also remains low. Gap between the per capita income of the richest state (Maharashtra) and the per capita income of the most backward state (Bihar), still remains more than 5 to one.

Maharashtra's per capita income is still more than 3.3 times that of Uttar Pradesh, yet it will be interesting to know how Uttar Pradesh rose in composite score of SDGs from 42 points to 60 in just two years. If we look at various factors, Uttar Pradesh has the best progress in respect of SDG 7 (that is, clean and affordable energy, in which Uttar Pradesh's score has increased from 23 to 100 points in just two years. This is because electrification is 100 percent. and LPG connections have reached to 107%. Uttar Pradesh has got the second-best success in Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3), in which Uttar Pradesh has increased its score from 25 to 60 points. In Gender Equality (SDG 5) the performance of Uttar Pradesh has also improved due to increased participation of women in the state legislature. For clean water and sanitation system (SDG 6), the score of Uttar Pradesh has gone up from 55 to 85 in 2 years. In terms Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) also, the score of Uttar Pradesh has increased from 61 to 79. Though, the performance of Uttar Pradesh is remarkable in only 5 factors, out of 17 factors, the state has moved up by getting 11 additional points in the composite SDG score. That is, if there is improvement in other SDGs also, then Uttar Pradesh can easily come in the list of front runner states.

National Council Meeting (Online) of SJM

June 5-6, 2021

Resolution-3

Universal Access to Covid Vaccines and Medicines Necessary

More than 17.5 crore persons worldwide and more than 2.85 crore in India have been swinging between life and death, after having got infected from Corona in the last one year. More than 37 lac persons across the world and 3.4 lac in India have succumbed to untimely death from Covid-19. Rest of the population is also scared of the fear of being infected from Covid-19. Therefore, to treat the infected patients and to prevent infection from Covid-19, universal access to vaccines and medicines is most essential. Today in Israel, US, UK, Bhutan and Norway etc. the new infections and death rate from Corona is under control, where the majority of the adult population has been vaccinated.

In this regard, the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch is of unequivocal opinion that the treatment of Covid infected patients and the protection of the entire population at home and worldwide is possible by universal access to the vaccines and medicines. But, in the wake of inhumane patent laws, the supply of these vaccines and medicines is very meagre and prices are exorbitant due to the monopoly of few companies. To relieve the 786 crore population from the strife of corona, freeing of vaccines, medicines and ingredients used in their manufacturing from patents and provisions of TRIPs, transfer of their production technology to all capable and desirous manufacturers and adequate supply of their ingredients is essential. Therefore, the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch has launched a worldwide campaign including India entitled, Universal Access to Vaccines and Medicines, the UAVM for making these vaccines and medicines for everyone. Under this campaign securing of online signatures, national and international conferences, demonstrations, other programs of mass awakening, press conferences and distribution of literature and similar other programs are being conducted. Swadeshi Jagaran Manch is deeply grateful to all the organisations, individuals and institutions participating in these programs for their extensive cooperation being received from the country and abroad in this campaign.

The national council of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch urges the World Trade Organisation and all those governments who are opposing the patent exemption of these vaccines and medicines. Manch warns them that these vaccines, medicines and the ingredients used in them should be made patent free and their technology transfer should be made mandatory for their patent holders. These patent-holding companies must ensure maximum supply of these vaccines, drugs and the materials used in them, with absolute neutrality of benefits and must transfer the technology without royalty to all the desirous manufacturers. Manch calls upon all its members, along with the global community, mass organisations active at various levels, individuals, groups and institutions, for making this Universal Access to Vaccines and Medicines (UAVM) campaign so strong and powerful by making it effective, so that the governments opposing the patent exemption of these drugs and medicines give up on their obduracy, the patent-holding companies transfer their technology without any delay, and global governments legislate necessary laws to ensure their technology transfer and supply of ingredients. □

Resolution-2

Making India a Global Hub of Vibrant and Innovative Healthcare system

Covid 19 pandemic crisis has exposed weaknesses of the Indian Healthcare system. However, this crisis can be used as an opportunity to strengthen its healthcare ecosystem to make India a global hub of

preventive and curative Healthcare using its wide, diversified healthcare experience, pharmaceutical manufacturing and wellness industry. India can be a global leader using its successful low-cost Healthcare delivery models, low cost drug manufacturing system, combining traditional and modern medicine knowledge, wisdom (Vasudev Kudamkum and Service Motive) and technology to offer low cost healthcare solutions. This can be further used to produce High value added and innovative medicines and other drugs.

Since independence, India has several achievements to its credit in terms of improvement in infant mortality, reduced birth and death rate, eradicating several fatal diseases, creation of large healthcare network with both modern and AYUSH (Traditional) medicine system, development of low cost healthcare delivery model, successful model of private-public-partnership, low cost drug producer and exporter, and provider of health professionals (i.e. Doctors and Trained Nurses) to the world.

On the other hand, India is still not able to provide its entire population a good, affordable and widely accessible Healthcare provision and facilities. Our healthcare system is characterized as deficient and inadequate, with poor health infrastructure. The second wave of the Covid 19 has a devastating impact on the economy and the lives of people. The pandemic and viruses are challenges not only just in the short to medium term, but they are also linked with the future challenges of biowarfare and bio terrorism. This is the right time, we make our Healthcare and pharmaceutical Industry the most vibrant and global leader by strengthening its capacity and quality.

India is known as the Pharmacy of the world with a large network of 10500 pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities. It is contributing 20 percent of the world's generic market and 62 percent of global demand for the vaccines. The size of the industry is around \$42 billion (in 2020) with an equal contribution from the domestic and export market. In the year 1969, India was producing just 5% of its drug consumption, as the 95% was produced by the Multinational companies. By the year 2020, the share of Indian companies in manufacturing drugs for domestic consumption has increased to 80%. The sector has provided employment directly and indirectly to around 2.7 million people. India ranks third in the world in terms of production of drugs in terms of volume, that is 10% of the global production. However, in terms of value of drug manufacturing, India has 14th position globally. This shows that Indian industry needs to move up the value chain with more investment in the R&D.

The solution to the challenges India facing is an efficient and agile healthcare system and innovative pharmaceutical and life science industry. It requires the strengthening of the following: accelerating research and innovation, achieving sustainable and equitable healthcare, strengthening manufacturing and supply chain, and improving access to medicines. All these four aspects are important.

India cannot depend on other countries for our health and safety needs. Recently in the Budget, the Government of India has announced 'Atmanirbhar Swasthya Bharat Yojana' to develop the capacity of Health system and institutions across the continuum of care at all levels viz., primary, secondary and tertiary. This needs to be implemented in a most efficient and time bound manner with effective monitoring.

India should produce all the drugs, API and essential equipment in the country. The Atmanirbhar Bharat mission is aimed at this. The government has provided a number of incentives to support manufacturing. However, we also need to focus more on research and innovation to develop innovative drugs and vaccines to meet future challenges. This requires a need to support quality research institutions in the country, provide skilling and upskilling to the talent pool of scientists, researchers and technologists, and enhance collaboration between stakeholders and academics. There is a need to maintain a positive operative environment for R&D investment and risk taking to thrive.

In order to achieve the aim of global leader in Healthcare and Pharma, we need to further strengthen and encourage Public-Private Partnership in all the fields of Healthcare system.

The success of all the policies of the government depends on time-bound effective implementation. To achieve this, bureaucrats or task forces are appointed to implement and monitor all these policies with outcome based/performance oriented Indicators.

There is also a need to look at the next gen capabilities and invest in the future. □

Rationale for Redesigning the Global Financial Architecture

Background

The present day Global Financial Architecture has begun to take its shape since 1940s, when the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, popularly called as Bretton Woods Institutes were established in 1944 by 44 countries. The two need complete restructuring and revamp with the change of global economic scenario since then and especially in the post Covid-19 era of reverse globalisation. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is in doldrums since 1999 and is marred by disputes and discords. Consensus is eluding on most of the issues ever since its establishment in 1995. The US has even brought the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body in complete disarray since 2019. It has enabled many countries to regain some degree of internal autonomy from the influence of GATT, TRIMS AOA and many other multilateral trade agreements (MTAs) of the WTO. The basic premise of its creation, the most favored nation (MFN) clause too has become almost redundant in the wake of several hundred free trade agreements signed so far and in vogue. The Basel iii recommendations are also lacking support of nations and the Financial Stability Board too needs to be made effective to take due cognizance of the post pandemic global needs of revival and balanced recovery from the ongoing economic plight.

Need to Redesign the GFA

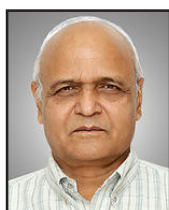
So, redesign of major components of Global Financial Architecture (GFA) including the IMF, World Bank, WTO etc. has become imperative, when most of the economies across the world have been experiencing unprecedented contraction, job losses, decline in incomes of individuals and firms, along with the plummeting public revenues. Balanced economic recovery across the globe with inclusive growth is need of the hour. So, the global financial architecture needs to take care of and create a right kind of ecosystem.

In the pursuit of redesign of the GFA following thrust areas need immediate attention:

1. Restructuring and Redefining the Role of Bretton Woods Institutes for Restoring Growth with Inclusion
2. Revisiting Trade IPR, Investments Regime AOA and all other Multilateral Trade Agreements (MTAs) of the WTO.
3. Policy and Institutional Interventions for Balanced Economic Recovery Across the Globe with Revisiting Financial Stability Board, Basel and all other components of the GFA.
4. Economic Self Reliance and Reasonable Technological self Sufficiency.

Historical Perspective

Since, the present day GFA has evolved out of early initiatives of 44 countries in 1944 followed by spate of multilateral and plurilateral endeavours of 200+ countries. The world has been changing rapidly with and interplay of 200 countries and several economic organisations in the economic arena. It would not be out of place to mention that India had been among the five largest quota (share) holders of the IMF and the World Bank (WB), ever since their inception and also had one permanent director on board of each, among the five perma-



Reforms in the GFA Needed for Financial Stability, with Balanced Recovery and Inclusive Growth.
Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma & Dr. Jaya Sharma

nent directors of the two. It was due to the myopic decision of the Jawahar Lal Nehru Government in 1949 to seek World Bank loan, for which the country had to devalue the Indian Rupee. At the time of independence one US dollar was equal to 3.50 Indian Rupees. This devaluation of Rupee since 1949, had depreciated the value to quota partly held in Indian Rupee by India. So, India lost its position and permanent directorship in 1960s. Now, India can partly gain some re-enhancement in its position. But, China may be the biggest gainer to capture third place among the top stakeholders. Had India negotiated firmly more in the 14th general review of quotas, it could regain better place among top five as it ranks third in the world economy in terms of its GDP, based on purchasing power parity.

But India is at 8th place in its quota holding. India's quota is 2.76 per cent China's is 6.41 percent and that of the US is 17.46 per cent, which translates to a vote share of 16.52 percent, giving the US a unique veto power over all crucial decisions at the IMF, many of which require a super majority of 85%.

The main parameters of the post-war world currency and financial systems were defined and the decision to create the International Monetary Fund and World Bank was made by mere 43 countries. The erstwhile system is almost redundant now. At that time, it was decided to have fixed exchange rates for the currencies of participant countries, along with the pegging of all currencies to gold (gold parity). Free convertibility of dollars to gold was also assured by the US Treasury to the monetary authorities of other countries. All

of these are no more in practice now. The Fund's main function was then defined as extending credit to member countries at the time of a deficit balance of payments where it could endanger the deviation of exchange rate of that currency from the established fixed rate and from gold parity. India was among the 5 top stockholders of the IMF as well as World Bank, with one permanent director till 60s in each of them.

The IMF is now an international organization of 190 member countries, was formed by 44 countries in 1944 and which also constitute the major component of the global economy, with its explicit objectives to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade & payments, promote high employment with sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world. Of late, its resources are proving too inadequate to take care of the emerging crisis worldwide, especially those erupted recently in the developed countries.

The IMF had already faced a more serious crisis to its existence in the 1970s, when the original structure of the Bretton-Woods system collapsed, especially because on August 15, 1971, the U.S. President R. Nixon announced a retrograde decision that, the U.S. Treasury was terminating the convertibility of dollars to gold. The final dismantling of that erstwhile system was affected at the Jamaica Conference in 1976, when amendments were made to the IMF Charter. Thereafter, floating exchange rates were enacted and the pegging of the dollar and other currencies to gold was terminated.

Though the IMF, which had the role of the world's financial fire-

fighter for last 7 decades should have been taken out of the clutches of the G-7 in the 1970s itself, when the President R. Nixon announced the termination of convertibility of dollars to gold. But, now as well, it is not too late. It needs to be made a truly international organization capable to reflect a balanced approach.

India Needs to take the Lead

Indian economy is the 3rd largest economy of the world on the basis of purchasing power parity, as per the latest rankings announced by the World Bank, besides being the second most populous country. This necessitates India to have one permanent directorship. Therefore, India should now endeavor to get the IMF fully revamped along with endeavoring to completely redesign the global financial architecture. Indeed, restructuring of the IMF and World Bank as well as the Economic stability board. As part of redesigning of the global financial architecture is most imminent to make them more responsive, meaningful democratic and representative, as well as to make them truly effective and independent from the captivity of the erstwhile G7 nations. The MTAs of the WTO need total redrafting to incorporate aspirations of global humanity vis-à-vis the monopolies of multinational companies over industry, commerce and national economies. So, a global debate followed by urgent initiatives to redesign the GFA is need of the hour, to rebuild domestic economies of all countries for balanced recovery and inclusive growth in the post pandemic era of reverse globalisation, underway in the global economy. □□

Will US politics bury or expose truth?

Respected science writer Nicholas Wade uncovers more. About how the guild of virology obfuscated, the World Health Organisation was suborned, the anti-Trump US media kept silent and the divided US polity let the culprit escape. Being a disciplined writer he did not touch the most sensitive subject - the link between the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and the PLA (Chinese military), which is now coming out. With the risky cooperative venture of the two friendly powers now in conflict endangering the world, where does all this leave the US and China, the world and its future? Read on.

One-sided love

With no ancient history to learn from and guided only by recent histories in its geopolitical strategies, the US is paying for its post-Cold War assumption that a prosperous China would eventually democratise. A great Indian seer said as far back as in 1973 that “communism was a passing phase in China and a Confucian China would emerge out of Communist China with its empire building instincts intact.” The modern minded America missed this historic ancient buried deep in the communist China’s consciousness. The Marxist state in China pretended to be a market economy and mesmerised the US to admit it into the WTO in 2001. Exactly 18 years later in 2019, the US and the EU were heard crying in the WTO that China was not a market economy. The WTO finally declared it was not. This shows US shortsightedness and how farsighted China was. The advent of Trump was too late for America, as by that time commercial interests had become so dependent on the supply chains from China that the US had lost its leverage over it. In too many areas, the US and China had joint exercises with China having undisclosed undercover intent and operations. The focused China cleverly co-



Being a disciplined writer he did not touch the most sensitive subject the link between the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and the PLA (Chinese military), which is now coming out.
S. Gurumurthy



opted the defocused US in the dirty corona virus research. The exposures embarrassed both but the US most.

Wade imagines what the behind-the-scenes conversation between the US and China could be, with the Chinese saying, “If this research was so dangerous, why did you fund it, and on our territory too?” The US side could retort, “Looks like it was you who let it escape. But do we really need to have this discussion in public?” Wade says that with Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, falling out with Trump but now handling the epidemic for President Joe Biden, the Congress will have little appetite to haul him for funding Shi Zhengli’s evil work at WIV. Result, just as China is keen to bury the truth about the WIV-generated virus, the US, too, will be keen to let China do it.

Virologists suppress

And now come to the scientist guild. When the virus outbreak in Wuhan pointed at the WIV as the source, a group of virologists and others wrote in the Lancet on Feb 9, 2020 that “We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin” and that “scientists overwhelmingly conclude that this corona virus originated in wildlife”. They gave a call to stand with Chinese colleagues on the frontline in the fight against the disease. This was, says Wade, when it was really far too soon for anyone to be sure what had happened. Yet, this had a great impact on global opinion.

A second one that had enormous influence in shaping public

attitudes was a letter authored by a group of virologists published in the journal Nature Medicine on 17 March 2020. While para 2 of the letter declared with certainty that SARS-2 “was not a laboratory construct”, its latter part said that it was “improbable” that it was lab manipulated, indicating its certainty had slipped several notches down. Yet no one would dare ask them. Why? Wade says that in universities ‘speech can be costly’, ‘careers can be destroyed for stepping out of line’ and any one ‘challenging the community’s declared view risks having his next grant application not approved by the community heads. Virologists, says Wade, are a loose-knit professional community, writing articles in the same journals, attending the same conferences, and having common interests in seeking funds from governments. This points to a more serious danger - of an oligarchy controlling the science establishment.

WHO manipulated

Now examine WHO’s role. First, it obligingly implied the natural evolution theory in naming the virus. Next, the composition of the WHO commission to probe whether it was natural evolution or man-made was heavily controlled by the Chinese authorities. Wade says that its members, who included the ubiquitous Peter Daszak (head of NGO Eco Health Alliance, through which US funds were routed to WIV) kept asserting before, during and after the visit to WIV that lab escape was unlikely.

The Chinese had no evidence in support of the natural emergence theory. The commission’s non-conclusion about both natural evolution and lab leak “was not

quite the propaganda victory the Chinese authorities may have been hoping for”, according to Wade. He is sure that China’s central authorities did their utmost to conceal the nature of the tragedy and China’s responsibility for it, suppressed all records at the WIV and closed down its virus databases; released a trickle of information, either false or designed to misdirect and mislead; and did their best to manipulate the WHO’s inquiry into the virus’ origins. Chinese were far more interested in deflecting blame than in taking steps to prevent a second pandemic.

Natural emergence, which, Wade says, was the media’s preferred theory until around the February 2021 visit by a WHO commission to China, is no more unquestioned. In the end, the manipulated WHO mission that neither found the truth nor helped the Chinese, stands most discredited.

Divided US, silenced media

Citing the deafening silence of mainstream US media on the lab leak issue, Wade rightly points to the absence of an in-depth news story of the virus that has killed 3.5 million people - something that should merit serious investigation. He mentions two reasons for the media’s lethargy. First is the virologists’ opinion. Second, because President Trump said the virus had escaped from a Wuhan lab, the media, most of which had migrated to the left of the political spectrum, gave the idea little credence. They preferred to join the respectable virologists’ view that the lab escape was a dismissible conspiracy theory, and rejected the position of the US intelligence services that lab escape could not be ruled out.

Clearly, the political divide silenced the media, too.

WIV-PLA link

As a disciplined science writer, Wade talks of only benign leak of the deadly virus from WIV. But many see sinister designs behind the construction of the evil virus at WIV. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has openly said that corona virus is a bio-war weapon and COVID-19 is bio-war. Brazil has 10 times India's death rate and three times our infection rate.

Next, a fact sheet in January 2021 from the US State Department under the subhead "Secret military activity at the WIV", said "the US has determined" that the WIV has collaborated with Chinese military on secret projects, engaging in classified research, including lab animal experiments since at least 2017.

Adding that the Chinese have been engaging in bio-weapons work, it said that the US and others who funded or collaborated with the WIV had an obligation to find out whether any research fund was diverted to secret Chinese military projects.

Three, a Begin-Sadat Centre paper says that the US had been able to get a 'source' from WIV directly, and that another Chinese scientist had defected to an unknown European country with information on the military side of the WIV. The study also quotes David Asher, who led a Department of State investigation, as saying the WIV has two campuses, surprisingly adding that it was known to the Indian authorities for years. Asher says that all mention of the SARS virus was dropped from the institute's publicly admit-

ted biological "defence programmes" by 2017, about the same time when the second lab kicked off operations. Four, the UK-based Sun newspaper, quoting the Australian media, says that the Chinese Army has projected that the next world war would be fought with bio-weapons and for that purpose, it developed in 2015 corona viruses to destroy the enemy's health infrastructure. It added that the US State Department has obtained Chinese documents that disclose the design. Undeni-

Health, peace, livelihood and families of most humanity are destroyed and most national economies are stressed because of the deadly virus whose supply chain is undoubtedly sourced in China and spread to the entire humanity with no exception.

ably, WIV is mixed up with heinous work.

World and China

Where has all this left the world? Health, peace, livelihood and families of most humanity are destroyed and most national economies are stressed because of the deadly virus whose supply chain is undoubtedly sourced in China and spread to the entire humanity with no exception. But China, the purveyor of the virus and already an emerging superpower, is safe with its economy on a high growth curve. With its military might, it can overawe all nations distressed by the bio-virus exported by it.

Will US-China politics bury or expose?

Now come to the US divided within and its China relations. When Avril Haines, President Biden's director of national intelligence, said the WIV lab leak cannot be ruled out, she was largely ignored. But of late the Biden administration and the US media are becoming active in questioning the natural evolution theory.

Fauci himself said that the lab escape theory cannot be ruled out. The Wall Street Journal recently reported a fact sheet of the State Department during Trump's tenure, which had found that even before the outbreak of corona virus, in November 2019, researchers at WIV sought hospital care with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. It adds to the call for probe into lab escape, the WSJ said. Politico magazine said that in the same fact sheet, US diplomats who had visited the WIV in 2018, warned that the WIV researchers had found new bat corona viruses that could easily infect human cells, but no one listened then.

The media and the Biden administration are under pressure to tell the truth and act. But will they? Or will they buckle under pressure and bury the truth?

Wade hopes that the "The common sense perception that a pandemic breaking out in Wuhan might have something to do with a Wuhan lab cooking up novel viruses of maximal danger could eventually displace the ideological insistence that whatever Trump said can't be true." Being a democratic nation, burying such an elephantine truth is impossible in the US. □□

Concluded
(The writer is editor in Thuglak, and commentator on economic and political affairs)
<https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/columnists/s-gurumurthy/2021/may/28/will-us-politics-bury-or-expose-truth-2308551.html>

IPR waiver and poor countries



85% of world trade is enjoyed by only 15% of the world population but the same cannot be possible in case of vaccination. World can bear income inequality but it cannot sustain with inadequate vaccination. Full vaccination in a few countries and no vaccination in the rest of the world is a threat to the whole world. Universal vaccination becomes even more important due to high speed with which this virus spreads, its changing mutation can break hell for humanity, if immunity is not developed in people. It becomes imperative for the world bodies to see how the whole mankind gets vaccinated. The demand for vaccine is quite high and

producers can't meet the demand on their own for many years. There is a dire need to involve more companies from developing world in the process to increase production and to reduce logistic and storage problems.

There is no doubt that companies invested on research to innovate the vaccine and WTO ensures patent to them for a fixed period of time. These pharma companies feel that they will lose their investment on research if they will give an easy access to others. They pursue business as usual approach for profits through rigid control on intellectual property rights. These rights allow organisations to stop others (for a fixed Period) for making use or selling their inventions without their permission. This keeps prices high and makes the monopoly of a few; if patent is removed multiple companies may get involved and can make world covid free in less time period. The pharma companies chose not to engage with WHO covid-19 technology access pool (C tap) initiative that aims to encourage voluntary contribution of IP, technologies and data to support the global sharing of covid-19 technologies.

India and South Africa have proposed WTO in October 2020, to waive intellectual property protection for a limited time on the products related for preventing, containing or treating Covid-19. They were supported by Kenya and Eswatini as co-sponsors, 100 countries supported the move immediately. It may be noted here that India has its domestic production yet it raised the issue on humanitarian bases for the countries who depend on others for vaccination. The issue raised pertains to several items for covid-19 including drugs, vaccines, protective gear, ventilators and diagnostic kits. The waiver should be applicable until the majority of world population gets vaccinated for immunity against covid-19.

The WTO makes Intellectual Property Right (IPR) inapplicable under certain abnormal condition. Article IX 3 and 4 of the Marrakesh agreement establishing WTO agreement affirms the exceptional circumstances as a waiver from TRIPS. The Doha declaration refers to compulsory licensing and the freedom to determine the grounds on which licence are granted, the right to determine what constitutes national emergency and circumstances of extreme urgency, and the freedom



The developing and poor countries want to see their proactive role in this human tragedy. The adamant attitude of a few companies has every potential to unite the people of world against IPR.

Prof. MK Bhat

to establish the exhaustion of IP rights. TRIPS allows compulsory licensing which enables governments to licence the use of patented invention to third party or government agency without the consent of the patent holder. Article 31 of Doha agreement set forth a number of conditions for the grant of compulsory licence.

There is enough justification for applying IP waiver in the current pandemic as it has already claimed 3.2 million lives, infected more than 437 million people and devastated economies. WTO as the ruling authority needs to develop consensus among member countries on this issue.

The world opinion on waiver of IPR on covid-19 is divided at present, countries like USA, France, Russia and New Zealand support the move while as Germany and a few multinational organisations oppose the waiver because they believe that protection of intellectual property is a source to finance innovation and must remain so, the other bottleneck raised by them is that waiving needs to be done with reference to other vaccines too. They apprehend that it may make companies to spend less on R&D. The other argument put forward is that developing countries do not have the necessary wherewithal to produce such vaccines, it may lose quality. Those opposing waiving of IPR see to their business alone while as India with its philosophy of “Vasudev Kutumbham” sees the welfare of humanity on earth.

The dissemination of vaccine needs to be done on humanitarian bases rather than on the economic strength of the nations but unluckily the rich countries have got lion's

share. There are countries where maximum people have been vaccinated and at the same time there are countries where vaccination has yet to start. Everyone's life is equally important. As per Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of UN, richest countries get vaccinated thirty times faster than the lowest income countries. 10 countries have received 75% of the vaccine administered so far, 0.3% has gone to low-income group and 1% to the African continent, and 100 countries have got no vaccination as yet. UK, USA and Israel have vaccinated majority of their population and life has started to become normal in these countries.

This has compelled various development and aid agencies to campaign against IPR on the plea that it will make vaccine affordable to the poor. Over 350 civil society organisations across the world have appealed to WTO member countries to support the proposal made by India and South Africa, in India Swadeshi Jagran Manch has launched nationwide campaign for waiving of IPR on covid 19 vaccine and more than 20 lakh people are likely to sign the petition by June 13th (8 lakh people have already signed it). All the above mentioned organisations believe that there is a need of equal access to vaccine and technology for containing pandemic.

It is worthwhile to mention here that IPR removal without technology transfer is of little use especially for mRNA vaccine like Pfizer and Moderna because they require high scientific input. The technology transfer can be better through partnership or licence with the innovator to figure out how to develop the vaccine. This will help to arrange the necessary equipment,

infrastructure, technical skills, technology software laboratories and raw materials. It may be noted that Astra Zeneca Covishield vaccine, the Johnson and Johnson, and Russian Sputnik have given voluntary licence to some companies around the world. The Bharat Biotech Covaxin developed by the Indian Medical Research has been licenced to three companies namely, Bharat immunologicals and biologicals corporation Ltd, Haffkine Biopharmaceutical corporation Ltd. and Indian immunologicals Ltd.

Universal vaccination is the only alternative at present for the current pandemics. Poor countries may have to wait upto 2026 to get vaccinated for herd immunity at the current speed. There is no doubt that Poverty can be no excuse for early vaccination, the governments of developed countries too are responsible for their people but the stockpiling of vaccines is definitely unacceptable. Developing countries are not having access to technologies on the one hand but on the other hand wealthy countries having 13 percent of the world population have locked at least half of the doses of world five leading potential vaccines.

The countries are heading towards consensus as world majority cannot be hostage to a few companies. The time has come when things need to be settled through international organisations in an amicable manner. It is a chance for international organisations to prove their credibility. The developing and poor countries want to see their proactive role in this human tragedy. The adamant attitude of a few companies has every potential to unite the people of world against IPR. □□

Prof. M. K. Bhat: Professor (M.A.I.T), Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi

Corona Vaccine for All: A Case for Universal Access



In spite of the fact that when hundreds of millions of doses of the vaccines have been administered to people, everyday more than 3.5 lakhs of individuals are getting infected with virus and more than 7 thousands individuals giving their life to this undying virus.

**Dr. Rajeev
Upadhyay**

Corona virus has already infected more than 18 crores people across the globe. More than 39 lakh individuals have also succumbed to this deadly virus. These are the reported statistics relating to the coronavirus pandemic. Lakhs of people are left with no family and thousands of children have become orphans. Crores of people across the globe have lost their livelihoods and have been forced into the vicious circle of poverty and are struggling for a square meal a day! World economy is left in lurch and there lies only uncertainties ahead. All this is happening when the governments, non-governmental organizations as well as the citizens across the world have been trying to provide the maximum support to everyone in need in the times of pandemic! Even at this point of time when hundreds of millions of doses of the vaccines have been administered to people, everyday more than 3.5 lakhs of individuals are getting infected with the virus and more than 7 thousands individuals giving their life to this undying virus.

India doesn't have a different story. The state of affairs in India during the second wave has been really heart-breaking as the whole healthcare system completely collapsed to even provide with required medicines live apart from hospitalization, oxygen support and other facilities. All this happened in India when it had almost won the battle against the deadly virus! Countries like Brazil, Argentina and Colombia etc. are forced to share similar experiences. In the first wave, the whole of Europe, the United States and other countries have witnessed similar horrifying stories where crematoriums were unable to provide proper last rites to the people!

Considering the high infectious nature and the widespread impacts of the virus on the world as well as its ability to change its inherent nature, there remains no doubt that the fate of humanity is at risk at large. As a result of the horrifying



impacts of the Coronavirus, the whole world is in distress in varying degrees and there looks to be no light at the end of the tunnel other than the vaccine for the coronavirus! Medical experts along with the World Health Organizations are anonymous for some time that they are the only vaccines which can help humanity at this point of time in history as no medicine can provide a shield against the coronavirus for sure!

Different countries across the world have been able to develop dozens of the vaccines for the coronavirus. Several pharmaceutical companies are working day and night to manufacture enough doses of the vaccines. But the demand for the vaccines surpasses the supply. Even India, the biggest supplier of vaccines, is unable to supply enough vaccines for its people in the last few weeks. Many countries in the world hardly have access to the vaccines even after a lot of the efforts of the WHO and so called vaccine diplomacy. The horrifying situation, that the world is forced to witness demands for the universal access to the coronavirus vaccines for the lowest possible or no costs to ensure life returns back to normal! This would be possible only when these vaccines are available in abundance. The world must understand that the money spent on vaccines at present is not expenditure but investment and the world must work in tandem and unite to win this battle against the coronavirus.

From the experiences till now, it can be said with certainty that with the current manufacturing capacity for the vaccines in the whole world, it will take years before the whole world is fully vaccinated.

So there remains only one solution to this problem: that the required technology and knowledge is transferred to every single existing and probable vaccine manufacturer in the world at no cost or the lowest possible cost without caring much about the intellectual property right and patents.

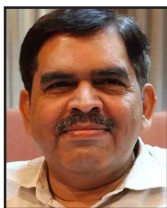
This is a risk which the world cannot afford at all at this point of time. So there remains only one solution to this problem: that the required technology and knowledge is transferred to every single existing and probable vaccine manufacturer in the world at no cost or the lowest possible cost without caring much about the intellectual property right and patents. It's true that to turn this into a reality, the laws relating to intellectual property rights and patents are the biggest barriers. As per WTO TRIPS, the intellectual property rights as well as the patent rights must be protected by the nation states. But in times of global crisis, the signatory countries unanimously must come together to enable this so that signatory countries can enact or amend the required laws in their respective countries or can make this legally possible.

It is a well known fact that the companies involved in the vaccine development process have to invest huge sums of money to come up with a vaccine or medicine for any disease or medical condition. As a practice, to recover that cost, the companies either sell the vaccines to the end user at profit by manufacturing themselves or give the right to other companies to manufacture the vaccines for roy-

alty. This practice makes it a prohibitive and costly process for the companies to manufacture and distribute vaccines. But at this point of the time, the governments and international bodies can come to a rescue. The governments and international bodies can unanimously agree to a set of terms and conditions for compensating the cost plus a nominal margin to the pharmaceutical companies against the universal access to the required technology and knowledge to all vaccine manufacturers including probable manufacturers. The cost may be borne by the nation states and international bodies. However, this process must ensure that the interest of every single entity (research as well as manufacturing bodies) is taken care of and no manufacturing company is capable of exploiting the end consumers. Such practices followed by the national government will ensure that the research and manufacturing environment is not compromised in the country. Apart from this, the governments also have to centrally procure the vaccines from the manufacturers so that there remains no pricing disparity in the different markets in the same country. □□

Dr Rajeev Upadhyay: Assistant Professor, Sri Aurobindo College (E), University of Delhi

Declining incomes-increasing inequalities



The welfare of the common man can be ensured through economic development along with employment generation, decentralised production system, upliftment of rural economy, based on the principles of Swadeshi and self-reliance, that is, Atmanirbhar Bharat.
Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

Recently, former Governor, Reserve Bank of India, Duvvuri Subbarao has expressed his deep concern towards the growing inequalities in the country. Though, economic recovery was experienced after the first wave of the corona pandemic, however, its benefits are very unevenly distributed. The rich are getting more benefit in this recovery, due to which the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. It is not only morally correct wrong, but 'politically corrosive' too.

About surprise surge in stock markets, he says that on the one hand the economy is facing severe turmoil due to the pandemic, on the other hand due to inflow of investments by foreign institutional investors in the greed of earning more profit, the stock markets are skyrocketing. Therefore, it can be understood that today the growing stock markets have no linkage with the economy. It's believed that the boom in the stock markets is purely the result of speculation.

Subbarao has expressed concern that due to the second wave of Corona, employment opportunities have started diminishing again, but the process of increasing the wealth of the rich people continued unabated. He has warned that the prospects of economic growth can be adversely affected in view of the disruption in the incomes of the poor. Significantly, according to Forbes magazine, the wealth of India's 100 richest people has increased by 14 percent from last year (2020) to \$ 517.5 billion in 2021.

It has to be understood that these inequalities are increasing not only in India but also in the rest of the world, which is becoming a cause of concern all over the globe. Significantly, in the last one year of Corona, the number of billionaires worldwide increased by 493. Significantly, according to the definition of Forbes magazine, a billionaire is a person whose assets are more than one billion US dollars. This is the biggest jump ever in the number of billionaires in the world. If the assets of all 2755 billionaires are considered, then they are 13100 billion dollars in 2021, which was only 8000 billion dollars in 2020 (with 2092 billionaires),

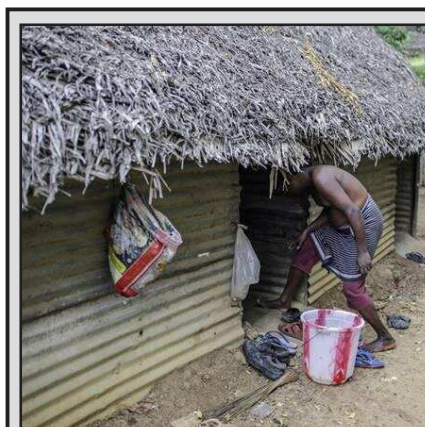


Discussion

that is, an increase of 5000 billion US dollars (5 trillion US dollars) in a single year (of pandemic).

Another important fact which is attracting attention is that due to the increasing demand and high prices for medicines and vaccines during pandemic, many people have now joined the 'billionaires club' and already rich companies have become even more richer. A coalition of organizations called the 'People's Vaccine Alliance' says that nine new billionaires have emerged purely due to that reason, during the pandemic; and their net worth is estimated have increased by \$ 19.3 billion. During this period, the net worth of all pharma companies has increased by \$32.2 billion. That is, it can be said that while the common people are losing jobs during the Corona period, absolute poverty has been increasing, the increasing wealth of the rich is naturally going to worsen inequalities in India and the world.

In the past, due to the hard work of the people of all developing countries, new technology and social welfare policies of the governments, the Human Development Index had continuously been improving. Per capita income, education facilities and health facilities, all had been witnessing unprecedented progress. But in the Corona era, that process has come to a halt. According to a recent report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), for the first time since the 1990s when the concept of the Human Development Index was first conceived, most countries are expected to see a decline in the Human Development Index in 2020. Global per capita income is expected to de-



The incidence of poverty is increasing due to depleted employment opportunities, declining income and burden of disease.

cline by 4 percent; and as the World Bank has said, an additional 40 to 60 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty. African countries and Asian countries will be the worst affected. The International Labour Organization (ILO) says that more than half of working people could lose jobs and the global economy is expected to lose \$1 trillion. The World Food Program says that if no steps are taken, 26.5 million additional people may become victims of hunger. The organization believes that 40 million people can slip into poverty in India alone because most of the people in India are employed in the unorganized sector.

It's understood that the incidence of poverty is increasing due to depleted employment opportunities, declining income and burden of disease. In such a situation, due to the efforts of the Government of India to create jobs in the rural areas, free ration to 80 crore people during the first wave and repetition of the same during the second wave, the impact of Corona on poverty could be abridged to some extent in our country, but this cannot be an alternative to creation of employment opportunities through normal economic activities.

What is the solution?

To deal with this severe poverty, unemployment, inequalities, health crisis etc., arising out of Corona, some special efforts will have to be made. In the coming times, we cannot continue our dependence on imports, and huge trade and payment deficit; and financing the same by foreign exchange coming from FDI and FPI, as we did in the past. The first condition for poverty alleviation is employment generation and the condition for employment generation is production by labour intensive technology. If along with GDP growth, employment is also increased proportionately, the income of the masses will increase and inequalities will automatically start coming down. It has to be understood that the welfare of the common man can be ensured through economic development along with employment generation, decentralised production system, upliftment of rural economy, based on the principles of Swadeshi and self-reliance, that is, Atmanirbhar Baharat. This is the only effective way to deal with growing inequalities and making lives of people better by lifting their living standards. □□

(Dr Ashwani Mahajan is a Professor at PGDAV College, University of Delhi and National Co-Convenor of SJM)

E-Commerce: A Note of Caution

The pandemic has provided a lot of tailwinds to e-commerce business but at the expense of traditional business. In management parlance Blue Ocean is a strategy that refers to a market for anything without any perceptible competition. Under it an uncontested market share is created and captured, making the competition irrelevant eventually. Big tech e-commerce companies have been investing, exploring, and fishing in Blue Ocean with a view to become such monoliths. Though still away from being ripe for picking, these deep pocket behemoths have time and resources on their side to pick the ripening fruit. The market is too tempting. According to one estimate the market is predicted to reach \$200 billion by 2027, from \$64 billion in 2020. There are close to 286 million households in India. Out of those around 65%- nearly 186 million- have an average annual gross household income between Rs. 1,50,000 to Rs. 10,00,000. This large chunk of the market pie is a promising bait for value e-commerce. Thanks to Reliance, data has become highly affordable for most Indians, thereby pulling the aspiring consumers into exploring e-commerce portals.

According to our estimate India's digital economy will be worth \$800 billion by 2030. In the same year sales by kiranas will touch nearly \$1.5 trillion. And the GMV (gross merchandise value) of online retail market will hit a figure of \$350 billion. By 2030 India will be third largest online retail market, after the US and China. In 2020 twenty million new shoppers were added to e-commerce platform, while this year this figure may be 40 million. The user base is likely to be 190 million by 2021 end. The sales for 2020 are \$38 billion, and may touch \$55 billion by 2021 end, a phenomenal growth of 45%. Interestingly and understandably this growth will be catalysed by 88% of new online shoppers coming from tier 2, 3 & 4 cities. New e-commerce models are emerging and fuelling this growth such as social, video, and influencer led. Most importantly while earlier 70% of online shoppers used to be driven by predatory pricing (aka heavy discounting) followed by these portals, presently more than 50% of these shoppers are moti-



E-commerce is full of travails and travesty. Indian regulators must apply correctives before we are mired in agony of inaction.

KK Srivastava



vated by convenience factor. The average time of delivery has been cut by two third. Hyperlocal and express deliveries are being offered now.

Online Retail Juggernaut

Year	GMV (\$bn)
2020	38
2021	55
2025	140
2030	350

The online retailing itself is expected to generate around 1.48 million employment opportunities by 2021. And for each of these jobs, downstream industries provide 3-4 additional jobs. The sector indeed offers a lot of promise. But the big question is: Will the segment be eventually dominated by big bulls who – if not prudently regulated – will perform in an oligopolistic market? What will happen to our kirana business? And will the predatory prices- aimed at eliminating competition – eventually be replaced by prices containing elements of supernormal profits? We have already seen that Amazon and Flipkart (read Walmart) were charged with favouring specific vendors on their platforms, in violation of fair play. In digital economy comprising of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and other technologies algorithms to eliminate competition can be easily developed. They were also making exclusive deals for merchandise and/or were selling certain products/models exclusively on their platforms. Remember players with foreign equity have been permitted to operate on ‘marketplace’ model, whereby they cannot have ‘preferred’ vendors, certainly not those in which they may have equity stakes too. They are not al-

lowed to practise inventory-based model. But they have been doing all this, and more. Thus there is definitely a need to rein them in by passing and implementing laws and regulations which will protect the interests of Indian vendors and Indian consumers. Also, the same goal can be achieved by creating competition by facilitating entry of other players. Otherwise market concentration will lead to centralization and cartelization of supplies, harming both the smaller players and unprotected customers. Moreover, what merits attention is the fact that no seller can offer price below cost in long run; deep discounts can continue only if vendors are squeezed. If caution is not exercised, the time may not be far when the consumers face limited choices at ‘market’ prices (set by the monopoly players) while vendors too face monopsonistic buyers.

Nobody in his senses should oppose e-commerce since they bring in multiple benefits. In 2021 half a million gig workers are expected to be employed in online retail. Logistics firms in India clocked over 3 billion shipments in 2020, of which nearly 800 were driven by third party logistics firms. Online retailing has made products accessible to even small towns. India can use these platforms to compete globally. Many MSMEs have been able to access the pan Indian and global markets, thanks to these marketplaces. In short, the evolving e-commerce ecosystem has contributed significantly to the economy of India, including consumers and producers. Yet, they cannot we allowed to adopt predatory practices. Surely, the new proposed e-commerce rules must strike a prudent balance. The two

players, Amazon and Flipkart have alleged that, if converted into law, these rules will increase compliance requirements of e-commerce companies in addition to curtailing the scope for business growth since broad discounts would be if allowed, may possibly restrict growth of private labels, and will probably not enjoy the ‘intermediary’ status since they will be subject to fall-back liability mechanism if consumers incur losses due to action of the seller.

Yet who can deny the fact that e-commerce behemoths have enjoyed instant exponential growth since their arrival. But this expansion used the crutches like predatory pricing, nongenuine product reviews, cooked up algorithms influencing consumers purchases, promoting favoured vendors. May be to this we will have to add in medium term the unethical practices like labour exploitation, dominating other sectors like BFSI (a fear recently expressed by RBI), and many more. Do you know that Jeff Bezos earns Rs 1.10 crore each minute of the day and has an accumulated wealth of nearly \$180 billion? India’s traditional retail sector provides second largest jobs after agriculture. Is the Govt. too late perhaps? It may be noted that most of the proposed amendments are already in place in one form or the other. What is needed is to finetune an e-commerce policy that becomes a cornerstone for online business. But the govt. should draw a fine balance by making it non-preferential and above board. While these regulation should not be diluted under pressure, at the same time if they need plenty of rewriting to meet the objectivity benchmark so be it. □□

Remembering Sundar Lal Ji

Today, 21st May, 2021, Sundarlal Bahuguna breathed his last.

Sundarlal Bahuguna has been my inspiration for nearly half a century. His inspiration will continue for generations to come.

I first met him at his Ashram in Silyara when I made a commitment to volunteer for the Chipko movement.

I first heard of “Chipko” from a road side chaiwala near Chamba in Garhwal. I was born and grew up in the Himalayan forests where my father was a forest officer.

Chamba and the hills between Chamba and Mussoorie had a dense oak forest. Below the forest rest house flew a stream.

In the early 1970's I was leaving for Canada to do my PhD in the foundations of Quantum theory.

Before leaving I wanted to do a small trek, visit a favourite forest in the Himalaya, and take the memory with me.

But the oak forest was gone, and the stream that had its source in it was a trickle.

I felt as if I had physically lost part of me. The forests and streams of the Himalaya had shaped me and made me who I was.

While waiting for a bus to get back to Delhi at a dhaba, I started talking to the chaiwala about my sadness and pain seeing the forests disappear.

He responded. “Now there is hope. Chipko has started”

I heard about women stopping logging in Reni and other places. I heard about Sundarlal Bahuguna.



Sundarlal Bahuguna ji, the founder of Chipko movement has been the inspiration for generation to respect the mother earth and natural environment.

Dr. Vandana Shiva



While I had to catch my flight to join my University in Canada, I took a pledge to return, find “Chipko” and volunteer in all my summer and winter vacations.

The first time I came home, we went to the Silyara Ashram which had been started by Sundarlal Bahuguna and Bimla Bahuguna. Since that day in the early 1970’s Sundarlalji has taught our generation that nature’s economy is the real economy which supports all economies, including the market economy.

Every vacation when I came to volunteer with Chipko, first while doing my PhD in Canada, and later while working in Indian Institute of Science and IIM Bangalore, Sundarlal would ask us undertake padyatras. From the mid 1970’s to 1981, under Sundarlal and Bimla Bahuguna’s guidance, we undertook padyatras, documenting the movement, learning from women.

We went to Advani and Badyargad, to Gangi and Phata, and other important locations of Forest Satyagrahas.

Through Chipko, I learnt the practise of Satyagraha, of acting from truth, and refusing to obey unjust law or follow unjust policy which was based on violence against nature and people.

Because of his tireless efforts, green felling was stopped in the central Himalaya in 1981.

Sundarlalji was the continuity between our freedom movement and today’s ecology movement.

He was inspired by Sri Dev Suman, worked with Vinoba Bhave and Gandhi’s disciples, Mira Behn and Sarla Behn.

I have been blessed to learn Gandhi’s principles first from my

Through Chipko, I learnt the practise of Satyagraha, of acting from truth, and refusing to obey unjust law or follow unjust policy which was based on violence against nature and people.

mother and father, and later from Sundarlal and Bimla Bahuguna.

These are the principles that have seeped into my thinking and work.

Sundarlal Bahuguna and Bimla Bahuguna are my teachers in Gandhian philosophy, that ecology is a permanent economy, that simple living in service of others is central to making a shift from ego centric thinking and living to eco centric thinking and living. Ego centrism leads to greed, consumerism, taking others share. Eco centrism leads to caring, sharing and not taking others share.

The three Gandhian principles that I have learnt from Sundarlal and Bimala Bahuguna are

1 Swaraj, Self Rule and Self Organisation.

2 Swadeshi, Self reliance, local economy.

3 Satyagraha, the force of truth and the obligation to not cooperate with unjust brute law.

Swaraj was Gandhi’s view of democracy. Swaraj is Sundarlal’s world view. As he says “Gandhi’s Swaraj means freedom for each village – freedom to produce, freedom to decide its develop-

ment. This means all power, all rights reside with the village

Satyagraha, a “No” to violence and injustice from the deepest conscience, is rooted in a constructive vision of non violence, Ahimsa, and compassion.

I have been blessed to participate in the Forest Satyagraha, Chipko, to protect the Himalayan forests from the greed of commercial forestry and monoculture plantations. I was privileged to do the study on Doon Valley Mining for the Ministry of Environment which led to a Satyagraha for the mountains. I have had the honour to support Sundarlal’s Ganga Satyagraha to protect the Ganga from the ravages of Tehri Dam.

The Satyagraha’s for nature that Sundarlal has led have shaped the contemporary ecology movement in India.

His Ashram was destroyed in the 1991 earth quake. But he continued to spread his message of non-violence and love for nature from his tent on the banks of the Ganga while doing his Satyagraha to protect the Ganga from Tehri dam.

Whether it was protecting the integrity of the Himalayan forests of oak and rhododendron in the 1970’s through the Chipko movement, spreading Chipko as Appiko in the western Ghats, or defending the integrity of Mother Ganga through his Ganga Satyagraha at the Tehri dam, Sundarlalji was the voice of nature, the voice of the Himalaya, the voice of the Ganga.

His inspiration was not limited to India. He marched to protect the forests in Nairobi.

I remember a journey with him to Mexico in the mid 1980s at

the invitation of Ivan Illich and Gustavo Esteva.

Richard Barbe Baker also known as there Man of the Trees wrote of Sundarlal Bahuguna, "As far as I know, in the entire world Sundarlal is the only person who has gone on a fast unto death for trees. Sundarlal is my guru. And the Chipko movement is the leading movement for protecting our forests" (pg 116 Valdiya)

The Satyagraha for the forest came from a deep love for the forest.

Chipko and Sundarlal Bahuguna received the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1987. In 2009, he was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan.

In spite of his awards and recognition, Sundarlalji and Bimlaji lived in simplicity and grace.

He came frequently with Bimladi to teach at the Earth Universi-

ty at Navdanya in courses on Gandhi and Globalisation and on Ecology.

And whenever we had the opportunity, we would visit him and Bimladi.

His life embodied the teachings of Gandhi "The Earth has enough for everyone's needs but not for a few people's greed"

Through his life, his teachings, his courageous activism, his creative ideas he taught me that to protect nature, we need to listen to her and to love her.

Listening to the mountains and the rivers has become a survival imperative for us in India, and for humanity across the world.

To listen to nature we need to listen to Sundarlal Bahuguna, follow his teachings, and the path he has walked.

Speaking to the future generations Sundarlal asks-

"Politicians have loudspeakers.

But who will speak for the tree that will be cut.

Who will come forward for the dying river?

Who will protect the mountains ?

It is now time to hear the voice of the tree being cut, the voice of the river, the scream of the mountain that is sliding .

(pg 116, KS Valdiya, Himalaya Me Mahatma Gandhi ke Sipahi, Sundarlal Bahuguna, Sasta Sahitya Mandal Prakashan, New Delhi, 2017)

Sundarlal had spoken as the voice of nature. He lived for nature and her protection. His life was a continuous Satyagraha for life and freedom. His legacy shows the way to the future of humanity living with respect for, and in harmony with nature. □□

(Based on author's forthcoming Memoir of Sundarlal Bahuguna to be published by Niyogi Books)
https://www.navdanya.org/bija-reflections/2021/05/21/remembering-sundarlalji/

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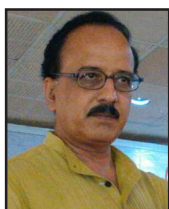
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Public money write-off calls for accountability



The rich continue to amass wealth, while the pandemic has driven the poor against the wall. The increase in corporate profits does not translate into higher tax collection from the rich. While the rich get hefty tax concessions and easy money, the rest of the country ends up paying more taxes. Corporate tax collections have declined significantly, reaching their lowest in 10 years. The systematic reduction in corporate tax is in sync with the global trend.

Devinder Sharma

An additional 230 million people have quietly slid below the poverty line during the first year of the pandemic, reports the Centre for Sustainable Employment at the Azim Premji University (APU). In another study, the Pew Research Centre had computed the middle class to have shrunk by an estimated 32 million. This estimate is again for the first year of the pandemic. However, both studies are a grim reminder of the severe blow dealt by the pandemic to the middle class and the poor.

We still do not know how severely (or relatively softly) the devastating second wave has impacted. While all sections of society have been hit in varying proportions, with household savings coming down drastically, and unemployment soaring, forcing the government to extend till November the 5-kg free ration scheme for the 800 million needy, the corporate net profits of listed companies have soared by 57.6 per cent in the last fiscal. At a time when economy is struggling to cope with the impact, the stock markets, fuelled by surplus money, too have been rallying high. While the wealth of India's billionaires has gone up by 35 per cent, Bloomberg says the wealth of the top two — Ambani and Adani — has jumped to \$84 billion and \$78 billion, respectively.

The rich continue to amass wealth, while the pandemic has driven the poor against the wall.

Let's dig still deeper. The increase in corporate profits does not, however, translate into higher tax collection from the rich. In reality, while the rich get hefty tax concessions and easy money, the rest of the country ends up paying more taxes. Corporate tax collections have declined significantly, reaching their lowest in 10 years. The systematic reduction in corporate tax is in sync with the global trend. The Finance Minister had in September 2019 lowered the corporate tax base from 30 per cent to 22 per cent, and reduced the corporate tax for the new manufacturing companies from 25 per cent to 15 per cent. This costs the exche-





A newspaper report, based on an RTI reply, showed how Rs 5 lakh crore of bank money is struck in frauds. Accordingly, the top 50 credit accounts contributed 76% to these dubious transactions.

quer Rs 1.45 lakh crore by way of revenue foregone every year.

Now let us take a look at how the tax base has shifted from the corporate to the average households. Against the direct tax collections — corporate and personal income tax — for 2020-21, which amounts to Rs 9.45 lakh crore, the indirect tax collections have exceeded it, and reached a high of Rs 11.37 lakh crore. In addition, the common person in the street ended up paying over Rs 5.70 lakh crore as taxes (excise and VAT) on petrol and diesel, with roughly 60 per cent of fuel tax coming from two-wheelers. Add to it the electricity duty that consumer pays along with taxes on real estate registry and excise duty on liquor, the share of indirect tax that a common person finally ends up paying is enormous. At least now the individual tax payers cannot claim they alone provide resources for development. The non-tax payers too have made a significantly higher contribution in generating revenue. Let's not forget, even a labourer wearing a plastic chapral (bathroom slippers) pays GST. In fact, it should now be abundantly clear: everyone pays tax.

What may appear baffling is that at a time when the share of corporate profit in the country's

GDP has reached a 10-year high of 2.63 per cent, Indian banks had written-off a whopping Rs 1.53 lakh crore of corporate bad loans in 2020-21. As per RBI estimates, non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks are expected to increase further. Meanwhile, the total write-off in the past four years, since 2017-18, stands at a staggering Rs 6.96 lakh crore. A lot of hue and cry erupts whenever farm loans are waived but the periodic NPA write-off by the banks goes rather unnoticed.

As if this is not enough, a newspaper report, based on an RTI reply, showed how Rs 5 lakh crore of bank money is struck in frauds. Accordingly, the top 50 credit accounts contributed 76 per cent to these dubious transactions.

Interestingly, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was enacted with the aim to punish the chronic defaulters but has left much to be desired. The two recent insolvency proceedings, where the banks/lenders have been forced to take a 'haircut' of 93 to 96 per cent, have evoked a lot of public anger. In a resolution plan, approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the bidder — Twin Star Technologies of Vedanta group — gets control of 13 companies of the debt-ridden

Videocon group by 'paying almost nothing'. Against the admitted claims of Rs 64,838.63 crore, Vedanta group walks away by paying only Rs 2,962.02 crore as a one-time settlement which is merely 4.15 per cent of the total amount. In other words, the creditors, including banks, have agreed to waive the remaining 95.85 per cent of the outstanding amount.

In another insolvency resolution, lenders of the Shiva Industries and Holdings, including several banks, have agreed to take a 'haircut' of 93.5 per cent. Of the total outstanding of Rs 4,863 crore, the creditors will get only Rs 313 crore. Of this, the company has agreed to pay upfront only Rs 5 crore. Financial journalist and author Sucheta Dalal quipped: "Now take a bicycle loan and see how banks treat you."

There are numerous such cases, where the bidders have walked away with cheap deals, leaving the banks (and other lenders) to take a heavy cut, often in the range of 80-95 per cent. The general impression is that it is public money that is being siphoned-off through a legitimate route. After all, the banks hold public money, and any write-off means public money lost.

Probably this is what irked industrialist Harsh Goenka, who tweeted: "Promoters stash away money on the side, take the company to the cleaners, get a 80-90% haircut from bankers/NCLT — that's the new game in town." he wrote, adding: "A lot of institutions cleansed by the government — NCLT next please @PMOIndia. We can't have our hard-earned money being stolen." □□

Devinder Sharma: Food & Agriculture Specialist
<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/public-money-write-off-calls-for-accountability-274934/>

Education System Leading India Down the Hole

The Switzerland-based Institute of Management Development (IMD) makes a World Competitiveness Ranking of major economies. India has been ranked at 43rd rank among 64 countries. Among the five BRICS economies that are comparable to India, China is placed at the 16th rank, Russia at 45th rank, Brazil at 57th rank, and South Africa at the 62nd rank. More importantly India was placed at the 41st rank in 2016. We then slipped to 47th rank in 2017, it climbed back to 43rd rank in 2018 and has remained there in the last two years. Another Global Competitiveness Index of 141 countries is made by the World Economic Forum (WEF). They have placed China on 28th, Russia on 43rd, South Africa on 60th, India on 68th and Brazil at the 71st rank. Here too India has been slipping. India was placed at the 58th rank in 2018 and slipped to 68th rank in 2019. This slippage is even more alarming because this has happened despite India having got a high rank in “size.” The WEF has placed India at the 3rd rank on size of the economy. Our rank would be lower if we look at the qualitative parameters only and ignore the size of the economy. Overall, India has been slipping in the last few years and is presently at nearly the lowest rank among the five BRICS countries.

The main cause of this slippage is our education system. India was placed at 59th rank among 64 countries in education. They have also said that youth unemployment increased from 10.4 percent to 23.0 percent in the last year. It is clear that our education system is not providing skills to the youth that may enable them to earn a living. This unfortunate situation exists despite considerable expenditures being made by the Union and State Governments. According to Reserve Bank of India, the Governments spend 3.3 percent of GDP on education in 2019-20. The GDP in this year was 197.4 lakh crore. This works out to an expenditure of 6,51,618 crore. The school-going age population is 45.9 cores. The per student expenditure being made is Rs 14196 rupees per year per student. This



India has slipped in its ranking in a world competitiveness ranking of major economies and presently at nearly the lowest rank among the five BRICS countries.

Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala



money is being spent in paying hefty salaries to government teachers. The Government is giving attractions like no fee, free books and mid-day meals to encourage the students to enroll in government schools where they get sub-standard education. The government teachers fundamentally have no interest in teaching the students because their salaries are secure irrespective of the results of their students. The curriculum is also “backward” looking with focus on regional languages against English; and on languages instead of mathematics and sciences. Time has come to undertake surgery of the government education system. The Governments must give this huge money directly to the students in the form of “education vouchers” with which they may pay the fees in a school or university of their choice. My estimate is that about 1/3rd students will not use these vouchers. The 2/3rd students who use these vouchers can be given vouchers of Rs 24,000 per year which would be more than sufficient for them to pay the fees of the good English medium schools in most of the small towns and rural areas who are charging about Rs 1,000 per month as per my assessment.

The Government also make teaching of computers compulsory from Class 6 so that the students can be prepared for the future challenges and opportunities. In this background the New Education Policy is entirely a failure. It fails to introduce English at the primary level, and technical education at the secondary level and fails to create a carrot-and-stick policy for the teachers. Unfortunately, the education policy is being made by the

The situation is serious. It is necessary to improve our competitiveness ranking in the community of nations if we have to stand global competition.

same education bureaucracy that is the problem.

The second weakness in our competitiveness rank is in the area of environment and health. The IMD has ranked India at 64th rank or the lowest among 64 countries. We are at the 64th rank in both components—pollution and Human Development—of this component. As far as pollution is concerned, the policy of the Union Government is to look the other way on environment in order to attain economic growth. For example, in the recent past the Government has relaxed the requirements of air pollution for thermal power plants; it has promoted pollution of our rivers by converting them into waterways; and it has proposed amendments to the Environment Impact Assessment that would take a number of activities out of the requirement to obtain an Environment Clearance. The Government’s policy is counterproductive. The Government is promoting pollution to jumpstart economic growth but it is having the opposite effect. The pollution is leading to a decline in our com-

petitiveness and hitting at growth. Therefore, Union Government must reconsider its policy of pollution-led economic growth and adopt pollution control-led economic growth. We must remember that large numbers of our rich are migrating out of India due to pollution.

The situation in the second component of the health is similar to that of education. The Union and State Government are spending Rs 1,900 per year per person. The two components of this expenditure are public- and curative health. Public health constitutes of vaccination, health education, epidemiology and like activities that can only be undertaken by the Government. The expenditures on curative health are substantially made to provide free health cure to government employees though, of course, numbers of private patients are also treated. The Government must dismantle the curative health system and provide “health vouchers” to every citizen with which she can buy health cure from either private or government hospital. About Rs 1500 per year can be provided from the present expenditures, including to the government servants.

The situation is serious. It is necessary to improve our competitiveness ranking in the community of nations if we have to stand global competition. That, in turn, requires that we repair our education, environment and health policies that are pulling our competitiveness rank down. We are slipping and continue to slip as the GDP growth rate will continue to fall as has been happening in the last seven years. □□

Formerly Professor of Economics at IIM Bengaluru

Fuel, healthcare, online biz spur prices RBI wants PSUs to lead economy

The global economy is to rise by 4 percent and India would marginally benefit from it with some rise in exports. A World Bank report wants India to create 90 million jobs in non-agricultural organized sector, herculean task as most private sector offices are either closing down or slashing operations. Humanitarian crisis, hunger deaths and societal conflicts are growing.

Latest figures indicate 12.69 percent inflation primarily on F2 – food and fuel. The fuel price rise is hitting every sector of the economy with nobody to correct it. The basic price of petrol remains still around Rs 35.99 and over Rs 65 are the central and state tax components. The edible oil prices have reached crisis points with 62 percent spike, Food Secretary Sudhansu Pande says. This follows withdrawal of edible oil from essential commodities list in September 2020

A State Bank of India report says that massive increase in healthcare, especially in the hinterland, steadily rising fuel prices and online delivery of articles will increase inflationary pressure much higher on one hand and crowd out other consumer spending on the other, putting a big question mark on overall growth that's still being driven by consumption demand. Month-on-month increase in inflation on non-institutional medicines, x-ray, ECG, pathological and other clinical tests is taking a heavy toll not only in urban areas but even on the rural populace.

The SBI report has questioned the *headline* inflation figures announced by the ministry. It says that a more important price concept is the relative prices which are not a monetary phenomenon but their movements convey important information about the scarcity of particular goods and services “as now like health”. Health expenditure, which currently constitutes 5 per cent of overall inflation basket, may jump to at least 11 per cent. {It may be noted that health



Indian economy may have started recovering with unlock but galloping inflation, increasing healthcare expenses and rising unemployment are major banes.
Shivaji Sarkar



expenditure is around Rs 6 lakh crore or 5 per cent of the private final consumption expenditure (PFCE)}. This is likely to also result in squeeze in expenditure on other items of discretionary consumption.

The daily increase of fuel prices is another bane. "And if we look at credit card spends since December, CPI computed inflation for the five month ending April is higher than the CSO estimate on an average by 60 basis points and the higher oil prices had forced consumers to ration out discretionary spends in December", says SBI chief economist Soumakanti Ghosh. It means the actual inflation is 60 percent more than the CSO figures.

The RBI has virtually given credence to the SBI finding as it estimates Rs 2 lakh crore losses on economic output. It carefully says that it may not reflect on GDP but there would be a considerable value loss across the economy. The SBI report clarifies it as the share of non-discretionary spend which has jumped to 59 percent in April and 52 percent in March and "this does not augur well".

The inflation is to further rise as the US has matched its interest rate rise. It would impact India as well as there would be commodity price rise globally. The RBI under government suggestion has suppressed interest rates but it will not help keep prices low. It will make difficult for the RBI to manage the conflicting targets of inflation, exchange rate and adequate liquidity amidst weak growth.

The RBI has already lowered its GDP projection to 9.5 percent from 10.5 percent. It had hoped 18.5 percent recovery in the first quarter, considered low base giv-

While private investments must rise, the government must relook at strengthening PSUs to tide over the crisis that is beyond the capacity of the private sector.

en the contraction last year. Now it is skeptical due to the second wave of lockdown that sees decline in deposits, indicating higher household expenses and lower savings. Additionally, currency holding – cash – with the people decelerated to 1.7 percent during April against a growth of 3.5 percent last year.

It substantiates what the SBI says that extra expenses on households have increased manifold. Also, there has been an increase in use of online delivery platforms which is not considered by the NSO and if the NSO considers online prices, there will be 10-15 basic points (bps) impact on CPI inflation. The SBI says that the online delivery adds to inflation. The RBI says that the increased healthcare and other expenses have impacted domestic demand. That is the reason of delayed recovery of manufacturing, core sector and other activities.

The recovery process, the SBI says, needs cut in fuel prices by tax rationalisation, otherwise non-discretionary spends will continue to get distorted and cause inflation.

The RBI has given another formula. It has gone a bit beyond and wants to partner with private sector – in short a prescription for

further denuding the PSUs. The recommendation should make the authorities rethink on privatisation.

Over the last few years, major PSUs have consistently increased payouts to the government despite a dip in their profitability. Since 2016, as per an official dictat they are paying a minimum 30 percent of their profit after tax or 5 percent of their net worth, whichever is higher, as dividend.

The 100 government companies declared a dividend of Rs 71857 dividend during 2018-19, according to CAG. In 2021, the PSUs paid dividend of Rs 39,022 crore (against estimate of 34717 crore), the RBI paid Rs 99,000 crore dividend and other banks Rs 1619 crore in 2020-21. In short a major part of government expenses are being funded by the PSUs. The government's efforts to sell PSUs are being stonewalled by poor economy. It should rather change its policies to strengthen the PSUs.

Despite this the India remains an investment destination. Healthy flow of FDI into the country corroborates India's strength and attention of global investors, industry chamber CII says. Total equity, re-invested earnings and capital rose 10 percent to the highest ever \$ 81.72 billion during 2020-21.

The RBI expects recent government boost in capital expenditure to spur activity and investment.

For all this, however, there has to be a major shift in policy thrust. While private investments must rise, the government must relook at strengthening PSUs to tide over the crisis that is beyond the capacity of the private sector. This would alone cut prices and boost demand. □□

Economizing 5G Technology

Telecommunications has emerged as the core infrastructure of the business. New economics is telecommunication dependent economics. Its horizon has expanded to social life and hence impacts social values. Speed is undoubtedly the factor that will determine the success or failure of the business, society, and the service provider. It is such a technology that we have witnessed it to be more demanding than drinking water. During the pandemic, telecommunication technology has demonstrated its relevance. We need the best telecommunication infrastructure, the best telecommunication service provider, the best telecommunication-dependent business practices, and the best telecommunication equipment. We simply can't ignore them. If we postpone them then we are lagging behind. The question is at what cost we need all these. The question is what the tradeoff we are willing to offer is. The answer lies to figure out the optimum delay so that terms of self-reliance are not diluted. The answer is the resources that we have to put in urgently to destroy the constraints in the self-reliance of 5-G technology access. We need to prioritize our applications of 5-G technology. We have to separate vulnerable from the non-vulnerable arena. Whatever we have done urgently we have succeeded. The Covid vaccine comes as a guiding example.

The shelf life of technology is small. We can jump to new technology by bypassing the intermediate technology. We have provided telecommunication services to rural people without giving them access to landline phones. Such people have experienced a sudden change of state without following the step-by-step up-gradation sequence. Simply one day they used the smartphone. Our citizens have experienced what they could not even dream about in their lifetime. Our underprivileged citizens have experienced spontaneously access to voice messages, video calls, and social sector schemes.

Is it not unbelievable that even illiterates who can't read and write but can send and receive voice messages through Whatsapp? The big technology compa-



*We could handle
pandemics
through a long
tenure of
lockdowns and
our own vaccine.
We have to move
ahead for 5-G
technology with
the same spirit.*
Alok Singh



nies know this better than anyone. These big technology companies know that their customer base is not restricted to urban elites or urban middle class or urban job seekers. They know their new business is in urban slums and rural illiterates or under-educated habitants. The politician knows well that their vote bank lies in slums and villages. They put their effort and resources into that large chunk of vote bank. The same way the big technology companies desperately advocate for 5-G technology so that they can control our people in a better way and with little incremental effort.

The 5-G technology is needed for the functioning of devices and services which use the internet of things and artificial intelligence. The data is food for such applications. The non-availability of 5-G is the hurdle in the implementation of such disruptive technologies. The direct cost of such services is bearable but what about those which are invisible, unseen, and attacks when we are most vulnerable. The direct or visible costs are the monthly plan and the device price. We have seen during the introduction of Reliance Jio how the device was bundled with the service and the customers switched to their plan and they were also successfully able to add a new customer base and also improve the profile of telecommunication density in the country. The government was also pleased, and at the same time able to implement social benefit schemes successfully in a very short period of time. But what about technologies which we can't control. We have to be careful with long-term ramifications. The companies which offer the services are

We have to look for architects of 5-G technology who are our own people. Wherever in the world, such an individual live has to come here and design the 5-G technology-enabled devices.

in hurry, the equipment manufacturers are in hurry, the government also seems to be in hurry. But are the consumers also in hurry?

We have to make our consumers aware of the data which they are sharing on smartphone and how their choices are being manipulated. The long term trap of controlling the customer, controlling the business, and dictating what to eat, what to wear, what education to get, and what to do to earn for a living are the concerns which already exist but 5-G will create more challenges to save ourselves.

We need to understand and spread awareness that digitalization and 5-G technology are totally different things. We need digital currency, digital land records, digital health records, digital transfer of a social benefit, digital education, digital banking but the 5-G devices should be reliable, homemade, under the control of our people and our government. For illustration, the internet of things and artificial intelligence along with 5-G can control our agriculture practices. We are struggling to arrest the intruding of big seeds companies, pesticides companies, and chemical fertilizers companies in our farmland. They control our plate.

Imagine the situation when these will be supplemented by services of big databases and the monitoring capability which the upcoming 5-G enabled technology companies will sell them. These two can collaborate or compete or destroy each other. Whatever these Bio-Company and 5-G enabled companies do is their matter but it is our serious concern. But their common goal is money minting and controlling the population. Our sovereignty is in danger. Our economy is moving in a new trap with a new global tool.

We are not 5G device ready. We have to look for architects of 5-G technology who are our own people. Wherever in the world, such an individual live has to come here and design the 5-G technology-enabled devices. The government has to support with grants and subsidies - the fabrication plant for 5-G compatible semiconductors. We can't do temporary adjustments always. These temporary adjustments are becoming permanent. We have done things on our own. The live example of ICMR and Bharat Biotech vaccine i.e. Covaxin has surprised the world. The big pharmaceutical companies are mending their ways.

These adjustments in terms of royalty, patent, intellectual property rights, trade secrets are not in our favor. These favor us if and only if we are strong. We could handle pandemics through a long tenure of lockdowns and our own vaccine. We have to move ahead for 5-G technology with the same spirit. Delayed implementation, our own device, and our own regulatory framework. Is the government ready with 5-G compatible regulatory policies? □□

(Alok Singh is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management Indore and currently is faculty of general management at NICMAR, Delhi-NCR Campus.)

Swami Vivekananda's 'Plague Manifesto'

How can it help us fight the Coronavirus outbreak?



When the Plague first made its appearance in Calcutta in May 1898, Swamiji, along with other sannyasis including Swami Sadananda and Bhagini Nivedita wanted to start relief operations immediately to help the afflicted.

The plague epidemic that seized Calcutta created mass hysteria. Relief involved nursing the afflicted in segregation camps and improving public sanitation. When Calcutta was again in the grip of a plague epidemic the following year, a relief programme was instituted on 31 March 1899. Sister Nivedita and Swami Sadananda spearheaded the relief operation.

The first thing Swamiji did was draft a plague manifesto in Bengali and Hindi. Due to the hard work of Sadananda and Nivedita, the manifesto reached the greater part of the population and considerably reassured them.



We can learn lessons from the leadership of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita during the plague epidemic in Calcutta in 1898 and 1899, in organizing relief movement and fighting Covid.
Vinod Johri

THE PLAGUE MANIFESTO

Om Salutations to Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna

Brothers of Calcutta!

1. We feel happy when you are happy, and we suffer when you suffer. Therefore, during these days of extreme adversity, we are striving and ceaselessly praying for your welfare and an easy way to save you from disease and the fear of an epidemic.
2. If that grave disease — fearing which both the high and the low, the rich and the poor are all fleeing the city — ever really comes in our midst, then even if we perish while serving and nursing you, we will consider ourselves fortunate because you are all embodiments of God. He who thinks otherwise — out of vanity, superstition or ignorance — offends God and incurs great sin. There is not the slightest doubt about it.
3. We humbly pray to you — please do not panic due to unfounded fear. Depend upon God and calmly try to find the best means to solve the problem. Otherwise, join hands with those who are doing that very thing.

[Continued on page no. 38]

Situating Themselves in History and Reconstructing Identity: A Preliminary Note on the Meenas of Jaipur–VII

We began our enquiry by observing that ‘history’ has remained popular amongst the tribals in order to attain social mobility and construct a new identity. Our assumption is proved by the fact that the biggest conference of the Meenas, Matsya Sammelan of April 1944 (held in Jaipur, attended by the Meenas from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) openly condemned the Criminal Tribe Act. It resulted in the meeting of the Meenas of Jhar (Jaipur district) in 1961, which passed the resolution that a serious project be undertaken to compile the ancient and contemporary history of the Meenas. However, the tribal perception does not originate from the so-called ‘exploitation of the marginal groups. Evidently, the Meenas played a significant role in the early period of Kachwaha state formation. Gradually, as the Rajput state came to control the Jaipur-Ramgarh locality, and Jaipur-Delhi routes were secured, Meenas were no longer politically important. Meanwhile, a section amongst the Meenas (possibly the chiefs and a few more) had emerged as an integral part of the local rural elite in the Kachwaha state by the seventeenth-eighteenth century. At the same time, the image of the invincible Rajput declined as the state of Jaipur faced a politico-military and economic crisis in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Claims by the Meenas of Jaipur to a respectable “history of their own were made precisely at this juncture. It is this newly emerging leadership that gets the story of treachery and a ‘glorious past’ told to a larger audience to enhance its image. But it is equally important to note that the Meenas of Jaipur in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century or the Meenas of Bundi in the seventeenth century, both adopted and invented a ‘history’ and a ‘new identity’ of their own with reference to the regional history, states and their systems.



The Meena elite kept giving themselves a respectable history to render a prestigious present in different points of time between the early 19th and mid-20th Century.

Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur

Finally, social historians should perhaps see the active role of the Meenas to ‘invent’ a history instead of a passive acceptance of the powerful ideological onslaughts of the Brahmanical system. What is important to note is that the attempt at reconstructing identity by the Meenas of Jaipur is different from that of the Meos, for the latter’s conception of the self and the world has been influenced by the idea of their being a ‘criminal tribe’. We shall briefly discuss the narrative of changing self images and identities projected by the leadership of the Meenas in the 1930s and 1960s in the next chapter.

Some aspects of self-identity of the Meenas in the twentieth century as described in Meena Purana Bhumika composed by Muni Magan Sagar (a Meena who converted into Jainism and was well-versed in Sanskrit literature) along with a brief reference to Meena Itihasa of Ravat Saraswat, published from Jaipur in 1967. Muniji ‘brahmanized’ the folk traditions and constructed the antiquities of the Meenas by quoting the scriptures, ranging from the Vedas to the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The term “Meena” is said to be derived from the Vedic word ‘menih’. The Vedic term denotes vajra or vajra-like indicating the valorous characteristics of the community of the Meenas. The ancient Meena kings are said to have wielded vajras in their hands, adorned crowns and their flags used to depict

the symbol of fish, the matsyaavatar (the fish incarnation) of Vishnu. Muniji strengthened the Meena contestation for power. by 'Rajputizing the Meena chieftaincies of the pre-Kachwaha period. Hence, the transition took place from a 'Meena-tribal' origin to 'Kshatriya-Rajput' origin. This transition can be situated in the socio-cultural reform movement in the erstwhile Jaipur state in the 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of prominent Meenas like Chhoturam Jharwal, Mahadevaram Pabri and Jawaharram Manotai. These leaders constituted the 'Meena Jati Sudhar Committee' in 1924, and Meena Kshatriya Mahasabha, Jaipur. The blanket coverage of Meenas under the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871 in 1920s was also an important context.

Muniji quotes Dharmashastras to mention that his community was known as Mena, Meena, Meena-ketu, and Meena-dhwajadi in ancient times. Yajurveda is supposed to refer to the Meenas as 'Viamebhyo Mainalam,' meaning that those Kshatriyas who save the mankind from injustice and oppression are known as 'Mainal'. Muniji further quotes elaborate verses from the Yajurveda Mahidhara Bhasyam to highlight the antiquity and prowess of the Meenas.

Muniji explains the etymological origin of the term 'Meenah' in the context of the above sloka. The term 'Meenah' is formed by the conjunction of two words: 'Mee' and 'näh', meaning Vishnu or Lakshminarayana." If "Mee' and 'näh' mean Vishnu, it signifies a divine and a purely Brahmanical origin of the Meenas. Thus, Muniji for the first time developed a direct linkage between the Brahmanical god

Vishnu and the community of Meenas. He 'Sanskritized' the Meena folk traditions of the early nineteenth century which was characterized by the search for political power and history in the pre-Rajput period in eastern Rajasthan and by an absence of a respectable caste-origin in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, as is evident from Tod's Annals. But by the fourth decade of the twentieth century when the 'criminalization of the tribe was occurring the time became ripe to lay claim to a respectable caste-origin within the Rajput society. Muniji declared that the descendants of those who saved their subjects from oppression and preserved the Vedas came to be known as Rajput Meenas. Hence, the Meena elite was raised to the status of Rajput-caste and declared guardians of the most sacred Brahmanical tradition, the Vedas." Muniji seems to have been inspired by the writings of the nationalist historians like Gauri Shankar Hira Chand Ojha on Rajasthan (volumes like Early History of Rajputana and Udaipur RajyakaItihasa published in the 1930s) in which the Rajputs were declared to be of Vedic-Kshatriya origin who protected 'Vedas' and the 'Hindu' traditions from 'onslaughts' of 'external intruders'." If the Meenas were to be Kshatriya Rajputs, they had to claim the history of Rajputs for themselves. The impact of the nationalist thesis on the origin of the Rajputs is profound, as Muniji quotes a reference from an unnamed.

Sanskrit source about the conquest of Mlechchhas and the protection of the Vedas by the Meenas. And this function was performed by Dasavatar Meena

(Vishnu) on behalf of the Meenas! The following are the interesting conclusions that Muniji draws from the above references. Meenas were a community of the ancient Kshatriyas or Aryas who were chivalrous and supportive of their 'subjects' in the Vedic times. Thus, Muniji claims for the Meenas proprietorship over land and royal status in the past.

Perhaps the most important source which sanctified the Meena claim to their Matsyaavatār origin from Vishnu is the tracing of their ancestry from the MatsyaPurana 'Manunirano Minah Purana Purusottamah' (the supreme man Manu). Svayambhu (self-emerging) Manu was responsible for the creation of the Meena community." A prophecy from the twelfth Skandha (chapter) of Srimad Bhagvad states that the Rajputs of the Meena community would rule over India." A large number of gotras (sub-castes) of the Meenas-Sunak, Prodyot, Palak, Sisunāga, Maurya, Sunga, Vrsala, Meda, Abhina, Gardabha, Kukura to Bhilla, Turuska, Pulinda, Hūna, K°atrapa, Mina and Matsya are listed in Meena Purana Bhumika. It is significant that in this list prestigious dynastic names like Sisunāga and Maurya, tribal groups like Pulinda, Abhira, Bhilla, and untouchable castes like Gardabha and Kukura and contemporary castes like Meena and Matsya figure. This is indicative of the Meenas seeking legitimation from antiquity by appropriating ancient dynastic names and placing those along with the tribals. Muniji quotes Agni Purana which mentions Mina and Maina as two daughters of Usa who were married to Kashyap. Descendants of Meena and Maina are Rajputs. □□

COVID-19: SJM demands patent waiver for vaccines, medicines



Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) has urged the World Trade Organization (WTO) to relax the provisions of its Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement for patent free access to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines and medicines.

SJM said it is organising 3,000 programmes, along with several organisations of workers, farmers, small traders, industry organisations, academic institutions and civil society groups, in 20 countries, including India, on June 20 to support its 'Patent Free Vaccine' campaign.

The campaigners want global pharmaceutical companies to voluntarily transfer technology, raw material sources and trade secrets to other pharma companies to facilitate production of vaccines and medicines free from patents. They also asked governments to use their sovereign rights to license more pharmaceutical firms to make vaccines, and exhorted citizens, parliamentarians, civil society organisations, opinion makers, academicians and others to support this campaign for humanity.

"In the last 16 months, 38.76 lakh people worldwide and 3.87 lakh people in India have died due to COVID-19. Though countries like Israel, US, UK, Norway etc. have almost controlled fresh infections and deaths from corona by vaccinating majority of their adult population, most of the countries are still reeling under the pandemic. To protect people from corona, the world needs about 14 billion vaccine doses, whereas in the last about 6 months, only 200 crore doses of vaccines could be produced by all eight pharma companies," SJM said.

"At the current rate, it may take another two-three years for the world's eligible population to be

vaccinated. It is imperative to vaccinate all the people all over the globe at a much faster pace, because 'no one will be safe until everyone is safe'," SJM added.

According to SJM, patent law and intellectual property rights under the provisions of TRIPS of WTO are an impediment to the mass production of COVID-19 vaccines as they do not allow other pharma companies to manufacture these vaccines.

"Patent laws need to be relaxed, even if it is for a limited period, to increase the production of vaccines and medicines to save the world's 7.87-billion population from the clutches of corona. We at SJM believe that this is the right of every human being on this earth to get vaccines and medicines at affordable prices," SJM said.

"It's to be noted that while people along with their representatives, all around the world are one on this issue and are supporting the proposal of India and South Africa for TRIPS waiver for vaccines and medicines, greedy companies and their supporter governments in some countries are creating hurdles in the smooth passage of this resolution at WTO," SJM said.

SJM said a signature campaign for 'Universal Access to Vaccine and Medicines' has so far got support of 14 lakh people from all over the country and the world, and a petition will be submitted to WTO, governments of different countries and also the companies coming in way for this noble cause of vaccine and medicines for all.

SJM expressed happiness over the decision of WTO in its meeting on June 9, 2021 to start text-based negotiations on TRIPS waiver, based on the proposal of India and South Africa.

<https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy-politics/story/covid-19-swadeshi-jagran-manch-demands-patent-waiver-for-vaccines-medicines-299190-2021-06-20>

SJM wants WTO to relax provisions for patent free access to make vaccines

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), has urged the World Trade Organization (WTO) to relax the provisions of its Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement for patent free access to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines and medicines.

SJM's officialsaid there is a need to scale up the production of vaccines to protect people against new Covid-19 infections. "To protect people from Coronavirus, the world needs about 14 billion vaccine doses,

whereas in the last 6 months, only 200 crore doses of vaccines could be produced by all eight pharma companies,” SJM said.

To meet the gap in production, the SJM has suggested that global pharmaceutical companies should voluntarily transfer technology, raw material sources and trade secrets, to other pharma companies to facilitate production of vaccines and medicines free from patents. It has also called for governments to use their sovereign rights to licence more pharmaceutical firms to make vaccines.

India, which has recorded 386,713 Covid-19 deaths so far has administered more than 27 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses since it began the vaccination drive on January 16, data from the Union health ministry shows. In October 2020, India and South Africa at the WTO had jointly proposed a waiver on intellectual property on medicinal tools for vaccines.

SJM cautioned that unless the restrictions on manufacture of vaccines are lifted, the immunization programme will be hampered. “At the current rate, it may take another 2-3 years for the world’s eligible population to be vaccinated. It is imperative to vaccinate all the people all over the globe at a much faster pace, because ‘no one will be safe until everyone is safe’,” SJM said.

The SJM has been pushing for relaxing patent laws even if it is for a limited period, to increase the production of vaccines and medicines. An online signature campaign for ‘Universal Access to Vaccine and Medicines’ started by the SJM, which has so far got support of 14 lakh people from India and abroad will be submitted to WTO, governments of different countries and to the companies that produce the vaccines.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ris-offshoot-wants-wto-to-relax-provisions-for-patent-free-access-to-make-vaccines-101624204113610-amp.html>

SJM demands patent waiver for Covid vaccines

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) on Sunday demanded that patents on Covid-19 vaccines be waived.

Ranjit Karthikeyan (Kerala State convenor of SJM) said in a statement that several countries including India and South Africa had demanded the removal of patents in the production of the Covid vaccine and so this is the time to act.

He said that the webinar organised by the Kerala unit of the SJM saw huge participation and had facilities for people to vent their opinion in the platform.

Karthikeyan said that the idea was to put pressure regarding providing the vaccine technical know-how without any patent threads to all the countries irrespective of the status of whether they are poor, underdeveloped or developing nations.

The SJM convenor said that India and South Africa had in October 2020 petitioned the World Health Organisation that the patent for the Covid-19 vaccine be removed and 57 countries in the world had pledged support.

He said that speakers in the webinar deliberated that the WHO could not take a concrete decision on the removal of the patent due to the stiff resistance of the powerful lobby of global vaccine manufacturing companies.

Karthikeyan said that the webinar is the first of several agitations and campaigns that the organization will be conducting in the days to come against the continuance of the Covid-19 vaccine patent.

<https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=845368>

Nations relying on Chinese Covid-19 vaccines now see spike in cases: Report

Countries like Mongolia, Seychelles and Bahrain relied on Covid-19 vaccines made by China to combat the coronavirus pandemic, but are now battling a surge in infections, according to a report in New York Times (NYT).

Examples from several countries suggest that the Chinese vaccines may not be very effective at preventing the spread of the coronavirus, particularly the new variants, the NYT report said.

In Seychelles, Chile, Bahrain and Mongolia, about 50 to 68% of the populations have been fully inoculated with Chinese vaccines, outpacing the United States, according to Our World in Data, quoted by the NYT. However, they are also among the top 10 countries with the worst Covid-19 outbreaks.

“If the vaccines are sufficiently good, we should not see this pattern. The Chinese have a responsibility to remedy this,” Jin Dongyan, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong, told the leading US daily.

Seychelles, which relied mostly on Sinopharm, reported more than 716 Covid-19 cases per million. Mongolia, relying on Chinese aid, quickly rolled out an inoculation program and eased restrictions, vaccinating 52 per cent of its population. However, it re-

corded 2,400 new infections on Sunday, a quadrupling from a month before.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates were the first two countries to approve the Sinopharm shot, even before late-stage clinical trial data was released. Since then, there have been extensive reports of vaccinated people falling ill in both countries, NYT reported.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/nations-relying-on-chinese-covid-19-vaccines-now-see-spike-in-cases-report-101624408699575.html>

What is gain-of-function research?

With the re-emergence of the lab-leak origin theory for the SARS-CoV-2, questions are also being raised on what gain-of-function research is, and whether the benefits of conducting such research outweigh the risks of pathogens escaping from labs. The Wuhan Institute of Virology was said to have conducted gain-of-function research on coronaviruses.

In virology, gain-of-function research involves deliberately altering an organism in the lab, altering a gene, or introducing a mutation in a pathogen to study its transmissibility, virulence and immunogenicity. It is believed that this allows researchers to study potential therapies, vaccine possibilities and ways to control the disease better in future. "Gain-of-function research involves manipulations that make certain pathogenic microbes more deadly or more transmissible. This is done by genetically engineering the virus and by allowing them to grow in different growth mediums, a technique called as serial passage," says Abdul Ghafur, senior consultant, infectious diseases, Apollo Hospitals.

There is also 'loss-of-function' research, which involves inactivating mutations, resulting in a significant loss of original function, or no function to the pathogen. When mutations occur, they alter the structure of the virus that is being studied, resulting in altered functions. Some of these significant mutations might weaken the virus or enhance its function.

Some forms of gain-of-function research reportedly carry inherent biosafety and biosecurity risks and are thus referred to as 'dual-use research of concern' (DURC). This indicates that while the research may result in benefits for humanity, there is also the potential to cause harm — accidental or deliberate escape of these altered pathogens from labs may cause even pandemics.

At the World Health Organization (WHO), the Science Division leads activities on DURC and responsible use of life sciences research, focusing on mitigation and prevention of biorisks and associated ethical issues. Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist, WHO, says that in 2020, the Department organised three DURC Dialogues with academies and councils, science editors and publishers, and donors of life sciences research. Following these dialogues, stakeholders called on the WHO to develop a Global Guidance Framework for member states to follow. The organisation initiated the development of that Framework and organised a consultative meeting in March 2021. Work is on to address key topics as part of the Framework.

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/expained-what-is-gain-of-function-research/article34861204.ece>

Centre to tighten e-commerce rules

India plans to tighten rules for e-commerce marketplaces, including Amazon and Flipkart, following complaints from small businesses of misuse of market dominance and deep discounting by the online retailers.

The rules propose to limit so-called 'flash sales' of goods and services by e-commerce companies, according to amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020 suggested by the consumer affairs ministry. Conventional e-commerce flash sales are not banned. Only specific flash sales or back-to-back sales that limit customer choice, increase prices and prevents a level playing field are not allowed.

E-commerce firms are also expected to establish adequate redressal mechanisms and appoint a chief compliance officer, according to the changes in e-commerce rules proposed by the ministry. These companies will also have to name a resident grievance officer who has to be a company employee and a citizen of India and serve as the nodal point of contact for law enforcement agencies.

Industry bodies and e-commerce firms have time until 6 July to submit their comments and suggestions on the proposed rules.

The proposal comes at a time when large e-commerce marketplaces such as Flipkart and Amazon India are being investigated by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for alleged abuse of market dominance and giving preferential treatment to sellers in which they hold indirect stakes.

The CCI probe also focuses on deep-discounting practices undertaken by e-commerce marketplaces, which has led to complaints from offline retailers.

Earlier this month, the Karnataka high court dismissed Flipkart and Amazon India's plea challenging CCI's probe, prompting the firms to appeal the order at a division bench of the court for relief.

To tackle growing concerns of preferential treatment, the new e-commerce rules propose to ensure none of the related parties to a marketplace are listed as sellers or are allowed to use any consumer information (from the online platform) for 'unfair advantage'. Further, even logistics service providers to these marketplaces will not be allowed to give preferential treatment to any sellers.

The ministry also proposed tightening of rules for 'private labels' by discouraging the use of a marketplace's brand entity for the promotion and sale of goods.

"No e-commerce entity which holds a domi-

nant position in any market shall be allowed to abuse its market position [...] Every e-commerce entity shall, as soon as possible, but no later than 72 hours of the receipt of the order, provide information under its control or possession or the assistance to a government agency, which is lawfully authorized for investigative or protective or cybersecurity activities," the ministry suggested.

As a part of the new proposed rules, marketplaces will also have to identify goods based on their country of origin and provide a filter mechanism at a pre-purchase stage for customers. Online marketplaces will also have to offer alternatives to these imported goods to provide a "fair opportunity" to domestic sellers, according to the ministry.

E-commerce firms operating in India will also have to register under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, according to the new proposed rules. □□

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/govt-to-tighten-rules-on-e-commerce-to-impose-ban-on-flash-sale-of-products-11624288529035.html>

[Continued from page no. 32]

Swami Vivekananda's 'Plague Manifesto'

4. What is there to fear? The terror that has entered people's hearts due to the occurrence of the plague has no real ground. Through God's will, nothing of the terrible form that plague takes, as seen in other places, has occurred in Calcutta. The government authorities have also been particularly helpful to us. So what is there to fear?
5. Come, let us give up this false fear and, having faith in the infinite compassion of God, gird our loins and enter the field of action. Let us live pure and clean lives. Disease, fear of an epidemic, etc., will vanish into thin air by His grace.
6. a. Always keep the house and its premises, the rooms, clothes, bed, drain, etc., clean.
b. Do not eat stale, spoiled food; take fresh and nutritious food
- instead. A weak body is more susceptible to disease.
- c. Always keep the mind cheerful. Everyone will die once. Cowards suffer the pangs of death again and again, solely due to the fear in their own minds.
- d. Fear never leaves those who earn their livelihoods by unethical means or who cause harm to others. Therefore, at this time when we face the great fear of death, desist from all such behaviour.
- e. During the period of epidemic, abstain from anger and from lust – even if you are householders.
- f. Do not pay any heed to rumours.
- g. The British government will not vaccinate anyone by force. Only those who are willing will be vaccinated.
- h. There will be no lack of effort

in treating the afflicted patients in our hospital under our special care and supervision, paying full respect to religion, caste and the modesty (Purdah) of women. Let the wealthy run away! But we are poor; we understand the heartache of the poor. The Mother of the Universe is Herself the support of the helpless. The Mother is assuring us: "Fear not! Fear not!"

7. Brother, if there is no one to help you, then send information immediately to the servants of Shri Bhagavan Ramakrishna at Belur Math. There will be no dearth of help that is physically possible. By the grace of the Mother, monetary help will also be possible.

— N. B. In order to remove the fear of the epidemic, you should sing NāmaSankirtanam [the name of the Lord] every evening and in every locality. □□

(Sources: Complete-Works / Volume 9 / Writings: Prose and Poems. Prabudha Bharata Vol 111; May 1, 2006)

Swadeshi Activities

Vishav Jagariti Divas (20 June 2021)

Pictorial Glimpses



Gujarat



Haryana



Himachal Pradesh



Jammu & Kashmir



Jaipur



Jharkhand



Jodhpur



Kanpur



Kashi



Kerala



Konkan



Madhya Bharat



Mahakaushal



Malva



Meerut

Swadeshi Activities

Vishav Jagariti Divas (20 June 2021)

Pictorial Glimpses



Afghanistan



Bhutan



Iran



Italy



Japan



Nepal



Australia



Canada



Indonesia



Malasia



Philippines



Saudi Arabia



Spain



Thailand



UK



UAE



Andhra Pradesh



Assam



Avadh



Brij



Chhattisgarh



Chittor



Delhi



Devgiri



Goraksh