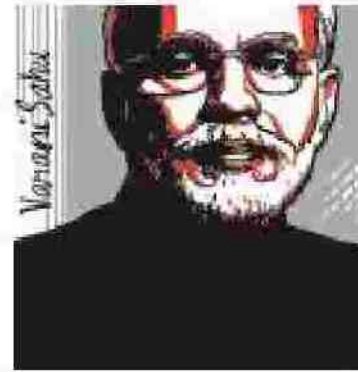


PM Right on Company of Industry Captains

PM Narendra Modi did well to declare that he was not scared to be seen in the company of corporate chieftains. This comes not a day too soon. With bad loans and flighty industrialists dominating the news, a narrative has once again been building up in which people who run companies are cast as villains. This false discourse must be abandoned and those who create wealth, produce goods, generate jobs, pay taxes and, in these days of mandated corporate social responsibility, even shoulder many of the governance tasks that rightfully are the responsibility of the state, accorded the respect they are due.

Pre-capitalist cultures tend to see wealth as the product of expropriation. Capitalism made it possible to generate new value



on a mass scale and for entrepreneurs to grow rich even as their workers and their suppliers of raw materials, components and capital all prospered. Sharing in the value newly created by entrepreneurial imagination, drive and energy is not a zero-sum game, but makes everyone better off. This is the economic reality. But

the political narrative has tended to ride on class antagonism: the poor are poor because the rich exploit them. In the recent past, land acquisition has fed the grouse, the relatively poor being dispossessed of their land to benefit some rich industrialist or the other. Policies designed to convert those who give up their land for non-farm enterprises into stakeholders in the prosperity built on that land would address this concern as well. Co-prosperers have no reason for hostility.

Investment and growth create prosperity and jobs. This has improved the industrialist's profile. This is welcome. What is additionally needed is transparency in the selection of particular industrialists for vital projects such as building warplanes and aid-funded power plants in other countries.