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PAPER CLIPPINGS

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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Agriculture Act

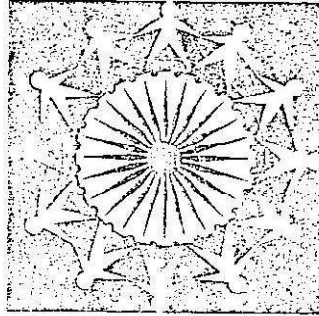
ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Times of India ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 27/1/21

## Troubled Republic

*Build better job opportunities, to put the smile and shine back into Brand India*

Although India has celebrated Republic Day every year since 1950, the celebrations get updated with the times, a kind of periodic rebranding. Some of this year's changes have been forced by the pandemic. Jawans will march in masks and there will be no chief guest because rising infections in the UK made PM Boris Johnson cancel his visit. Other changes are purposeful. The parade will be led by a Bangladeshi tri-service contingent, underlining how 50 years ago Indian forces fought shoulder to shoulder with Mukti Bahini. But audiences will also be reminded how this neighbour's per capita income is now crossing ours, and more generally how much shine Brand India has lost in recent years.

This has a direct bearing on the most unusual feature of this year's Republic Day, that farmers will be taking out a parallel tractor parade in the capital. The roots of this protest movement are similar to insistent and multiplying demands for caste based job reservations.



In his 1992 budget speech, Manmohan Singh had outlined the long-term imperative to evolve patterns of production that would generate larger employment opportunities in higher income jobs. Significant shortfalls in this project have meant matching failures in moving workers from farm to factory, from informal to formal enterprises.

The Indian economy had been losing momentum for eight quarters even before the Covid lockdown contracted it painfully which, as CMIE data shows, meant jobs lapsing further back into low productivity sectors such as agriculture. The problem of too many people being dependent on agriculture can't be solved by only 9% of workers being employed in enterprises with 20 or more of them. All the growth stories of Asia tell us that it is larger economic units that build gainful employment, and these can only be delivered by greater integration with the global supply chain. There is no other path to lifting a large number of Indians into a middle class earning good and stable wages.

In failing to open such paths the state is tempted to suppress protests by suppressing civil liberties. But this is untenable in a republic held together by democracy. Whether it was the 1991 economic reforms or the 2021 historic cricket victory Down Under, the lesson is we can claw back from adversity by betting on our human capital. Invest in it and let it fly. Protectionist and statist tendencies only worsen the yawning gap between India's potential and performance.