**National Press Release – to be released across India**

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**Swarna Bharat Party wants the Indian government to immediately sign free trade agreements**

Mr Rahul Pandit, President of Swarna Bharat Party, India’s only liberal party, said that SBP is a staunch supporter of free trade, with a unilateral free trade policy. In the face of rising clamour in the media for protectionism (influenced by inefficient crony capitalists), SBP urges the people to look through the barrage of falsehoods being fed to them.

The media outlets and their crony capitalist promoters want Indians to use shoddy and expensive domestic goods instead of accessing high quality, cheap goods. A recent media article attacked free trade arguing that a particular trade pact would “destroy” India’s economy. Actually, it is the other way around. Not having more trade will destroy India’s economy. Free trade is always beneficial and any obstructions to it will destroy the economy. SBP has an unambiguous policy of unilateral free trade.

The argument for free trade is simple. The government, which is our servant, has no right to infringe on our economic rights and liberties. Everyone should be free to buy whatever he wants, from whomever he wants and whenever he wants. The only restrictions relate to goods and services that physically harm others.

Free trade gives us access to cheaper goods of better quality, making us vastly better off. It also destroys uncompetitive crony capitalists who thrive on subsidies and restrictions. It forces businesses to become more productive or perish.

Mr Pandit said that free trade will propel India to competitive strength. He called upon the Modi government to abolish the 70-90% tariff rates on agricultural commodities and the near-criminal 100% tariff on motorcycles, among many other similar levies.

Even if the Modi government is incapable of understanding the benefits of unilateral free trade, India should immediately sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership as well as the EU Free Trade Agreements and stop being protectionist.

But Mr Pandit added a strong word of caution. He noted that this measure alone will never suffice to ensure prosperity in India. We have highly skilled and innovative small businesses but also perhaps the most venal, petty bureaucrats in the world. These people have ensured that small businesses who are perfectly capable of competing with China are tied up with red tape, kept running to offices with files and some cash, and hence unable to focus on business. To top it off the government then taxes all inputs and grants corresponding duty cuts to imported finished goods.

Our small businesses are being forced by this venal system to shut shop and become importers, instead of manufacturers. To stop this huge loss of talent, the Modi government must enable small entrepreneurs and manufacturers and liberate them from the choking burden of red tape. And governance reforms detailed in SBP’s manifesto must be immediately implemented.

**Notes for Editors**

SBP is India’s only liberal party, committed to defending liberty and promoting prosperity.

**Contact:**

Rahul Pandit (Hyderabad) National President, +91 9703425422