

# Infrastructure: Pivoting AtmaNirbhar Bharat

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**18** March, 2021  
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Print this article  
Font size 16

The Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown took a heavy toll on the global economy. Despite having strong fundamentals and huge domestic demand, the Indian economy could not escape the impact of the pandemic as almost all the economic activities ceased during this period. However, as the nation gradually unlocked, the government of India started taking firm steps to revive the slowing economy and the efforts have paid off. Fiscal packages for MSMEs increased spending on the infrastructure sector, strong commitment towards the development of 100 smart cities are some of the initiatives taken by the government. Besides these, one of the most important initiatives taken by the government is the Aatmanirbhar Bharat or the self-reliant India mission. The Mission is not a standalone initiative but a collective approach to making the Indian economy self-sufficient and reliant. Besides public participation and policy intervention, infrastructure will play an important role in the success of this Mission.

## Impact of the Mission

The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission is expected to be a game-changer for the Indian economy in the coming decades. It is expected to start a production revolution in the country. Promoting the production of commodities in India and making the local products popular among the Indians lie at the core of this mission. Besides making India the manufacturing hub of the world, the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission will also generate employment for millions and boost the nation's exports. It will also help the industry develop beyond the larger cities and decentralize industrialization. With more industries and employment opportunities in smaller towns and rural areas, people will not be forced to migrate to larger cities. This will result in the decongestion of the big cities leading to the improvement in the quality of life, easing pressure on infrastructure, and help the environment recover. This Mission will also prepare India for any future global disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as big and ambitious this mission is, equally humongous are the requirements to achieve it.

## Role of infrastructure in creating a self-reliant economy

To achieve the targets of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission, India needs to invest heavily on its manufacturing infrastructure. High manufacturing capacity will help achieve economies of scale thus lowering the prices of products. This high manufacturing capacity also needs a constant supply of raw material. Railway and road infrastructure will play an important role in keeping the factories continuously fed. The conveyance infrastructure will also be critical in the transportation of the finished product from factories to the market. Efficient transportation infrastructure will reduce the cost of transit thus making the products more economical. It will also minimize the damage to the products during the journey.

Education and research infrastructure are also important for the mission. Educational and training institutes will create a skilled workforce required to work on sophisticated machinery to produce superior quality products. It is the skilled workforce that made China the manufacturing hub of the world and it's now time for India to take that position. Research and development institutes will be instrumental in developing new products, testing new raw materials, and optimizing the resources in the entire manufacturing sector.

For the entire manufacturing sector to function smoothly, power is perhaps the most critical input. Power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure form the core of any modern economy. The uninterrupted power supply is imperative and can do wonders for the country's manufacturing sector.

Agricultural production lies at the heart of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission. Unless a country is self-reliant in its food production, there is no point even thinking about self-dependence in other sectors. The Indian agriculture sector is plagued in with low productivity and wastages. It is heavily dependent on the monsoon for irrigation. Creating a reliable irrigation infrastructure will help remove the uncertainty from the agriculture sector. Millions of tons of produce rot and get wasted every year. This happens primarily due to the lack of proper storage and transportation facilities in the area.

Moreover, the lack of storage facilities often forces the farmers to compromise on the prices and sell their products cheaper than the actual worth. Proper irrigation, storage and transportation infrastructure can help increase the productivity, reduce wastage and enhance the overall efficiency of the sector.

As India's production capacity will increase, it will also need infrastructure to export. Therefore, there will be a need to superior land and seaports to support its export requirements.

## Conclusion

In the past few years, the government of India has launched various missions and set several targets for the growth and development of the economy. Doubling farmer's income, Make-in-India mission, the National Infrastructure Pipeline, electricity for all etc. are some of the steps taken in the direction. The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission is a combination of all these efforts to ensure that the India's manufacturing and agriculture sectors receive all the impetus required to compete at the world stage. The first step to achieve this, is making the Indian market self-reliant and provide the Indian products a competitive advantage in the local market. Infrastructure, along with other factors, has a very important role to play in the success of this entire mission.

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