

▶▶ VIEW POINT

▶▶ AGRICULTURE

▶▶ ANALYSIS

Rs 15/-, Page-40

Swadeshi

PATRIKA

AUGUST 2022



Swadeshi Activities

Entrepreneurship Encouragement Conferences

(उद्यमिता प्रोत्साहन सम्मेलन)

Pictorial Glimpses



Gurugram, Haryana



Guwahati, Assam



Ajmer, Rajasthan



Ghaziabad, UP



Bulandshahr, UP



Krawal Nagar, Delhi



Tamil Nadu



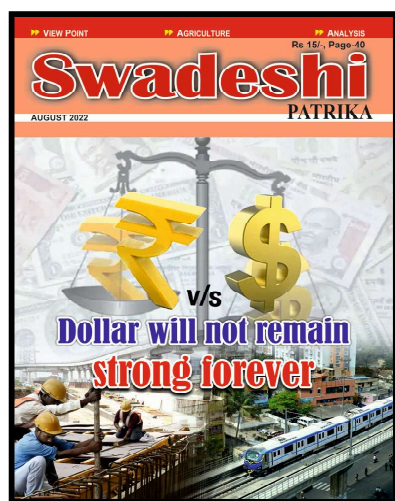
Uttarakhand



Rohini, Delhi



Imphal, Manipur



Vol-27, No. 8
Shravan-Bhadrapad 2079 August 2022

EDITOR
Ajeay Bharti

ASSOCIATE-EDITOR
Dr. Phool Chand

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:
Dr. Ashwani Mahajan on behalf of **Swadeshi Jagaran Samiti**, 'Dharmakshetra', Sector-8, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-22,

COVER & PAGE DESIGNING
Sudama Dixit

EDITORIAL OFFICE
'Dharmakshetra' Sector-8, Babu Genu Marg, R.K. Puram, N. D.-22

E-MAIL : swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com
WEBSITE : www.swadeshionline.in

LETTERS 3

NEWS 34-38



CONTENTS

COVER STORY 6

Dollar will not remain strong forever

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



1	Cover Page	
2	Cover Inside Page	
08	COVER STORY	
	Rupee Ascent toward the global journey	Vikas Sinha
10	COVER STORY	
	Rupee on a global leap, Neighbours key to the dream	Shivaji Sarkar
11	PERSPECTIVE	
	Economics and politics of freebies	KK Srivastava
13	DEBATE	
	Constitutional Mandate for Preserving Heritage in the Directive Principles	Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma
16	TELECOM	
	Why BSNL got Rs 1.64 lakh crore lifeline from government	Anilesh S. Mahajan
18	OPINION	
	Why Shinzo Abe emerged as Japan's most significant PM	Sanjaya Baru
20	ECONOMY	
	Fiscal consolidation today	Rathin Roy
22	ANALYSIS	
	Ulema perpetuate Afghanistan stalemate	Sandhya Jain
25	DISCUSSION	
	The diminishing role of Exclusive Kitchen in City Homes	Alok Singh
27	FOOD SECURITY	
	How healthy is the food that you eat?	Devinder Sharma
29	ENVIRONMENT	
	Vedic Perspective of Environment	Vinod Johri
32	HISTORY	
	Mewar as the Locus of Guhila State (Part-III)	Prof. Nandini Kapur Sinha
39	Back Inside Cover	
40	Back Cover	



Domestic Telecommunication Landscape

There are two recent happenings in the domestic Telecom landscape. One is with the start of bidding for the 5G spectrum on July 26 and renewed discussion about the Private 5G network. The other one is the revival package of INR 1.64 lakh crore for BSNL.

Within 5G technology, the private 5G mainly differs from the public 5G over priority access and isolation. Unlike public 5G, a private 5G network can be set to allow different levels of priority access with more business-critical network activities getting priority over others. It also allows to completely or partially isolate end-user devices from public networks. This reduces threats, by limiting exposure to public interfaces whenever necessary, such as with personal data, intellectual property, or other sensitive activities. These features of the private 5G will promote the practice of data localization.

The revival package for BSNL includes money allotted for the 4G spectrum, the development of an indigenously 4G technology stack, and the merger of BBNL with BSNL. The aim is to make BSNL become a financially viable entity, allow it to improve the quality of existing services, roll out 4G services, enhance its wireline offering so that it can compete in the market, and provide high-speed data. The revival of BSNL is of utmost importance given the recent border tensions between India and China. As private sector telecom companies mainly work for profits; they are reluctant to develop their network in border areas, Maoist-infested areas, or low-density population areas. In these areas, only BSNL can provide a reliable and safe network. Also, with rising concerns about the survival of Vodafone Idea, the telecom sector is in danger of becoming a duopoly between Jio and Airtel. So BSNL revival will also be necessary from a consumer's point of view.

— Kumar Gaurav, Samastipur, Bihar

EDITORIAL OFFICE

SWADESHI PATRIKA

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

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

For subscription please send payment by A/c payee Cheque/Demand Draft/Money

Order in favour of 'Swadeshi Patrika' at New Delhi, or

Deposit the subscription amount in Bank of India A/C No. 602510110002740,

IFSC: BKID 0006025 (Ramakrishnapuram)

Annual Subscription : 150/-

Life Membership : 1500/-

Kindly write your full name and address in capital letters.

If you do not receive any issue of Swadeshi Patrika, kindly e-mail us immediately.

Disclaimer

The views expressed within are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of Swadeshi Patrika. Swadeshi Patrika often present views that we do not entirely agree with, because they may still contain information which we think is valuable for our readers.

Quote-Unquote



Short-cut politics based on populist promises can destroy the nation.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Bharat



I will get taxes down in this Parliament, but I'm going to do so responsibly. I don't cut taxes to win elections, I win elections to cut taxes.

Rishi Sunak, Conservative Party (the UK) leader



We have to think of the repercussions if public sector banks are privatised and if they go the foreign hands.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan, Nation Co-convenor, SJM



Designing and manufacturing can be done at Jabalpur itself by making available manufacturing plants, adding a skilled workforce, getting investments, the idea is to make India Atmanirbhar for Everything-Electronics.

Ajai Chowdhry, Ideator, Innovator, Investor,
Founder HCL, Chairman EPIC Foundation

Privatisation of public sector banks

In this year's general budget, the Finance Minister had said in her budget speech that two public sector banks and a public sector insurance company would be privatized. It is noteworthy that according to the current laws, in public sector banks 51 percent participation of the central government is mandatory. But as per the current announced policy, the government intends to reduce its participation to zero after the privatization of public sector banks. To implement this intention, the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill was listed in the winter session of 2021. But for some reason it was not presented. It was being said that now this bill will be presented in the monsoon session, but it seems that this bill will not see light of the day, in this monsoon session also. Debate on privatization of public sector banks has intensified recently after Poonam Gupta, director general of the National Council of Applied Economic Research, and Arvind Panagariya of Columbia University, former vice chairman of NITI Aayog, published an academic paper. This article recommends that all public sector banks should be privatized, keeping only the State Bank of India in government's hands. Although, it is well known that both the authors are not saying anything new, their views about privatization are well known, that they consider privatization to be the solution to all problems in all sectors including banks. Economists, obsessed with the idea of ??privatization, believe that the private sector provides the most efficient solution, as the same is market driven. Public sector cannot compete with private sector in efficiency, so we should handover all public sector establishments to private sector.

According to the directions of the Reserve Bank, efforts are made to link private banks with national objectives, but it is equally true that despite all the rules, bye-laws and instructions, way the task of financial inclusion is performed by public sector banks, private sector banks are no match for them. After Narendra Modi government came to power, Jan Dhan accounts with zero balance were opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), ensuring financial inclusion. So far, 46 crore such Jan Dhan accounts have been opened, through which not only the poor, common people have access to banks, but a large amount of direct benefit transfer by the government to these Jan Dhan accounts, which are linked with Aadhaar and mobile phones, has been made possible. Be it transfer of Kisan Samman Nidhi or transfer of COVID related cash to 20 crore women, all this has been made possible only due to Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). But, we must understand that, today when the share of private banks in deposits and lending is around 36 percent, only 10 percent of Jan Dhan accounts have been opened by private banks. This fact speaks tons about the role of Public Sector Banks in financial inclusion.

Not only this, 90 percent livelihood loans to 6 crore women under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana, are being provided by PSBs and regional rural banks (RRBs), sponsored by PSBs. Similarly, the task of giving loans to street vendors is also performed by public sector banks. In such a situation, naturally, the profitability of private sector banks is higher than the public sector banks, because these banks are free from the duty of financial inclusion. Government banks are bound to implement all government schemes. In such a situation, it would not be appropriate to consider private sector banks, more competent because they are earning more profit. If financial inclusion and social banking are removed from the functioning of public sector banks, their profits can also increase in leaps and bounds. There is no unanimity about handing over the public sector banks to the big industrial houses, as the same may lead to cronyism. If the promoters of private banks in the country are not in a position to buy state-owned banks, there is also a danger that the privatization of public sector banks will lead to an increase in stake of foreigners in the banking sector. Total foreign investment in private banks is above 80 percent in some cases. If we bring PSBs also under foreign influence, it can harm the country significantly, as control of financial system by foreigners will be fraught with severe dangers.

Some experts are of the view that privatization is no solution to the present day banking problems. Experience shows that the efficiency of an organization does not depend on its ownership, but on its management. If seen, after the nationalization of banks, the confidence of the general public increased in financial institutions and the mobilisation of household savings in the country increased significantly. Due to this, necessary financial resources could be mobilized for development in the country. No government bank failed due to the central government's patronage in public sector banks. Rather, in the meantime many private banks were saved from failure, thanks to interventions of PSBs.

Recently, a private bank named Lakshmi Vilas Bank had to be handed over to DSB, a Singaporean bank. In such a situation, if the financial sector of the country goes under foreign domination due to the privatization of banks, then the economy will have to suffer its consequences. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to carry out the privatization of public sector banks only on the basis of suggestions made by some institutions or some

Dollar will not remain strong forever

The Indian rupee has been depreciating against the dollar for some time now, and rupee has depreciated from Rs 74.5 per dollar in February 2022 to almost Rs 80 per dollar, before appreciating again to Rs 68.69 per dollar on August 2, 2022. Due to this weakness of the rupee, there is a natural concern among the policy makers. On the other hand, the opposition parties are also trying to blame the government. This is not the first time that the Indian rupee has weakened against the dollar. If we calculate from 1991 till now, the rupee has been depreciating against the dollar at an average rate of 3.03 percent annually. This depreciation in rupee has not remained the same in all the years. Significantly, rupee has depreciated by 7.28 percent in the last 5 months.

In the past, the rupee had been weakening not only against the dollar, but also against many important currencies including the euro, pound, yen, yuan. For example, since 1991, the rupee has depreciated 137 percent against the pound sterling, 489 percent against the euro and 241 percent against the yen, while the depreciation against the dollar has been 252 percent. This means that in the long run, the rupee has weakened against all the important currencies.

But there has been a change in the depreciation trend of the rupee in the last 5 months till July 2022. While the rupee has weakened by 7.28 percent against the dollar, it has gained 6.31 percent against the pound sterling, 10.77 percent against the yen and 4.72 percent against the euro. That is, it can be said that the rupee has weakened against the dollar, but it has strengthened against other currencies and those currencies have also weakened against the dollar. Since the dollar has strengthened against almost all major currencies around the world, it would be more beneficial for us to understand the reasons for the strength of the dollar against various currencies rather than the weakness of the rupee. We also have to understand that what is the future of rupee and other currencies? Today, when the dollar is getting stronger against all the major currencies of the world, the question arises



The ever-increasing foreign direct investment and strong fundamentals have the potential to propel the rupee towards strength. Therefore, we will have to wait and watch that for how long dollar can continue to remain high.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



whether the winning streak of dollar will continue in future also? Will all currencies, including the rupee, kneel against the dollar?

To answer this question, we need to know about the reality of the American economy. It is well known that where we talk about the indebtedness of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, European countries etc., we have to understand that the US economy is the most indebted country in the world. Today, the US has an external debt of \$30.4 trillion, China's \$13 trillion and UK \$9.02 trillion. External debt on India is only \$ 614.9 billion, which is hardly 20 percent of our GDP. America's foreign debt is 102 percent of its GDP, while that of England is 345 percent. It also has to be understood that some of the India's foreign exchange reserves have been sacrificed for the past few months to maintain the stability of the rupee, but still they remain at \$ 572.7 billion.

Due to the Russo-Ukraine war, today all the countries are reeling under inflation. The rate of inflation in USA has reached 9.1 percent, while in England it is 9.4 percent and in India it is only 7.0 percent. The high rate of inflation in all these countries is due to supply constraints at the international level. Due to this, the prices of fuel, food items and essential raw materials and intermediates and metals are increasing continuously. The turmoil in international markets has also affected financial markets across the world. History is witness that whenever there is turmoil in the world, the dollar gets stronger. This is because investors around the world believe that the US is the safest destination for them. This process is called 'Run

for Safe Haven' in business parlance. It is being said by market experts that since inflation is on rise across the world, worries about growth have increased and interest rates are also rising, hence the dollar is strengthening.

Against a 'basket' of different currencies, the dollar has risen 10 percent in the past one year and has reached an all-time high in 20 years. The yen has hit a 24-year low against the dollar. While central banks around the world are raising interest rates in their respective countries to contain inflation, the US Federal Reserve, is also raising interest rates. Since interest rates in the US have risen more, due to this also investors from all over the world are getting attracted to the US.

Though, US companies doing business outside the US will be at a disadvantage due to the stronger dollar, with the S&P 500 losing as much as 5 percent of their revenue; companies operating in the US will benefit from a stronger dollar.

If we talk about other countries, especially smaller ones, those have borrowed heavily, they are finding it difficult to repay interest and principal. But there are some countries which are oil producing and exporting countries or which are suppliers of agricultural commodities, their currencies are not depreciating. Similarly, despite all the efforts of USA and Europe, Russia's ruble continues to get strengthened. The reason for this is the increasing export of oil and gas by Russia and the control on capital flows imposed by the Russian government. It is true that supply chain disruptions due to China's lockdown and Russo-Ukraine war are fueling inflation in the world. The USD is strengthening

due to global turmoil and rising interest rates in the US, but it may not last long. Such situations in the world are considered to be short-lived. In such a situation, when there will be an uptick in other currencies of the world and the investors who have deserted India in search of 'Safe Havens' will again come back to India and other countries of the world in search of markets, then downfall of dollar would be inevitable. Talking about the recession in the world, whereas the signs of recession are being seen in Europe, America and Japan; economic activities are gaining momentum in India. Receipts from GST and direct taxes are booming. It's notable that against all odds, GST collection reached 1.49 Lakh Crores, in July 2022. The data for the month of May 2022, show that industrial production grew by 19.6 percent, which was 7.1 percent more than the previous month. Whether it is the demand for electricity, consumer goods or capital goods, the huge growth of 20 to 55 percent in all types of demand in the country is indicating an uptick in economic activities in India. All the global institutions are expecting India to be the fastest growing economy in the world. For this reason, investors from all over the world will also be compelled to turn to India. Although there is still a big gap between imports and exports, but with increasing production in the country, this gap is going to reduce. The ever-increasing foreign direct investment and strong fundamentals have the potential to propel the rupee towards strength. Therefore, we will have to wait and watch that for how long dollar can continue to remain high. □□

Rupee Ascent toward the global journey

The exchange rate regime determines the way a country's currency is pegged against currencies of the other country. Broadly it has two approaches. The first is the fixed exchange rate and the other is the floating exchange rate. Depending on various economic and political developments as well as the strengths, the monetary policy authority of the country keeps changing the regime or modifying the variants of the fixed rate or floating rate regime.

Once again, the exchange rate regime of the country is at a revolving point. Before the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, we had rupee exchange in trade with Russia. Today in 2022, because of many reasons the rupee exchange in trade with Russia is rising and significant enough to revisit the exchange rate regime to be followed. The 1991 was economic and political crisis to the country. The year 2022 is neither an economic nor a political crisis to our country. The Russian political crisis of 1991 had impacted the rupee exchange in trade unfavorably and the 2022 Russian political crisis is encouraging rupee exchange in trade favorably. The new global order is consistently emerging at faster pace in this century. It keeps changing politically, economically, and financially. The demographic profile has also emerged as our strength and an important influencing factor in the decision of exchange rate regime for us. The demographic profile impacts many things including economy and aspirations and hence impacts exchange rate as well. The RBI is in action mode for revival of rupee as a exchange in trade again.

Allowing import and export transactions to be settled in Indian Rupees by the opening of the Vostro Account is a surprise move by RBI which has put a plethora of new opportunities and challenges before us. In the year when we have been celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and cherishing our rich cultural values, our much-discussed implementation of the idea of AatmaNirbhar Bharat - surely it's a step forward in this direction.



In the year when we have been celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and cherishing our rich cultural values, our much-discussed implementation of the idea of Aatmanirbhar Bharat - surely it's a step forward in this direction.
Vikas Sinha



But are we too late for this or we have been forced to do this due to rising exchange rate volatility or we have been an opportunist exploiting the global crisis at a time when Russia on one side and Ukraine representing western dominant countries are at war with each other. With the passage of time when people are less concerned with the death toll in Ukraine due to war but more concerned with rising inflation due to this war - the economic motive behind the war is obvious to all. It has taught the world that all international decisions are based on hidden economic motives.

Developed nations or the western countries in particular or the cartel of these developed nations known by whatever name like G-6, G-8, WTO, etc have their own vested economic interest where warfare often supersedes welfare. The ongoing war also witnesses the same where Russia was removed from the SWIFT system and its account in Dollars was frozen by dominant western countries.

However, this blockage led Russia to make its International transactions in country-specific currencies and in a barter system. It also forced the world to rethink its dependency on reserved currencies particularly the US Dollar for means of currency conversions in International transactions. Further, it also raised eyebrows on the free functioning of SWIFT as an international payment interface and thus came the need to develop a new payment Interface and the desire to promote its own currency for International trade settlements. RBI's move to start invoicing international trade in Indian currency by allowing Vostro account opening and developing

India has emerged as an open economy with one of the largest consumer bases and in this competitive environment when everyone wants a market share of this consumer base we can negotiate strongly the terms of trade in our favor by properly regulating this market, and market player's acceptance of Indian currency for trade settlement must be incorporated as one of the foremost terms of trade.

Unified Payment Interface is a witness to this situation.

With the abolition of the Gold standard and the Bretton woods agreement coming to an end, American Dollar emerged as the preferred choice of currency convertibility. The world decrypted the message that the economy of the country will decide the status of your currency convertibility. With the richer country's economies flourishing, their currencies became globally accepted and convertible while poor countries move to the bottom of convertibility. This also gave an edge to these developed countries in dictating the terms of trade and diminished their exchange rate risk & vice-versa for poor countries.

Since independence, we have been witnessing this in our terms of trade which have been mostly unfavorable to us. On many occasions, we have seen very closely how apartheid our currency had been treated in its convertibility and as a means of exchange in global transactions. We were forced to open our economy to uncertain global market players much to our exploitation in the name of liberalization. From being an economy with too low reserves to an economy being among the highest forex reserves of 600 Billion USD our concern to mitigating exchange is clearly visible.

This recent move of RBI is a welcome move in this direction which will surely minimize this risk and decrease our reliance on Dollar. With Russia voluntarily agreeing of using bilateral currency transactions Rupee has taken the flight of this global journey. However since the time is ripe India is in discussion with almost 25 other countries for Rupee-based trade transactions. Other than Russia, India has also been paying Iran for its Oil import in Indian Rupees. On a close study of our import and export bills, it is evident that 40 % of our import and export countries are the same that is we are exporting to them as well as importing from them so there arises the opportunity to settle these transactions in Indian Currency. Only for the deficit trade transactions, do we need to be dependent upon the dollar.

India has emerged as an open economy with one of the largest consumer bases and in this competitive environment when everyone wants a market share of this consumer base we can negotiate strongly the terms of trade in our favor by properly regulating this market, and market player's acceptance of Indian currency for trade settlement must be incorporated as one of the foremost terms of trade. □□

(Vikas Sinha, Vasant kunj, New Delhi)

Rupee on a global leap, Neighbours key to the dream

India is keen on raving up the economy with international trading in rupee, even as it slides to below 80 to a dollar. A dream of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee may come true if the neighbours do not envy and rupee remains stable. Would Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and ASEAN accept it despite Reserve Bank of India paving the way for currency swapping? These are good dreams to enable rupee to become an international currency though RBI circular does not make it convertible. The goals are not easy to achieve when rupee continues to slip rapidly forcing slower growth. It stresses on policy changes to strengthen the purchasing capacity of individual citizens and protect their wealth to contend with the mighty dollar. Since 2011, India is taking baby steps.

Soviet Union had a rupee-rouble trade arrangement but reincarnated Russia scrapped it in 1990s. Recently too Russia was given the offer to go back to the old arrangement. It has not expressed interest in accepting rupee though it wants payments in rouble, post-Ukrainian war. It does not help India much as only through a dollar conversion it can pay in rouble. Iran till recently having a close relationship accepted rupee payment amid US sanctions. This was undone by India under the US pressure. Iran still may work it out provided the sanctions do not deter. But neither Bangladesh nor Sri Lanka despite high trade ties ever accepted the swap. Would Indians accept Bangladesh 'taka'? Rupee is accepted unofficially, in, legal or not, border trades but taka still is not a preference. The enabling provisions apart, Sri Lanka through its worst crisis takes \$ 3 billion loan from India in foreign exchange. A large part of it may be repaid as deals for oil and other goods from India.

The country feels that it would have ready acceptance to its offer from small neighbours. Sri Lanka got into the trap of China and today rupee. Bangladesh with over dozen large projects with Chinese assistance is witnessing discontent within. Despite a favourable Awami League rule under Sheikh Hasina, sentiments are less pro-India. Myanmar has recently agreed to accept Thai baht in border trade dealings and reportedly plans a similar arrangement for Indian rupee seeking to limit reliance on the US dollar.

The Russia-Ukraine war has led to shortage, protectionism and a wave of defaults. It has led to weakening of world growth, high inflation and uncertainty for India with myriad issues like consistent trade deficits of \$ 20 billion a month or almost a year. The currency reserves now reduced to \$ 588 billion as 50 percent of imports have seen price surge. Trade deficits may touch \$ 250 billion this year.

India's trade with Gulf countries crosses \$ 175 billion in 2021-22, for much of its oil imports and cumulative investments of \$ 16 billion. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement sealed by India and the United Arab Emirates on February 2022 is expected to facilitate Indian exporters to gain access to the Arab and African markets besides increasing the two-way trade to USD 100 billion in the next five years from current USD 60 billion. But the region does not seem willing for a rupee trading.

[Continued on page no. 17]



A mix of policy changes and push to the real growth would make the rupee more acceptable and not a mere official circular.

Shivaji Sarkar

Economics and politics of freebies



The present central govt under the leadership of Modi has done admirable well on reducing inequity by providing access to basic necessities and facilities (banking, hygiene, water, housing, insurance, electricity...) to the most needy. This then raises the productivity of the Indian human resource.

KK Srivastava

There have been tectonic (and positive) changes in India since 1991 when market friendly economic reforms were ushered in. However, basic structural weaknesses – inequality of wealth being one – have either stubbornly stayed put or even accentuated. This has, inter alia, adverse political consequences. The top 10% in India earned 57.1% of income in 2018 while the poorest 50% earned only 13.1%, according to world renowned economist Thomas Pickety. The corresponding figures stood at 34.4% and 20.3% respectively, in 1991. Between 1991-2000 the share of wealth of the top 10% increased from 50.5% to 74.3% while the share of the bottom 50% fell from 8.8% to abysmal 2.8%.

Not only have the poor lost out in their share of productive resources but they have also witnessed a significant fall in their rights and access to social protection. One example of this is labour codes which provide no success to the informal sector workers and essentially reinforce the capitalism claim that essentially workers are lazy and greedy; so the labor market worked best in a hire and fire mode. Both these developments – clamour for increasing adoption of market based economy, including in essential provisions (such as food, education, health, etc.), on one hand and alarming rise in inequalities on the other do not augur well for Indian economy, polity, and society. This could undermine the nation's fragile social stability.

A report commissioned by the Economic Advisory Council to the PM (EAC-PM) estimates that while top 1% earned 6.14% of total income in 2017-18, this percentage rose to 6.82% in 2019-20. Top 10% earned 35.18% and 32.52% respectively. In other words the heavily skewed nature of income distribution is only turning worse. And to alleviate the grim situation it suggested introduction of universal basic income, assurance of better distribution of earnings, launch of



Indicator	Unit	Brazil	Russia	India	China	World
Total Population	Million	214	145	1408	1426	7909
Sex ratio at birth	M per 100 F	105	106	108	112	106
Life expectancy at birth	Years	72.8	69.4	67.2	78.2	71
Mean Child Bearing Age	Years	27.7	28.7	27.9	28.8	28.2
Infant Mortality Rate	Per 1000 live births	12.8	3.9	25.5	5.7	27.9

MGNREGA type scheme for urban poor, allocation of higher share of expenditure for the social sector, etc. Incidentally in 2017, IMF had approvingly suggested the idea of India launching a fiscally neutral universal basic income by eliminating both food and fuel subsidies that could cost 3% of GDP.

According to UN's World Population Prospects 2022 India is high on population but low on development indicators (see table below).

No doubt poorer the country, worse is it likely to perform on development indicators; differential income levels do matter. However, Bangladesh (figures not mentioned in the table: these are 169, 105, 72.4, 25.7, 22.9) with significantly lower per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP) than India (\$6,613 compared to India's \$7,333) has done better on most parameters. This shows it's not all about income and its spending. What matters more as to how we spend the scarce resources to lift those who are at the bottom of the pyramid.

It is in this background that we must dispassionately examine the debate about freebies. Take the example of nutrition security.

According to the UN report on the state of food security and Nutrition (2022) while the world is moving backwards in its bid to banish hunger, India is bucking the trend. Thus while globally the count of undernourished people

swelled by nearly 45 million over past decade and a half, in India the number fell by nearly 23.5 million. But, having said that, more than 50% of Indian women in the 15-49 age group are anemic. About 45 million children are stunted due to deficiency of vitamins and minerals. One can go on and on. One conclusion, however, is inescapable. Competitive populism of freebies is to be shunned, instead targeted spending are needed that actually benefit those for whom they should be meant. Even the Supreme Court has come down heavily on illogical freebies that the elected governments keep announcing before elections. It went one step further and advised the Centre to consult the Finance Commission on regulating them. The PM has, in his latest outpour, spoken out against the revdi culture. Not that the ruling party can absolve itself of the charge of same culture. In UP, BJP had promised a farm loan write off in 2017 election eve. This waver added up to over Rs. 2 trillion, giving a shiver to banks. Parties of all hues, BJP included, promise massive dosage of subsidies and freebies, including free electricity, water, housing, bicycles, laptops, etc. on top of the cash handouts. This is competitive populism at its peak. To be sure, it is not a new phenomenon; only that no one shies of it anymore. Even if it is a zero sum game, the contesting netas perhaps find themselves in a Prisoner's Dilemma like

situation. No one can dare to bell the cat.

The paramount question is if the freebies are affordable given the perilous state finances; indeed they are not fiscally prudent or sustainable. Punjab, where the Aam Aadmi Party had promised free power, the state's total outstandings as a percentage of its GSDP have risen to 53% by March 2022; these were only 33% a decade ago. NK Singh suggests that the states should be provided annual, not five yearly, grant penalising them for their profligacy. But can it be implemented, given the sentiments about curbs on state autonomy? One really is skeptical.

More important issue is to decide about the treatment given to merit subsidy vs non merit subsidy. So should the economically weaker be also deprived of free/subsidized water, power, housing, fuel, education the list goes on. But, equally, it is a very unsound-economically at least – move to cover all users for providing such benefits. But all parties, without exception, indulge in this reckless populism. Moreover, such 'unproductive' spending severely constrain the government's ability to spend on developmental goals.

The present central government under the leadership of Modi has done admirable well on reducing inequity by providing access to basic necessities and facilities (banking, hygiene, water, housing, insurance, electricity) to the most needy. This then raises the productivity of the Indian human resource. It has empowered people.

What is needed is to work out a sustainable welfare provisioning to those deserving, but minus the unaffordable fiscal burden. □□

Constitutional Mandate for Preserving Heritage in the Directive Principles

India is an ancient civilization endowed with rich historical, civilisational and cultural heritage. This richness is visible in the archaeological sites, monuments, landscapes, artifacts, and legends of historical value, comprising its ancient history, civilisational antiquities, languages, scripts, music, festivals, dances, social practices, customs, arts, artifacts, scriptures, epigraphs, manuscripts and advanced ancient wisdom¹.

National Heritage and Duties of the State and Citizens

Indian Constitution explicitly casts definite responsibility on the State to protect and conserve nation's heritage under the Directive Principles of State policy. Article 49 of the Directive Principles states Policy, "It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, (declared by or under law made by Parliament) to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal disposal or export, as the case may be."² In addition to this the Article 51 A (f) widens the responsibility and directs every citizen to contribute to heritage preservation. It states that "it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture; and under 51 A (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures."³ The Directive Principles of State Policy appear to have been borrowed from the Constitution of Ireland,⁴ which in turn had copied them from the Spanish Constitution.⁵ These Directive Principles have their immediate origin from the Sapru Committee Recommendations of 1945, which suggested two categories of individual rights: (i) justiciable and (ii) non-justiciable rights.⁶ The justiciable rights, as we know are the Fundamental Rights, whereas the non-justiciable ones are the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) incorporated in the Constitution.⁷



The historical monuments etc mandated to be protected under Article 49 have a historical past constituting unique cultural and civilisational antiquities of national and even universal significance.

Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma



Directive Principles

The DPSP are ideals which are meant to be kept in view by the State when it formulates policies and enacts laws. They are an 'instrument of instructions' which were also enumerated in the Government of India Act of 1935 as well. There are multiple objectives of the Directive Principles of State which are given below:

- They seek to establish economic and social democracy in the country.
- They are ideals but not legally enforceable by the courts for their violation.
- These are guidelines for government and based on principles of welfare of citizens
- These are the Principles of village self Rule, mostly inherited from ancient Hindu Scriptures of Raj –Dharm
- They are Liberal and intellectual Principles of governance.

Origin of Directive Principles in Sapru Committee Report

The Sapru Committee Report incorporating mention of the Directive Principles as nonjusticiable right was published in 1945 and was set up to resolve issues pertaining to minorities that HAD PLAGUED Indian political and constitutional discourse⁸. It was prepared by a committee appointed by the Non-party Conference in November 1944. This group consisted of individuals who represented a variety of interests except those of the dominant political parties which were the Indian National Congress, Muslim League and the Communist Party.

The Sapru Committee and Its Background

In the early 1940s, the politi-



***On 3 February, 2015
a bench of the
Supreme Court
comprising of Justice
TS Thakur and
Justice Adarsh
Kumar Goel
emphatically held
that preservation of
rich heritage and
culture of the country
is a constitutional
mandate.***

cal scenario was marred by communal strife out of the conflict and impasse between the Congress and Muslim league over the constitutional future of India and the separatist demand of the certain sections of Indian Muslims. The Gandhi – Jinnah talks of 1944 had failed so, to overcome the communal tensions and problem, the Non- Party Conference set up a 30 member committee with Tej Bahadur Sapru as its Chairman. The Committee was assigned, among other issues to examine the whole communal and minorities

question from a future constitutional and political point of view. The 343 pages Report was contained detailed expositions on various aspects of India's constitutional future. The Report rejected the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. The committee held that a separate Muslim state would not be advantageous to any community and felt that the division of India would 'endanger the peace, tranquility and progress of the whole country'. It called for the setting up of a constitution –making body, in which Muslims also were recommended to be included.

The Report had a section on fundamental rights like: freedom of speech, freedom of press, religious freedom and equality. In the explanatory sections the Committee asserted for dividing the rights into justifiable and non-justifiable. This Report was a prelude for setting up of the Constituent Assembly and had an indirect influence on the constitution-making process as eight members of Sapru Committee went on to become the members of the Constituent Assembly as well. These included: M. R. Jayakar, Gopalaswami Ayyagar, John Mathai, Frank Anthony and Sachidananda Sinha- who be-

come the first (provisional) chairman of the Constituent Assembly. However the Constituent Assembly continued with same legacy of minorities, when the country was partitioned and the constitution should not have been at all plagued by minorityism. In light of the above discussions and mandate under article 49 and 51(f) the heritage and cultural history of the country should be protected with getting plagued from minority's mind and pseudo-secularist propaganda.

Judicial Directive

Supreme Court has also held on several occasions that preservation of rich heritage and culture of the country in several cases. On 3 February, 2015 a bench of the Supreme Court comprising of Justice TS Thakur and Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel emphatically held that preservation of rich heritage and culture of the country is a constitutional mandate. Hearing a writ petition filed by Subhas Datta as a public interest litigation under Article 32 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court took a serious note of the submissions made by the petitioner about the concerned agencies, which are running and managing museums, to the effect that the security and maintenance of historic artifacts requires serious and continuous efforts by technically trained persons. The court also noted the challenges pointed out in this regard, such as space constraints, manpower shortage and lack of other resources, that need to be looked into by the Ministry of Culture and other concerned authorities, and also the appropriate monitoring mechanism that ought to have been put in place. The court also took note of the fact that requisite funds have

The court also took note of the fact that requisite funds have to be allocated for the purpose. The petition had been filed in the year 2004 on the issue of protection of historical objects preserved at different places in the country.

to be allocated for the purpose. The petition had been filed in the year 2004 on the issue of protection of historical objects preserved at different places in the country⁹.

History and Culture Integral to the Monuments

The historical monuments etc mandated to be protected under Article 49 have a historical past constituting unique cultural and civilisational antiquities of national and even universal significance. For instance, the Hampi, protected by the "Hampi, World Heritage Area Management Authority Act 2002" represents Ramayan era heritage, which has vivid and live historical and cultural links with Ram Janmbhoomi in Ayodhya, Ram Setu and Rameshwaram in Tamil nadu and Several other places mentioned in Ramayan, including Chitrakoot. The Scriptural descriptions in the epic Ramayan also become equally important. The mention of 4 tusked elephants¹⁰ in Valmiki Ramayan corroborates the belief that the Ramayan period falls in the Treta Yuga, elapsed almost a million years ago (exactly 8,69,124 years). According to archeologists the 4 tusked elephants had become

extinct a million year ago. Likewise 'the heritage of the archeological remains of the ancient Dwarika found under the sea water, also goes back to five millennia as per radio carbon dating and Mahabharat era antiquity of Dwarika has links with hundreds of places of Mahabharat, including the Mathura, Kurukshetra, Dankore, Gurugram, Jagannath Puri and so on. So, resurrecting their historical account along with the physical structure and their historical as well as cultural legends, described in their epical descriptions is equally important. There are several thousand places and their epical legends which need to be resurrected and preserved, documented and be taught along with this monuments in the educational institutions. It is a clear constitutional mandate, to preserve the heritage and historical monuments with their scriptural description and it should not be ignored in the name of pseudo secularism. □□

References

1. City heritage and flawed strategies | ORF <http://www.orfonline.org/http://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/city-heritage-and-flawed-strategies/>
2. National Portal of India - Article 49, Constitution of India, <https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india>
3. National Portal of India - Article 51 A, Constitution of India, <https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india>
4. Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) Under the Indian Constitution, <https://blog.ipleaders.in/directive-principles-of-state-policy-dpsp-under-the-indian-constitution>
5. *ibid* 4
6. Constitution of India https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical_constitutions/sapru_committee_report_sir_tej_bahadur_sapru_1945_1st/20December/201945
7. *ibid* 4
8. *ibid* 6
9. Preservation of rich heritage and culture is a constitutional mandate, says..., <https://tilamarg.com/news/preservation-of-rich-heritage-and-culture-is-a-constitutional-mandate-says-supreme-court/>
10. Valmiki Ramayan, Sunder Kand-4.27.12; 5.4.26-28; 5.9, 4-5

Why BSNL got Rs 1.64 lakh crore lifeline from government



The smile on telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's face at the end of the July 27 Union cabinet meeting said it all. The minister had secured clearance for the next phase of the revival package for state-owned telecom player BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited)—Rs 1.64 lakh crore. The next phase, in Vaishnaw's words, would have three main elements: improve the quality of BSNL's services; clean up the company's balance-sheet; and expand the telecom player's fiber reach.

In 2019, the Union government had extended a Rs 70,000 crore package to fund a VRS (voluntary retirement scheme) for BSNL and MTNL (Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited) employees. At that time, roughly 80 per cent of the revenues were dedicated to payouts and pensions. BSNL managed to half its consolidated losses from Rs 15,500 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 7,441 crore in 2020-21. For the current fiscal, the losses were almost at a similar level.

Minister says BSNL has returned to making operational profits and that its complete revival will be a reality once more corrective measures are enforced, such as introducing 4G and improving basic services. The minister projected profits for BSNL from fiscal 2026-27.

The cabinet meeting came a day after the 5G spectrum auctions. BSNL officials claimed the entry of private players in 5G will not place BSNL at any disadvantage as the device ecosystem for the new-age services was still evolving.

Under pressure from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliates, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), the BJP-led central government had, in 2019, put off plans to sell off BSNL. The Narendra Modi government doesn't have a one-size-fits-all privatisation policy. While it opted for strategic sale of Air India, it has listed LIC (Life Insurance Corporation of India) at the stock markets, whereas Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) was merged with ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation).

Regarding BSNL, it was decided to keep the telecom company afloat. SJM national co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan argued that BSNL's survival was crucial for the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat programme, as unlike private operators, the state-run telecom company anchored the ecosystem for domestic component manufacturers. Besides, BSNL's survival is thought to be crucial for telecom connectivity in the country's border areas and areas affected by left-wing extremism. Security agencies consider BSNL, a public sector enterprise (PSE), as strategically too vital to be privatised. Moreover, like other PSEs, BSNL has social obligations, such as spearheading the government's rural connectivity efforts. Nearly 36 per cent of BSNL's optical fiber customers are in the rural belt, and the network is expanding to far-flung areas.



Telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says the revival package will help improve the quality of BSNL's services, clean up the company's balance-sheet and expand its fiber reach.

Anilesh S. Mahajan

One of the proposals accepted by the Union cabinet is the merger of BSNL and Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), the nodal agency for the BharatNet rollout. This is expected to augment BSNL's fiber network. The cumulative network of the new entity will be around 13 lakh km of fiber. Minister explained that BSNL had over 6.8 lakh km of optical fiber cable network, whereas BBNL had laid 5.67 lakh km of fiber, connecting 185,000 village panchayats by using the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

In the second leg of the revival programme for the loss-making BSNL, the cabinet cleared a Rs 1.64 lakh crore package. With this plan, BSNL has been asked to clean up the balance-sheet and focus on upgrading services. Top officials in Vaishnaw's ministry explained that sovereign guarantee will be extended to BSNL and MTNL for raising long-term loans, which includes bonds of Rs 40,399 crore. Further, the AGR (adjusted gross revenue) dues of BSNL worth Rs 33,404 crore will be converted into equity. Meanwhile, BSNL will get spectrum allocation—900 MHz and 1800 MHz frequencies—at Rs 44,993 crore, which will be infused through equity.

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) would be pleased that the cabinet cleared the proposal for a capital expenditure of Rs 22,471 crore for deployment of indigenous 4G stack by the operator. The SJM had been proposing the same for the past eight years and had been at loggerheads over it with former telecom minister Ravishankar Prasad. The cabinet also cleared the proposal of providing Rs

13,789 crore as viability gap funding for operating commercially unviable rural wireline operations done between FY15 and FY20.

Minister is hopeful that these measures will help BSNL improve the quality of existing services, roll

out 4G and become financially viable by starting to earn profit in FY 2026-27. But four years are not far off and BSNL has lots on its plate. The countdown begins. □□

<https://www.newprincefromhome.com/india-today-insight/story/why-bsnl-got-rs-1-64-lakh-crore-lifeline-from-government-1981479-2022-07-29>

[Continued from page no. 10]

Rupee on a global leap, Neighbours key to the dream

The latest RBI move is not a new deal. The UPA government in 2013 had finalized a list of 23 countries with which India could have trade in local currencies to save precious foreign exchange and strengthen the rupee. The list included Angola, Algeria, Nigeria, Oman, Iran, Iraq, Venezuela, Qatar, Yemen and Saudi Arabia and a task force was set up under the then special secretary Rajiv Kher. The Kher committee in 2014 had suggested the traditional swap model.

In 2011, India and Japan agreed to \$15 billion currency swap line as Japan's then prime minister Yoshihiko Noda agreed to support the troubled Indian rupee, Asia's worst performing currency then at Rs 48.24 to a dollar. It was proposed to be increased to \$75 billion in 2018 by the NDA government. It meant that a conversion rate is decided and later both the countries repay the amount at the same exchange rate. These are linked to London inter-bank rate, called Libor. Japan has done this with a number of countries like China, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. Madan Sabnavis, chief economist CARE ratings observed that such arrangements were there but never used

nor it impacted the market but gives some leverage to RBI.

India's three free trade agreements with the ASEAN, Japan and South Korea have not turned out to be favourable for the country as these resulted in growing deficits in merchandise trade, according to a study published by think-tank Third World Network. It means the FTAs need a review as the perceived benefits elude.

It is erroneous to believe that rupee is losing only because of the present Ukrainian war. There are many other reasons and details have to be listed. The inherent conditions in the country, the 7.1 percent retail and 15.18 percent (down from 15.88 percent) wholesale price rises, 32 percent hike, in a year, of commodity prices and flight of foreign manufacturers significantly contributed to the crisis. One may wonder why despite 9.1 percent US inflation the dollar values increase. It is attributed to the US Fed Reserve decision to increase real interest rates. It assures higher returns to the investor. India has yet to develop that intrinsic strength.

A mix of policy changes and push to the real growth would make the rupee more acceptable and not a mere official circular. □□

Why Shinzo Abe emerged as Japan's most significant PM

Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose tragic assassination on July 8 was mourned all around the world, has been widely referred to as the island nation's "most consequential" head of government. Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had referred to him as a "personal friend" and not just as a friend of India. Indeed, there are few world leaders who have had a genuinely warm personal relationship with both Mr Modi and Dr Singh, given the very different personality of the two PMs. Therein lies the secret of Abe's importance to the new Japan-India relationship.

At the purely government-to-government level, the India-Japan relationship went through its ups and downs over the past 70 years. Interestingly, till Abe's first official visit to India in 2007, the most memorable visit of a post-war Japanese PM was that of Abe's grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who came in 1957. Jawaharlal Nehru played host in his inimitable manner and established a firm bond between two newly-established countries that have had long historical associations. Years earlier Nehru had written in his *Glimpses of World History* how Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905 had inspired Indian freedom fighters because it was the first time in centuries that an Asian nation had worsted a European one.

Nehru would also have been familiar with the enormous praise that Japan's modernisation and rapid industrialisation, in the 19th century, had elicited from such great Indian leaders as Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, M. Vishwesvarayya and Jamsetji Tata, after their visits to Japan at the turn of the nineteenth century. Yet, the Cold War kept the two Asian nations apart. After the Cold War ended, Japan was seduced by China's rising and expanding home market and industrial opportunity, and so through the 1990s it ignored India, focusing on China.

India's decision to declare itself a nuclear weapons power in May 1998 made matters worse with Japan imposing sanctions, citing its principled opposition to nuclear weapons. In December 1998 the Atal Behari Vajpayee government sponsored the visit to Japan of a non-official delegation which included strategic af-



At the purely government-to-government level, the India-Japan relationship went through its ups and downs over the past 70 years.
Sanjaya Baru



fairs guru K. Subrahmanyam, defence analyst Jasjit Singh, former defence secretary N.N. Vohra, retired diplomat Arjun Asrani and this writer. Our task was to convince Japanese think tanks and public opinion of the merits of the Indian case. Abe was one of the few Japanese officials willing to lend an ear at that time to an Indian voice, including that of an Indian diplomat then posted in Tokyo, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, who is now India's external affairs minister.

In 2000 the first steps were taken when Prime Ministers Vajpayee and Yoshiro Mori signed a joint statement designating each other's nations as "global partners". In April 2005 Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Junichiro Koizumi defined the bilateral relationship as both "global and strategic". This was the turning point. They outlined an "eight-fold initiative" for enhanced cooperation that included a high-level strategic dialogue; comprehensive economic engagement; cooperation in science and technology and strengthening of people-to-people contacts; and, joining forces in dealing with the challenges & opportunities of what they termed as the new "Asian era".

While Mori and Koizumi laid the foundations of the new India-Japan relationship, along with Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, it was Abe who conceived the architecture of the total edifice when he addressed the Indian Parliament in August 2005. "The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A 'broader Asia' that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct

India is one of the few major countries that carries no negative historical baggage with regard to Japan. Both Western nations and many of Japan's neighbours like to remind Japan of its imperial and war-time past. They have been critical of Abe's policy of reviving Japan's military power.

form. Our two countries have the ability — and the responsibility — to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency." This is a speech worth reading even today.

Two statistics worth noting. Till 2006, the curve of inward Japanese investment into India was virtually flat. After 2007 it rose sharply. Till 2005 the total number of annual visits to India of Japanese ministers were in the single digits — in fact no more than four or five. After 2005 there was a sharp increase with as many as 20 to 25 ministers visiting India. Abe was the author of this enhanced official engagement with India. Finally, Abe gave a new direction to Asian security architecture and India's external security environment by promoting the concept of the "Indo-Pacific". His "confluence of the two seas" speech laid out the framework for what has since been termed the Indo-Pacific and built the basis for the constitution of the

Quadrilateral Security Initiative, otherwise known as the "Quad".

While India and Japan are the real pillars of the Indo-Pacific region, their bilateral relationship should be defined sui generis rather than in a regional geopolitical context. The geo-economic synergy between Japan, which is a high-tech but an ageing, labour deficient economy, and India, a developing economy in need of technology and saddled with a young labour force, is fairly obvious. Japan needs land, raw materials and labour. India needs technology and investment. Both need each other's markets. The synergy is self-evident.

Moreover, India is one of the few major countries that carries no negative historical baggage with regard to Japan. Both Western nations and many of Japan's neighbours like to remind Japan of its imperial and war-time past. They have been critical of Abe's policy of reviving Japan's military power. India would like to see Japan normalised as an Asian democracy with military capabilities. If the imperialist powers of the West would like all post-colonial developing nations to let bygones be bygones and seek to redefine their relations on the basis of shared democratic values, why cannot Japan expect the same? Every country has a past that it seeks to forget. Reviving Japan's military capabilities, and even allowing Japan to become a declared nuclear power, is in the interests of regional stability in Asia. If the world has come to terms with the nuclear status of China, India, Pakistan and North Korea, why not Japan? □□

(The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author, and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh)

<https://asianage.com/opinion/columnists/250722/sanjaya-baru-why-ihing-abo-emerged-as-japani-most-significant-pm.html>

Fiscal consolidation today

Fiscal consolidation (FC) in a recession is contextually very different for emerging market economies like India from FC in times of normal growth.

By my definition (a consistent fall in gross domestic product, or GDP, growth for three years running), India has been in a recessionary situation since FY16, with the usual consequences, particularly falling tax revenue buoyancies. The situation was further complicated by the painful and slipshod implementation of the goods and services tax (GST), which was a task of complexity well beyond the capabilities of the Ministry of Finance. For the same reason, disinvestment targets were unrealistic, and consistently never met. Fiscal restraint was maintained by cutting public, especially capital, expenditure.

Covid and its aftermath have complicated matters by raising the fiscal deficit in FY21 to 9.2 per cent, and 6.9 per cent in FY22, compared to 3.4 per cent in FY19. Only a fraction of this increase was for capital expenditure; this rose by just 1 percentage point of GDP from FY19 to FY22 whereas the fiscal deficit jumped by 3 percentage points. The revenue deficit increased from 2.4 per cent to 4.7 per cent of GDP in the same period. India continues to borrow largely to consume and the problem is only magnifying.

Tax buoyancy in FY22 was 1.4 compared to 0.8 in FY19 but, worryingly, this is projected to fall to 0.67 in FY23, indicating that the rising buoyancy was temporary and largely due to the base effect.

The fiscal crisis thus remains with us and has, in fact, been exacerbated in two important ways. First, the government has not resolved its revenue problems. It has merely become realistic about its revenue and disinvestment capabilities. However, the laudable realism of moderating expectations does not solve the problem of low revenue buoyancies, an important driver of India's silent fiscal crisis. This means that unless the government intends to lower the deficit through



Mercifully, India has been spared the problems that foreign currency sovereign debt would have posed.

Rathin Roy



expenditure compression (which happened between FY16 and FY19), the need to borrow will continue to rise in the medium term. But such expenditure compression now will either delay the government's incremental capital expenditure ambitions or force it to reduce committed expenditures, which have risen across the pandemic period. However, interest payments account for the bulk of the rise, and these are not amenable to fiscal correction, particularly in a period of high inflation and rising interest rates.

Mercifully, India has been spared the problems that foreign currency sovereign debt would have posed. This was a course much recommended by the Bretton Woods institutions, when I was a member of the FRBM committee, and even adopted in the FY20 budget. Thankfully, this was not implemented due to vigorous efforts by many concerned experts.

Second, the Centre has regrettably transmitted the fiscal crisis to the states. The share of states in gross tax revenue has fallen from 36.69 per cent in FY19 to 29.8 per cent in FY22. This, on the back of low aggregate buoyancies, and compounded by volatile releases of GST shares to the states (both compensation cess and Integrated GST) have exported fiscal fragility from the Centre. There is one more worrying trend in these hard times that will impact the FC imperative. Not only is growth low, but we now have rising inflation. A widening current account deficit in the face of a rising dollar means that at least for now, the Marshall Lerner conditions do not apply.

This brings into play a further factor. The proportion of foreign-



We need to know, what will a \$5-trillion economy look like? Will it be export led or atmanirbhar or both, and how will this change structural conditions?

ers holding rupee-denominated government debt has been growing over time. In this situation, rising government debt/GDP ratios (even if largely rupee denominated) can signal fragility and incentivise exit of inward foreign capital flows, which have financed India's recurrent current account deficit. Further, exit of international players from the rupee sovereign debt market will directly impact the management of the public finances. This, while not identical, has parallels with the 1991 situation. It is not yet a crisis — reserves are comfortable, exiting the rupee sovereign debt market will be costly, but the situation demands close attention.

The situation is not irredeemable. What is urgently needed is a medium-term road map for the Indian economy which acknowl-

edges the hard times we are in, sets out the policy initiatives that will address these challenges over the medium term, and ensures that short-term policymaking conforms to this medium-term map. Merely positing a \$5-trillion economy target or something of the sort will not do the trick. We need to know, what will a \$5-trillion economy look like? Will it be export led or atmanirbhar or both, and how will this change structural conditions? Will it raise tax buoyancy and limit committed government spending? Modern fiscal policymaking involves nesting annual fiscal budgeting within such a macro fiscal road map and its utility, in those countries which have done so, has been amply demonstrated in Covid times.

In addition to the redevelopment of the macro and fiscal medium-term policy levers, this task will require a supporting institutional fiscal framework — such as a fiscal council and fiscal rules — that will be resisted by a turf-oriented economic bureaucracy comfortable only with short-term policymaking. Overcoming this will require considerable investment of political capital, which is yet to be forthcoming. □□

*The writer is managing director, ODI, London.
r.roy@odi.org. The views are personal.*

https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/fiscal-consolidation-today-122070701289_1.html

Ulema perpetuate Afghanistan stalemate

Barely five weeks short of its first anniversary in power, the Taliban regime failed to address or resolve any of the serious issues facing Afghanistan, with the three-day “Great Conference of Ulema” held in Kabul (June 30-July 2, 2022) proving a damp squib. The regime took care not to designate the gathering as a Loya Jirga, which is the traditional Afghan way for local leaders to have their grievances heard by rulers, and vested it with the authority of Islamic scholars and clerics.

Simultaneously, the two-day meeting of Afghanistan finance and central bank officials with US officials in Doha, Qatar (June 30-July 1), to discuss economic and aid issues in the aftermath of the June 22, 2022 earthquake, concluded without progress on the critical issues of release \$3.5 billion of the \$7 billion Afghan assets frozen in American banks, and the lifting of sanctions. The talks were led by US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West and Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Abdul Qahar Balkhi, spokesman for the foreign minister, later tweeted that Muttaqi had expressed gratitude for the \$55 million pledged in humanitarian aid for victims of the June 2022 earthquake. The Taliban quoted Thomas West as saying that Washington “preferred engagement and sought a stable Afghanistan.” The US envoy said Washington does not “support any armed opposition in Afghanistan” and said such actions were “detrimental” to that country. Both sides agreed to meet again.

Voice of America reported that a State Department spokesperson denied that Washington was legitimising the regime but that diplomatic engagement with the Taliban was necessary as “pure isolation” cannot help Washington to achieve its objectives there. The spokesperson said the Biden administration was “fo-



As the first anniversary of its seizure of power approaches, the Taliban have failed to pacify the unhappy women and girls in the country, or to win the confidence of the civilian population regarding their ability to govern the country in fair and equitable manner.

Sandhya Jain



cused on advancing US interests” in Afghanistan such as human rights, counterterrorism, economic stabilization, reopening of all schools and safe passage for Afghans who worked with US-led international forces before the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

In Kabul, the 3,500-strong gathering of male clerics and elders exhorted the people to support the Taliban-led “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” and urged the international community to recognise the regime. The resolution issued at the end of the meeting said, “The establishment of Islamic system in Afghanistan which is the outcome of more than four decades of sacrifices and suffering of our people has ensured justice, peace and security in the country, and deserved support and we not only support but also defend it as our religion and national obligation.”

Calling for mutual respect and coexistence with neighbouring countries, the region and the world at large, the resolution assured that “the Afghan soil won’t be used against any country and Afghanistan also won’t allow anyone to interfere in its internal affairs.” It condemned the Islamic State (Daesh) as “insurgent, terrorist,” and declared that cooperation with the group is against Islamic laws.

Women were excluded from the gathering, and the critical issues of the return of girls to school and the right of women to work and travel, were simply avoided. Al Jazeera reported Habiba Sarabi, the first woman governor of an Afghan province (Bamiyan, 2005), lamenting that the Taliban’s “mind-set is that women should stay at home.” “They don’t believe in hu-



Deputy Taliban chief and acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani addressed the Ulema meet on July 1 and said the Taliban needs time to address the demand from the international community for inclusive govt and education.

man rights and that’s why no woman was invited.” Political analyst Lutfullah Lutf said the meeting did not include all political opinions, and the exclusion of women from the political sphere is “saddening in a nation where 50 percent of the population are women.”

The Great Conference of Ulema continued the charade that supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada is alive though to this day no one has seen his face. Akhundzada addressed the gathering with his back turned, and urged citizens to accept whatever the regime does; he warned the international community from in-

terfering with the regime. The Taliban urged Afghans to renew allegiance to Akhundzada and called for Sharia laws in the country.

Earlier, on May 1, Akhundzada reportedly led the Eid prayers in Kandahar, but no one present on the occasion saw his face either while praying or giving a speech. Local journalists said that someone spoke from the mosque loudspeaker, but remained unseen. The Taliban did not allow anyone to approach the person who led the prayers, intensifying the suspicion that Akhundzada, who had not been seen publicly even once, was killed in a bomb blast in Pakistan two years ago. Akhundzada became the supreme leader of the Taliban in 2016 after a US drone strike killed his predecessor, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor.

It was in Akhundzada’s name that the Taliban banned girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade; women were also told to cover themselves completely in public, barring their eyes. At the Ulema conference, Shia scholar, Sayed Nasrullah Waezi, a Hazara from Bamiyan, raised the matter of reopening schools for girls.

Deputy Taliban chief and acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin

Haqqani addressed the Ulema meet on July 1 and said the Taliban needs time to address the demand from the international community for inclusive government and education. Indicating the Taliban's rigidity on these issues, he said, "This gathering is about trust, interaction, we are here to make our future according to Islam and to national interests."

Acting Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hasan Akhund opened the meeting and urged the representatives of all Afghan groups to help uphold the Islamic system of governance. Mawlawi Mohammed Omar Khattabi from Kandahar, who runs a network of madrasas and Islamic radios in southern Afghanistan, urged Taliban authorities to seek consultations with religious scholars when it came to the Islamic system.

Arab News reported that gunshots were heard at the venue, Kabul's Polytechnic University, during a lunch break. State broadcaster RTA reported that two assailants were killed.

Meanwhile, fighting with the National Resistance Front has intensified over the past few months. As the National Resistance Front claimed successes, Defence minister Mullah Yaqub reported took charge of the war in Panjshir. On February 23, 2022, the NRF announced the death of Mullah Ezatullah Kandahari, commander of Taliban Red Unit, along with nine other Taliban, in Shotul district of Panjshir, and released photographs of the dead. The Taliban reportedly sent more than one thousand fighters to Panjshir, Andarab and Bamiyan, with helicopter gunships, to eliminate the NRF guerrillas. The fighting has spread

Former member of parliament, Habibullah, told media that the Taliban had killed six members of his family in Kapisa province, on February 13, 2022. A carpenter, Naeem Karimi, was caught for being a Panjshiri, and brutally tortured. He died on February 14, 2022.

to Kapisa and Parwan provinces. Special attention is being given to seven Tajik-populated provinces.

Reports have surfaced about internal differences amongst the Taliban in Panjshir. In the past two weeks, the Taliban have been arresting their own local leaders in different areas, the most notable being Qari Hasibullah Habibi, Taliban intelligence director for Khenj. The situation is blurred, with journalist Mohammad Natiq claiming that the only Hazara commander of Taliban, Mawlawi Mehdi Balkhabi, has turned against the group after his removal from the post of intelligence chief in Bamiyan. Mawlawi Balkhabi is said to have seized control of Balkhab district of Sar-e Pul in June 2022.

Amidst reports that local people are increasingly helping the National Resistance Front, the Taliban is taking people hostage and torturing them in the Wersaj district and Taloqan city in Takhar province. Taliban fighters force the locals to prepare food for their fighters, and beat and arrest those who do not comply. Sources say that Taliban casualties have been rising in recent weeks.

The reign of terror against those who served the previous administration continues unabated. In April 2022, army officer Rasool Khan from Paktia province was arrested by the Taliban, and alleged-

ly tortured before his dead body was handed over to his family (Aamaj News). Former interior ministry officer, Qasem Qaim, who was asked to return to his job in March 2022, was arrested from his office after two weeks. His body was handed over to his family on April 17, 2022.

Other victims include weightlifting champion Navid Afghan, who was tortured and killed inside the National Directorate of Security, in February, according to his family. On February 23, the Taliban publicly hanged former police officer, Mahbobsha, in Herat city. Women activists are being abducted. Former member of parliament, Habibullah, told media that the Taliban had killed six members of his family in Kapisa province, on February 13, 2022. A carpenter, Naeem Karimi, was caught for being a Panjshiri, and brutally tortured. He died on February 14, 2022.

Thus, as the first anniversary of its seizure of power approaches, the Taliban have failed to pacify the unhappy women and girls in the country, or to win the confidence of the civilian population regarding their ability to govern the country in fair and equitable manner. The schism between the people and the regime can only be expected to grow in the coming days. □□

<https://www.sandhyajainarchive.org/2022/07/14/ulema-perpetuates-afghanistan-statemate/>

The diminishing role of Exclusive Kitchen in City Homes



The continuous evolution is happening everywhere. It's happening in the way we live, the way we work, the way we communicate, the way we eat, the way we practice agriculture, the way we plan to develop cities, the way we design houses, the way we avail health care services, the way we get educated, the way we trust-distrust social media, and the list goes on. Anything and everything is not beneficial to everyone. The appearance of the Covid 19 gave birth to the idea of the pandemic-ready housing society, educational institutions, public places, and offices. It's visible to the

eyes that the design of the smart city and the smart houses are offering more and more convenience to human civilization. This convenience has a trade-off. We have to explore the things which are not visible to the normal eyes; it needs special eyes to visualize. The arrival of artificial intelligence and the internet of things are forcing human civilization to miss the earlier habits and align with modern necessities. We have to be selective about where we want a substitute and where we don't. Innovation is not to be substituted everywhere. Everything that is latest, modern, and digital is not beneficial.

Everything has to be green, the climate change concerns and the commitments to net zero energy, sustainable life, and cooperation with nature rather than exploitation of nature are the mission to be accomplished and it demands swift action from individuals, society, corporate, and regulators, and from policymakers.

There are numerous disruptive ideas and technologies which have given birth to lifestyle-related physical and mental imbalance. The modern housing society is coming up with ideas that there can be a housing complex where there is no necessity for a kitchen in every dwelling unit. It means that there can be a common kitchen area on a floor where individuals who wish to cook on their own can use the facility. The source of this idea is not the dearth of housing requirements for the increasing population but the change in eating habits. It has changed to a level that indicates that the kitchen has become the most underutilized space in a house today. The community kitchen has its own cultural relevance and advantages, but the motivation today for the absence of an exclusive operational kitchen in a home is scary. In many cities, the interior designers and the facilities in a bathroom are more expensive than in a kitchen. People spend much more money on electrical work, civil work, and plumbing work in a bathroom than in the kitchen.

The design of future houses is moving towards pandemic-ready, internet of things friendly, and kitchen-less dwelling units. And it can be counter-argued by few that it is justified to have the absence of a kitchen in a house as it will improve the utility of the land; it will provide more dwelling units on the same land by



The Indian tradition of agriculture, the Indian tradition of food preparations, and the Indian philosophy of relevance of agriculture practices are something that needs to be revised and followed strictly.

Alok Singh

excluding kitchen, and also contribute to sustainable climate goal by completely erasing the input materials for constructing a kitchen.

The promotion of green building and net zero energy future residence is being talked about as well as promoted by the real estate developers and the government guidelines. Climate change is no more an emerging problem. Climate change has arrived. It's an emergency. Many habits are responsible for this emergency. Many habits need to be changed urgently. The world has experienced changed habits during the Covid-19 pandemic, to live with masks and hand sanitizers and lockdowns. The country is developing habits to live without single-use plastics. The orientation of the society and the policymakers forces an individual to follow the new habit which is for the advantage of every stakeholder in the ecosystem. Change in habits is possible but proper communication with the masses is missing.

There is an urgent requirement of creating effective awareness about the role of the food we eat and its impact on the variety of health of the different kinds of stakeholders in the supply chain. It's not only the physical health of the consumer, but rather the health of the environment, the health of the finances, the repercussions on the medical services, and its overall impact on growth figures and the cost to the soil, air, and water.

The opponents of traditional food are deep-pocket food industry corporate who spread misleading health benefits and cost-benefit of their factory-produced 'ready to consume' or 'ready to cook' foods. The savings-driven

expenditure compulsion forces the majority of the population to consume foods that are easily available. The marketing of ultra-processed food carrying high contents of salt, sugar, and bad fats is giving rise to a variety of diseases, like diabetes, obesity, and many more.

The policymakers are distracted. They need to concentrate on the whole domain of food, farming, and health. The proposal of food industrialists to address health issues that are due to deficiency of micronutrients using tools of synthetic food fortification is an illustration of a misleading suggestion. Such fortification is a business opportunity for big corporate at the cost of killing the livelihood of traditional manufacturers and traders and depriving value addition in rural areas. The policymakers should facilitate the consumption of diverse food by the population and ways should be prepared to promote the local food prepared using traditional cooking ingredients and processes.

The Indian tradition of agriculture, the Indian tradition of food preparations, and the Indian philosophy of relevance of agriculture practices are something that needs to be revised and followed strictly. Agriculture is not only to feed but it's linked to human civilization and culture. Agriculture is the base of our culture and civilization. All the festivals are one way or the other linked to agriculture. Abundance production of food is the objective but consumption has to be careful. Production has to be in high volume but consumption has to be frugal. It aims to create inventory for non-production seasons due to flood or drought or war; and also to serve the world with food whenever situations

arise, like today we are caring for the food of the world due to the Russia-Ukraine war and for our neighbor Sri Lanka due to Chinese debt trap. We can feed the whole world by engaging our traditional practices of agriculture and food ingredients. We have to revive our ancient rice route rather than think about the silk route which is a modern-day Chinese debt route.

The policy maker has to awake fast. The substitution of traditional organic agriculture practices has already killed the climate, environment, soil, air, water, and health. The big corporate houses with a deep budget for research & development, and for marketing & advertisement are now eyeing the diminished role of the kitchen in the house. The intervention of disruptive technology like synthetic food fortification, digital platforms for food delivery, ready-to-cook food, and convenience-based post-consumption work has killed the role of the kitchen in the home. The policy of the government to encourage organic farming needs reinforcement by creating awareness of the role of traditional food prepared in the kitchen using efforts. The machine can be a tool in the kitchen of a house but it can't be allowed to be a complete substitute to eliminate the role of the kitchen in our life. The arrival of taxi aggregators discouraged people to own personal vehicles, and the neo-aggregators in the food supply chain - from delivery process to cooking ingredients to final consumable food - are discouraging youngsters to bother least about the exclusive kitchen in upcoming homes. □□

(Alok Singh is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management Indore, a freelancer academician, and associated with AGET Business School, Jhajjar, Haryana)

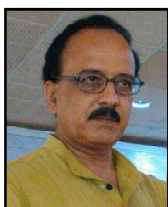
How healthy is the food that you eat?

Senator Jon Tester, a third generation farmer from Montana in United States, has asked an interesting question. He wanted to know whether more wheat varieties are really healthy for the people, and is anyone studying it.

In response, the director of Food Safety and Nutrition at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Dr Susan Mayne, said they don't have the resources to study that. In my understanding, the question posed by Senator Tester is fundamental, and especially in the light of the continuing debate on how to address nutritional security, also becomes exceptionally crucial.

Award-winning US journalist Helena Bottemiller Evich, who reports on food policy, brought this to light on Twitter; and in her response says this gets to a bigger issue though – agriculture and human health/ nutrition research are often very disconnected. Although, many believe that this kind of research would not be cost effective, but forget what is more important is to feed the world with safe and nutritionally-rich food, lest we forget that food is actually a medicine. Numerous reports have shown how the food we eat is actually becoming hollow, devoid of adequate nutritional content. Producing healthy food, instead of producing food surpluses that big corporations thrive trading on, is the kind of food transformation that the world should be actually looking at.

Considering what the US Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, proudly announced on twitter the other day: "At US Department of Agriculture, our vision for the future is an equitable, climate-smart agricultural economy that protects our land, forests and water, improves the health, nutrition, and quality of life of all Americans, helps rural communities thrive, and feeds the world," the emphasis on health, nutrition and quality of life cannot be simply glossed over. Research programmes can be easily re-initiated to evaluate the health impacts of popularly grown wheat and rice varieties to begin with, and as a suggestion redesigning the research priority of the international agricultural research centres, governed by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), should help. The USDA as well as big agricultural research programmes in several other coun-



Producing healthy food, instead of producing food surpluses that big corporations thrive trading on, is the kind of food transformation that the world should be actually looking at.

Devinder Sharma



tries can be tagged to shift the research focus accordingly.

The question of costs comes only with intent. If we can dole out hundreds of billions of dollars every year in tax concessions to the rich and elite, I see no reason why research cannot be directed at the basic human right: to ensure healthy and nutritious food for everyone. Since the days of the economic meltdown in 2008-09, the world has already printed surplus money to the tune of \$25 trillion. Let a part of the quantitative easing programme – the surplus money that central banks in several rich and emerging economies print year after year – be directed to support such crucial and of course more relevant research programmes.

When I say producing healthy food, I don't mean using genetic modification to produce Golden Rice. While the debate on genetic engineering and its impact on human health remain inconclusive, the question that Senator Tester posed actually wants us to move beyond the rhetoric – as well as the answers – provided by the agri-business industry. If the industry prescriptions were so relevant and appropriate, there was no need for Senator Tester to make a statement that has in a limited way stirred the hornet's nest. It is no use producing crop varieties which are nutritionally inferior, maybe barring a few exceptions, and later fortifying them with certain essential minerals. Fortification is an industrial solution to partially address the deeper crisis of hidden hunger. While in the short term the industry will walk away after amassing profits, the society will only learn of the implications arising from its forced use, whether healthy or un-

All things considered, academic research is increasingly industry sponsored. They produce the same research conclusions that the industry wants them to.

healthy, in the years to come.

All things considered, academic research is increasingly industry sponsored. They produce the same research conclusions that the industry wants them to. Take the case of Bt cotton, the genetically modified strains cotton varieties, that were aggressively promoted a few years back in India. Years after its introduction and after the seed industry made hefty profits, the problem remains where it existed earlier. Resistance to the devastating pink bollworm insects began in 2013-14 and since then it has spread to various parts of the cotton growing belt. This year, in Punjab, nearly the entire early sown crop has been affected. While all these years seed industry had marketed the next generation of GM seeds, the insect problem still persists. A few years back, a number of cotton farmers had committed suicide after a severe insect attack, which predominantly had remained confined to GM crop varieties. Traditional cotton varieties had largely escaped the attack.

The point I am trying to make is why agricultural scientists can't instead look for environmentally-safe and time-tested alternatives, which can at least withstand the insect infestation for the long run. It is all a question of priorities, and

the need to move away from an ideological research direction, which relies more on what the industry prescribes. At least, public sector universities (not forgetting that many research programmes are industry sponsored) could have looked for appropriate solutions. I am talking of the keet pathshala approach, popularly called as Nidana model in Haryana, where predatory insects are used to control cotton pests. Just because this technology is not industry-sponsored, our universities have not been comfortable talking about it.

Coming back to the question of developing healthy crop varieties, most highyielding wheat varieties for instance are nutritionally weak. This is essentially because when scientists breed crops to increase its yield potential, plant nutrition goes down. Technically speaking, high yield is inversely proportionate to plant nutrition. To explain, the drop in nutrition levels is so much that the high-yielding new wheat varieties have seen a steep fall in copper content, an essential trace mineral, by as much as 80 per cent, and some nutritionists ascribe this to a rise in cholesterol-related incidences world over.

Nevertheless, as is often said, you are what you eat. A hollow diet will mean more of empty calories, derived from sugar and fat, to fill the gap. The development strategy from 'farm to fork' therefore should aim at getting it first right at the farm level. This means plant breeding has to be re-prioritised to cater to human health, which also means developing varieties that are responsive to cultivation practices that are environmentally safe. □□

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

<https://www.bhaskar.com/opinion/how-healthy-is-the-food-that-you-eat-1153761>

Vedic Perspective of Environment



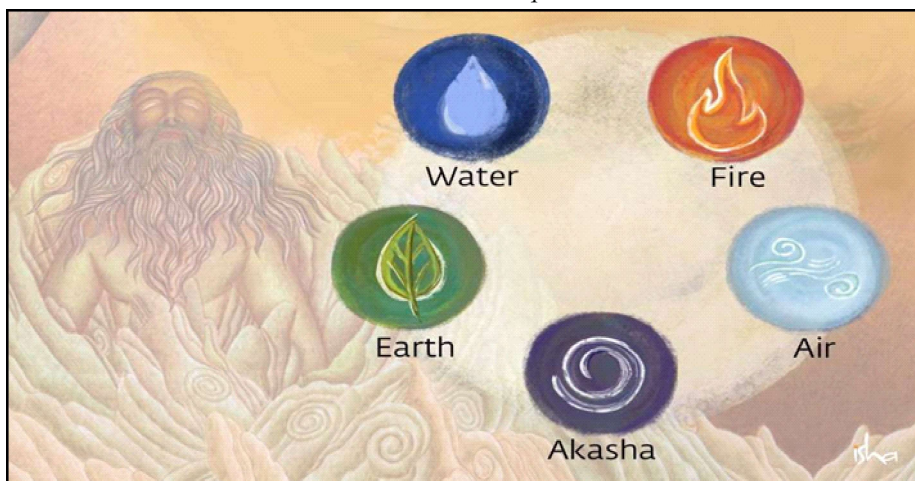
There are five types of yajna that have been prescribed for every house holder, brahma yajna, i.e., reading and gathering knowledge for the benefit of humanity, deva yajaya, i.e., the rituals that signify replenishing nature, pitri yajna, i.e., respecting and taking care of the elders in the family as well as the society, atithi yajna, i.e., respect to the guests who come into your home and finally bhuta yajna, i.e., respect for all flora and fauna.

Vinod Johri

Recently there have been fierce floods in Uttarakhand, Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Gujrat, Maharashtra and various parts of our country claiming scores of precious lives and loss of harvests, public and personal property. According to information available in public domain, in an average every year, 75 lakh hectares of land is affected, 1600 lives are lost and the damage caused to crops, houses and public utilities is Rs. 1800 crores due to floods. Thousands of people are displaced. As per the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the major flood prone areas of India cover almost 12.5% area of the country. The annual losses from forest fires in India for the entire country have been moderately estimated at Rs 440 crores.

USA, France, Spain and other European countries, Australia are regularly facing ferocious forest fires every year. In 2021, the United States experienced 43 natural disasters, which made it the most natural catastrophe-prone country in the world that year. Total forest area in the world was 6 billion hectares. Today, only 4 billion hectares are left. The world has lost one-third of its forest – an area twice the size of the United States. Between 2015 and 2020, the rate of deforestation was estimated at 10 million hectares per year. As a driver of climate change, wildfires release huge quantities of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. In British Columbia, extreme fire years in 2017 and 2018 each produced three times more greenhouse gases than all other sectors of the province combined. Catastrophic wildfires take a large economic toll on communities through property losses, decreased tourism, even changes in the long-term structure of the local economy. However, the record wildfires in the U.S. made for a very expensive year: the global direct cost of wildfires in 2020 was \$17 billion.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) took place in from 31 October to 12 November 2021. The main goal was to secure global net zero by mid-century and keep a maximum of 1.5C degrees of warming within reach. Net zero means total emissions are equal to or less than the emissions



removed from the environment.

Prior to COP26, four goals that needed to be achieved were set out. These were to secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5C degrees within reach by:

- accelerating the phase-out of coal
- curtailing deforestation
- speeding up the switch to electric vehicles
- encouraging investment in renewables.

Countries stressed the urgency of action “in this critical decade,” when carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced by 45 per cent to reach net zero around mid-century. But with present climate plans – the Nationally determined Contributions — falling far short on ambition, the Glasgow Climate Pact calls on all countries to present stronger national action plans next year, instead of in 2025, which was the original timeline.

Vedic perspective on environment

Our Vedas have several references on environmental protection, ecological balance, weather cycles, rainfall phenomena, hydrologic cycle, and related subjects that directly indicate the high level of awareness of our saints and people of that time. Ancient treasures of vast knowledge reveal a full cognizance of the undesirable effects of environmental degradation, whether caused by natural factors or human activities. The protection of the environment was understood to be closely related to the protection of the heavens and earth. Between these two lies the atmosphere and the environment that we refer to as the paryavarana. The Rig Veda venerates de-

ities like Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Maruts and Aditya, that are responsible for maintaining the requisite balance in the functioning of all entities of Nature whether the mountains, lakes, heaven and earth, the forests or the waters. Our saints in Vedic period were in fact great scientists, research scholars and teachers who relentlessly worked for welfare of the people and the humanity.

There are many shlokas seeking the blessings of the five basic gross elements or the panchamahabhoota of Nature: akashor firmament, vayu or air, agni, tejas or fire, apah or water, and prithvi or earth. People were careful to refrain from activities that could cause harm to Nature’s bounties. It was understood that the well-being of Mother Earth depended on the preservation and sustenance of the environment.

The Vedas propound that all of us (every entity of nature), especially the human beings must have friendly relations with each aspect of nature. While the Vedas don’t deny the attitude of indulgence and gratification towards nature, they do say that this attitude should be restrained. The other factor the Vedas talk about is enjoying nature with tyag bhava. The wealth of natural resources does not belong to anybody and must be shared with everyone.

The pandemic has proved that for nature there is no geographic boundary and the effects of nature reaches everybody. Vedas are beyond the borders of religion, geographical boundaries etc.

The prithvisukta of the Atharvaveda is one of the most important resources we have learnt from the Vedas. Earth in this shloka is

symbolic of everything that grows on it. It invokes all the physical and non-physical aspects of nature within its verse. It depicts not only the forms of nature’s aspects but its underlying emotional bonding with them. It describes the earth as one’s mother, the sky as one’s father, and the moon as one’s brother and so on. This is not just the personification of nature but also a description of a way of life. At the same time, three spheres of the universe have been enumerated in the Vedic philosophy expressed in the prithvisukta, the ground to the solid earth, the intermediary or the mid-space and the uppermost or the celestial. The Vedas say that all these spheres exist within and outside of the body. By considering the forces of nature as divine, our ancestors were respectful and mindful towards nature. This is something that has been lost in our greed. Nature has two aspects, the benign aspect and the fierce aspect as seen in its form of natural resources and natural disasters. Today’s natural disasters are not something normal. It puts the vedic teachings in practice as rituals, for e.g. planting a tree, watering a particular plant etc. Overall, it is offering oneself for the collective good. It is derived from the root yaj, i.e., propitiating the divine, communitarian sharing as well as sharing of resources. Following this, there are five types of yajna that have been prescribed for every house holder, brahma yajna, i.e., reading and gathering knowledge for the benefit of humanity, deva yajna, i.e., the rituals that signify replenishing nature, pitri yajna, i.e., respecting and taking care of the elders in the family as well as the society, atithi yajna,

i.e., respect to the guests who come into your home and finally bhuta yajna, i.e., respect for all flora and fauna.

The Rig Veda makes a clear reference to the presence of a protective layer which we know as ozone layer that filters the harmful rays of the sun and protects the earth and praises the radiation that enters the atmosphere that is responsible for the health of the environment. In a shloka of the Rig Veda the saint prays to the Ashvins for their indulgence for protection against any excessive solar flares that also affect earth's temperature. All four major Vedas the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda recognise the importance of maintenance of the seasons' cycles that are likely to get altered due to the climate change owing to inappropriate human actions. It is remarkable that the people

in Vedic times regarded Nature and the environment in a holistic manner and revered each of its constituents and entities by carefully preserving them.

Oshadhi Sukta of Rigveda addresses the plants and vegetables as mother, "O mother! Hundreds are your birthplaces and thousands of your shoots (Rigveda, 10.97.2)" The Atharvaveda mentions some medicinal plants which are useful for treatment of various diseases of human being, e.g. Tulsi, turmeric, vilva, peppal etc. The Tulsi plant is worshiped by every Hindu family and one Tulsi plant is a must in the court yard of every family. This clearly shows the environmental awareness of the people of vedic period towards the nature.

The view that Yajna cleans atmosphere through its medicinal smoke, and provides longevity, breath, vision etc., is established in

Yajurveda (Ayur Jainena Kalpatam, Pranajajnenakalpatam, Saksurjajnenakalpatam: Yajurveda 9.21). Vedic texts believe that 'Jajna' helps in increasing the crop production, controls the air pollution, protects the surroundings from air born disease etc. This belief shows that the saints of vedic period knows about the effects of gases which were evolved by burning of specific substances like ghrita, vilva etc. They look at every entity of Nature with the eye of a friend and sympathizer— *Mitrasyaaham Chakshushaa Sarvaani Bhootani Sameekshhe.*

Kalyan mantra as we recite religiously sums up our vedic philosophy -

*Sarvebhavantusukhinah; sarvesantun-
airaamaya, Sarvebhadraraanipashyantu,
maa kaschitdukkhabhaagbhavet.
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) □□*

Vinod Johri: Retd. Additional Commissioner of
Income Tax

SWADESHI PATRIKA

Voice of Real Economy

Dedicated to Swadeshi Movement in all its dimensions;
Battles threats to the economic sovereignty of the nation; and
Gives Voice to all sections of Economy

SUBSCRIBE AND/OR RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

FILL THE FORM AND SEND IT TO US : Medium : (Hindi / English)

Name

Address.....

.....Contact No.....

City Pin

YEARLY Rs. 150/-

LIFE Rs. 1500/-

Website: www.swadeshionline.in Email: swadeshipatrika@rediffmail.com

For subscription please send payment by A/c payee Cheque/Demand Draft/Money Order in favour of
'Swadeshi Patrika' at New Delhi, , or Deposit the subscription amount in Bank of India A/C No. 602510110002740,
IFSC: BKID 0006025 (Ramakrishnapuram)

Mewar as the Locus of Guhila State (Part-III)

The credit for annexing Godwar is likely to go to Vairisimha, father of Vijayasimha, as is evident from eulogies and military exploits of Vairisimha recorded in the Kadmal plates.

It is likely that enmity with the Paramâras of Malwa continued into the late eleventh century. But by this period the Paramâras were a declining political power and Vairisimha's military exploits must have put an end to Paramâra ambitions in Mewar. A small Paramâra power which had ruled in Vagod (Dungarpur-Banswara districts) with its political centre at Arthuna (Banswara district) during the eleventh century does not seem to have existed in Vagod beyond 1100.5% Arthuna Inscriptions of Paramâra Camundarâja dated 1078 and 1080 seem to be the last of the Paramâra records in Vagod. Therefore, with fast changing political configurations in western and central India, the Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada entered into matrimonial relationship with the Paramâras of Malwa at this juncture. The Bheraghat Inscriptions of the Chedi dated 907 (AD 1155) mention that Guhila King Vijayasimha married Syamaladevi, the daughter of Paramara King Udayaditya of Malwa (AD 1060-87). This alliance seems to have been utilized as a joint front against the threatening ambitions of Caulukyan ruler Bhima I (AD 1022-64). The Bheraghat inscription also states that Syamaladevi was the mother of Alahanadevi, the queen of Kalacuri Gayâkarna of Dahala.

The early twelfth century witnessed a significant development for the Guhilas of Nâgdâ-Ahada. The Guhilas, for the first time in their history identified themselves as the sovereigns of the region of Mewar implying territorial integration, and hence, an important step towards regional state formation was taken. The Paldi Inscription of Guhila Arisimha (son of Vijayasimha) of 1116 proclaimed the king as the ruling prince of Medapata (Bhûpâle Medapâmahimâm)." Thus, the identification of the Guhila king with the king of Mewar is a proof of the claim of the Nâgdâ-



The acquisition of the ancient political landmark fortress of Chittaurgarh gave the legitimate status of regional statehood to the Guhila royal dynasty in the thirteenth century.

Prof. Nandini Kapur Sinha



AhadaGuhilas on the region of Medapāa at this point of time.

To be sure, there was a brief Caulukyan intrusion into Mewar and Vagod regions (districts of Dungarpur and Banswara in middle Mahi basin), as suggested by Kumarapala's Chittaurgarh Inscription of 1.150, Bhimadeva II's short inscriptional records of 1196,⁶¹ Ahada grant of 1207 from Gujarat and another record of Siddharaja Jayasimha from the last decade of the twelfth century. Yet, the Nāgdā-Ahada Guhilas came to command southern portion of the upper Banas plain in the late twelfth century." If Pratapgarh records prove that they held some territorial claims in the southern part of upper Banas plain in the mid tenth century, they seem to have integrated this territory into their state by the second half of the twelfth century as is evident from the Jagat Inscription of 1172 of Guhila Samantasimhadeva. It is significant that unlike the status of the Pratihāras in the tenth century in the upper Banas plain, the Guhilas in Jagat inscription figure as sovereigns on their own.

The thirteenth century witnessed the height of territorial expansion for the Guhilas. It was then that the traditional political landmark of Mewar, the fortress of Chittaur, was finally occupied by the Nagda Ahada Guhilas. A number of Guhila records were issued during the reign of Tejasimha from Chittaur." Jaitrasimha is eulogized in the Achalecvara Inscription of Samarasimha (his grandson) as the protector of the earth through the exploits of his arms and also as the destroyer of Nadola. He is also eulogized as occupant of a throne along with

the monarch of the gods, Indra. As to the age of Jaitrasimha, two inscriptions of AD 1213 (Pillar Inscription near Ekalingaji) and AD 1222 (Nadesama Village Inscription) refer to the reign of Guhila King Jaitrasimha, who is spoken as ruling from Nāgadraha." Thus from all the available evidences it seems that Jaitrasimha was possibly the first Guhila king who annexed the fortress of Chittaur briefly: whereby the political sovereignty of the Nāgdā-AhadaGuhilas all over Mewar was sealed. Chittaur was the ancient political landmark of Mewar. Chittaur which began its political career at Nagari, the capital of the Sibis, went on to be the political centre of ancient Mewar under the Aulikāras, the later Moris of eastern Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh. It is already noted that Chittaurgarh later came under the control of the Cahamānas, Pratihāras, Paramāras and Caulukyas, before passing into the hands of the Guhilas. The special mention of the rooting out of Nadula by Jaitrasimha implies the occupation of the Godwar region (Pali district) by the Guhilas. As noted, it is evident from the Kadmal plates that the Guhilas had established their sway over Godwar by the late eleventh century. But because of the rise of the Nadol Cāhamānas, the Guhilas had to reassert themselves again in Godwar in the thirteenth century. The occupation of Chittaur formally integrated greater part of upper Banas plain into the Guhila state. The end of the Imperial Cahamāna power in central Rajasthan (with the defeat of Prithviraja III at the battle of Tarrain in 1192) evidently facilitated the conquest of Chittaur. The Cahamana

occupation of Chittaur and the upper Banas plain in the late twelfth century is evident from Bijolia and Menal stone inscriptions (both in Bhilwara district) of 1168 and 1170 respectively of the reign of Prthviraja III." However, the Achalecvara Inscription of Samarasimha proves the sway of the Guhilas over the Mount Abu region (the inscription was issued from the temple of Achalecvara, Mount Abu) as well as much of Godwar, controlling routes to seaports of Gujarat by the late thirteenth century.

Thus the thirteenth century was a decisive period in the history of the state: Mewar finally came to have its own political identity as a regional state. The Guhila acquisition of Chittaurgarh extended their sovereignty over Vagod (districts of Dungarpur and Banswara) as well. The fifteenth century official claim that Jaitrasimha ruled over Citrakûta, Medapāa, Aghata and Vagod," reflects the actual political configuration of the region in the aftermath of the acquisition.

Thus in contrast to the Guhilas of Kīkindha and Dhavagartā (seventh eighth centuries), the Guhila royal family of Nagda-Ahada stands out as the effective sovereign of Mewar. It was the Nāgdā-Ahada family, of all the Guhila ruling families of Mewar and beyond, which successfully laid the foundation of a state structure."

Inevitably, there were further, new, and prestigious genealogical claims along with claims of sovereignty over Mewar. The Guhadatta legend of tenth-eleventh centuries was dropped from the records and instead the new legends of Bappaka Hāritarasi-Ekalinga-Medapata were adopted. □

Security clearance for Air India CEO designate Wilson only after background check



Union Home Ministry is vetting the application for granting security clearance to Air India MD & CEO designate Campbell Wilson, and the approval will be given once a thorough background check is completed, senior government officials reportedly said.

As per government rules, private companies require the home ministry's permission for the appointment of foreign nationals at key positions.

Tata Sons, which recently overtook the loss-making airline from the government of India, announced Wilson's appointment on May 12; however, Wilson is yet to formally take over the charge as the security clearance has not been given.

Until recently, Wilson was the CEO of Scoot Tigerair Pte Ltd, the budget airline of Singapore Airlines. He has 26 years of experience in the aviation industry spanning both full-service and low-cost carriers. Wilson, 50, started his career as a management trainee with SIA in New Zealand in 1996. He then worked for SIA in Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. He returned to Singapore Airlines as the founding CEO of Scoot in 2011, which he led until 2016.

In March 2022, Air India appointed Ilker Ayci, former chairman and board member of Turkish Airlines, who later rejected the offer citing negative media reports, which he said had tainted the appointment.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch called upon the government to block Ayci's appointment citing national security concerns. Ayci served as an advisor to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan when he was the mayor of Istanbul. Erdogan is a vocal India critic, known for regularly siding with Pakistan on international forums with respect to the Kashmir issue.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/business-economy/companies/security-clearance-for-air-india-co-designate-wilson-only-after-background-check-article-92939125>

SJM organises panel discussion on 'Entrepreneurship in Barak Valley'

Under the Swabalambi Bharat Abhiyaan Movement started by Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha (SJM) on pan-India basis to promote entrepreneurship, Cachar Zila Committee of SJM in collaboration with Assam University, Silchar (AUS) organised a discussion session in Assam University on the topic; "Entrepreneurship in Barak Valley – A step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat."

The session was chaired by Prof. GP Pandey, Dean Abanindranath Tagore School of Creative Arts & Communication Studies, Prof. Niranjan Roy, Department of Economics, Assam University, Dr. Pradosh Kiran Nath, Registrar AUS, Annada Shankar Panigrahi- Akhil Bharatiya Sangharsh Vahini Promukh, Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha, Santanu Sutradhar, State Co-Convenor Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha, Binoy Paul, Sanjojok, Hailakandi, Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha, Debotosh Chakraborty, Associate Professor, AUS. The session was moderated by Dr. Joydeep Goswami.



In the opening speech, Debotosh Chakraborty welcomed the guests and briefed about the initiative of Swabalambi Bharat Abhiyaan. The keynote speaker, Prof. Niranjan Roy elaborately put forward the economic condition of Barak Valley and emphasized upon the need for utilizing the resources of our valley and develop entrepreneurship in relevant sectors to generate employment opportunities. He highlighted the examples of many entrepreneurs of Barak Valley along with the success story of Santanu Sutradhar, exporter of handicrafts of Barak valley. He insisted the youths to take up entrepreneurship and open the employment opportunities for the unemployed youths of this valley.

Annada Shankar Panigrahi in his speech elaborately explained about the strength of 37 crores youth of

India who has the capability to take forward the nation to Atmanirbharata. The need for developing entrepreneurship and changing the mindset of being job seekers to Job Providers. He narrated many success stories of renowned entrepreneurs which are the source of inspiration for the youths who aspire to become entrepreneur. He appealed to the educational institutions of Barak Valley to hold awareness programmes encouraging entrepreneurship among the students.

SantanuSutradhar, a successful exporter of handicrafts and State Co-Convenor of SJM in his speech highlighted the need for the change in the mindset of our society which is only job centric and right from the primary school a child is inspired to become doctor, engineer or a govt employee. This trend has to change and the entrepreneurs should get due recognition in the society. The role of Institutions can play a pivotal role in this regard and motivate the youth to become job providers, rather than job seekers. He also highlighted the immense potential which exists in Barak Valley in terms of traditional crafts which could be materialized to generate mass employment.

Prof. DP Pandey in his speech appraised about the need for entrepreneurship in India to become Vishwa Guru as India has the best skills and technical resources among the youths. He expressed his thanks to SJM for the movement. Two educated successful entrepreneurs, namely, Saikat Paul Choudhry and Digbijoy Mandal who has set up an organic modern Poly-house in Udharbond and produced 600 Kgs of Cucumber and bell pepper was felicitated in the programme from Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha. The vote of thanks was delivered by SantanuSutradhar.

It needs mention here that Swadeshi Jagaran Mancha has been conducting awareness programme in Atmanirbhar Bharat and Entrepreneurship in Barak Valley Since 2020. SJM in collaboration with AUS is going to organise an Entrepreneurship Encouragement Seminar in Assam University on 24 August, 2022 and also an Intellectual Meet the same day in Silchar, where many entrepreneurs of Barak Valley would be felicitated.

<https://way2barak.com/swadeshi-jagaran-mancha-assam-university-organises-panel-discussion-on-entrepreneurship-in-barak-valley/>

Bangladesh Seeking IMF Bailout

Bangladesh is seeking a loan from the International Monetary Fund, becoming the latest South Asian nation to ask for assistance as costlier oil eats into the region's foreign-exchange stockpiles.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has written to the multilateral lender with its request, an IMF spokesperson said in response to emailed queries. The Daily Star newspaper, which reported the development earlier, said Bangladesh wants \$4.5 billion from the IMF.



"The IMF stands ready to support Bangladesh, and the staff will engage with the authorities on program design," the multilateral agency said after its staff visited the country.

Foreign exchange reserves in Bangladesh slipped to \$39.79 billion as of July 13 from \$45.33 billion a year earlier. That's enough to cover roughly four months of imports, slightly higher than the IMF's recommended three-month cover.

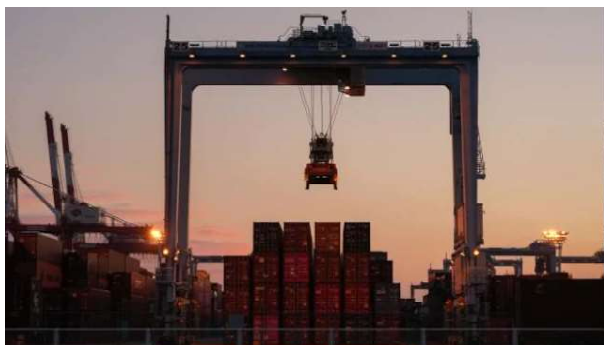
Calls to Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal remained unanswered.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-26/bangladesh-is-said-to-seek-imf-bailout-as-its-fx-reserves-fall#story7r2kg>

Neighbours, Russia can help convert 16.38% of India's trade into rupees

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced a mechanism to settle international payments in rupee. India could convert 16.38 per cent of its total trade from US dollars into rupees if its neighbours (excluding Pakistan) and Russia, which is under Western sanctions, follow the central bank's policy, according to analysis of Ministry of Commerce's data. India's total trade volume with the world stood at Rs 77.15 trillion in FY22.

Rupee's use in trade settlement would help the RBI in conserving foreign exchange. India's forex reserves have fallen by more than Rs 1 trillion since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in February. According to RBI's latest figures, it stood at Rs 46.43 trillion as compared to Rs 47.52 trillion in February.



The rupee fell to a record low on Tuesday as declines in the domestic share market and weakness in other Asian currencies on fears of a global recession weighed on the unit despite recent measures by the central bank to boost dollar inflows.

Rupee settlement would allow India to bypass the orders preventing the use of the US dollar for trade, like in case of sanctions imposed by western countries in Russia. The total trade between India and Russia was Rs 0.98 trillion in FY22, less than 1 per cent of India's total global trade. That trade has gone up significantly after March when Russia started selling oil to India at discount.

Before the war, Russia made up just 0.2 per cent of the total oil imported by India, according to official data. By May, this had jumped to 10 per cent, making Russia India's second biggest oil supplier. India imported 25 million barrels of Russian oil in May.

The share of neighbouring countries, in India's total trade volume in FY22 stood at 15.11 per cent, according to Ministry of Commerce data. Goods worth Rs 11.66 trillion were traded between India and these countries namely China, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Maldives (Pakistan excluded). China was India's biggest trading partner among these countries in FY22, accounting for over half of the figure at Rs 8.6 trillion.

Sri Lanka's tottering economy could gain if it trades with its giant neighbour in Indian rupees. The Indian government has extended credit lines worth over \$3 billion for fuel, fertilisers and other essential supplies to help Sri Lanka stay afloat.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/neighbors-russia-can-help-convert-16-38-of-india-s-trade-into-rupees-122071200484_1.html

God save EC if it can't stop poll freebies: SC

May God save the Election Commission of India (ECI) if it can only wring its hands when elector-

ates are sought to be bribed through freebies, the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday, as it sought to know from the Finance Commission if revenue allocation to states can take into account unnecessary expenditures on hand outs.

The top court found itself constrained to seek the help of the Finance Commission after ECI said that it cannot regulate promises of freebies even as the Union government assigned the responsibility to ECI for taking all possible steps under the existing legal regime.

Terming unrealistic poll promises and freebies a "serious" problem, a bench, headed by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana, said that the contentious practice has to be controlled and that the court will, therefore, seek the views of the Finance Commission if something can be done in this regard.

"God save the Election Commission of India if it's saying that we can't do anything when the electorates are sought to be bribed through freebies...We are suggesting that this (freebies) has to be controlled. How it is going to be done needs to be examined," said the bench, which also included justices Krishna Murari and HimaKohli.

The court's remarks on ECI came after the statutory body took the position that it cannot regulate distribution of freebies and that it is for the voters to decide whether they should elect leaders even if such hand-outs could harm the economic health of a state.

ECI's affidavit was submitted in April in response to a public interest litigation by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, who sought a direction for issuance of stringent guidelines to deregister errant political parties and seize their election symbols for offering "irrational freebies" ahead of polls.

On July 16, while speaking at an event in Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hit out at the culture of freebies.

"The 'revadi culture' is very dangerous for the development of the country," Modi said, calling on people to not fall for this culture.

The Prime Minister used the term 'revadi', a popular north Indian sweet often distributed during festivals, as a metaphor for freebies being promised by various parties to grab power.

"Those behind this 'revadi culture' do not believe in building expressways, airports and defence corridors. Together we have to defeat this thinking and remove this culture from politics," he added.



Earlier this week, in response to the PM's comments, his Bharatiya Janata Party asked state unite to refrain from offering freebies during elections.

In April, a team of senior bureaucrats warned PM Modi during a review that the culture of freebies could bankrupt state exchequers.

When Upadhyay's PIL was taken up on Tuesday, advocate Amit Sharma, appearing for ECI, informed the bench that their affidavit has culled out relevant regulations and cases on issuance of manifestos by the political parties and various advisories have also been issued. At the same time, Sharma said that there is not much that EC can do to control distribution of freebies by a winning party nor can it seize election symbols under the existing laws.

At this point, the bench expressed its dismay at ECI's stand and proceeded to enquire from the Union government about the latter's views.

Additional solicitor general KM Nataraj, representing the Centre, said the onus was on ECI. "There cannot be a general direction in matters like these. This will have to be done on a case-by-case basis and the Election Commission will have to decide it," argued the law officer.

Irked that the central government has not submitted any formal reply to convey its stand on the issue although the notice was issued in January this year, the bench told Nataraj: "Why have you not said this on an affidavit if this is your stand? Should we record your stand that you don't have any problem if the Election Commission does this? Why don't you take a stand? First of all, tell us whether it's a serious issue or not."

Responding, the ASG admitted that it is a serious issue. "Then why don't you take a categorical stand and then we can decide whether freebies can continue or not," replied the bench.

Upadhyay, on his part, argued that ECI can insert an additional condition in the electoral laws and

rules that a party may lose its registration and election symbol for making irrational promises of freebies.

But the bench told the lawyer-petitioner that it may not be possible to stop political parties from making poll promises and that the issue of what is a reasonable promise and what is not would also crop up in such cases.

Drawing a parallel with Sri Lanka which is in the middle of a severe political and economic crisis, Upadhyay added that India could be soon on its way to becoming Sri Lanka if freebies were not controlled.

To this, the bench said: "How? The government of India will control it here. It's not that any state can take loan without prior approvals of RBI and the government of India. There are limits on allocations of loans. Don't worry!"

The bench, at this juncture, spotted senior advocate and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal present in the court, and decided to elicit his views on a possible solution.

Sibal said: "It's a serious matter. The solution is very difficult but the problem is very serious. You cannot expect the government of India to issue direction because that will create political issues. One way to explore a possible solution is to involve the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission, when it makes its allocation to the states from the total taxes, can take into account whether such allocations can take into account the money spent on unnecessary freebies."

Accepting Sibal's suggestion, the bench asked ASG Nataraj to enquire from the Finance Commission if a discussion on the subject and possible modalities can be initiated and revert in a week. Fixing the hearing on Wednesday next week, the court directed the Centre to come back with clear instructions on the issue.

On January 25, the bench asked for explanations from the Centre and ECI on steps taken by them since the court's 2013 judgment to regulate electoral promises and distribution of freebies by political parties using public funds.

"This is no doubt a serious issue. Budget for freebies is going above the regular budget. As the Supreme Court said before, this disturbs the level playing field," the bench observed then.

The 2013 judgment of the Supreme Court in *S Subramaniam Balajis Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors* delved on the issues of election manifestos

and freebies. In this judgment, the top court said that distribution of freebies of any kind, undoubtedly, influences all people.

“It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree. The Election Commission through its counsel also conveyed the same feeling both in the affidavit and in the argument that the promise of such freebies at government cost disturbs the level playing field and vitiates the electoral process and thereby expressed willingness to implement any directions or decision of this Court in this regard,” the 2013 judgment held.

In response to the court’s move, ECI filed its affidavit in April, expressing its inability to impose restrictions on electoral promises and freebies. ECI said that it can neither stop the political parties from making promises of freebies nor act against them in absence of a law to de-register political parties for making any unreasonable promises to the voters.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/god-save-ec-if-it-can-stop-poll-freebies-sc-101658859377844.html>

Oppo has canceled its live phone launch in India, demanding a boycott of Chinese products

China’s Oppo dropped the live online dispatch of its lead cell phone in India on Wednesday after a fringe conflict between the two nations that has re-charged calls from neighborhood Indian dealer gatherings to evade Chinese items.

Warriors from India and China battled each other with nail-studded clubs and stones on a contested Himalayan mountain wilderness this week, prompting the passing of 20 Indian officers in the most noticeably awful conflict since 1967.

The conflicts chance souring assumption for huge Chinese financial specialists who were looking at the Indian market and right now confronted pressure as hostile to China feeling putrefied during the coronavirus episode.

Chinese firms, for example, Great Wall, SAIC and Bytedance have put down significant wagers on India, where financial specialists like Alibaba additionally finance numerous new businesses. Chinese cell phone brands, including Oppo and Xiaomi, represent eight of each 10 cell phones sold in India.

Oppo, which has a telephone get together plant in India, had prior reported a ‘live revealing’ of its



new Find X2 cell phone models would be hung on Wednesday, however a YouTube interface that needed to go live at 4 p.m. nearby time was not accessible for survey.

To dispatch the telephone, the organization rather transferred a 20-minute, pre-recorded video which incorporated a concise feature of Oppo’s endeavors to help Indian experts in forestalling the spread of coronavirus.

Indeed, even before the outskirts conflicts, New Delhi in April changed its outside speculation strategy for neighboring nations, a move that resentful Chinese speculators as the Indian government presently screens every approaching venture from that point.

“The current government will get down to business. I don’t figure any new endorsements for China proposition will occur in a rush,” said Abhishek Saxena, prime supporter of Indian law office Phoenix Legal that prompts Chinese customers.

The Confederation of All India Traders, a gathering speaking to around 70 million physical retailers, said on Wednesday its individuals will blacklist imported Chinese merchandise regardless of the misfortune their organizations will endure.

A Twitter client, UzairHasanRizvi, transferred a video that gave a few people tossing a ‘Chinese TV’ from a high-story working in Gujarat state and afterward moving on it before destroying it. Reuters couldn’t freely affirm when the video was made.

Hindu patriot bunch Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which advocates for independence, encouraged Indian specialists to restrict Chinese organizations from taking part in government tenders.

Police captured a few individuals from the gathering who fought close to the Chinese international safe haven in New Delhi and recited trademarks, for example, ‘Made in China down’.

□□

<https://theprimetime.in/oppo-has-canceled-its-live-phone-launch-in-india-demanding-a-boycott-of-chinese-products/>

Swadeshi Activities

Entrepreneurship Encouragement Conferences

(उद्यमिता प्रोत्साहन सम्मेलन)

Pictorial Glimpses



Shahadra, Delhi



Damoh, Mahakaushal



Madhura, UP



Paschim Vibhag, Delhi



Cachar, Assam



Azamgarh, U.P.



Ratalam, Malva



Agartala, Tripura



Moradabad, UP

51065/2022/PR-HO



CENTRAL POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE

Website : cpcb.nic.in

KEY THRUST AREAS AND R&D ACTIVITIES

Air Quality Monitoring at 818 operating stations in 352 cities/towns in 29 states and 6 Union Territories of the Country;

Network of 4294 Water Quality Monitoring locations on Aquatic Resources;

70 Noise Monitoring Stations in 7 metro cities;

Development of Standards for all categories of industries;

Revisiting/Revised Standards to cover star rating;

Co-Processing of Hazardous Waste and Plastic Waste as Fuel in Cement Kiln;

Performance Evaluation of STPs and CETPs;

Municipal Solid Waste: Its Complete Recycling and Biotransformation of Compostable Waste;

38 Clusters out of 100 identified as critically polluted based on CEPI score.

Action plans prepared and being implemented;

Preparation of Action Plan for non Attainment Cities and polluted river stretches;

Providing technical assistance and guidance to the State Boards;

Established in-house State-of-Art

Published more than 250 publications;

Odour Measurement and Control;

In-situ sewage treatment for drains and application of bacterio-phages;

Remediation of contaminated sites initiated for eight sites;

Development of National Air Quality Index;

Real Time Monitoring of Emission and Effluent;

Implementation of Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) for industrial sectors.

A CLEAN PARIVESH FOR ALL IS OUR GOAL