



स्वतंत्र भारत
Swatantra Bharat Party

ANIL GHANWAT, President
email: ghanwatanil77@gmail.com
http://swatantra.org.in

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PRESS RELEASE

Open Letter to the Prime Minister on technology and economic freedom for farmers

Mr Anil Ghanwat, senior leader of Shetkari Sanghatana and President of Swatantra Bharat Party today wrote an [Open Letter to the Prime Minister of India](#), outlining a plan of action to demand reforms.

1. Technology freedom: Lift the moratorium on GM by 16 February 2022

Mr Ghanwat said that India's farmers can feed a growing India, even as farmers' incomes grow rapidly, **through biotechnology**. He said that Bt Brinjal was approved in 2009 by the Indian regulator but the Congress government froze the approval. In the meantime, seven years ago, Bt brinjal was approved by neighbouring Bangladesh and its citizens have been eating it for the past many years.

On 19 July 2019 in response to question 4441 in the Lok Sabha, the Mr Modi's BJP government said in the Parliament: "[There is no scientific evidence to prove that GM crops are unsafe](#)".

Despite this, the Modi government continues to block GM crops in India.

He said Swatantra Bharat Party wants the Modi government to lift the moratorium on GM approvals by 16 February 2022. Else, Swatantra Bharat Party along with [Shetkari Sanghatana](#) will start a **Feed India movement from 17 February 2022** in which farmers will what are falsely labelled as "illegal" GM seeds. He said he will also issue a **Feed India paper** on 17 February 2022 to outline the benefits of biotechnology and highlight the failures of mandatory natural farming.

Mr Ghanwat expressed great concern about the Prime Minister's taking about an India "free from chemical fertilisers and pesticides". If that happens, millions will fall deeper into hunger and malnutrition. He wanted Mr Modi to confirm that no taxpayer funds will be spent on natural farming. Mr Ghanwat noted a suspicion among farmers that natural farming is being promoted by the government in order to cut **fertiliser subsidy**. The subsidy must only be removed after the full suite of reforms has been enacted and farmers compensated for decades of negative subsidy.

Mr Ghanwat said that the country needs the slogan: "**Biotechnology to feed India, Natural farming to starve India**". He said without high-yielding varieties of seeds that led to the Green Revolution, India could not have fed its growing population.

He said that Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a complete failure and can never help either the farmer or the land which is our mother. He said that the originator of ZBNF had to give up cultivating his own land in Amaravati. In his own village there are no takers for his ideas. Most ZBNF followers give it up within three years.

On 12 January 2021, it was reported in *The Financial Express* that: "Large scale adoption of ZBNF – farm practices which exclude all synthetic chemical inputs and promote use of on-farm biomass – would result in 'tremendous reduction' in production of agricultural crops thus **comprising India's**

food security”¹. With mandatory natural farming, the poor people of neighbouring Sri Lanka are facing starvation and its leaders have been forced to come to India’s doors to beg for food.

Mr Ghanwat said that as an agriculture science graduate he is in favour of all innovative technologies to reduce the use of chemicals, but the choice of technology must be left to farmers so long as they use chemicals in the prescribed manner.

2. Economic freedom: White Paper, Discussion Paper, Supreme Court Committee Report

Mr Ghanwat repeated his demand of 22 November 2021 in the Open Letter, for the government to establish a Committee with representation of all views to prepare a **White Paper on agriculture policy** that considers costs and 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.

Mr Ghanwat said in the Open Letter that it is almost a year since the **Supreme Court Committee Report on Farm Laws** submitted its Report to the Hon’ble Supreme Court. If the Hon’ble Court does not release the Report soon despite his two letters seeking its publication, Mr Ghanwat will make it public to inform policymakers, noting that the overwhelming majority of the submissions received were supportive of the now-repealed farm laws.

In the Open Letter Mr Ghanwat said that Swatantra Bharat Party is working on a **Discussion Paper on Agriculture Policy**. He invited views at discussion@swatantra.org.in. He said that if the Prime Minister doesn’t commission a White Paper to progress reforms, he may need to **bring farmers to Delhi** to demand reforms.

3. Stop arbitrary interventions

In the Open Letter Mr Ghanwat also asked the Modi government to stop arbitrary interference in the markets, as illustrated by SEBI’s decision decisions of 2021 to bar futures and options contracts chana, mustard, wheat, soyabean, oil, soya De Oiled Cake, moong, and others. Futures and options market play a very important role in fetching better prices for farmers. Such arbitrary actions create uncertainty for farmers and investors and amount to a confiscation of property rights.

4. Open Letter to Chairman SEBI

Mr Ghanwat also released an Open Letter that he has written to day on behalf a number of farmer organisations to Mr Ajay Tyagi, Chairman of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). The letter points out the grievous harm caused to farmers by SEBI’s recent actions and asks for the bans on agriculture items for futures and options trading to be reversed immediately.

Minimal role for government in business

Finally, Mr Ghanwat said that the core message of India’s tradition is *Jahaan Ka Raja Ho Vyapaari, Vahaan Ki Janata Bhikhari*. Where the king is a trader, the people are beggars. Unfortunately, since independence, India’s governments have adopted Karl Marx’s hatred for profit and choked innovation and entrepreneurship. They should focus only on their duty, their *Dharma* – which is to ensure justice, security and infrastructure. We need *Minimum Government, Maximum Governance*.

¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-in/money/news/zero-budget-natural-farming-could-lead-to-yield-loss-panel/ar-AA5G3bZ?ocid=msedgntp>

Notes for Editors

Swatantra Bharat Party was founded in 1994 in the tradition of Rajaji's Swatantra Party by Sharad Joshi (who became a member of the Rajya Sabha in 2004). 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 Open Letters (1) to the Prime Minister and (2) to the Chairman of SEBI are available at: <https://bit.ly/3357Va5> or at <https://bit.ly/3qkmWgL>

Contacts:

Anil Ghanwat, Former President Shetkari Sanghatana (currently a senior leader), and President, Swatantra Bharat Party, Ph: 9923707646, email: ghanwatanil77@gmail.com

Pankaj Das, President Swarna Bharat Party, Guwahati, +91 97060 49270, daspankaj01@gmail.com

Sanjeev Sabhlok, Adviser to both parties, sabhlok@gmail.com