



“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

—Helen Keller



# Jabs no shortcut to health

The growing popularity of GLP-1 weight loss drugs in India has sparked an important debate about health, responsibility and regulation. Originally developed as prescription medicines to treat diabetes and obesity, these drugs are now increasingly being promoted as quick solutions for weight loss. This trend has raised serious concerns about their misuse and the risks it poses to public health. GLP-1 drugs, known scientifically as GLP-1 receptor agonists, work by regulating blood sugar levels and reducing appetite. By slowing gastric emptying and increasing the feeling of fullness, they help patients manage both diabetes and obesity under proper medical supervision. In clinical settings they represent an important breakthrough in modern medicine. However, these medications are not ordinary weight loss products. They are powerful prescription drugs designed to be used only under the guidance of qualified specialists. The fact that some of them are now being sold or promoted without proper medical oversight is deeply worrying. Recognising the risks, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and the Drug Controller General of India have intensified inspections and regulatory surveillance across the country. Authorities have already conducted audits of pharmacies, wholesalers, online platforms and weight loss clinics to check violations. Businesses found encouraging unauthorised sales or misleading promotion have been issued notices and warned of strict legal action. Such action is necessary and timely. GLP-1 drugs can cause a range of side effects if taken without medical supervision. While some patients may experience mild symptoms such as nausea or vomiting, more serious complications can also occur. These include pancreatitis, kidney injury and bowel obstruction. These are not risks that should be ignored in the pursuit of rapid weight loss. But regulation alone cannot address the deeper issue behind this trend. The increasing demand for such drugs reflects a broader public health challenge. India is facing a growing epidemic of obesity and diabetes. Crores of people struggle with weight related health problems, often driven by sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets. The temptation of a quick medical fix is therefore understandable. Yet it is also dangerous. A worrying pattern is emerging where individuals seek weight loss injections simply because they repeatedly abandon diet plans and exercise routines. Medication is then seen as a shortcut to compensate for lifestyle choices. This approach misses the larger truth. No drug can replace the fundamentals of good health. Sustainable weight management still depends on balanced nutrition, regular physical activity and long term discipline. Medical treatments can support these efforts but they cannot substitute them. The path forward must therefore combine strong regulation with greater public awareness. People need to understand that lasting health improvements come from consistent lifestyle changes. Nutrition education, healthier diets, regular exercise and affordable medical treatment when required must remain the foundation of any strategy to fight obesity and diabetes. Weight loss jabs may be part of the solution but they cannot be the solution itself. Treating a national health crisis requires patience, awareness and responsible choices both from institutions and from society.

DR D K GIRI

Iran war has entered into the phase of ceasefire. On request from international quarters, Donald Trump has put off the bombing of critical resource hub and infrastructure. Only Trump knows how long he will maintain that position. The entire world knows that Trump likes to ham and haw and is capable of changing his mind without any reason. As the President of the most powerful country, Donald Trump has disastrously disrupted the world economy, security and politics by his undependable and untenable approach.

Be that as it may, it is in order that we discuss the durability of the ceasefire leading to an end of the war. Donald Trump as his wont would like to end the war as soon as possible. Perhaps like Vladimir Putin in Ukraine, Trump expected to have a quick operation in beating Iran into submission. That was not to be. The conditions put forward by both warring parties; America and Iran are not acceptable to either. It will require highly skilful mediation to get them on the same page. It is now next to impossible to predict how Trump will respond at a particular time. And Pakistan, hosting the negotiation meetings is merely a facilitator rather than a mediator. More on this a bit later.

There are various theories on why America went into the war against Iran. We have discussed it more than once in this column. The main actor in this Iran drama is Israel. But America has taken the cudgel to back Israel in its battle against Iran and communicate the proceedings to the world. Although, obviously, Donald Trump is not doing it so well, in fact, doing it quite badly. His flip-flops, about turns, statements on shifting sands and so on will certainly become part of the political folklores. But the regime in the United States does not consist of President alone although he is in the forefront. That said, Trump has two able and articulate deputies in the government — Mark Rubio, the Secretary of State and J.D. Vance, the Vice President. The latter is representing America on the next negotiation meeting with Iran in Islamabad.

Talking of the war aims of the US, Mark Rubio has made a convincing and a formidable statement on 8 April. He said in a presser, “Iran wanted nuclear weapons. There is zero doubt about it. If they wanted what they claim, the nuclear energy like many countries have done, they should have imported the fuel and built the nuclear reactors above the ground. That is what they have not done. They have built the reactors and the facilities deep in the mountain away from the public glare. They want to enrich that material. They want to develop into nuclear weapons. They were entitled to have nuclear energy, and the world has agreed to that, not to acquire weapons. But Iran has turned it down every time. At the same time, they have built a conventional shield consisting of drones and missiles that will deter any attack on their nuclear weapon infrastructure. They had on the verge of acquiring that capability which will make them immune from any at-

tack on their nuclear programmes. This was an intolerable risk. In fact, this was the last chance to dismantle that conventional shield that is why America took the military step.”

The above is a persuasive argument for the war. Admittedly, many countries especially India would like to talk about dialogue and diplomacy and international law not

mediation as New Delhi claims to be neutral having strategic autonomy etc. That did not happen. In Iran war, the same expectation surfaced again. In fact, the Prime Minister of Finland, a credible, often neutral country, Alexander Stubbs openly exhorted Prime Minister Modi to plunge into a mediator role. On the contrary, that position went to Pak-

supported India solidly in his first term. Modi regime, especially the Foreign Minister failed to understand Trump’s personality and therefore to deal with him. Modi’s visit to Israel just before the war, a right step, has backfired as the External Affairs Minister failed to build on it. Disappointingly, the main Opposition party, Congress, instead of

## War In Iran

# WHERE IS INDIA?

**There are various theories on why America went into the war against Iran. We have discussed it more than once in this column. The main actor in this Iran drama is Israel. But America has taken the cudgel to back Israel in its battle against Iran and communicate the proceedings to the world. Although, obviously, Donald Trump is not doing it so well, in fact, doing it quite badly. His flip-flops, about turns, statements on shifting sands and so on will certainly become part of the political folklores. But the regime in the United States does not consist of President alone although he is in the forefront. That said, Trump has two able and articulate deputies in the government — Mark Rubio, the Secretary of State and J.D. Vance, the Vice President. The latter is representing America on the next negotiation meeting with Iran in Islamabad. Talking of the war aims of the US, Mark Rubio has made a convincing and a formidable statement on 8 April. He said in a presser, “Iran wanted nuclear weapons. There is zero doubt about it. If they wanted what they claim, the nuclear energy like many countries have done, they should have imported the fuel and built the nuclear reactors above the ground. That is what they have not done. They have built the reactors and the facilities deep in the mountain away from the public glare. They want to enrich that material. They want to develop into nuclear weapons. They were entitled to have nuclear energy, and the world has agreed to that, not to acquire weapons. But Iran has turned it down every time. At the same time, they have built a conventional shield consisting of drones and missiles that will deter any attack on their nuclear weapon infrastructure. They had on the verge of acquiring that capability which will make them immune from any attack on their nuclear programmes. This was an intolerable risk. In fact, this was the last chance to dismantle that conventional shield that is why America took the military step.”**



war. But there are occasions in international relations, war becomes unavoidable. It is said that war is failure of diplomacy and vice-versa meaning diplomacy begins when war is inconclusive. However, has that war objective been accomplished? Is the ceasefire an excuse for re-strategising and rebuilding?

The moot question in this piece is where India is in this war which is closer in many ways than the war in Ukraine. Frankly, New Delhi has let itself down once more. When the world expects India to step up, New Delhi dithers. The slips between the cup and the lip, lost opportunities have been experienced since the times of Pt. Nehru. Modi regime which seems determined to undo the mistakes of Nehru ends up repeating them. To illustrate, during Covid, an international disaster caused by China, the world expected India to be an alternative manufacturing hub given its demography and democracy, but New Delhi could not even come close to it.

On Ukraine war, India could initiate the

istan of all the countries, a terrorist hub.

One could decipher the main reason for India’s failure to occupy the stage on mediation. India traditionally has presented a moral profile in international politics but has not built on it. At the same time, New Delhi has not emphasised on building capabilities which is the sine qua non of geo politics, surely the real politik. America has thrived on its capability in utter denial of international norms and laws; so have Russia and China. India tried to shift from a moralist, self-righteous position to a pragmatic stance by beginning to decouple from its traditional ally Russia and engage with America. But again, New Delhi got caught in moralistic postures and fouled up the relations with Trump.

At the cost of repeating, Narendra Modi breaking diplomatic traditions and protocols endorsed the candidature of Trump in the presidential election in a much-advertised public meeting called Howdy Modi. Trump

attacking Modi on alienating Trump and United States, is misfiring by accusing Modi of kowtowing to Trump. So, Modi has become a frenemy to United States and vice-versa.

A word on Pakistan’s surprising elevation to a facilitator, Pakistan has sucked up to Donald Trump by proposing him for the Nobel Prize. Trump likes such adulation. Islamabad may be active as a proxy of China. By many accounts, Beijing seems to be the big winner in this war. The elaboration on this thesis is for another article. Objectively, Pakistan’s proximity to Iran and its existing diplomatic channels made it an ideal conduit for communication. To be sure, Pakistan’s role is seen more as a facilitator than a full-fledged mediator with limited access and influence. But for now, Pakistan has edged India on Iran war. New Delhi has a lot to think about it. Maybe they will do so after the state elections where Prime Minister is actively campaigning. ---INFA

# India-US trade pact: Opportunities, Fears, and the Search for Balance

DR PRIYANKA SAURABH

The proposed bilateral trade agreement (2026) between India and the United States has emerged at a time when India, on the one hand, is moving towards expanding its participation in the global economy, while on the other hand, it faces the essential challenge of protecting its agriculture-based socio-economic structure. While the interim framework announced in February 2026 has opened new opportunities for Indian exporters in the US market, the potential import of cheap US agricultural products has created a sense of anxiety and insecurity among millions of farmers in the country. In this context, the question becomes extremely relevant: whether this agreement will establish India as a strong global agricultural exporter or will it cause economic crisis for small and marginal farmers.

India-US trade relations have historically been strategic and multifaceted. India has achieved a surplus in agricultural trade between the two countries in recent years, indicating the potential for global competitiveness of Indian agricultural products. The proposed agreement, under which the US would reduce or eliminate

tariffs on Indian products—such as spices, tea, coffee, cashews, mangoes, papayas, and processed foods—could boost Indian exports. This would not only increase foreign exchange earnings but also boost value addition and processing industries in the agricultural sector.

But the other side of this agreement is far more complex and sensitive. The United States provides extensive subsidies to its farmers, making its agricultural products highly competitive in the international market. If such products—such as DDGS, soybean oil, and sorghum—enter the Indian market on a large scale, domestic farmers could suffer serious price competition. This could lead to a decline in agricultural prices, creating even more challenges for farmers already struggling with income stress.

India’s agricultural structure is largely based on small and marginal farmers, who constitute approximately 86% of the total. These farmers sustain their livelihoods amid challenges such as limited resources, volatile markets, and climate change. Policies such as the Minimum Support Price (MSP) provide a safety net for these farmers, but its reach is limited and does not benefit all crops and regions equally. If cheap imports increase in the domestic market, the effectiveness of the MSP could be weakened and farmers’ in-

comes could be adversely affected.

Another important concern relates to biosafety and genetically modified (GM) crops. The United States is a major producer and exporter of GM crops, while India still maintains a cautious approach to the subject. India may face pressure to reduce non-tariff barriers under trade agreements, potentially increasing the import of GM products. This situation could pose long-term risks to the country’s biodiversity, traditional agricultural practices, and food security.

Additionally, sensitive sectors such as dairy, poultry, and oilseeds could be affected by this agreement. India’s dairy sector is not only a global leader but also supports the livelihoods of millions of rural families. If American dairy products enter the Indian market, local producers will face competition. Similarly, the oilseeds sector, in which India is striving for self-sufficiency, could be affected by cheap imports, hindering the promotion of domestic production.

Along with these economic challenges, the social and strategic dimensions of this agreement are also important. Potential income losses and competition in the agricultural sector could adversely impact rural employment, exacerbating social inequality and regional disparities. Strategically, this agreement symbolizes growing co-

operation between India and the United States, which is also linked to the broader perspective of the Quad and the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, it is not practical for India to reject this agreement outright; rather, it is necessary to adopt a balanced approach.

In this context, the biggest challenge facing India is how to protect its agricultural interests while taking advantage of global economic opportunities. This requires a multi-pronged strategy. First, trade protection measures—such as quantity limits (TRQs), minimum import prices (MIPs), and special safeguard measures (SSMs)—should be effectively utilized to protect the domestic market from sudden surges in imports.

Second, structural reforms are necessary to strengthen the domestic agricultural sector. This includes promoting Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), strengthening the supply chain, and encouraging processing and value addition. This will increase the competitiveness of Indian products and enable farmers to obtain better prices.

Third, an export-oriented agricultural policy should be strengthened. India has immense potential to capture global markets in spices, organic products, horticultural crops, and tradi-

tional food products. If attention is paid to quality standards, branding, and logistics in these sectors, India can not only maintain but also strengthen its trade balance.

Fourth, it is essential to adopt a clear and strict policy regarding biosafety and quality standards, so that the country’s food security and environmental balance are not compromised. Additionally, a balance must be struck between traditional knowledge and modern science while embracing technological innovations.

Ultimately, this agreement is not just an economic document, but a crucial step in shaping India’s development journey. Balancing its inherent opportunities and risks will be key to its success. India must adopt a “nation first” approach and develop a strategy that reconciles farmer security, food sovereignty, and global competitiveness.

If India succeeds in striking this balance through smart and sensitive policy-making, this agreement will not only become a vehicle for economic progress but will also pave the way for sustainable prosperity for crores of farmers in the country.

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