

## **REFORMS IN A COVID ERA**

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### **Abstract**

*A crisis as life altering as the corona virus pandemic naturally inspires speculation about how it will change everything. Like other countries, India is also seeking to steer a thoughtful path between the need to protect the population, and to revive the economic engine. The most compelling requirement for reviving the economy is to effectively manage the emergence from the lockdown, ensuring that supply chains are reopened, that manufacturing and service enterprises are free to operate, while ensuring basic health hygiene. So, The focus of the Government has to be to look after the lives of every citizen. It has to redefine its responsibilities towards its citizens, extending its role to include universal social welfare for all citizens,*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A crisis as life altering as the corona virus pandemic naturally inspires speculation about how it will change everything. But it is worth recalling that a far deadlier predecessor, the Spanish Flu, killed 50 million to 100 million people between 1918 to 1920, and was followed by the Roaring 20's. So did it change anything? No..but , it simply accelerated trends that were already in slow progress.. And the same may will happen now also.

Like other countries, India is also seeking to steer a thoughtful path between the need to protect the population, and to revive the economic engine. The rigorous national lockdown has succeeded in slowing the spread of the virus, and the current thinking in the government is to open the country for business in a cautiously calibrated manner, focusing on revitalising sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and services; while isolating geographic hotspots and

vulnerable groups. The most compelling requirement for reviving the economy is to effectively manage the emergence from the lockdown, ensuring that supply chains are reopened, that manufacturing and service enterprises are free to operate, while ensuring basic health hygiene.

So, is there any light at the end of the tunnel, and where do we go from here? It is apparent that the greatest challenge before us is tackling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The top priority is discovering a way to overcome or neutralise the effects of the virus. All other battles can be handled once we cross this particular challenge. Thanks to the early reaction and integrated approach of containment that India initiated, has outperformed most other countries in slowing down the pandemic.

## **NEED OF THE HOUR**

### **1. Our frontline - the healthcare sector**

As early as in the month of February, the private hospitals came forward and has been working closely with the public sector. It is a remarkable development that India ramped up health education and leading organisations started online training for COVID-19. Healthcare professionals from all over the world have been showing interest to join these courses and a definitive is that e-training will be the next game-changer in stretching the boundaries of care. In addition to measures of containment and prevention, the big need of the hour is testing. Nationwide, testing has ramped up quickly and more than half a million samples have been tested as of June 2<sup>nd</sup> week. Further across India, a total of 586 hospitals have been identified as committed COVID-19 hospitals with the capacity of over 100,000 isolation beds and 11,500 ICU beds reserved for corona virus patients.

The Indian Railways have arranged train compartments to provide as isolation wards and other popular Private hospitals have also come forward to give specialised treatment for COVID-19 patients. Alongside, hotel chains, corporate houses, and universities, colleges, and schools have partnered to convert rooms into facilities for individuals who need to self-isolate and be in quarantine.

Besides ,telemedicine has finally found its place in India's healthcare ecosystem. Further to the recent approval of guidelines for telemedicine by the central government, tele consultation emerged as a godsend for patients who need to consult with their doctors, without going to the hospital. In the future , digital health with its innate potential to extent medical care at a lesser price will help millions in need, and be a great tool to manage even the rising pervasiveness of non-communicable diseases.

It is the people who make a sector with the courageous hearts and leading roles of healthcare - India's doctors, nurses, paramedics, technicians, administration, and support staff who have shown that they can rise spectacularly to the occasion.

## **2. Measures to boost business**

To address these adverse situation, the Government of India has been preparing strategies and action plans not only for business continuity and sectoral recovery but also re-rolling the red carpet for global investors to continue to select India as their preferred destination for investments. The Government of India continues to augment international co-operation for promoting FDI and improve Ease of Doing Business in the country by releasing notifications / amendments / circulars highlighting way to recover business environment in India. Below are some of the special measures by Central government, State governments and the sectoral ministries to welcome and boost businesses in India. Relief measures announced by Finance minister across the following.

1.Income tax filing 2.GST filing3.Corporate affairs 4.GST 5.Customs & Central Excise 6/Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 7.Fisheries 8.Banking Sector 9.Commerce.

## **3. Getting India to work again**

Fortunately, for us, backbone of Indian economy, agricultural sector accounts for almost 14% of our GDP can recover quickly and in fact, even grow next year. But this agricultural sector must be supported by logistics and storage. The likely normal monsoon this year will help out the sector maintain its momentum.

Once the risk of the virus recedes, the service industry, the number one contributor to our GDP will start cruising again. We cannot underestimate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but unlike geophysical disasters and wars, the physical infrastructure of the

industry has survived without damage. Therefore, most industries can hastily become operational with a new work culture, if they have the labour force back and the working capital to restart their business. Agriculture in India is a State subject, and as has been observed in past years, policies and programs vary from one State to the other. Structural reforms such as contract farming, private agricultural markets and land leasing etc. have long been advocated to bring better investments into the agriculture sector and to push its growth.

However, there has not been uniform implementation of these legislations by State Governments and so the full potential of the sector is unrealized. These reforms need significant political will. Concerns of a slowdown in the zeal of States, post-COVID scenario, could be tackled with suitable incentive mechanisms by the Federal Government to the States.

#### **4.Sectorial Boost**

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, which contributes to 30% of India's GDP, is one of the key drivers of the Indian economy. Today, almost all MSMEs are not in a position to pay their employees and most of them don't have the financial resources to re-start their businesses due to the lockdown. The government has announced the relief package of Rs. 20,000 crores for this sector..These sectors will put people back to work and build some traction in the recovery of our economy. This may all sound simple, but obviously there is no easy fix to this unprecedented crisis The small and medium enterprises, running with raw materials from the agriculture and allied sector or otherwise, also need special consideration so that the rural economy doesn't collapse.

To obviate the immediate concerns of scarcity of farm labour, policies must facilitate easy availability of machinery through state entities, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) or custom hiring centers (CHCs) with suitable incentives.

#### **5. Work on new education policy.**

India needs a new education policy that can benefit students, ease the challenges faced by institutions, and support the industry. This is a seemingly challenging task, to balance the interests of key stakeholders of education, however, that is the only way to advance, for in every stakeholder's interest lies the other's. We have all been awaiting the announcement of

India's next education policy. It has done several rounds of deliberations between civil society, committees, inter-governmental exchanges, and the ministries.

## **CONCLUSION**

The first big change has to be initiated by the government of India. The focus of the Government has to be to protect the lives of every citizen. It has to redefine its responsibilities towards its citizens, extending its role to include universal social welfare for all citizens. The second big change will come when the current Centre-state relationship gets redefined in a way that enables the 28 states to become federal in the true sense – as self-sustaining economic territories in matters of energy, water, food production and waste recycling. Our economic geography of production, transport and communication has to change – it has to become distributive rather than being focused towards the Centre. At present the Government should give priority to meeting the urgent challenges posed by covid 19, but it should be remembered that it is a time to begin strategising for the longer term economic transformation. As the saying goes, never let a crisis go to waste.

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