

Swadeshi

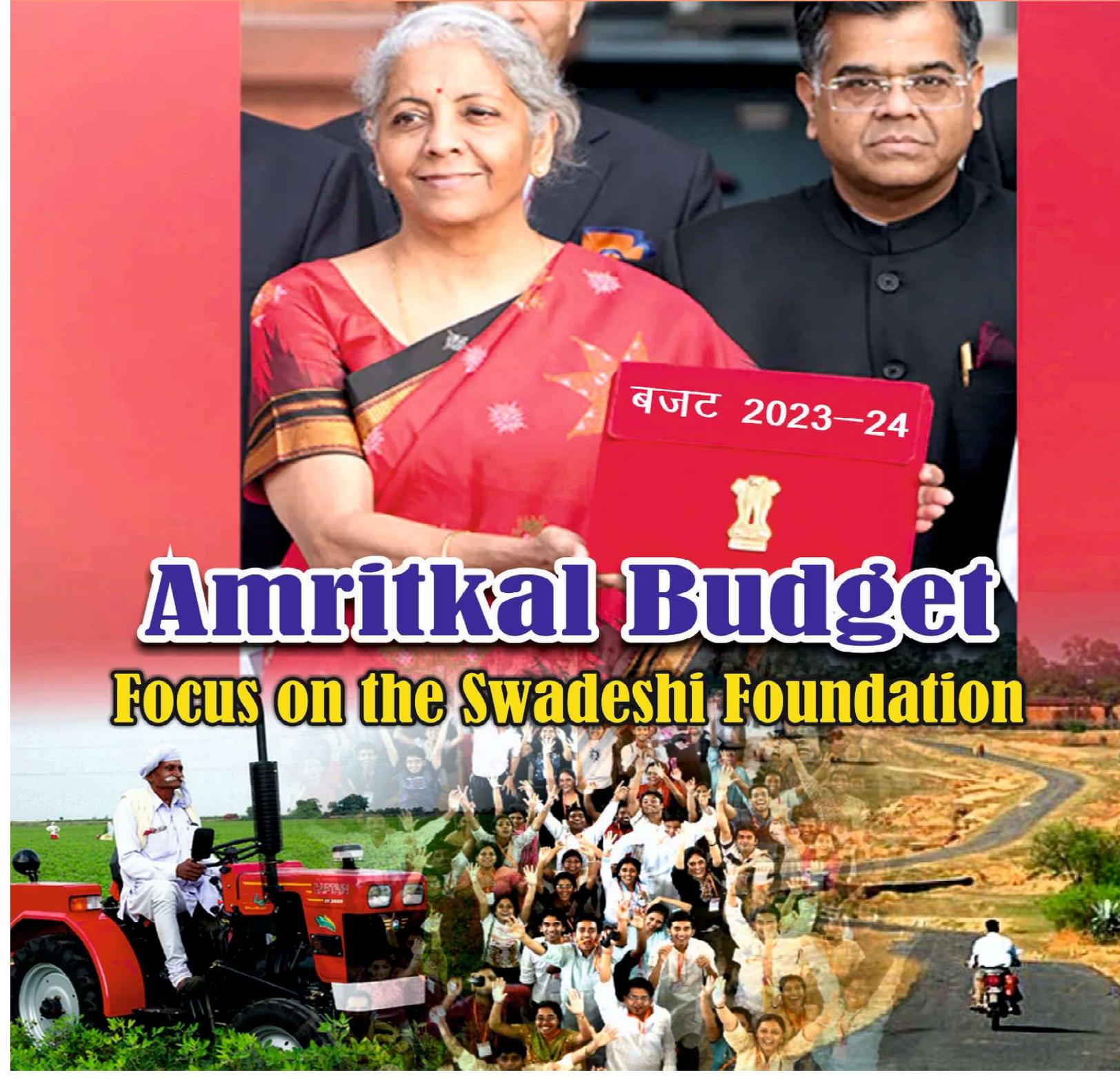
PATRIKA

FEBRUARY 2023



Amritkal Budget

Focus on the Swadeshi Foundation



Swadeshi Activities

Swadeshi Mela

Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Pictorial Glimpses



Bokaro, Jharkhand



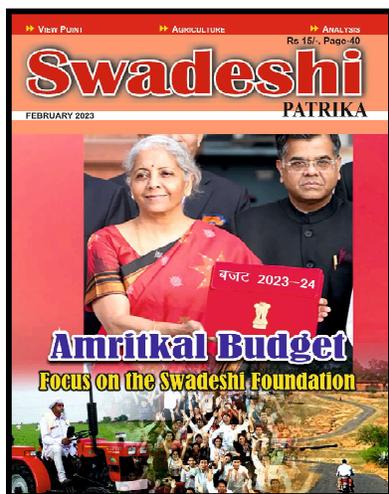
Swavlambhi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

Entrepreneurship Encouragement Conferences

(उद्यमिता प्रोत्साहन सम्मेलन)



Narmadapur, MP



Vol-28, No. 2
Magh-Phalgun 2079 February 2023

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

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Universal Access to Digital Library

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced about setting up of a National Digital Library for children and youth to facilitate access to quality books across subjects during the presentation of the Union Budget.

The aim will be to provide quality books across geographies, languages, genres and levels and device-agnostic accessibility to help children and adolescents overcome learning losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The states will be encouraged to set up physical libraries at panchayat and ward levels and provide infrastructure for accessing the National Digital Library resources.

The National Book Trust (NBT), the Children's Book Trust (CBT), and other sources will be encouraged to replenish titles in regional languages in these libraries. The availability of the resources in regional language is a challenge and this arrangement will address such constraints and motivate the publishers to make such arrangements at the earliest; as the volume of the same content will be replicated multiple times as there are many regional languages in our country. The government will also try to instil a culture of reading by collaborating with NGOs and providing age-appropriate reading material to everyone.

The government had already announced setting up of a national digital university in the last Budget to resolve the problem of limited access to seats within the higher education ecosystem. This digital university is likely to start operations in June-July this year. The university will offer exclusively online courses from its partner institutes, both private and public universities and will function under a hub-and-spoke model.

These two steps by the government will give a much-needed boost to the universal access of library resources to remote areas of Indian Education system.

— Kumar Gaurav, Samastipur, Bihar

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

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

IFSC: BKID 0006025 (Ramakrishnapuram)

Annual Subscription : 150/-

Life Membership : 1500/-

Kindly write your full name and address in capital letters.

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Quote-Unquote



The first budget of Amrit Kaal will lay a strong foundation for building a developed India. The dream of every class will be fulfilled. This budget will fulfill the dreams of poor, middle class, aspirational society including farmers.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Bharat



The budget focuses on development and welfare, with priority to provide assistance to farmers, women, marginalized sections and the middle class.

Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, Bharat



India has been a bright spot when the world is struggling with difficulties. This budget will make India the growth engine of the world.

Ashwini Vaishnav, Railway Minister, Bharat



With a focus on rural development, infrastructure and small scale industries, the budget will spur growth, and changes in the income tax structure will provide relief to the middle class.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-convenor, SJM

Focus on Growth- Relief to Middle Class

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the first complete budget of 'Amrit Kaal' and the last complete budget of Modi-02 Government, before the Parliament on 1 February 2023. As expected, the income tax burden (in the new tax regime) has been reduced for the middle class, including for ultra rich, which will have an impact on the total revenue of Rs 37,000 crore. New income tax system may give relief to the tax payers in terms of ease in filing returns, with lower tax burden.

In today's era where GST has gone out of the ambit of the budget; and hardly much possibility of any tweaks in corporate taxation, the allocation of government expenditure is more in the eyes of economic analysts. No doubt, the allocation of government expenditure is the mirror of the policies of the government; and that is perfectly getting reflected in the budget. Allocation for infrastructure, rural development, green growth, education and digitization in the budget are welcome features of the Budget.

Promotion of millets in the International Year of Millets, hiking agricultural credit, with focus on allied activities like dairy and fisheries, encouragement to cooperative etc. are the major attractions of this budget. Promotion of dairy, fishery sector while promoting multi purpose primary agricultural credit co-operative societies (PACS) has been included in the budget. Increase in agricultural credit target to Rs 20 lakh crore is a welcome step. It will give a boost to all agriculture and allied activities.

As per the new announcement, moving from 'Aspirational District' to 'Aspirational Blocks' scheme in the rural areas, focus seems to be on the rural development in the backward blocks. Allocation for irrigation in the drought prone areas is yet another attempt for fostering more inclusive rural growth.

Carrying forward last year's resolution, the share of effective capital expenditure (including support to state governments for capital formation) has been raised to Rs 13.7 lakh crore, which is 4.5 per cent of GDP. It will benefit infrastructure building and other types of asset creation. Capital expenditure of Rs 2.40 lakh crore For Railways, the provision of various types of capital expenditure, including logistics of Rs 7500 crore makes this budget special. This much capital expenditure is a record not only in terms of quantity, but also as a percentage of GDP in recent decades.

Another welcome focus in the budget is MSME sector. Extending Credit Guarantee for MSMEs, giving relief to MSMEs who could not fulfil their contracts with government by releasing their caution money, PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman scheme is a welcome step for empowering artisans, who are at the bottom of the pyramid.

Emphasis on green growth is one of the highlights of this budget. Provisions like Green Hydrogen Mission, Renewable Energy, Gobardhan, Green Credit, etc., can be considered as signs of India's resolution to 'net zero' by 2070 for protection of environment.

Government has been focusing, on tourism for some time. Along with improving connectivity, there are many provisions in this budget including self-employment and skill building in this sector.

According to the revised estimates (RE) for the year 2022-23, the total expenditure is expected to be approximately Rs 42 lakh crore. In comparison, a provision of about Rs 45 lakh crore has been kept this year (Budget Estimates), which means an increase of only 7 percent. Expenditure has been limited, perhaps with an aim to limit the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent, however, the burden of fiscal prudence is not being felt on capital expenditure. Rather increase in Capex, is a welcome part of the budget. Growth orientation, with focus on rural development, infrastructure and MSMEs, is the speciality of the Budget.

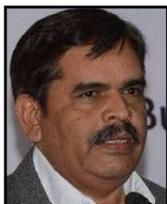
Hindenburg is no holy cow



A firm named Hindenburg Research has made some serious allegations against the Adani group in its recent report, including allegations of fraud and unduly influencing of share prices. After that there has been a huge fall in the shares of Adani group companies. It is being said that due to the fall in shares caused by this report, Gautam Adani's net worth has decreased by \$ 30 billion i.e. Rs 2.5 lakh crore. Not only this, total valuation of the Adani group, has suffered a loss of more than 65 billion dollars i.e. more than Rs 5 lakh crore so far.

Significantly, after Narendra Modi government, the companies of the Gautam Adani group have expanded rapidly. It has also been alleged by the opposition parties that the government has been extraordinarily been kind to Adani. After the report of Hindenburg Research, opposition parties have also sharpened their attack on Adani Group and the government.

It is not possible to comment on the veracity of the Hindenburg report, but since the Hindenburg report has come only about the Adani group, it is only the Adani group that is being held accountable for misreporting or frauds. Can the allegations leveled against the Adani group be applied on other corporate groups as well?



It has to be understood that Hindenburg Research is a commercial firm whose business is 'short selling'.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

What is Hindenburg Research and their allegations

Hindenburg Research is a forensic financial research firm founded by Nathan Anderson that analyzes equities, credits and derivatives. It is being said that earlier it has exposed the mistakes and frauds of 16 companies. Including disclosures about electric truck company Nikola Corporation and Twitter, in the context of its acquisition drama of Twitter by Elon Musk. That is, the disclosure about the Adani group by Hindenburg Research is not the first such act of Hindenburg.

It has to be understood that Hindenburg Research is a commercial firm whose business is 'short selling'. In stock market terminology, 'short selling' refers to a deal, when a firm or individual sells more shares than the shares in its possession. In such a situation, at the time of settlement of the deal, the 'short seller' has to settle according to the price prevailing at that time, or extend it further through derivatives. The seller selling more shares than he holds (i.e. short selling) naturally operates on the assumption that the share price will be lower in the future and that the short seller will benefit by selling the shares at a higher price earlier. That is, it cannot be ruled out that Hindenburg Research, whose interests are linked to the

decline in the prices of shares of companies, is also linked with the objective of making money through such so-called disclosures. That is, it becomes a case of 'conflict of interest'.

It may be interesting to note that same Hindenburg was restricted by Tis Hazari court in Delhi by withdrawing tweets by them in July 2022 on application by Ebix, a company in which Hindenburg Research held a short position. Ebix also managed to restrict Google search results pointing to the Ebix report.

What is the business of Adani?

Adani has become the country's fastest growing conglomerate with diverse businesses including world-class infrastructure and other logistics, mining, metals, energy etc.. Adani's companies include companies like Adani Ports and SEZs, Adani Power, Adani Transmission, Adani Enterprises, Adani Total Gas and Adani Wilmark. If we talk about Adani Airports, many airports including Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Bengaluru, Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram are being developed and operated by Adani Group. Adani Green Energy manufactures solar panels and other equipment in large quantities. Due to this, country's dependence on other countries including China has started decreasing. Several ports and Special Economic Zones are being constructed and operated by Adani Ports and SEZs. Recently, a big effort has been made by the Government of India aimed at self-reliance in semiconductor technology and the government has announced incentives of Rs 60 thousand crore, linked with the production of semicon-

ductors. Under the same, it is believed that soon the semiconductors made by Adani Group will hit the markets. That is, if seen, all the companies of Adani Group are creating real assets in the field of manufacturing and infrastructure in the country.

Can the country be harmed?

Some people believe that defamation of the Adani group by Hindenburg, and the huge fall in the stock market because of the same, may dent the reputation not only of the Adani group but of the entire country and alienate foreign investors from India. But it has to be understood that the report of an agency with conflict of interest should be read with a pinch of salt. India is currently the center of attraction for investors from all over the world. Due to India's huge market; world's highest growth rate; progress in various sectors; effective policies of Government of India in the manufacturing sector, foreign direct investment is increasing in the country. Today, the country has political stability with a pro-development government; and progress in every field, thanks to a pro business environment. Democracy and strong legal system are main reasons for this attraction towards India. Therefore, to assume that India's investment climate can be vitiated by reports of an agency with a conflict of interest, targeting a company would be incorrect.

Asset creation vs cash burning

There are two types of business models running in the country and the world today. One is the conventional model of asset creation, in which production units, infrastructure and various types of

logistics are built and through that production capacity and GDP are increased. This model of business has been adopted by Adani Group. Due to this, self-reliance is increasing in various sectors in the country. On the other hand another model of business is also in operation, which is called 'cash burning model'. In this, consumer markets are expanded through various types of discounts by burning cash, and on the basis of that the valuation of the firm is increased for attracting investors and taking investment from them. Many companies from all over globe and India like Amazon, Paytm, Zomato, Nykaa, Flipkart in India have been growing riding on 'cash burning'. Recently many of these cash burning companies mobilised money from Indian investors by issuing IPO through 'SEBI'. Most of these investors have lost 40 to 70 percent of their money, so far.

It has to be understood that when many rich people of India, thinking that living in India is not gainful, tied up their assets and migrated to foreign countries; however, some rich people decided to stay back in India and expanded their businesses at varying pace. Be it Ambani, Adani, Tata, Mahindra, Birla group companies, ITC, L&T and many others; these groups and companies have worked hard to take India's growth journey forward. Certainly these companies are better than cash burning businesses. In such a situation, these companies have to be saved from the attacks on Indian enterprises by foreign agencies. If any kind of mistake is made by these companies, then it will also be necessary to correct, under India's legal framework. □□

Amritkal Budget – Focus on the Swadeshi Foundation

The Central Budget presented in Parliament on 1st February 2023 amidst global turbulence and uncertainties arising out of Russia-Ukraine War and the recessionary trend around the World, is broadly focused on the principles and ideology of ‘Swadeshi’ to achieve an economic growth of 6.5 per cent in the Financial Year 2023-24. It has relied upon the economic growth by giving emphasis on the five broader principles of Swawalamban.

1. Skill Development and providing incentives to youth as engine of growth for Entrepreneurship including innovative Start-ups in rural areas and encouragement to research and development and providing adequate credit facilities to the MSME sector. There is an effort for transformation through innovation by harnessing the Human Resource and by utilizing its potential for the intellectual resource.

2. Emphasising on the development for inclusive growth through Co-operatives. It is important to note that the share of Agriculture and Allied Sector which was on a downhill path since 1991 and had come down from 35% of GDP to 16.38% in 2011-12 has regained its share to a large extent and now in 2021-22 its share in GDP has increased to 20.19%. If the process for inclusive growth with financial as well as overall economic inclusion continues, the farmers income will increase to a dignified level and they will not depend on Government support and its subsidies.

3. Promoting through marketing and other infrastructure support for local produce of artisans and rural cottage industry with the help of KVIC, APEDA and NABARD.

4. Adoption of the idea of decentralization by involving the fishermen, farmers by setting up farmers’ producers’ organization and by providing support to self-Help groups. The number of self-help groups have increased from 19 lakh during 2009-2014 to 81 lakh involving nine crores working women as on 31st December 2022 which has substantially increased from two crores women in 2009-2014 duration and the amount of assistance to these self-help group has also increased from Rs. 80000 crores to Rs. 4,93000 crores over 2014 to 2022. There is plan to set up Digital Public Infrastructure with the help of artificial intelligence for informative solutions to farmers. Making India Global hub for Millets and promoting natural farming and building infrastructure for storage and transport will ensure remunerative prices to the farmers.

5. Promoting green Hydrogen and protecting Environment to achieve the goal of Net Zero by supporting alternative sources of renewal energy and by setting up 500 new Waste to wealth Plants as part of the circular economy under Gobardhan Scheme and Mangrove plantation along the coastline for Green Growth.

The Economic Survey presented a day before the Budget underlines the fact that “Economy has nearly recouped what was lost, renewed what had paused and reenergised what had slowed during the Pandemic and since the conflict in Europe.”



The Budget announcements are positive and it will depend upon us about its proper implementation and for exploiting the opportunity in the next 20 -25 years to make India the strongest economy of the World.

Dr. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal



Indian economy has proved to be resilient to global shocks as have proved during the Asian Crisis of 1997, Global meltdown in 2008-09 and again during the Covid-19, followed by Russia-Ukraine War. The economic growth in the current Fiscal Year is likely to be 6.8 per cent as against China 3.4 per cent and US 2.4 per cent. This gives a clear indication that India@2047 will become the largest economy in the world once again as it was until 1700 AD contributing more than 25 percent of the global economy before the arrival of British in India.

Increase in capital investment outlay by 33.4 % to Rs.10 crores and allocation of Rs. 2.4 lakh crores for Railway is the highest ever capital outlay and will have a multiplier effect on the private investment and will thus open the gateway for continuous growth to achieve the target of not only US\$ 5 Trillion economy but will reach to US\$ 10 trillion by 2030.

The Fiscal deficit has come down from 9.2 per cent in 2020-21 and 6.7 per cent in 2021-22 to 6.4 per cent in 2022-23 and has been projected to be just 5.9 per cent in 2023-24. Revenue deficit has decreased from 4.4 per cent in 2021-22 to 4.1 per cent in 2022-23 and has been projected at just

2.9 per cent in 2023-24. Tax collections (net to Centre) have increased from Rs. 18.04 lakh crores to Rs.20.86 lakh crores with impressive increase in GST on an average of Rs.1.5 lakh crores Per month and this has resulted in to substantial benefits to states including West Bengal to at least around Rs. 10000 crores.

The challenge for the Government is the income inequality, rising unemployment and the inflation or the price rise. Modi Government has given a call for Aatmanirbhar Bharat and has undertaken make in India drive by giving more emphasis on the manufacturing sector through production link incentives. However major part of the consumables and the spare parts for automobiles, electronics, mobile phones are imported. Our dependence on energy sector is highest in the world and therefore the prevailing current account deficit is also a big challenge. Our rupee is under pressure and has devalued from around Rs 74-75 before COVID period is now Rs82-83 and the increase in interest rates by Fed Reserve is causing outflow of capital by the foreign institutional investors coupled with declining exports due to slowing global economy. Although there is no imminent danger in the

balance of payment as our forex reserves are sufficient but if the global inflation continues due to Russian-Ukraine War, there may be further spurt in oil prices and will have double edged impact on our inflation firstly due to devaluation and secondly due to cascading effect of increased crude oil prices.

Under such prevailing global uncertainties the Government has opted for strong measures for increased capital expenditure for building infrastructure and to maintain liquidity and adequate demand for industrial goods and to maintain the growth momentum. However, we must motivate our private sector to collaborate and spend on research for scientific inventions in order to manufacture qualitative goods at competitive prices so that in the long run we can increase our exports and conserve our foreign exchange. Thus there is a need to strengthen our innovation on the one hand and also strengthen our exchange rate on the other hand. This alone can make our manufacturing sector strong, create more employment and help controlling our price rise. This will bring out our economy from vicious cycle of unemployment and low income to full employment and higher income with more purchasing power in the hands of the masses. We are the country with highest number of youth and the working population and must take the benefit of demographic dividend. The Budget announcements are positive and it will depend upon us about its proper implementation and for exploiting the opportunity in the next 20 - 25 years to make India the strongest economy of the World. □□

Dr Dhanpat Ram Agarwal: *National Co-Convenor, SJM*

Saptarishi and Budget's proposals

Indian budgets are now more for future than for the present. Last budget for 2022-23 talked about 'Gatishakti' and 'monetisation' of public assets. Current budget is talking of 'Saptarishi'- seven priorities- so to guide the Amrit Kaal Indian economic development. By listening or reading the budget speech, one feels happy to see that finance minister has so much for India's future development. However, till the speech reaches to personal tax part, one fails to understand what FM is proposing to solve the current problems of Indian economy. At the end of budget speech, it can safely be said that the budget has more for future and less for current.

'Saptarishi' will guide the economic policies

FM called 'Saptarishi' to look after the development policies. These 'Saptarishis', however, are not the old rishis like Kashyap, Atri or vashisht but the modern must be priorities for Indian economic development. These can be defined as ultimate results of development. The FM of course expect this development to happen not in the current year but in 'Amrit Kaal'- a 25-year period. This period, however, is too long a period to wait for Inclusive Development, Reaching the Last Mile, Infrastructure development, Unleashing the Indian Potential of growth, Green Growth, engage Youth Power and develop Indian Financial Sector fully.

The 'Saptarishi' priorities

The 'Saptarishi' or the priorities listed in the budget 2023-24 were, Inclusive development- agriculture and cooperatives, health, education and skilling; Reaching to the last mile, that is antyodaya and include tribal development, micro irrigation, eklavya model schools and digitisation of ancient inscriptions; infrastructure development include increased capital investment, extend help to state governments, create urban infrastructure and increase connectivity to port, coal, fertiliser etc.; unleashing the potentials include, AI development, data governance, ease



The budget's 'Saptarishi' and government's intent to spend more on capital account may help the economy. As past performance of government announcements have shown positive results, hopes for budget promises are more.

Anil Javalekar



doing business, E-courts, 5G services etc.; Green growth include green credit, alternate fertilisers, mangrove plantation, optimal usage of wastelands etc.; youth power include launching new courses, boosting tourism and Unity mall etc.; Financial sector include introduction of national financial information registry, data processing centre, savings schemes to mahila and senior citizens, credit guarantee to MSMEs etc. All announcements and new programmes launched in 2023-24 budget were to boost these sectors.

What budget 2023-24 proposed

1. Agriculture and allied sector: The important schemes like Crop Insurance Scheme, Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS), Distribution of Pulses to State / Union Territories for Welfare Schemes, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan), Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojana, Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna and National Mission on Natural Farming will continue as they are. There are new proposals like building up of Digital public infrastructure for agriculture and setting up of Agriculture Accelerator Fund; cluster-based and value chain approach through Public Private Partnerships (PPP) to enhance the productivity of extra-long staple cotton; an Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program to boost availability of disease-free, quality planting material for high value horticultural crops; making India a global hub for 'Shree Anna'; PM Matsya Sampada Yojana; setting up of decen-

tralised storage capacity in cooperatives; assistance for Upper Bhadra Project to provide sustainable micro irrigation and filling up of surface tanks for drinking water.

2. Infrastructure development: The budget has focused on this sector. The Capital investment is being increased to Rs 10 lakh crore. The budget to continue the 50-year interest free loan to state governments for one more year to spur investment in infrastructure. One hundred critical transport infrastructure projects, for last and first mile connectivity for ports, coal, steel, fertilizer, and food grains sectors have been identified. Fifty additional airports, heliports, water aerodromes and advance landing grounds will be revived for improving regional air connectivity. An Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) will be established through use of priority sector lending shortfall and will be used by public agencies to create urban infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

3. Personal tax eased: Increased the rebate limit to Rs 7 lakh in the new tax regime. Reduced the number of slabs to five and increased the tax exemption limit to Rs 3 lakh. Extended the benefit of standard deduction to the new tax regime. The leave encashment on retirement of non-government salaried employees increased to Rs 25 lakh. Relief given to sugar co-operatives. Increased the threshold limits for presumptive scheme of taxation for eligible businesses from Rs 2 crore to Rs 3 crore and for specified professions from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 75 lakh. Tax on capital gains by investing proceeds of such gains in residential property capped at Rs 10 crore.

4. For poor and senior citizens: The financial support will be provided to poor persons who are in prisons and unable to afford the penalty or the bail amount. A scheme to supply free food grain to all Antyodaya and priority households for the next one year will be implemented. Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, will be made available for a two-year period up to March 2025. This will offer deposit facility upto Rs 2 lakh in the name of women or girls for a tenor of 2 years at fixed interest rate of 7.5 per cent with partial withdrawal option. The maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh.

5. Other important announcements: One hundred and fifty-seven new nursing colleges will be established. A Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia by 2047 will be launched. Teachers' training will be re-envisioned through innovative pedagogy, curriculum transaction, continuous professional development, dipstick surveys, and ICT implementation. A National Digital Library for children and adolescents will be set-up. Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission will be launched. Three centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence will be set-up in top educational institutions. A National Data Governance Policy will be brought out. E-Courts project will be launched. A Green Credit Programme will be notified under the Environment (Protection) Act. "PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth" will be launched to incentivize States & Union Territories

[Continued on page no. 13]

Budget 2023-24 boosts Green Growth



The Budget proposed Lithium cell customs tax reduction from 21% to 13% and EV battery subsidy continuation for another year stimulates the demand of EVs will result in greener vehicles on roads by boosting the electric vehicles market and, subsequently, into the accomplishment of green growth.

Dr. S. Lingamurthy & Shivanjali Shukla

India's Economic growth is estimated to be 6.8% in 2023-24 financial year, being the highest among all major economies, irrespective of the sluggish global growth due to the COVID pandemic and the Russia – Ukraine war. The finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, presented the Union Budget of Amrit Kaal in Parliament. The Union budget 2023-24 is built on the outline drawn for India@100. "Amrit kaal's" goal is to improve the quality of life of our people with inclusive growth and development, in which the prosperous outcome of action reaches all.

The 'use-and-dispose' economy currently in place, characterized by witless and destructive consumerism, is to be replaced by the circular economy towards attentive and purposeful utilization. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, proclaimed Mission LiFE at the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26) to put people's actions at the heart of the global climate action narrative. The Mission is to encourage people to engage in simple, everyday activities that, when widely adopted, can effectively halt climate change.

One of the seven 'SAPTARSHI's i.e, Green Growth, stated among seven priority sectors by the Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitaraman considers India's current emphasis on green growth with a budget of 19,700 crores. The recently established National Green Hydrogen Mission will aid in the transformation of the economy to one with a low carbon intensity, lessen reliance on imports of fossil fuels, and enable the nation to assume technological and market leadership in this emerging industry with a hope to have a 5 MMT annual production rate by 2030. In addition, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has allocated rupees 35,000 crores in the Budget for energy transition, net zero emissions, and energy security for priority capital investment by the concerned ministry.

Sustainable economic development is the need of the 21st century; a Battery Energy Storage System with a capacity of 4,000 MWH is planned to support with viability gap funding, and a comprehensive framework for pumped storage



projects will be developed. The inter-state transmission line for evacuation and grid integration of 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh with a cost of 20,700 crores, including central funding of rupees 8,300 crores has been announced.

The pollution caused by internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs) is the primary contributor to global warming, leading to climate change as a direct result of the emissions of harmful greenhouse gases (CO₂) by the ICEVs. To curb this, a significant step toward greening our economy is getting rid of our fleet of obsolete, polluting vehicles. Adequate funds have been allotted to scrap obsolete vehicles and ambulances of the Central Government. The State Governments will also be aided in replacing old vehicles and ambulances, as outlined in the Budget 2021-22.

As part of FAME Phase-II the INR 10,000 crore outlay that was announced earlier on April 1, 2019, for a period of five years, and which would come to an end on March 31, 2024, the allocation to the FAME II scheme has been increased. The allocation will be 5,172 Crore for FY24, which is an increase from 2,898 Crore in FY23.

In addition to the above initiatives, the Prime Minister's Promotion of Alternate Nutrients for Agriculture Management Yojana (PM-PRANAM) incentivizes the State Governments and Union Territories to promote the usage of alternative fertilizers such as composted manure, cow dung; Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources (GOBARdhan) scheme to establish 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants to promote a circular economy through effective management and encouragement

of cattle and organic waste in the country with the budget allocation of Rs. 10,000 crores, to establish 300 community or cluster based plants.

The Budget also gave utmost importance to Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti with the allocation of Rs. 459 crores to establish 10,000 bio-inputs resource centres to facilitate 1 crore farmers to adopt natural farming; Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Income (MISHTI) for the promotion of Mangrove plantation across the coastline of India i.e., 7,516.6 KM; promotion of coastal shipping for energy efficient transportation; Amrit dharohar to implement optimal use of wet-

lands, etc have been taken by the government to attain green growth mission and contribute to the five Amrit tattva's mentioned by the prime minister at COP26 conference in Glasgow, emphasizing 'PANCHAMRIT' while delivering the 'National statement.' The Budget proposed Lithium ion cell customs tax reduction from 21% to 13% and EV battery subsidy continuation for another year stimulates the demand of EVs will result in greener vehicles on roads by boosting the electric vehicles market and, subsequently, into the accomplishment of green growth. □□

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Saptarishi and Budget's proposals

to promote alternative fertilizers and balanced use of chemical fertilizers. 'Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes', MISHTI, will be taken up for mangrove plantation along the coastline. A scheme that will be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 will be launched to skill lakhs of youth within the next three years. A national financial information registry will be set up to serve as the central repository of financial and ancillary information.

Fiscal management is important

True, budget 2023-24 made many announcements and many programmes will be launched dur-

ing the year. The concern should be for high fiscal and revenue deficits and increased market borrowings to meet the same. The total expenditure for 2023-24 is estimated at Rs 45 lakh crores and fiscal deficit is at about Rs 18 lakh crores. The revenue deficit alone estimated at Rs 8.70 lakh crores and no efforts seen to reduce the same. The inflation is high and international conditions are volatile and therefore, things may not be favourable as thought of. True, Indian economy is returning to normal after pandemic and likely to perform better compared to other countries. The budget's 'Saptarishi' and government's intent to spend more on capital account may help the economy. As past performance of government announcements have shown positive results, hopes for budget promises are more. □□

Natural Farming, AI, Green Growth: How Centre is making agriculture get greener roots

When it comes to agriculture, the union budget 2023-24 was quite unexpected. Moving away from convention, the Finance Minister unveiled a new policy outlook- Green growth where agriculture and environment come together for the 'Amrit Kaal'. Creation of natural farming and AI infrastructure seemed to be the top priorities of this agri-budget.

The big announcements included the plans for transitioning 10 million farmers towards natural farming, creation of natural farming infrastructure like 10,000 bio-input resource centre, setting up agriculture accelerator fund for agri start-up, 20 lakh crore funding for animal husbandry, fisheries and dairy, creation of digital public infrastructure, making India a millet hub for the world and more.

Under the green growth agenda, the government also announced a coastal mangrove scheme MISHTI – 'Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes. Now mangroves earn one of the highest carbon revenue and the government wants to promote it in all coastal land available. If done right, this alone can create additional carbon revenue for the government and communities involved. But is the government thinking of carbon dollars? Both the FM and the recent economic survey report mention carbon stocks of our forests, and FM even mentioned a new scheme for optimal wetland use program called Amrit Darohar, which fits right into the carbon bandwagon. In the next three years, this project "will enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities". And a GOBAR-dhan scheme announcing the 500 new bio-waste collection and processing centres. The FM has galvanised the biogas program by adding 200 compressed biogas plants to this year's budget and also made bold announcements towards carbon neutrality through natural based solutions.

The FM also announced a Green credit program to incentivise environmentally friendly actions of companies, individuals and local bodies, and provide additional help to expand their scope. This could be a precursor to compulsory carbon compliances.

Now for AI and agriculture, three new AI centres of excellence will begin soon to understand how AI can be integrated with Indian farming. The government intends to create an open source digital public infrastructure for agriculture to have relevant information for crop planning, farm inputs, etc together. In short, an agri-data stack that can then be fed into the AI systems.

Moving back to crops, cotton also figured in the union budget for cluster development. Ambitiously, the government announced that a special cluster will be developed between industry, farmers and suppliers to grow long staple cotton.

Heavy tax concessions were also made for ethanol. The government can encourage diverting excessive sugar into biofuel production. The current decision impacts sugarcane farmers and industry at large.

As for seeds and post-harvest storage, the winds seem to sail towards de-



The green growth policy outlook is definitely progressive as it doesn't see agriculture in isolation but as a holistic system.

Indra Shekhar Singh

centralisation. Government has shown intent to create smaller grain storage centres across the hinterland, to empower the farmers against price fluctuations. Potentially, this scheme can be implemented best by providing DBTs (Direct Benefit Transfers) to farmers for storage building or renting grains storage. FPO (Farmers Producer Organisation) can also play an important role here.

For seed, there is a design to create seed villages, which help in seed breeding and become local seed hubs. For most crops, seeds cost 5-8 per cent of the total farm input kitty, and if some it can be recirculated into rural economy by farmers' owned seed co-operatives, economy and biodiversity both stand to benefit. Another big step was the 2200 crore allotted to the clean plant program for good planting material. Given the new changes of climate change, India needs to have higher genetic diversity and disease resistant plants and germ plasm to develop healthy trees. And improvement of horticulture genetics and add many folds to the farmers' incomes.

On natural farming the government's intention seems clear. Natural farming had lacked infrastructure and farm supplies. Empowered by DBTs the farmers instead of chemical fertilisers can also choose organic inputs. This policy push will not only help ease the fertiliser subsidy bills, but also help India meet her carbon needs much faster, while encouraging a healthy diet.

Although more energy is needed to strengthen the Indian organic certifications. Recently, the USDA cancelled the equivalence of Indian certifications like NPOP or PGS, organic exporters were hop-

ing the budget provides additional funds to improve on certification mechanisms.

The other big challenge to natural farming comes from GM mustard, if India loses its non-gm tag, our organic exports and organic farming could really suffer. The budget also makes new allotments for beekeeping, and the GM threat could undermine current efforts. The same applies to long staple cotton projects. The Herbicide tolerant (HT) Bt cotton is spreading wilding across the Indian cotton belts. And if the project clusters are also contaminated, we would risk this project too.

Now let's review the numbers. Agriculture budget has been reduced from 151,521 crores (2022-23) to 144, 214 crores in 2023-24. Even flagship schemes like PM Kisan and PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) haven't been spared and had their budgets chopped by about 12 percent and 13 percent respectively.

The overall share of agriculture in the total budget has plummeted to 3.20 percent from the previous 3.84 percent. The government has also been silent on demand of its very own RSS affiliated Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) who were expecting a fair price system for farmers, after their recent protest in New Delhi. It may be cumbersome for the government to run so many programs on a reduced budget.

The AI vision for agriculture may also be headed for some roadblocks. First would be economic viability. Farm inputs are already rising each day, so how will the marginal farmers be able to avail expensive AI based softwares? Or even run a smart phone with this

complex softwares? India has many languages and lower rural literacy; it would be interesting to see how many people or farmers can avail benefits of this new technology. Even if this AI can predict weather and untimely rain, farmers would make huge savings. But moving to sweeter things, the bio-fuel agenda of the government also needs careful introspection because we have limited land, and diverting the more fertile sugarcane growing areas for biofuel and ethanol could bring down land under grains and other food essentials.

Now if we really want to make India into a millet hub, we need to reintroduce nutritious millets like ragi, sava, ramdana, etc back in our diets. The mid day meals around the country should include the local millets. PDS systems should have millets along with rice and wheat and the government should procure summer millets like jowar and winter millets like bajra for the PDS systems and also as an alternative to wheat and paddy. Through these steps, we can have additional food security and also encourage millet production and farmers, especially in the rain fed areas.

Creation of millet Mandis and financial incentives can support millet farmers, increase our nutrition quality and also reduce our water and agri-inputs use.

Overall, the budget is making agriculture get greener roots. The green growth policy outlook is definitely progressive as it doesn't see agriculture in isolation but as a holistic system. Time will be the best judge, if this path leads us to the Amrit Kaal or not. □□

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Budget 2023-24 Strategies Unity Mall

The vision for a self-reliant nation is taking shape. The confidence level of the youth is encouraging. The policymakers are seriously formulating their responsibilities and execution of the duties is continuous work in progress. There are many planned works for the self-reliance of the nation. The latest addition is the Unity Mall.

The budget speech of the finance minister mentions that “States will be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall in their state capital or most prominent tourism center or the financial capital for promotion and sale of their own ODOPs (one district, one product), GI products and other handicraft products, and for providing space for such products of all other States”.

Unity Mall needs to be taken seriously. The mainstream media is not broadcasting it too much. The Unity Mall as proposed in the budget 2023-24 can be the game changer. We need not miss it. We are already delayed but the road ahead is bright and at the same time we can't afford any lack of seriousness from the policymakers. The experience of missing the execution of the game-changer project of the semiconductor fabrication plant around the year 2010 should not be repeated. Our miss in semiconductor fabrication policy was gain to China and China's time-dependent allies. We are trying to catch up but it will take decades to be self-reliant in the semiconductor industry. The Unity Mall is for local products which a buyer struggles to get in their neighborhood shop. The Strategy needs to be crystal clear for the Unity Mall. Every strategy has usually three parts. The first is analysis, the second is the formulation and the third is implementation. The Unity Mall can be seen using the lenses of strategy management.

The analysis has to be rational rather than emotional. The shelf life of sentimental or emotional activities is lesser than those of rational activities. Our coun-



The Unity Mall can be replicated and scaled up to many places more conveniently by the Railways.

Alok Singh



try's economy is savings driven. Every individual and family who struggles for daily survival will obviously look for cheaper products as it is their compulsion, unless and until they follow some variety of barter system among themselves. The big question with a lot of doubt was the ways to counter big technology companies like Amazon and Wal-Mart-Flipkart, other big technology, and fintech companies. These companies whether wholly domestic brand or wholly foreign brand or domestic but with control of foreign finance or domestic but with control of foreign management were creating high entry barriers for local products. The absence of domestic brands in the soft drinks market is proof of the unrealistically high entry barrier. The analysis resulted in the vision of a self-reliant nation with a mission to create local products. The objectives and constraints were clear to the policymakers.

The formulation part resulted in the decision of constructing Unity Mall. The concern was to visit a market where local products are offered to customers. The exclusiveness of such outlets or such platforms will boost producers of local products and buyers of local products. The buyers of local products have to struggle a lot to visit a shop where they can be assured that they will get the local products. The organization of 'Hunar Haats' for sales and purchase of local products made by hand is usually an annual event. The customers want a marketplace where they can visit to get the local product at their convenient time and such markets should be available round the year in all the seasons; the customers of tier one and

The buyers of local products have to struggle a lot to visit a shop where they can be assured that they will get the local products. The organization of 'Hunar Haats' for sales and purchase of local products made by hand is usually an annual event.

tier two cities will be delighted if it is operational round the clock.

The implementation part of the Unity Mall is the physical presence of such infrastructure. The central government project where the state governments are also supposed to cooperate and invest has a hurdle of political interest and conflicts. The race between the state and union governments to promote their exclusive public projects and to label the grey area project as their own for political gain is a serious constraint. Those states where the government is friendly to the union government will cooperate properly while those states where the government is unfriendly to the union government and competes for vote share will derail the Unity Mall. This is the behavior within which the Unity Mall has to be constructed.

The Union government is offering fifty years of interest-free loans to construct Unity Malls also. But the pity politics of regional parties whether allies or opposition, see the vote bank as a priority, and the display of Unity Mall is labeled as a Union Government project, so expecting too much cooperation is unfair. The Union government can support some other reliable agency the same financial support that it plans to sup-

port state governments in case they construct Unity Mall. There can be many alternatives to implement the project of Unity Mall. One alternative is to expect the Ministry of Railways to execute the job of constructing, maintaining, and earning from the Unity Mall. The Union government has railways in its control. The railways have a lot of real estate in their ownership. The Railway should take the lead and grab the opportunity to develop the Unity Mall. The Ministry of Railway can further develop exclusive Railway Unity Mall or Public Private Partnership Unity Mall or any other variant of the Unity Mall. The budget speech of the finance minister committed to one Unity Mall for every state whether in the capital city of the state or the financial city of the state or the most prominent tourism center. The Unity Mall can be replicated and scaled up to many places more conveniently by the Railways. The redevelopment of world-class railway stations can incorporate a scope of Unity mall in this project itself. It will be helpful in bearing the construction cost and will be a win-win situation for the railways as well as for the Unity Mall. □□

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Congress: Near Impossible poll walk after yatra

In the aftermath of humiliating defeats in five state elections last year the Congress Party proposed to reinvent itself through a padyatra so as to reestablish the fraying (frayed?) connection with aam aadmi. Rahul Gandhi (RG) now has actually travelled for 135 days covering 75 districts (14 states). Simple message: BJP is sowing seeds of animosity; only Congress can neutralize this challenge.

The campaign did attract reasonable crowds and energized the party workers. The walk to some extent refurbished (negative to positive) RG's image of being only a part time politician and being a simpleton (Pappu); the brand got a make over. Things like walking only in a T-shirt (no warm clothes even in harsh winter), covering on foot nearly 20 km everyday, sharing warm hugs, etc. did work. On a macro level the yatra established the party's organizational skills in handling ground level and social media resources. The party did get rehabilitated but with significant questions still remaining unanswered. Beyond the reconnect, were there any significant positive takeaways?

There is no proof that the increased soft power of RG's likeability is matched by increased hard power to show victory signs in coming elections. Infact, ambivalently, the campaign itself declined to adduce the yatra to any tangible electoral ambitions. Winning elections requires a clear electoral agenda, focused leadership, dedicated organization, committed workers, and of course ample resources. One really doubts if the party ticks right on all these boxes. Optics are one thing (yatra) but tangibility (positive electoral wins) is an entirely another ball game. No doubt roughly 119 million people voted for Congress in 2019. But it is not sufficient, especially in face of new challenges from AAP and TMC – infact from



While the recent padyatra undertaken by Gandhi scion may have partly done some good to his image, it is doubtful if it has added to the political capital of Congress.

KK Srivastava



the hushed talks about a Congress Mukt opposition are also in air. There are nine state elections lined up in 2023 ahead of 2024 Lok Sabha elections. At present the yatra appears to be just a vanity project for RG rather than being an instrument to catalyze the much delayed revival of the grand old party.

There is no doubt that there is discontentment over social and economic issues among people, as is very natural in a vast and diverse democracy, the size of which nowhere else in the world is duplicated. But this disaffection with the ruling regime is sporadic. More importantly, giving the agonizing voice a patient hearing is one thing, but winning elections on that basis by weaving such grievances into a tight political campaign is an arduous task. At the present juncture Congress hardly seems to be equal to the task. Moreover, most other opposition parties declined to joint the yatra as cotravellers despite being invited. For unseating NDA there has to be a potent UPA with Congress being the nucleus; this joint opposition then needs to sell a vision that strikes at the vulnerability of the ruling dispensation. So far there is no indication that there is any baby step being taken in this direction. In the absence of such efforts, and consequently in face of a united BJP and disunited opposition, the ruling NDA will not have to hand over the reins in 2024.

To be sure the socio economic disparities are hitting some pockets, but this disaffection still cannot counter effectively the political gains arising out of a very successful conjured imagery of nationalism, masculine nation, and

Hindutva for BJP.

The Udaipur Chintan Shivir talked about structural reforms, including taking the organization to being more democratic and younger. So far no work is in sight, except that successful organizing of this yatra has energized the grass root level workers. But, as we said earlier, no new alliances with other opposition parties could be formed, including even some traditional Congress 'friends'. Rahul won, the alliance did not get strengthened. While for him it is a definite gain, for the party the gains are iffy. He exhibited his staying power through a spectacle covered by the lights of camera and bytes by media. But the same cannot be said about the party. While BJP's iron grip is weakening no doubt, but just about. Besides, the consequent gains are being captured by Congress, this is not the case. An on the edge victory in Himachal does not put out myriad signals, as shouted out by Congress, indicating that henceforth Congress will prove equal to BJP. Not true, yet.

The Congress Party is preparing itself to meet the 2024 challenge on two main planks: one, revive and energize the organization; two, propagate the ideology the party firmly believer in. Addressing his Party this year, Kcharge said: "... The onus is on us to save our constitution and democratic ethos. Every Indian should feel that the Congress is the medium and vehicle in realizing their dreams and aspirations of a secular, progressive and liberal India. Let this be the year that we work hard to raise the voice of every Indian, especially the weakest." Grand words but how to translate them into action-

able work?

The party aims to release charge sheets periodically as it did in 2003, focusing on issues concerning the masses. But to make these bread-and-butter issues work to its advantage, the party needs efficient, empowered, and effective state level organization. This is the Achilles heel. In the absence of that Kcharge's words will not work as clarion call, but will perhaps be the famous last words.

On the other hand under the energetic and dynamic duo – Modi and Shah – the BJP is a very fit, aggressive, fighting, and full of pelf election winning machine. For example, recently it has identified nearly 130,000 poll booths in nearly 200 seats where BJP has either never won, or lost narrowly, or had reasonable support. Each such constituency will have a full time in-charge who will stay there till next Lok Sabha election. All Union Ministers will be allotted constituencies. They then will be tasked to monitor the delivery and spread of centre's flagship programs so as to ensure that benefits reach those targeted. Pre poll prepping is always in green light mode in battle hardened organizational apparatus of BJP. Of course it helps that the party is resources – media, money, muscle, manpower – rich. RG is up against a very-very formidable, and determined, opposition – BJP – which is agile, aggressive, argumentative, and is continuing to project the Congress leader as asinine. While the first yatra is relatively easy, the real challenge for RG is the next one where he has to trek to the people, party, and polls. Abhi Dilli Door Hei: it is a long arduous walk still.

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Now Tehri, Mussorie crumble

APATHY SINKS HIMALAYAS

Heaven is literally falling to the greed. It is just not Joshimath but even Tehri Garhwal, Karnaprayag, and Mussorie are also sinking and so may be many other parts at the crest of the Uttarakhand Himalayas. The Rs 12000 crore Char Dham (CD) all-weather road projects spurring real-estate are gobbling up all.

Latest reports say that still the earth movers are digging around Joshimath and other areas even as over 4000 persons evacuated and most houses crumble. Tragedies do not stop the road to hell. In 2013, Uttarakhand government had sought Rs 21000 crore for ruthless reconstruction post the Himalayan deluge. It seems to be the catalyst for the present disaster.

The Tehri district is the latest to report cracks and land subsidence. An IIT Roorkee team is studying Karnaprayag. Chamba in the Tehri, around a CD tunnelling is the worst hit with houses crumbling. Seepages at Tehri dam are common, reports SP Rai of National Institute of Hydrology. Now a road from Mana to Lipulekh through sensitive hills with rare virgin forest is the latest danger.

In June 2013, after the Kedarnath tragedy this scribe mentioned “In all there are 244 hydel projects (HEP) of various sizes are planned to be constructed in the state. Some of these are already on stream. Others are coming up. Pancheswar dam being planned in Tanakpur is likely to be bigger than Tehri and biggest in India. Does that mean more disasters are awaiting the region?”

Unfortunately, it is so. Nobody listened to the cries of former minister Uma Bharati for not dislodging the image of presiding deity, *Dhari Devi* before the June 18, 2013 cloudburst. The CAG reviewed 42 hydel projects in 2009. It noted that over 200 more projects were coming up – almost at every 5 to 7 kms. The yearning for making Uttarakhand the “Urja Pradesh” has led to reckless development.

Ravi Chopra, former head of High-Power Committee for CD roads mentions that a bypass around Joshimath was opposed by the townspeople. The 10-metre-wide road all around the state weakens the hills with digging, blasting, removal of green cover and aquifers.



It is just not Joshimath but even Tehri Garhwal, Karnaprayag and Mussorie are also sinking and so may be many other parts at the crest of the Uttarakhand Himalayas.
Shivaji Sarkar



Pristine Joshimath the gateway to heaven, Satopanth, from where Yudhisthir went to *swarga*; the *peeth* of Adi Shankaracharya; winter camp of Lord Badarinath, is as per a legend may be enunciating the end of an era. The policy failure and greed to generate thousands of crores of profits has led to a disaster evolving for decades and hastened by rapid activity of hydel tunnelling, road constructions and puncturing aquifers ill-suited for a delicate fragile region, crown of the Indian subcontinent.

Ancient wisdom ordained for least activity around tenuous hills that is shaken with the mildest vibration. No wonder even the British resorted to the least activities and built lighter toy trains where possible. They avoided wanton destruction that the *swadeshi* gold diggers have delved into. The broad gauge railway being extend beyond Rishikesh could have been avoided.

The prophesy of the Nar and Narayan hills merging with the Badarinath temple vanishing seems coming true. It predicts the submergence of the temple with the Alaknanda and other rivers either vanishing or changing course.

The Himalayan shrines may have contributed to wanderlust and development of the livelihood of the locals. In itself it has culturally been supposed to be a sustainable but not large economy. Religious trekking from Rishikesh upwards added to the adventure and charm of the pilgrimage. It was for the spirit and not fun. Post-Independence the road constructions started threatening the fragile region with more landslides. With each decade greed sharpened and the massive Tehri dam was built even against the wishes of scientists and ministers.

The Himalayas all around are crumbling. Dams and roads benefit the industry-real estate mafia damning the sensitive geology and livelihood.

These shrines were considered sacred not only for their spirituality but as a constant reminder to tectonically sensitive zone that controls the subcontinental climate.

Joshimath is an instance of how common man suffers for pittance. Yes, Joshimath, facing literally a Himalayan disaster itself has been a thriving economy with a mere bank investment of a petty amount of Rs 900 crore! That is the total debt entire Joshimath owes. Surprising for a population of about 30,000 serving pilgrims and tourists to Badarinath, Valley of Flowers, Hemkund and the ski rink Auli. The rink itself cost Rs 83 lakh and today earns Rs 4.5 crore a year but termed a hazard. The 10-meter-wide CD road decays hills amid severe devastation with felling of large number of trees, destruction of aquifers, shrubs and fauna habitats.

Queer is the norm for planting trees. Trees felled on the hills are replaced with planting trees in Jharkhand or anywhere in the country. The official files do a wonderful *ecological balancing*.

In 2010, HNB Garhwal University study said tunnel boring machine punctured an aquifer on December 24, 2009 releasing millions of litres of water daily from NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad 520 MW hydel project. The research-

ers warned of the mishap's potential for "initiating ground subsidence". It was forgotten till December 2022 when the looming nightmare became a reality around Joshimath. This punctured aquifer gushing out water is the cause for Joshimath sinking, confirms Garhwal Commissioner Sushil Kumar.

In February 2021, around 200 people went missing as Dhauliganaga and Rishibhanga rivers flooded Tapovan head race tunnel.

Warnings of 1930 Swiss scientists, 1976 Commissioner MC Mishra on haphazard constructions and Supreme Court appointed committee of 2013 for seismically sensitive Main Central Zone advice against hydel projects were ignored. The CD project of the Border Road Organisation being touted as defence project, though it was not so earlier, is only aggravating the situation.

Incidents of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), a UNDP and European Commission study mentioned that such floods are happening regularly. Notable incidents occurred in 1997, 2000 and 2005 in the Sutlej basin and in 1970 and 1978 in Alaknanda and Bhagirathi basins. In 2000 and 2005 it hit the Pong Dam, in Himachal, severely, damaging roads, habitations and scores of bridges. Incidents of GLOF are reported in Sikkim, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal & Arunachal Pradesh.

The Himalayas all around are crumbling. Dams and roads benefit the industry-real estate mafia damning the sensitive geology and livelihood. If unchecked it may have disastrous consequences and even desertify, cradle of the civilisation, the Ganga valley. The country must rise to stop it. □□

Punjab can sow seeds of a Millet Revolution

With 2023 being celebrated as the UN International Year of Millets, the focus is once again back on rediscovering the magic of these wonder grains. By the time the year comes to a close, I am hoping it will at least manage to remove the mental block we have against coarse cereals, as the millet crops are generally referred to, and, in the bargain, catapult India to effectively addressing the scourge of hidden hunger by tapping into and building nutrient-sensitive and environmentally sustainable local food value chains.

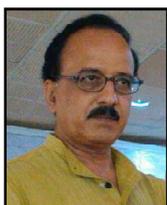
Coarse cereals are not rough and unhealthy grains. They are, in fact, nutritionally-rich and climate-resilient smart crops. Cultivated in the dry and rainfed regions of the country, the millets — nine grains that include bajra, jowar and ragi, besides other small millets — had been deliberately pushed to the margins. Because these super foods did not form a part of the European and American diets, these were generally ignored.

But the rediscovery of millets, especially with the campaign conducted by civil society groups led by the Millets Network of India and others to push these grains in the public distribution system, has now opened up the floodgates for a diversified food and farming system.

A lot has been written about the virtues of the millet crops, including the health and sustainability aspects, and we will hear more on the unleashing of the potential of millets as the year progresses. The focus will remain on raising awareness, and also on aggregation, enhancing production and creating ample processing opportunities. But expanding the area under millets, which means diverting a significant proportion of the area from the water-guzzling paddy crop, will only be possible by making millets an attractive proposition for the farmers.

Now, this is a lot easier said than done. We are aware that earlier efforts at diversifying the cropping pattern haven't succeeded.

Given that paddy requires between 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water for producing one kg of rice (depending upon the agro-climatic zones) and millets nor-



Punjab has a double advantage by incorporating millets in its crop diversification scheme. First, it will lead to setting its own house in order by getting away from the environmentally devastating consequences of the Green Revolution. Second, it will trigger a huge demand for millets that can be replicated elsewhere.

Devinder Sharma



mally require about 200 litres, an effective price that augments the water-saving potential of millets, environmental protection with hardly any application of chemical fertiliser and pesticides and nutritional superiority need to be acknowledged and accounted for. After all, millets can become an alternative to paddy provided their pricing is looked at afresh.

Ascribing economic value to the tremendous environment and nutritional gains that millets bring in, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) should modify the pricing formula by adopting the principles of ecosystem services. This assumes importance given the low share of farmers in the end consumer price. Providing an assured price that is substantially higher can, therefore, be a win-win situation which benefits farmers as well as the society at large.

That makes me wonder. In addition to a reworked MSP for millets, what can prompt Punjab, a food bowl, to make a transition towards a diversified farming system? After all, undivided Punjab was cultivating more than 11 lakh hectares of bajra in the 1950s, which is now down to a mere 1,000 hectares. This decline is primarily due to the continuing policy emphasis on an intensive wheat-paddy crop rotation.

Shifting back to millets, besides pulses and oilseeds, is arguably the best way forward. Punjab, therefore, has a double advantage by incorporating millets in its crop diversification programme. First, it will lead to setting its own house in order by getting away from the environmentally devastating consequences of the Green Revolution. And second, it will trig-

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ger a huge demand for millets that can be replicated elsewhere.

Picking up from Andhra Pradesh where a collective of 11 religious places, under the banner of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), has in a tripartite agreement with the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) and the AP Markfed resolved to provide over 15,000 tonnes of 12 farm commodities, all naturally farmed. Under the agreement, farmers are being paid a price that is 10 per cent higher than the MSP, and if the market price is higher, they get 15 percent more.

Karnataka had earlier given a higher price 40 percent more than the MSP to encourage ragi cultivation.

Considering that Punjab has thousands of gurdwaras, a much bigger demand for millets (and organic produce) can be generated if religious bodies like the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) can be roped in to shift to organic langar, including millets in the menu. In fact, even for parshad, millet halwa and millet kheer are better alternatives.

Punjab's Markfed can be en-

trusted with the responsibility of creating adequate storage facilities and ensuring timely supplies. Similarly, non-profits like the Kheti Virasat Mission and others can be tasked with building organic farming clusters. The backward linkages to mark organic clusters, source the produce and ensure quality can be easily worked out.

Add to it the demand from schools. There are nearly 30 lakh students enrolled in government schools in Punjab. If millets could be incorporated in their mid-day meal programme once a week to begin with, the huge demand that is created will necessitate local supplies. A programme to source millets from Punjab's farmers can be easily built on the TTD model that AP has created. For instance, in the union territory of Chandigarh alone, which has more than 110 government schools, it is becoming difficult to source millets to meet the once-in-a-week millet menu. If that is the situation in Chandigarh, Punjab can definitely draw up an imaginative farm-to-fork supply chain to match the increased demand that is expected from the mid-day meal scheme as well as from the gurdwaras.

At the national level, with 120 million students in 1.27 million schools, introducing millets in the mid-day meal could be one of the biggest programmes towards encouraging farmers to take to the cultivation of millets in a big way.

Schools, hospitals and shrines can be the motivating factors in encouraging millets' cultivation and bringing millets back on our plate. Let Punjab sow the seeds of a millet revolution in India. □□

Devinder Sharma: Food & Agriculture Specialist
<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/punjab-can-sow-seeds-of-a-millet-revolution-470147>

Entrepreneurs Braving Odds

Second season of Sony channel reality show “Shark Tank India” stirred the mind to think and document the ideas and thought process of self-motivated aspirational entrepreneurs who are obsessed with pursuit to success despite odds of experience, funds and support. The idea and motive are not to promote any TV show but to grab the ideas and spirit of entrepreneurs and investors. It may be a scripted show yet real success stories are quite encouraging. It is so heartening to see that youth of 19-20 years, drop-outs are earning Rs. 1.5 Lakh to Rs. 2 Lakh per month with hard work, perseverance & innovation while IIM & ISB Grads are taking huge risks of entrepreneurship with mammoth success in short time. They have busted business myths. The Sharks i.e. investors are also very young entrepreneurs of top brands, who thrash, encourage and grill the founders & promoters seeking investments on certain terms. It astonishes that new age entrepreneurs have huge knowledge of the businesses and global trends as well as market dynamics. They have bravely ventured into unexplored avenues. There are entrepreneurs including women who had no business background, no technical skill, no capital and no knowledge of markets. They had passion to fight odds in their life, break from past, independence from family shackles and have taken risks.

They have innovated and made goods with out-of-box ideas. From food items to pharmaceutical products to safely equipments for forest camping & forest guards to pregnancy related monitoring systems, they are ready to rock. What they need, is technical support, market guidance and investment not as debts but on equity basis. They all make swadeshi products long term strategy and with big dreams.

Further, the recipients of Business Awards of various Associations, Publications, Media houses etc. have great success stories which inspire the business world so deeply that it compels to rethink and redefine the needs of present industry. We encourage to use swadeshi products in our daily life and consequently create market demand of swadeshi products so that our indigenous industry in MSME sector grows massively thus generating employment, self-employment and ancil-



The young entrepreneurs have innovated and made goods without out-of-box ideas.

Vinod Johri



laries in urban and rural areas. MSMEs are key to making Bharat a global production hub. MSMEs are the harbinger of entrepreneurship and innovation which are important pillars for lifting our country's capacity in shifting towards the manufacture and exports of sophisticated high-tech products and help move the global value chains. Of course, it is most important to use swadeshi goods but it is also equally important that swadeshi goods are produced not only to our satisfaction but also to the profitable satisfaction of the industry and entrepreneurs. The swadeshi industry needs to be transformed through innovation, latest technology in AI, robotics and digitisation in real time to meet changing demands and conditions in the industry, in the supply network and in customer needs. Brand building is must in swadeshi industry as consumer is directly connected with the brands. Fab India, Haldiram, Tanishq, MDH, Dabur, Godrej, Lakme, Jaguar, Liberty, Amul, Patanjali, Jhandu, Tata are few of the most successful examples.

Newspapers carry out special features and cover stories on budding entrepreneurs. Women from naxal affected areas of Jharkhand, infested with opium crops, are now cultivating marigold (gende ka phool) with self-help groups and earning good income. Large number of women have made groups in Varanasi and making laddoo prasad for temples like Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple and are sold instantly giving them respectful earning. Women from Bundelkhand are making agarbatti, candles etc. About 45000 Bundelkhand women have ventured into dairy business of annual turnover of Rs.

230 crores. More than 1200 women of 41 self-help groups from Devas, Madhya Pradesh are making bamboo products in 2.5 acres with 4.5 bamboo trees.

Brand Building & Technology

Brand building is a marketing need and adoption of latest technology is now indispensable for our swadeshi products. One of the other themes gaining prominence is brands working towards bringing their purpose to life. Consumers today connect with brands with a strong purpose that resonates with them, while making a positive impact in the world. The year 2022 was a year of promise and discoveries for the marketing and advertising community, especially after two pandemic-impacted years. From AI and hybrid working modes to a greater focus on brand purpose, marketers and advertising leaders recap the big trends and achievements that shaped the industry this year. Metaverse is a new channel that has made its way into mainstream media. In an era when brands are looking for new, engaging ways to communicate with consumers, the metaverse presents itself as an innovative way to do so. This year, we had brands from diverse industries such as fashion, lifestyle, auto and more build their presence on the metaverse. Aside from leveraging the virtual space to create unique shopping experiences, a slew of marketing campaigns, product launches and live brand-sponsored events were conducted in the metaverse. The innovative marketing potential of this hybrid digital / physical world is near-endless. While the market of metaverse is still at a nascent stage in India, it is likely to dominate the digital

space in the years to come. Whether it is to analyse consumers to better understand their behaviour and create more personalised experiences, or to drive engagement, AI is changing the way we understand marketing. It holds great promise and potential for advertisers to make their marketing more effective. While e-commerce brands have been using this strategy for a while to suggest products to consumers based on factors like purchase history, the tool has been leveraged a great deal this year to personalise messaging. Brands have created digital avatars of their brand ambassadors and sent personalised messages from the celebrity to their target audiences. AI is completely transforming consumer engagement and is definitely the new wave in marketing. Adaptability will remain the most sustainable skill for survival. Success stories of 108 unicorns in our country, need not be retold. Besides Fintech, Edtech, foodtech and agritech, the start-up ecosystem around drone manufacturing & operation will be a huge success in 2023.

Disruptions lay down the path for new discoveries. The last couple of years disrupted our traditional work models, paving the way for new ways of working. We recast the perception of being a function that needs teams to always physically huddle together. As we have become familiar with hybrid modes, technology has played a big part in making it a success. It has allowed us to open up to a better balance across teams. What it also brings is the possibility of opening our doors to a larger talent pool. The other big shift has come in from the changing consumer behaviour and adoption of new

formats for content consumption. The high cost of quality content now being monetised across multiple screens and the potential to engage cohorts in a targeted manner are opening up the option of media solutions being more specific and accountable. There will be bigger shifts and marketers will need to be on top of their game to match the pace.

The second half of 2022 hit us like a hurricane, with brands, people and partners returning to the game with renewed vigour, far beyond pre-Covid levels. Everyone was hungry for fortune we've had to let go of for the last two years.

We are entering the age of fourth industrial revolution which represents a fundamental change in the way we live, work and relate to one another. It is a new chapter in human development, enabled by extraordinary technology advanc-

es commensurate with those of the first (agrarian to machine and process driven manufacturing), second (Technological Revolution, a phase of rapid scientific discovery, standardization, mass production and industrialization) and third (semiconductors, mainframe computing, personal computing, and the Internet—the digital revolution) industrial revolutions. These advances are merging the physical, digital and biological worlds in ways that create both huge promise and potential peril. The speed, breadth and depth of this revolution is forcing us to rethink how countries develop, how organisations create value and even what it means to be human. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is about more than just technology-driven change; it is an opportunity to help everyone, including leaders, policymakers and people from all in-

come groups and nations, to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centred future. The real opportunity is to look beyond technology, and find ways to give the greatest number of people the ability to positively impact their families, organisations and communities. Robotics is the key driver behind the industry 4.0. It ushers into the phase of smart manufacturing which can be defined as fully integrated, collaborative manufacturing systems that respond in real time to meet changing demands and conditions in the factory, in the supply network, and in customer needs.

Our entrepreneurs have world level capabilities in technology, financial strength and innovation and there is no doubt that in next decade they will rock the world.

Vinod Johri: Retd Additional Commissioner of Income Tax, Delhi

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India-US ties: It's like riding a roller coaster

Foreign correspondents have always been a window to the world. Even in these times of global electronic and social media connectivity, with instant parading of fact and fiction, the professional reporting of a seasoned correspondent still has value. Many foreign correspondents based in India have written interesting accounts that their home and host country audience have appreciated. Even though the Indian media has, regrettably, a mere handful of foreign correspondents worldwide, some of them have produced books worth reading.

Pallavi Aiyar's books written after her assignments in Beijing and Tokyo offer a fascinating Indian view of these two nations. A new addition to the short list of books by Indian journalists posted overseas is Seema Sirohi's recently published worm's eye view of the ups and downs of US-India relations over a 30-year period.

Sirohi's *Friends with Benefits: The India-US Story* (HarperCollins, 2023) is not the usual foreign correspondent's account of life and times in the station of one's posting. Rather, it is a detailed account, virtually a "blow-by-blow" account, so to speak, of the evolution of India-US diplomatic and government-to-government relations since the end of the Cold War. Seema Sirohi was posted to Washington DC in 1990 and so her tenure began with the world-shaking events of that year and next. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the new turn in India's economic policies.

Three things stand out from Sirohi's painstakingly detailed account of the evolution of the India-US relationship over the past three decades. First, the persistence of Cold War attitudes in Washington DC well into this century. Second, the shadow of Pakistan and China on the American view of India. Third, the role played by Prime Ministers Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, on the Indian side, and Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, on the US side, in redefining the bilateral relationship.



The US has so many diasporas from nations that it has poor relations with.

Sanjaya Baru



Interestingly, Sirohi does not have much to say on the role of the Indian diaspora and perhaps she is right in not giving them an exaggerated role in the bilateral relationship. After all, the US has so many diasporas from nations that it has poor relations with. There are times when the diaspora comes into play in a positive manner, and sometimes it can be a source of trouble for diplomats.

Sirohi's account of the 30-year history has two dimensions to it which are of contemporary relevance. First, she shows how systematically both countries managed to construct this relationship over a fairly long period of time, despite frustratingly constant changes in governments and personnel on both sides. Former US ambassador to India Robert Blackwill once said to me: "For you India's history begins five thousand years ago. For every American administration, it begins on the day of the presidential inauguration." Blackwill was often frustrated both by Indians remembering too many negative stories from the past and his American colleagues not knowing anything about the past in the bilateral relationship.

Second, Sirohi shows how deftly Pakistani diplomacy managed to keep the United States on its side so that US-Pakistan relations repeatedly threw a spanner in the works of the evolving US-India relationship. This happened with almost every President — Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, with the singular exception of George Bush Jr. Indeed, I have often argued that President Bush Jr was the one individual who fundamentally altered the bilateral relationship. It was not just with the

What is also clear is that both countries have their own priorities in some important areas and they have to learn to live with these differences.

civil nuclear deal but with his overall strategic approach to India.

Sirohi's account of the relationship is worth reading at this particular time when doubts have been raised about where it is headed, especially in the context of India's stand on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the American attempts from time to time to breathe life into an otherwise testy relationship with both Pakistan and China.

Given the manner in which both India and the United States have kept their balance on what has clearly been a roller-coaster ride of ups and downs, there is reason to be optimistic about the future of this relationship.

Very different political leaders and governments in both countries — Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi in India and Barack Obama and Donald Trump in the US — kept the flame of the strategic partnership alive. You cannot get a more diverse set of political leaders than this lot. If Singh-Modi and Obama-Trump, with all their differences, could stay the bilateral course, then US-India relations can be declared to be stable, even if not predictable.

What is also clear is that both countries have their own priorities

in some important areas and they have to learn to live with these differences. The US-China and US-Pakistan relationship will frustrate India while the India-Russia relationship will frustrate the US. Both countries will pursue an independent foreign policy that may run parallel on many fronts, but not on all.

This is the core of the reality of the nature of the two countries and their bilateral relationship that scholars and foreign affairs commentators in both countries must understand. Far too many in both countries have entertained unrealistic expectations and baseless fears about the bilateral relationship. India-baiters and India-enthusiasts in the US have often been frustrated by New Delhi's assertion of "strategic autonomy", just as friends and critics of the US in India have also gone off the tangent predicting either that India would become a military ally of the US or that India would finally succeed in pushing both China and Pakistan off the US map of Asia.

Perhaps one should thank Vladimir Putin for clarifying many minds in New Delhi, Washington DC and many other capitals around the world. He managed to force the Indian political leadership to clarify the nature of India's relations with various powers. In dealing with the post-Ukraine world, India has had to carefully define the nature of the relationship it hopes to maintain with various big powers. There is now, I believe, greater clarity in major capitals on how India views its relations with the world. India's adversaries may still try to throw spanner in the works, but we have shown we know how to ride the roller-coaster. □□

<https://www.asianage.com/opinion/columnists/080123/sanjaya-baru-india-us-ties-its-like-riding-a-roller-coaster.html>

Year of Millets: Festive comeback of the Ancient Superfood

The world is celebrating 2023 as the International Year of Millets, almost 5 years after India observed its National Year of Millets in 2018. The proposal for the International Year of Millets 2023, sponsored by the Government of India and led by the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly. The declaration has let the Government of India to take a leading role in the celebration of International Millet Year 2023.

Festive Kickstart

The festivities and events kickstarted on 6th December 2022 in the opening ceremony by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome. Followed by this ceremony, various events and exhibitions have been lined up by various organisations, Ministries and Embassies in India. At the G-20 Summit, millet dishes were served to foreign delegates to promote millets on a global diaspora. This initiative aims to increase production, consumption and global awareness of the health benefits of millets as well as ensuring nutritional security.

What are millets?

Millet is a common name for a group of coarse, small seeded grasses that are grown for their grains. There are several different types of millets, including sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), finger millet (ragi), foxtail millet (kangni), barnyard millet (sawa), amaranth, buckwheat etc. Each type has its own unique characteristics and can be used in a variety of ways. These grains have traditionally been a part of staple diet of people living in the Asian and African continent. Consumption of millets was very common in Indian sub-continent, until green revolution made its way in Indian kitchens in 1960s. In 1960s the then government prioritised the production of wheat and rice, leading to a decrease in consumption of millets, stating it as a poor man's food. These refined crops (wheat and rice) lack the critically important nutrients that our bodies need.



Given the growing interest in millet and its potential as both a food and energy crop, it is projected that the global market for this grain will expand in the years to come.

Dr. Jaya Sharma

India: The Ancient Home for Millets

India is the largest producer of millets world over followed by Africa and China. Within India, the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana are major producers of these grains. Millets are native to many parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, and South America, and have been a significant part of the diet and agriculture of many civilisations. The mention of millets in the ancient Indian scripture, Yajurved suggests that the consumption of millets was prevalent since ancient times. Millets have been cultivated for food in Africa for over 5000 years and have traditionally been a major staple crop in various regions of the continent.

An Eco-Friendly option

Millets are not only nutritious, but also a sustainable grain with numerous environmental benefits, which makes them attractive to farmers. Millets are a low-maintenance crop (do not require much fertiliser or pesticides) that can thrive in areas with poor soil conditions or low rainfall and water availability. Millets are also highly resistant to pests and diseases; this reduces the need for pest control

measures and increases the chances of a successful harvest. They also have a shorter growing season than some other crops, which can be beneficial for farmers in areas with limited growing seasons. Millets have deep root systems that help to improve soil health by increasing organic matter and reducing erosion. The cultivation of millets has been shown to prevent salinization, as opposed to other crops such as rice which require a high amount of water for growing and can contribute to the accumulation of salt in the soil, which negatively impacts soil health. Additionally, millets have a high yield potential and can be grown on a variety of soil types, making them a versatile option for farmers.

Treasure Trove for Health Benefits

The high and growing disease burden of masses can well be overcome by integrating millets into our diet. They are high in protein, dietary fibre, a variety of vitamins and minerals, and are a good source of antioxidants. They also have a low glycaemic index, which makes them suitable for people with diabetes or those looking to manage their blood sugar levels. Millets are naturally gluten-free and non-allergic which makes them a perfect alternative for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance. Many food items today are contaminated with adulterants or harmful chemicals, in contrast, millets are purely organic due to the minimal use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Nutritional Value of Millets

Including millets in diet can be a healthy and sustainable way to add variety and nutrition to meals, owing to their low carbon footprint compared to other grains. Apart from these, millets are also used as

Millet Type	Serving size* (g)	Calories (kcal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fibre (g)
Pearl millet	64	172	4.6	1.4	35.4	3.4
Finger millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3
Foxtail millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3
Kodo millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3
Proso millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3
Little millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3
Barnyard millet	64	371	7.5	1.3	78.5	5.3

*Serving size is for cooked millet. Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference

fodder for livestock and as a source of fuel. Therefore, growing millets could potentially lead to increased exports and economic growth.

Taanana Teras: Traditional Millet Day

The lineages of our society demonstrated a high degree of consideration in their selection of practices. Their lifestyle was characterized by both healthfulness and sustainability. Prior to incorporating any particular practice into their daily lives, they thoroughly evaluated its potential benefits and drawbacks. As a result of this conscientious examination, millets became an integral component of their diet. This tradition of incorporating millets into the diet has been passed down and is still widely practiced among the people of Rajasthan. Every year in pursuit of Pauranic tradition, when Wednesday coincided with Shukla Paksh (fortnight of the waxing moon) and Trayodashi tithi (thirteenth lunar day of Hindu calendar), 'Taanana teras' is celebrated. It can be also said to be the Pauranic Biodiversity Day. On this day different types of millets are prepared in a variety of dishes such as porridge, khichdi, chapati, desserts, fritters, etc. In addition to millets, the consumption of seasonal vegetables is also emphasized on this day. It is a tradition to prepare a dry curry featuring 13 different seasonal vegetables along with multigrain bread made of 13 different grains. This tra-

dition not only generated revenue for farmers, but also provided a nutritionally balanced diet for the individuals who celebrated.

Conclusion

Millets have been identified as a potential solution to a range of issues including agricultural distress, climate extremes, and nutritional inadequacies stemming from the consumption of a single crop. Their ability to thrive in difficult growing conditions and their diverse range of nutrients make them a promising option for addressing these challenges. As the awareness of the health benefits associated with millet continues to grow, it is anticipated that demand for this grain crop will increase in the near future. For small-scale farmers in developing countries, millet represents a vital crop that provides not only a source of food, but also a means of income generation.

By pursuing research and development, it is possible to enhance the yield and quality of millets, leading to increased production and a wider adoption of this crop. Additionally, millet also has the potential to serve as a feedstock for biofuels, offering an alternative source of energy and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Given the growing interest in millet and its potential as both a food and energy crop, it is projected that the global market for this grain will expand in the years to come. □□

Mewar as the Locus of the State (Part-VIII)



The legends of Bappa, Haritarashi and Eklingaji and Brasmha-Kshatra social staus dominated the political and religious symbols of the Guhila state of Mewar in the thirteenth century.

Ranking system facilitated expansion of the royal Guhila family of Nagda-Ahada accomplishing territorial and political integration of Mewar.

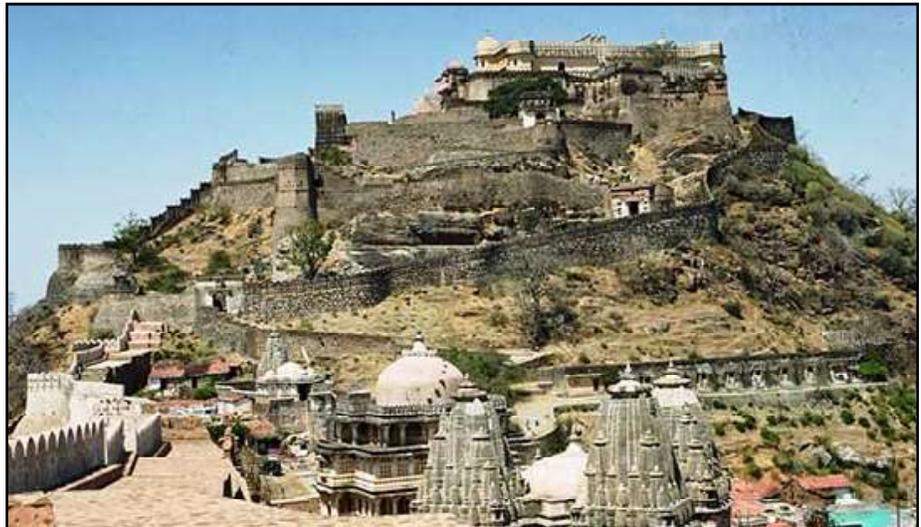
Prof. Nandini Kapur Sinha

Political and religious symbols: Thirteenth Century

The acquisition of Chittaurgarh bestowed political sanctity on the Guhila royal family as the sovereigns of Mewar. As noted, Chittaurgarh had evolved into a symbol of political eminence in southern Rajasthan since the beginning of its career as Nagari, the capital of the ancient 8-ibis. As it was annexed and integrated into the expanding Guhila state, the Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada could legitimately call themselves the kings of Mewar. Thus was completed the process of territorial unification. So, it was with the Guhila acquisition of Chittaurgarh that the region of Mewar could identify itself with the Guhila royal family of Nagda-Ahada.

The culminating phase of this process found echoes in the new political and religious symbols. It was in the thirteenth century that the Guhilas acquired new political and religious symbols. They were no longer the Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada: they were formally transformed into Guhilas of Medapata (Mewar).

The point of reference for legitimization, with new territorial acquisitions, was no longer just the Mewar hills for the Guhilas, but all Mewar. A significant turn in their genealogical structure in thirteenth century changed the political and religious symbols. The Chittaurgarh Inscription (AD 1274) and the Achalesvara Inscription (AD 1285) of Samarasimha claimed Bappaka and not Guhadatta, as the founder of the royal house of Medapata, it is Guhila (Guhadatta) merely appeared as his son. Thus, Guhadatta of the tenth-eleventh century was dropped from the thirteenth century records as the founder of the royal family. The records claimed the bestowal of the state of Mewar on Bappa by the Pashupata sage Haritarashi with the favour of Ekalinga. The sage also gave Bappa, a Brahmana by caste, a golden anklet and Bappa got his Brahmanahood exchanged for Kshatriyahood which was obtained by the blessing of God Ekalinga who was happy with the devotion of the Pash upata sage, Haritarashi. Thus, the new political and



religious symbols of the thirteenth century revolved around the legends of Bappaka-HaritarasHi-Ekalinga-Medapata and the status of Bramha-ksatra (Brahmana Bappa receiving ksatriyahood from Haritarashi).

Kinship Structure, Proliferation of the Branches of Nagda-Ahada Guhilas, Expansion of Nagda-Ahada Guhila Power in Vagod (Middle Mahi Basin) and Emergence of Centres of Power in Upper Banas Plain and Vagod Claiming Guhila Lineage.

The first evidence of segmentations of the Nagda-Ahada Guhila royal family comes from a late eleventh century record, the Kadmal Plates of Guhila Vijayasimha (AD 1083). The reads:

Guhadattah - Bhoja – Mahendra (I) – Naga - Sila - Aparajita - Mahendra (II) – Kalabhoja - Khummana (I) - Mattata - Bhartpatta (I) - Simha - Khummana – Mahoyaka – Khummana (II) – Bhartpatta (II) – Allata – Mahipala – Vairata – Hamsapala – Vairisimha – Vijayasimha.

The relation of each succeeding prince with his immediate predecessor in the description got mentioned from Simha (the twelfth ruler) onwards in contrast with the earlier rulers. For instance, Simha is Bhartpatta (I)'s son (simho = bhava ... daku(nu)va(ta)sya suto = tha(tha) yaje). It is significant that instead of Naravahana of tenth-century records, Allata is succeeded by Mahipala in the present record. Naravahana, the successor of Allata, is not mentioned by the above record.

Therefore, it is obvious that both Naravahana and Mahipala were sons of the same father, Allata. Naravahana being the eldest,

succeeded to the throne in regular succession after Allata. This is the main reason why all the known epigraphic records of the Guhilas of Mewar mention Naravahana. The question arises, however, as to why this particular record omits the mention of Naravahana and proclaims instead, Mahipala as the son and successor of Allata. The question becomes important in view of the fact that Mahipala never succeeded to the throne of Nagda-Ahada in the tenth century. None of the Guhila records except Kadmal plates mentions Mahipala as a Guhila prince. One may assume that only if Vijayasimha (the Guhila king issuing Kadmal plates) belonged to a branch of the Guhila ruling family other than that of Naravahana's, would he have mentioned his immediate ancestors (rather than Naravahana). In other words, it is likely that Vijayasimha belonged to a junior branch of the ruling house. Evidently, this junior branch originated with the younger son of Allata, Mahipala. This is evident from the fact that Vairata who preceded Hamsapala in the genealogy had obtained rulership elsewhere, i.e. outside his paternal place (anyatra labdha rajyasya).

The fact is corroborated by the third slab of Kumbhalgarh inscription, which stated that the progeny of Yogaraja (who figures in the main list of the rulers), the predecessor of Vairata, did not attain regal status, and that the lot finally fell on Vairata who was a descendant of a branch of Allata's lineage." The above genealogical variations as culled from all the extant and important records are presented below.

Allata (vs 1010 = AD 953)

Senior Branch – 1. Naravahana (vs 1028 = AD 971), 2. Salivahana, 3. Shaktikumara (vs 1034 = AD 977), 4. Ambaprasada, 5. Suchivarman, 6. Naravarman, 7. Anantavarman, 8. Yasovarman, 9. Yogaraja, 10. Vairata (vs 1083 = AD 1026)

Junior Branch — Mahipala.

In the Kumbhalgarh slabs, the second major segment of the ruling house which branched off with Yogaraja's son in the early eleventh century is mentioned. Since Yogaraja's son could not succeed to the throne, the scion of the immediate junior branch, Vairata was the next legal claimant. Thus, Vairata succeeded Yogaraja. A fragmentary inscription of vs 1083 (AD 1026) preserved in the Victoria Hall Museum at Udaipur can probably be assigned to the reign of Vairata (the major portion containing the name of the ruling prince and other details are lost). It is important that neither a fifteenth-century literary source like the Ekalitigamc-Thiittnyam (Section: Rajavarnana) nor a seventeenth-century epigraphic or literary source such as Rajaprashasti and Amarakavyam provide any clue to early junior branches. The question arises as to what necessitated these segmentations of the royal family that led to proliferation of its junior branches. A.K. Vyas is probably right when he points out that it might have been a case of some internal family feud of the Guhila state in this period (tenth-eleventh centuries). Formation of new branches seems to have been the most plausible consequence of the ranking system which was the basis of political integration.

This article is taken from Nandini Sinha Kapur, 'State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the 7th—15th Centuries', New Delhi, 2002.

Draft Resolution
Round Table on Imminent Himalayan Crisis
(28 January 2023, Haryana Bhawan, Delhi)

Declare Himalayas as eco sensitive zone

(Parts of our history and rich culture and Heritage on the brink of collapse with sinking Joshimath.)

Sri Adi Shankaracharya founded the city in the eighth century, where the holy Jyotirlinga is located, which is known as Joshi Math (Jyotir Math). Today, this math is at the brink of collapse. The news of the sinking of Joshi Math has shaken the whole country. Even though some steps have been taken in view of the current crisis, experts believe that the sinking of Joshi Math cannot be stopped. That is, the downfall of this first Jyotir Math established by Adi Shankaracharya cannot be stopped.

We have gathered here today to mull on the facts on ground and the next steps from here on.

1. Issue at hand: The issue at hand draws attention to sudden land sinking in Joshimath early this year but for those who have forewarned such an event through several government reports in the past such as:

Mishra Commission Report of 1976 that says with reference to the fragile terrain around Joshimath/upper Alaknanda basin, the Mishra Commission recommended in 1976 a blanket ban on collecting construction material from a radius of 5 km of the Joshimath town. No boulders should be removed either by digging or blasting and no trees should be cut in the landslide zone. The Commission also stated that Joshimath town was located in a fragile sliding zone.

Or the Task force report of the planning commission of 2010 saying that “No Go” areas need to be defined.

Or the Expert body committee report after 2013 disaster which says that these fragile mountains are overburdened and deforestation and excessive construction works beyond the carrying capacity of these areas is aggravating the effect of disasters.

2. Assessing the root cause: This is not the first time that such a tragedy has happened in the Himalayan region. Earlier in the year 2021 also, 200 people including the laborers of Tapovan dam had died in the Chamoli flood. Earlier in 2013 too, a large number of bridges, roads and buildings had collapsed due to floods in the Ganga, Yamuna and its tributaries in the region after heavy rains. There has been an evident increase in the number of such disasters in the Himalayan region in recent years. These natural calamities cannot be taken lightly.

Uncontrolled construction work in such fragile terrain is the reason for the collapse of Joshi Math and recent disasters. It is worth mentioning that the way the mountain was cut at the foothills of Joshi Math for the construction of Char Dham Marg and how without a proper hydrogeological study, the NTPC dug a tunnel in the middle of the mountain for its hydro project, this fragile mountain was destroyed. It is also noticed that due to robust and unplanned construction of high-rise hotels and buildings there is inadequate arrangement for sanitation, which makes Joshimath more unstable and burdened.

Due to all this, today the entire area of Joshi Math is sinking and there is no way we can save the same. The question is not only of Joshi Math.

In the name of development, construction work and tampering with nature is going on continuously all over Uttarakhand. Due to the massive deforestation, there is hardly any greenery left on the mountains; and due to this, landslides have become a common feature in these youngest fold mountains.

3. Inadequate solutions: While on one hand a large number of people are going to be displaced due to the sinking of Joshi Math city, on the other hand, the solution is being sought only by way of rehabilitation of affected residents. Currently the work on mega projects in this area - the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) hydropower project, Helang bypass road construction which is part of Chardham road widening project and Ropeways project, has been stopped by the district administration succumbing to the local protests.

It can be seen that areas such as Bhagirathi ESZ, where large scale mega projects have not happened and

the local ecology has not been tampered with, land subsidence and land slide incidents and devastating disaster events are minimum to none. This is proof enough that the indiscriminate unplanned robust construction everywhere else in the state of Uttarakhand has directly/ indirectly impacted and aggravated the disaster like situation. "In view of this type of rapid destruction in the past, it has become necessary to consider that the so-called development driven by human greed cannot be allowed to continue.

The whole of Uttarakhand and especially the centres of tourist attraction like Nainital and Mussoorie etc. are also on the verge of sinking. Some people believe that a situation like Joshi Math may soon repeat in Nainital and other areas of Garhwal as well.

Significantly, in Uttarakhand, and also in other hilly states, the work of widening of roads, construction of tunnels, railway lines, construction of dams etc.; and in addition large-scale building construction, which mostly includes hotel construction, has increased rapidly in the last two decades. During this period, there have been governments of different parties at the center and in the state. So no one political party can be blamed singularly for these disasters.

4. What is the solution? Disastrous construction in the name of development without assessing the expected impact is becoming the cause of today's and earlier tragedies. This crisis can be avoided only by curbing this indiscriminate construction. But the construction works at different places cannot be stopped without making a law.

Legislation is a long process and it is a difficult task to create a consensus of opinion among various stakeholders. The state government can make efforts for this by showing sensitivity that due to the current crisis, the district administration has stopped all the construction activities, but if long-term measures are not thought of, then these construction works will restart again sooner or later. "Therefore, it is necessary that long-term measures are taken to deal with this problem. We know that most of the rivers in the country, originate from the Himalayan Mountains. Whereas glaciers are located on the top of the Himalayas, due to global warming in the world, glaciers are melting and because of this not only the sources of drinking water are depleting due to excess flow of water, but the water level of the sea is also increasing.

Declare Himalayas as eco sensitive zone

Various rivers originate under the glaciers. In the past there had been opposition to the obstruction of continuous flow of the Ganga by tampering with nature in the name of building dams on the river Ganga. After protests and agitations and fast unto death by many people including Prof. GD Agrawal, in the year 2010, the central government declared the area of Bhagirathi as eco-sensitive zone.

The experience after that is that natural calamities have remained almost non-existent in that area. Similarly, parallel to Bhagirathi area, if Yamunotri, Alaknanda, Mandakini and Kali river & Dhauliganga areas are also declared eco-sensitive zones, then only it will be possible to prevent future disasters in this area.

Regulate the devastation of the big projects: Chardham road widening project must regulate the road-width to intermediate standard to minimize the damage to the terrain.

Chardham railways is an over ambitious project that will cause much devastation and will further overburden the tourist centric state of Uttarakhand. This project should be reassessed and re-looked at.

A detailed carrying capacity assessment of state of Uttarakhand should be done to ensure the number of tourists to these places is accounted for and doesn't cause environmental overburdening.

This Ganga basin is the collective property of the entire country and the cultural sanctity of the Ganga Himalayas is impeccable and must not be compromised at any cost. It is therefore important that these ecologically and culturally sensitive zones should be taken care of, conserved and protected as an inter-generational equity.

It has to be understood that present generation and the government has the responsibility of not only the protection of the Himalayan region, but also the future of all the people living on this land, who are dependent on the rivers coming out of this region. The present governments, both at centre and the state, will have to demonstrate utmost sensitivity, otherwise the future generations will never forgive us.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

'Those who participated in India's growth story shouldn't be targeted': SJM



Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) that promotes self-reliance came forward in support of industrialist Gautam Adani in the wake of allegations by Hindenburg, a US-based investment research firm. SJM, took to Twitter to extend the organisation's support to the Adani Group and maintained that Mr. Adani was not burning cash, but building assets. He added that reports like Hindenburg won't affect broader sentiment towards India. "The Hindenburg is in the business of defaming other companies in which they have a business interest in short-selling. Also, this is not the first time it is doing it," he told The Hindu. He said had this investigation been done by some independent company, it would still have some value. But in this case, this firm is directly gaining from such reports. Hence, it has to be discounted.

"Adani is producing solar panels. Adani is producing semi conductors. Adani has built all these airports. They are all real assets. So Adani's model of business is not cash burning. Therefore saying that his firm is cash burning is wrong. I question how the assets being built will vanish? It will not," added SJM.

He further said the rise of Mr. Adani was a threat to China. "The gain of Adani is loss of China," SJM said, adding that there were many people who had literally stolen India's money and fled abroad. They should be called the real 'culprits'.

SJM said those who participated in India's growth story shouldn't be targeted. Global investors had no option than to invest in India, he said and added that all other economies were contracting and facing huge crises. In its report released last week, Hindenburg, a U.S.-based investment research firm that specialises in activist short-selling, has alleged that the Adani Group was "engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and

accounting fraud", a charge the conglomerate described as malicious, unsubstantiated, one-sided, and done with the malafide intention to ruin its share-sale.

The report further details a web of Adani-family controlled offshore shell entities in tax havens spanning the Caribbean and Mauritius to the United Arab Emirates, which it claims were used to facilitate corruption, money laundering and taxpayer theft, while siphoning off money from the group's listed companies.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/hindenburg-report-swadeshi-jagran-manch-backs-adani-says-those-who-participated-in-indias-growth-story-shouldnt-be-targeted/article66451158.ece>

Declare Himalayas eco sensitive zone, regulate big projects: SJM

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), said that several "overambitious" projects under execution in the Himalayas of Uttarakhand are causing irreversible damage to the State and its people and hence must be stopped. In a resolution, passed during the round table conference organised by the organisation, the participants maintained that the government must declare the entire Himalayas as "eco-sensitive zone" and ensure there is no further damage to the environment.



The round table, headed by SJM, was also attended by Ravi Chopra, a veteran environmentalist and director of People's Science Institute, and social expert Hemant Dhyani among others who spoke at length about the devastation happening at Joshimath and the reasons behind it.

While demanding to declare Himalayas as eco-sensitive zone, the participants of the conference maintained that various rivers originate from the glaciers in Himalayas. In the past, there had been "opposition to the obstruction of continuous flow of the Ganga, one of the several Himalayan rivers, by tampering with nature in the name of building dams across the river", they said.

"After protests and agitations and fast unto death by many people including Prof. G.D. Agrawal, the

Central government declared the area of Bhagirathi as eco-sensitive zone. Declaring the stretch from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi, covering an area of 4,179.59 sq.km., as eco-sensitive zone resulted in no event of natural calamity occurring in the area. This is why the government must consider declaring Yamunotri, Alaknanda, Mandakini, Kali and Dhauli - all Ganges tributaries - as 'eco-sensitive zones' to prevent future disasters in Uttarakhand," said Mr. Dhyani.

SJM said the Ganges basin is the collective property of the entire country and the cultural sanctity of the Himalayas is unimpeachable and must not be compromised at any cost. It is therefore important that these "ecologically and culturally sensitive zones should be taken care of, conserved and protected as an inter-generational equity".

"The present governments, both at Centre and the State, will have to demonstrate utmost sensitivity towards nature, otherwise the future generations will never forgive them," SJM further said.

Speaking about the measures that should be taken immediately, the participants of the conference said that the Char Dham road widening project must be regulated and the width of the road should change to "intermediate standard" to minimise damage to the terrain.

"Char Dham rail is an overambitious project that will cause much devastation in the Himalayas and will further overburden the tourist-centric State of Uttarakhand. This project should be reassessed and re-looked," demanded the SJM.

The organisation also added that a detailed carrying capacity assessment of the State of Uttarakhand should be done to ensure the number of tourists to these places is accounted for and the activities don't cause environmental overburdening.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/joshimath-crisis-declare-himalayas-as-eco-sensitive-zone-and-regulate-the-big-projects-demands-swadeshi-jagran-manch/article6444098.ee>

Re-Impose cap on royalty payments by MNCs: SJM

Swadeshi Jagran Manch expressed its concern over issues regarding outflow of valuable foreign exchange in the name of royalty and technical fees by multinational corporations (MNCs).

Referring to the decision of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) to increase the Royalty payment to their parent company Unilever, from 2.65 per cent to 3.45 per cent (that is, 80 basis point hike), over three years till 2025, it said: "This decision has once again ex-



posed the unethical practice of increasing royalty payment by MNCs, impacting, health of the economy in general and outgo of foreign exchange and ultimate depreciation of rupee in particular."

"Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) demands that the government reimpose these 'caps' to save valuable foreign exchange as there is no logic to continue the same. These curbs would help increase the profits of MNCs, mainly in the automobiles sector, prevent depletion of foreign exchange reserves and protect the interest of minority shareholders. It will also increase the revenue of the government, apart from saving valuable foreign exchange," SJM.

SJM said that rising royalty and technical fees to foreign companies have been widening the deficit in our Balance of Payment (BOP) further. Royalty payment outflows are payments made by MNCs to their foreign parent firms or by Indian citizens to foreign entities for use of property, patent, copyrighted work, licence or franchise.

Royalty and technical fees is one of the many ways in which MNCs extract huge sums of money from the developing and underdeveloped economies.

For the year 2017-18, "While FDI inflows accounted for USD 60.96 billion, the payments relating to Royalty and technical fees amounted to US\$ 20.65 billion. This figure is reaching nearly \$25 billion by now. This shows how benefits of FDI are clearly being negated by the outflow on royalty and technical fees. Moreover, these outgoes would continue in future too, even when there is no FDI inflows," SJM said.

SJM said that prior to 2009, royalty payments were regulated by the government and were capped at 8 per cent of exports and 5 per cent of domestic sales in case of technology transfer collaborations and was fixed at 2 per cent of exports and 1 per cent of domestic sales for use of trademarks or brand names. This was in tune with international standards and practices. The outflow of these payments started increas-

ing significantly after the Ministry of Commerce, under Shri Anand Sharma, of the UPA government 'liberalised' the FDI policy in 2009. It had removed the cap and permitted Indian companies to pay royalties to their technical collaborators without seeking prior government approval. After lifting of the cap on the royalty outflows on account of royalty and fee for technical services, has been increasing at a very fast pace, SJM added.

"It is the considered opinion of Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) that the cap on royalty as it existed prior to 2009, was a prudent policy as it helped in keeping outgo of foreign exchange and therefore keeping the Current Account Deficit in BOP low and therefore reduced requirement of foreign exchange. It is notable that prior to 2009, outgo of foreign exchange on royalty and technical fees was hardly 4 billion \$US, which has henceforth been increasing in leaps and bounds and has reached more than \$25 billion \$US by now," SJM said.

Under the present circumstance it's imperative to keep the acts of foreign companies in discipline, as they have been increasing outflow of foreign exchange for royalty and technical fees unilaterally after lifting of cap on the same in 2009.

<http://www.smtimes.in/smtimes/news/indian-economy-news/2023/jan/25/mnc-royalty80599.html>

SJM seeks protectionist measures to counter China

India should raise tariffs to allow the domestic industry to thrive, while aiming to prevent the dumping of goods from China, Swadeshi Jagran Manch said.

"We wish and expect for tariffs to go up significantly," SJM told Moneycontrol in an interview. "Aatmanirbhar Bharat is the only way to ensure that we narrow the trade deficit and reverse deindustrialisation."

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch is the economic affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which provides India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party with its top leadership and most committed cadres.

Training his guns on liberal economists, the bureaucracy and past administrations, Mahajan rued that Indian industry has to compete with Chinese shipments that benefit from unfair practices in that country. China is India's second-biggest trading partner after the US and shipments continue apace despite tensions on the Indo-China border.

"We as a nation cannot depend upon one country or a set of countries, like what we did from 1991

until 2020, when Aatmanirbhar Bharat was rolled out," SJM said.

The larger neighbour continues to use unethical tactics, including dumping and under-invoicing, SJM added. Over the past few years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration has increased duties on a raft of goods and offered production-linked incentive schemes to boost local manufacturing in a host of sectors ranging from automobiles, white goods, and pharmaceuticals to solar photovoltaic modules.

The programme is part of a broader goal to reduce imports and boost exports of manufactured products in an attempt to secure a foothold in the global supply chain, which is shifting away from China following the pandemic. Despite these moves, China's tactics remain the same, SJM said.

"Even if you start domestic production, they will dump goods and force you to shut shop," SJM said.

Mahajan suggested that the government identify the goods from China and raise tariffs on them.

"Our bound rates are 40 percent. No one can stop us if we raise rates to 25 percent," SJM said. Bound rates are the maximum rate of duty that can be imposed by an importing country.

SJM said he is not advocating protection of the inefficient domestic industry but bringing it at par, seeking "competitive tariffs," unlike the high tariffs of the Nehruvian era.

Meanwhile, the government must look to curb imports of intermediates and use more non-tariff measures to restrict imports and focus on protecting existing industrial capacities, he added.

The government is surrounded by economists who continue to want to slash tariffs, SJM alleged.

"If you do that, the factory sector will shrink further. How else will you generate employment in the country? How will you utilise the demographic dividend? India should learn from Trump, who raised duties on a raft of imports from China. When Trump can do it, why can't you?"

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/budget/budget-2023-rss-affiliate-seeks-protectionist-measures-to-counter-china-9880611.html>

Re-assess Char Dham rail project: SJM

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) called for a relook and re-assessment of the Char Dham railway project, describing mindless construction in the sensitive Himalayan region as the principal cause of subsidence in Joshimath, a city Adi Shankaracharya found-



ed in the eighth century.

SJM said devastation caused by major projects in Uttarakhand needed to be stopped. “The Char Dham road widening project must regulate the road width to intermediate standard to minimise the damage to the terrain.

The Char Dham railway project is an overambitious plan that will cause much devastation and further burden the tourist-centric state of Uttarakhand. This project should be reassessed and re-looked at,” said SJM in a statement.

The SJM’s statement came after a day-long round table conference on the Joshimath crisis. With experts demanding urgent action, the SJM called for the Himalayas be declared an eco-sensitive zone.

“Unplanned construction in such fragile terrain is the reason for the collapse of Joshimath and recent disasters. The way the mountain was cut at the foothills of Joshimath for the construction of the Char Dham Marg and a tunnel was dug up in the middle of the mountain for an NTPC hydro project without a proper study, it meant disaster for fragile mountains,” SJM said. The RSS affiliate cautioned the government, saying the entire Uttarakhand, especially tourist centres of Nainital and Mussoorie, was on the verge of sinking.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/re-assess-char-dham-rail-project-rss-affiliate-474477>

FSSAI to tighten front-of-the-pack labelling norms

India’s food safety regulator is in talks with companies to include a “cautionary warning” on the amount of added salt, sugar and fat in the front labelling of packaged foods, alongside the proposed star rating system, to help consumers make informed choices, said a senior official. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is in the process of framing rules for front-of pack nutrition labelling (FOPL) of packaged foods. Its draft guide-

lines, issued in September, propose star ratings for food quality, among other measures.

“There should be some kind of cautionary warning to indicate how much (of a particular item) can be consumed in one day,” the official cited earlier said, requesting not to be named. The “cautionary warning” could be similar to the disclaimers on the front-of-pack of liquor bottles, he said.

“We are still in discussion with the industry about it,” the official told ET. “We will try to sensitise the consumers about the levels of fats (sugar and salt).”

In its draft regulation for FOPL, the regulator proposed star ratings of one to five to indicate how healthy the food items are based on their salt, sugar and fat content.

The proposal, however, has been opposed by packaged food makers who say the move will hit their business.



Several types of labels were being considered, including traffic light signs, nutrition score, health star ratings and warning symbols. However, the authority has chosen the star rating system based on the study done by IIM-Ahmedabad, which was roped in by the FSSAI to conduct a detailed report on impact on consumers on front-of-labelling for packaged and processed foods in India.

A similar system has been adopted by Australia and New Zealand. FOPL is the most debated regulation for food packaging, which has been in consultation stages for several years. This was the first time such an external entity is being involved in the labelling guidelines.

The issue has been in the consultation stage for several years, with processed and packaged foods companies conveying reluctance on the same and health activists seeking the strictest possible norm. While there have been multiple discussions with stakeholders, there’s been no final decision yet.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/fssai-to-tighten-front-of-the-pack-labelling-norms/articleshow/97462699.cms>

Swadeshi Activities Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) Zila Rojgar Srajan Kendra

Pictorial Glimpses



Bhilwara, Rajasthan



Balrampur, UP



Madurai, Tamil Nadu



Kanching, Manipur



Bikaner, Rajasthan



Chhindwara, Mahakaushal



Wayanad, Kerala



Udaipur, Rajasthan

Swadeshi Activities

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

Zila Rojgar Srajan Kendra

Pictorial Glimpses



Delhi



Guwahati, Assam



Imphal, Manipur



Jaisalmer, Rajasthan



Jamshedpur, Jharkhand



Chhattarpur, Mahakaushal



West Godavari, A.P.



Hapur, UP