

Three years of Modi as India's prime minister

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Modi has completed three years as prime minister of India on May 26, 2017. Here is a true and impartial assessment on the performance of the Modi government during the last three years.

Fight against corruption and black money

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections took place in the background of a great turmoil in India caused by mega scams like 2G scam, coal scam and CWG scam and the controversy over the alleged black money stashed abroad. Modi had promised a thorough cleansing of the system to put an end to corruption in high places and to bring about transparency and accountability in all government deals. True to his word, he has already curbed corruption in high places by eliminating the menace of agents and middlemen in various civil contracts and defence acquisition deals, etc. It is admirable that Modi and his ministerial colleagues have not faced any corruption charges during the last three years. However, this cleansing of the system is yet to be percolated fully to the lower levels of administration. Also, the ways and means have to be found to ensure corruption-free administration in the states as well.

The first major decision of the Modi government after coming to power was the appointment of a high-powered special investigation team (SIT) to trace and bring back all the black money stashed by the Indians in foreign banks. The SIT headed by M.B.Shaw, a retired Supreme Court judge, also consisted of the chiefs of Intelligence Bureau, R&AW, CBI and Enforcement Directorate, among others as its members. The black money illegally stashed in foreign banks is reported to be about one thousand billion dollars and this task is yet to be completed. To unearth the black money within the country, the Enforcement Directorate and IT officials had recently conducted nation-wide raids at the offices of many tax professionals, CAs and company secretaries who constitute the backbone of black money generation in the country using shell companies. This exercise is still on and the total money unearthed is yet to be assessed. The demonetization exercise carried out by the Modi government also helped to unearth about five lakh crore black money in the country. Besides bringing 91 lakh more people into the tax net, it also gave a big push to India's digitization drive.

Economic development and welfare schemes.

The economy has registered a steady growth of around 7%+ during the three years, while the inflation has been brought down to 3.5%. Along with fast-paced development, there has been a steady inflow of FDI into the country totaling about an impressive \$156 billion during the last three years. Inflation has dropped from 8% earlier to 4% currently. Fiscal deficit has come down from 4.5% in 2013-14 to 3.5% in 2016-17. There has been greater acceleration in rural electrification and per-day rural road construction. Various welfare schemes launched by the government for the urban and rural poor in sectors like health-care, housing, old age pension and education have been greatly appreciated and admired by the people. Around two crore free LPG connections have been given to BPL families under prime minister's Ujjwala Yojana scheme. The Union cabinet has also approved a plan for the closure of at least a dozen sick public sector units to lessen the burden on India's economy. The demonetization of high currency

notes and the surgical strike have proved that Modi can take bold decisions and successfully implement them.

Defence

All hurdles created by the earlier UPA government in undertaking crucial projects like the construction of border roads in the Himalayan region bordering China and a new naval base for submarines near Visakhapatnam have been cleared and the work undertaken on a war footing. New defence deals for acquisition of artillery guns and Rafale fighter jets have been signed. Steps for acquisition/manufacture of more such urgently needed defence items are being taken. The armed forces have been given a free hand to take appropriate steps to neutralize the threat emanating from across the border. The long-pending demand of the retired defence personnel for the grant of 'one rank one pension' formula was approved by the government giving a morale boost to the servicemen.

Failures of Modi government

Three years time is a sufficiently long period to make an objective analysis about the performance of any government. Modi had made tall promises during his election speeches, and because of his reputation as a sincere, hardworking and non-corrupt leader, people had a lot of expectation from him. But unfortunately, after three years in power, there is very little for Modi to show as his achievements. True, he has curbed corruption in high places, improved country's image abroad, performed well in sectors like rural electrification and per-day road construction and has started some impressive welfare schemes for the poor. However, there had been some serious lapses in certain areas, especially in tackling Kashmir unrest and Maoist menace and in managing India's foreign policy issues, as mentioned below.

Employment generation

The single biggest promise that Modi had made in his 2014 election campaign was about ensuring jobs to all new entrants in India's labour market. Modi government's biggest failure also was in fulfilling this promise. There was actually a sharp decline in generation of jobs in organized sectors such as textiles, metals, leather, gems and jewellery, IT, BPO, transport, automobiles and handlooms. In 2015, the generation of jobs in these sectors collapsed to an all time low of 1.5 lakh jobs. Alarmed by this development, the government changed the methodology of gathering data and included service sectors like education and health with the manufacturing sector and thus showed a slightly improved figure of 2.31 lakh jobs in 2016. Even this figure is 25% lower than jobs generated in 2009. The problem of unemployment is likely to worsen further because of the growing threat of automation in sectors like IT, BPO, automobiles and engineering.

NPA menace

The volume of non-performing assets in Indian banks continues to rise despite periodical pronouncements by the reserve bank governor and other responsible ministers and officials about proposed strict measures to curb this menace caused by the collusion between erring industrialists and corrupt high-ranking bank officials. However there does not seem to be any conscious effort from the government side to stem this rot. The loan waiver announced by certain state governments and the demand for loan waiver from other states has only further complicated this problem. The demand for Loan waiver which can be considered only in extreme cases of natural calamities, is now raised by the farmers every year as a matter of their right. Government succumbing to pressures for such unreasonable demands will be disastrous for the economy.

Defence still neglected

When in opposition, the BJP was highly critical of the UPA government headed by Manmohan Singh for ignoring the needs of the armed forces and for not allocating enough funds for the modernization of the armed forces. But now, the Modi government is also committing the same mistake by not allocating enough funds for strengthening and modernizing the armed forces. About ten years back a Parliamentary Committee on Security had recommended budget allocation of at least 3% of the GDP for defence every year in view of the growing threat faced by India from our two hostile neighbours. However, even after completing three years in power, the BJP does not seem to be interested in implementing this important recommendation. Our air force strength of 32 squadron is far below the sanctioned strength of 42 squadron. In a candid interview to 'The Indian Express' on 19th June, 2017, Air Chief Marshal B.S.Dhanoa described the shortfall in the number of fighter squadrons as akin to a cricket team playing with seven players instead of eleven. This comment shows the utter frustration of the air force chief over the state of our defence preparedness.

The Indian navy's submarine strength is also steadily depleting because of the delay in induction of new vessels. The modernization of the forces takes place at a pathetically slow pace because of the cash crunch. India's defence allocation for 2017-18 was Rs. 2.74 lakh crore which is just 1.63% of the GDP. In contrast, China's military spending for this period has been pegged at US\$ 152 billion which is close to 3% of its GDP and three times higher than India's defence budget. Addressing a defence think-tank on May 4th of this year in New Delhi, Army Chief General Bipin Rawat had lamented about our armed forces not getting their due share of resources and had said that India's true potential could be realized only when the economic growth and might of the military go hand-in-hand. General Rawat's comments reflect the true sentiments of all defence experts in this regard.

Anti-development lobby still active.

During the UPA rule, most of our prestigious mega development projects were either stalled or delayed because of the activities of some NGO and human rights activists, supported and financed by certain western agencies and the government's indirect support for such activities. Based on the reports of Indian intelligence agencies, Modi government had started a crack down on some such anti-national NGOs for FCRA violations and had imposed some restrictions on their activities. The NGOs targeted by the government included the Ford Foundation, linked with the CIA and patronized by the US government. However, intervention by high-level officials of the US administration, the government seems to have mellowed down on their resolve to curb the activities of such anti-national agencies. Though many stalled projects have been cleared by the Modi government, many others still remain stalled or even abandoned. One such project is the proposed POSCO steel plant in Odisha. South Korean steel major POSCO had signed a MOU with the Odisha government in June 2005 to set up a 12 million tonne per annum mega steel plant at Jagatsinghpur in Odisha. This 52-thousand crore project had drawn a lot of media attention because of its projection as the biggest foreign direct investment in India. The project was to provide direct employment to 13000 people and indirect employment to 35000 people. However, some local people guided by some foreign-funded NGOs opposed the project raising various issues like displacement of people, loss of livelihood and environmental damage, and they even resorted to violent agitations stalling the project work. The environment ministry also created some hurdles by first giving clearance to the project and later withdrawing it, etc. Even the UN human rights panel had asked the POSCO to stop work in October, 2013 on the ground of displacement of thousands of people and disruption of their livelihood. Faced with continued delays and hurdles, the POSCO has finally decided to withdraw from the project in March, 2017 and has offered to return the land acquired for the project back to the state government. It is very unfortunate that even the Modi government could not save this biggest FDI project in India.

India-based Neutrino Project

The government of India had decided to set up a very important and prestigious neutrino research laboratory (INO) in India and had selected Singara in Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu as the most suitable location for this project. The whole universe is filled with neutrinos. They are so tiny that they can pass through anything and everything in this universe. Still, the scientists knew very little about these elusive particles. Scientists believe that the study of neutrinos will help us to understand the universe and its origin better. The project report for the INO was submitted in 2002. The approval for the project came in 2007. The Planning Commission also approved the project and allocated a sum of Rs 950 crore and earmarked Rs 315 crore for disbursement during the 11th plan. The ministry of environment and forests gave its clearance for

the project in 2008. The proposed laboratory was to be housed in a man-made cave beneath the tallest peak of the Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu. There are only handful of such labs in the world, and the INO was slated to become the most advanced among them and was expected to put India in the forefront of neutrino physics.

However, some NGO and environmental activists, who were opposed to this project from the beginning, started a vicious campaign against this project raking up issues like threat to the environment and wild life and spreading all sorts of lies and falsehood. Some international agencies like World Wild-life Fund also took an active part in this campaign. Even the Forest Department of Tamil Nadu opposed the project and refused to give clearance.

Many eminent Indians like former president Dr. Abdul Kalam, and top scientists like late P.K.Iyengar (former chairman of Atomic Energy Commission) had shown keen interest in early completion of the INO project. In August 2007, eleven leading physicists including Nobel laureates Sheldon Glashow and Masatoshi Koshiha had written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging him to intervene in the matter for early clearance for the project. However, the minister for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh rejected the proposal for the INO project at Singara in 2009 on the ground that the project site falls in an elephant corridor and tiger reserve area. Singara was the site best suited for the location of INO project as per the site selection committee. It was declared as a tiger reserve area only in 2008 where as the forest clearance for the INO project at Singara was pending since 2006. Thus, it appears that Singara was declared as a tiger reserve area only to strengthen the cause of anti-INO lobby.

The experiments being carried out by the European Organization for Nuclear research (CERN) at its research lab in Geneva are also linked with the neutrino research. The proton-colliding experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at Geneva with tentative evidence for the existence of Higgs boson (the God particle) has already created a sensation among the scientific community in the world. The neutrino research is certain to open the floodgate of new mysteries and revelations that could shock the mankind. The neutrino research will help us to know more about the black hole, antimatter and dark energy. Another important fact is that the neutrino technology, just as the nuclear energy, will also have its use in military application. It is possible that those who master the neutrino technology will rule the earth in future. It is such an important project that the Sonia loyalist Jairam Ramesh and the NGO coterie successfully stalled at Singara.

Following the rejection of the Singara site, in consultation with the environment minister Jairam Ramesh, it was decided to shift the neutrino project to a new site at the Bodi West Hills in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. It may be noted that the new site was earlier rejected by the site selection committee, for not being good enough for the location of the project. The neutrino

project at Singara was to be commissioned in 2012. Because of the green hurdles created by the NGO lobby and the MoEF, the prestigious INO project was already delayed by at least 7/8 years. But, at the new site at Bodi West Hills in Theni also, the NGO and environmental activists started a campaign against the project raking up various issues and spreading all sorts of lies and falsehoods to stall the project. One such rumour was that the proposed neutrino lab is actually a dump yard for nuclear waste and hence will be a health hazard to the local people.

Based on a complaint lodged by an NGO called 'Poovulagin Numargal' (Friends of the Flower World), the southern bench of National Green Tribunal on March 21, 2017 suspended the clearance given by the Environmental Ministry for the underground Neutrino Observatory project at Pottipuram in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. The NGO had alleged that the clearance for the Neutrino project was obtained by concealing the fact that the project site falls within 4.9 km within a National Park of Iduki district in Kerala thereby violating the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act. Another allegation raised by the NGO is that the environmental clearance for the project was given on the basis of report submitted by an unauthorized agency. Hence the NGT wanted a fresh green nod from an accredited agency and a clearance from National Board for Wild Life for the INO project. Thus, 16 years after initiating a prestigious project like the underground neutrino lab, we are still looking for necessary clearance for the project because of hurdles created by various agencies and NGOs. It is unfortunate that nobody has taken up this issue with the prime minister and brief him about the urgent need to save this project.

Failure in tackling the Maoist menace

Modi government has failed to tackle the Maoist threat. Bastar region in Chhattisgarh is a strong-hold of Maoist movement. Maximum number of incidents of Maoist violence had taken place in this region. SRP.Kalluri,IPS, who took charge as the IG, Bastar in June,2014, had taken some tough measures to control the Maoist menace and restore peace in the area. Many Maoists had surrendered to the police and some others were killed in encounters with the police since he took over as IG Bastar. Concerned over the dwindling support base of the Maoists, some human rights activists in the area led by Bela Bhatia w/o Professor Jean Dreze (a Sonia loyalist), then started a campaign against I.G Kalluri accusing him of indulging in gross human rights violations. She had also taken up the matter with NHRC which had sent a delegation with her to Bastar to record the molestation allegations raised by some of Bela Bhatia's tribal supporters. Based on the report of NHRC, SRP.Kalluri was transferred to Police Headquarters in Chhattisgarh on February 7, 2017. Demoralized by the transfer of a tough and sincere officer like SRP. Kalluri, the police began to take a softer line in dealing with Maoists. The result was the killing of 25 CRPF personnel in an ambush by Maoists at Sukma in Bastar on April 24, 2017. Thus it can be seen that Human rights activist Bela Bhatia and the NHRC are responsible for the massacre of 25 CRPF jawans on April 7, 2017. Human rights activists like

Prof. Bela Bhatia, Prof. Nandini Sunder of Delhi university and Prof. Archana Prasad of JNU are some of the over-ground intellectual activists of the Maoist movement. They regularly go and camp in tribal pockets in Chhattisgarh only to incite the tribal people to rebel against the elected government. Their wheel-chair bound leader Prof. G.N. Saibaba of Delhi University was convicted for life by a sessions court in Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) on March 7, 2017 for his Maoist links. Modi government should realize that unless strong action is taken to destroy this anti-national lobby of NGO and human rights activists, promoted and funded by some western agencies, Maoist menace cannot be tackled.

India's foreign policy fiasco

India was one of the top leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement. We consistently followed this non-aligned policy during the last 70 years, especially during the cold war between the two power blocks led by the US and the Soviet Union. It is true that despite being non-aligned, India had always been a little closer to the Soviet Union because of the fact that the Soviet Union had always extended its support to India whenever the Kashmir dispute was raked up in the UN. Whereas the US had always taken the side of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan over the issue of refugees from East Pakistan, the US had sent its seventh fleet led by the US Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise to the Indian ocean in support of Pakistan to intervene in the conflict and prevent India from liberating East Pakistan. The US fleet had clear orders to attack the Indian bases in the Eastern Sector if necessary, to prevent India from achieving its objective. It is only because of the timely intervention by the Soviet Union which sent its warships and submarines to the war zone to neutralize the threat posed by the US navy's 7th fleet to the Indian forces, that helped India to go ahead and liberate East Pakistan and facilitate the creation of Bangladesh.

Besides the US's open support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, the US had also been giving clandestine support to all militant and insurgency movements in India like the Maoist movement, Sikh militancy, Tamil nationalist movement and insurgency movements in the north-east. The US had also been trying to block India's economic progress by creating an anti-development lobby in India to stall/delay all our mega development projects in India using NGO and human rights activists. The US had always tried to prevent India from developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles like ICBM. On June 4 this year, India had launched the GSLV-Mark III rocket with indigenously developed cryogenic engine. India would have mastered the cryogenic technology at least 14 years earlier, if Nambi Narayanan, the ISRO's project director in charge of cryogenic technology in Trivandrum was not trapped in a CIA-sponsored fake spy case in 1994. Despite the involvement of the US in all such anti-national activities in India, the Modi government has signed a Logistics Support Agreement with the US in August, 2016,

allowing the use of each other's land, air and naval bases for repair and resupply, thereby betraying the interests of our trusted friend and traditional ally Russia.

India scores a self- goal by antagonizing China

The Modi government has committed a big blunder by allowing Dalai Lama to hold a CIA-sponsored meeting of Chinese dissidents from across the world at Dharmasala in Himachal Pradesh during the last week of April, 2016. After Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Gujarat and New Delhi in September, 2014, India's relations with China were on an upswing. The Dharmasala meeting of Chinese dissidents effectively curbed the brewing friendship between India and China. The relations with China were further worsened when the Dalai Lama undertook a one week tour to Arunachal Pradesh in April, 2017 and spent four days in Tawang. China took the Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang as a deliberate provocation and had warned India of serious consequences. One can see the clear hand of the US in this sudden deterioration in the relations between India and China. The US was not comfortable with the possibility of China and India getting closer after Xi Jinping's visit to Gujarat in September, 2014. The Dharmasala meeting of Chinese dissidents and the Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang was clearly a CIA plot to create fresh hostilities between China and India. The US has achieved its objective. But, why did India toe the US line sacrificing our own national interests? After indulging in blatant anti-China activities, we are now crying about China creating all hurdles against India's entry into the NSG.

Kashmir situation worsens as India's Pakistan policy becomes directionless

After the attack on Pathankot airbase by the Jeish-e-Mohammad on January 2, 2016, India allowed a Joint Investigation Team from Pakistan to visit the Pathankot IAF base in India to conduct an inquiry into the attack on Pathankot air base. Lt Col. Tanweer Ahmed, a senior ISI officer, was also a member of the five-member team. The team was allowed to interrogate 13 witnesses including former Gurdaspur SP Salwinder Singh and record their statements. The NIA also shared all available documents about the four terrorists killed in the attack with the Pakistan team. The investigation into the Pathankot air base attack conducted by the Indian agencies had proved beyond any doubt that the attack was carried out by terrorists belonging to Jeish-e-Moahammad with its chief Moulana Masoor Azhar being the mastermind behind the attack. Moulana Masoor Azhar is considered as a strategic asset by Pakistani rulers and treated like a VVIP in Pakistan. Under the circumstances, by allowing a JIT from Pakistan, which included a senior ISI officer, to visit the Pathankot air base to conduct a probe into the attack on the air base and interrogate and record the statement of 13 Indian witnesses, including Gurdaspur SP Salwinder Singh, the NDA government has made a mockery of the Pathankot probe. To add further fuel to our humiliation, a few days after returning to Pakistan, the joint investigation team told the Pakistani media that the attack on Pathankot IAF base was a drama staged by the Indian authorities to malign Islamabad. Such humiliating experiences were quite routine during

the UPA regime. But, nobody thought that such things would happen under the Modi government. From the Pathankot airbase attack fiasco, it appears that the government policy on Kashmir is flawed and directionless.

Failure in controlling the Hindu extremists

Modi seems to be helpless in controlling the Hindu extremists in his own party. This could have serious repercussions, not only for his own future prospects, but for the country itself. Thus, the bitter truth is that the Modi government's failures far outweigh the good work done by the government during the last three years.

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