

TOWARDS A PEOPLE-FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT

Ethical deficit to trust deficit – cushioning the social diseconomies



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effect or revisiting an approval. The bureaucracy needs to be given a free hand in doing what is good for development and growth. At the same time, the guilty shall not go unpunished.

- Removing the license raj - industry and bureaucracy, who have already been struggling to cope with a plethora of old regulations are today faced with an avalanche of new ones imposed on them in the last few years. The most onerous are related to the environment, forests, tribal areas, and land acquisition. These have created a new license-permit raj. Honest business has become impossible in several areas, notably natural resources and land. Dishonest business though is still possible through kickbacks. Need to create an enabling environment for honest business.

NEED TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR HONEST BUSINESS

- Ease of doing business - Policies need to be simplified by simplifying the excessive regulations that bind us today. Do away with the discretionary powers that breed corruption.

Addressing the above issues would solve a host of problems including economic woes.

Boosting India's sluggish economy

The important issue that India Inc is waiting for the government to address is the slowdown in the economic activity in the country. Following are the certain measures that the new government may pursue:

- Revival of Investment in infrastructure and manufacturing - Encourage investment in infrastructure and manufacturing. Review all the projects that are stuck at various stages to fast track their approval and monitor their progress at stages to expedite their completion. Revive the job scenario to create employment for educated youth and to take benefit of the demographic dividend.

- Land acquisition and labour reforms - Though we have a new land acquisition policy, it is filled with conditions that make land acquisition much tougher. The government needs to review them and make land acquisition much easier without undermining the rights and benefits of the original land holders through an attractive R&R policy. The labour laws must be revisited to make them in accordance to

the market need. Today the tough regulations go on to protect the job, but the worker sadly is less protected which needs to be changed. Progressive labour laws would increase more job opportunities in the market.

Fiscal reforms

The entire tax structure - both direct (personal and corporate income tax) and indirect - needs a change for the better.

- Simplification of tax laws.

- Introduction of goods & services tax (GST) at the earliest without any further delay.

- Introduction of Direct Tax Code (DTC) after suitable modifications.

A check on discretionary powers and much higher level of accountability of the revenue officials is the need of the hour. The revenue officials need to overhaul their mindset that the taxpayer is paying for their livelihood as well and is not to be treated as a criminal but deserves respect.

Large taxpayers need to be honoured instead of the current mindset of 'Catch the big fish'. Search and seizure should be an exception and not the rule.

Legal reforms

The legal reforms include a whole gamut of changes primary among them is the removal of obsolete and antiquated laws. Any law that cannot be complied by most citizens should be scrapped. We do not need to formulate any new law/regulation, we just need to simplify the existing and focus on its implementation. Implementation should be based on the principle of certainty of punishment rather than its severity.

PROGRESSIVE LABOUR LAWS WOULD CREATE MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MARKET

Attention is also required in removing confusions with regards to the Companies Act. The Companies Act, 2013, replaces the old law with nearly 700 conflicting sections with 470 sections. However, a modern law does not by itself become a great law, for its success depends on how smoothly it can be implemented which is certainly missing in the new Act and hence needs an urgent review.

IMPLEMENTATION SHOULD BE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY OF PUNISHMENT RATHER THAN ITS SEVERITY

Administrative reforms

In the administrative front certain reforms have become utmost important. These include:

- Modernize the police and insulate them from political influence - **police reforms.**

- Enact public grievance redressal bill.

- Ensure trust-based compliance instead of regular harassment by enforcement agencies.

Judicial reforms

An independent and impartial judiciary and a speedy and efficient system are the very essence of civilization. However, our judiciary, by its very nature, has become ponderous, excruciatingly slow and inefficient. This alarming situation calls for speedy remedial reforms. These measures should be practical and effective while they are in consonance with the basic features of the Constitution. They include:

- Improvement in the judge - population ratio.

- Enact laws on judicial appointments and accountability.

- Fast track resolution of pending cases - **justice delayed is justice denied.**

For efficient and transparent functioning of the government the following measures are a must:

- Bring about an end to wasteful government expenditure.

- Ensure allocation of natural resources in a transparent manner through auctions.

- Government should progressively come out from being the majority owner of natural resources and encourage more private investment to bring in efficiency and productivity through use of technology. Government's role should be to monitor that such activity is within the prescribed environment and safety norms and strict action may be taken for any violation.

The first and foremost expectation from the new government has already been achieved even without the first bullet being fired. The 'feel good factor' and reinstilling trust of the common man in the system has been achieved very successfully by Modiji even before he has taken oath as the Prime Minister of India. I am sure in the days to come concrete steps would be taken by the government to remove the trust deficit which has been corroding the fabric of the nation. Industry needs to be reassured that their investment is protected and that there would not be any retrospective

LARGE TAXPAYERS NEED TO BE HONOURED INSTEAD OF THE CURRENT MINDSET OF 'CATCH THE BIG FISH'. SEARCH AND SEIZURE SHOULD BE AN EXCEPTION AND NOT THE RULE