

"भिऊ नको, घेऊ घामाचे दाम"



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PRESS RELEASE

Mr Anil Ghanwat, senior leader of Shetkari Sanghatna and President of Swatantra Bharat Party today publicly released a copy of the letter he has written to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, requesting the release the Report of the Farm Laws Committee. The Report can play an educational role and ease the misapprehensions of many farmers about reforms.

Recalling the many decades of effort of Mr Sharad Joshi to remove the shackles placed by the government on India's farmers – shackles that have harmed hundreds of millions of people and impoverished rural areas – Mr Ghanwat said that Mr Joshi would have approved of Mr Modi's farm laws which were an attempt to loosen these chains. While these three laws fell short of Mr Joshi's dream for India, these laws could have potentially been made to work and improved in the course of time.

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to bulldoze policies without adequate consultation and education of the country. Reforms which affect a large number of people require broad-based consensus. That there are no shortcuts to good public policy. Had the Government consulted with farmers and educated them systematically in advance of making the laws, the outcome would have been quite different. Sadly, the current approach has allowed some leaders to mislead farmers. Such leaders do not understand the price system and how a minimally regulated free market can allocate national resources to their most productive use. Such leaders are causing enormous national harm, not just to farmers.

For many decades India's farmers, as entrepreneurs in their own right, have suffered from lack of understanding or focus on their regulatory needs for production and marketing. The regulation imposed on them has choked their production and marketing efforts. Much of this regulation is sheltered in Schedule 9 of the Constitution: away from judicial scrutiny. Regulation is intended to reduce any harm caused by an entrepreneur's action, but in the case of farmers, regulation has itself been the cause of harm both to the farmers and to the environment. Many of India's farmers are desperate for renewed, not less, focus on reforms – particularly market freedom and technology freedom. The reform impulse reflected in the farm laws (despite their shortcomings) must not be abandoned by the Modi Government.

While requesting the Supreme Court to release the Committee's report, Mr Ghanwat has also sought a direction from the Court to the Government to develop and implement a robust policy process.

A robust policy process for making new farm laws would involve establishing a Committee with representation of all views. The Committee would prepare a White Paper that considers costs and

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benefits of options, consults widely and recommends a way forward. The legislation resulting from such a process would be acceptable to India's long-suffering farmers.

Sequencing of reforms must include the waiver of farmer loans (once the reforms are implemented) so that the negative subsidy for agriculture is at least partially compensated. Further, the White Paper must consider the total suite of reforms, not in a piecemeal manner like these three farm laws had done. Mr Ghanwat said he is happy to assist the Modi Government in developing a White Paper.

Mr Ghanwat has recently handed over the role of President of Shetkari Sanghatana to Mr Lalit Bahale and has been elected as the President of Swatantra Bharat Party. In that broader capacity as leader of India's major liberal party, he emphasised the need for a broader range of reforms and better regulation of industry to make it attractive for Indian and foreign investors to invest in India, including in cold chains and food processing.

Mr Sanjeev Sabhlok, former IAS officer of the 1982 batch who resigned in 2001 in order to promote liberty and good governance in India, and advises both Swatantra Bharat Party and Swarna Bharat Party, then spoke about the need for reforms to make India a *Sone ki Chidiya* again: the world's Number One in prosperity and defence capability.

Mr Sabhlok said India needs to focus on its own culture of *Shubh Labh* (which considers honestly made profit to be a good thing) and aspiration for *Ram Rajya* in which the king does not operate banks, run public buses and hotels, trade in foodgrains, or produce cement. India's culture contains the key principles of good economic policy that were discovered thousands of years later by the West. For instance, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* elaborates upon free trade and good regulation as the pillars of prosperity.

The core message of India's tradition is *Jahaan Ka Raja Ho Vyapaari, Vahaan Ki Janata Bhikhari*. This means that where the king is a trader, the people are beggars. Unfortunately, since independence, India's governments have aped Karl Marx's hatred for profit and have choked innovation and entrepreneurship. Instead, they should focus only on their prescribed duty, their prescribed *Dharma* – which is to ensure justice, security and infrastructure. We need *Minimum Government, Maximum Governance*. But instead, we have *Maximum Government, Minimum Governance*.

Notes for Editors

Swatantra Bharat Party was founded in 1994 in the tradition of Rajaji's Swatantra Party by Sharad Joshi (who later became an MP in the Rajya Sabha). In 2013, Sanjeev Sabhlok helped establish Swarna Bharat Party (<http://swarnabharat.in>). These two parties are now merging to create India's first large-scale liberal party since the Swatantra Party.

An electronic copy of this press release and the letter to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India is available at: <https://bit.ly/30NLtRg>.

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