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'No GM' Tag
crucial for India's trade

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Regulation of Online Gaming

The Online Gaming Market in India grew at a CAGR of 38% between 2017-2020, 8% in China and 10% in the USA. It is to grow at a CAGR of 15% to reach Rs 153 billion in revenue by 2024. India's percentage of new paying users is the fastest to 50% in 2021. Online gaming is USD 200 billion industry. India has tremendous potential to grow startups and attract more investment in the gaming segment. Online Gaming innovators will be the next big push for India's Digital Economy and Startup Ecosystem. But this phenomenal growth comes with its own set of problems. The criticism of online gaming includes growing societal fear about the proliferation of such games, particularly among young people, its addiction, people losing large sums of money, leading to suicides in various parts of the country, no grievance redressal mechanism, misleading advertisements, concern regarding data and intellectual property rights.

To address these concerns, the Government recently announced Draft IT rules for Online Gaming with the aim to promote a vibrant innovation ecosystem, protect gamers' rights and lay down guardrails against online wagering/ betting. The draft rules proposed self-regulatory bodies for online gaming companies which will develop filters and tests required to decide permissible gaming, be it a game of chance (games that are played randomly and are based on luck. For instance, dice games, picking a number etc.) or a game of skills (games that are played based on a person's prior knowledge or experience of the game. E.g., Rummy) or other games like esports, online fantasy sports etc. It also proposed verification of users and measures to safeguard users against the risk of gaming addiction and financial loss. The aim is to bring in comprehensive progressive uniform regulation to reduce state-wise regulatory fragmentation, consumer welfare and better consumer redressal & which will help grow the industry. The regulation is a continuous evolving process; this new beginning needs to be consistently upgraded and the control of regulation should be with the government.

— Kumar Gaurav, Samastipur, Bihar

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Quote-Unquote



It is a simple truth that India should remain India. There is no danger to the Muslims living in India today. Islam has no fear. But at the same time, it is also necessary that Muslims should give up rhetorical statements about their superiority.

Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, Sarsanghchalak, RSS



For Indians, the whole world is the country. Our forefathers shaped the culture of India on the basis of this idea. We went around the world. We started an extraordinary tradition of global trade centuries ago. Today, when we see crores of our overseas Indians, we see Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in them. When people from different provinces and regions of India meet, there is an experience of one India, the best India.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Bharat

G20: One Earth, One Family, One Future; that is, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

India has taken over the presidency of the G-20, the world's largest powerful and influential group of nations, from 1 December 2022. Significantly, 85 percent of the world's GDP comes from the G-20 countries and two-thirds of the world's total population resides in these countries. Not only this, 75 percent of the world's total trade is by these G-20 countries. Today, the whole world is facing huge challenges after Corona. Due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war since February 2022, many countries have been facing shortage of essential food items, many countries are also facing worst inflation and contraction of GDP. The disillusionment of countries towards indiscriminate globalization is also apparent. Different countries of the world have started talking about self-reliance and at the same time concepts like 'Global Value Chain' are also fast losing significance. The whole world today is grappling with recession, contraction in GDP and rising inflation. Along with this, climate change is emerging as a major crisis before the world. Compared to the enormity of the challenge of climate change, efforts to deal with the same, appear to be extremely indecisive and half-hearted. According to their promise, developed countries are shying away from giving financial support to deal with the climate change, and not only this, they are not even ready to transfer technology to deal with this crisis. Although all kinds of issues can come up for discussion under the G-20, but if India succeeds in attracting global attention to some such issues which are very important in view of global challenges and developing countries including India, then it will be beneficial for humanity in general and India in particular. Not only for India, it will be a great achievement for countries around the world.

Recently, in the context of G-20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while describing it as a great opportunity, has said that we want to use this opportunity for the welfare of the world. India has the vision, as well as the ability to face and solve all these challenges for world peace, world unity, environmental awareness and sustainable development. If seen, it is possible to solve most of the world's problems, but for that a change in thinking is needed. History is the witness that mutual enmity between different countries, competition to move ahead of other countries and expansionist approach has been causing conflicts in the world. The instigation of Ukraine by the US and European countries to come closer to 'NATO' became the initial reason for the Russia-Ukraine war. After that, efforts were also made to weaken Russia by imposing various types of sanctions. It is also true that Russia's aggressive policy added fuel to the fire. Later, Russia not only defied US and European sanctions, but also fueled the disruptions in the global value chain all over the world today. Due to this worldwide upheaval, shortage of essential commodities and consequent rise in prices and contraction of economies due to all these reasons, remains a headache for the world today. In such a situation, India, which is holding presidency of G-20 countries, has given a message to the world. The Prime Minister has said that in history only the strategy of struggle and competition was adopted to capture the resources. We have seen that various countries are still obsessed with the mentality of grabbing land and resources of other countries. Payment systems, hold over essential goods etc are being used as weapons. The Prime Minister believes that those who believe that struggle and greed cannot be done away with, are wrong. Continuation of our traditional culture of oneness, is living proof of the same.

The traditional thinking of India has been that all living beings are made up of five elements earth, water, fire, air and sky and coordination and harmony among all living beings is essential for our physical, social and environmental well-being. India will work for this universal solidarity during the presidency of G20. This is what our motto of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' indicates. This is not just a slogan, it is an important thing to understand in the context of the changes that have taken place in the human condition since some time. That is why the Prime Minister says that challenges like climate change, terrorism and pandemics cannot be tackled by fighting each other. We need to work together. Fortunately, today technology is capable of providing solutions to solve the problems of humanity. Digital technology is proving to be of great utility. Our country presents the oldest example of the tradition of collective decision-making in the world, which is the foundation of democracy. Due to the emergence of democracy, national unanimity in India is not done by instructions, but collectivity.

The Prime Minister has said that our priorities will focus on healing 'One Earth', building harmony and building hope for a future. We will encourage a sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle based on India's tradition of trusteeship of nature for the healing of the earth. It will be our endeavor to promote harmony within the global society by keeping politics separate from the global supply of food, fertilizers and medical products, so that the tensions of global politics do not endanger humanity.

‘No GM’ tag is crucial for India’s trade



Recently, the United State’s Trade Representative (USTR) has complained to the World Trade Organization that US exports are suffering because of India’s restriction on genetically modified (GM) imports. Significantly, in the context of food imports, India has mandated the certification of non-GM products. US says that the World Trade Organization should instruct India to lift the restriction on GM imports so that US can send its GM foods to India. Significantly, the production of GM products is allowed only in a few countries of the world, in which US is a prominent one.

US says that due to this condition, their exporters are finding it difficult to export rice and apples to India. It’s notable that India’s food regulator, FSSAI, has made non-GM certification mandatory for countries exporting food to India from March 1, 2021. US says that the compulsion of this certificate should be removed. US says that the justification for this order has not been explained. There should be a scientific basis to justify non-GM certification and it needs to be accompanied by a risk assessment, US argues.

Interestingly, in a yet another dramatic move, a committee of the Ministry of Environment, Government of India, Genetic Engineering and Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has recommended the environmental release of GM mustard, and in the most unprecedented manner, Ministry of Environment and Forests has also given its approval, paving way for commercial production of GM Mustard. Those who oppose this, say that if GM is allowed in food items in India, then this will pose a huge hindrance in the export of food items from the country, and may lead to flooding of imports of GM items in the country, which are not allowed as per India’s laws so far. With government of India allowing GM Mustard, a food item, this restriction will automatically be removed and there may be a flooding of GM imports in the country.

It has to be understood that India has become self-sufficient in food items today. Except for edible oils and some pulses, all other food items, namely, food grains, fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products, eggs, fish etc. are produced in sufficient quantity in the country. Not only this, India is also exporting food items worth rupees \$50 billion today. Many times consignments of India’s food exports have been rejected by some countries on the grounds that they were found to contain pesticides banned in those countries, beyond limits. But once it also happened that our rice export consignments sent to Middle East were also rejected for the reason that GM rice was mixed in them.

Recently, in the month of October 2021, according to a release of the ‘Rap-



India is an important country in food production in the world, which is not only free from GM food, but due to government and non-government measures, it is also moving forward in organic farming.

Dr. Ashwani Mahajan

id Alert System' of the European Union, Mars Wrigley, the famous candy company had recall its product 'Crispey M&M' from all over Europe because they contained GM rice, and their origin was said to be in India. Though, the Ministry of Commerce said that GM rice is not produced in India, so it is not possible, the farmers believe that since field trials have been going on in GM rice, it is possible that due to this the seeds of GM rice may have got mixed with other rice. Since then European countries are becoming more apprehensive and cautious about rice imports from India. It is natural that according to the rules of Europe, the products of 'GM tag' will be rejected outright.

Food exports and imports of India

Food exports from India are about Rs 4 lakh crore every year, some of which are processed food and rest are raw food products. These food exports are made to around 40 countries of the world. The important thing is that today GM is banned in 26 countries, and it's notable that these countries import a large amount of food from India. This clearly means that as soon as GM enters in food items in India, such countries (Europe, Middle East Asian countries, Mexico, Russia etc.) will be apprehensive about food imports from India and our exports to these countries may be badly hit.

On the other hand, America, Canada, Australia and other countries enjoying surplus of food items, which are not able to export to GM free countries, are looking for ways to dump their goods in India. If GM is allowed in food items in India, then these countries

Food exports from India are about Rs 4 lakh crore every year, some of which are processed food and rest are raw food products. These food exports are made to around 40 countries of the world.

will be able to export food products to India with ease, even if it's against our interests.

Thus we can understand that allowing GM can be a double whammy for India. On the one hand it would create major hurdle in our exports, such that they would be blocked in GM free countries and on the other hand GM producing countries will be able to sell their products easily in India. On the one hand foreign exchange inflow will be hit adversely, while its outflow increases due to increase in GM imports. Meaning thereby, a double whammy on the valuable foreign exchange for India.

Double whammy on farmer

Whereas, the supporters of GM are arguing that the permission of GM is going to benefit the farmers a lot and their income will increase, the fact is that if India's food exports decrease and food imports increase by allowing GM, then not only will there be big loss of foreign exchange, but farmers will also have to bear huge economic losses. Food exports from India enable farmers to get better prices for their crops. Exports of rice, wheat, spices, vegetables, fruits etc. from the country are continuously increasing, due to

which farmers' distress has been reduced significantly, by making them get better prices.

At the same time, due to the jump in food imports from US and other GM producing countries, it will become difficult for farmers to get a fair value for their crops. Significantly, GM producing countries are also known for giving huge subsidies in agriculture. It is a known fact that import of subsidized agricultural goods from US can lead to flooding of imported goods in India, due to which agriculture will cease to be a profitable venture. Perhaps, sensing the ill effects of GM on their economic interests and also impact on environment, farmers are also vehemently opposing introduction of GM in the country.

India's responsibility

India is an important country in food production in the world, which is not only free from GM food, but due to government and non-government measures, it is also moving forward in organic farming. Along with non-GM foods, organic products are also being exported in large quantities. In view of the growing health hazards caused by GM products, the world is looking towards India for healthy foods including organic ones. It is notable that entry of GM in the country may prove to be death knell for organic produce. In such a situation, if GM foods are allowed, India's exports will get adversely affected and GM imports will increase. In such an eventuality, not only India's farmers will suffer, given known impact of GMO on health, efforts to curb the growing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the world will also get a big blow. □□

India: Need for new alignments against China

Let's, for a moment, kept jingoism aside and face stark realities two facts are inescapable. One, partly due to its expansionist designs and partly due to current domestic compulsions China remains ever hostile to India. And, two, there is an asymmetry of power between China and India, economically and militarily. Yet there is no gainsaying the fact that India has dealt with this aggression to the best of its abilities. It has fortified its borders. It has declared that no normalization of relations is possible until border status is restored. More importantly, it has deepened its collaboration with the US, on bilateral basis and under the Quad umbrella. This has both cautioned and angered China, but for India it has expanded its geopolitical options.

India has been taking effective steps to build public world opinion against Chinese invasions into Indian territories on one hand, and at the same time adding to own economic and military might. The aim ultimately is to make it more costly for China to engage in aggression on borders facing India. Not that China will abandon its salami slicing tactical attacks, given the new doctrine of sovereignty – and consequent national mobilization – under the current President, Xi Jinping. The only option for India is to remain wary of our neighbour, build international opinion against it, and add to our economic, military, and diplomatic powers against our hostile nation. One inference is inescapable, however: India can't do it alone. Notwithstanding a temporary deceleration of China's growth, Chinese influence in our neighborhood – South Asia – is growing. Chinese trade with the countries there is growing, they are getting deeply entrenched in the projects under the Belt and Road initiative, they are getting entrapped in associated debt problem, they are militarily closer to China and many times, echo Chinese opinion on international issues. We failed to 'Look East' for far too long. In other



China is a formidable adversary whose nefarious designs and deeds need to be countered on many fronts.

KK Srivastava



words Chinese sphere of influence is growing in Asia. A counterforce must emerge which should work to India's advantage. What about US-Chinese relations?

As events are unfolding, even if not in immediate future, there is a strong possibility of emergence of a bipolar – US and China – world, other nations will have to then take care of their interests through hedging, balancing, and hand holding. In such a world whether US and China adopt confrontational or collaborative stance it is not in India's favour. If the two nations fight, India will bear the brunt of such rivalry since it is in immediate neighborhood of China which will show its displeasure against us. On the other hand if US accepts China as its equal peer, it will not object to China flexing its muscles against India. Either way thus India has to be very cautious.

There are, however, certain comforting factors for India that suggest that it is China which has bigger stakes on world stage than India. One, India is a small player in Chinese world view. While China does want – eventually – to make India accept Chinese predominance – in Asia as well as on world theatre – it is not an immediate concern for it. For the moment China's main worry is the attempts by US to weaken China by building anti-China coalition. It wants to bring together all the nations which don't approve of Chinese influence – economically and militarily – and hence share a desire to cooperate and coordinate. Washington is shaping its economic policies around the foreign policy and natural security concerns. Supply chains are being restructured where China's role will be undermined.

There is a renewed realization in the West that in the long run the real threat will come from China. Thus, there is a conscious attempt to reduce its economic reliance on China for critical products. This is what India needs to do too.

India should seize the opportunity to butt in China plus one policy. Thus, we should aim at building our economy. This will help us in building our military might too.

Two, since India will be hosting the G20 summit this year, China would not want to internationalise the border issue and put itself under bad spotlight. It is not only US that China has to worry about. China's support for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has heightened European concerns about creeping Chinese influence on the continent. Besides, India has sought to balance its ties with both Russia and West. China has been unable to leverage India's differences with its Western partners on Russia, nor could it drive a wedge between India and the US. China thus may find it lonely at the top.

However, we should not have a blinkered view about Chinese limitations. There is no point in shutting our eyes towards seeing a mammoth rise of Chinese capabilities in technologies reporting its military power such as space, autonomous weaponry, and overall cyber sector. This means that, if not already, China is likely to have a military force that is technologically far superior to that of India. This will raise the Indian challenge very considerably and the power asymmetry will further align in favour of our adversary. India will find it increasingly more difficult to de-

ter China from having aggressive postures. There is a very lethal position of hegemonic ambition, a tendency to bully the neighbours, ambition to make China supreme, and growing technological heft. While India has addressed the issue by developing capabilities, building new relationship, alter its world view and grow economically we are constrained by resource limitations. The only way out is to forge new relationships with 'friendly' nations like US, France, Australia and Japan both bilaterally and other multilateral fora. India has to follow an effective deterrent strategy which should include building of a network of strategic alliances.

There is a renewed realization in the West that in the long run the real threat will come from China. Thus, there is a conscious attempt to reduce its economic reliance on China for critical products. This is what India needs to do too. Second, the West is limiting China's access to strategic technologies on one hand and is seeking new partnerships with like-minded nations. India should come forward and be a part of this alliance. India, in other words, should use this sentiment against China to its advantage for building our nation economically and militarily. Besides, it should build a groundswell of public opinion against Chinese designs which adversely impact India and the rest of the world. □□

Violence Against Women

The gang rape of 'Nirbhaya' in Delhi on December 2012 had jolted the collective conscience of our nation. It led to a rekindled discussion about crimes against women and how to deter them. Thus, the definition of sexual assault was expanded, the quantum of punishment for rape was enhanced, the 'two finger' test was sought to be discontinued (in practice, horror of horrors, it was never stopped!), police complaint was sought to be filed early. Reality is not much on ground has changed even after 10 years. Even in 2021 more than 4 lakh (4,28,278) cases of crimes against women were registered; the figure was less than 2.5 lakh (2,44,270) in 2012. And, in actual fact, many such perpetrated crimes go unreported due to multifarious reasons, like stigma attached to the reporting, police apathy or reluctance, fear of a long and unproductive trial, expenses involved in pursuing the case, and of course threats from those who committed the crime in the first place.

Law is hardly a deterrent. In Delhi, which being a small state and being the capital of the country is better governed, the conviction rate was only 5.46 per cent for the total 13,614 cases of rape, dowry death, molestation, eve teasing, dowry and abduction. And for 2021, the percentage dropped to mere 1.65%!

The pathetic figures are pointers towards perfunctory investigations and lapses in filing charge sheets. Compare the worked out cases and those acquitted. Infact the existing justice delivery system (police, courts, laws, all put together) is so accused friendly that most victims don't even come forward to register the case. And if they do, police don't register it or records it faultily. Later the witnesses are likely to turn hostile. After 2012 a Nirbhaya fund was created to get rape victims easy access to justice. 30% of this fund remains unutilized. And, surprise of surprise, in Maharashtra the money was used to provide security to legislators.

But the cause for poor conviction are not merely institutional. There is the attendant social regression. Now even the authorities some time suggest that the



Violence against women has many dimensions. It needs to be dealt with as economic, sociopathic, and legal problem.

Dr. Jaya Kakkar



Crimes Against Women

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Case registered	13,614	9924	14,022	12,854
Cases worked out	9179	6820	9384	7943
Cases decided	2481	759	643	NA
Acquitted/discharge	1762	438	411	NA
Convictions	719	331	232	NA

The figures for 2021 are upto November 15, 2022.

rapist marry the victim. In Bilkis Bano's case there was even tacit and (sectional) societal support for transgression, when the convicted ones were recently released out of jail. Then there is popular sentiment for instant retribution which is an outcome of larger failures.

Worryingly to the state of crimes perpetrated against women now there is lately an addition in the form of the ferocity of the attacks. Only in very recent months, just to talk about a few, a woman was stabbed 51 times by her stalker with a screwdriver, a 17 year old girl was attacked with acid, and a 27 year old woman hacked into 37 pieces by her partner. Rising brutality is a new (or is it new?) dimension to the crimes against women. This, along with the fact that, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, a crime against a woman was recorded nearly every minute in 2021.

Besides, violence is not merely physical. Many women face emotional abuse both at work and at home. For that matter, domestic violence is widely prevalent in Indian society. Thus, violence could be physical, emotional, economic – all due to iniquitous power sharing between men and women, husband and wife, in Indian home and society. Apart from physical violence, the other kinds of abuse of women may be difficult to recog-

The Nirbhaya case did make society conscious about women rights, violence, harassment and abuse. It led to acknowledgement that 'freedom' for women needed to be put on a more equal pedestal in comparison with men.

nize and acknowledge. But even if it is, there may not be effective legal remedies available to women. In this regard, one can draw some comfort from a recent court judgement (though only at sessions court level) which suggested that while physical violence is certainly a crime, domestic violence should include sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse as well.

The legal system has to perform its duty. But there are obvious limitations, as we have seen. Only with education, exposure, maturity, and confidence can the Indian women take recourse to this agonizingly slow system which in any case is not very victim friendly.

The landscape for women's rights, including availability of suf-

ficient protection and redressal against violence, is not much promising after all these years. The Nirbhaya case did make society conscious about women rights, violence, harassment and abuse. It led to acknowledgement that 'freedom' for women needed to be put on a more equal pedestal in comparison with men. The legal system became more open to admitting these abuses. There was progress in legislation and prosecution relating to women related crimes. But just about.

In fact too much reliance on laws as deterrent has grace limitations. While the law is important it can do only as much. We need to focus on mindset. When many women are considered to be the properties of men, naturally there is a disconnect between efforts to fight violence against women and social realities of male dominated and misogynist mindsets. There is a very disturbing, added, discourse about giving these cases a communal colour, including interfaith relationships.

Education, awareness, and social conditioning – as against sensationalism coupled with even handed, reliable, speedy, and persistent law enforcement holds the key. Male entitlements need to be curtailed. The women don't have to be defensive, even though they are victims.

Finally, in the passing, since we don't have space available, we may mention that economic emancipation is equally important. Women are as vulnerable outside as they are to domestic violence. They have the right to be free of violence, the right to lead a dignified life, and the right to economic independence. □□

Technological changes and Road Ahead for India@2047

In the present era of knowledge, technology and innovation, we notice an inextricable link between the economic growth and the technological development. This holds true for a company and a country, both. The new economy led by digital players like Google, Face Book, Amazon, Apple and many others have replaced the earlier giants like General Motors, Exxon Mobile and AT&T. Many like Kodak, Black Berry, Nokia and others have either become sick or closed or are on the verge of being extinct either due to obsolescence of the old technology or due to non-adoption of the competitive intelligence. This was true even 500 years before when Indian economy was at its peak and that was also because that we were the origin of knowledge in the field of science, mathematics, astrophysics and medicine. Aryabhatt invented Zero and Decimals which is the basis of modern science including artificial intelligence. We were number one in textile manufacturing and there are several evidences to support that Indian economy contributed more than 25 per cent of global GDP even until 17th century before the arrival of British who started exploiting and destroying our industry. East India Company came to India before the industrial revolution and therefore it came to India to buy Indian goods and not to sell foreign goods as there was nothing which was manufactured in England in those days. The objective of this article is to focus that it was science and technology which made India great and today again we need to regain our past glory by recognising the importance of research and development and to produce Swadeshi goods which are best in quality and least in manufacturing cost to meet the demand of the global market.

The technology is moving today much faster than the economic planning or the market demands or even before the legal framework is ready to regulate its impact on the whole economic or social behaviour.

Creative destruction is the buzzword. In earlier era when the steam Engine was invented in 1712 in the first phase or when the electricity was invented in 1752 in the second phase the industrial revolution had just started and for more than two centuries, there was no paradigm shift in the in the field of science and technology except some incremental development for automobiles and other modes of transport including aeroplanes and few minor changes in the process for chemical or electrical segments.

However the third phase of industrial revolution which began with the invention of computers in 1945 and then the fourth phase with the invention of Internet in 1983, the information and communication technology has really transformed and revolutionised the life style and the functioning of the global economy. The pace of technological changes continues in unbound manner and we are moving towards the fifth phase of industrial revolution in the form of artificial intelligence and automation through robotics, machine learning, block chain technology, cloud computing and internet of things which are creating new challenges for unemployment, paving the way for a new economy. However there are two basic challenges of technology namely unemployment and environment or the



India can easily achieve the target of US\$ 10 trillion GDP by 2030 if due attention is paid for R&D and innovation.

Dr. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal

climate change which is again to be resolved through green technology towards decarbonisation and sustainable development goals. It would not be out of place to mention that India has an obligation under the Paris agreement under Article 4.19 to strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies for low carbon development pathways. It is to be noted that according to IPCC AR-6 Report 2022, that India's contribution together with other south Asian countries is only 4% as against 23% of North America and 16% of Europe in the net anthropogenic emissions between 1850 and 2019 although South Asia represents 24% of the global population as against North America and Europe together represents only 13% of the global population. India is committed to net zero emissions by 2070 and has already planned for producing 50% of its cumulative electricity installed capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030.

Amidst these changes, we find that the countries which are spending more towards R&D are able to expand their economic size and are able to dominate more economic power by producing cheaper capital and consumer goods and are influencing the legitimacy of international trade and investments through the existing world economic order. It is a different issue that a new international economic order is necessary for an equitable and balanced growth but that question is not dealt with here and needs further discussion for the geo-politics and geo-economics. However it is important to understand the close link between the technology and the economic development.

For example USA has the GDP of nearly US \$21 Trillion, China US \$18 trillion and our country, India is hovering around US \$3 trillion out of the global GDP of about US \$94 trillion in the year 2021-22. It is important to understand that the US population is only around 33.83 crores which is less than 5 % of the global population of nearly 800 crores and the population of both China and India is nearly 140 Crores or nearly 18 per cent of the global population. However there is a direct link between the spending on research, the number of scientific inventions translated into the number of patent filings and the size of the GDP. USA spends almost 3% of its GDP, China nearly 2%, whereas India spends only 0.7% of its GDP on R&D as against the World average of 1.8%. Even Niti Ayog has accepted that India's spending on R&D is one of the lowest in the World. This position is further fructified by the number of patent filing. China has filed 1.59 million or almost 16 lakhs Patents in 2021 against the total world filing of 3.4million or 34 lakhs or nearly 50% of the world filing of patents. USA being the second, filed 5,91473, Japan 2,89200, Republic of Korea 2,37,998 and Europe 1,88,178. Together, these five offices accounted for 85.1% of the total number of patents filed in 2021. However a noticeable change is taking place in the filing trends of patents as would be evident from the decline in percentage terms for USA and Europe and increase in the percentage of the Asian patents. Whereas there is increase in Asia from 54.6% to 67.6%, there is declining trends in North America from 25% to 18.5% and in Europe from 15.5% to

10.5% during 2011 to 2021. The countries with top five numbers in Patent filing are also the countries whose share in the global GDP is more than 75%. India's filing is just 61573 in 2021 and out of the same; almost three fourth is filed by Multi-national corporations. Even when we compare India's ranking in the global innovation index which has though improved in the last few years but still at 40th position as compared to USA second and China 11th position. We must motivate and legalise compulsory spending on R&D by the private sector just like CSR spending if we really want to be a big economic power by 2047 as major part of research is taking place in Government institutions like CSIR and other IITs.

India can easily achieve the target of US\$ 10 trillion GDP by 2030 if due attention is paid for R&D and innovation. It will help self-reliance for the local producers and the village based small and medium industry which provides employment to youth and enable them to produce quality goods and at competitive prices. In the long run our current account deficit will be reduced and our dependence on foreign capital will also be reduced and thus our Rupee which is on a devaluation mode will reverse its direction to appreciation mode and stop importing inflation. In the long run our dependence on crude oil will also come down with the adoption of new green technology to meet our energy requirements. Thus technology will help economic development and We will be able to increase standard of living of our people and remove the problems of poverty and unemployment in a phased manner.□□

The Author is National Co-convenor, SJM

Bihar's ignominy: Mahagathbandhan 2.0

Mahagathbandhan 2.0 is proving to be the proverbial millstone around Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's neck, threatening to end his long political career in ignominy. Since the Janata Dal (United) resurrected the alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal in August 2022, hardly a week or fortnight has passed without some serious issue of law & order, or maladministration, surfacing, many in the capital itself.

Fears of the return of 'jungle raj' that was the hallmark of the 15-year RJD rule, returned within twenty-four hours of the formation of JD(U)-RJD coalition government on August 10, 2022. In a chilling and gruesome murder, Rudal Sah, priest of the Ram Janki temple in Bakulhar village, Bettiah district, was beheaded and his severed head taken to the Pipra Kali temple two miles away, on August 11, 2022. The pujari always slept in the temple at night, and though he had shut the doors and gates, the killers scaled the wall of the temple and killed him. Rudal Sah was deaf and mute; he is survived by two sons and a daughter.

In the same twenty-four hours, a Toyota showroom in Patna was looted of Rs nine lakh and a guard killed, while another guard was beaten up and his hands and feet tied up. A businessman's house was burgled and Rs 50 lakh taken, a gold trader was kidnapped in Gopalganj district, and journalist Gokul Yadav of Prabhat Khabar was shot dead by five persons who arrived on motorcycles, in Simultala block, Jamui district.

The killing appeared to be a professional hit-job, ostensibly caused by animosity over the Panchayat elections. Gokul Yadav's wife had contested from Khuranda Panchayat but lost, triggering several disputes in the village. Gokul Yadav was attacked a few days before his murder. He was on his way to the market to buy pesticide for the family's corn farm when he was killed.

On August 14, a woman was beaten after being partially disrobed in Parsauni panchayat, Sitamarhi district. On August 17, a vegetable vendor's 15-year-old daughter was shot in neck, in Patna. On August 18, army jawan, Bablu Kumar, was shot dead by two men on a motorcycle, in an attempted robbery, at 3 am near Chiraiyatand bridge in Patna. Kumar was on his way to board the Rajdhani Express to Guwahati.

The elevation of first time RJD MLC, Kartikeya Singh, as Law Minister, triggered a controversy. A Danapur court had issued an arrest warrant against him on July 16, for his alleged role in a kidnapping case of 2014. He is close to Mokama strongman, Anant Singh. Stating that Kartikeya Singh should have surrendered to the court, BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi asked, "I ask Nitish, is he trying to take Bihar back to Lalu's times? Kartikeya Singh should be immediately dismissed."

On August 19, former chief minister Lalu Yadav's son-in-law, Shailendra Kumar, raised eyebrows by attending an official meeting called by minister Tej Pratap Yadav, his wife's brother. The incident, among others, compelled deputy chief minister Tejaswi Yadav to issue a code of conduct for RJD ministers. Yadav directed the new ministers not to buy new cars and restrain visitors from touching their feet. He urged that greetings be exchanged with namaste or aadab,



In just six months, the sheen seems to be coming off Nitish Kumar's image as susashan babu.

Sandhya Jain

and ministers conduct themselves with dignity and humility, prioritising service to the poor, regardless of religion or caste. Keen to project a more sober image, Yadav urged party leaders to promote the exchange of books or pens rather than bouquets. He warned partymen not to gloat over being the bigger partner in the coalition, and to focus on action governed by probity and transparency.

But it was easier said than done. On August 22, dozens of youths seeking jobs as teachers were lathi-charged at Dak Bungalow Chowraha in Patna. The government did not apologise or provide employment to aspirants. The same day, in Nalanda district, a scheduled caste woman was teased by anti-social elements and her family members were roughed up for protesting, while police remained mute spectators.

On September 13, four men on two motorcycles went on the rampage and shot at people in crowded places in the Begusarai district, killing one and critically injuring eleven persons. Police arrested all four and said the men were psychopaths and there was no motive behind the shooting.

On September 14, the administrator of a hospital in Patna was abducted; a ransom of Rs 10 lakh was demanded. On September 15, silk trader Mohammad Afzal was shot dead in Nathnagar, Bhagalpur district, while returning home. The assailants came with the intention to murder him and fired several shots, of which four hit him. On September 24, a 15-year-old schoolboy, Aditya Tiwari, was murdered by three students for resisting their misbehaviour with girls in the school.

On October 16, passengers of the Delhi-Kolkata Duronto Express were robbed at gunpoint near Patna by a 35-member gang. East Central Railway authorities said the gang raided at least five coaches of Duronto Express when the train was between Patna and Bakhtiyarpur stations in Bihar. They seized ladies' purses, mangalsutra and other valuables.

On November 25, 2022, thieves dug a tunnel to the railway yard in Begusarai district and stole a complete diesel engine, part by part. Then, in a daring act of daylight robbery, a gang posing as officials of a mobile company, stole an entire mobile tower worth Rs 19 lakh by telling farmer Lallan Singh, on whose terrace it was installed, that the company was removing the tower as it was incurring huge losses. Around 25 persons worked with gas cutters for three days to remove the tower. The incident came to light on November 28.

The sand mafia operated with impunity in Patna and Vaishali districts, illegally mining sand from the Ganga and transporting the same by boats and trucks.

Crime has been unabated in the state. On December 13, a woman from Vaishali district was abducted by five men and raped for a month in Delhi before being returned to the district.

In a more serious instance of maladministration, a 206-metre-long bridge over Burhi Gandak river in Begusarai district developed cracks and snapped two hours before its official inauguration, with a section falling into the river, on December 19, 2022. Fortunately, no one was injured in the mishap.

The five-year-old bridge, con-

structed at a cost of 13 crore Rs., could not be inaugurated earlier due to the lack of an access road. It was built under the Chief Minister National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) scheme (2016-17), and was among a series of bridge failures in recent months. Previously, in November 2022, an under-construction bridge in CM Nitish Kumar's Nalanda district collapsed, killing one labourer and injuring another.

Meanwhile, the Chhapra hooch tragedy toll has crossed 70, with opposition accusing the government of hiding the true figures, even as it claimed that families are cremating their dead quietly, for fear of police action. Amidst charges that the prohibition policy introduced in April 2016 is a complete failure and has given rise to the illegal hooch trade, chief minister Nitish Kumar remains adamant that no compensation would be given to the families of the victims.

In just six months, the sheen seems to be coming off Nitish Kumar's image as *susashan babu* (governance by rules). The harsh temper and lack of empathy towards hooch victims and their families in the Vidhan Sabha would have rattled the staunchest allies. The BJP's victory in the Kurhani assembly by-election could prove a trigger for wider political changes.

RJD leaders were quick to demand that Nitish Kumar step down and allow Tejaswi Yadav to lead the coalition. For the present, Nitish Kumar has deflected the challenge by stating that the RJD leader is the future leader of the alliance. But it is only a matter of time before the RJD sees the alliance as a drag on its own prospects in 2024. □□

GM fundamentalists can't even give one valid argument: Dr. Mahajan

The cold winter breeze returns to Delhi, making it harder for yellow sun rays to penetrate the smog and warm young mustard saplings. Meanwhile the Supreme Court for the past two days had been hearing the PIL against genetically modified (GM) mustard aka DMH-11 and asked a pertinent question – “If GM mustard is not approved, will our country be destroyed?”.

After all, the fate of Indian mustard hangs by a thread, one wrong step and India's risks destroying thousands of years of evolution, nutrition and our rich traditions associated with mustard.

To seek the answer, I travelled to RK Puram where Ashwani Mahajan, national co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) awaited me. Over the years, SJM has vehemently opposed the introduction of GM mustard and successfully stood their ground against the pro-GM lobby in India. The question now was will India's mustard survive against corporations and seed patents?

It was about 1:32 pm, when I entered Mahajan's office, he was flipping through the Oragniser (RSS magazine) and wearing a greyish coat and white shirt. We exchanged greetings and he quickly showed me the magazine. GM mustard was on the cover. So, I asked him what is the urgency on GM mustard.

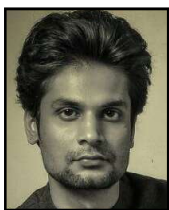
“The Supreme Court has asked the right question, and except for the pro GM lobby who are acting as fundamentalists, there is no urgency. GM fundamentalists including some “agri-economists” and so called “agri-scientists” are giving the government fraudulent information on DHM-11 yields. These people are not relying on science, but rather make-believe propaganda, especially when it comes to the yields,” Ashwani said. This was a serious charge and I wanted to probe further. “If we look at the yields of DMH-11 it's about 2200 kg/Ha and today there are research varieties of mustard that are giving 4 tons/ha that are growing in the country. We don't need GM mustard to improve yields, we just have to rely on varieties that are already growing in India,” he said.

Grey areas in India's tryst with GMOs

“The GM fundamentalists can't even give one valid argument in support of GM mustard, and when questioned start to narrate the “success” story of BT cotton. But when asked they can never explain why the maximum number of farmers' suicides are among BT cotton farmers,” he added.

Now, Mahajan definitely had a point, there were many grey areas in India's tryst with GMOs. As per the government, over 95% cotton is BT cotton in India, and since its introduction India has experienced a significant drop post 2013 in average cotton production, meanwhile other fields crops like paddy, wheat, etc have doubled in productivity.

“In 14 years counting from 2007 to 2022, India has seen a 21% drop in production, meanwhile non-GMO cotton growing countries like Bangladesh , Ethiopia, etc are increasing yields each year. Agri-economists conveniently omit production figures post 2013, and make their case. This is not science, but the fundamentalism of the GM lobby,” Ashwani told us. The picture was getting



‘We don't need GM mustard to improve yields, we just have to rely on varieties that are already growing in India,’ says Mahajan.
Indra Shekhar Singh

clearer, and so I asked, why should India not embrace GM Mustard? Is Ashwani's opposition ideologically driven?

Mahajan smiled and replied, "The pro-GM lobby is ideologically driven, and they are blind to the data on Bt cotton and still repeatedly call it a success, when it actually has been a big failure for our farmers, native biodiversity and environment. 8000 crore has been illegally extracted by Bayer/Monsanto as trait fee for a failed technology. More than the politicians, people in the system (agri-scientists, bureaucrats, etc) are responsible for mis-guiding the government."

"Take for example the yield parameters of DMH-11 (GM mustard). Instead of comparing DMH-11 yields with the best mustard cultivar available, they are comparing the yields with a hybrid they have used to make the DMH-11. This is not sound science or agronomy. We have mustard varieties growing in the public Mustard research centres that can outperform the GM mustard. So why be on this path of destruction," Ashwani explained.

The swadeshi claim

But he was not done. I asked him about the swadeshi claim, did he think the DMH-11 as a swadeshi GMO? "The second lie being told is that this is swadeshi GMO, but if we look at the two traits (bar-barnase-barstar system) used to develop the DMH-11, it clearly points to Bayer. These two traits are patented products of Bayer and it is about time the developers of DMH-11 tell us what is the relationship between them and Bayer. Bayer tried to introduce a GM mustard in early 2000s, but it was rejected. Then out of the blue, the swadeshi GM mustard

was introduced with the same two traits (Bayer owned). This mustard is neither swadeshi nor is it a mustard. It is a GM canola disguised as GM mustard. Bayer already has a monopoly on cotton and now using this DMH-11, foreign corporations want to take control of our mustard too," Mahajan said.

Overlap of health and herbicide

The third major issue in the debate is the overlap of health and herbicide, the developers claimed that this GM mustard was not intended to be herbicide tolerant crop, what did Mahajan think of this statement?

"They hide the fact that it's a herbicide tolerant crop, and once we exposed it, they confessed. With the DMH-11 the govt agencies are trying to legitimise herbicide use and increase the incomes of pesticide makers. We have, with over 2 lakhs signatures helped get the carcinogenic Glyphosate restricted in India, now the DMH-11 is tolerant to glufosinate herbicide which is much more toxic than glyphosate, and once DHM-11 will be released no one can stop glufosinate from being sprayed on our fields and entering our food and water systems. Already there are thousands of cancer victims appealing in US courts against Round-Up (glyphosate), we don't want another cancer epidemic in India, because of this toxic chemical," Ashwani said.

Now agriculture is not separate from trade, and as many experts have pointed out, with the introduction of GM mustard or DMH-11, India could lose its non-GM tag and risks forfeiting billions of dollars in agri-exports. How did SJM see impacts on trade?

"Today India is able to export

our farmers' produce freely because of the non-GM tag. Except for a few countries, most of the world doesn't not accept GM food, and if we allow GM mustard, we can lose billions in agri-exports. In 2007, GM rice trials were on in India, and about the same time UAE rejected an Indian rice consignment saying it tested positive for GM. After an investigation it was found that the GM trial fields were nearby and the traits perhaps escaped from the field trials," said Mahajan.

"Now imagine if this can happen during controlled trials, what will happen once we commercialise GM crops. We risk everything. Organic exporters and farmers have more to lose here. Now look at what the US is doing at the WTO, they are pressuring us to remove the non-gm tag and allow for GM foods to enter Indian markets. While the US is pressuring us, India is debating GM mustard. If GM mustard is allowed it will open the floodgates for agri dumping of GMOs on our markets. The environment ministry cannot fully understand impacts on farmers, public health and markets, hence commerce ministry, health and agriculture ministry should work in tandem to understand GM mustard. Without this assessment, India risks losing our biological heritage for the profits of foreign companies," Mahajan added.

As the clock struck 3 pm, I had to leave, but before leaving, I asked him – will the GM mustard be approved? Ashwani smiled and said, "we are making the best efforts to safeguard farmers, consumers and our civilisation, and we won't give up so easily. □□

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Opp edges out Biz takes over, Modi govt. bats for India Growth

India is striving to be a fifth, third or one of the largest economies as 2022 comes to a close amid not an easy global or local economic situation and politically warming up to a swashbuckling preparation to a year beyond to 2024 general elections. At least that is what the Opposition wants though it does not even appear to be prepared for the nine scheduled state elections in 2023 and a possible tenth in Jammu and Kashmir. The opposition is in disarray against the ruling BJP keeping up its ante and sharp barbs leave its rival nowhere. Will the opposition further crumble as its strongholds in Tamilnadu, Telangana, Tripura, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh seemingly severely challenged? Is economic change possible?

Two decades back it was believed India is edging out to multinational MNCs. There was apprehension among Indian companies as droves of the MNCs acquired significant businesses. Several MNCs like Ford, Holcim, Cairn, Daiichi, Sankyo, Carrefour, Metro AG and others aggressively entered even the commodities market. They had hopes of dynamically changing Indian business and economic pattern. Now with shifting priorities, global slowdown, local competition and losses most have either walked out or are venturing to move out.

What was then threatened to be sweep by the foreign companies is now apparently going back to Indian tortoise, apt at pushing the difficult rivals out through careful moves. Carrefour, Walmart and Metro exited as their models did not conform with their usual global model.

Slow and steady Indian corporate is taking charge once again. An aspect that escaped notice is their aggressive political roles in setting the country's agenda as per their possible business plan. It is no secret how a business leader walked into the residence of a prime minister, the morning after his swearing-in about 12 years back ushering in junking the stated aim of the politics keeping away from commerce, possibly a Nehruvian legacy.

It would be naïve to believe that the MNCs did not try that through their clout on their home governments. Western political access paved many of their



India is striving to be a fifth, third or one of the largest economies as 2022 comes to a close amid not an easy global or local economic situation.

Shivaji Sarkar



entry to India. Now they are getting it back in their coin. India too has giants now, some are aggressive players and others quiet functionaries. The economy is now moving out from the government. It may be good or not, India shies off discussing the major shift. The struggling political parties live in oblivion! Road construction and infra investment or growing insurance biz are becoming huge burdens and money guzzlers. Nobody discusses.

The government is being squeezed by trade bodies to dole out more, not subsidies, as they call it PLI – productivity-linked incentives. In the last week of December itself over Rs 4000 crore is decided to be released to cash rich pharma, telecom and food companies as year-end gift. The new FICCI president Shubhrakant Panda wants PLI to be extended to 14 sectors already listed. The ploy is that host of companies are moving out of China and with tax concessions can come to India. He does not say that these concessions would enormously benefit them as well.

He has a point. Indian tax system needs streamlining and not selective treatment. India has not yet looked at giving up personal income-tax at 42 plus percent or irrational GST provisions that strain the purchasing capacity. The country has not yet discussed how an economy could have a benevolent edge without the public sector. India aviation is not known to have faced airport chaos ever as it is happening now with gradual withdrawal of Airports Authority (AAI) or CISF being replaced with private players. The opposition is eloquently silent or is it selling itself out?

The government role in decid-

The New Year would sharpen domestic competitive politics. India does not yet know whether demolition of the PSUs is good even for profits and sustainability of the private sector.

ing economic parameters is shrinking. Prices are at a high despite fall in inflation stats. The RBI monetary policy committee is divided on the necessary step of 35 basis points, 0.35 percent, repo (interest) rate hike. Corporate do not want it even as RBI Governor Shaktikant Das says it would be costly error. Deputy Governor Michael Patra says for prices to come down decisive decline in inflation must.

The rising prices are impacting government expenditure, indicates Finance Minister Nirmal Sitharaman in Parliament as she rolls out her plans to keep fiscal deficit in check, certainly an uphill task.

So would crypto be allowed or checked remains a dilemma as RBI says it could usher in the next financial crisis. Das says, “It is a 100% speculative activity. They (crypto proponents) do not believe in the regulated financial system. I am yet to hear credible argument market about what public good it serves”. Sadly, politicians do not discuss it.

The clamour for jobs in a shrinking economy is right. Strangely enough jobs are to be given by the government and vanishing PSUs. Privates are profit-oriented, would not give jobs and

proper wages is dream. The vacuum in public life or hush-hush discussion will not solve the untreated malaise.

Growth figures of UNCTAD at 5.7 percent, RBI 6.3 percent or now S&P cutting it to 7 percent or less, 6 percent in 2023 and 6.9 percent in 2024 are concerns. Despite that the world is gaga about Narendra Modi’s India growth rate of an average 6.6 percent. It looks bright but Indian politics is ignoring the sore points and corrective steps. The World Bank, now a lobby of builders, says \$ 840 billion over next 15 years, or \$ 55 billion a year, spending in urban infra needed for India to grow. All know that infra is needed but also remember that expensive infra led Southeast Asian tigers to a collapse. The banks crashed. Should that “wise” step be repeated?

The saga of unending global economic uncertainties – US Fed’s steep hike in interest rates; UK’s (reversed) tax cut crisis; China’s growth below the rest of Asia since 1990; NATO-EU in Russia-Ukraine war mesh have implications on rupee, foreign trade and diplomacy despite a cheaper Russian oil the current account deficit gets graver. World demand-plunge is affecting Indian manufacturing. Promoting a dole-based food economy or freebies are neither easy to manage nor solution.

The New Year would sharpen domestic competitive politics. India does not yet know whether demolition of the PSUs is good even for profits and sustainability of the private sector. An all-encompassing parley may unfold the path to come out of the political morass to turn the Indian economy. Would 2023 show the way? □□

Self Employment: A way for Self Reliance



Luckily the two biggest sectors of employment in our country are still self-organized. It is the agriculture sector and the construction sector. If these two sectors can run successfully on principles of self-reliance then other sectors including software and other services sectors can run successfully in a self-organized way.

Alok Singh

The old saying is “uttam khetee madhyam baan, nikrsht chaakaree, bheekh nidaan”. The modern saying is ‘job market’ i.e. Prepare self to buy the job. The market-driven economy has over a period of time labeled the job itself as a market, and the frequent use of the term supports it. The alternative to a market-driven economy is a command or government-driven economy and society-driven economy. Self-reliance can be attained in a social economy. In a market-driven economy, there is no care for society while in a command-driven economy, there is no care for an individual. The socially driven economy is tough to achieve in a zero or low-tariff trading globalized world. The education import bill of our country is rising at an alarming rate. It can be extrapolated to understand that having a job is like owning an asset. So today’s job behaves as an asset. The education expense is the price to own the asset.

In any market, the buyer and seller meet and negotiate the deal. The best offer is accepted and the rest is rejected. It is a zero-sum game. The job in the job market is more about networks, connections, eliteness, and fraternity rather than about talent and skills. This is reflected in the job profile of alumni of the Indian Institute of Technologies. The IITians having studied diverse branches of engineering at a highly subsidized rate whose costs are borne by the taxpayers of the country, almost always aspired for a job in information and computer technology companies. This is happening for more than two decades. This is also reflected in the profile of the branch of engineering that an employee of the information or computer technology companies studied. Whether it is civil engineering or mechanical engineering or textile engineering or chemical engineering or any other branch of engineering, these people disowned their training and worked for a company for which they were not trained initially. The IITians relied on the label of brand IIT rather than the label of a branch of engineering that they studied. This was a dual loss to the nation. The country was deprived of required civil or mechanical or textile or other branches of engineering and at the same time, the



incurred cost of training was completely lost. If the students do not take admission to a particular department then the department in that college is closed, but nothing was done to control the migration of students trained in one particular branch of engineering to completely work in a new job profile, and that too just for the sake of dollars. The shoulders were broken. This argument should not be countered with the necessity of interdisciplinary research and work profile. The products of the best institutions in our country were diverted to one geographical area i.e. Silicon Valley.

Silicon Valley is all about computer technology which today drives social media, all types of business, and finance. Today Silicon Valley is shrinking. The big names of Silicon Valley like Netflix, Amazon, Alphabet i.e. Google, Meta i.e. Facebook, and Microsoft are facing turbulences in managing their expense for expanding human resources. They sought solutions in either lying off or freezing new recruitments. The victims are new job seekers who spent millions of money on their education to get a job there. The lower and middle-level human resources are the initial people in an organization to lose their job. In our own country, the education technology companies which hired too many during the pandemic are now laying off. Taxi aggregators, hotel room aggregators, and much other information technology-driven companies have laid off in big numbers.

The solution demands a new attitude. The approach should be of job givers rather than job seekers. The role of the policymakers

The union government has done what the best it can offer for the startup ecosystem. The geopolitics also favors us and the strong leadership of the nation is being acknowledged worldwide and the trade rules are no more a one-way compulsion. The world listens to us in trade negotiations.

is to timely figure out such conspiracies that destruct the social face of livelihood. The new recruitee is easy prey who instead of upgrading their skills over a lengthier period of time in their original domain works for the sector which offers them a comparatively higher initial salary. The final-year students do face the dilemma of either joining a job or studying higher education. Within higher education, there is a choice of opting for subjects of interest or opting for subjects that offer higher future salaries. In this trade-off of money versus others, the unstable money wins i.e. the interest in work and quality of life is compromised. But the recent unfavorable trends of Silicon Valley are again forcing youngsters to visualize their career path more thoughtfully and analyze their skills more carefully. It has resulted in many bright youngsters opting for either joining startups or starting their own startups. Self-employment is for everyone. Talent is not reflected in education only; it can be reflected in many

other sectors which do not require education from elite institutions. Talent is reflected in many ways. So, anyone having interest and talent should prefer self-employment during the early days of their productive life. From a few months to a few years, a job can be treated like an extended internship program.

The task for each one is to create a job for self by figuring out the gap and fulfilling it. The New Education Policy promoted by the union government of India is a reinforcement of the idea of self-reliance in livelihood through self-employment. The focus on vocational training and mother tongue as a medium of instruction is also in one way or the other the foundation for self-reliance in jobs through self-employment.

There was a generation that felt secure in government jobs, followed by a generation that aspired for private jobs and today's generation launches startups and practices entrepreneurship. The union government has done what the best it can offer for the startup ecosystem. The geopolitics also favors us and the strong leadership of the nation is being acknowledged worldwide and the trade rules are no more a one-way compulsion. The world listens to us in trade negotiations.

Luckily the two biggest sectors of employment in our country are still self-organized. It is the agriculture sector and the construction sector. If these two sectors can run successfully on principles of self-reliance then other sectors including software and other services sectors can run successfully in a self-organized way. □□

(Alok Singh is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Management Indore, a freelance academician, and associated with AGET Business School, Jhajar.)

Cash Burning Business Model is Failing

In the last year and a half, many such new-age companies, who had built their big businesses, Issued IPOs i.e. Initial Public Offer under certain provisions of Securities and Exchange Board of India ie 'SEBI' and common investors influenced by the increasing market valuation of these companies in the past, invested huge sums in their shares. Most of these companies were loss making e-commerce companies. Zomato issued their shares to the public in July 2021, Nykaa, Paytm and Policybazaar in November 2021 and Delhivery in May 2022. Investors had bought these shares with great enthusiasm, but unfortunately, soon the investors had to bear heavy losses in these shares. By November 2022, investors in Policybazaar have lost 69 percent of their money, Paytm investors have lost 65.4 percent, Nykaa investors have lost 49.34 percent, Zomato investors last 41.39 percent, whereas Delhivery investors had lost 31.33 percent of their money so far. In quantitative terms, Zomato investors lost about Rs 40,911 crore, Policybazaar investors about Rs 37,277 crore, Nykaa investors about Rs 51,469 crore and Dehlivari investors about Rs 12,175 crore, and highest loss was that of Paytm investors, that is about Rs 66,169 crore.

There is nothing uncommon for investors to lose money in share markets. But in this type of IPOs, which came after a long period lag, the huge loss to the investors has shaken the faith of investors in IPO market. It is believed that the interest of investors in the new issue may also decrease. That's why it is necessary to go into the root of this problem. A cursory glance shows that all these companies were in losses since their inception; and were incurring losses even at the time of issue of shares and are still in loss, without there being any plan to overcome from these losses. In fact, the business model of these companies itself is the 'cash burning model'.

What is 'Cash Burning Model'?

In the last almost two decades, a new model of business has taken birth in India and the world, which is called 'cash burning model'. Traditionally, business people, whether they are running a shop or running a factory or service enterprise, have been aiming to earn maximum profit by minimizing their expenses and earning income in their businesses, by building shops, factories, offices etc. Be it Tata or Mahindra or any other car company, by setting up its own plant, manufacture cars, bring new models, expands their business on the basis of consumer preferences and satisfaction, and ultimately earn profits and gives maximum dividend to their share holders and save some amount for future expansion. Similarly, companies engaged in electronics, chemicals, textiles and other industries have been making profits by expanding their business more and more. Sometimes companies have been shutting businesses due to not being able to stand in front of the competitors and more capable entrepreneurs.

In conventional economic theories, though, objective of maximisation of sales apart from objective of maximisation of profit, was also considered in some cases, however, ultimately maximum profit always used to be the ultimate objective.

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Swadeshi Samvad

But in the last two decades a new model of business has emerged, which initially appeared to be successful and this model was the 'cash earning model'. It started in the e-commerce business. Initially, it seemed that e-commerce companies will provide cheap goods to people to lure them initially, but later they will compensate their losses by raising prices. But when the companies continued their business for decades under the strategy of ousting the traditional small businessmen i.e. small shopkeepers, wholesale traders etc. from the market, economic analysts started understanding their strategy. It is observed that cash burning is not a short term strategy but it is actually a long term strategy which has been making the promoters rich and also increasing their business tremendously.

How did businessmen become rich by burning cash?

Typically, when a business tries to monopolize a business strategically by incurring losses, by selling at predatory prices, this drains their capital and eventually reduces the business's assets. But the 'cash burning model', which has been going on for the last two decades, has changed the whole idea of accounting. Let's try to understand this with an example. Two youths formed a company named Flipkart. They invested some amount from their personal relations in that company and started the business of e-commerce. They started selling goods at 20 to 30 percent cheaper than the market price. Naturally, the initial amount they had invested was exhausted. They



got in touch with the investors in the market and asked them to invest in that business. The speciality of that company was that they had a large quantum of customers' information and they had also earned the trust of the customers. On that basis the company was appraised and a huge amount was received by diluting some percentage of the shares. Later that amount was also blown away due to discounts and predatory prices, by then the valuation of that company had also increased further; and new investors took some more percentage as stake and gave huge amount to the company. This process continued and finally during the month of April 2018, the world's largest retail trading company named Walmart, which was keen to get into the business of e-commerce, valued the company at \$20 billion, tied up with various investors. Walmart bought 77 percent of the company's shares for \$ 15.4 billion, in which a lion's share also went to promoters. It would be good to mention that in August 2017, an investor company named SoftBank bought 22 percent of the shares of Flipkart Company for \$ 2.2 billion against the valuation of \$ 10 billion. When Walmart bought 77 percent of the company at a valuation of \$20 billion, SoftBank

now got \$4.4 billion in return by selling their stake in the company.

It can be understood that 'cash burning model' so far had benefited all. Consumers were getting cheaper goods, promoters were getting higher valuations and investors were getting huge returns on their investments. Economic and business analysts were praising this model. But the story doesn't end here.

What happened in the end?

In the last one and a half years, many such companies, which grew their business on the basis of 'cash burning model', and by the opaque and unique method of valuation, businesses were perhaps overvalued. The important thing is that these companies were getting good valuations when investors were investing in these companies in closed doors, but as soon as the markets started evaluating these companies, share prices started plunging. Such a huge loss in the shares of these companies in such a short period is raising a question mark on the business model of these companies. It has to be understood that all those companies which tried to increase their business and its valuation on the basis of cash burning model. But these companies couldn't withstand scrutiny by markets. It may become difficult for them to raise more funds for their expansion. It can be said that the market is not going to accept this 'cash burning model' model any more. If these startups have to get investment to expand their business in future, then they have to change their business model. Or in other words, 'cash burning' has to be. □□

Why subsidy for farm sector is no dole

“I have calculated all my inputs and my overall costs. At the end of the day, I am not getting the returns. If I started making a balance sheet, I would be in the negative every year,” rues Ammar Zaidi from Hardoi district in Uttar Pradesh. A former banker, he is now into sugarcane cultivation. Quoted in a news report, what Zaidi says is all-pervasive among the farming community.

In Punjab, the food bowl of the country, too, agriculture is in severe distress. Despite achieving record crop productivity in wheat and paddy — more than 11 tonnes per hectare per year — farmers carry an outstanding debt of Rs 1 trillion, pushing them deeper into crisis. With Rs 2 lakh of debt standing against every agricultural household, it only shows what was always known — farm returns are not enough to cover even the cost of production.

Whether it is in India, the European Union or America, agriculture continues to be in the grip of a terrible crisis. Summing up the tragedy that is affecting farmers globally, a British farmer was quoted as saying: “Every genuine farmer is now stuck unfairly on a treadmill with accumulating debts to meet unless he goes bankrupt, commits suicide or finds another source of income.” Still, every time farmers demand a higher price, it is drowned in the cacophony raised by market apologists, who accuse them of inefficiency, and for living perpetually on government doles.

In reality, we have socialism for corporates, and capitalism for farmers. In a study on the first 10 years of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, presented at the time of the 2005 WTO Ministerial Conference at Hong Kong, my assessment was that of the massive subsidies that the rich countries provide in the name of agriculture, 80 per cent go to agri-business companies.

Simply put, farmers are victims of a global economic design that has deliberately kept agriculture impoverished. Already at the bottom of the pyramid, markets have failed to prop up farm incomes. If the markets were so efficient, I see no reason why 40 per cent of the income of an American farmer and 50 per cent



What the world, in fact, needs is to bring in capitalism for corporates and socialism for farmers.

Devinder Sharma



of the European farmer should come from subsidy support. Call it welfare economics, but the fact remains that there is little alternative to cover up for the losses.

The richest 10 per cent globally own more wealth than the bottom 76 per cent, says the Global Inequality Report. In India, the richest 10 per cent possess 77 per cent of the country's wealth. While the poorest half in India sees only 1 per cent rise in their wealth, globally the have-nots hold just 2 per cent of the total wealth. In other words, it is quite apparent that economic growth is no measure of social welfare. The widening inequality that has been built up by a capitalist economy is bringing the focus back to the role of a welfare state.

Nowhere else is it as starkly visible as in agriculture. US President Joe Biden succinctly summed it thus: "Fifty years ago, ranchers got 60 cents of every dollar families spent on beef. Today, they get about 39 cents. Fifty years ago, hog farmers got 48 to 50 cents for each dollar the consumer spent. Today, it is about 19 cents. And the big companies are making massive profits." Earlier, the Chief Economist of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) had acknowledged that farm incomes in America have been on a steep decline since the 1960s. This is happening in a country where markets dominate, and where corporate profits have swelled up to \$2.11 trillion in the last quarter of this year. To help the miniscule population remaining in farming, the US has to come up with massive subsidies and investments every five years.

In India, it's no different. Studies have shown that farm in-

In order to keep food inflation under control, successive governments have denied farmers their rightful income. The entire burden of keeping food prices low, therefore, has been very conveniently passed on to farmers.

comes have touched a 15-year low. Niti Aayog had earlier worked out the real farm incomes in the five-year period between 2011-12 and 2015-16 to be less than half a per cent every year, 0.44 per cent to be exact. In 2016, the Economy Survey itself had reported that the average farm income in 17 states of India, which means farm income in roughly half the country, stood at a meagre Rs 20,000 per year. This comes to an average of less than Rs 1,700 per month. On the other hand, the latest Situational Assessment Survey for Rural Households in 2021 computes the average income of a farm household in the country at a low of Rs 10,218 per month, based on the data collected in 2018-19. But the income from farming operations alone (excluding non-farm activities) comes to a paltry Rs 27 per day. With such pathetically low income levels, over the decades, the resulting farm crisis has led to suicides and forced farmers to abandon farming and migrate to cities looking for menial jobs.

Any call for raising the prices for farmers is always met with stiff opposition from marketeers. A

dominant class of economists has often blamed farmers for not linking with markets, because markets value efficiency and provide economic justice. But even in the rich countries, what is not being explained is why the markets have failed to help farmers gain economic independence.

In such a dismal scenario, it is difficult to imagine how the farming communities survive. After all, Indian farmers are, in reality, wealth creators — the gross value of food produced in India being a staggering \$400,722,025 (FAO, 2021). Moreover, with a record harvest year after year, farmers have continued to produce more despite not being paid a living income. A record production of 315.72 million tonnes of foodgrains, 342 million tonnes of fruits and vegetables, 210 million tonnes of milk, and with an equally high production in agricultural commodities like sugarcane, oilseeds, jute, etc, in 2022 — farmers produce economic wealth for the country, but remain deprived of being adequately compensated.

Where markets fail, social responsibility can and must fill the void. In order to keep food inflation under control, successive governments have denied farmers their rightful income. The entire burden of keeping food prices low, therefore, has been very conveniently passed on to farmers. Providing farmers with direct income support, beginning with Rs 6,000 a year, given in three instalments, is a welfare measure to fill for the price loss farmers suffer. Strangely, this is considered to be yet another dole for farmers, and a lot of questions are asked about the rise in fiscal deficit as a result. But I hope that

in the years to come, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi can provide support of at least Rs 5,000 per month to every farmer, including tenant farmers.

When a corporate tax concession of Rs 1.45 lakh crore is announced, like in September 2019, and that too when some economists were asking for support on the demand side, it is hailed as a supply-side reform needed to boost economic growth. Similarly, all kinds of questions are raised when farm loans of Rs 2.52 lakh crores are waived off by a few state governments. While the farm loan waivers are seen as leading to credit indiscipline and a moral hazard, a corporate loan waiver is viewed as leading to economic growth.

Corporate bad loans totalling Rs 10 lakh crore have been written off by banks in the last five years.

This is just one illustration to show the bias in economic thinking, considering that both the corporate and the farmer take loans from the same bank.

Economists like Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz have already written the obituary for neoliberal economics. With some latest initiatives by the US President being considered as a step back from the policies enshrined under the Washington Consensus, the world is increasingly sliding back to welfare economics. Since agriculture, not only in America, but globally, has suffered from the policies that link it with markets, it is time to ensure that income parity or what we, in India, call a guaranteed price for farmers is enforced. That, I think, will be the best way towards farmer welfare.

When prices for all industrial

products come with a price tag, there is no reason why prices of agricultural commodities should not come with a price tag. A legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the best mechanism to provide a price tag for every agricultural commodity. In my understanding, providing a legally-binding MSP for agriculture produce is what farmers need. While agriculture needs reform, the best way to pull farmers out of the prevailing distress is by providing them with an economically viable and profitable price. Like everyone else, farmers too need a living income that can inspire the younger generation to return to farming as a career.

What the world, in fact, needs is to bring in capitalism for corporates and socialism for farmers. □□

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/features/why-subsidy-for-farm-sector-is-no-dok-466383>

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Manufacturers must adopt Reparability Model

We have not forgotten the days when all our electronic and electric gadgets like TV, transistors, fans, Air conditioners, computers, laptops, mobiles etc. household goods, microwaves, refrigerators etc. and miscellaneous instruments were repaired in repair shops in our nearby markets. For a long time, technology companies have made their products difficult, if not impossible, to repair. This is a major drawback for consumers. The manufacturers have designed the modern gadgets with policy of guarantee and warranty in such a way that those shops have largely closed rendering the mechanics jobless and entailing heavy expenditure and inconvenience as well as disadvantage to the customers on repairs beyond guarantee and warranty period or purchasing the new one as models change every year or frequently so, when parts of old models not available. Thus consumers' rights are not protected. This article seeks to sensitise the consumers, the Government and the manufacturers to adopt reparability model of their products.

More and more products are becoming unrepairable. For example, a product may be impossible to open without destroying it, and may have no third-party parts options. Devices should be designed in a way that allows for repair. Even appliances, which have long been regarded as repairable, are increasingly incorporating computer chips, potentially making them more difficult to repair in the future. Thus, basically, the right to repair requires manufacturers to disclose product details to customers so that they can repair devices by themselves or through third parties rather than relying on the original producers. It also unifies trade between Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and third-party buyers and sellers, resulting in the creation of new jobs. In order to improve consumer welfare, our country should implement a dedicated repair law. In *Shamsher Kataria v Honda Sael Cars India Ltd (2017)*, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) ruled that limiting access to spare parts to independent automotive repair units through an end-user licence agreement was anti-competitive. The CCI found that the practice was harmful to consumer welfare.

The right to repair is a rising global movement that aims to ensure that consumers are able to fix and repair their own devices. Otherwise, the producer of those gadgets restricts the consumer to use only their offered services. This right gives the user access to a manufacturer's hardware and software tools, as well as the choice of repairing the device himself or taking it to the manufacturer's service centre or to a third party. While global society is seriously concerned about the growing quantity of solid waste (particularly electronic components), the primary debate over the right to repair has been a subject of discussion worldwide.

The Department of Consumer Affairs formed a committee under the chairmanship the Additional Secretary, to develop a comprehensive framework for the right to repair. The term "right to repair" refers to legislation that would enable consumers to independently repair and modify their own consumer goods such as electronic, automotive, or even farm machinery, where the manufacturers of such products would otherwise require the consumer to use only their offered



It can be summarised that the right to repair is important for both the use and the environment.

Even if, a manufacturer does not benefit as much as the consumer, it can still develop newer and better products while still allowing users to repair existing ones.

Vinod Johri

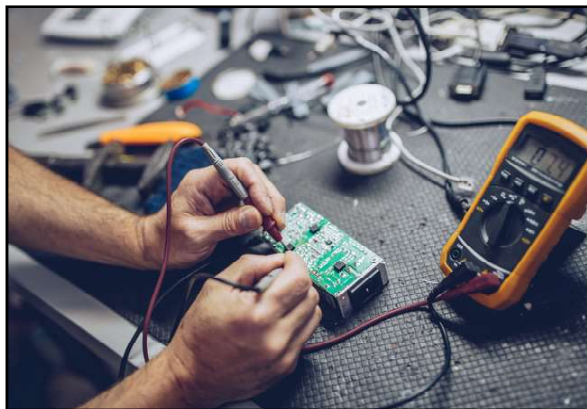
services by limiting access to tools and components or by putting up software barriers to prevent independent repair or modification. These challenges typically increase consumer expenses or make users replace equipment rather than repair it.

Recently Government has taken initiatives on right to repairs through National Consumer Helpline (NCH). The goal of developing a framework for the right to repair in our country is as follows:

- a. To empower consumers & product buyers in the local market,
- b. To harmonise trade between original equipment manufacturers and third-party buyers and sellers.
- c. To emphasise developing sustainable product consumption and
- d. To reduce e-waste.

Advantages of right to repair-

- i. This will help small repair shops, which are an important part of local economies, grow.
- ii. It will contribute to the reduction of the continent's vast electrical and electronic waste.
- iii. It will save consumers' money.
- iv. It will help to achieve circular economy goals by extending the life of appliances and improving their maintenance, re-use, upgrading, recyclability, and waste handling.
- v. Customers will be able to purchase their own set of tools to enable them to fix their devices and gadgets.
- vi. Company will also give access to required software which the customer needs for repairing the gadget for a prescribed time
- vii. The obsolescence of devices /



gadgets will reduce.

- viii Company will provide a clearly instructed manual that would aid consumers to repair the devices and gadgets.
- ix. Consumers will have the choice of either repairing the gadgets and devices themselves or to go to the Company repair centre.
- x. Organised refurbishing will be possible.

Thus, when this legislation is implemented, it would be a game changer for product sustainability and a driver for job creation by permitting third-party repairs.

Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Shri Piyush Goyal launched a host of new initiatives, including the right to repair portal and an NTH mobile app and opened new premises of National Consumer Helpline centre in the national capital. A memorandum of understanding was also signed between the Consumer Affairs Department and IIT (BHU), Varanasi as well launched a capacity building programme of consumer commissions. These initiatives were launched on the occasion of the National Consumer Day. On the 'right to repair' portal, manufacturers will share the manual of product details with customers so that they can either repair by self, by third parties, rather than depend

on original manufacturers. Initially, mobile phones, electronic, consumer durables, automobile and farming equipments will be covered. Speaking on the theme "Effective disposal of cases in consumer commission" on the occasion of National Consumer Day, Shri Piyush Goyal lauded the consumer commissions for disposing

of higher number of pending cases in last six months and expressed confidence of eliminating the backlog of cases across the country. He further said his ministry is making efforts keeping in mind what the prime minister has articulated — convergency, capacity building and climate change — to make consumers' life easier and promote ease of doing business. He emphasised that 3T's — Technology, Training and Transparency will help towards achieving greater consumer awareness and greater service to our consumers.

It can be summarised that the right to repair is important for both the user and the environment. Even if a manufacturer does not benefit as much as the consumer, it can still develop newer and better products while still allowing users to repair existing ones. Technology advancements and reparability may not be construed contradictory. Moving toward a world where technology is not constantly discarded due to a single malfunctioning part, would assist in reducing electrical & electronic waste and environmental problems while also giving consumers choice over the things they buy and the ability to fix such devices. □□

Vinod Johri, Retd Additional Commissioner of Income Tax.

Attack on Imran Khan: A turning point in November

The murderous attempt on Imran Khan's life has dramatically raised the stakes and altered the nature of challenge he has come to pose to the ruling dispensation in Pakistan. Till now Pakistan has been figuring more often on sports pages in the Indian media than on the front page. That is bound to change as the headline news from Pakistan this November has the potential of constituting yet another turning point not just in that nation's checkered history but for regional politics and security too.

Khan, former prime minister and chairman of the opposition political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been on a long march to Islamabad, challenging not just the legitimacy of the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, but also hoping to create divisions within Pakistan's armed forces leadership. While Khan's march, before Thursday's attack, was expected to arrive on the outskirts of Islamabad within the next few days, another important November event to watch would be the scheduled retirement of Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa at the end of the month.

Will Khan end up laying siege to Islamabad? Will Bajwa retire and walk into the sunset, or will there be a military re-assertion of some sort in Pakistan's politics? Can political leaders like Khan and Sharif arrive at some compromise that allows the country a breather? Will the army dump Sharif and go back to backing Khan? Are Pakistan's political parties and the armed forces the only actors in the game or do outside players — China, United States, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have any skin in the game?

To the extent that Pakistan is embroiled in an economic crisis, implementing the International Monetary Fund's fiscal and structural adjustment programme is vital. Will political instability and the developments of the next few weeks impact the economy? What role could the judiciary play at a time when other key institutions of the state are being challenged? Would all this have implications for India



Gujranwala firing, Imran's long march, scheduled retirement of army chief, could transform the dynamic in Pakistan and region too.
Sanjaya Baru



and regional security?

These and many other questions are being posed and examined by analysts of Pakistan affairs in the region and around the world. What a pity that at a time like this the Indian media does not have a single correspondent posted in the country to report directly. While print media offers at least occasionally a professional view of developments in Pakistan, the electronic media has turned Pakistan reporting and analysis into a soap opera, a circus and just propaganda.

Not surprisingly, therefore, even as some Indian analysts were claiming that Pakistan would be moved up from the grey to the black list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), it was finally taken off even the grey list. The US followed up this gesture with a resumption of defence supplies and western diplomats started wooing Pakistani politicians. Time was when some in the ruling dispensation in New Delhi would claim that India had succeeded in “isolating” Pakistan internationally. On the contrary, today Pakistan has reasonably good relations with the US, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Britain and Russia.

In the past, the body of expertise in India on Pakistan, outside of the security and intelligence agencies, consisted of two well-informed groups — diplomats and journalists. Many diplomats have distinguished themselves after retirement, writing informed commentary on that country. The authors of some of the best books published in recent times on China and Pakistan have been former diplomats, intelligence officials and senior defence staff.

However, Indian academic

scholarship is inadequate and dwindling. There are many good historians with access to archives, especially in Britain, who have written interesting books on the past, but few informed publications on Pakistan’s contemporary economy, politics, ethnic, social, cultural and other divisions. The era when senior journalists would either be posted to Pakistan or could travel frequently and establish social links with politicians, scholars and journalists, has regrettably ended. People to people interaction even at the cultural and social level has reduced dramatically.

Lack of access due to restrictions on travel and, more importantly, limited interaction with the present generation of scholars have become barriers to a better informed view of what is happening within Pakistan. Rumours, innuendos, aspersions, prejudices fill the vacuum created by the absence of informed, professional and regular reporting and analysis.

Just over two decades ago, India’s first National Security Advisory Board (of which I was a member), chaired by the strategic affairs guru, the late K Subrahmanyan, met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and suggested to him that the government should fund high quality research institutions, employing subject specialists, to study China and Pakistan. It was emphasised that such subject specialists — economists, defence analysts, scientists, sociologists and political scientists — should have knowledge of Mandarin, for the study of China, and Urdu, for the study of Pakistan.

The point was made how the United States invests in domestic scholarship, outside government,

in the study of China and Russia and how Chinese researchers were filling up spaces in American research institutions to study the US, not to study their own country from the US (like so many Indian and Indian American scholars in American institutions)! Prime Minister Vajpayee instantly nodded his head in agreement, turned to his colleagues seated on either side and said it was an important suggestion.

There has since been some investment by the government in the study of China, though few who work in these institutions know the language or have had opportunities to spend enough time in the country. However, against the backdrop of the growing focus on China, India’s Pakistan scholarship is now woefully inadequate.

In any case, such scholarship and informed news reporting and analysis cannot happen within an intellectual vacuum created by limited social interaction. Whatever little interaction there was till a decade ago has virtually come to a halt because of the diplomatic impasse, travel restrictions, paranoia about interaction between even intelligent and patriotic nationals.

While there are now a couple of bright young journalists posted in China, reporting from the rest of South Asia remains weak and dependent on western news agencies. A nation and a society that lives in such ignorance of its own neighbours can hardly be expected to play a significant role in the destiny of its neighbourhood. Even if official policy remains Neighbourhood First. □□

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/imran-khan-shot-gujranwala-pakistan-rally-8247884/>

International Mountain Day Aravalis in Peril

December 11 is observed and celebrated as the International Mountain Day world over. Mountains are an integral part of our ecosystem. They help to precipitate rains, provide expanded surface area for rich vegetation, feed the rivers and high-rise mountains are also home to glaciers, feeding perennial rivers.

Aravali Mountain Range is the Unique Gift of Nature

It is one of the oldest geographical landforms on Earth, dating back to Proterozoic era, making it significantly older than other mountain ranges such as the Western Ghats, Vindhyachal, Satpura, Nilgiri, and the Himalaya. The exact age of the range is not clear, but it is believed to be several hundred million years old. Aravali Range extends for a distance of approximately 800 kilometers (500 miles) across four states in north-western India: Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. It also extends underground in the state of Uttarakhand up to the city of Haridwar.

In Indian culture, mountains are revered for their generosity and are considered sacred, and hence worshipped. However, Aravalis are facing serious peril. Its wildlife, ancient drainage paths, unique hydrogeology, and holistic ecosystem, of millions of years and even their very existence is at stake. These mountains, which have stood for eons and are home to a range of native flora and fauna, have also served as a protective barrier for the capital city of the Mewar kingdom, Udaipur, defending it from invaders. Many ancient and historical forts, which provided secure, fortified habitats for indigenous communities, have been built on these hills.



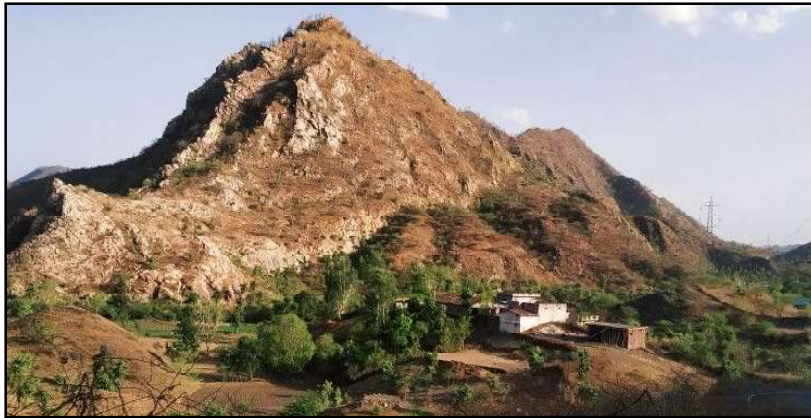
Aravali's landscape, ecology, forests, geology, hydrogeology, have served mankind for ages. It is important to take action to preserve these resources for future generations.

Dr. Jaya Sharma

The Age-Old Lifeline

The Aravali Range serves as a lifeline to the nearby areas providing a bounty of quintessential resources. It serves as a natural barrier for the northern and north-western regions of India, preventing further desertification in eastern Rajasthan and the North Indian plains. It also protects these areas from cold winds coming from the north and helps maintain their greenery. Aravali range is instrumental in bringing rainfall to Rajasthan and its neighboring states by catching and directing the monsoon winds coming from the Arabian Sea. This way Aravali plays a vital role in the ecological and climatic well-being of the region. Since Aravali is a fold mountain range, it serves as a reliable source of rivers and water catchment areas, which means a consistently recharged groundwater level. Additionally, the range is rich in natural resources and is the origin point for numerous rivers.

The Aravali landscape has shaped the Indian subcontinent and its climate, and has always remained an integral part of northwestern India. In spite of this exuberance significance, it faces threat of extinction and dilapidation. The deterioration of the Aravali Range is primarily the result of urban sprawl and development, illegal mining and rampant widening of roads. Repeated interventions of the High Court and Supreme Court are also proving ineffective against the human



greed and government's apathy. Mining is prohibited in the ecologically sensitive Aravali region unless specifically approved by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Yet, large-scale illegal mining continues to take place despite this prohibition.

Serious Threat to Their Existence and Ecosystem

The constant increase in population has led to illegal encroachments and a corresponding increase in demand for resources like timber, marble, and granite, resulting in the depletion of forests and damage to the ecosystem. These resources have been extracted beyond sustainable levels. Illegal mining activities have also disturbed the existence of numerous water bodies in the Aravali Range, and has led to the disappearance of 31 of the original 128 hills in Rajasthan alone. If this trend continues, it is possible that the desert will eventually extend into the north eastern plains.

The mountain range was a significant habitat to more than 300 species of native plants and exclusive animals like leopards, golden jackals, nilgay, Indian gazelle, and rare birds' species, which are now on the verge of extinction from the region. The rocks beneath the Aravali Range, such as granite and

quartz, are aquifer rocks that serve as reservoirs of groundwater. However, the over-extraction of these rocks has resulted in a decline in the groundwater level in the surrounding area. In the recent past, the groundwater level in the vicinity of the Aravali Range was higher than it is currently.

The mountains have sustained irreparable damage, with soil erosion leading to a lack of vegetation and the formation of cracks on the rocks due to temperature fluctuations (during the day, the rocks absorb heat, while at night they experience a drop in temperature). This has resulted in barren, rocky terrain that will be difficult to reforest. The absence of vegetation on the surface has also contributed to land sliding. These factors together present a significant challenge for the regeneration of these mountains.

Way Forward

Massive reforestation efforts should be undertaken on these barren hills to bring them back to life. Strict action should be taken against those who clear the forest cover. It is imperative that the mountain range be protected from further harm and that new policies be implemented to repair the damaged ecosystem, conserve lost biodiver-

sity, and preserve remaining resources. Any construction activity in and around Aravali Range should be prohibited. The expansion of urban areas into and around the mountains must also be halted.

It is necessary to exercise restraint in our resource consumption and to extract only the quantity that is required. We should also strive to reuse resources as much as possible. Additionally, we should be more mindful of resources that bear environmental costs to obtain and are frequently discarded without consideration, such as stapler pins and sharpener blades. In terms of road construction, it is advisable to reconsider the traditional approach of using freshly quarried rocks every time a road is built. Instead, the old road could be repurposed by scraping and using its concrete along with scrap tires, which are produced in volumes globally every year. This would not only conserve valuable mountains and their resources, but also address the issue of waste management.

While it is not possible to fully restore the mountains to their original state or reverse the damage that has been done, it is still possible to prevent any further harm. Aravali's landscape, ecology, forests, geology, hydrogeology, have served mankind for ages. It is important to take action to preserve these resources for future generations. By recklessly and excessively destroying this ancient mountain range, we risk inviting a natural disaster that will be beyond control. It is necessary to strike a balance between environmental conservation and development, rather than prioritizing the latter at the expense of the former. □□

For growth, bolster the manufacturing sector

Is India's recent push to catch up with industrial powerhouses in manufacturing misguided? Some commentators, such as former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan have argued against India's manufacturing emphasis as there is "no place for a second China", making a case instead for harnessing the potential of services.

I disagree. India should fully tap the potential of services, be it information technology and communication, education, health, accounting, legal, and tourism. But why ignore India's manufacturing potential, which is key to realising its development aspirations? As economist Nicholas Kaldor has argued, few countries, if at all, have achieved prosperity without industrialisation.

The transformation of an agriculture-dominated economy into a services-dominated one has been an achievement for the past 75 years. While the service sector has delivered robust growth rates, it has failed to absorb workers proportionately, leaving agriculture to sustain 46% of India's workforce with barely a 15% share of the gross domestic product (GDP). It has translated into low productivity, pervasive informality, and persisting poverty. Therefore, the structural transformation — where workers move from low-productivity sectors (e.g. agriculture) to higher-productivity sectors (such as industry and services) over time — has failed to take place in India.

This failure can be largely attributed to the country's inability to harness its manufacturing potential. The share of manufacturing valueadded (MVA) in India's GDP has stagnated at around 16% compared to over 30% in the East Asian countries. The vision of a developed nation by 2047 will never be realised without providing decent jobs for everyone in India's young workforce. This will require harnessing manufacturing's potential to create millions of jobs directly and indirectly.



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Nagesh Kumar



Furthermore, Covid-19 has exposed the risks of overdependence on a few sources for supply chains, leading to the trend of reshoring. In addition, industrial policymaking has seen a strong revival globally, with the \$50 billion in semiconductor subsidies by the United States (US) becoming the latest example. Against that backdrop, India's production-linked incentives (PLI) to revive 14 manufacturing sectors under Aatmanirbhar Bharat can be seen as a part of the global trend.

What are the key manufacturing opportunities for India?

The most important opportunity is strategic import substitution. In 2021-22, India's merchandise imports totalled \$610 billion, which included \$300 billion of manufactured goods. What are these imported goods? They comprise machinery and other capital goods, electronics and semiconductors, and intermediate goods. They also include products earlier made in India but now outsourced to China to save costs, and low-technology and labour-intensive household electric goods such as toasters, wall clocks, electric irons, refrigerators and televisions.

A priority should be to reverse this deindustrialisation trend and bring back this production for local consumption, besides other products (including defence equipment) that can be made in India competitively, given the size of local demand. Substitution of 50% of these imports over the next couple of years could enhance MVA by 30%.

While tariffs and PLI schemes are helpful, India could also leverage non-tariff barriers and a com-

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petitive exchange rate in real terms. The protection should gradually be withdrawn to enhance competitiveness once the scale is built. The industrialised and newly industrialised countries have followed such sequencing in the early phases of their development.

The early results are impressive: India-made mobile handset exports crossed the \$1-billion mark in September. Although these exports represent assembling, that is how the electronics industry begins anywhere. Once assembling achieves a particular scale, the deepening of the local production happens with the ecosystem taking shape. As a result, several semiconductor manufacturing projects are on the horizon.

A strategy of export-oriented industrialisation, as pursued by Southeast Asian countries, may be challenging in the context of global recession and rising protectionist trends. Yet even a marginal increase in India's 1.7% share of global merchandise exports over the next two-three years could enhance MVA, and add \$100 billion to India's exports.

Consolidating India's presence in traditional areas such as textiles and clothing, leather goods, gems and jewellery, processed foods, vaccines, generic pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and components, refined petroleum products, steels, and non-ferrous metals, some types of machinery and electrical equipment is vital while making inroads in new areas and markets. Moreover, India should fully harness the opportunity provided by the China+1 strategy adopted by global corporations to de-risk their supply chains.

Import substitution and export orientation are not antithetical to each other, as they are often posited, but complementary industrial strategies, as demonstrated by the East Asian countries. Building scales of production and leveraging domestic demand helps enhance competitiveness.

Green industrialisation also offers profitable opportunities in India. Manufacturing green hydrogen, solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and batteries, among others, provide promising industrialisation avenues while advancing the sustainability agenda. India can aim to become a global hub of compact EVs, batteries, and solar panels, among other sunrise industries. Translating these opportunities for strategic import-substitution, export orientation, green industrialisation, and other sunrise sectors can potentially double India's MVA to \$1 trillion by 2026, thus advancing the government's \$5 trillion economy target. Hence, India should move ahead with determination toward a manufacturing-led transformation. □□

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<https://www.bhaskar.com/opinion/for-growth-bolster-the-manufacturing-sector-101672414746968.html>

Experts Discuss Swadeshi Jagran Manch Seeking Higher Tax On Chinese Imports



With less than four weeks to go for the union budget, industry bodies and associations are busy making representations and recommendations to the finance ministry.

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch which is the economic wing of the RSS has pitched for a hike in tariffs on Chinese imports. It has said that Chinese imports are hurting India's manufacturing sector and resulting in capacity under-utilisation. This comes at a time when sources say that the government is concerned about countries like Vietnam benefiting from China +1 and is now mulling a calibration in strategy.

CNBC-TV18 learns that the centre is reviewing its stance on Chinese investments to ensure global companies relocate to India. Speaking to CNBC-TV18, Anup Wadhawan, Former Commerce Secretary said targeted subsidies like PLIs are the solution to boost manufacturing. He added that increasing tariffs will add to the cost of manufacturers.

"Strengthening the domestic environment is the best solution. There are many steps which have been taken and they need to be persisted with. For instance, the production linked incentives (PLIs) which have been introduced is the way to strengthen the domestic investment environment. So we need to make it more comprehensive. India is already a high cost economy and that is primarily the reason why we are a poor investment destination today not only for domestic investors but for foreign investors as well. By raising tariffs we will make ourselves even more high cost economy than before. It is going to add to cost for our manufacturers. So targeted subsidies like PLIs are the solution. PLIs are being used because tariffs are a problem as they add to the cost of manufacturers," Wadhawan said.

Jayant Dasgupta, Former Ambassador to WTO said increasing tariffs with China alone won't be in line with WTO commitments as we have given them the most favoured nation status.

Dasgupta said, "We just can't increase the tariffs on China alone as that would not be in keeping with our commitments at the WTO whereby we have given most favoured nation treatment to China. If we feel that there is under-pricing or dumping is taking place or subsidies are being given in contrary to the WTO commitments of China, then we can take action against China. However raising the tariffs on China alone, I don't think it is on."

<https://www.cnbctv18.com/videos/economy/pli-solution-to-boost-domestic-manufacturing-former-commerce-secretary-15564651.htm/amp>

RSS leaders urge Centre to restore old pension scheme, raise import duty



Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), has urged the Central government to restore the old pension scheme.

The demand was made during Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's meeting with RSS leaders that took place between November 21 and November 29. The meeting was the part of the exercise in which the Finance Minister discusses and takes suggestions from various organisations, industry chambers and experts to draw the outline of the Union Budget.

In series of meetings, various organisations associated to the RSS gave several suggestions to the Finance Minister, keeping in view the interests of farmers and labourers.

Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) urged the government to increase the amount of financial benefit provided under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana and sought to link it with the inflation.

Similarly, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) expressed concern over the ever-increasing trade deficit with China and suggested the Finance Minister to raise

duty on imported goods. The SJM also suggested several steps to make India self-reliant.

Interestingly, the restoration of the old pension scheme has become a major political issue with the Congress party raising the issue vigorously in its campaigning for assembly elections. Speaking to IANS, SJM said that during the meeting with the Finance Minister, the forum expressed concerns over the increasing trade deficit with China reaching \$ 100 billion and asked her to raise the import duty.

He said that this will on the one hand reduce India's dependence on import and save the country's foreign exchange, while on the other hand it will encourage manufacturing in India, which would help in increasing the domestic production and creating more employment opportunities in the country. Praising the government's project under ambitious 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' scheme, the forum suggested to the Finance Minister to make efforts to promote non-farm economic activities and industries in rural India.

SJM said that he also suggested making rules for R&D on the lines of CSR fund so that companies spend a part of their income or revenue on research and development work.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/rss-leaders-urge-centre-to-restore-old-pension-scheme-raise-import-duty-122120300062_1.html

Quoting a book authored by Dharampal, the RSS Sarkaryavah said that India was a pioneer in science and industries in 18th century. A general perception was created that India was only an agriculture based country, however, the industries here were flourishing then and doing business around the world, said Hosabale. There were arrangements in India to provide employment to people at local level but owing to some reasons, India got behind in this regard, he added. Owing to treading the path of socialism, mixed economy, India got lagged behind somewhere. "We should ponder over how we can do at own level increase the employment," he said.

Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan's All India Co Convenor Jitendra Gupt in his address said the aim of campaign is to take India to the path of self reliance.

Employment Creation Centres: The Employment Creation Centres will operate under Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan of Swadeshi Jagran Manch. The centres will not provide job directly but will work like facilitation centre and consultancy agency. Here the job information in government, private and industry sector will be provided to youths. The centers will operate in 15 districts.

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/bhopal/bhopal-encourage-youths-seeking-govt-help-for-self-employment-says-rss-sarkaryavah-dattatreya-hosabale>

Encourage youths seeking govt help for self-employment: Dattatreya Hosabale



RSS Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale said the administrative officers should encourage and guide youths seeking government help for self-employment. A positive atmosphere favouring self employment should be created, said Hosabale while addressing a gathering at inauguration of employment creation centre under Self Reliance Campaign of Swadeshi Jagran Manch at Shivaji Nagar. After inaugurating the centre in Bhopal, the RSS Sarkaryawah virtually launched the centres of 15 districts.

Why govt's policy shift on GM crops may run into rough weather

The Union government's green signal for genetically modified (GM) herbicide tolerant (HT) mustard, Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11), buttressed by its statements in Parliament and the Supreme Court, points to a significant shift in official policy concerning GM crops. Going beyond considering it to be safe for food and feed use, the government is now advocating that GM technology is vital for India's food security and reducing imports.

The paradigm shift is an endorsement of the argument that genetic engineering is essential to meet the growing demand for farm products, boost farmers' incomes by reducing production costs, and face the challenges posed by pests, diseases and climate change. There is also the compelling need for another technology-driven Green Revolution (some call it Yellow Revolution in the context of mustard) that leads to introducing genetically superior variants of foods and commercial crops.



GM mustard is not the only food crop that has had to wait for over a decade for clearance. The anti-GM lobby, notably RSS affiliate Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) and several pro-green groups, had stalled the fate of the gene-tweaked Bt brinjal after it had received the nod of regulator Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) way back in 2009. It failed to reach farmers' fields, and worse still prompted the government to impose a 10-year moratorium on field trials of all GM seeds. That Bt brinjal, developed in India, is being grown in Bangladesh and Philippines is a poignant reminder of the absence of consistency in India's GM crops policy in adopting adequate safeguards.

Now, despite the positive strokes welcoming GM mustard, concerns remain about DMH-11. That it will yield 25-30 per cent more and is herbicide tolerant continues to be challenged. Opponents say that in its testing, DMH-11 was not compared with non-GM hybrids. For hybrid trial, hybrid checks are essential, especially in the case of GM mustard hybrid, since it is claiming to be a better hybridisation technology than non-GM hybridisation options that already exist for breeders and seed producers.

"It was not even tested against varieties designated as zonal and national in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) system of testing, but were compared against varieties released long ago in India," says Kavitha Kuruganti of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture. She alleges the comparators used for GM mustard testing violated ICAR protocols as well as the conditions under which permission was granted by GEAC. Despite all of this, both ICAR and GEAC allowed the crop developer to move forward in the regulatory pipeline. Further, there is no evidence that DMH-11 will yield more than existing hybrid varieties, she adds.

The other major concern is herbicide tolerance. Some argue that GM mustard has nothing new to

offer other than the risks of transgenic HT technology. Independent experts of the Supreme Court's technical expert committee on GM have recommended a ban on HT crops. They have suggested a ban on GM in crops for which India is the centre of origin or diversity. "That GM mustard has been sought to be camouflaged as a hybridisation technology, and not an HT crop which it very much is, implies that testing has never been done as an HT crop," argues Kuruganti. She expects the Supreme Court, where the matter is pending, to take cognisance of these 'irregularities'.

An overriding concern for the government for pushing DMH-11 is meeting domestic edible oil needs by minimising the import bill. Yet, this may not be a credible argument for propagating DMH-11. "In India, where huge genetic diversity for mustard exists, there is an imperative to pick up from the forgotten Yellow Revolution," suggests food policy analyst Devinder Sharma. It was in 1985-86 that then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had launched the Oilseeds Technology Mission with an aim to increase edible oil production and reduce import dependence.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/why-govts-policy-shift-on-gm-crops-may-run-into-rough-weather-2311011-2022-12-19>

India looks at expanding rupee trade to make currency stronger

India, which has already been in talks with Russia for a rupee-rouble payment system, is now looking at expanding the rupee trade with other nations as well, including several countries in Africa, UAE and Saudi Arabia among others. Besides cash-starved Sri Lanka is also likely to start using the Indian currency for bilateral trade.

An analyst working for an industry body noted that as many countries look at setting up alternative supply chains in India, there is an "openness in accepting the rupee trade." Expanded trading in rupees will help India to reduce dependence on its foreign exchange reserves and even help in boosting the balance of payments position and strengthening the fundamentals of the economy.

The exercise will also strengthen the rupee and internationalise it while reducing the impact of exchange rate fluctuations on the economy.

"Given the situation with rapid geopolitical shifts, India has already started taking appropriate steps to make the rupee more acceptable internationally," a government insider told India Narrative. He added

that there are a few issues which have come up and those need to be resolved for a smooth deal.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch added that India must also take up the issue of rupee trade with countries with which it is looking at inking trade agreements.

“This issue is a serious one, we must move fast on internationalising the rupee not just with countries which are dollar deficient like Sri Lanka or Bangladesh but even with those that share cordial ties with New Delhi,” SJM said. Meanwhile, China has already started putting in measures to internalise its currency renminbi (RMB). The People’s Bank of China—the country’s central bank, stated earlier that it will look at ways to expand the use of renminbi globally for trade and even cross border investments.

<https://www.indianarrative.com/?p=86286>

Star rating on food labels may not work, say experts



A new food labelling system based on a ‘star rating’ proposed by FSSAI has left health experts worried – who believe that it will fall short of fulfilling its key function. Front-of-package warning labels are gaining traction across the world as a strategy to improve public health as it helps consumers to identify ingredients quicker and clearer. These include products high in sugar, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats and total fats, and critical nutrients associated with the spiralling burden of non-communicable diseases.

A similar regimen is being implemented in India, however, with a twist. Termed ‘Indian Nutrition Rating’ (INR), the recently published draft regulation for a front-of-pack nutrition label is based on a ‘star rating’ system, which is seen as the least effective in achieving health benefits.

Leading doctors of India, including paediatricians, endocrinologists and cardiologists from institutes of national importance, have urged that clear warnings on the front of food and beverage packets

should be a priority for India if it were to avert a catastrophic public health crisis.

According to them, the consumption of packaged and ultra-processed foods and beverages has increased across India, regardless of income level or rural-urban settings, which is resulting in leading to a rise in diabetes and cardiovascular disease burden.

According to Prof Umesh Kapil, President, of the Epidemiological Foundation of India, FSSAI’s proposed India Nutrition Rating, is unlikely to serve its purpose. “We are consuming dangerous quantities of packaged foods that are processed with high levels of added sugars, sodium, saturated fats, and refined carbohydrates – all of which are directly linked to a higher risk of diabetes, liver and kidney damage, heart disease and cancers,” he said.

“The true purpose of a front-of-pack label is to give clear and unambiguous information about the health value of a food product, that helps people make the right choice. The stars are assigned by a complex scoring system, that values positive factors such as added nuts even if the food product has a high content of sugar or saturated fat,” explained Dr Kapil.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2022/dec/17/delhi-star-rating-on-food-labels-may-not-work-say-experts-2529059.html>

GST collections up 15 pc in December at Rs 149,507 crore



The gross revenue from goods and services tax (GST) rose 15 percent year-on-year to Rs 149,507 crore in December 2022, according to government data released. The government collected Rs 129,780 crore as gross GST revenue in December 2022. Of the total GST collected in December, CGST was Rs 26,711 crore, SGST was Rs 33,357 crore, IGST was Rs 78,434 crore (including Rs 40,263 crore collected on import of goods) and cess was Rs 11,005 crore (including Rs 850 crore collected on import of goods), data revealed. □□

<https://ritamdigital.org/postview/75d103d9-4b90-4e5b-95fb-01678730263>

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

Pictorial Glimpses



Ayodhya, UP



Dhanbad, Jharkhand



Dindigul, Tamil Nadu (South)



Jaipur, Rajasthan



Baleshwar, Odisha



Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh



Gurgaon, Haryana

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

Pictorial Glimpses



Bemetara, Chhattisgarh



Adilabad, Telangana



Ajmer, Rajasthan



Haridwar, Uttarakhand



Himmat Nagar, Gujarat



South Kamrup District, Assam



Sipahijhola, Tripura



Kerala