

Self-reliant India

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Abstract

Prime Minister pitches for self-reliance, said it will be based on 5 pillars—economy, infrastructure, technology-driven system, vibrant demography and demand. Though the PM clarified that his call for self-reliance should not be mistaken for “self-centric arrangements”, this is cold comfort for those who remember the suffocating drabness of pre-liberalisation India.

Modi underlined the importance of strengthening all stakeholders in the supply chain to increase, as well as fulfil, demand and made a strong pitch for local manufacturing and local products. He said the crisis had taught the country of the importance of local manufacturing, local market and local supply chains. “All our demands during the crisis were met ‘locally’. Now, it’s time to be vocal about local products and help these local products become global,” Modi said as he called for a self-reliant India.

Under Modi’s leadership, India is moving towards becoming a nation where equal and right opportunities for education, employment, medical facilities and advancement will be available for everyone. In the last six years, India is moving fast towards becoming self-reliant nation by bridging the gap of six decades.

Keywords: Self-reliant, Self-reliance, Self-centric Economy, Infrastructure, Labourers, Middle Class, Industry.

“Every Indian should be vocal for local... Today’s global brands were once local too but when people there started supporting them they became global.”

—PM Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 12 May, 2020 said the government would unveil a Rs. 20 lakh crore package to help nurse the economy back to health and also unleash a new set of reforms focused on land, labour, liquidity and legal frameworks that would power India’s push for self-reliance.

He strongly identified the theme of “Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)” that he said wouldn’t be a self-absorbed vision but would rather make the country a part of global supply chains.

Modi said the package, which includes measures already announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Finance Minister, would be equal to 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The RBI had announced support equal to 3.2% of GDP and the Garib Kalyan Yojana unveiled by Sitharaman on March 26 accounted for 0.8% of GDP.

Previous steps announced by RBI worked out to 3.2% of GDP while PM Garib Kalyan package announced on March 25 came to 0.8% of GDP. New measure will thus be around 6% of GDP.

Package to ensure reforms in land, labour, liquidity and laws. More clarity on stimulus to emerge in FM's.

Package will cater to various sections including cottage industry, MSMEs, farmers, labourers, middle class, and industry.

Prime Minister pitches for self-reliance, said it will be based on 5 pillars—economy, infrastructure, technology-driven system, vibrant demography and demand.¹

The state of the World today teaches us that a self-reliant India (atma-nirbhar Bharat) is the only path, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a televised national address on May 12 that outlined his government's response to the ongoing pandemic. "Our responsibility to make the 21st century the century of India will be fulfilled by the pledge of self-reliant India."

Though the PM clarified that his call for self-reliance should not be mistaken for "self-centric arrangements", this is cold comfort for those who remember the suffocating drabness of pre-liberalisation India.²

Economy doesn't need Incremental Step but a Quantum Jump : Modi³

The PM's speech had several key points, such as a promise that new reforms wouldn't ignore migrant labour and those whose livelihoods had been hit hard by COVID-19 and a call to be "Vocal about Local" which he said was crucial to sustaining life during the lockdown.

There was a specific reference to "redi walas and thela walas (street vendors)", part of the flow of migrants leaving cities in droves in the face of the pandemic's economic impact, along with references to cottage industry, MSME, middle class, industries and others sectors.

Outlining the need for bold steps, the PM said the economy did not need incremental steps but a quantum jump and added this was one of the "five pillars" of a self-reliant India. The others are infrastructure, a tech-driven system that delivers on the dreams of a modern India, demography that is vibrant and demand that is fed by supply chains capable of meeting the needs of a growing nation. He added that this included a rational tax system.

Aware that the unprecedented lockdown had hurt people's earnings, Modi sought to buoy spirits by saying though the threat was unparalleled, there was no room for tiredness, being defeated or dispersing in the face of the disease. He said no goal was impossible and India had the means and will to set targets and meet them. Highlighting their contribution to the country and the suffering they have had experienced, Modi said the package

would also focus on empowering the poor, labourers, migrants and others from both organized and unorganized sectors.

To put the overall package in context, the government had announced a package equivalent to 4% of GDP during the global financial crisis in 2008-09. The Rs. 20 lakh crore package compares with Germany's 10.7% of GDP and more than the 9.7% of GDP package unveiled by France to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on their economies. Several experts had called for a big stimulus which the government seems to have accepted except that it will be split into several components.

Modi underlined the importance of strengthening all stakeholders in the supply chain to increase, as well as fulfil, demand and made a strong pitch for local manufacturing and local products. He said the crisis had taught the country of the importance of local manufacturing, local market and local supply chains. "All our demands during the crisis were met 'locally'. Now, it's time to be vocal about local products and help these local products become global," Modi said as he called for a self-reliant India.

The PM said self-reliance would prepare India for tough competition in the global supply chain, and it was important that the country won this competition. He said the same theme had been kept in mind while preparing the package, "It will not only increase efficiency in various sectors but also ensure quality," he added.

Modi said the definition of self-reliance had undergone a change in the globalised world and clarified that when the country talked about self-reliance, it was different from being self-centred. He said India's culture considered the world as one family, and progress in India was part of, and also contributed to, progress in the whole world. He said the world trusted that India had a lot to contribute towards development of the entire humanity. Vowing to deepen reforms, Modi said several bold reforms were needed to make the country self-reliant, so that the impact of a crisis such as Covid-19, could be negated in future. These reforms included supply chain reforms for agriculture, rational tax system, simple and clear laws, capable human resource and a strong financial system.

Modi has turned India into a Self-reliant Country brimming with Self-confidence⁴

The developmental journey of India in the last six years, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been amazing, unimaginable and praiseworthy. This time, in contrast to the anxiety, stagnation, and hollow promises of the pre-2014 era, the public has seen the ability to reach targets ahead of time with strong leadership, trust in people, their cooperation and self-confidence. Undoubtedly, the Modi government has bridged the gap of six decades in six years and has laid the strong foundation of a self-reliant India.

Making India the world's foremost economy from the "Fragile Five", taking India out of the shadow of terrorism and preparing the country for a decisive fight against this menace, making sanitation a habit and culture of every Indian, pledging to transform the villages and lives of poor farmers in the true sense, India has now seen its ability to convert challenges into opportunities in the very first term of the Modi government. The first year of the second term has assured the people of the country that their dreams would be realised.

Several historic decisions like abolition of Articles 370 and 35A in Jammu & Kashmir, paving the way for construction of Shri Ram Temple, liberating Muslim women from the cruse of triple talaq and giving citizenship rights to deprived sections of society through CAA: The Modi government has rectified the historical mistakes after Independence.

On the other hand, through the world's largest health insurance scheme 'Ayushman Bharat', about 50 crore poor people of the country are relieved of the burden of treatment costs, empowerment of crores of poor women through Ujjwala Scheme, financial assistance of Rs. 6,000 annually to farmers, housing to every poor and access to banks through Jan Dhan account are some of the all-encompassing decisions of a New India.

The decisive assault on terrorism and corruption by the Modi government has instilled a different kind of confidence in the country. Terrorism has been blunted through the UAPA and NIA Act. India's aggressive foreign and defence policies have put the country in the front row and there has been a complete change in the world's view about the country.

In the first year of the second term of the Modi government, many decisions were taken giving a boost to India's economy in spite of the global recession. These include paving the way for FDI in civil aviation, reducing corporate tax, merger of banks, moratorium on NBFC loans, reforms in the Companies Act, easy loan arrangement for the development of MSME sector among others. The Bru-Reang Refugee problem pending for years was also resolved in the first year of Modi 2.0 under the Bodo Accord. Similarly, the landmark decision was taken to create the post of chief of defense staff (CSD), again pending for decades. The interests of farmers and businessmen of the country were protected by opposing RCEP, whose importance is further underlined by China's role in the coronavirus situation. Foreign investment was not only attracted by creating a defence industry corridor, it has also saved millions of cores of foreign exchange.

Pension schemes for farmers, labourers, and small entrepreneurs, creation of a new ministry of Jal Shakti, one country one ration card, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the decision to increase the MSP of crops more than one and a half times, developmental scheme for aspirational districts, Ujjwala and Suabhagya Yojana as well as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for ODF India have established that economic growth especially in terms of GDP can also be achieved with the help of welfare schemes for the poor.

The Modi government has announced special economic package of more than Rs. 20 lakh crore for people, economy, employment, agriculture and industries affected by lockdown that has been imposed to prevent coronavirus infection and this has heralded a new dawn for a self-reliant India. So far, more than about Rs. 60,000 crore have been transferred to the accounts of the poor, labourers, farmers, widows, elderly and differently abled people in just two months through various schemes. A provision of free ration for the poor for five months has been made and a separate provision of Rs. 40,000 crore has been made under MGNREGA.

While we were completely dependent on imports for PPE kits, ventilators and N-95 masks in early April, today we are able to mass produce them. Now, around five lakh PPE kits and 2.5 lakh N-95 masks are being made in the country every day. The indigenous versions of the ventilator are being manufactured by many institutions in the country at prices much lower than the market price. More than a million corona beds have been made available and we have also achieved a capacity of 1.5 lakh tests per day.

India has succeeded in stopping the spread of corona to a great extent due to the lockdown at the right time. Under Modi's leadership, India is moving towards becoming a nation where equal and right opportunities for education, employment, medical facilities and advancement will be available for everyone. In the last six years, India is moving fast towards becoming self-reliant nation by bridging the gap of six decades. Modi is the hero of this journey.

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