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Addressing Challenges of the
Second Wave

Pratim Ranjan Bose

India-EU Summit: Building on
the Momentum

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Managing a 'Once in a Century'
Pandemic Challenge

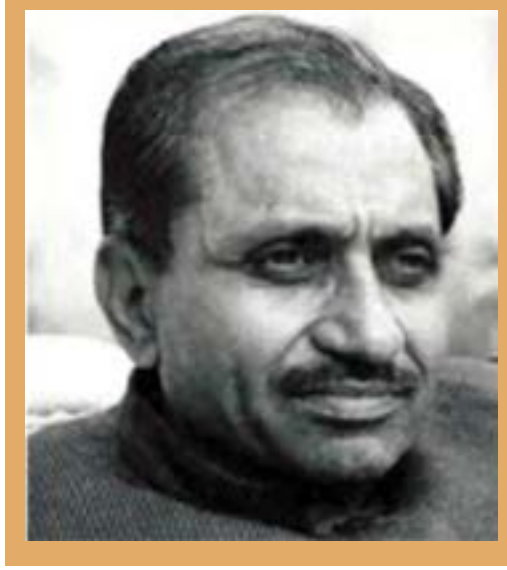
Pathikrit Payne

मोदी सरकार: चुनौतियों व उपलब्धियों
के सात साल

शिवानंद द्विवेदी

देश में स्वास्थ्य तंत्र को मजबूत करने
हेतु किए जा रहे हैं विशेष प्रयास
प्रहलाद सबनानी





“यह भी आवश्यक है कि हम आर्थिक क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भर बनें. यदि हमारे कार्यक्रमों की पूर्ति विदेशी सहायता पर निर्भर रही तो वह अवश्य ही हमारे उपर प्रत्यक्ष- अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से बंधनकारक होगी. हम सहायता देने वाले देशों के आर्थिक प्रभाव में आ जायेंगे. अपनी आर्थिक योजनाओं की सफलपूर्ति में संभव बाधाओं को बचाने की दृष्टि से हमें अनेक स्थानों पर मौन रहना पड़ेगा”

पं दीनदयाल उपाध्याय,
पुस्तक ‘भारतीय अर्थ-नीति विकास की एक दिशा’ से



**The
Nationalist**

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Dr. Anirban Ganguly

Calling out the Promoters of Vaccine Hesitancy

comprising of frontline workers and the very vulnerable.

But the approach and attitude of the opposition parties, led by the Congress and some regional parties, stood in opposition to this nation-wide vaccination drive. These parties and their leaders have repeatedly displayed an irresponsible attitude to this national effort. A personalised politics, an irrational antipathy to PM Modi and his efforts by these parties, created a negative narrative not only on India's vaccination drive, but also on India's efforts to produce vaccines. This negative propaganda gave, rise among some sections, to 'vaccine hesitancy'.

23 crore Covid vaccine doses have been administered in India. This is a major landmark achieved by the Narendra Modi government in its herculean effort to stem and control the pandemic's second outbreak. The world's largest vaccination drive is gathering pace and momentum and the Modi government is ensuring that there is ramped up production and enhanced supply across states.

Since last year (2020), Prime Minister spoke ceaselessly of the need to remain alert, to follow all Covid related protocols and to wait for vaccine to be rolled out and administered. When the vaccine came and was put into use, PM repeatedly called upon and encouraged people to come forward and to take the vaccine. Age and service criteria were worked out for administering the vaccine to the first batches –

If sections of the population did not want to be inoculated, if they were seen to be refusing vaccination and to be doubting India's capacity to produce and administer the vaccine it was because of this 'vaccine hesitancy' stance promoted by a section of the political opposition in India. The opposition's stance exposed the vulnerable sections to Covid infection risk, dented the vaccination drive and led to definite vaccine wastage. Having done this, it was also ironical to see many of these leaders take the jab later. But by then their irresponsible utterances had already impacted negatively the drive.

On 16th January 2021, when the world's largest vaccination drive was launched in India, by PM Modi, it generated hope, optimism and relief among people. But Congress leader Manish Tewari, for instance, publicly criticised the drive and questioned the efficacy of the vaccine. Soon other opposition leaders joined the chorus in opposing the drive and the vaccine, thus sowing seeds of doubt in the minds of millions. Health Minister of Congress ruled Chhattisgarh, T.S.

Singhdeo, for example, opposed the use of Covaxin, which PM Modi himself and many others had taken. Singhdeo said that the vaccine was 'NOT SAFE.' He repeatedly indulged in fear-mongering and began discrediting Indian-made vaccines. Later though, Singhdeo got himself inoculated with Covaxin having spread fear and doubt against it.

One would have expected a former Chief Minister of one of the largest states of India, Uttar Pradesh, to display a modicum of sense and commitment to public welfare and national health, but instead of that Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, took the lead in generating vaccine hesitancy. In a callous and motivated stance, Akhilesh declared that the BJP's vaccine could not be trusted, 'we cannot get vaccinated by BJP's vaccine.'

Prime Minister Modi, took his first jab in March 2021, only after frontline workers had taken the vaccine. In January, Nawab Malik, spokesperson of the regional Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) had made fun of the Prime Minister for not taking the vaccine, saying, that people harboured doubts about the upcoming vaccination drive and that 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi should get himself inoculated first to allay their concern...' Malik was deliberately obfuscating the fact that the Prime Minister had repeatedly said, that the vaccine plan had clearly indicated that priority would be given to frontline workers and only then would the Prime Minister and others take it.

Health Minister in the JMM government of Jharkhand, Banna Gupta, deliberately spread vaccine hesitancy among people

saying that people of India should not be made 'lab rats.' He said this after India had announced its universal vaccination drive. A section of the intelligentsia and commentariat led by the likes of Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan even doubted the need for a vaccine. To the Modi government's announcement that 35,000 crores would be pumped in for the Covid vaccine, Bhushan questioned the need to give this money for producing vaccines when 'Covid is naturally dying down in India.'

The level of the discourse dipped to an all-time low when Asaduddin Owaisi, leader of the Muslim political party AIMIM asked, making light of the entire exercise, that he had read in a report emanating from the West that Covishield is not effective and that is why the Prime Minister had taken the Covaxin dose. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had publicly cast aspersion on the entire vaccine producing exercise, and had raised questions on the efficacy of the vaccines. Thus, for over a sustained period, leaders of these parties, publicly promoted vaccine hesitancy, generating confusion, doubt and uncertainty. While the fact that India had rolled out the world's largest vaccination drive could have been an occasion to disseminate the message of an India that was confident and certain of recovery, here was a political section, driven by a compulsive need to oppose Modi, deliberately pushing a segment of the population to the brink as far as the Covid challenge was concerned.

To add to this was their continuously shifting stance on procurement and distribution. The Congress and regional parties such as the Trinamool Congress first

called for giving rights to the states for the procurement and distribution of vaccines. Leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Mamata Banerjee had made the demand. But as soon as power was delegated to them, these parties got together to demand that the Union government must procure vaccines and give it to the states. In fact, Chief Ministers of Congress ruled states wrote to the Prime Minister calling for 'centralised procurement of vaccines' and on June 7th just after PM Modi announced 'a centralised vaccine drive' which will be wholly supported and borne by his government, Mamata Banerjee complained that Modi would take away all credit and the Congress lamented that universal free vaccine was still not achieved.

Undeterred by these motivated ellipses, PM Modi announced that his government will procure 75 per cent of the vaccines that were being produced in the country and also procure the 25 per cent of the vaccines that were to be undertaken by the states. While the opposition to Modi opposed the vaccination drive, sought to sow confusion, panic and hesitancy among people and raise hurdles to slow the drive or to derail it, PM Modi displayed a stoic focus and doggedness on making the drive successful by enhancing its speed and widening its reach. Every-time he came up with an innovative approach which would help in transforming the drive to a peoples' movement.

Launching the nation-wide 'Tika Utsav' (Vaccine Festival) in the middle of April 2021, a mega drive to push for greater vaccination and awareness of it, PM Modi spoke of this as the beginning of a 'second major war against corona'. This was an inspiring and innovate approach to spread

societal awareness on the imperative for vaccination and also to turn it into a drive which will heighten social consciousness and commitment. PM Modi spoke of four approaches:

First, Each One- Vaccinate, meaning those who can't go themselves for vaccination such as the old and unaware, need to be assisted

Second, Each One- Treat One. This involves helping people in getting Corona treatment, who do not have resources or knowledge to get it.

Third, Each One- Save One, meaning I should wear mask and save myself and others.

Fourth, Society and people should lead in creating micro-containment zones.

Today, there is a visible confidence and pattern that is now setting-in in the Modi Government's vaccine policy and drive. Increasing vaccination and a comprehensive roadmap clearly indicates that the hesitancy narrative is gradually losing steam and credibility. But those leaders and parties who generated hesitancy, need to ask themselves hard questions: why is it that they decided to endanger and place at risk the people of India, why is it that even in these times of a 'once in a century' pandemic, when India faces one of the severest national challenges since independence, they were incapable of placing a moratorium on their anti-Modi politics and join in lifting India out of this complex web? While Modi is driven by India-First, the opposition to him is deterred by it. Their promotion of vaccine hesitancy was a failed attempt to jettison India's rise.

Addressing Challenges of the Second Wave



Pratim Ranjan Bose

India ended the last winter on a positive note. After a huge 24 percent contraction in June following countrywide lockdown, GDP had beaten (de) growth estimates in September and came back on the growth path in December. The recovery was distinctly faster than the projections by forcing global agencies to go for upward revision in estimates.

Some bumps in IIP (Index for industrial production) number notwithstanding, things were panning out well in the January-March 2021 quarter as well, with the composite index of the homegrown SBI Research (one of the most conservative agencies) touching 70-month high in March. Market was soaring and the industrial outlook was getting brighter as both FII and FDI were pouring in record numbers.

Public sentiments were high as the incidence of covid infection was as low as 13 (seven-day average) in every one million (10 lakh) population, as on March 10.

Centre was issuing regular alerts to States, particularly those where new infections were concentrated, asking them to remain on toes and step-up tests and vaccination.

But it is questionable, if many paid attention to those alerts. As on March 3, 86 percent of new cases were from six States Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka. At

least two of these States, both rich, Tamil Nadu and Punjab were laggards in vaccination.

According to Prof Shamika Ravi, senior fellow of Brookings Institute as on May 23, 4.43 percent of India's eligible population is vaccinated. The ratios stand at a mere 3.39 percent in Tamil Nadu and 3.21 percent in Punjab. The credit goes entirely to vaccine hesitancy, which States failed to address.

In India the role of States is highly important in public health, as it has near complete control over the delivery infrastructure – both hard and soft. Role of the Centre is limited to policy making and facilitating creation of infrastructure through projects like National Health Mission.

No Models Predicted This

Covid infections started zooming from the second half of March and hit the second peak, and a higher one than the first, of 283 cases per million on May 8.

PK Mishra, principal secretary to the prime minister, admits the error of judgement. In an interview to The Times of India on May 21, 2021, he said: There were at least half a dozen meetings at the official level to monitor the situation from

India is the fourth largest covid vaccine producer in the world after China, USA, Europe (Germany, Belgium) – but a distant fourth. The biggest producer is a licensee manufacturer. The second one is India-made (Covaxin) vaccine. Both were administered on emergency approval and the India-made vaccine cleared the third and final trial only recently.



Photo Credit: assets.ey.com

mid-February to mid-March. We expected an increase (in infection) but we did not anticipate such a steep rise. None of the models predicted this.”

New cases are now falling as fast as it went up and was 191 per million (almost the same level as of Malaysia which is now heading for a new peak) as on May 22.

Death ratios follow the infection curve with a lag effect. It has now hit a plateau of 3.04 per million, slightly ahead of Germany’s 2.15, which has passed its second wave peak of 10.68 deaths per million on January 13. Death ratio came down from 10 to 1.68 per million in the USA.

Notably Germany and USA both witnessed way higher case-loads than India. Both started vaccinations ahead of India. Germany was nearly a month ahead. It is a technology and manufacturing superpower and has one of the best public health and social security systems in the world. Most importantly, Germany has

barely 8 crore people.

Despite that, according to ‘Our World in Data’ only 13 percent Germans are fully vaccinated so far (as against 4 percent in India). The USA did better with 38 percent.

Everyone was learning

The moot question, however, remains: Has India been exceptional in making an error of judgement. The question is important as the Opposition is blaming the government for failing to take precautions for the second wave and failing to ramp up vaccination.

To answer, let’s turn our focus to South Korea, which is not merely an economic and technology super power, but also known for its highly disciplined and consistent approach in policy making.

South Korea averted much of the impact of the pandemic through highly efficient testing and tracking initiatives. As in January, when

States are having an inventory of two crore vaccine doses. Such high inventory, that too at a crunch situation, points at capacity constraint at State level.

countries were scrambling for vaccines, South Korea didn't join the rush. It was bargaining for the right quality of vaccine.

As in May, Seoul is reeling under a vaccine shortage (Reuters, May 12) and there is growing fear that the country may miss the target of full vaccination to all by November. According to Our World in Data, only 3.4 percent of Koreans are fully vaccinated so far.

Japan is in even bad shape. It is in the middle of a second wave and only two percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

Manufacturing power, Taiwan is blaming China for sabotaging its attempt to get vaccines, while it is witnessing first major spike in covid cases. Taiwan, if one may remember, alerted the world about the outbreak in China and had put up one of the strongest resistance to the pandemic until recently.

Take a look at the rich economies in Southeast Asia and the situation is similar. They were considered a model to keep the pandemic under control during the first wave. Now all are falling to the second wave. If you blame India, will you also blame policymakers of all these countries for failing to prevent a second wave?

With a few times higher per-capita GDP (than India), even Thailand has better resources to fight against the pandemic. Yet, it is running out of beds, oxygen and critical care capacity – something akin to what Delhi witnessed for barely two weeks, before the Indian government

moved heaven and earth to bring the situation under control.

You do not hear about the oxygen crisis any more. Leave data pertaining to Uttar Pradesh's dramatic turnaround aside, we do not see much SOS for beds or oxygen from cities in UP or Delhi anymore, on social media.

Second wave is receding

That situation improved too fast is evident in public reaction. Smartphones are a great tool that is available even in the remotest part of the country. There may be discrepancy in information. But it is impossible to hide information in today's world, at least in India.

This takes us to the last question. Could India ramp up vaccination? Yes, of course. If Gujarat or Kerala could vaccinate 25 percent of its adult population, why Tamil Nadu and UP should score nine percent, lower than the national average of 16 percent?

Vaccine shortage is a worldwide phenomenon. There is limited availability of imported vaccines. Moreover, many such vaccines require delivery logistics which are not easy to facilitate in India. The dependence is on domestic production.

India is the fourth largest covid vaccine producer in the world after China, USA, Europe (Germany, Belgium) – but a distant fourth. The biggest producer is a licensee manufacturer. The second one is India-made (Covaxin) vaccine. Both were administered on emergency approval and the India-made vaccine cleared the third and final trial only recently.

Govt is funding the producers to expand the manufacturing capacities manifold. Fresh capacities will come on stream beginning June-July. The decision coincided with the second wave, which triggered the rush for vaccines beginning at the end-April. Spike in demand

created a temporary short supply scenario in May.

To address the issue, the government has put a temporary embargo on overseas distribution (25 percent of domestic capacity) of vaccines including those contracted by some countries and the Covax distribution programme led by the World Health Organisation beginning April. The embargo will be removed after domestic capacities are augmented.

One may argue that India could have been more proactive in funding the companies in expanding manufacturing capacity, thereby saving a month or two. Government is yet to clarify this issue. Presumably, it had low leveraging capacity with respect to the licensee manufacturer and was waiting for Covaxin to establish its efficacy before going overboard on production.

Shortage vs incapacity of States

In retrospect, however, the so-called “shortage” was as much a contribution of low availability as failure of the States to vaccinate faster. Right at this moment, the Centre has distributed 22 crore doses to States. 20 crores were consumed. This includes two percent (40 lakh) wastage.

States are having an inventory of two crore vaccine doses. Such high inventory, that too at a crunch situation, points at capacity constraint at State level.

The constraint is understandable. Before Covid arrived, India was carrying out its door-to-door immunization programme through village level community health workers (ASHA) who carry the vaccine in a regular ice-box.

But, Covid vaccines require a consistent cold chain. Under ‘emergency use’ guidelines, the vaccine is administered by trainer nurses

ensuring supervision and availability of doctor and healthcare facilities to address post-vaccination illness, if any.

This takes us to a critical gap. According to the World Bank, India has only 0.9 doctors per 1000 people against the world average of 1.5 doctors, 4.2 in Germany and two in China. The world average of nurses and midwives is 3.8 per 1000 population. India has 1.7 nurses per 1000 population against 2.7 in China and 4.2 in Germany.

This is the result of prolonged neglect to healthcare, which cannot be mitigated overnight. You can create a hospital in days or months. But it takes five years to become a doctor (MBBS) and 3-5 years in nursing.

To take a more comprehensive view, India fared way better than the majority of the world, including the developed world, in covid management so far. Given its population (2.5 times denser than China) and resource position; it showed better results in case load, death ratio, vaccination and economic recovery.

Economy is the king

Covid is a once in a century phenomenon. It will die its natural death. What is important is to take the economy forward. All indicators point that the economic damage has been distinctly less in the second wave.

The FDI and FPI (foreign portfolio investment) inflow continued to remain high even in the first week of May when fresh infections peaked. With second wave fast waning out and lockdown restrictions are likely to be removed in many States in weeks, things should improve faster.

(The writer is a well-known former journalist, public policy expert and a writer. Views expressed are his own)

India-EU Summit: Building on the Momentum



Uttam Kumar Sinha

Over the last two decades, India-EU relationship has successfully transformed from its traditional economic interaction to a broader strategic dimension. That the transformation from entrenched perception to broad-based synergies and cooperation has come through frank dialogue and mutual understanding is indeed remarkable. The journey since 2000, when the first summit was held, has been long and challenging but by all accounts successful. Today, the two reinforce one another and their evolved ‘strategic partnership’ is seen as common conviction to deal with global challenges.

On May 8, 2021 the European Union and its member states and India met in ‘hybrid format’ in Porto, a coastal city in northwest Portugal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi took part in these crucial deliberations as a special invitee. It carried forward the momentum of shared interests and values and a Roadmap 2025 that was provided in the last summit in July 2020. As the world’s two largest democracy, India and EU have a definite role to play in not only ensuring global security but equally working in tandem to bring in necessary reforms of multilateral organisations as well as implement sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement of 2015. The summit also underlined that India’s memberships in the

UN Security Council in 2021-2022 and in the UN Human Rights Council in 2019-2021, and its forthcoming G20 Presidency in 2023 can further the strategic partnership in bringing global peace and order and respect of law.

The Summit also came at a time of India’s vaccination drive against the COVID-19 pandemic and as the joint statement noted, “Recognising the role of extensive immunisation as a global public good and concurring that the vaccination process is not a race amongst countries but a race against time, we welcomed the EU’s and its Member States’ contribution to vaccines’ production and their substantial support to the COVAX Facility, as well as India’s efforts to produce and distribute COVID-19 vaccines to over 90 countries through its ‘Vaccine Maitri.’” The pandemic situation has opened the door for India-EU to cooperate on health emergencies and build a resilient medical supply chain. Prime Minister Modi expressed his “expressed his appreciation of the EU and its member states for mobilizing rapid support for India’s fight against the second wave of Coronavirus.”

An interesting area of convergence of interest has been the ‘connectivity agreement’ based on “principles of social, economic, fiscal, climate and environmental sustainability

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and a level playing field for economic operators.” This convergence assumes geo-strategic significance and can be seen as counter-balancing China and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by diversifying supply chain, reducing trade imbalance and building digital, energy and transport connectivity. The joint statement noted to this effect, “The Partnership will synergise our efforts with the work of the multilateral development banks, including the EIB [European Invest Bank] and public and private financial institutions of the EU Member States and India for promoting sustainable infrastructure projects.”

A significant feature of the Summit was on ‘Protecting our planet and fostering green growth.’ The EU is a principal protagonist in the climate change debate. Combating climate change has given the EU a collective identity and leadership role distinct from and even opposed to that of the US. In its December 2002 Communication, the EU had noted: “The Union must be in a position to take more resolute and more effective action in the interests of sustainable development and to deal with certain new risks, associated in most cases with the persistent and growing economic

and social imbalances in the world. It must therefore stick up for a strategy of sustainable development, based on a multilateral and multipolar organisation of the world economy, to offset any hegemonic or unilateral approach”. The spirit of this communication remains fundamental to the climate convergence with India. Not surprisingly, the EU has invited India to participate in the negotiations on Global Plastics Agreement.

India on its part has stressed on the importance of achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. India’s own climate leadership has been proactive. In the early phases of climate

“Recognising the role of extensive immunisation as a global public good and concurring that the vaccination process is not a race amongst countries but a race against time, we welcomed the EU’s and its Member States’ contribution to vaccines’ production and their substantial support to the COVAX Facility, as well as India’s efforts to produce and distribute COVID-19 vaccines to over 90 countries through its ‘Vaccine Maitri’”

debate, India led the resistance of developing world against the injustices of the historical polluters who seldom took the responsibility of their climate damaging actions. Now critically involved in climate deal making, India has changed the narrative by introducing 'Climate Justice' in the Paris Agreement preamble and later the issue of 'differentiation' in the Kigali Amendment of the Montreal Protocol in 2016. India now leads the climate debate by example. It has one of the most ambitious renewable energy goals across the world. By the end of 2022, it hopes to achieve a capacity of 175 GW of renewable energy and 450 GW by 2030. The EU equally has robust sustainable energy goals. The joint statement noting the convergence welcomed "EU's support to the International Solar Alliance, as well as India's leadership in promoting solar power..."

Clean energy and climate partnership are the critical areas that can navigate India-EU future relations. For India one of its biggest challenge is the energy transition. This transition has to be just and cannot be at the cost of jobs, growth or sustainability. Such transition requires affordable finance. It is estimated that India would require \$ 200 bn investment for future renewable targets or as some calculations puts it \$ 40 bn a year. Fiscal challenges are, therefore, enormous. There are also ground realities that impede the renewable story like scaling rooftop solar and energy storage. Conscious of the clean energy challenges, the 2021 Summit decided to give a new work programme under the India-EU Energy Panel with a purpose to "...accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, promote energy efficiency, collaborate on smart grid & storage technology and modernise the electricity market. Through the Partnership's new work programme, we will step up

"The Union must be in a position to take more resolute and more effective action in the interests of sustainable development and to deal with certain new risks, associated in most cases with the persistent and growing economic and social imbalances in the world. It must therefore stick up for a strategy of sustainable development, based on a multilateral and multipolar organisation of the world economy, to offset any hegemonic or unilateral approach".

cooperation to deploy innovative renewable technologies, such as offshore wind, as well as to exploit the potential of hydrogen - in particular from renewable sources - and of electricity inter-connections, to enable the cost-effective integration of large shares of renewable electricity."

Both the EU and India extract a lot of strategic value from their partnership. It also needs to be emphasised that both India and EU are unions of diversity. No sectoral reforms in a densely populated country like India can ensue without global climate collaboration which will require, among many things, facilitated access to technology and finance, but also dissuading countries from pressurizing others. India-EU are natural allies in promoting international coordination and cooperation and thus sustaining the partnership through regular institutionalised dialogues is of paramount importance.

(Uttam Sinha is a fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. He is also, co-editor, among other volumes, of The Modi Doctrine: new paradigms in India's Foreign Policy (2016). Views expressed are his own.)

Managing a 'Once in a Century' Pandemic Challenge



Pathikrit Payne

Some of India's leading opposition parties who have not been in power for more than half a decade now, must be thanking their stars for not being in power in the current circumstances. In one of the toughest and unprecedented phases that India is facing right now, owing to Coronavirus, for them it is much more convenient to be in opposition and tweet, than to be in the hot seat and manage the crisis.

Frankly speaking, no country, not even the United States of America, with one of the most modern healthcare systems, was prepared for the onslaught of the coronavirus, as it has happened over the last one year. Last year also witnessed Europe's leading countries being ravaged by covid, and had almost given up in spite of having a far lesser population to manage.

India was not spared either. In reality, to manage a population of around 140 crore people and with a healthcare system far from being at par with their American or European counterparts, it was always supposed to be a major challenge for India. Yet no country had to face a multitude of challenges as India had faced over the last one year including a face-off with China as well as making sure that the livelihoods are not affected beyond a point.

Confronting a Pandemic Against all Odds: Political and Otherwise

For some of the opposition leaders and vested interests, sadly, the coronavirus crisis was almost like newfound opportunity to target and vilify Prime Minister Narendra Modi and singularly hold him responsible for everything, as if India is a unitary state and not a federal republic with each state having a functional government headed by an elected Chief Minister. For every action of his, there was a readymade script to criticize and ridicule. It was as if, 'damned if he does and damned if he does not'.

Over the last one month, even as a section of media and political opportunists barraged the Prime Minister with all kinds of allegations and accusations, the PM maintained stoic composure and did not get into a mudslinging match. Instead, he and his team remained focused on the job at hand, i.e. to mitigate the oxygen supply issue and address the issue of vaccine, which is far more complex than writing a critical tweet of a hundred alphabets. In less than a month, no one talks anymore of the oxygen issue because it has been sorted out. The Government of India worked tirelessly to mitigate the logistical issue associated with delivery of oxygen without even for once seeking credit for it. But for the critics, the goalpost has shifted.

How India Fared in the Last 14 Months

It is true that over the last one year, when both the first and second wave of coronavirus is combined, India has certainly witnessed many fatalities, which is tragic but in most cases was unavoidable, in spite of best efforts of both central,

state level governments as well as the medical fraternity. Yet, it could have been far worse given the enormity of population that India has and the density of the same. To understand what the Government of India has done over the last one 14 months to confront the covid crisis, one has to look at it from the perspective of where India was in January-February 2020.

Circa 2020: From Importer of PPE kits and N-95 Masks to Net Exporter

In January, 2020, India was not even making sufficient number of PPE kits and N-95 masks that were so very required as basic ingredients to combat a pandemic as contagious as coronavirus. The Government of India took the initiative to address the issue on a mission mode. For dealing with any kind of pandemic situation, one requires PPE kits with class-3 protection levels that most domestic manufacturers, at that time, did not have capacity to make. The same was the case with N-95 masks. The Government was racing against time considering that the demand was estimated at around 20 million PPE kits and 40 million N-95 masks from July 2020 onward. In March 2020, Ministry of Textile launched 'Operation PPE Coverall'. It was not an easy task considering the level of effort that was needed to create a robust supply chain as well as having WHO level testing protocols in place.

Yet, thanks to concerted effort of both Centre and private sector, by May 2020, India was manufacturing 2 lakh PPE kits and 2 lakh N-95 masks daily. By July, India's supply exceeded demand and India had become the second largest PPE kit manufacturer in the world.

Further, to boost the production of hand sanitizers, a large number of distilleries and more than 500 other manufactures, including sugar mills and FMCG companies, were granted permission to produce hand sanitizers.

The production of all these critical elements namely, PPE kits, face masks and hand sanitizers have so seamlessly been expanded that the country did not realize the enormity of efforts that were put behind it to make sure that the supply matched the rising demand. Also, during the same period, Government of India also ordered 60,000 ventilators for disbursement among hospitals in various states. Of the 60,000 ordered, 50,000 were funded by PM Cares Fund and almost 96% of them were procured from Indian companies.

India's problem, over the last one year, has not been covid alone

Sadly however, while the rest of the world had time to grapple only with Covid crisis, India had much more than that to handle. The misadventure of China along the LAC and the clash in Galwan compelled India not only to start a major logistical operation to fortify its borders with China and deploy battle ready troops in lakhs, but also had to commit an additional Rs 20,000 crore to buy emergency weapon systems.

Also, because of the ongoing face-off with China and India's decision to ban a large number of Chinese mobile apps as well as debarring Chinese investments in various critical sector projects, it was quite apparent that India had to take measures to reduce its dependence on import of Active Pharma Ingredients (API) that India was important in huge quantity from China. This means that while India was one of the largest manufacturers of generic drugs in the world, it had a near 70% dependence on China for API.

To address this issue, Modi Government started work on a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme to increase the production of pharma ingredients within the country. In February 2021, Modi Government, finally approved Rs 15,000 crore worth of PLI scheme for the period 2020-21 to 2028-29 that is aimed at garnering incremental

sale of Rs 2,94,000 crore of pharma products and at least Rs 1,96,000 crore of incremental exports during the period.

The overalls scheme also includes approval of 33 applications under PLI scheme for production of API in India. One of the biggest lessons of the covid crisis as well as face-off with China was that it was important for India to develop a resilient supply chain that would be immune from global shocks. From pharma to other critical sectors, Government worked on a 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' policy to make India more self-sufficient in production of both finished good as well as intermediary ones.

Further, Government of India did something last year which is unthinkable even in many of the western countries. The Government of India under PM Modi announced in June,2020 that it would given free ration to 80 crore Indians for five months, which would be in addition to their existing quota of foodgrain that they get from ration shops. This was later extended by some more months. In one go, Government of India had ensured that people need not have to worry about basic food during lockdown period.

The Vaccine Saga: Truth Vs Disinformation Campaign

On the vaccine front, while Serum Institute of India was getting ready from late last year with production of covid vaccine, namely Covishield, in India under a contract with Astra-Zeneca, another Indian company Bharat Biotech was developing an indigenous covid vaccine, namely Covaxin, with help of National Institute of Virology.

From 16th January, 2021, Government of India started a massive drive to vaccinate around 2.36 crore frontline healthcare workers. This was followed by another massive drive to vaccinate India's armed forces. Giving priority to vaccination of healthcare workers and armed forces was a

critical decision in combating covid while keeping India's borders secure from external aggressions. Yet a narrative was set as if nothing was being done by Government so far as vaccination was concerned.

Also, some of leading voices of opposition parties have been planting apprehensions about utility of vaccines and safety of vaccines for quite some time. Therefore, in the initial days of March, when vaccination was opened up for people above the age of 60, many of the centres were running half empty since many people thought that they did not need the vaccine anymore and also had apprehensions. Later on, as the second wave gathered pace and people became more aware about the efficacy of vaccines, there was a sudden rush to vaccinate. While some from opposition have continued with their doomsday projections by predicting that India would not be able to vaccinate all before 2024, the reality is that by December 2021, India is expected to vaccinate all eligible people and perhaps even more.

To bust the fake rhetoric of naysayers, it is therefore important to consider a few points since a considerable amount of misinformation is being spread by vested interests.

Making vaccines is not like making instant noodles or popcorn. It takes nothing less than 100-120 days to make one batch of vaccines ready for inoculation, starting from production, testing by Central Drugs Laboratory, delivery of produced batches of vaccines and then eventual logistical process through which it has to go before it reaches a vaccination center. Bharat Biotech in a statement asserted the same in the recent past.

Therefore, however one wishes for, vaccines cannot be made available instantly. Covid-19 appeared in the global arena in 2020 and since then vaccine makers have been racing against time to make vaccines. Never in the past have vaccines

been made available at such a short notice as it happened with Covid vaccines. The time that vaccine makers need to deliver a quality vaccine has to be given to them. It does not mean that either the vaccine makers or the Government have been lackadaisical.

Not every pharma company or vaccine maker can make coronavirus vaccines since it requires BS Level-3 of safety parameters and not many have been willing to work with such a contagious virus. Therefore, while it has always been easy to make claims as to why not 20 odd Indian companies been allowed to make vaccines in one go, reality is that it was practically not possible unless those entities develop BS Level-3 of safety.

While both Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech agreed to ramp up their production to meet the rising demands and for which Government of India approved vaccine supply credit to the tune of Rs 3000 crore and Rs 1500 crore respectively to SII and Bharat Biotech, one has to understand that physical capacity building for ramping up of vaccine production cannot happen overnight. It takes a minimum of a few months. While Bharat Biotech is expected to gradually scale up its vaccine production in the Bangalore facility to 700 million annually by September-October, Serum Institute too is expected to scale up its production to 11 crore or more in the coming months.

To further scale up production, in April 2021, Government of India granted approval to Haffkine Bio Pharmaceutical, a state level PSU owned by Government of Maharashtra, to co-produce Covaxin in collaboration with Bharat Biotech, and for that Government of India also approved a grant of Rs 65 crore to Haffkine Bio Pharmaceutical. Likewise, grants were also approved by Government of India for Indian Immunologicals Limited, which is expected to start production

of drug substance for covid vaccines of Bharat Biotech and initiate its delivery from July onward. Indian Immunologicals is expected to produce drug substance for 10-15 million vaccines doses every month.

Likewise, Government of India has also roped in another state-owned vaccine maker, namely Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Limited (BIBCOL). In its Bulandshar plant in Uttar Pradesh, BIBCOL would be coproducing 2 crore doses of Covaxin per month.

Further, Government of India granted approval for initial import and subsequent production of Sputnik-V vaccines in India. Russia Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) backed Sputnik-V has entered into collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratory, Hetero Drugs, Gland Pharma, Virchow Biotech, Panacea Biotech, Shilpa Medicare and Stelis Biopharma for local production of Sputnik vaccines in India. Production has already started as at least a 100 million are expected to made available annually.

This apart, Indian biotech companies such as Biologicals-E, Gennova and Zydus Cadilla are also working on covid vaccines to be made available soon while Government may also allow imports of vaccines from Pfizer and J&J.

Overall as it stands, from middle of June onward the vaccine shortage is expected to be gradually addressed and by July- August onward supply is expected match with demand or even exceed it.

Mitigating the Oxygen Challenge: An Uphill Task that Eventually was Accomplished

While some opposition parties and their leaders left no stone unturned to play politics on the vaccine front, on the issue of oxygen shortage as well, some found it as an opportunity to catapult themselves keeping perhaps 2024 elections in

mind, instead of working with the Government to address the issue.

In this context, it has to be understood that India has not faced any pandemic like this since independence, and theories aside, there was certainly no reference point or benchmarks to embrace from. Secondly, it is always an extremely difficult proposition to anticipate the trajectory of a mutating RNA virus. Therefore, while there were anticipations of the possibility of a second wave of Covid, few would have imagined it to have come in the manner in which it created a 'tsunami' since late April. For the Government, it was always supposed to be a Catch-22 situation. Being extremely strict and not opening commercial and public places including offices and other utilities, would have meant huge of employment bankruptcy of business holdings as well as sustained negative growth rate of economy. The same opposition blaming Central Government for unlocking too soon, and thereby 'inviting second wave' would then have accused it for 'destroying economy and livelihood'.

It was also beyond anybody's guess as to how the second wave would create an exponential increase in demand for medical oxygen. Government of India, nevertheless had anticipated a part of it last year itself as is evident from the fact that way back in October 2020, it had invited bids for setting up of 150 oxygen plants in hospital premises for reducing dependence on oxygen cylinders. Yet sadly, only 33 were up and running by April 2021. There was apparent reluctance on part of many hospitals to move ahead with the proposal with alacrity. Doubts therefore remain if lobbies of oxygen suppliers prevented the setting up of Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) based oxygen plants in hospital premises.

Nevertheless, it was precisely the absence of PSA based Oxygen plants in hospital premises that resulted in shortage and not because of overall

shortage of oxygen in the country. In the month of April, 2021, India was producing around 7500 tons of oxygen on a daily basis. This also included oxygen used for industrial purposes. And yet India a mere 1200 odd cryogenic containers to transport the much-needed oxygen to hospitals. It was a logistical nightmare considering the distance that each of such vehicles had to travel from far flung areas to hospitals.

Secondly, there was also an apocalyptic rise in the demand of oxygen concentrators. It was during this phase when the opposition parties instead of showing solidarity were busy playing politics that Modi Government silently went on the operation mode to address the issue. Indian Railways commenced operation of 'Oxygen Express' to ferry oxygen laden trucks to different parts of the country. By the end of May, 2021, the Indian Railways had already delivered 20,000 metric tonnes of oxygen across various parts of the country with the help of 300 Oxygen Express Trains.

The Indian Air Force and Indian Navy likewise, were also pressed into service to bring in the much needed cryogenic containers from abroad since in the shortest possible time it was not possible to domestically manufacture them. By the end of April, 2020, IAF had already airlifted 47 oxygen containers having a payload carrying capacity of 830 metric tonnes of oxygen.

The Air Force, eventually made hundreds of sorties to bring in several such containers and critical supplies from abroad. By the first week of May, 2021, India had already received 3000 metric tons of medical aid including oxygen concentrators and oxygen plants, and here too, in spite of the process of disbursement being extremely transparent, some unnecessary fake controversies were attempted to be created by vested interests. Meanwhile even as Government of India came out

with directives to restrict supply of oxygen to nine industries for making sure that adequate amount of industrial oxygen could be directed towards medical emergencies.

Through some humongous efforts, Government of India made sure that by the end of April 2021, India's daily production of oxygen was ramped up to around 9000 metric tonnes while under the aegis of Prime Minister Modi, by first week of May, 2021, funds were allocated from PM CARES for installation of 500 PSA Oxygen plants within three months. In the last week of May, Union Minister Anurag Thakur stated that in all 1500 oxygen plants would be set up across India with the help of PM CARES FUND and PSU Funds. PSUs like ONGC chipped in with pledge to procure 1 lakh oxygen concentrators for Centre.

One also has to mention about the incredible contribution of India's industrial majors such as the TATA Group, Reliance Industries, Adani Group, Jindal Group and many more, towards mitigating the oxygen crisis in India by diverting thousands of tonnes of industrial oxygen towards medical purpose on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, Government agencies like DRDO worked tirelessly to come up with a new oral medicine for combating covid and it is expected to revolutionize India's war against Covid. DRDO not only worked on the 2DG medicine but also on developing technology for setting up of PSA Oxygen Plants and supplemental oxygen delivery systems. Further, in the private sector, production of anti-viral drug remdesivir was ramped up by almost 10 times.

The Abominable Politics Around Medical Aid that India Received from Abroad

Incidentally, when at a very short notice, India received around 3000 metric tonnes of medical supplies from abroad, a shocking narrative

was created by vested interests and political opportunists that as if India has been turned into a 'beggar' country since these deliveries were coming from abroad free of cost. In the first place, none of the things that were coming to India could not have been made in India. Yet, those essential medical equipment were necessary for Government of India to receive because India was racing against time and in such occasions, it was more important to make sure that equipment are delivered rather than allowing inhibitions and ego to prevent acceptance of such aid.

Last year, India too gave the US millions of doses of hydroxychloroquine when they desperately needed it. The fact that India was helped by so many countries is because on several occasions in the recent past India stood by them. Also, as an economic powerhouse, the world values India as a nation and it simply did not want the India to face the crisis alone and thus extended their helping hand. For the myopic and self-serving vested interests, it might be too difficult to comprehend as to how global diplomacy works and why India was helped in crisis by genuine friends. Acknowledging it would mean accepting the success of Modi Government's foreign policy, something many cannot admit even with a grudge.

It was time for the Country to act in unison: Sadly, it did not!

On a concluding note, it has to be said that a pandemic of this proportion is a national crisis that requires cooperation of all. Instead, some political opportunists and vested interests tried to piggyback the second wave to vilify the Prime Minister on the presumption that this would help them in their prospects in future elections. Nothing could be more unfortunate than this.

Apart from mindless political bickering and a twenty-four-seven obsession to vilify the Prime Minister, what also has not worked for India

is the sheer wastage of resources that has often happened at times. While many states, in spite of political differences did extensively cooperate with the Central Government, in certain cases, lack of cooperation and sheer wastage of resources did hamper the management of pandemic.

Take for example the controversy surrounding ventilators supplied by Government of India to Punjab through PM Cares Fund. While claims were made that almost 237 of 320 ventilators received from Centre were not functional, an audit by Central Government found the sheer mismanagement of delicate devices including absence of basic recalibration of settings as per geographical location, or checking of the O2 pressure levels or the basic fixing of electrical settings that resulted them from not functioning properly. Instead of managing them well they were dumped in stores and kept unutilized for months. In many cases in Punjab, the hospitals did not even have the basic infrastructure necessary for installation of ventilators, as was revealed in a letter by Union Health Secretary. Therefore, instead of creating basic trained manpower and infrastructure in place for adequate utilization of ventilators, the state was more eager to engineer a political issue even as patient suffered while ventilators were kept unutilized in stores.

In the same league, sheer wastage of vaccines has been another major issue that the country has been grappling with. Many states have been extremely lackadaisical in management of vaccine vials resulting in wastage. As per a report by Union Health Ministry, wastage of vaccine is disproportionately high in case of some states. In Jharkhand for example, wastage of vaccines has been as high as 37%, in Chattisgarh the figure states at 30.2%, followed by Tamil Nadu at 15.5%, Jammu and Kashmir reportedly was wasting 10.8% of vaccines while Madhya Pradesh is alleged to have wasted 10.7% of allotted vaccines. Recently

Union Government has accused Rajasthan of wasting 11 lakh doses of vaccines. An investigative report by a media house revealed that the wastage in Rajasthan is to the tune of 25%. Why states are wasting vaccines to this extent and how can India eventually beat covid and vaccinate all, if wastage of this proportion continues, is a million-dollar question.

Lessons Learnt: Time to prepare for future eventualities

Even as the number of active cases are on a decline, the second wave showed how ferocious and unexpected can be the advent of a new wave. The tragic losses of lives would take time to heal. When things would settle down, it would be time to introspect more on certain pertinent issues including the need for setting up of a National Healthcare Regulatory Authority for bringing uniformity and standards in medical treatment in India, the need for setting up of a large number low cost hospitals especially in rural areas, prioritizing telemedicine and promoting technology based consultations for expanding the reach of medical consultations in far flung areas, creating a new wave of revolution in the realm of biotechnology sector and emulating the same success in biotechnology as has been in case of software services, better engagement of public health experts in national healthcare planning, potential need for strategic storage of essential and critical medicines much on the lines of storage of crude oil, to name a few. However, having learnt lessons, India is poised to be much better prepared for future pandemics, one lingering question that remains unanswered is whether India faced a pandemic or a biological war. In case of the latter, India needs a whole new architecture to secure itself in future.

(The author is a public policy analyst and a well-known commentator. Views expressed are his own)

मोदी सरकार: चुनौतियों व उपलब्धियों के सात साल



शिवानंद द्विवेदी

को रोना महामारी की दूसरी लहर के बीच केंद्र में मोदी सरकार दूसरे कार्यकाल के दो वर्ष और कुल मिलाकर सात वर्ष पूरे हो गए हैं। 2014 में पहली बार जब भाजपा सत्ता में आई तब देश के सामने कई चुनौतियाँ थीं। आज उन चुनौतियों से देश को उबारने में मोदी सरकार कितना कामयाब हो पाई है, इस पर चर्चा जरूरी है।

पहली बार प्रधानमंत्री पद की शपथ लेने के बाद नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा था कि 'मेरी सरकार गरीब कल्याण को समर्पित है।' ऐसा कहना 'कल्याणकारी राज्य' की अवधारणा पर आगे बढ़ने का संकेत था। सवाल था 'गरीब कल्याण' की भावना को मोदी अमल में कैसे लायेंगे। यह सवाल इसलिए भी था कि गरीब कल्याण के वादों का बुरा हथ्र देश ने दशकों तक देखा है। निश्चित ही पुराने धिसे-पिटे ढर्रे पर चलने की बजाय नीतिगत बदलावों तथा नवाचारों को अपनाने की जरूरत थी।

गरीब कल्याण की राह में सबसे बड़ा रोड़ा था गरीब का हक सीधे गरीब तक नहीं पहुँच पाना। दशकों तक भारत ने ऐसा कोई पारदर्शी तंत्र नहीं विकसित किया, जिसके माध्यम से गरीब का हक सीधे गरीब को पहुँचाया जा सके। देश के करोड़ों गरीब परिवार ऐसे थे जो मुख्यधारा के अर्थतंत्र से बाहर थे। उनका बैंक खाता न होने की वजह से कोई भी आर्थिक लाभ सीधा लाभार्थी को दे पाना संभव नहीं था। देश करोड़ों गरीबों को बैंकों से जोड़े बिना गरीब कल्याण के दावे पूरे नहीं किये जा सकते थे। आज देश के 42 करोड़ से अधिक लोग जनधन योजना के तहत बैंको से जुड़ चुके हैं। गरीबों के आर्थिक उत्थान में इसका बड़ा लाभ हुआ कि 54 मंत्रालयों की 319 योजनाओं का आर्थिक लाभांश बिना किसी बिचौलिए के सीधे लाभार्थियों के खाते में पहुँचना संभव हो रहा है। कोरोना काल में आम जनता को त्वरित आर्थिक

सहायता में डायरेक्ट बेनिफिट ट्रांसफर का तंत्र रामबाण साबित हुआ है। करोड़ों किसानों, महिलाओं, प्रवासियों को सरकार सीधा मदद पहुँचा पा रही है।

कार्यशैली तथा नीतिगत बदलावों से कैसे योजनाओं की तस्वीर बदल सकती है, जनधन योजना इसका एक उदाहरण है। निस्संदेह अपने वादों और दावों में कोई भी सरकार गरीब कल्याण की विरोधी नहीं होती। कई सरकारें गरीब कल्याण की नीयत भी रखती हैं। किंतु कोई सरकार 'गरीब कल्याण की भावना रखे, इतना पर्याप्त नहीं होता। उसे अमल में लाने के लिए सही नीति, सटीक निर्णय और सशक्त नेतृत्व मायने रखता है। भाजपा की मोदी सरकार आने के बाद यह बदलाव देश ने महसूस किया है।

अपने पहले पांच साल के कार्यकाल में जनहित के साथ-साथ आर्थिक सुधारों तथा कानूनी जटिलताओं से ईज ऑफ़ डूइंग

भारत में कोरोना का पहला मामला 27 जनवरी, 2020 को केरल में सामने आया था। इसके बाद संक्रमण बढ़ते-बढ़ते मार्च तक पूरे देश में फैलने लगा था। सरकार और जनता दोनों के लिए यह संकट एकदम नया और अबूझ पहली की तरह था। मोदी सरकार संपूर्ण लॉक डाउन के विकल्प पर आगे बढ़ी। एक सौ तीस करोड़ आबादी वाले विशाल देश में यह एक साहसिक फैसला था। इस फैसले के बाद श्रमिकों का पलायन सरकार के समक्ष बड़ी चुनौती के रूप में आया। शुरुआती दिनों में अफरा-तफरी की स्थिति भी पैदा हुई, जो स्वाभाविक भी थी। लेकिन सरकार राज्यों से संपर्क और संवाद करते हुए तय ने योजना के साथ विशेष ट्रेनें चलाकर श्रमिकों को उनके घर तक सुरक्षित पहुँचाने का काम किया और यह समस्या अधिक बढ़ा रूप नहीं ले पाई।

तक के लिए मोदी सरकार ने सही नीयत के साथ सफल प्रयास किये हैं। देश में निवेश बढे, उत्पादन की क्षमता बढे, स्व-रोजगार को बढावा मिले, आधारभूत संरचना के विकास में गति आये तथा भारत की साख दुनिया में मजबूत हो, इन सबको लेकर मोदी सरकार ने चौतरफा कार्य किये। सही व पारदर्शी नीति होने की वजह से अनेक कार्य एक साथ बिना किसी आपसी टकराव के हुए। यही कारण था कि 2019 के आम चुनावों में देश ने मोदी को पिछले बार की तुलना में बड़े जनादेश के साथ सत्ता की कमान सौंपी।

किसी भी सरकार के कामकाज का संपूर्ण मूल्यांकन उसकी वैचारिक प्रतिबद्धता तथा घोषणापत्र में किये वायदों की अनदेखी करके नहीं की जा सकती है।

2019 में सरकार बनने के बाद हुए संसद के पहले ही सत्र में सरकार ने जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद-370 को समाप्त करने का ऐतिहासिक निर्णय लिया। राज्य को दो भागों जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख में बाँटकर केंद्रशासित प्रदेश का दर्जा दिया। पिछले कार्यकाल से राज्यसभा में अटका हुआ तीन तलाक के विरुद्ध कानून पारित कराने में भी सरकार सफल रही। 9 नवंबर, 2019 को श्रीरामजन्मभूमि पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का ऐतिहासिक निर्णय आया। इसी क्रम में संसद के शीतकालीन सत्र में नागरिकता संशोधन कानून पारित होना भी मोदी सरकार की एक बड़ी उपलब्धि रही। ये सारे निर्णय बहु-प्रतिक्षित तथा दशकों से लंबित थे। मोदी सरकार अपनी विचारधारा और अपने घोषणापत्र के मुताबिक इसे पूरा करने में सफल रही। यह सब करते हुए सरकार को शायद अंदाजा भी नहीं रहा हो कि आने वाले समय में उसका सामना आजाद भारत की सबसे बड़ी चुनौती से होने जा रहा है।

भारत में कोरोना का पहला मामला 27 जनवरी, 2020 को केरल में सामने आया था। इसके बाद संक्रमण बढ़ते-बढ़ते मार्च तक पूरे देश में फैलने लगा था। सरकार और जनता दोनों के लिए यह संकट एकदम नया और अबूझ पहिली की तरह था। मोदी सरकार संपूर्ण लॉक डाउन के विकल्प पर आगे बढ़ी। एक सौ तीस करोड़ आबादी वाले विशाल देश में यह एक साहसिक फैसला था। इस फैसले के बाद श्रमिकों का पलायन सरकार के समक्ष बड़ी चुनौती के रूप में आया। शुरुआती दिनों में अफरा-तफरी की स्थिति भी पैदा हुई, जो स्वाभाविक भी थी। लेकिन सरकार राज्यों से संपर्क और संवाद करते हुए तय ने योजना के साथ विशेष ट्रेनें चलाकर श्रमिकों को उनके घर तक सुरक्षित पहुँचाने का काम किया और यह समस्या अधिक बड़ा रूप नहीं ले पाई।

लॉकडाउन में रोजगार न होने से देश के गरीबों को रोजी-रोटी का संकट न हो, इसके लिए लॉकडाउन के तुरंत बाद ही 1170

लाख करोड़ रुपये के प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण पैकेज के माध्यम से किसानों, महिलाओं, बुजुर्गों तथा श्रमिकों के खातों में नियमित रूप से धनराशि भेजी गयी तथा राशनकार्ड धारकों को परिवार के प्रति व्यक्ति के हिसाब से पाँच किलो मुफ्त अनाज देने की व्यवस्था की गई। इस योजना के अंतर्गत लगभग अस्सी करोड़ लोगों को मुफ्त अनाज उपलब्ध कराया गया। इसके अतिरिक्त कोरोना से आमने-सामने की लड़ाई लड़ रहे कोरोना योद्धाओं के लिए भी सरकार बीमा योजना की शुरुआत की गयी।

इसी दौरान 12 मई, 2020 को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी द्वारा 20 लाख करोड़ के राहत पैकेज की घोषणा करते हुए आत्मनिर्भर भारत अभियान की शुरुआत की गयी। एक आंकड़े के मुताबिक, जनवरी, 2020 तक देश में आयातित 275000 पीपीई किट ही थे, लेकिन मार्च में कोरोना का कहर शुरू होने के लगभग दो महीने के अंदर ही सरकार के प्रयासों से स्थिति यह हो गयी कि भारत प्रतिदिन दो लाख पीपीई किट का उत्पादन करने लगा। जुलाई तक देश पीपीई किट का निर्यात करने लगा था। भारत ने टेस्टिंग क्षमता को भी तेजी से बढ़ाया। बहुत कम समय में देश में सैकड़ों टेस्टिंग सेंटर काम करने लगे।

कोरोना के खिलाफ लड़ाई में देश हर मोर्चे पर मुस्तैद दिखा। स्थिति को संभालने के साथ-साथ देश ने अपने स्तर पर दो-दो वैक्सीन का परीक्षण पूरा करने के बाद टीकाकरण अभियान भी शुरू कर दिया। ताजा स्थिति में देश में 20 करोड़ के आसपास लोगों का पहला डोज टीकाकरण पूरा हो चुका है। एक समय ऐसा लगने लगा कि देश इस महामारी से जल्द ही पूरी तरह से पार पा लेगा। लेकिन तभी मार्च में इसकी दूसरी लहर ने पाँव पसारने शुरू कर दिए। हालांकि यह स्वीकारने में कोई गुरेज नहीं होनी चाहिए कि कोरोना की दूसरी लहर अधिक खतरनाक साबित हुई है। लेकिन केंद्र सरकार ने इस कठिन परिस्थिति में राज्यों को ऑक्सीजन की उपलब्धता से लगाये अन्य सहायता के लिए हमेशा तैयार रखी। पीएम केयर्स फंड से 200 करोड़ से अधिक की राशि राज्यों को ऑक्सीजन प्लांट लगाने के लिए समय रहते केंद्र सरकार द्वारा दे दी गयी थी, लेकिन राज्यों की तरफ से इसको लेकर समय रहते उत्साह कम दिखाया गया। राज्यों की उदासीनता और समय रहते तैयारी में कमी भी दूसरी लहर की विभीषिका का एक कारण है। कोरोना की इस दूसरी लहर से भी निपटने के लिए सरकार युद्धस्तर पर प्रयासरत है और दिन-प्रतिदिन स्थिति में सुधार देखने को मिल रहा है। इस लड़ाई को आरोप-प्रत्यारोप की बजाय एकजुटता से लड़ने में ही देश और समाज का हित हो सकेगा।

(लेखक भाजपा के थिंक टैंक एसपीएमआरएफ में सीनियर फैलो हैं। प्रस्तुत विचार उनके निजी हैं।)

देश में स्वास्थ्य तंत्र को मजबूत करने हेतु किए जा रहे हैं विशेष प्रयास



प्रह्लाद सबनानी

को रोगा महामारी की दूसरी लहर के दौरान देश के अस्पतालों पर स्पष्ट रूप से अधिक दबाव देखा गया था। कुल मिलाकर ऐसा महसूस होने लगा था कि देश में उपलब्ध स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएं शायद पर्याप्त नहीं हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में और अधिक सुविधाएं उपलब्ध कराना अब आवश्यक हो गया है। इस उद्देश्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए केंद्र सरकार और भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने कदम कस ली है। रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा दिनांक 5 मई 2021 को कुछ विशेष घोषणाएं की गयी हैं ताकि देश में कोविड महामारी से संबंधित स्वास्थ्य सम्बंधी बुनियादी ढांचे को तेजी के साथ विकसित किया जा सके।

इन घोषणाओं के अनुसार, अब बैंकों द्वारा स्वास्थ्य सम्बंधी बुनियादी ढांचे को मजबूत बनाने के उद्देश्य से अधिक ऋण उपलब्ध कराया जा सके इस हेतु भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा 50,000 करोड़ रुपए की राशि विभिन्न बैंकों को रेपो दर पर (वर्तमान में 4 प्रतिशत) तीन वर्षों के लिए उपलब्ध कराई जाएगी एवं बैंक इस व्यवस्था का लाभ 31 मार्च 2022 तक उठा सकेंगे।

इस योजना के अंतर्गत प्राथमिकता वाले चिकित्सा उपकरणों के आयातकों व आपूर्तिकर्ताओं, अस्पतालों, डिस्पेंसरियों, पैथोलॉजी लैब, ऑक्सीजन एवं वेंटिलेटर विनिर्माताओं और आपूर्तिकर्ताओं तथा कोविड की दवाओं के आयातकों और लॉजिस्टिक फर्मों एवं मरीजों को उपचार के लिए बैंकों द्वारा ऋण उपलब्ध कराया जा सकता है।

इस प्रकार के ऋणों को प्राथमिक क्षेत्र के ऋण की श्रेणी में रखा जाएगा। प्राथमिक क्षेत्र के ऋण के लिए बैंकों को नकदी आरक्षी अनुपात या सांविधिक तरलता अनुपात बरकरार रखने की जरूरत नहीं होती है और यह कर्ज रियायती दर पर उपलब्ध होता है।

साथ ही, भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने लघु वित्त बैंकों को लम्बी अवधि

के विशेष रेपो संचालन में भाग लेने की छूट प्रदान कर दी है ताकि ये बैंक सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं असंगठित क्षेत्र के संस्थानों को वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करने में सक्षम हो सकें। इस सुविधा के साथ अब लघु वित्त बैंक, लघु सूक्ष्म वित्त संस्थाओं, जिनके परिसंपत्तियों का आकार 500 करोड़ रुपए का है, को भी वित्त प्रदान करने के लिए अधिकृत किया गया है। भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक विशेष रूप से लघु वित्त बैंकों के लिए 10,000 करोड़ रुपए का, रेपो की दर (वर्तमान में 4 प्रतिशत) पर, 3 वर्ष की लम्बी अवधि का एक विशेष रेपो संचालन करेगा।

इसी तरह के उपाय, कोरोना महामारी के प्रथम लहर के दौरान, 27 मार्च 2020 को भी भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने किए थे। उस समय पर भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने आर्थिक गतिविधियों को चुस्त दुरुस्त बनाए रखने के उद्देश्य से सिस्टम में तरलता बनाए रखने के लिए एक लाख करोड़ रुपए से अधिक की राशि के पैकेज की घोषणा की थी। यह अपने आप में बहुत बड़ी घोषणा थी। अब फिर से कोरोना महामारी की दूसरी लहर के दौरान, विशेष रूप से स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र को 50000 करोड़ रुपए की तरलता उपलब्ध कराने के उद्देश्य से यह घोषणा की है।

देश में तरलता की स्थिति में सुधार होने के बाद अक्सर बैंकों में आत्मविश्वास का स्तर बढ़ता है एवं वे अधिक ऋण प्रदान करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित होते हैं। विशेष रूप से इस नाजुक समय में देश में आपूर्ति प्रबंधन को बनाए रखना जरूरी है अन्यथा की स्थिति में देश में मुद्रा स्फीति की दर बढ़ सकती है। अतः यदि विभिन्न उत्पादों का उत्पादन करने वाली इकाइयों को धन की कमी नहीं आने दी जाती है तो इन उत्पादों का उत्पादन पर्याप्त मात्रा में होता रहेगा एवं इनकी आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित होती रहेगी।

कोविड महामारी की दूसरी लहर का अर्थव्यवस्था पर कम से कम विपरीत प्रभाव हो इस हेतु केंद्र सरकार एवं भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा लगातार प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं। किसी भी महामारी के बाद उत्पादन क्षमता को बढ़ाना आवश्यक होता है, ऐसा दूसरे विश्व युद्ध के दौरान वर्ष 1945 में भी देखा गया था, अतः पूंजी पर्याप्त मात्रा में उपलब्ध रहे इसका प्रयास सरकार एवं केंद्रीय बैंक मिलकर रहे हैं।

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा किए जा रहे उक्त उपायों के चलते देश के स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में निश्चित ही सुधार होगा क्योंकि वित्त की उपलब्धता आसान होने से इस क्षेत्र में निजी निवेश भी बढ़ेगा। वर्ष 2021 के जून



एवं जुलाई माह में स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में निवेश का एक माहौल तैयार हो सकता है, क्योंकि इस क्षेत्र में पर्याप्त मांग भी देश में ही उपलब्ध है।

ऑक्सिजन की समस्या हल करने के लिए नए उत्पादन केंद्र विकसित किए जाएंगे। केंद्र सरकार ने इस तरह के कारखाने स्थापित करने की अनुमति पहले से ही दे दी है, अब भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक पूंजी उपलब्ध करने का प्रयास कर रहा है।

कोरोना महामारी के काल में केंद्र सरकार ने भी देश में नागरिकों को स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं उपलब्ध कराने के लिए अपना पूरा जोर लगा दिया। देश के जिन इलाकों में ऑक्सिजन एवं दवाईयों की कमी महसूस की गई थी वहां रेल्वे एवं हवाई मार्ग से बहुत ही तेजी के साथ इन पदार्थों को उपलब्ध कराया गया।

अब बैंकों द्वारा स्वास्थ्य सम्बंधी बुनियादी ढांचे को मजबूत बनाने के उद्देश्य से अधिक ऋण उपलब्ध कराया जा सके इस हेतु भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा 50,000 करोड़ रुपए की राशि विभिन्न बैंकों को रेपो दर पर (वर्तमान में 4 प्रतिशत) तीन वर्षों के लिए उपलब्ध कराई जाएगी एवं बैंक इस व्यवस्था का लाभ 31 मार्च 2022 तक उठा सकेंगे।

विश्व के अन्य कई देशों ने भी आगे आकर भारत को इस दौरान ऑक्सिजन, दवाईयां एवं वेक्सीनेशन उपलब्ध कराने में सहायता योगदान दिया है। साथ ही केंद्र सरकार गरीब लोगों के लिये मुफ्त राशन की योजना भी चला रही है, ताकि देश के गरीब नागरिकों को इस आपदा के दौरान खाद्य सामग्री की कोई कमी नहीं हो।

प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण अन्न योजना के माध्यम से वर्ष 2020 के 8 महीनों तक गरीबों को मुफ्त राशन प्रदान कराया गया था। इस साल भी देश के 80 करोड़ से ज्यादा जरूरतमंदों को मुफ्त में राशन उपलब्ध कराया जा रहा है। इसी प्रकार 14 मई 2021 को प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की आठवीं किस्त का वितरण किया गया।

प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत केंद्र सरकार प्रत्येक किसान परिवार को हर साल 6,000 रुपए प्रदान करती है। यह राशि 2,000 रुपए की तीन समान किस्तों में उपलब्ध करायी जाती है। प्रत्येक 4 महीने के बाद यह सम्मान राशि सीधे किसानों के बैंक खाते में अंतरित की जाती है। इस योजना के अंतर्गत अब तक 11 करोड़ किसानों के खातों में 1.35 लाख करोड़ रुपए की राशि अंतरित की जा चुकी है।

(लेखक बैंकिंग क्षेत्र से सेवानिवृत्त हैं। आर्थिक विषयों के जानकार हैं। प्रस्तुत विचार उनके निजी हैं।)

कृषि कानूनों की कामयाबी बयां कर रही है गेहूं की रिकॉर्डतोड़ खरीद



रमेश कुमार दुबे

मोदी सरकार द्वारा कृषि के आधुनिकीकरण और सूचना-प्रौद्योगिकी आधारित नई खरीद-विपणन प्रणाली के लिए लाए गए तीन नए कृषि कानूनों के नतीजे दिखने लगे हैं। पंजाब में 14 मई 2021 को समाप्त हुए गेहूं खरीद सत्र में रिकॉर्ड खरीद हुई है। इस रबी खरीद सत्र के दौरान पंजाब में नौ लाख किसानों से 132 लाख टन गेहूं की खरीद की गई।

सबसे बड़ी बात यह रही कि पंजाब के इतिहास में यह पहली बार हुआ जब बिचौलियों-आढ़तियों को बायपास करते हुए सरकार ने 23000 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान सीधे किसानों के बैंक खातों में किया। इसी का नतीजा हुआ कि पंजाब में इस बार सबसे ज्यादा गेहूं खरीद हुई।

नए कानून के मातृबिक सरकार ने किसानों को अनाज खरीद नामक पोर्टल पर रजिस्टर किया। पंजाब देश का पहला राज्य बन गया है जहां किसानों के जमीन संबंधी विवरण जे फार्म में भरकर सरकार के डिजिटल लॉकर में रखा गया है। इससे किसी प्रकार के घपले-घोटाले की आशंका दूर हो गई।

पंजाब में 35 लाख हेक्टेयर रकबे में गेहूं की खेती होती है जिसमें 1.7 से 1.8 करोड़ टन उत्पादन होता है। राज्य में कुल उत्पादन का 75

राज्य में 1850 मंडियां हैं जिनमें 32000 कमीशन एजेंट गेहूं और 28000 कमीशन एजेंट धान की खरीद-बिक्री से जुड़े हैं। इस खरीद बिक्री के एवज में आढ़तियों-बिचैलियों को सरकारी खरीद एजेंसियां कमीशन देती रही हैं।

प्रतिशत गेहूं मंडियों में बिकने के लिए आता है। पंजाब में अब तक सरकारी एजेंसियां जैसे भारतीय खाद्य निगम किसानों से सीधे अनाज खरीद न करके आढ़तियों-बिचैलियों के जरिए करती थीं।

राज्य में 1850 मंडियां हैं जिनमें 32000 कमीशन एजेंट गेहूं और 28000 कमीशन एजेंट धान की खरीद-बिक्री से जुड़े हैं। इस खरीद बिक्री के एवज में आढ़तियों-बिचैलियों को सरकारी खरीद एजेंसियां कमीशन देती रही हैं।

आढ़ती-बिचौलिए इसी प्रकार का कमीशन किसानों से भी लेते थे। इस प्रकार बिना कुछ किए-धरे हर साल हजारों करोड़ रुपये आढ़तियों-बिचैलियों की जेब में पहुंच जाते थे। राजनीतिक दलों से जुड़े इन आढ़तियों-बिचैलियों ने पंजाब में एक सशक्त लॉबी बना रखी है जिन्हें नजरअंदाज करने का साहस कोई राजनीतिक दल या सरकार नहीं उठाते थे।

इस साल शुरू में ही केंद्र सरकार ने स्पष्ट कर दिया था कि गेहूं खरीद की अदायगी सीधे किसानों के बैंक खातों में की जाएगी। मोदी सरकार के इस फैसले से आढ़तियों-बिचौलियों की लॉबी में हलचल मच गई। उन्होंने पंजाब सरकार पर दबाव बनाया किया वह केंद्र सरकार के इस फैसले को न माने।

लेकिन केंद्र सरकार ने सख्त रूख अपनाते हुए स्पष्ट कर दिया कि यदि किसानों को सीधे भुगतान की अनुमति नहीं दी गई तो सरकार पंजाब से गेहूं खरीद नहीं करेगी। इसके बाद ही पंजाब सरकार किसानों के बैंक खातों में सीधे अदायगी पर तैयार हुई।

मोदी सरकार का लक्ष्य हर स्तर पर बिचौलिया मुक्त व्यवस्था लागू करने का है। इसके लिए सरकार देश भर के किसानों का डिजिटल रिकॉर्ड बना रही है। इसके साथ-साथ मंडी व्यवस्था का आधुनिकीकरण किया जा रहा है ताकि किसान देश भर में ई-मंडी के जरिए अपनी उपज बेच सकें। मोदी सरकार की यही कवायद बिचौलियों और उन्हें संरक्षण देने वाले राजनीतिक दलों की नींद हाराम किए हुए है। इसीलिए वे सरकार के खिलाफ मिथ्या प्रचार करने में जुटे हैं।

(लेखक केन्द्रीय सचिवालय में अधिकारी हैं। वरिष्ठ टिप्पणीकार हैं। प्रस्तुत विचार उनके निजी हैं।)

कोरोना संकट में आमजन और अर्थव्यवस्था दोनों को राहत देने में जुटी है सरकार



सतीश सिंह

केंद्र सरकार के वाणिज्य मंत्रालय ने कारोबारियों को राहत देने के लिये कोरोना महामारी के इलाज से जुड़े सामानों की सरकारी खरीदारी में मेक इन इंडिया को प्राथमिकता देने की शर्त में छूट दी है। यह छूट 30 सितंबर 2021 तक लागू रहेगी। गौरतलब है कि केंद्र सरकार ने 15 जून 2017 को सरकारी खरीद से जुड़े नियमों में मेक इन इंडिया संकल्पना को लागू किया था।

यह नियम वस्तुओं और सेवाओं के घरेलू उत्पादन, कारोबारियों की आमदनी बढ़ाने, रोजगार सृजन आदि को बढ़ावा देने के लिये सरकार ने बनाया था। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो इस नियम का उद्देश्य विविध उत्पादों के उत्पादन को बढ़ाने के लिये घरेलू निर्माताओं को आर्थिक प्रोत्साहन देना है।

इस नियम के मुताबिक, सरकारी खरीदारी अगर 50 लाख रुपये से कम है तो संबंधित मंत्रालय या विभाग को स्थानीय आपूर्तिकर्ताओं को प्राथमिकता देनी होगी। यदि सरकारी खरीदारी 50 लाख रुपये से अधिक है तो मंत्रालय या विभाग को 20 प्रतिशत खरीदारी स्थानीय आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से करनी होगी। उल्लेखनीय है कि सभी प्रकार की वस्तुओं और सेवाओं की सरकारी खरीद में यह नियम लागू है।

सेंट्रल बोर्ड ऑफ इन-डॉयरेक्ट टैक्सेज एंड कस्टम्स (सीबीआईसी) ने सूक्ष्म, लघु और मझौले उधमों (एमएसएमई) को राहत देने के लिए चुकाये गये ज्यादा कर को वापिस करने और ड्यूटी ड्रॉबैक दावा का निपटारा मई महीने के दूसरे पाक्षिक में प्राथमिकता के आधार पर करना शुरू किया है। सीबीआईसी के अनुसार फिलहाल एमएसएमई द्वारा ज्यादा कर भुगतान की वापसी और ड्यूटी ड्रॉबैक के दावे का जल्द से जल्द निपटारा करने की जरूरत है, ताकि एमएसएमई को

कोरोना महामारी में फौरी तौर पर राहत मिल सके।

सीबीआईसी की योजना एमएसएमई को राहत पहुँचाने के लिये कर के ज्यादा भुगतान की वापसी के मामलों में मामूली कारणों की वजह से जारी किये गये नोटिस की जल्द से जल्द से समीक्षा करके ज्यादा कर भुगतान और ड्रॉबैक का भुगतान जमाकर्ताओं को करने की भी है। सरकार द्वारा उठाये गये इन कदमों से एमएसएमई को राहत मिलने की उम्मीद है।

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने 14 मई 2021 को प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की आठवीं किस्त का वितरण वीडियो कॉन्फ्रेंसिंग के जरिए किया। प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत केंद्र सरकार प्रत्येक किसान परिवार को हर साल 6,000 रुपये देती है। यह राशि 2,000 रुपये की तीन समान किस्तों में दी जाती है।

प्रत्येक 4 महीने के बाद यह सम्मान राशि सीधे किसानों के बैंक खाते में अंतरित की जाती है। इस योजना के अंतर्गत अब तक 1.16 लाख करोड़ रुपये की राशि किसानों के खाते में अंतरित की जा चुकी है। इसके पहले 25 दिसंबर 2020 को करीब 9 करोड़ किसानों के खाते में प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की सातवीं किस्त के तहत 2000 रुपये अंतरित की गई थी।

आठवीं किस्त के रूप में 9.5 करोड़ से ज्यादा किसानों को 2000 रुपये अंतरित किये गये, जिससे सरकारी खजाने पर 20 हजार करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा राशि का भार पड़ा है। उल्लेखनीय है कि प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की घोषणा वर्ष 2019 में अंतरिम बजट में की गई थी, लेकिन इस योजना को दिसंबर 2018 में ही लागू कर दिया गया था।

प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की आठवीं किस्त में पश्चिम बंगाल के 7 लाख से ज्यादा किसानों को पहली बार प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत 2000 रुपये की आर्थिक सहायता दी गई है। अभी तक इस योजना के तहत देश के लगभग 11 करोड़ किसानों के खातों में लगभग 1 लाख 35 हजार करोड़ रुपये जमा किये जा चुके हैं। इस योजना के तहत केवल कोरोना



काल में 60,000 करोड़ रुपए से ज्यादा की राशि किसानों के खातों में जमा की गई है।

किसानों को राहत देने के लिये सरकार ने बैंकों को निर्देश दिया है कि कृषि और संबद्ध गतिविधियों के लिए 3 लाख रुपए तक के सभी अल्पावधि ऋण की अदायगी की तारीख को बढ़ाकर 30 जून 2021 तक कर दें। साथ ही, इस बढ़ी हुई अवधि में भी किसानों को 4 प्रतिशत की ब्याज सबवैशान और समय पर ऋण खाते में किस्त एवं ब्याज जमा करने पर प्रोत्साहन योजना का लाभ भी दें।

कोरोना काल में सरकार गरीब लोगों के लिये मुफ्त राशन की योजना चला रही है। प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण अन्न योजना के माध्यम से वर्ष 2020 के 8 महीनों तक गरीबों को मुफ्त राशन दिया गया था। इस साल भी देश के 80 करोड़ से ज्यादा जरूरतमंदों को

मुफ्त में राशन देने का प्रस्ताव है।

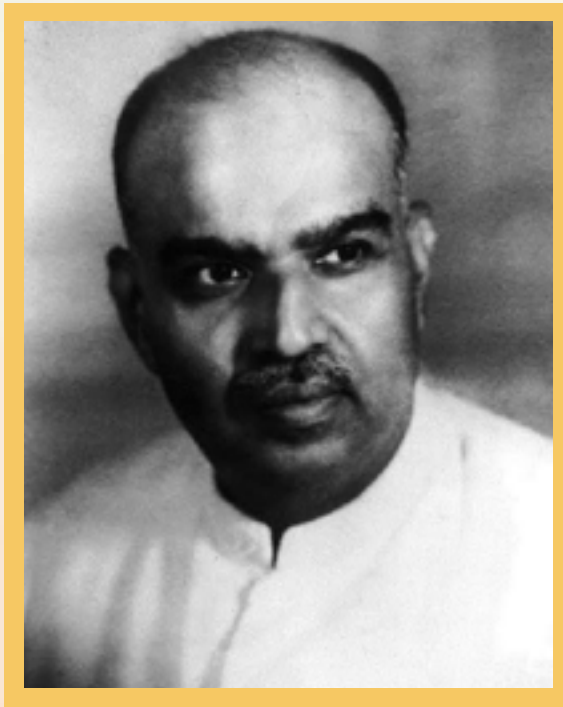
जीएसटी कौंसिल की 28 मई को होने वाली 43वीं बैठक में एमएसएमई को राहत देने का प्रस्ताव है। कोरोना महामारी की दूसरी लहर के कारण दो पहिया वाहनों की बिक्री में उल्लेखनीय कमी आई है। इसलिये, प्रस्तावित बैठक में दोपहिया वाहनों पर लगने वाली जीएसटी दर में तार्किक कटौती करने का प्रस्ताव है।

घरों में पाइप के जरिए आने वाली गैस को त्रिस्तरीय जीएसटी संरचना के दायरे में लाने का प्रस्ताव है। घरों में इस्तेमाल की जाने वाली गैस के लिए कर की दर सबसे कम 5 प्रतिशत, व्यावसायिक कार्यों के लिये इस्तेमाल किये जाने वाले गैस के लिए 18 प्रतिशत और गाड़ियों में इस्तेमाल होने वाली सीएनजी के लिए 28 प्रतिशत हो सकता है। इस बैठक में टीका पर लिये जा रहे जीएसटी को हटाने पर भी विचार किया जा सकता है।

कोरोना काल में एमएसएमई, मजदूरों और किसानों को सबसे ज्यादा राहत देने की जरूरत है। इसी को दृष्टिगत करके सरकार ने एमएसएमई, मजदूरों और किसानों के लिये कुछ उपाय किये हैं। हालांकि जरूरत और राहत देने की है, जिसके लिए सरकार प्रयास कर रही है।

(लेखक भारतीय स्टेट बैंक के कॉरपोरेट केंद्र मुंबई के आर्थिक अनुसंधान विभाग में कार्यरत हैं। आर्थिक मामलों के जानकार हैं। प्रस्तुत विचार उनके निजी हैं।)

प्रत्येक 4 महीने के बाद यह सम्मान राशि सीधे किसानों के बैंक खाते में अंतरित की जाती है। इस योजना के अंतर्गत अब तक 1.16 लाख करोड़ रुपए की राशि किसानों के खाते में अंतरित की जा चुकी है। इसके पहले 25 दिसंबर 2020 को करीब 9 करोड़ किसानों के खाते में प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की सातवीं किस्त के तहत 2000 रूपये अंतरित की गई थी।



“As a university you have a great role to play in reshaping the destinies of the people of your country. We must bear in mind the cardinal principle that we want to see developed and trained through education the whole nature of our alumni, intellectual, moral and physical, not merely for the purpose of qualifying for any special calling but to bring up good citizens, useful members of society, men, true and fearless capable of bearing their part with credit in public and private life...”

-Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee
Banaras Hindu University,
1 December 1940

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