
AATM NIRBHAR BHARAT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT:

At present time world is facing from the COVID-19 pandemic. It spread in many countries and affect the economy, education system, manufacturing activities, employment sector and labour workforces. The performance of India against COVID-19, is appreciated by WHO, US and other developed countries. But some major challenges in front of India during face COVID-19 are—health problem and medical infrastructure, migrant labours, unemployment, agricultural, supply chain and food security, successful implementation of E-learning. The above challenges India have some major opportunities to face this problem are—Aatm Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-reliant India), opportunity for Pharm and Auto Industry, behaviour change of Indian consumers, To export medical equipment like PPE kits and Hydroxychloroquine drugs etc.

INTRODUCTIONS:

At present time world is facing from the corona virus disease known as COVID-19. The spread of this disease, many countries have shut down their seaports and airports. They have banned the import and export activities. India is a developing country, due the spread of COVID-19 cases reported in India Government has lockdown the country for 54 days in lockdown 1, 2 and 3, which affected the economy, education system, manufacturing activities, employment sector and labour.

But the performance of India in some field describe that, India is credible, like some examples—

- ❖ India's PDS (Public Distribution System) is the largest food distribution network in the world. Supplying necessary food to 800 million people. For farmers, it provides guaranteed minimum prices and for the country's poor, it provides access to important food staples at subsidised prices.
- ❖ India is not new to online education. Many private and Government colleges in the country had been conducting online classes. Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSATs) are still used by top business schools in the country to create a closed user group (CUGs) which offers online class globally. India, along with the world is fighting the COVID-19 virus while ensuring education in schools and colleges does not suffer. The fight, it seems, will be a long one and the way we educate are next generation has undoubtedly changed.
- ❖ In other hand India's presentation in health are also incredible—India has now become the second largest producer of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits in the world, along behind China. Not long ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic began, not a single PPE kit was being provided in India.
- ❖ India's setting up of public charitable trust—Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund). Such kind of optional fund is to deal with any kind of emergency, such as a situation following COVID-19 outbreak and to provide immediate relief to the affected.

Bertie Ahern, PM of Ireland, "India's unprecedented economic growth over the past decade makes it an attractive prospect for companies seeking new markets for their products and services".

CHALLENGES OF INDIA AGAINST COVID-19:

There are so many challenges faced by India during COVID-19 pandemic, but some major challenges are there:

1. HEALTH PROBLEM AND LACK OF MEDICAL FUNDS: The COVID-19 pandemic is considered as the most crucial global health calamity of the century and the greatest challenge that the humankind faced since the 2nd world war. Till now there is no report of any clinically approved antiviral drugs or vaccines that are effective against COVID-19. It has rapidly spread around the world and raising enormous health, economic, environmental and social challenges to the entire human population.

(i) LACK OF TESTING AND TREATMENT: Almost all the nations are struggling to slow down the transmission of the disease by testing & treating patients, quarantine suspected persons through contact tracing, restricting large gathering, maintaining complete or partial lockdown etc.

Initially the labs tested samples only from these with a travel history to 12 countries designated as high risk, or those who have come in contact with anyone testing positive for the corona virus or showing symptoms as per the Government guidelines. The Government decided to also include all pneumonia cases, regardless of travel or contact history after the country saw a sharp increase in the number of cases.

On 19th March, Ramanan Laxminarayan director of the centre for disease dynamic, economic & policy stated that. India could be facing a “tsunami of cases within a few weeks” as testing increase and the reason for the low number of confirmed cases—currently is due to under testing. He also said that according to mathematical models applied in the US or UK at least 20%-60% of population will be affected. Applying the same models in India means that at the lower end of the estimate there could be 300 million cases of which 4-8 million could be served.

In such a scenario providing health care in a pandemic has to be relied more on preventive measures. The COVID-19 demands a very competent handling of the healthcare of the citizens. Highly organized nations like Italy, USA, NATO countries including UK find it difficult to tackle the pandemic because of lack of preventive measures. Medical equipment, ventilators, face-masks, sanitizers shortage have created a grim situation for ordinary people to get the needed healthcare. The doctors, nursing paramedical and accessory health staff have taken the huge responsibility to provide the best medical care to the needy risking their own lives, all over the world.

(ii) LACK OF MEDICAL FUNDS: Deposits additional funding the continued lack of medical investment and health care infrastructure will present challenges to mounting an effective response in India against COVID-19. The continued lack of medical funding and healthcare infrastructure inform our view for the potential epidemic to be worse in India, if it is not adequately contained.

Fitch solutions Country Risk and Industry Research (a credit of Fitch ????) said in its outbreak for India’s pharmaceutical market with 8.5 hospital beds per 10000 citizens and 8 physicians per 10000 the country’s healthcare sector is not equipped for such a crisis.

(iii) LACK OF HOSPITALS BEDS AND VENTILATORS: In addition more than 80% of the population still does not have any significant health insurance coverage and approximately 68% of the Indians have limited or no access to essential medicines.

The limited number of hospital beds and ventilators is a serious concern for India. According to the National Health Profile 2019, there are approximately 714000 Govt. hospital beds amounting to 0.55 beds per 1000 population. This ratio is extremely low by International standard. According to one estimate, India could have 2.2 million COVID-19 cases by the end of May 2020, which implies & need for 200000 ventilators. India currently has an estimated 18000 to 25000 ventilators, but demand for ventilators could quickly outstrip this limited supply.

2. MIGRANT WORKERS: Indian migrant workers during COVID-19 pandemic have faced multiple hardships with factories and workforces shut down due to the lockdown imposed in the

country, millions of migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, food shortage and uncertainly about their future. Following this many of them and their families went hungry. Thousands of them began walking back home with no means of transport due to the lock down. In response, the central and state government took various measures to help them and later arranged transport for them.

(i) **FOOD SHORTAGE:** According the Government reports there was enough food grain stocked up in the FCI godowns to feed the poor for at least a year and a half. While government schemes ensured that the poor would yet additional rations due to the lockdown the distribution system failed to be effective as the ration cards are area-specific and fair price shops were largely in accessible.

(ii) **Exodus:** With no work and no money and lock down restrictions putting a stop to public transport, thousands of migrant workers were seen walking or bicycling hundreds of kilometres to go back to their native villages, some with their families, many died while hungry. Social distancing was not possible for these migrant since they travelled together in large groups. According to some of them, they would rather die from the virus of their own village than starve because of now work in the city. Many were arrested from violating the lockdown. Some of the migrants died of exhaustion, others died in accidents on the roads offer walking or hiding in vehicles.

Many migrants expressed a fear of returning to their old jobs in the cities after facing unemployment during the lockdown. Companies reported labour shortages from mid-April.

3. UNEMPLOYMENT: International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that globally more than 25 million jobs would be threatened due to the spread of COVID-19. It is estimated that 4 out of 5 peoples (81%) in the global workforce of 3.3 billion are currently affected by fall or partial workplace closure. In India, there are high concerns for low paid and low skilled informal workers in low and middle income groups where the industries and services have high proportion of such informal workers. This sudden loss of livelihood would be horrifying for them. Understandably, this indicates that the current nationwide lockdown has been the biggest job destroyer even in the history. In India up to 53% of business have specified a certain amount of impact of shutdown caused due to COVID-19, (On operations FICCI surveys). By April 24 the unemployment rate had increased nearly 19% within a month, reaching 26% unemployment across India, according to the centre for monitoring Indian economy. Around 14 cores Indians lost employment in the lockdown. More than 45% households across the nations have reported an income drop as compared to the previous year. Various businesses such as hotels and airlines are cutting salaries and lying off employees.

4. AGRICULTURAL, SUPPLY CHAIN AND FOOD SECURITY: COVID-19 is disrupting some activities in agricultural and supply chains. Preliminary reports show that the non-availability of migrant labour is interrupting some harvesting activities, particularly in Northwest India, where wheat and pulses are being harvested. There are disruptions in supply chain because of transportation problems and other issue. Price have declined for wheat, vegetables and other crops yet consumers are after paying mere.

FOOD SECURITY: Food security in India is critical issue given more than half a billion Indians are dependent on the precarious informal sector for their livelihood, which will be hard hit for an extended and uncertain time by the lockdown. Access to adequate food, especially for the poor, has shaped up as one of the major challenges given the shock to supply chains in the wake of COVID-19. The grains are procured, stored and transported by FCI and bulk allocated to states based on need. The states then distributed the food to poor households through licenced 'fair price' shops. There are half a million fair price shops in India, one for about every 40 beneficiary households. COVID-19 poses an extraordinary challenge for India both for infectious disease central and for maintaining food security and livelihood.

5. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE EDUCATION/E-LEARNING: The petrifying and severe impact of COVID-19 has shaken the world to its core. Further most of the Governments around the world have temporally closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. In India too, the Government as a part of the nationwide lockdown has closed all educational institutions as a consequences of which, learners ranging from school going children to postgraduate students are affected.

Therefore, the Government has come up with E-learning program. A complete revolution in the way we learn today has been brought about by technology. Each students gets in contact with a world-class education which is not easy to import by the traditional white chalk and blackboard method of teaching. However, digital/E-learning is not without its limitations and challenges, since face-to-face interaction is usually perceived as the best form of communication as compared to the rather personalized nature of remote learning. Globally, online education has met with some success. In the case of India, we still have a long way to go before digital learning is seen as mainstream education, because students learning in urban area have the facilities to opt for digital education, however, rural area students do not have the required infrastructure nor are financially strong to avail the resources required for digital education. Building of the digital education infrastructure by the Government of India presently appears to be difficult even if the digital infrastructure is built; training has to be given to the teachers to use digital system to provide authentic and proper, uninterrupted and seamless education to the students. Remote learning increasing relies on the reliable power supply and ubiquitous Internet connecting which highest be a for – fetched thing for tier 2 and tier 3 in India.

Another challenge is that E-learning come across as somewhat patchy and impersonal experience. Also e-learning is likely to witness a high dropout rate due to the lack of atmosphere for studying. Students might tend to get distracted by gaming consoles, social media at home and might not feel a sense of community while taking online classes. Successful delivery of education is also a challenge because learning the level of higher education and learning at the kindergarten/school level can be different.

OPPORTUNITIES OF INDIA AGAINST COVID-19:

1. AATM NIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN: Towards the closing days of lockdown 3.0. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi gave the nation a clarion call of Aatm Nirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India). Amplying his earlier statement of ‘Jann Bhi Jahan Bhi’, the asserted that, “we have to protect ourselves and more ahead as well”. He also announced a special economic package to boost the economy and said the recent decisions by the Government the decisions by the RBI combined with the may 12 financial package announcement come to about ` 20 lakh crore nearly 10% of India’s GDP. Modi also enunciated 5 pillars of Aatm Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan—Economy, Infrastructure, Technology, Demography and Demand.

Thereafter, the Finance Minister, Nirmal Sitharaman in series of 5 press conferences explained to the nation the five details of the economic package which focused on land, labour, liquidity and laws and catered to various sections including cottage industry (MSMEs), labourers, formus, Self Help Group (SHGs), middle class, industries among others., This package is also meant to give requisite boost for the Aatm Nirbhar Bharat, through structural reforms, technology, intervention and improved measures for “ease of doing business”. These included both fiscal and monetary measures.

The first set of relief measures announced by Finance Minister focused on enabling the Indian Economy’s backbone—MSMEs that employ around 11 crore people and have a GDP share approximately 29%, provided ` 5,94,550 crore.

Second business catered ` 3,10,000 crore to migrant workers and street vendors. The F. M. introduced “One Nation One Ration Card” to allow migrant workers to buy ration from any depot in the country.

The third measures worth ` 1.5 lakh crore focused on the agricultural and allied sectors including dairy, animal husbandry and fisheries as the government announcement steps to strengthen the overall form sector.

The fourth and fifth measures worth ` 48,100 crore package comprised of reforms the sectors including cool minerals, defence production, air spare management, airports, MRO, distribution companies in UTs, space sector and atomic energy.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIAN INDUSTRY (PHARMA AND AUTO): The COVID-19 outbreak has sent shiners down the spine of the global economy. it has disputed the complex global supply chain network. The worst hit sectors include technology and auto. To overcome the threat of production disruption, Jaguar Land Rover was flying in parts to the UK from China in suitcases. In recent development Samsung electronics decided to shifts its production of premium flagship phones to Vietnam. China accounts for close to 30% of global exports of electronics and electronics components. This significance dependence or in some cases, over dependence on China is hurting the global economy and companies are now on a lookout for alternative production hubs. Now for many companies shift from China began prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, thanks to the rising input costs and the US-China trade-war. The virus just added fuel to the fire and with the disruption caused but it likely to persist until mid-April, the manufacturing companies are staring at an imminent crisis. This has had a catalytic impact on companies looking to relocate their production hubs.

The movement of companies away from China to other less developed countries would trigger a new wage of industrialisation. Consequently, the expansion of the manufacturing hub linked with global supply chains would increase not only productivity but also credit large scale employment.

In a recent talk of IIM Calcutta, the Chief Economic Advisor mentioned that, “The outbreak of COVID-19 provides a good opportunity of India to follow an export-driven model”.

Every industry is different. Hence it is vital to understand the diverse need of these business and focus on specific sectors such as pharma and automotive, which could yield greater and faster gains. India cannot dethrone China before the world recovers from COVID-19. It however can establish itself in manufacturing space.

3. OPPORTUNITY AS BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: While the pandemic derailed several sectors including travel and tourism this year other areas—such as e-commerce digital payments, remote work, online learning and healthcare technologies have been a positive impact. The ongoing crisis has led to two types of changes in behaviour—First, a technical shift in consumption habit that are expected to last up to two years.

Secondly, there are some structured changes taking place—like more people will probably be working from home even after the pandemic is over.

4. TO EXPORT MEDICAL EQUIPMENT: India has ramped up production of COVID-19 protective gears and medical equipment giving a boost to its fight against novel corona virus and reducing dependency on foreign countries for these items which are in high demand globally due to the pandemic. India is now producing over 4.5 lakh PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) suits daily and now over 600 copanies in the country are certified to manufacture PPEs.

P.M. Modi announced that India was finally indigenously manufacturing about 2 lakh PPE kits and 2 lakh N-95 masks every day. By doing this India has now become the second largest producers of PPE kits in the world after China. Not long ago before the COVID-19 pandemic began not a single PPE kit was being produced in India. From 2000 to second largest in the world, India has come a long way in times when the world needs industry leaders to stand out and lead the people out of situation or crisis.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

India's management of COVID-19 outbreak has been closely watched and appreciated by WHO, UN, IMF, ADB and also the advanced economics.

- ❖ Immediate and urgent steps are needed to harvest crops and secure the farmers. The Government is allocating transport and other logistical support to move the crops from the fields directly to the warehouses with the help of the private sector.
- ❖ Small poultry and dairy farmers need targeted help, as their pandemic related input supply and market access problems are urgent.
- ❖ The government should promote trade by avoiding export bans and import restrictions.
- ❖ As lockdown measures have increased demand has risen for home delivery of groceries and e-commerce. This trend should be encouraged and promoted.
- ❖ Managing the endemic and the resultant public health crisis through anything financial resources increasing insurances coverage and using technology solutions.
- ❖ Protective income and employment particularly for the more vulnerable sections of the society through implementing direct cash transfer programmes backed by adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and using existing digital payment infrastructure.
- ❖ 'Hydroxychloroquine' drug production has increased to export above the world.

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