

Swadeshi

PATRIKA

December 2024



Kumbh Mela

Not Merely Religious, An Economic Festival Too

Swadeshi Activities

Prant Sammelans & Meeting

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Tripura Meeting



Avadh Prant Sammelan

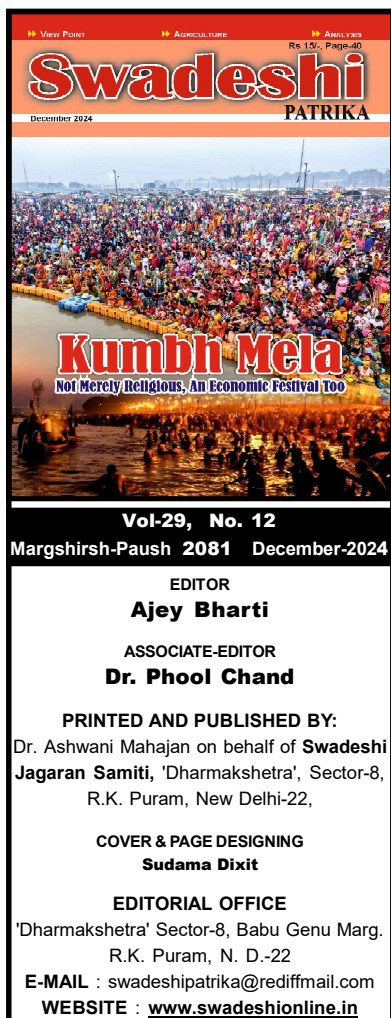


Ludhiana Meeting



Nainital Meeting





LETTERS

3

NEWS

36-38



CONTENTS

COVER STORY

6

Kumbh Mela: An Economic Festival

Dr. Jaya Sharma



1	Cover Page
2.	Cover Inside Page
09	ECONOMY
	RBI & CSO Need to Correct their Methodologies on Household Savings Dr. Ashwani Mahajan
11	OPINION
	The Slowdown: Challenges and Remedies KK Srivastava
14	DISCUSSION ISSUE
	XVI BRICS Summit and de-Dollarisation Prof. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal
16	SCRUTINY
	After Georgia, Romania turns against globalists Sandhya Jain
18	FARMING
	'Ease of Doing Farming' Is The Best Bet To Save Farmers From Future Misery Devinder Sharma
20	ANALYSIS
	What Does Our Govt. Need To Fulfil Its Natural Farming Mission? Indra Shekhar Singh
22	POWER
	Economics of Soft Power Alok Singh
24	ANALYSIS
	Story of Centurion RSS : "Sangh" thy name itself, is enough Mahadevayya Karadalli
26	VIEW POINT
	Trump tariffs and the making of a trade war Biswajit Dhar
28	INITIATIVE
	Kashmir - The Cultural Crossroads - 1 Vinod Johri
31	HISTORY
	Matallurgy in Ancient India Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur
39	Back Inside Cover
40	Back Cover



TFR Debate

Concerns about India's declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR) are being discussed while the nation is also harvesting its once-in-many-many-century demographic dividend. Trending factors like women's increasing workforce participation and the rising costs of raising children are cultural attacks that have impacted TFR. The Western world is struggling with TFR, and the strong reason is a change in perception about family and feminism. Feminism is about women's rights, interests, choices, etc.

Seventy-five years ago, we were 35 crores; today, we are 140 crores with more than 37 crore youths. The aggregate and disaggregate data of TFR within the country need a separate study. The nationwide TFR is below the replacement rate, but it behaves differently region-wise and community-wise.

The rising cost of child-rearing is a significant factor affecting family size decisions. Other factors include inflation, urbanization, and changing lifestyles. Addressing these economic concerns is crucial to supporting families and encouraging responsible population growth.

The Western world, whether government, corporations, or social activists, is discussing and implementing ways to address the diminishing TFR. Policymakers must address these challenges through a combination of approaches, including improving access to education and healthcare, promoting gender equality, and implementing social safety nets to support families. This requires a balanced approach that recognizes both the benefits of women's empowerment and the need to ensure sustainable population growth.

Our situation is not worse or even worse. Still, the signals from the West are a warning to save our definitions of feminism, family, and nation. The onus lies more on society than on the government.

— Vijeet Kumar, *Delhi*

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

IFSC: BKID 0006025 (Ramakrishnapuram)

Annual Subscription : 150/-

Life Membership : 1500/-

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Quote-Unquote



Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's personality and work will continue to be an inspiration for the citizens for the unity, integrity of the nation and the achievement of the resolution of a developed India.

Narendra Modi, PM, Bharat



Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world, and India is at the forefront of tackling this challenge.

Om Birla, Speaker, Lok Sabha, Bharat



We have to adopt technology like electric mobility, biofuels, multimodal transport options to bring down overall carbon impact and make sustainability the core of our thinking.

Piyush Goyal, Industry Minister, Bharat



We need to come clear that today the problem faced by the Indian economy is to maintain its population so that our development efforts don't face any hurdle. We must understand that if we fail to rise to the occasion, it may cause a dangerous imbalance in the population in the form of raising the dependency burden, slowing down our growth.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-convenor, SJM

Time for Selective Increase in Import Tariffs

Today when the trade deficit with China has reached an unbearable level of \$85 billion, which is also affecting our industry and employment, we need to make efforts aimed at reducing this deficit. First, when in the 2018-19 budget, it was decided to increase the import duty on electronics and telecom products from 10% to 20% under the 'Make in India' policy of Prime Minister Modi, and then in the same year, it was decided to increase the import duty on textiles and apparel and then on other non-essential imports from 10% to 20%. As a result, the trade deficit with China in the year 2018-19 was reduced to only \$53.6 billion, whereas it was \$63 billion in 2017-18. This was not the first time, we got the benefit of higher tariffs. The automobile sector, which contributes nearly 50 percent to the total manufacturing in the country, could grow only due to high tariffs. In India, automobile products attract a tariff of 100 percent for cars worth more than USD 40 thousand and 60 percent for cars worth less than USD 40 thousand. Today, India is a global leader in automobiles, especially cars and many Indian and foreign companies are manufacturing cars and other automobiles in the country and also exporting them huge quantities; and more than 45 lakh vehicles were exported from India in 2023-24.

Historically, if we see, in India average weighted tariff was nearly 24 percent in the year 2004, prior to UPA taking over the reign of power. But tariffs were reduced dramatically, and average weighted tariff was reduced to hardly 6 percent by the year 2006. This caused havoc to our manufacturing and increased our dependence on imports manifold. The important point here is that advocates of lower tariffs believe in Ricardo and other classical economists who argued for free trade to maximize the welfare of the people. But we need to understand that extremely low tariffs impede the creation of manufacturing capacity; and thus increase our dependence on imports, further reducing the possibilities of increasing domestic production. As a result, a vicious circle of ever-increasing dependence on imports is created.

We, must also understand that, as per Ricardo, theory of free trade works under the assumptions of full mobility of products, total immobility of factors of production and stationary state economy; none of which is fulfilled in present day world. Advantage of free trade, is only when others also follow free and fair trade, but if some country is breaking rules by dumping; or are raising tariffs walls, other country/ countries can't continue with the stance of free trade. Today, many countries including USA are raising tariffs walls, in the name of protecting their industries; as a result, our country can't remain open as before. If we see, there has been an unprecedented hike in import from different parts of the world; especially China. Major component for this hike in imports, is huge imports of intermediate products, especially from China, for domestic industry. A part of the produce made by these imported intermediates is exported; however, a major portion of the same is absorbed in the domestic market. Interestingly, since 2020 when Aatmanirbhar Bharat policy was announced by the government of India, import of these intermediate products have increased manifold. Notably in this Aatmanirbhar Bharat policy, several sectors have been identified. Production is supposed to be encouraged in these sectors. These include active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), electronics, telecommunications, toys, solar equipment, semiconductors, textiles, chemicals, etc. For encouraging production in these sectors, a special production linked incentives (PLIs) scheme has been rolled out in which the government has earmarked more than three lakh crores of rupees. But despite PLI scheme; and efforts towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat, we don't see much reduction in imports of intermediates. We also find a significant amount of domestic investment occurring in these sectors, however dumping by China has affected the success of PLI schemes. Moreover, user industries of these intermediates have been clamoring for further reduction in the import duties on these intermediate products to keep their production going, in the name of efficiency and global competitiveness. But if we continue to reduce tariffs on these intermediate products, we may continue to depend on Chinese imports.

On the other hand, those who are investing in chemical, APIs, electronics, telecom components industries, want protection from Chinese dumping and other unethical practices, by raising tariffs. Investors' main apprehension is that, if Chinese dumping is not stopped, their industry will face closure once again. Therefore, we can say that in view of the huge support given by government in the form of PLI, these industries need great degree of protection from Chinese dumping. On January 20, 2024, Donald Trump, will be sworn in as President of the United States for the second time. His persistent warnings of imposing tariffs on various countries may provoke retaliatory tariffs from other nations. As we are aware, US has the advantage, that it can impose country specific tariffs, which other countries can't. While retaliating against US tariffs hike, countries will have to raise tariffs against all their trade partners. In such a case, those partners will also be forced to increase import duty; so India cannot remain untouched by this import duty competition. Further, the argument of cheap imports to benefit consumers is a short-lived phenomenon; as with increased dependence on Chinese imports, would lead to exploitation by Chinese. For example, in case of APIs, as country's dependence on Chinese API was increased, China started exploiting Indian companies by increasing the prices of APIs manifold. If we so decide to raise tariffs on our trade partners, a major problem may arise, due to existence of FTAs with many countries, under which we are committed to allow majority imports at zero or very low tariff. In such a case, China or other countries on whom tariffs have been imposed, may try to route their exports through these countries, with whom we have FTAs. We will have to extremely vigilant and impose strict rules of origin restrictions.

Kumbh Mela: An Economic Festival

India, one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, owes much of its momentum to its rich cultural heritage and timeless traditions. Among these, festivals holds a special place—not just as celebrations of faith but as significant drivers of economic growth. A shining example of this is the Kumbh Mela, a festival that combines both spiritual grandeur and economic impact. UNESCO has recognized it as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Kumbh Mela is held in two main cycles: every 12 years (Purna Kumbh) and 6 years (Ardh Kumbh) and are among the largest human gatherings on Earth. These grand events take place at four sacred sites—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik—drawing millions of devotees, ascetics, and tourists from around the world. These gatherings transform the host cities into vibrant hubs of spirituality, commerce, and cultural exchange, showcasing India's ability to harmonize faith with modernity.

The Kumbh Melas not only a spiritual confluence but also an extraordinary economic phenomenon. This grand event, significantly contributes to the Indian economy by generating employment, boosting tourism, and promoting local industries.

Major Beneficiary Sectors - Tourism and Hospitality

The influx of millions of pilgrims, tourists, and international visitors during the Kumbh Mela creates a massive surge in demand for hospitality services. Hotels, lodges, guest houses, and homestays operate at full capacity, while temporary accommodations set up by local authorities and private players also thrive. The Kumbh Mela not only benefits the host city but also provides significant economic advantages to the neighboring states, as they too experience a surge in related activities.



The festival not only brings together millions of devotees and visitors from across the world but also fosters job creation, boosts local economies, and enhances India's global stature.
Jaya Sharma



Neighboring states benefit significantly from the Kumbh Mela through increased tourism and hospitality demand. Tourists attending the event often extend their trips to explore nearby states like Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh, boosting the local tourism sector. With the host city's accommodation capacity often overwhelmed, visitors seek lodging in surrounding areas, driving revenue for hotels and guesthouses. The transportation sector in these states also experiences heightened activity, as increased travel through airports, railways, and highways generates substantial income.

In Prayagraj, the 2019 Kumbh Mela attracted over 240 million visitors, contributing billions of rupees to the state's economy. Transportation services, including airlines, railways, and local taxis, experienced significant growth, creating a ripple effect across related industries.

The hospitality sector is set to experience a significant boost during the Kumbh Mela. Reports suggest that over 2,000 luxury tents and 25,000 public accommodations will be established in the area. Several hotels in Prayagraj and its vicinity, along with registered homestays, will cater to the influx of visitors. Accommodation costs range from Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 25,000 per night, depending on the amenities offered, contributing to an overall business turnover estimated between Rs. 1,500 and Rs. 2,000 crore during the event.

On the infrastructure front, preparations include the installation of approximately 70,000 additional streetlights to facilitate movement between the river and accommoda-



tion sites. Security will be bolstered with around 23,000 CCTV cameras, creating opportunities for suppliers of such services and products. Transport arrangements are also extensive, with over 7,000 roadways buses, 550 shuttle buses, and 3,000 trains operational during the festival. While most vehicles are likely to be rented rather than purchased, the hiring costs alone are expected to amount to around Rs. 500 crore over the 45-day event. The railways, too, will generate substantial revenue from the movement of pilgrims and visitors.

How Kumbh Mela Boost Local Economy?

The Kumbh Mela is a significant driver of economic growth with far-reaching impacts on local and national economies. It creates a ripple effect across multiple sectors, which fuels economic activity, generate employment, and drive infrastructural development.

At Kumbh Mela, the influx of millions of devotees and tourists generates massive demand for goods and services which benefits local merchants, artisans, and entrepreneurs. Sectors like hospitality, transportation, food services, and retail experience a significant boom during the festival. It also

In Prayagraj, the 2019 Kumbh Mela attracted over 240 million visitors, contributing billions of rupees to the state's economy. Transportation services, including airlines, railways, and local taxis, experienced significant growth, creating a ripple effect across related industries.

boosts economic activities in the unorganized sectors such as rickshaw, boat services, etc. thereby increasing local employment and income.

The **Kumbh Mela** also serves as a major source of employment for the local population. Many temporary jobs are created in critical areas such as security, sanitation, healthcare, and event management. These roles not only provide income but also valuable work experience for the locals. Indirect employment opportunities in sectors like catering, logistics, and transport services further enhance the festival's economic footprint, and create a robust support sys-

tem to meet the demands of the event.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) projects that the recent Kumbh Mela will generate ¹ 1.2 lakh crore for Uttar Pradesh, creating over six lakh jobs across sectors such as hospitality (2.5 lakh jobs), aviation (1.5 lakh jobs), and tourism. It also offers a significant boost to eco-tourism, medical tourism, and the unorganized sector, including guides and taxi drivers. The economic ripple effect extends to nearby cities like Ayodhya and Varanasi, supported by key developments such as the KashiVishwanath Corridor and Ram Mandir.

The employment impact extends beyond the event's duration, as the planning and execution of the Kumbh Mela span several months, involving government agencies, private contractors, and NGOs. This large-scale mobilization ensures livelihood opportunities for a wide section of the population.

Impact on National Economy

The Kumbh Mela has significant implications for the national economy as well. The festival attracts a substantial number of foreign tourists, who bring in valuable foreign exchange. In 2019, for instance, over 24 crore people attended the Kumbh Mela held in Haridwar and Prayagraj, including more than one million international visitors. These foreign tourists contribute to India's foreign exchange reserves while fueling demand for accommodations, transport, and other services, creating widespread economic benefits.

The tourism surge during the festival generates revenue in the thousands of crores, benefiting businesses of all sizes—from lux-

The Kumbh Mela, beyond its spiritual and cultural significance, plays a vital role in promoting economic growth, social unity, and national pride.

ury hotels and airlines to local vendors and artisans. This increased activity not only supports private enterprises but also significantly enhances government tax collections through GST on goods and services, tourism fees, and permits.

Lasting Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development ahead of the Kumbh Mela also amplifies its economic benefits. Investments in roads, railways, sanitation, and public amenities not only ensure the smooth functioning of the festival but also leave behind lasting improvements for the host cities. These upgrades enhance connectivity and urban facilities, attracting future tourism and supporting long-term economic growth. For instance, improved roads and transportation systems make cities like Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik more accessible, increasing their potential to draw tourists even after the event concludes.

Religious Significance of the Kumbh Mela

The Kumbh Mela holds immense religious significance, deeply rooted in sacred texts and ancient traditions. The history of the Kumbh Mela dates back millions

of years and is mentioned in many ancient religious scriptures. Its story is tied to Samudra-Manthan. According to the story, four drops of amritfell at four locations on Earth—Haridwar, Ujjain, Nasik, and Prayagraj. It is at these sites that the Kumbh Mela is held. The festival is organized at these four locations during different intervals, lasting from one to three months and occurring around three key dates. The largest crowd gathers during the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela, followed by the second largest crowd at Haridwar.

The timing and location of the Kumbh Mela are based on astrological calculations (positions of planets and stars). Special attention is paid to the positioning of Jupiter, Sun, and Moon. These celestial alignments not only govern the timing of the festival but also hold spiritual significance, making each event a deeply meaningful occasion for millions of devotees.

The Kumbh Mela, beyond its spiritual and cultural significance, plays a vital role in promoting economic growth, social unity, and national pride. Rooted in ancient traditions and celestial alignments, this grand gathering reflects the rich heritage of India while driving economic prosperity across various sectors, from tourism to infrastructure development. The festival not only brings together millions of devotees and visitors from across the world but also fosters job creation, boosts local economies, and enhances India's global stature. With its unique blend of tradition, faith, and economic impact, the Kumbh Mela continues to be a testament to India's enduring legacy and its ability to harmonize spirituality with modern-day progress. □□

RBI and CSO Need to Correct their Methodologies on Household Savings

Traditionally, households save their earnings in two forms- financial assets and physical assets. The savings of households, who are traditionally considered to be surplus spenders, constitute a large part of gross domestic savings that finance investments by firms and also the government spending (both consumption and capital spending). In 1971, the households had contributed Rs. 4634 crore of savings out of Rs. 6649 crore of gross domestic savings (that is, nearly 70 percent). In the same year, out of Rs 4634 crore of household savings, households saved Rs 1371 crores (29.5 percent) in the form of financial assets and Rs 3263 crore (70.41 percent) in physical assets. However, in 2022-23, households contributed Rs 652 0404 crore of savings out of Rs 815 0008 crore gross domestic savings, which was 80 percent. Out of Rs 6520404 crore of household savings, 45 percent and 53 percent were saved in the form of financial assets and physical assets respectively.

We find that between 1971 and 2022, there had been a multifold increase in household savings. In proportionate terms also, it increased from 70 percent in 1971 to 80 percent of gross domestic savings in 2022. There had been an increase of around 10 percentage points.

Besides, the increase in households' savings, the households have started to channelize their savings away from traditional form of assets, into various other forms, and have started investing a large chunk of their savings in varied types of financial assets, including bank deposits, shares and debentures, private and government bonds etc and their several types.



RBI has recently published data on household savings; and has reported that net household savings as a percent of GDP are at their lowest level in nearly 50 years.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

Borrowing for Building Assets

RBI has recently published data on household savings; and has reported that net household savings as a percent of GDP are at their lowest level in nearly 50 years. Some analysts have concluded that while gross savings remained steady, mounting loans have caused decline in net savings, leaving families with lesser disposables incomes. As per the data, financial liabilities of households increased from Rs 737350 in 2020-21 to Rs 1557190 by 2022-23 (an increase by Rs 819840). However, this startling hike in financial liabilities is clearly explained by increase in physical assets of the household, which have increased unprecedentedly from Rs 2135450 to Rs 3483370 between 2020-21 and 2022-23 (an increase by Rs 1347920). This means, that households have built assets worth Rs 13.5 lakh more, as compared to last year and their borrowings have increased by only Rs 8.2 lakh crores.

Therefore, increase in financial liabilities cannot be considered to be an adverse phenomenon, if they have helped households to build more physical assets, say houses, cars and other consumer durables. Phenomenal creation of assets by households is definitely a good news, and certainly not a bad news, for the economy; and therefore assuming that households have gone into debt; and decline in net financial saving is in any way an alarm bell, for rise in debt burden on households, is not a wise conclusion.

Not only this there is a systemic under-estimation of gross financial savings of the household, explained in subsequent sections.

Why CSO's Data on Households' Financial Saving is Not Correct?

The national accounts statistics fails to correctly capture the financial investments done by the Indian households. The Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has published a working paper on the September 4, 2024 titled as 'Household Savings through Indian Securities Markets', where it had questioned the RBI methodology, used for computing the households' financial savings.

As per the SEBI report, the existing methodology of the RBI accounts for only 35 percent of the investment in primary equity market, 40 percent in primary debt market net inflow in mutual fund while computing the flow of households' savings. Whereas, to compute the stock of households' savings, the RBI counts the Assets Under Management (AMU) data for the High Net-worth Individuals (HNIs). However, the RBI doesn't account the flow and stock of households' funds into preferential issuance, sales executed through stock exchange platform, private placement of debt, mutual debt securities, securitized debt instruments and special rights shares (SRs), real estate investment trusts (REITs), infrastructure investment trusts (InfITs), resources mobilized in secondary market, holding of equity & debt, etc.

Moreover, even in the SEBI report, there is no mention about the Indian investment in the new financial assets, which is cryptocurrencies. It's notable that around 20 per cent of the Indians have invested in cryp-

tocurrencies. Though, cryptocurrencies even pose threat to the effectiveness of monetary policy, however flow of funds to cryptocurrencies cannot be ignored while estimating household savings and therefore gross domestic savings.

If we re-estimate the Indian households' savings based on the data provided by the RBI and methodologies suggested by the SEBI, we get an altogether different figures for household savings. Here we compare two scenarios, one RBI's estimates of household savings and two, household savings after taking into consideration financial saving using SEBI's methodology. When we add-up the flows of households' savings under the categories of mutual funds, equity, corporate debt, REITs, InfITs as estimated by using the RBI's methodologies, we get a figure of Rs 106850 crore in 2020-21, Rs 213850 crore in 2021-22, and Rs 2057950 crore in 2022-23. However, for the same categories, (individually figures were estimated by the SEBI), we get the figures of Rs 68210 crore in 2020-21, Rs 352031 crore in 2021-22, and Rs 289475 crore in 2022-23.

The total discrepancies (difference between the SEBI estimate and the RBI estimate) of the households' savings for the consequent years are (-)38640 crore, 138181 crore in 2021-22, and 83680 crore in 2022-23 respectively.

The gross financial savings as reported by the RBI for the years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 were 3067021 crore, 2611974 crore in 2021-22, and 2973637 crore in 2022-23 respectively. Now, after taking account, the above discrepancies, the gross financial savings of the Indian households' were Rs 3028381 crore in 2020-

21, Rs 2750155 crore in 2021-22, and Rs 3057317 crore in 2022-23. Hence, it gives a more appropriate estimation of the gross financial savings that capture the changes in pattern of savings.

Corrections Needed?

Thus, from the above exercise, we make three points. First, The rise of financial liabilities, is also due to greater borrowing for building physical assets. It's notable that with increased incomes, middle class has acquired higher capacity to borrow for the purpose of building physical assets, namely, houses, cars, and other consumer durables. Taking account of 'gross' financial is the right way to estimate the savings generated by the households- not 'net', after subtracting financial liabilities.

Second, there is an underestimation of financial savings by the RBI, which has failed to take account of changing savings pattern of households, namely investment in shares and debt instruments is not fully captured in RBI estimates. to overcome the problem of underestimation of financial saving, RBI needs to adopt methodology as suggested by SEBI. We need to understand that Indian households have not only built more physical assets, they have also added to their financial assets from stock market; and now they possess more diverse portfolio of financial markets.

Third, the RBI also takes into account, the new types of instruments, of which legality even is questioned, apart from their opaque nature. Large number of Indian households are putting their savings in these 'assets', i.e, cryptocurrencies. RBI needs to deploy its resources to estimate, net purchase of cryptocurrencies by households. □□

The Slowdown: Challenges and Remedies

The first three quarters of 2024 have revealed a significant dip in economic performance, sparking concerns despite government assurances about the nation's long-term growth prospects. India's GDP growth is expected to reach 6.5% this fiscal year, potentially retaining its status as the fastest-growing large economy. However, this rate of growth is inadequate to address pressing challenges such as employment generation, income inequality, and sustainable development.

In comparison, economies like China, South Korea, and Japan consistently achieved growth rates exceeding 8% during their high-growth phases. Such elevated rates propelled robust job creation, narrowed income disparities, and significantly increased per capita income. India's current growth trajectory lacks the vigor needed to produce similar outcomes. The pressing question remains: Is this slowdown temporary and cyclical, or does it signal a return to pre-pandemic trends following an "abnormal" post-pandemic recovery driven by a low base? Either way, the current deceleration is more severe than anticipated and requires urgent attention.



India's economic growth narrative has encountered a slowdown, but the country's long-term potential remains intact. With a judicious mix of fiscal stimulus, monetary policy adjustments, and structural reforms, the economy can navigate these challenges and return to a robust growth trajectory.

KK Srivastava

Key Drivers of the Slowdown

The secondary sector, encompassing manufacturing, construction, electricity, and utilities, has been a significant drag on the economy. Despite healthy corporate and banking balance sheets, private capital expenditure has stagnated. The lack of "animal spirits," or the willingness to invest in anticipation of robust future demand, has created a vicious cycle. This hesitation among businesses to invest has dampened consumer demand, further stalling economic growth.

Prominent policymakers, including the Finance Minister and Chief Economic Advisor, have recommended cutting interest rates to stimulate borrowing and spending. However, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has remained cautious, citing inflationary concerns. Stricter regulations on unsecured non-bank lending have further restricted consumer spending. While reducing interest rates might



offer a temporary boost, prioritizing growth at the cost of long-term stability poses risks. Additionally, the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation limits the scope for increased public spending as a growth stimulus.

Long-Term Implications of Slow Growth

India has demonstrated resilience in maintaining macroeconomic stability compared to other major economies during the post-pandemic recovery phase. However, sustaining a minimum annual growth rate of 7% is essential for providing a decent quality of life for its 1.5 billion citizens. This urgency becomes even more pronounced as India's demographic dividend begins to diminish, driven by underutilized youth potential and their declining share in the overall population.

Global economic conditions further exacerbate India's challenges. China, a major player in global trade, struggles with overcapacity, while the potential return of protectionist trade policies under Trump 2.0 could adversely affect India's exports. On the domestic front, manufacturing growth has dropped sharply from 7% in the previous quarter to 2.2%, reflecting the broader economic malaise.

Urban consumption has also weakened, particularly among lower-income groups. Stagnant wages and inflation nearing 6% have eroded purchasing power. Food inflation, which exceeds 10%, has added to household financial strain, reducing discretionary spending and consumption levels. Private consumption, a significant driver of GDP, rose by just 6% in the July-September quarter, down from 7.4% in the preceding quarter.

Urban Indians, whose spending substantially contributes to GDP growth, face stagnant or declining inflation-adjusted wages. The situation has been further aggravated by capital outflows since October, signaling waning investor confidence. Moreover, the U.S. Federal Reserve's reluctance to lower interest rates as aggressively as anticipated makes Indian markets less attractive to foreign investors.

Bright Spots Amid the Challenges

Despite the challenges, agriculture remains a bright spot, with the sector recording a 3.5% growth in the July-September quarter, aided by favorable monsoon conditions. Rural demand, bolstered by this agricultural growth, offers a counterbalance to the urban slowdown. If adequately supported by targeted government measures, this demand could help stabilize the economy. Additionally, public spending continues at a healthy pace, providing a critical cushion against economic headwinds.

Monetary Stimulus: A Double-Edged Sword

The debate over monetary stimulus remains at the forefront. The RBI has resisted calls to reduce benchmark interest rates from 6.5%, emphasizing inflationary concerns. Nonetheless, some economists argue that the current economic climate necessitates rate cuts. High borrowing costs discourage capacity building and fresh investments, exacerbating the slowdown in manufacturing and urban demand.

Interest rate reductions, while not a panacea, could provide a psychological and financial boost. Lower borrowing costs might ease the burden of loan repayments,

freeing disposable income and encouraging consumption. Businesses, too, could benefit from reduced financing costs, potentially rekindling investment activity. However, the impact of monetary easing typically operates with a lag, underscoring the need for complementary structural reforms.

Structural Reforms: The Need of the Hour

Monetary easing alone cannot address the root causes of the slowdown. Structural reforms are essential to tackle manufacturing overcapacity, enhance export competitiveness, and curb the dumping of cheap imports that undermine domestic industries. The government must also prioritize technological advancements and capitalize on global shifts, such as the "China Plus One" strategy, which aims to diversify supply chains beyond China. Unfortunately, India has not fully leveraged this opportunity.

While supply-side issues are significant, the primary driver of the slowdown lies on the demand side. Aggregate demand, including both consumption and investment, remains weak. Corporates, despite healthy profits, have focused on deleveraging rather than channeling gains toward wage increases or capacity expansion. This focus has further dampened aggregate demand, perpetuating the investment cycle's stagnation.

Coordinated Policy Action: The Way Forward

India's economy, though fundamentally resilient, cannot afford to overlook the warning signs of the current slowdown. Even in the absence of an immediate crisis, this period should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers. Coordinat-

ed efforts are required to reinvigorate the economy and ensure sustained growth.

First, fiscal policy must be leveraged to provide targeted support to sectors most affected by the slowdown. While fiscal consolidation is important, a measured increase in public spending can stimulate demand without jeopardizing macroeconomic stability.

Second, monetary policy should strike a balance between inflation control and growth stimulation. If inflationary pressures ease, the RBI could consider a calibrated reduction in interest rates to support borrowing and investment.

Third, structural reforms must be accelerated to address long-standing challenges. Policies aimed at improving labor productivity, enhancing infrastructure, and simplifying regulatory frameworks could create a more conducive

environment for investment.

Finally, export promotion should be a key focus area. Strengthening trade partnerships, diversifying export baskets, and enhancing the competitiveness of Indian products in global markets can provide a much-needed boost to the economy.

Growth Beyond Numbers

Economic growth is more than just a statistical measure; it is a means to improve the well-being of the nation's citizens. Addressing the current slowdown requires a multi-pronged approach that goes beyond short-term fixes. It demands a vision for inclusive and sustainable development that prioritizes the needs of the people.

By addressing both supply-side and demand-side challenges, India can lay the foundation for a resilient and dynamic economy. The slowdown, while concerning, also pre-

sents an opportunity to rethink and recalibrate the drivers of growth. Through innovation, coordinated policy action, and a focus on structural reforms, India can emerge stronger and better positioned to achieve its long-term goals.

Conclusion

India's economic journey has always been marked by resilience and adaptability. However, the current slowdown is a reminder that complacency is not an option. The challenges are formidable, but so are the opportunities. By harnessing its inherent strengths and addressing its vulnerabilities, India can not only overcome the present slowdown but also set the stage for sustained high growth in the future. Growth is not just about achieving impressive GDP numbers; it is about ensuring the prosperity and well-being of the nation. The time to act is now. □□

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XVI BRICS Summit and de-Dollarisation



The North-South divide is increasing, and the conflict of West vs rest is rising. Although the era of Cold War has ended but the global leadership must find a way for a multipolar homogeneous world for peace and prosperity by saving mother earth from the vagaries of climate change and for sustainable development.

Dr. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal

The recently held XVI conference of BRICS countries at Kazan, Russian Federation on 22-24 October is considered to be unification of the forces of the emerging economies from the three continents of global south namely Latin America, Africa and Asia. The Kazan Summit was a “BRICS Plus” Dialogue with participation of EMDCs from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Middle East under the motto: “BRICS and Global South: Building a Better World Together.”

The Kazan Declaration is the reflection of the solidarity of the developing countries and demands reforms and democratisation of the Bretton Woods System. There has been changes in the demography and the share in the global income of the major constituents of the member countries since after the establishment of the World Bank and IMF in 1944 and therefore the hegemony of the West and specially of United States cannot be allowed indefinitely. The New Development Bank for the BRICS countries is gaining parallel strength over the years. The salient features of the Kazan declaration were inter alia to the use of national currency in the bilateral trade instead of US Dollar. India and Russia have been doing bilateral trade in Rupee as well as in Rouble and similarly China Russia trade is happening in Chinese Yuan. Both China and India are increasing the use of their respective local currencies in financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners including settlements in local currencies in line with BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (BCBPI). Inter-BRICS trade has increased by 65% between 2017 and 2022 and has reached to US\$ 614.8 billion. Almost 90% of trade between Russia and China is in Yuan. Saudi Arabia and UAE are gradually phasing out petrodollar and are working out payments with China, India and others in national currencies. Africa has made the Pan-Africa payment and settlement system (PAPSS), Mercosur countries are also looking for trade in their own currencies under the leadership of Brazil. Asian has also announced recently in May 2023 to trade in local currencies. Therefore a change is taking place to replace US dollar as a currency of international trade but it will take time much longer than expected to find a common currency for international trade as a substitute for US dollar. However there is a silver lining.

There were also discussions on the unilateral economic sanctions by US and specially for freezing of Russian Forex Reserve of US\$ 300 Billion. It may be important to know that the International Emergency Economic Power Act (IEEPA) 1977, grants US President powers to regulate commerce after declaring national emergency and allows freezing of assets through Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), a division of US Treasury Department, to impose sanctions on States, individuals or entities involved in terrorism, cybercrimes or threats to US foreign policy.

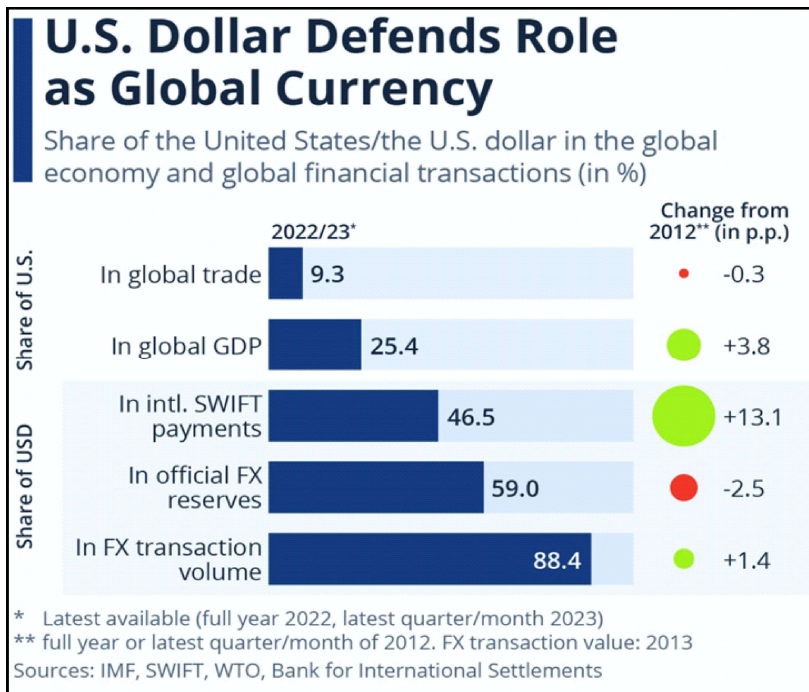
The Kazan Declaration has therefore taken deep concern about the disruptive effects of unlawful unilateral coercive measures including illegal sanctions on the world economy, international trade and the achievement of the sustainable

goals. Such measures undermine the UN Charter, the multilateral trading system the multilateral agreements on sustainable development and on environment. These sanctions also negatively impact economic growth, energy and food security exacerbating poverty and health related challenges.

The Kazan Declaration has also emphasised for the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions which includes increased representation of developing countries including a merit-based inclusive and equitable selection process for the top positions at IMF and the World Bank.

The global economic system and the financial architecture is in the process of a transition from a bipolar heterogeneous world of Cold War era to a multipolar homogeneous world with a short term stop gap of unipolar liberal capitalism. It was thought that globalisation and market capitalism will remain under the domain of US and the West but today the situation is changing with European economy under deep recession coupled with inflation or stagflation with the exception of Spain and Greece.

The US is under huge debt burden. According to the latest published data of US Treasury department on its website www.federaldata.treasury.gov, the US national debt is US\$ 35.46 trillion which is 123% of its GDP of US\$28.82 trillion as on October 2024. The global economy is also carrying an all-time high debt burden which is US\$ 313 trillion almost three times of the global GDP of US\$ 105 trillion as per the global debt monitor published by Institute of International Finance (IIF).



Under such a situation the question is about the intrinsic worth of US dollar particularly when it is no longer pegged with gold since 1973 when President Nixon openly announced its withdrawal from the commitments made in 1944 that it would return one ounce of gold against a parity of US\$35. Today the gold is ruling at US\$ 2655 per ounce and therefore it's validity as international currency of reserve has lost and there is a need to redefine the international financial system.

In the recently held BRICS summit the members have discussed about the way out for an alternate currency. China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) is already an attempt for the SWIFT system for the banking transactions. President elect Trump has issued warning for a differential high tariff for imports from a country which opposes the supremacy of US dollar. Although US dollar occupies 58% of the forex reserve but its importance as

a currency for international transactions is still above 88 per cent. (see Chart)

To conclude it may be said that the time has come for an introspection by the global community to look for the challenges of sustainable development in the light of global warming, growing inequality, increasing global debt along with the acute problems of poverty, unemployment, cybercrime, terrorism and the geopolitical disturbances around the World. The root cause is the greed for money and the thrust for economic power through illegitimate way of exploitation of the natural resources and unbridled consumption. The North-South divide is increasing, and the conflict of West vs rest is rising. Although the era of Cold War has ended but the global leadership must find a way for a multipolar homogeneous world for peace and prosperity by saving mother earth from the vagaries of climate change and for sustainable development. □□

After Georgia, Romania turns against globalists



Romania's independent nationalist and pro-Russia candidate, Călin Georgescu, stunned Europe by winning the first round of the presidential elections on November 24, 2024, mainly on the strength of anti-establishment and diaspora votes.
Sandhya Jain

Romania's independent nationalist and pro-Russia candidate, Călin Georgescu, stunned Europe by winning the first round of the presidential elections on November 24, 2024, mainly on the strength of anti-establishment and diaspora votes. Local surveys had predicted that he would win 5 percent of the vote, but he reeled in 22.95 percent as counting ended.

Călin Georgescu spent very little on his campaign and relied on his popular TikTok videos (he has 298,000 followers and attracts millions of likes). A specialist in agricultural affairs and food policy, he urged the country to be more self-sufficient in farm and energy output. He holds a doctorate in Soil Science and has worked for Romania's Ministry of Environment. He focused on Romania's soaring cost of living, high poverty, highest inflation rate in the European Union and largest budget deficit. He called for an end to aid for Ukraine.

A university professor, Georgescu has worked with the United Nations as a special rapporteur in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights between 2010 and 2012, and as the executive director of the Global Sustainable Index Institute between 2015 and 2016.

Speaking after his victory, he said, "Tonight, the Romanian people cried out for peace. And they shouted very loudly, extremely loudly." On Facebook, he said the results represent "an extraordinary awakening" of the people. Georgescu campaigned under the slogan "Restore the dignity of the Romanian nation;" his victory was welcomed in Russian media.

In an interview in 2021, Georgescu condemned the NATO ballistic missile defense shield based at the Deveselu military base in southern Romania as "a disgrace". He said NATO would not protect any of its members if Russia were to attack them. Romania has been a NATO member since 2004.

The second round against Elena Lasconi is slated for December 8, 2024. Lasconi (Save Romania Union party, USR) won 19.17 percent of the vote, narrowly beating Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu (Social Democratic Party, PSD) who secured 19.15 percent. A former journalist, Lasconi supports Romania's presence in NATO and the European Union. She advocates increased defense spending and continued aid to Ukraine, which may not go down well with the electorate.

Romania has a 650-km border with Ukraine, so Georgescu's potential victory is being closely monitored. From the beginning of the war, Romania helped Ukraine export grain via the Port of Constanța and import military supplies. Romania secures the gates of NATO at the Black Sea, shared with Crimea, Turkey and Russia. The war raised the strategic importance of the Mihail Kogălniceanu air base on the Black Sea, which is/was mooted to become NATO's largest.

Reports suggest that Robert F. Kennedy, nominated by President-elect Donald Trump to serve as US secretary of health and human services, will go to Romania (Dec. 5) to help Georgescu to clinch the second round. A Trump endorsement of Georgescu is consistent with the former's commitment to end the Ukraine war.

George Simion's far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians Party (AUR) won 13.86 percent of the vote. The AUR expelled Georgescu in 2022 for being too radical and publicly praising Ion Antonescu (World War II prime minister who was executed for his part in Romania's Holocaust) and Corneliu Codreanu (leader of the 1930s Iron Guard). Georgescu said the duo "are heroes through whom national history lived, ... not through the lackeys of the globalist powers that lead Romania today temporarily." However, after Georgescu's stunning victory, Simion said AUR would fully support him in the run-off. Diana 'o'oacă's nationalist SOS Romania party has also announced its support for Georgescu.

Once a globalist, Georgescu turned more nationalistic around 2016, became critical of NATO and the EU, and opposed the construction of a NATO missile base at Deveselu. He denies being pro-Russia, but wants to keep Romania out of the Ukraine conflict. An adherent of the Romanian Orthodox Church, he upholds its importance in the nation.

Should he win, Georgescu is likely to focus on domestic issues as his voters opposed Ukrainian grain flooding the domestic market at the cost of local farmers, and were against the government financially supporting Ukrainian refugees.

Amidst growing fears of World War III, Romanians fear involvement because of the NATO base and US missile infrastructure, Romania's logistical role in arming Ukraine and the newly built "Moldova Highway" that could



facilitate deployment of NATO troops in the event of a conventional conflict.

Appreciating Russian President Vladimir Putin as one of the few true leaders in the world, Georgescu said Romania could do with some Russian wisdom and called President Volodymyr Zelensky bad for Ukraine. He said the 1989 revolution, which ended Communist rule in Romania was a coup d'état used by the West to steal Romania's resources, and added that the West now enslaves the country.

Some analysts believe that the verdict does not reflect mass support for Georgescu. Claudiu Pandaru, co-founder of the Romanian news website Republica, says he got "protest votes against [the] current political class" (accused of corruption) and the majority of his voters are unaware of his "pro-Russia" comments.

Philipp Lausberg, senior policy analyst at the Belgium-based European Policy Centre, agrees that people "are tired of the existing party system." Lausberg said Georgescu won the diaspora vote, mostly from "labour migrants in Western Europe" as he "gave them the idea that he would offer them a Romania that is worth returning home" [to]. While, according to the

Romanian Institute of Statistics, inflation has fallen from 13.8 percent in 2022 to around 5 percent in 2024, it remains among the highest in the European Union.

Romania's parliamentary elections fall on December 1, the country's National Day. The pollster Inscop predicts that (as of October) the PSD is leading the parliamentary polls with 30.2 percent, followed by the PNL with 13.2 percent and Lasconi's USR with 12.7 percent of the votes.

What is undeniable is that a far-right surge is happening in Europe. Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ) won the parliamentary election in September 2024. Also in September, Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) won the state election in Thuringia, the first time a far-right party won a state election in Germany since World War II.

Dorit Geva, a professor at the University of Vienna, said right-wing wins in Europe could "further legitimise Viktor Orbán's vision for the future of Europe, which means limiting the power of Brussels, securitising European borders against migration, and is certainly bad news for Ukraine."

Romania's election comes close on the heels of the Georgian Dream party's victory in the parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024, with 54.24 percent of the vote under Prime Minister Irakli. Georgia is the second country in the former Soviet sphere of influence to have returned to a pro-Russia political orientation. As in Georgia, NGOs in the LGBTQ+ sector decried the national trend towards traditional Christian morality. □

<https://sandhyajainarchive.org/2024/12/03/after-georgia-romania-turns-against-globalists/>

‘Ease of Doing Farming’ Is The Best Bet To Save Farmers From Future Misery

A few days back, a picture shared on the social media depicted the rising vexation and the continuing plight of farmers. Looking at the picture again, which had gone viral earlier, one could feel the indifference, apathy and persecution that farmers encounter every other day.

The picture itself is painful. It showed an elderly farmer standing at the heap of unsold paddy in a Punjab mandi with folded hands. He was standing in front of a senior district administrator, who was accompanied by other senior officials.

Probably the district administrator was only trying to listen to the farmer's woes at a time when paddy was not being lifted at its normal pace, but the fact that farmers feel so helpless and hapless that they plead with folded hands before the administration to rescue them, is rather unfortunate.

That the people who feed the country are so desperate that they have to literally beg the government officials to push the rate of sluggish paddy procurement so as to enable them to market the harvested crop and then get the fields ready for sowing the next crop, itself shows how insensitive the system has become to the acute crisis farmers are being gradually pushed into. After producing a record paddy harvest this year, farmers waiting endlessly in the mandis to market the harvested grain reflect the complacency with which the governments – both the Centre and State – are treating farmers with.

“If we can't even sell our crop in time, please tell me. Why should my children have to undergo this torture again and again.” a visibly frustrated Sukhjit Singh, a farmer sitting over heaps of paddy bags in Ferozepur mandi, asked me.

“I would instead like my children to migrate to Canada or Australia”, he added.

Another farmer categorically said “we are being punished for forcing the government to withdraw the three contentious farm laws. Perhaps the government has forgotten the days when it was the Punjab farmers alone who had pulled the country from a hunger trap.”

I was rendered speechless.

This reminds of two other incidents which failed to shake up the society from the growing impassiveness towards the farming community. Only a few days back, we saw a short video of a Madhya Pradesh farmer rolling on floor with folded hands at the Collector's office in Mandsaur to reclaim his ‘stolen’ land.

According to a news report, the farmer said that he has appealed to the President, Prime Minister and the state Chief Minister to help him get back his land allegedly by a government official working there. I am not sure whether he finally got a patient hearing from the Collector and an appropriate action initiated against the said official, but the question that bothers me is why the poor farmer's grievances should not be addressed as quickly as the industry complaints are addressed and disposed of.



All eyes are on grabbing farm lands and that too by denying them the right compensation. There are numerous such examples where farmers are bashed by police when they protest their land being acquired at throwaway prices.
Devinder Sharma

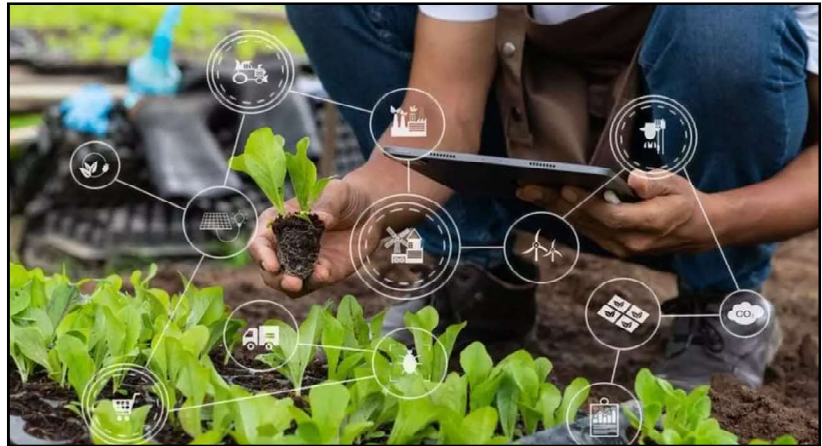
Just like Ease of Doing Business a similar initiative for Ease of Doing Farming certainly can be launched.

Another incident that comes to my mind is equally hurting. A Karnataka farmer from Shimoga district was asked to rush to pay back the outstanding amount against a bank loan he had taken some months back. Media reports say, with no transport available, the farmer preferred to walk for about 15 km to reach the bank. And when he reached, he had told that what he had to pay back was only Rs. 3.46. The callousness with which the bank asked the farmer to rush to clear the pending amounts speaks volumes about the double role the banks play.

To the farmers, even a petty outstanding amount turns into a panic situation for a bank, but when it comes to defaulting corporate, hundreds of crores of bad loans are written off in one stroke. For the records, more than Rs. 15 lakh crore of outstanding corporate loans have been written off in the last 10 years.

It is therefore heartening to see the Supreme Court show empathy towards farmers when it dismissed a case filed by the Karnataka government challenging a High Court's order enhancing compensation for the land acquired from farmers for the purpose of construction of Hipparagi major irrigation project in Krishna River. It was really magnanimous on the part of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan to turn down Karnataka's plea saying farmers are a distressed lot and the State, where thousands of farmers die by suicides annually, must allow them to survive.

According to another media



report, 8,245 farmers have committed suicide between 2013 and 2024. In just five months, between April and August of this year, 1,214 farmers in Karnataka have died by suicides as per the official data.

“The farmers are a distressed lot. If you don't want to pay the enhanced compensation, why don't you return the land,” the Supreme Court bench said. As the bench observed, farmers needed a fair compensation and that cannot be denied to them. The kindness and benevolence that the Supreme Court has demonstrated in this case should become a norm rather than exception.

This brings me to the bigger question as to why the official system cannot exemplify humaneness and a big heart when it comes to dealing with farmers. Why does the system – down from the top at the Centre to the lowest revenue official in the district – be more compassionate and be generous towards farmers. Why should a farmer roll at the Collector's office to get a hearing, and why should a farmer walk for 15 km to pay an outstanding amount of Rs 3.46? Why should an aggrieved farmer stand with folded hands before a district official, and that too for no fault of his?

More so, it is well known that in the name of development, all eyes are on grabbing farm lands and that too by denying them the right compensation. There are numerous such examples where farmers are bashed by police when they protest their land being acquired at throwaway prices. Tribals are hounded out of the forests and the trees mercilessly cut when their land is needed for corporate. Similarly, I find that the average consumer is not even willing to pay farmers a higher price for their produce.

Talk of an assured and a profitable price for farmers', and the troll on social media begins to lash out against farmers.

This must change and the sooner the better. After all, even 76 years after Independence, Indian farmers are at the lowest rung in the society when it comes to farm incomes. With an average monthly income of Rs. 10,218 the entire effort is to short-change them and treat them inhumanly as if they are the children of a lesser god.

Let's be considerate towards them. Let's provide them dignity, which, in turn, helps restore pride in farming. □□

(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/ease-of-doing-farming-is-the-best-idea-to-save-farmers-from-future-misery-1343030#google_rignette

What Does Our Government Need To Fulfil Its Natural Farming Mission?

Ever since the Modi government came to power, it has been stressing on natural farming in one way or another. Starting with a program of *Paramparaghat Krishi Vikas Mission* to emphasise on zero budget farming or awarding various central government awards to indigenous seed savers and farmers, the government is trying to encourage natural farming in the public view.

The government even has allocated a yearly budget for natural farming. This clearly shows their intent. But the question remains - is political will enough to bring an organic farming revolution in India? Perhaps not, because a lot is needed.

Recently the government announced about Rs 2481 crore for the promotion of natural farming along with other measures like the creation of 2000 demonstration farmers, farmers training and set a target of reaching one crore farmers and initiating Natural Farming (NF) in 7.5 lakh Ha area. But a big question: who is responsible for training and creating this organic/natural farming infrastructure? Is it going to be incumbent agricultural scientists, extension officers or farmers themselves? There is no clear answer.

First, let us look at the history of “modern agriculture” which is synonymous with the “Green Revolution”. It was during the late 60s that agricultural chemicals and new industrial seeds started to enter the Indian fields. Much of this research and technology was financed by the US government and after Lal Bhadur Shastri’s untimely death was part of an agrarian re-structuring that India was forced to undergo.

The government faced an uphill task of trying to convince farmers to shift from organic cultivation to adopt foreign seeds, fertilisers and agri-chemicals. Farmers in Punjab rejected the seeds for almost a decade. It took a solid two



We need to dedicate a special budget to archive and research on India’s indigenous agrarian and animal husbandry wisdom.

Indra Shekhar Singh



decades for the government to almost forcefully achieve a mass-scale adoption of the Green Revolution. Still, many of Punjab's elder generation of farmers will recount how extension officers did fly-by-night operations and threw fertilisers and seeds in their fields.

Since that period, Indian agrarian institutions and research have dropped indigenous agrarian practices and worked solely on the tenets of American-style industrial agriculture. Most Indian agri-scientists often have a disdain for traditional agriculture and a vast majority of them are not trained in it either. Only a small percentage of them have basic knowledge of traditional agrarian practices and it would take years before we can build a strong knowledge pool related to organic agriculture covering areas of pest management, soil fertility, natural-based planting, etc.

Our agrarian diversity matched with 16 plus agro-climatic zones makes it very hard to have one set of agrarian practices. Each region has their own way of farming and organic or natural farming is based on the agri-climatic zones, the one-size-fits-all model of industrial agriculture where chemical fertilisers and pesticides rule the roost, don't fit for organic agriculture.

So what is needed to relearn the wisdom of our ancestors? The first thing the government needs to do is create a demand. APEDA, NAFED and FCI should all have a special cluster-based program for procuring organic produce. This program should have pre-sowing price floors, so farmers can actually plan and sow crops. They can then register with various programs from organic crop procurement. Once the registration is done, APE-

Farmers, FPOs, other farmers co-operatives, et al should sit with chart out plans with agro-scientists and state agricultural institutions on how to grow in accordance with agro-climate, water sustainability and market demand.

DA, et al can have a monitoring role through the NPOP system or through a PGS system. With a pre-sowing MSP for organic rice or legumes or even oilseeds, the government can in a short duration create a huge shift.

Local procurement centres linked to the proposed organic *bazaars* and haats in cities can boost local economies.

The second big demand is that the government needs to create new public sector jobs by creating natural farming departments in each district for promotion of organic nature for a minimum of 15 years. This should be done at par with the "green revolution" steam. The role of new natural farming departments would develop organic farming strategies for each district with special attention to various blocks and gram panchayats.

Farmers, FPOs, other farmers co-operatives, et al should sit with chart out plans with agro-scientists and state agricultural institutions on how to grow in accordance with agro-climate, water sus-

tainability and market demand. Through this way, we can effectively and rapidly increase organic clusters in the country, while also making organic produce reasonable and in the reach of the common person.

But if all the scientists are trained in ways of industrial agriculture, where will we find people to work at the natural farming departments? The answer lies in creating a new syllabus and research departments in agricultural universities in the country. All agricultural universities should have courses in organic agriculture. IARI and ICARs can take a lead role in this. The government needs to also create flagship universities or steer the mandate of a few of the existing agricultural universities towards natural farming. Once the government gives a push, many students will be drawn towards it.

We need to dedicate a special budget to archive and research on India's indigenous agrarian and animal husbandry wisdom. By reviving *Vriskhayurveda* (Tree ayurveda), animal ayurveda and agrarian techniques, we can make them stand the litmus test of modernity and help improve them where necessary because each time we don't have to reinvent the wheel, we only have to learn from the wisdom of our ancestors.

This step will also increase our traditional knowledge and help archive it, but it also has the added benefit of presenting newer solutions to diseases, integrated pest management, soil rejuvenation, etc. Through some of these steps, the government can fill gaps, and take India forward to fulfil her natural farming revolution. □□

<https://www.evibharat.com/amp/en/opinion/ideation-what-does-our-government-need-to-fulfil-its-natural-farming-mission-en24120606968>

Economics of Soft Power

Soft power, a concept coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, is the ability of a nation to influence others through its culture, political values, and foreign policies rather than through military force. It is often considered more important than hard power, as it concerns things that need to be protected by hard power. If hard power is attained at the loss of soft power, it's not worth bargain.

The soft power of any nation is its deep-rooted things that are responsible for its existence. The economy of the country revolves around its soft power. It's about food, clothing, entertainment, beliefs, faiths, practices, education, sports, literature, the definition of family, values, and many more matters of daily life.

Economics has a role because wherever religious conversations happen today, they're about economics and finances rather than swords, wars, and weapons.

Economics itself needs to be understood relatively. There is the economics of Naxalism, a term used to describe the economic and social conditions that led to the rise of Naxalite groups, politics, and the environment. In the same way, there is the economics of many things, including multiple soft powers.

The economics of temples and ways of life are easier to visualize. Hindus' soft power may be transitional, but their core is universally stable. The formats developed and changed from Yagna to temples, and today, the definition of family itself is in a transition phase due to attacks by unfavorable soft power. The format of attacks is also changing. Economics is the principal motivation for wars and attacks.

The attacks on Hindutva can be chronological, from the attack on Holy Yagna during the early phases of civilization to the attack on the definition of family today. The Holy Yagna was the target of evil forces before and during Sri Ram's era. Sri Ram has defended many Holy Yagnas in response to the demand



The Vishwa Vijay is also said to be a Vishwa Yagna in our soft power. It is not for the benefit of one but for the wellness of all.

Alok Singh



for defense by Holy Rishis. These attacks, whether physical or ideological, have been a constant threat to the soft power of Hindutva.

The Holy Yagna coexisted with temples, and the attack changed its format. The Mughals started attacking temples, i.e., the attacks on the faith of Hindutva, starting from Ayodhya, Mathura, Kashi, and so on.

The next phase of the attack was by the Britishers, who attacked our education system and germinated the caste-based division of Hindutva. The economic framework of the society collapsed.

The new attack started in 1991 with the arrival of economic compulsion of blind acceptance of liberalization, privatization, and globalization. The education system and the dream of a corporate job in well-paying foreign companies, whether they are in the business of potato chips or computer chips, saw the weakening of Hindutva on the name and the path towards career growth, resulting in matching celebrations, practices and holidays by the faith of the foreign paymasters.

The current phase of the attack began with widespread access to social media and internet technology. While the primary idea was to provide transparent and real-time access to banking, documentation, information, and other services, our previous policymakers had already laid the foundation for foreign, primarily Western-influenced lifestyles. The current policymakers are working to control and steer this influence toward the Bhartiya way. The urgent need for Indigenous social media platforms is clear, as they are a necessity to shield against this latest attack.

Unfortunately, our social lead-

The PM of our country knows well that China has shielded itself from Western or any foreign cultural attacks. Still, our intellectual class, academicians or journalists, business class, and soft power have damaged it consistently for the last several years.

ers, academicians, journalists, and centers of soft power like movies, theatres, literature, and others have fallen into the hands of foreign players. Our competitor has done relatively well on this front.

China could defend its turf of soft power. China has its share of challenges in saving its civilization and culture. Even in the education sector, China could defend the way Western Universities teach Chinese culture and history. However, Western Universities teach Bhartiya Culture and history at their convenience, which is an attack on our soft power. Even in science and technology, like astronomy, our Vedic resources are deciphered and presented to us as Western knowledge, which is an attack on our soft power.

The country's current prime minister, a strong advocate for the relevance of soft power, has consistently showcased the nation's soft power to the world. He has actively participated in every micro and macro event and has cashed on the opportunity to strengthen it, instilling a sense of pride in the audience.

The background of Nalanda University in the concluding G-20 meeting in 2023 at Bharat Manda-

pam, New Delhi, caught the most attention. The Prime Minister received all the heads of foreign states and organized the photo shoot so that the ruins of Nalanda University today are well captured in the memory of global leaders.

The Prime Minister of our country knows well that China has shielded itself from Western or any foreign cultural attacks. Still, our intellectual class, academicians or journalists, business class, and soft power have damaged it consistently for the last several years.

This demonstration of soft power and the declaration of the International Day of Yoga are well poised to establish us as Vishwa Guru. Our soft power is regaining its due relevance.

We always wished to be Vishwa Gurus and never to be Vishwa Rajas, although we worship and celebrate the tradition of Ashvamedha Yagna. This Yagna performed by Sri Ram resulted in occasional obstacles, which we labeled as a conflict that wouldn't be good; these obstacles were for the good of everyone.

The Vishwa Vijay is also said to be a Vishwa Yagna in our soft power. It is not for the benefit of one but for the wellness of all.

Despite many attacks, we could survive, and the survival of soft power is our survival rather than hard power. The current prime minister is engaging it well in the country through sports like Khelo-India or foreign policy like the International Day of Yoga.

Joseph Nye of Harvard University coined "soft power" in 2012, but our behavior and ideas have always favored soft power. □□

(Alok Singh has a doctorate in management from the Indian Institute of Management Indore and is the promoter of Transition Research Consultancy for Policy and Management).

(Story of Centurion RSS)

“Sangh” thy name itself, is enough

Wow! I am entering into my 100th year. What a thrilling moment indeed. After century, still young, energetic and growing stature, it is hard to believe that I am 100. I was laughed off by society, harshly criticized by intellectuals, subjected to repressive action by government including ban for 3 times and yet I not only survived, but grown like a banyan tree, a model of development. It is only because of selfless, dedicated karyakartas.

None of the organizations founded by great leaders have survived for 100 years; even if they survived, none of them are in original form as I am, so active, so vibrant, and consistently expanding. Considering the Phenomenal changes which are happening in the country/world, in the areas of technology, social, political, economical fields etc., My identity is still undisturbed and relevant to the present day situation. Great leaders at the time of my birth, were totally immersed with the immediate task of getting freedom from British. They never bothered to analyse, address the problems, questions viz, why we have lost freedom? Why are continued to be slaves for many centuries? More important question was what should be done to save our freedom after getting it from British. What not to be done so that freedom may not lost again. In search of these problems my founder gave a very deep thought and realized that the lack of unity among the Hindus and lack of self respect on being Hindu, were the reasons for our loss of freedom. The concept of Unity of Hindus, was just an utopian idea at that time. It was the time when some people would joke that the only way to make 4 Hindus to walk in one direction is to make them carry dead body on their shoulder. In such a bleak scenario, my founder could attract few brave young men who were ready make sacrifice their entire life for Hindu Unity.



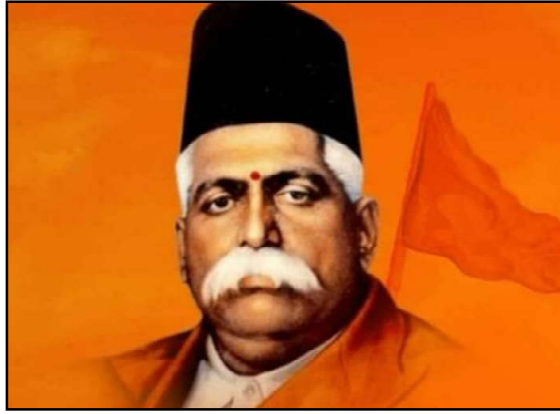
RSS founder was so self-effacing that even now, after 100 years of RSS successful journey most of the countrymen are not aware of him.

**Mahadevayya
Karadalli**



Technically, my birth took place on the auspicious day of Vijayadashami in 1925 in Nagapur in a small room of Dr. Hegdewar's house. Later, I was made public in a Reshambagh playground, at Nagapur. My birth was so normal that my formal naming was done after many months. However, the idea of giving birth to me, might have been in the mind of my founder Dr. Hegdewar's for a long time. He was worked in many freedom fighters and organizations with wide organizational spectrum (from congress on one side to revolutionaries on the other). He is a born visionary realized that there is basic difference, which cannot solved merely by getting freedom. Freedom from British is not the solution to the problem.

Since, it has deep rooted basic problems. Having concern about the future of our motherland he promoted out of box thinking i.e. the idea of Hindu Unity and modality to achieve the same. The instrument adopted by my founder was very simple yet very unique. With the motto "Character Building, Nation making". He started daily Shakha, wherein the youngsters were required to just get together for one hour to train their Sharira, Buddhi, Manassu through desi plays, exercise, yoga, patriot songs, intellectual discussions etc., and lastly a prayer for Mother Bharat. Since decades these simple activities were supplemented by service activities in downtrodden areas to unite Hindu society. My founder was so self-effacing that even now, after 100 years of my successful journey most of the



When my founder left for abode after nurturing me for 15 years, many Sangha Well-wishers had fear that I would gradually get weakened to face inevitable death.

countrymen are not aware of him. Shkha activities would certainly looks like very ordinary, simple and meaningless on the face, but for my Founder these are skills to develop Anushashit (Self disciplined), Sheela sampanna (with Character), Swayam Sevaks (Volunteers). The ordinary, youngsters trained in Shakha, the swayamsevak did the extraordinary things i.e. spreading the message of Hindu Unity across the length and breadth of India consistently over many decades sacrificing their entire life time. Our founder has to face a lot of challenges, the most important one being the derision, insult and negligence by Hindu community for

whose very survival he was building the organization. Fortunately, there were many persons, whose vision was beyond the limits of caste, religion, language, politics, or territory and were concerned about Hindus unity and of Bharat Mata. They have always supported, assisted with their timely help.

When my founder left for abode after nurturing me for 15 years, many Sangha Well-wishers had fear that I would gradually get weakened to face inevitable death. Such prediction of gloom and doom fortunately did not come true, mainly because of very able successor, spiritually minded Shri MS Golwalkar (popularly known as Guruji). Thanks to Sri Guruji's untiring work and journey minimum twice year across the country to guide the swayamsevaks.

Misusing the unfortunate incident i.e. dastardly killing of Mahatma Gandhi, in a crooked manner, I was banned by the Government of independent India. Under the able, astute leadership of Shri Guruji, my swayamsevaks fought against this undemocratic, immoral and illegal act, in a democratic and peaceful manner. Our men suffering with persecution in the form of police raid, imprisonment etc., Later on the judiciary declared the ban as unconstitutional. It forced the government to revoke the ban after about 18 months. The hostile environment, which I had to face, did not ease just because ban on me was lifted. Secular and Anti Hindu forces, who were either active labeled me with Anti Muslim, Anti Christian, Fascist etc. □□

Trump tariffs and the making of a trade war

Merely weeks before his inauguration as the United States (US) President for a second term, Donald Trump announced that he would implement his campaign promise of raising tariffs immediately after assuming charge. In two posts on his social media platform Truth Social, Trump stated that he would “sign all necessary documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25% Tariff on ALL products coming into the United States, and its ridiculous Open Borders”. He added, “This Tariff will remain in effect until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!” Trump also accused Beijing of not taking strong enough action to stop the flow of illicit drugs into the US, stating that the US “will be charging China an additional 10% Tariff, above any additional Tariffs, on all of their many products” imported by the US.

Through these announcements, the president-elect targeted two sets of problems affecting the US he has consistently highlighted — the flow of illegal migrants and the opioid crisis. The former issue was among the central planks of Trump’s election campaign, while the latter was also given considerable space. Over the past several years, the opioid crisis emerged as a major problem for the US due to a steep rise in the number of deaths from drug overdose, according to the US Drug Enforcement Administration. Synthetic opioids, including fentanyl illegally produced in China, contributed to the spurt in opioid deaths over the past decade.

Trump’s announcement is his unique way of using unilateral measures to force targeted countries to fall in line with his agenda. But it raises two sets of questions. One, would the Trump tariffs sufficiently disrupt the exports of the three countries to the US, forcing their governments to clamp down on illegal



Before targeting the US’s two neighbours and rival China, Donald Trump should bear in mind that there will be no winners in this war.
Biswajit Dhar



immigration and trafficking of illicit drugs? Two, if the US acts unilaterally, as the president-elect has proposed, wouldn't the target countries retaliate, setting off a trade war?

Trade data shows that the Trump tariffs could significantly affect overall exports of Canada and Mexico to the US, as the two North American countries are overwhelmingly dependent on their neighbour for their export business. In 2023, Canada's dependence was 78%, and Mexico's was almost 80%. Interestingly, both countries have become more dependent on the US after Trump renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement in 2018, replacing it with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Sectoral trade data provides a better view of the extent of Canada and Mexico's dependence on the US market. Several major manufacturing sectors of Canada, including transport equipment and metal fabrication, rely heavily on the US market, accounting for more than 90% of total exports. Mexico's largest manufacturing sectors are almost as dependent on the US market. In 2023, more than 93% of Mexico's garment exports and 90% of electrical and electronics exports ended up across the country's northern border. And 83% of Mexico's automobile industry exports, which have emerged as one of the largest globally, were to the US.

On the other hand, China's exports would be much less impacted by the Trump tariffs. Although the US has remained its largest export market, China's large presence in almost all regions never made it too dependent on a sin-

gle country's market. The US accounted for over 21% of China's exports in the early years of the millennium, but since the 2008 economic recession, this figure stood at 17-19%. However, after the Covid pandemic, China's exports to the US declined further to below 15% of the total in 2023. This is the lowest level since 1993, the early phase of China's forays into the global economy.

Unlike the US's two neighbours, none of the major manufacturing sectors of the Chinese economy are too dependent on the world's largest economy. In fact, relatively more technologically-intensive sectors, especially electronics and other machinery producers exported only around 15% of their total exports to the US in 2023. Pharmaceutical and organic chemicals producers did similarly. On the other hand, the automobile industry, which is already being targeted by the Joe Biden administration using high tariffs, exported less than 10% to the US in 2023.

Political leaderships of the targeted countries have responded to the threat of Trump tariffs in varied ways. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum contacted the US President-elect immediately to stave off the immediate economic turmoil their countries could face if the tariffs were imposed. Sheinbaum sounded a note of warning in her response: "If there are US tariffs, Mexico would also raise tariffs". This was a clear signal that her government could take retaliatory actions against its largest trade partner. Trudeau made initial efforts to negotiate with Donald Trump, but premiers of British Colombia and Ontario

Trump seems to have made it a habit to threaten the imposition of higher tariffs on countries he feels are acting against his plans of "making America great again".

have spoken of stronger Canadian responses such as imposing retaliatory tariffs and cutting off electricity exports to some US states.

China, on the other hand, is a study in contrast. While there has been no official response thus far on the measures it could adopt to counter Trump tariffs, a few voices from the policy community have provided some indications of China's likely response. For instance, a former head of the People's Bank of China argued that Beijing may be forced to retaliate to "give the public an account" of what is being done in response.

Trump seems to have made it a habit to threaten the imposition of higher tariffs on countries he feels are acting against his plans of "making America great again". However, reactions from the three countries suggest that the US's unilateral actions will be retaliated against, making trade war a distinct possibility.

Before he signs the executive orders authorising tariff hikes, Trump will do well to recognise that in a trade war, there are no winners. □□

Biswajit Dhar is distinguished professor, Council for Social Development.
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/trump-tariffs-and-the-making-of-a-trade-war-101734669584007.html>

Kashmir: The Cultural Crossroads - 1

Kashmir, Pakistan and China have always been in focus in domestic and international politics. However, we benchmark 1947 as starting point of our study and research on the partition of Bharat, illegal occupation of major part of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan and China or at best a decade earlier. Regular invasions from Pakistan in the façade of kabayalies, massive violence during partition, pouncing upon Hindu minorities by Islamic extremists as vultures during partition, the conspiracies and betrayals by Musim league, National Conference in partition of Bharat, role of United Nations in keeping the Kashmir issue alive and burning for more than two decades, have been reported in various newspapers during 1940 to 1960. Surprisingly and unfortunately, the historians and journalists of that period have not reported the British efforts, conspiracies and armed explorations to control Kashmir, Leh, Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan, NFWP since early eighteenth century for repulsing the Russians and containing & restraining Chinese from this region. I have gone through the major national newspapers of those times but find little about it. Hundreds of books have been written by the researchers, historians, senior army officers posted in the area, Bhartiya and foreign diplomats, academicians, explores on British-Russia-China rivalries for more than 150 years prior to independence, scarred by the partition and illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan and China. It looked that the agenda of invaders was hastily implemented by mutilation of Bharat by way of partition.

There are several dimensions of studies and research on Jammu and Kashmir. There are cultural dimensions too. In this article in two parts, an effort is made to share cultural affinity of Kashmir with the neighbouring countries on Buddhism. There is a detailed account on this subject in the book - *The Crossroads*



There are several dimensions of studies and research on Jammu and Kashmir.
Vinod Johri



— *Kashmir - India's Bridge to Xinjiang* by Kulbhushan Warikoo — P-ISBN — 978-93-5702-569-0. This article is based on the contents of this book and honestly, all the material relates to this book which provides the detailed British-Russia-China rivalries for more than 150 years in Central Asia. I have not come across any such other research or books, which is an eye opener.

Kashmir, due to its close physical proximity and shared cultural affinity with Xinjiang, has been a hub for India's socio-economic exchanges with Central Asia since ancient times. During the British rule the nature and extent of political and commercial interactions between Kashmir and Xinjiang were conditioned by the rivalry between the British and Russian empires for control over Central Asia. The British were quick to realise the strategic importance of Kashmir, and used their influence in the valley to restrain Russian designs on Central Asia. Kashmir and its frontier territories of Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan, Hunza and Nagar came to occupy pivotal position in the British strategy of checkmating Tsarist Russia and later Soviet Russia.

Due to its unique geographical position, Kashmir stood at the crossroads connecting mainland India with neighbouring regions of Gandhar, Afghanistan, Xinjiang, Central Asia and China. Notwithstanding the lofty barriers of Pamirs, Karakoram and Hindu Kush ranges, there have existed since ancient times close cultural and socio-economic links between Kashmir including its frontier territories of Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit and adjoining regions of Xinjiang, Tibet and Central Asia.



Kashmir was a cradle from which Buddhism spread to different directions in Xinjiang, Central Asia, Tibet, China and beyond. Gilgit, Chilas, Chitral, Baltistan, Ladakh, Zaskar and another frontier areas of Kashmir have been important mileposts of the famed silk route.

During the Kushan period (second century BC to third century AD) when Central Asia and north-western India were integrated into single kingdom, various cities like Khotan, Kashgar, Balkh and Bamiyan had developed into important centres of Buddhism. This is amply borne out by archaeological finds at various sites in Kashmir and Xinjiang. The vast wealth of archaeological epigraphic and other remains found in Xinjiang in Khotan, Niya and other places, also testifies to diffusion of culture and Buddhism from Kashmir in Trans-Karakoram region.

Kashmir was a cradle from which Buddhism spread to different directions in Xinjiang, Central Asia, Tibet, China and beyond. Gilgit, Chilas, Chitral, Baltistan, Ladakh, Zaskar and another frontier areas of Kashmir have been important mileposts of the famed silk route. The preponderance of carvings and inscriptions of prehistoric and Buddhist periods in Gilgit-Baltistan region provides sufficient evidence of the prevalence of Buddhism in this region in pre-Islamic times. The sites at Shaital, Thor, Thaplan, Shingh Nala, Satpara, Kargah, Chilas etc., that still exists today, have high concentration of drawings of stupas, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Jatakas besides thousands of inscriptions written in Kharosthi, Brahmi, Sanskrit, Sogdian and Tibetan scripts. Some 80 percent are in Brahmin script.

The famous Gilgit manuscripts containing the Lotus Sutra, written on birch bark, were first discovered by chance in a ruined stupa near Gilgit in 1931. These manuscripts contain Buddhist texts dating back to 5th and 6th centuries AD. The second lot of these manuscripts were discovered by Pandit Madhusudan Kaul during his ex-

cavation in Gilgit in 1938. A major part of the Gilgit manuscripts is in possession of the National Archives of India, which released the facsimile edition of its work on Lotus Sutra series on 3 May 2012, in association with Soka Gakkai International.

Professor Karl Jettmar and his Pak-German study group did pioneer work on rock carvings and inscriptions in this region. The diversity and density of rock carvings (about 5000 carvings and 5000 inscriptions) Gilgit-Baltistan turned the area into one of the most important petroglyph (*Chattan par*

cultures, and attracted travellers, traders and pilgrims - that Buddhism was transmitted to Xinjiang and beyond.

Buddhism reached Xinjiang during Ashoka reign in third century BC. According to the ancient Khotanese beliefs, a son of Ashoka, named Kustana founded Khotan, in around 240 BC. His grandson, Vijay Sambhav is reported to have introduced Buddhism in Khotan. This dynasty is said to have ruled Khotan for several generations during which Buddhism was the religion of the state.

Some small colonies of Indi-

tan to Kashgar, Niya, Cherchen, Loulan, Aksu Kucha, Karashahar, Turfan and other parts of the China. The Kushans, particularly Kanishka who had extended his rule to Xinjiang, spread Buddhism far and wide in Xinjiang, Central Asia and China. Kanishka organised the fourth Buddhist council in Kashmir, in which around 500 Buddhist scholars were said to have participated. The proceedings of their debates were engraved on copper plates, put in the box and buried somewhere in Kashmir. Archaeologists are yet to locate this treasure trove buried somewhere in Kashmir valley. A Chinese Scholar Professor Liu Shiu Lin, noted the legacy of Kashmir's cultural relations with China. He stated -

People of China knew about Kashmir since ancient times. China had a tradition of history writing cultural relations since ancient times. Has had a tradition of history writing since ancient times. Same tradition existed in Kashmir in the Indian subcontinent. Historiographical tradition of Kashmir is very ancient. The tradition of friendly and cultural relations between China and Kashmir is over 2000 years old. These ties flourished during the Buddhist period. Chinese monks would come to Kashmir to learn Buddhist philosophy and literature. They have left a valuable record about Kashmir. Chinese have transferred many such works (*Mir. G.M. China and Kashmir, Ancient Political and Cultural Relations, Mirpur, 2002, Page-45*). □□

(In the second part of this article, the detailed discussion will be made about Kashmiri Buddhist scholars in Xinjiang, China and Chinese scholars in Kashmir.)

Vinod Johri, Retd. Additional Commissioner of Income Tax, Delhi

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ukeri gayi) sites in the world. Unfortunately, over 30,000 carvings and descriptions are doomed to be inundated due to construction of Daimar-Bhasha Dam. According to Professor Harald Hauptmann of Heidelberg, who has worked on the heritage of this area for many years. 37,051 Carvings on 5928 boulders will be inundated. Hoffman added that some 3002 pass and a number of drawings were submerged under the dam (*Yusuf Suhail, Threatened Rock Carvings of Pakistan*). Obviously, it was through this region - which acted as crossroads of ancient routes and

ans had come up in parts of southern Xinjiang, along with Silk route. Chinese scholars confirm that a Kashmiri monk, Virochana built a Buddhist shrine in Khotan in 80 BC, which became the first Buddhism Temple in Chinese history, and was worshipped mainly by Indian immigrants. They also affirm that 'Buddhist art, as an arm of religion, was introduced by Yutian (Khotan) in Xinjiang from Kashmir, soon after founding of Yutian State. (Shen, Fuwei, Cultural Flow between China and outside world through history)

Buddhism spread from Kho-

Matallurgy in Ancient India (Part-3)

Henry Yule quoted the 12th-century Arab Edrizi who wrote: “The South Indians excel in the manufacture of iron, and in the preparations of those ingredients along with which it is fused to obtain that kind of soft iron which is usually styled Indian steel. They also have workshops wherein are forged the most famous sabres in the world. It is not possible to find anything to surpass the edge that you get from Indian steel (al-hadid al-Hindi).

As early as the 17th century, Europeans knew of India’s ability to make crucible steel from reports brought back by travelers who had observed the process at several places in southern India. Several attempts were made to import the process, but failed because the exact technique remained a mystery. Studies of wootz were made in an attempt to understand its secrets, including a major effort by the famous scientist, Michael Faraday, son of a blacksmith. Working with a local cutlery manufacturer he wrongly concluded that it was the addition of aluminium oxide and silica from the glass that gave wootz its unique properties.

After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, many Indian wootz steel swords were ordered to be destroyed by the East India Company. The metalworking industry in India went into decline during the period of British Crown control due to various colonial policies, but steel production was revived in India by Jamsetji Tata.



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**Prof. Nandini
Sinha Kapur**

Zinc

Zinc was extracted in India as early as in the 4th to 3rd century BCE. Zinc production may have begun in India, and ancient northwestern India is the earliest known civilization that produced zinc on an industrial scale. The distillation technique was developed around 1200 CE at Zawar in Rajasthan.

In the 17th century, China exported Zinc to Europe under the name of totamu or tutenag. The term tutenag may derive from the South Indian term Tutthanagaa (zinc). In 1597, Libavius, a metallurgist in England received some quantity of Zinc metal and named it as Indian/Malabar lead. In 1738, William



Champion is credited with patenting in Britain a process to extract zinc from calamine in a smelter, a technology that bore a strong resemblance to and was probably inspired by the process used in the Zawar zinc mines in Rajasthan. His first patent was rejected by the patent court on grounds of plagiarising the technology common in India. However, he was granted the patent on his second submission of patent approval. Postlewayt's Universal Dictionary of 1751 still wasn't aware of how Zinc was produced.

The Arthashastra describes the production of zinc. The Rasaratnakara by Nagarjuna describes the production of brass and zinc. There are references of medicinal uses of zinc in the Charaka Samhita (300 BCE). The Rasaratna Samuchaya (800 CE) explains the existence of two types of ores for zinc metal, one of which is ideal for metal extraction while the other is used for medicinal purpose. It also describes two methods of zinc distillation.

Early history (—200 BCE)

Recent excavations in Middle Ganges Valley conducted by archaeologist Rakesh Tewari show iron working in India may have begun as early as 1800 BCE. Archaeological sites in India, such as Malhar, Dadupur, Raja Nala Ka Tila and Lahuradewa in the state of Uttar Pradesh show iron implements in the period between 1800 BCE-1200 BCE. Sahi (1979: 366) concluded that by the early 13th century BCE, iron smelting was definitely practiced on a bigger scale in India, suggesting that the date the technology's early period may well be placed as early as the 16th century BCE.

Some of the early iron objects found in India are dated to 1400 BCE by employing the method of radio carbon dating. Spikes, knives, daggers, arrow-heads, bowls, spoons, saucepans, axes, chisels, tongs, door fittings etc. ranging from 600 BCE—200 BCE have been discovered from several archaeological sites. In Southern India (present day Mysore) iron appeared as early as the 12th or 11th century BCE. These developments were too early for any significant close contact with the northwest of the country.

The earliest available Bronze age swords of copper discovered from the Harappan sites in Pakistan date back to 2300 BCE. Swords have been recovered in archaeological findings throughout the Ganges-Jamuna Doab region of India, consisting of bronze but more commonly copper. Diverse specimens have been discovered in Fatehgarh, where there are several varieties of hilt. These swords have been variously dated to periods between 1700 and 1400 BCE, but were probably used more extensively during the opening centuries of the 1st millennium BCE.

The beginning of the 1st millennium BCE saw extensive developments in iron metallurgy in India. Technological advancement and mastery of iron metallurgy was achieved during this period of peaceful settlements. The years between 322 and 185 BCE saw several advancements being made to the technology involved in metallurgy during the politically stable Maurya period (322—185 BCE). Greek historian Herodotus (431—425 BCE) wrote the first western account of the use of iron in India.

Perhaps as early as 300

BCE—although certainly by 200 CE—high quality steel was being produced in southern India by what Europeans would later call the crucible technique. In this system, high-purity wrought iron, charcoal, and glass were mixed in a crucible and heated until the iron melted and absorbed the carbon. The first crucible steel was the wootz steel that originated in India before the beginning of the common era. Wootz steel was widely exported and traded throughout ancient Europe, China, the Arab world, and became particularly famous in the Middle East, where it became known as Damascus steel. Archaeological evidence suggests that this manufacturing process was already in existence in South India well before the common era.

Zinc mines of Zawar, near Udaipur, Rajasthan, were active during 400 BCE. There are references of medicinal uses of zinc in the Charaka Samhita (300 BCE). The Periplus Maris Erythraei mentions weapons of Indian iron and steel being exported from India to Greece.

Early Common Era—Early Modern Era

The world's first iron pillar was the Iron pillar of Delhi—erected at the times of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (375–413), often considered as one of the finest pieces of ancient metallurgy. The swords manufactured in Indian workshops find written mention in the works of Muhammad al-Idrisi (flourished 1154). Indian Blades made of Damascus steel found their way into Persia. European scholars—during the 14th century—studied Indian casting and metallurgy technology. □□

Swadeshi Jagran Manch
2-Day Residential Workshop
30 November-1 December, 2024 (Prachar Vibhag, Delhi)

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) hosted a significant two-day residential workshop for the Prachar Vibhag at its central office in Ram Krishna Puram, New Delhi. This event was scheduled for 30 November and 1 December 2024.

The first Day of the workshop featured five insightful sessions.

1. Key figures in our organization graced the inaugural session. Satish Kumar ji, Sah-Sanghtak of SJM, a seasoned leader, led a thought-provoking discussion on the role of swadeshi from time immemorial to the present Day and the foundation of SJM.

2. The second session, led by Dr. K G Suresh Ji, an applied and academic expert in journalism, provided practical insights into contemporary media challenges and strategies for overcoming them, both in the short and long term. He cautioned the audience that there are media professionals who, within no time, will change the narrative in favour of the opposite ideology if the union government changes. He meant that those media professionals who seem to be ideologically supporting us may not be true; it's because of the ruling government that such people align with us. Hence, we need to establish and nurture our own media ecosystem. People with vested interests temporarily support us, but the same people will discard us if the union government changes to different ideology.

3. Sri Abhinav Khare Ji from Sangh Prachar Vibhag, shared several case studies of false narrative building and the engagement of global forces to derail our nation's growth. He urged the audience to counter false narratives within the time band. Otherwise, the damage can be irreversible on many occasions. He convinced the audience that we are consistently developing an ecosystem to counter such anti national narratives and that we all should stand in support of our own narrative.

4. Dr. Ashwani Mahajn Ji's session delved into the narratives propagated on the international platform by entities with vested interests, as well as the role of SJM in countering these narratives. This dis-

cussion, particularly relevant in the current global context, kept the audience engaged and interested. He enthused the audience by sharing the success story of the efforts of SJM in policy changes like RCEP, and the struggle of SJM on WTO platforms, both within and outside the nation. He compared the economic policies of socialism and capitalism and the unintentional mistakes of the past fifty to seventy years and the way ahead for us.

5. Dr. Dharmendra Dubey Ji, the SJM Prachar Pramukh, and a practicing media academician instructed the concluding session on the first Day. He demonstrated the challenges and precautions and the relevance of video and reels in attracting viewers to the context. Sri Kulkdeep Sangwan Ji of SJM demonstrated and shared skills based on his professional experience in reel-making and social media handling.

The second Day of the workshop witnessed an insightful session from the leadership of the SJM and the media practitioners.

6. Sri Prafull Ketkar Ji, the editor of Sangh mouthpiece "Organiser" delivered the first session of the second of the workshop. He talked in detail about the mindset problem and expressed grief that, to date, we have not entirely escaped ourselves from the colonial mindset. He highlighted the phase-wise demolition of our heritage and economic resources. He urged for "Swa" in every sphere of life, including education, language, lifestyle, economics, and others. He discussed Marxism, the Wealth of Nations, and the role of many other political scientists and thinkers, leaders, and philosophers who impacted their home country, their ideas travelled international boundaries, and infringed "on the Swa" of many countries, including Bharat. He expressed satisfaction that people are rising to regain the past glory, and everyone has to put in the effort. Initially in this session, Sri. Kashmiri Lal Ji, Sanghatak of SJM joined online and expressed wishes and satisfaction about the workshop.

7. Sri. Harsh Vardhan Tripathi Ji and Sri. Ashok Choudhary Ji jointly addressed the second session of



the second day. Sri. Harsh Ji, well-known media personnel, expressed his view on the role of media in creating propaganda and the role of social media in amplifying the agenda. Sri. Ashok Ji, a successful entrepreneur and filmmaker, coached the audience on increasing social media reach and how even a single individual can successfully attract an audience to their profile.

8. The third session of Sri. Dharmendra Dubey Ji and Sri Lakshman Ji happened on the second Day of the workshop. Dharmendra Ji and Lakshman Ji the national officebearers of SJM shared the relevance and their respective experience within the organization regarding Prachar Tantra. Lakshman Ji exposed the audience to the decision-making process within the organization and the way the Prachar Vibhag of SJM should develop in the future. He suggested that the central leadership attend programs at the local level to engage new people with the thoughts and ideologies of the SJM. Sri. Dharmendra Ji shared the publications and various wings of SJM that are working to impact the public policy and the awareness campaign conducted regularly to change the mindset of ignorant people in favor of “Swadesh Thoughts,” as proposed by Thengdi Ji.

9. The concluding session of the workshop witnessed the participation of the National Convener of SJM- R Sundaram Ji, the National Co-Convener of SJM- Dr. Ashwani Mahajan Ji, and Dr. Raj Kumar Mittal Ji, and the lead speaker Sri. Ashok Srivatava ji from DD News. Sundaram Ji instructed that such workshops should happen more frequently and with

SJM National Convener Sh. R. Sundaram Ji instructed that such workshops should happen more frequently and with a higher number of participants from diverse age groups from all over Bharat, and participation should also be from “Matri-Shakti,” that reflects women’s power.

a higher number of participants from diverse age groups from all over Bharat, and participation should also be from “Matri-Shakti,” that reflects women’s power. Sri. Ashok Srivastav Ji shared the professional hazards of media professionals and the need for considerable changes in print and electronic media. The media is too far away from the ideal situation, and the quality of the information shared from the newsroom has been reduced to just entertainment. At the same time, he expressed satisfaction that social media has democratized and decentralized the platform. There are ways, but the impact factor needs special skills. The doors are open for everyone, and efforts should be made to utilize them for social and national relevance.

The two-day residential workshop was accomplished with the “Kalyan Mantra” and with a commitment to achieve better work for SJM. □□

Data Exclusivity Anti Poor, Anti-Farmer, Anti Self-Reliance: Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



Implementing data exclusivity could impact India's pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors and public health, Ashwani Mahajan, the co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch, has said. In a blog post on data exclusivity, Sh. Mahajan said the topic has been a point of contention since the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Data exclusivity refers to the period during which a manufacturer cannot rely on existing data to support the approval of a generic or similar product. This prevents companies from introducing generics or bio similars until the exclusivity period expires. As a result, the introduction of affordable alternatives is delayed, directly impacting the consumer, particularly in sectors like pharmaceuticals, where price reductions post-patent expiry are critical to ensuring affordable access to medicines.

He says India's pharmaceutical industry has been able to manufacture generic versions of medicines as soon as patents expire, often reducing the price of medicines by up to 90%. This has led to the establishment of government schemes like the PM Jan Aushadhi Kendras, where generic medicines are sold at discounted rates. The introduction of data exclusivity could put an end to these benefits, forcing consumers to pay much higher prices for medicines.

Despite the government's clear stance against data exclusivity, multinational corporations (MNCs) and foreign governments continue to push for its inclusion, particularly through Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). While these efforts have been largely unsuccessful for over two decades, recent developments signal a renewed push that could harm domestic industries and public health.

One example, Sh. Mahajan points out, is a No-

vember 4, 2024, order from the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. "As per this order a committee has been constituted to explore and examine the provisions related to data protection for agrochemicals. This order, has been issued on the pretext, 'to study the requirements of regulatory data protection and global best practices on data protection with the intent to introduce new molecules and pesticides that have no alternatives aimed at protecting major crops from these losses due to new invasive pests and diseases'," he writes.

India has consistently opposed data exclusivity in trade negotiations. Its withdrawal from the 2019 Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was partly due to provisions seeking to "extend pharmaceutical corporations' patent terms beyond the usual 20 years," says Mahajan, adding that such measures threaten access to affordable medicines.

"In many of the FTAs on table, including UK, USA and EU, this issue of data exclusivity is definitely, a cause of major concern for Indian industry, especially pharmaceutical and chemicals," he writes in the blog.

On the official position, Sh. Mahajan says that government memorandums, including a 2015 note on the Pesticide Management Bill, have consistently flagged data exclusivity as "TRIPS-plus" and if "this provision is extended to agro-chemicals, there will be pressure from MNCs to extend the same to pharmaceutical products also," which would delay generic drug entry and inflate prices.

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/data-exclusivity-anti-poor-anti-farmer-anti-self-reliance-ashwani-mahajan-7313545>

Why Swiss response to Nestle SC verdict may not be just a tax issue for India

Earlier this week, Switzerland unilaterally withdrew the 'most favoured nation or MFN' status it had accorded to India under the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) the countries had signed in 1994.

The Swiss authorities termed it as a reciprocal action against a 2023 verdict of India's Supreme Court which made Swiss multinational Nestle liable to pay a 'higher' rate of tax in India. Nestle had appealed to the SC that the company should be taxed at a lower rate because of certain provisions under DTAA that were added when it was amended in 2010. Due to



the withdrawal of MFN status. Indian entities will pay the revised (10%) tax on income generated from Switzerland from January 1, 2025.

The Swiss government's action against the legal interpretation of the existing bilateral agreement by India's apex court came at a time when the Swiss Parliament is expected to ratify the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) signed after decades of negotiations between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member States Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein and India in early 2025.

While DTAA and TEPA are independent agreements, the timing of the Swiss announcement and the doubts it attempts to create among foreign investors over the credibility of India's DTAA commitments can be a cause of concern as India's readiness to accept TEPA was primarily rooted in an assurance given by EFTA members to invest \$100 billion in India and create 1 million direct jobs in the country within 15 years of the operationalisation of TEPA.

Due to the same reason, withdrawal of MFN status may demand closer scrutiny of the promised India has offered under EFTA as and when it gets implemented through appropriate amendments to Indian regulations, experts say. "We have to follow the law of the land. The promise of bringing in investments cannot be a reason to not follow the law of the land. Reciprocation should not be based on verdicts of our courts", says Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-Convener of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM). "It is highly objectionable on the part of the governments of the other countries to impose some conditions based on court orders. Investments are fine, but are not above legal rulings", he adds.

The TEPA comprises 14 chapters with a main focus on market access related to goods, rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade,

investment promotion, market access on services, intellectual property rights, trade and sustainable development and other legal and horizontal provisions. Under the agreement, EFTA is offering 92.2% of its tariff lines which covers 99.6% of India's exports. The EFTA's market access offer covers 100% of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).

The commerce ministry had stated that India is offering 82.7% of its tariff lines which covers 95.3% of EFTA exports of which more than 80% of imports are gold and the effective duty on gold remains untouched. The ministry also says that the sensitivity related to Production Linked Incentive (PLI) in sectors such as pharma, medical devices & processed food etc. have been taken while extending offers and sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in exclusion list under the trade agreement.

Incidentally, in one of the first official responses from the Indian side on the Swiss decision, Randhir Jaiswal, official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said TEPA could take precedence over DTAA and Switzerland may renegotiate DTAA with India. "My understanding is that with Switzerland, because of EFTA, the double taxation treaty we have is going to be re-negotiated. I don't have an update on the MFN status", he said in response to a question at MEA's weekly press briefing on December 13.

The ratification of TEPA by Switzerland's Parliament could happen first. DTAA re-negotiation next.

<https://www.fortuneindia.com/macro/why-swiss-response-to-nestle-is-verdict-may-not-be-just-a-tax-issue-for-india/>
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Proposal To Impose 35% GST On 'Sin Goods' Not A Good Idea: SJM

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), along with other trade associations, has criticized the proposal to impose a 35% GST on "sin goods" like tobacco and aerated beverages. They argue that this higher tax would lead to increased smuggling, loss of revenue, and harm small retailers while burdening consumers. The All India Consumer Products Distributors Federation (AICP-DF) and the Indian Sellers Collective, which represents various trade bodies, also expressed concerns over the recommendations made by the Group of Ministers (GoM) regarding GST rate rationalization.

Earlier this month, the GoM, led by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, proposed a 35%

special rate for sin goods, including cigarettes, tobacco products, and aerated beverages. The GoM also suggested a review of tax rates on apparel. SJM criticized the idea of adding another GST slab, arguing that it would complicate the system and encourage smuggling, ultimately defeating the efficiency of taxation. Mahajan also reiterated that while the fight against tobacco was important, it required a more comprehensive approach.

SJM highlighted that high taxes on cigarettes have led to a booming black market, which would only grow with the introduction of this new tax rate. SJM pointed out that China benefits significantly from the smuggling of cheaper, more harmful cigarettes. There were also concerns raised about the health consequences of high taxes, as people might turn to more dangerous, cheaper tobacco products when legal options become unaffordable.

The AICPDF and Indian Sellers Collective also opposed the proposal, arguing that it would negatively impact small retailers, raise consumer costs, and encourage the black market. They urged the government to focus on simplifying GST compliance, reducing rates in a balanced way, and ensuring a stable business environment. Both organizations warned that the proposed changes could undermine the benefits of the GST system and cause lasting damage to India's retail sector.

<https://www.newsc.com/business/proposal-to-impose-35-gst-on-sin-goods-not-a-good-idea-swadeshi-jagran-manch/>
#google_rignette

SJM expresses concern over falling Total Fertility Rate

Swadeshi Jagran Manch expressed concern over the fast declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which means the number of babies an average woman aged 15-49 bears over her lifetime, and its likely impact on the future growth of population entering, which is getting into negative zone; and its impact on existence of our society. SJM said that Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh chief Dr. Mohan Bhagwat has also expressed his concern over falling total fertility rates in India below 2.0. It's notable that, Lancet in his latest publication reported that India's TFR has come down to 1.91 by the year 2021.

Further Lancet's study has projected that by the year 2050, TFR may fall to 1.29. It's notable that in the year 1950, the fertility rate was 6.18 children per woman, SJM added.



A TFR of 2.1 is considered 'replacement-level fertility'. This means that a woman having two children replaces herself and her partner with two new lives. It ensures that each generation replaces itself. The nation has to ensure that the population doesn't really fall.

SJM said, "We need to take this warning seriously, as Sarsanghchalak Ji has said that a decline in TFR, to less than the replacement rate, means that with this the societies cease to exist, without anyone destroying them. Therefore, society is faced with the danger of extinction in the long run, which is a cause of major worry, and has been said that TFR shouldn't in any case fall below 2.1." Globally, also the trend is towards generally declining TFR. We see that the developed countries with constantly declining and low TFR have been facing a contraction in their population. TFR has fallen much below the replacement level of 2.1 in South Korea, Japan, Germany etc., threatening their very existence. Bharat must learn from these countries and take remedial measures to reverse the declining trend, SJM added.

Due to the decreasing infant mortality rate, the youth population in the country started increasing continuously, a phenomenon known as 'demographic dividend'. If we take the data from 2001, the population of youth (age group of 15 to 34 years) in the country was 33.80 per cent of the total population, which increased to 34.85 per cent in 2011.

It is currently more than 35.3 per cent of the total population. When one looks at absolute numbers, it becomes clear that today, India has the largest number of youth in comparison to any other country. This segment of the population can contribute more to development.

SJM said that with changing times, economists have started realising that the rising population is no longer a burden, and with fast-advancing health services, the death rate, especially the infant mortality rate has come down drastically, improving chances for our

children to survive longer, adding further to demographic dividend and contribute to the development of the nation.

“However, our efforts towards improving the chances of survival of our children would not suffice if the fertility rate falls to less than the replacement rate. Even the population Policy of India of the year 2000 clearly stated, ‘By adopting cross-sectoral working strategies, the medium-term goal is to raise the TFR to replacement level (TFR of 2.1) by 2010’. It has further stated its long-term goal, ‘to stabilize the population by 2045 at a level that satisfies the demands of societal development, environmental preservation, and sustainable economic growth’”, SJM said.

SJM, in its National Council meeting held in Lucknow, in June 2024 had passed a resolution also in this regard, expressing concerns over these trends in TFR. The Manch calls upon the people of Bharat in general and opinion makers, policy analysts and policymakers, in particular, to delve upon this issue of declining TFR to less than replacement level, endangering the existence of the society in the long run.

“We need to come clear that today the problem faced by the Indian economy is to maintain its population so that our development efforts don’t face any hurdle. We must understand that if we fail to rise to the occasion, it may cause a dangerous imbalance in the population in the form of raising the dependency burden, slowing down our growth,” SJM added.

<https://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/274820545/swadeshi-jagran-manch-expresses-concern-over-falling-total-fertility-rate>

Govt committed to welfare of Beedi workers: Union Minister

Union Labour & Employment Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya said the Modi government is committed to the welfare of beedi workers and their families with the help of several welfare schemes.

Addressing at the launch of the book titled The Need to Preserve, Protect, and Promote Beedi Workers' Livelihood on Wednesday, the minister stressed that the mantra of the Modi government is "sabka saath sabka vikas".

He said welfare of poor people, farmers, and labourers is the top priority of the Modi government.

The book was released by the All India Bidi Industry Federation (AIBIF), in partnership with the Triniketan Foundation for Development, New Delhi. The book is authored by Dr Anila Nair and Dr M M Rehman.



Other dignitaries included Praful Bhai Patel, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Dr Ashwani Mahajan, National Convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, and B Surendran, All India Organising Secretary, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh.

The guests launched major studies on the Triniketan Foundation's website (triniketanfoundation.org.in) along with two micro studies conducted in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, and Bagdah, West Bengal.

The study revealed that for many women workers, beedi rolling is more than just a job; it is a means of dignity and self-reliance. It provides them with an opportunity to earn a livelihood from the comfort of their homes, sparing them the burden of transport costs.

Several women shared how this opportunity had empowered them with agency and independence.

This impact is especially visible in Solapur, Bengaluru, Mysore, and Mandya.

The event called for reconsideration of GST on beedis, stressing that for millions, beedi rolling is more than an industry and it's a lifeline.

The event aimed to highlight the plight of beedi workers brought together over 25 Members of Parliament and assemblies cutting across political parties, alongside major trade union representatives, officials from the Department of Labour, and beedi workers from Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.

Praful Patel said, "It is important that people have access to employment, and the beedi industry's key characteristic is that it provides employment in small villages where jobs are scarce." Dr Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-Convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, said since the increase in taxation (GST) on beedis to 28 per cent from very low excise duty in the past; there has been large-scale dumping by cheap cigarettes from China causing a huge loss to the exchequer, apart from major loss of employment from this major labour-intensive industry.

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<https://www.deccanherald.com/business/govt-committed-to-welfare-of-beedi-workers-union-minister-mansukh-mandaviya-3325025>

Swadeshi Activities Prant Sammelans

Pictorial Glimpses



Haryana



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Swadeshi Activities
Babu Genu Balidan Diwas
(12 December 2024)

Pictorial Glimpses

