

## EDITORIAL

*Dear Reader,*

*RGICS brings out weekly Policy Watch to enrich and update our readers with contemporary policy-relevant news and analyses. The product follows a very stringent process of filtering policy updates by navigating almost 300 news links across the globe.*

*Each issue opens up with a cover story, which summarises an important report relevant to society, economy and polity. The current cover story attempts to draw the attention of the readers by discussing 'The Global Competitiveness Report: 2014-15' compiled by World Economic Forum. Following a rigorous method of estimating the index and rank of economic competitiveness of the countries across the world, the report places India in the rank of 71st amongst 144 nations. The report interestingly categorises three stages of competitiveness, driven by factors, efficiency and innovations respectively. India is still at its first stage of competitive strength encountering factor-driven challenges like institutions, infrastructure, social and macro-economic environment. India's most unachievable 'social sector' ranks as low as 98th, though curiously its corruption index improves to the rank of 65th out of 144 nations. The report further finds a marginal improvement in government efficiency with lesser red-tapism in India; but still suffers from high concentration of economic power, monopolistic tendency and protectionism, which severely restrain fair competition and operation in the market. The report alerts that such high socio-economic polarities have the potentials to challenge democratic and market institutions, culminating to political volatility. A sustained progress in social sector therefore is imperative for fair competitive economy. This alone can help India to move to the second and third stages of development, driven by efficiency and innovation for higher level of prosperity.*

*Amongst other interesting reports, this issue of Policy Watch also bring out India's pertinent challenges of caste, income and untouchability. There are highlights on present government's policy intention towards scaling down the pro-poor schemes like MGNREGA, ideas of green laws, and its big plan to develop India through 'Make in India' scheme. Some of the reports also take up India's social injustice, like its cash-crunch in higher education, its sterilisation policy focusing more on women, issue of farm distress, and alarming number of tiger deaths.*

*Hope our readers will enjoy and benefit from this large canvass of policy news. We look forward to get your feedback for future improvement.*

*Looking forward to your comments and feedback.*

*Rakhee Bhattacharya  
Associate Director, RGICS*

## EDITORIAL

### COVER STORY:

- 2014 Global Competitiveness Index: Case of India

### HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:

- Caste survey shows high income unable to change mindset ,one in four Indian practice untouchability
- Rural job guarantee scheme chokes as funds dry up
- Questionable green laws seeks to subsume existing authorities

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- IT investment in Gujarat fails to take off

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- Government eyes private cash to build railways to its ports
- CAG report says SEZ's have failed
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## COVER STORY

**2014 Global Competitiveness Index: Case of India**

Today, many countries are suffering from accelerating income inequalities; often these inequalities are the lasting effects of the crisis that are creating domestic social tensions with potential global consequences. In 2014, World Economic Forum came up with a Global Competitiveness Report which provides an overview of the competitiveness performance of 144 economies. For 35 years, this Report has shed light on the key factors and their mechanisms and interrelations that determine economic growth and the level of present and future prosperity in a country.

We present here an overview of Global Competitiveness particularly focusing at the performance of India in the global world by summarizing 'The Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2014-15'.

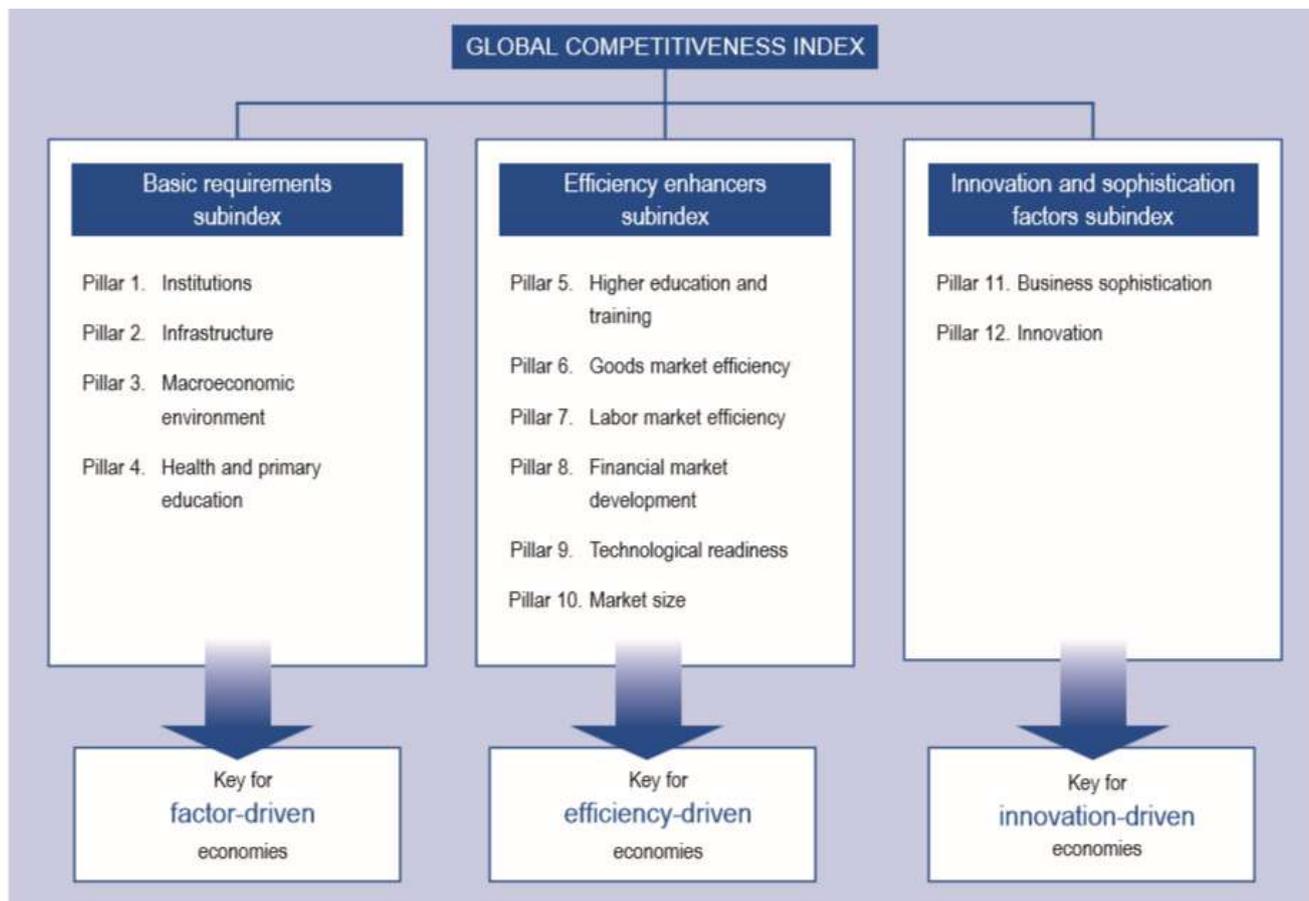
**Key Findings**

- India's 2014 GCI rank remained the same as that of 2013 (71<sup>st</sup>), considering the same list of economies as covered in the previous year.
- In South Asia, among the region's six countries covered by the GCI, only India features in the top half of the rankings.
- Even though India lies in the top half of the rankings, what is more alarming is that India still lies on stage 1 of development which is factor driven as per the GCR 2014-15.
- This year's Report provides an overview of the competitiveness performance of 144 economies, amongst which the top of the rankings continues to be dominated by highly advanced Western economies and several Asian tigers.
- For the sixth consecutive year Switzerland leads the top 10, and again this year Singapore ranks as the second-most competitive economy in the world.
- A wide-ranging performance disparity highlights the persistence of a competitiveness divide in Europe between a highly competitive Northern Europe and a less competitive Southern and Eastern Europe.
- The competitiveness landscape in the Asia and the Pacific region remains one of stark contrasts. The region is home to 3 of the 10 most competitive economies in the world, further 3 economies are featured in the top 20. At the other end of the regional spectrum, five countries rank below the 100th mark.
- In South Asia, among the region's six countries covered by the GCI, only India features in the top half of the rankings.
- The Latin America and the Caribbean region continues to suffer from strong headwinds related to weak investments, a fall in exports and commodity prices, and tighter access to finance that, to a large extent, fueled growth in recent years.
- Some North African economies, such as Egypt and Tunisia, are slowly stabilizing and are starting to focus on economic reform.
- Sub-Saharan economies carry on registering impressive growth rates of close to 5 percent in 2013—with rising projections for the next two years—below only emerging and developing Asia.

COVER STORY

**What is Global Competitiveness Index?**

Many determinants drive productivity and competitiveness. GCI is a tool which tries to capture the competitiveness of an economy by including a weighted average of many different components, each measuring a different aspect of competitiveness. The components are grouped into 12 pillars to measure the competitiveness performance of these various economies. Figure 1 represents the 12 pillars that constitute the index.



Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15

While all of the pillars described above will matter to a certain extent for all economies, it is clear that they will affect different economies in different ways based on their stage of development. The stage of development is allocated to any economy based on two criteria. First, level of GDP per capita at market exchange rates and second criterion is used to adjust for countries that, based on income, would have moved beyond stage 1, but where prosperity is based on the extraction of resources. However, for some resource-based economies that have reached very high levels of income, the capacity to increase the productivity of any other sector beyond mineral production will be based on the country’s capacity to boost innovation, because adopting technology from abroad is not sufficient to increase productivity enough to sustain their high wage levels. Consequently, countries that are resource driven and significantly wealthier than economies at the technological frontier are classified in the innovation-driven stage. Further, the best way for India to improve its competitiveness is not the same as the best way for China to do so. This is because India and China are in different stages of development: as countries move along the development path, wages tend to increase and, in order to sustain this higher income, labor productivity must improve.

## COVER STORY

### India's Competitiveness Performance

According to GCR 2014-15, India ranks 71<sup>st</sup> among the 144 economies for which the index is estimated. It is currently under 1<sup>st</sup> stage of development which is factor driven. Figure 2 sheds light on the main strengths and weaknesses of India's competitiveness and presents the country's performance along the 12 dimensions of the GCI. Overall, India does best in the more complex areas of the GCI: innovation (49th) and business sophistication (57th). In contrast, it obtains low marks in the more basic and more fundamental drivers of competitiveness. For instance, India ranks 98th on the health and primary education pillar. On a more positive note, India is on track to achieve universal primary education. India has achieved spectacular progress in various measures of corruption and now ranks 65th.

Figure 2: India's Rank in the 12 pillars of the GCI 2014–2015



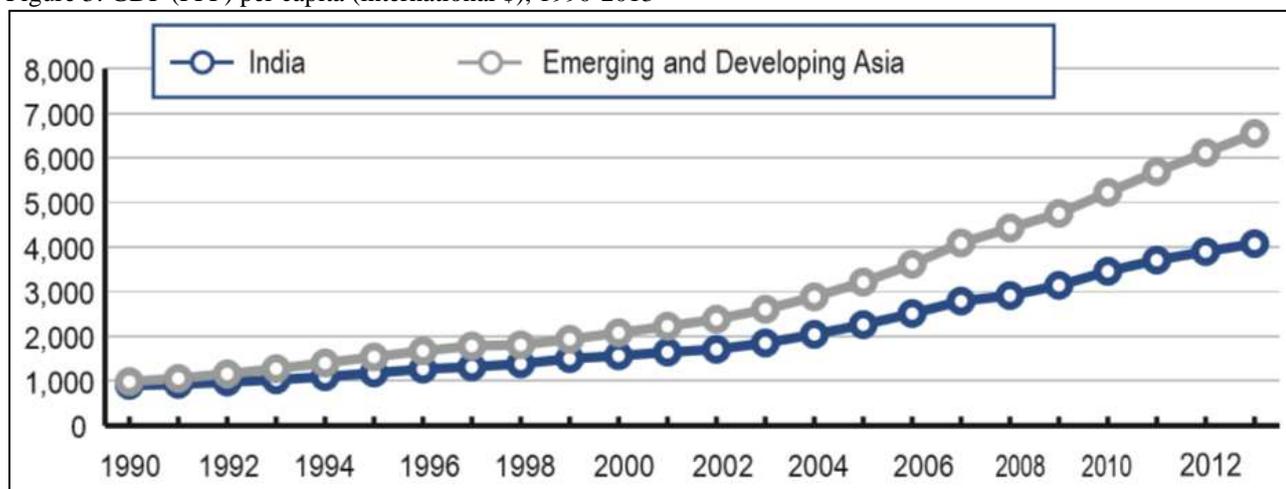
Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15

Note: India's rank (out of 144 economies) in the pillar is indicated in parentheses.

Red tape seems to be less of an issue than it had been, and government efficiency is equally improving. However, the overall business environment and market efficiency (95th, down 10 places) are undermined by protectionism, monopolies, and various distortionary measures, including subsidies and administrative barriers to entry and operation. Though India's GDP per capita showed a rising trend from 1990-2013, but the gap between India's GDP per capita and Emerging & Developing Asia's GDP per capita increased over the period of time. Figure 3 represents India's GDP per capita during 1990-2013.

## COVER STORY

Figure 3: GDP (PPP) per capita (international \$), 1990-2013



Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15

### Sustainable Competitiveness

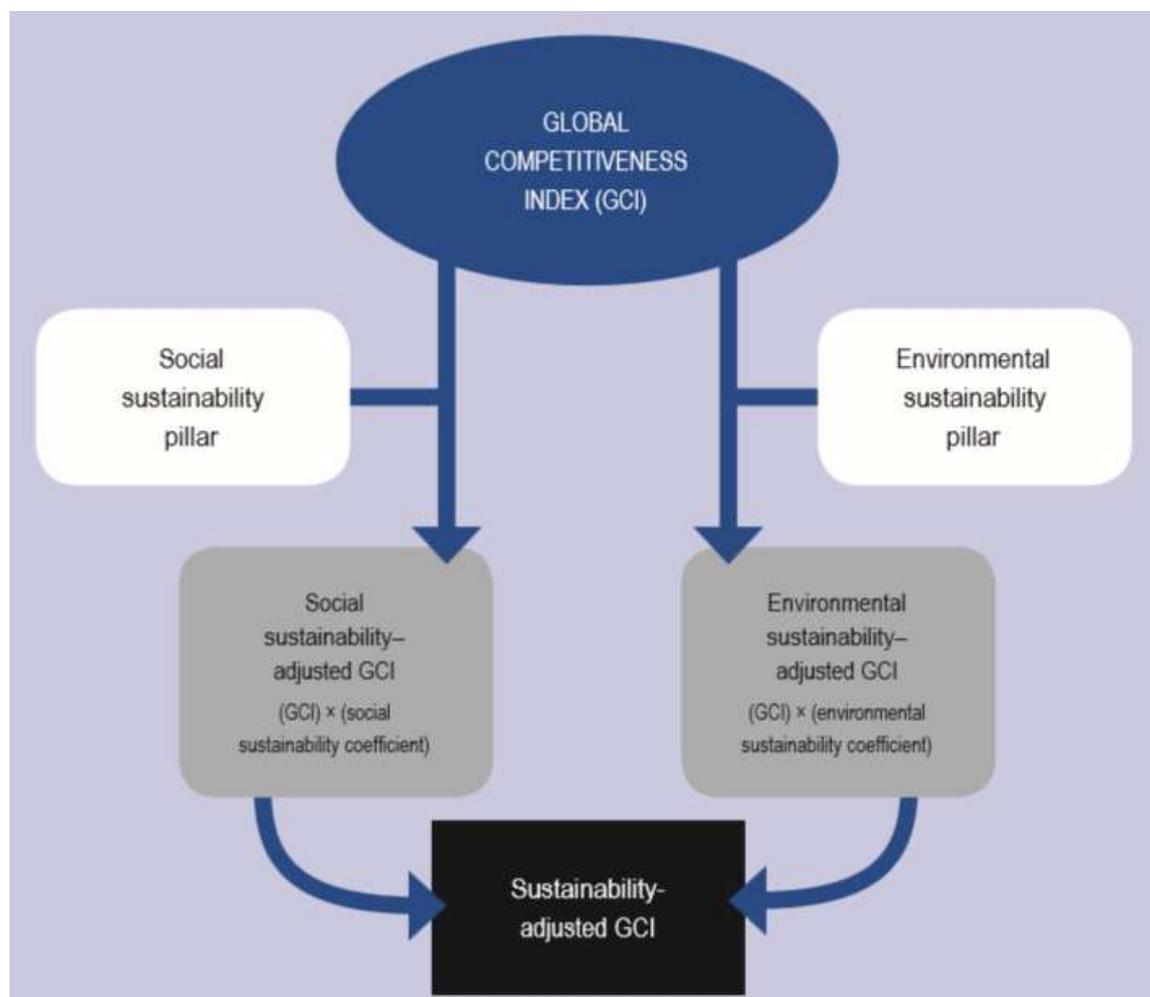
The report further highlights that apart from the economic performance of an economy which leads to development, the factors such as social and environment sustainability are also viable for sustained and universal levels of prosperity. Despite increased awareness about the urgency of social and environmental issues, progress toward a more sustainable future is slow. On the environmental sustainability side, although concrete improvements have been achieved in many countries on specific issues such as the regulation of hazardous substances, progress on broader issues has been patchy. On the social sustainability side, there appears to be a trend toward more polarized societies. Research shows that more polarized societies may undermine trust in democratic and market institutions, leading to greater political instability.

Taken together, the limited progress in addressing environmental and social concerns could undermine the prospects for worldwide shared prosperity. In the absence of economic growth, any effort toward a more equal distribution of income would do little good for the millions of people in developing countries who remain at low levels of income and human development.

In order to address these concerns, World Economic Forum has estimated Sustainability Adjusted Global Competitiveness Index. The framework adopted to represent this index (Figure 4) highlights the central position of competitiveness as the key driver of prosperity in society, recognizing that high levels of competitiveness are crucial to sustained prosperity.

COVER STORY

Figure 4: The structure of the sustainability-adjusted GCI



Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15

Further, the forum has identified three conceptual elements for social sustainability and environmental sustainability each which are represented in Table 1. Further the report estimates that India’s competitiveness has reduced when sustainability is taken into account. Social sustainability is hindered mainly by the population’s very uneven access to sanitation (still only 36 percent of Indians have access to these basic services) and high rates of vulnerable employment. To a lesser extent, its large informal economy and its lack of a universal social safety net show that India remains largely a poor country that is developing with large disparities within its society. India’s environmental performance is also below par because the country’s natural assets are depleting, despite some efforts in tightening environmental regulations since the adoption of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981.

COVER STORY

Table 1: Indicators for social sustainability and environmental sustainability

Social Sustainability			Environmental Sustainability		
Access to basic necessities	Vulnerability to economic exclusion	Social cohesion	Environmental policy	Use of renewable resources	Degradation of the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to sanitation</li> <li>• Access to improved drinking water</li> <li>• Access to healthcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to employment</li> <li>• Extent of informal economy</li> <li>• Social safety net protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Gini Index</li> <li>• Social mobility</li> <li>• Youth unemployment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental regulations (stringency and enforcement)</li> <li>• Number of ratified international environmental treaties</li> <li>• Terrestrial biome protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline water stress</li> <li>• Wastewater treatment</li> <li>• Forest cover change</li> <li>• Fish stocks overexploitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of particular matter concentration</li> <li>• CO2 intensity</li> <li>• Quality of the natural environment</li> </ul>

Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15

Air quality has slightly improved this year, but concentrations of particulate matter and carbon intensity are still very high: this is the case especially in the main urban centers, which are ranked among the 50 most polluted cities worldwide. In addition, the limited treatment of wastewater is increasing pressure on India’s water tables, and limited protected areas are wearing down the assessment of the quality of the natural environment. Although on some issues the authorities are working to improve the situation, but further work needs to be done.

**Conclusion**

In the light of concerns raised in the report, it is evident that while enhancing competitiveness remains a fundamental prerequisite to raising prosperity, it should be accompanied by transformations that adapt to the new technological, geopolitical, and ecological reality to ensure that progress translates into higher human development for all. Much of the growth in recent years has taken place because of the extraordinary and bold monetary policies in countries such as the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. As the economy improves in these countries, a normalization of monetary policy with tightening financial conditions could have an impact on both advanced and emerging economies. At the same time, sustainable competitiveness should be at the heart of the thinking about sustainability because competitive economies tend to be more innovative, more resilient, and better able to respond to external shocks and thus maintain high levels of prosperity going forward.

Attaining higher levels of sustainability requires that governments, businesses, and civil society work together to address the emerging challenges. Progress on these challenges requires high levels of multi-stakeholder collaboration—for example, on environmental regulation, where a balance with productivity needs to be ensured, and on social inclusion, which can be achieved only if businesses contribute to human capital development. Such collaboration is needed to achieve more pragmatic progress and allow countries to transition to more sustainable models of growth.

Reference

- Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15. World Economic Forum (WEF). (2014). Accessed from- [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GlobalCompetitivenessReport\\_2014-15.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2014-15.pdf)

Prepared by  
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## HEADLINES

## Caste Survey Shows High Incomes Unable to Change Mindset, One in Four Indians Practice Untouchability

Seema Chishti, *The Indian Express*, November 29, 2014

It has been sixty-four years since untouchability was abolished under the Indian Constitution. However, a survey conducted in over 42,000 households across India by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, US shows, across India, 27% respondents agreed that they did practice untouchability in some form. The results are part of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2) — the largest pan-Indian non-government household survey — carried out in 2011-12 for economic and social variables across multiple categories.

The survey found out that the practice was most prevalent among Brahmin respondents (52%). 24% of non-Brahmin forward caste respondents admitted to it, which was surprisingly lower than OBC respondents, 33% of who confirmed its prevalence in their homes. 15% of Scheduled Caste and 22% of Scheduled Tribe respondents admitted to the practice. In fact, those who admit to practicing untouchability belong to practically every religious and caste group, including Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Broken up by religious groups, data from the survey shows almost every third Hindu (30%) admitted to the practice, followed by Sikhs (23 per cent), Muslims (18 per cent) and Christians (5 per cent). Jains show the highest prevalence at 35%, however their sample size considered was small so results might be inconclusive. Spatially considered, the survey shows that the practice is most common in the Hindi heartland. Madhya Pradesh leads (53%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (50%), Chhattisgarh (48%), Rajasthan and Bihar (47%), Uttar Pradesh (43%), and Uttarakhand (40%). Bengal and Kerala seem to be progressive in this regard with 1% and 2% of respondents. Maharashtra stands at 4%, the Northeast at 7%, and Andhra Pradesh at 10%.

The report shows that high incomes have been unable to change the mindset, as caste identity sticks around. The leading factor that helps attack the practice turns out to be education, especially among Brahmins and OBCs.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/one-in-four-indians-admit-to-practising-untouchability-biggest-caste-survey/>

Date accessed: 30.11.2014  
(Kasturi Mishra)

## Rural Job Guarantee Scheme Chokes as Funds Dry Up

(Subodh Verma, *Times of India*, November 27, 2014)

Over two crore households have been denied work under the fund-starved rural job guarantee scheme in the past eight months. This is a direct result of the deep cuts in funding of the scheme and various other changes initiated by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. With the employment situation still dire and the new government's long-term efforts to catalyze industrial growth still on the drawing board, the failure of the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) has resulted in large scale discontent in rural areas, particularly those sections of society that dependent on MGNREGA to supplement their daily earnings

According to the ministry of rural development, over 10.6 crore households had applied for work till November 25 this year. But work was provided to 8.3 crore only, leaving 2.3 crore households without work. In the previous year, during the same period, work was provided to 9.8 crore households out of 10.9 crore who demanded it. This huge drop in the ability to provide work to poor rural households appears to be directly related to the cut in funding for the scheme. Fund allocation dropped from nearly Rs 39,000 crore in 2013-14 to nearly Rs 34,000 crore in the current year.

The Ministry data shows that the funds situation is so desperate that at the gram-panchayat level, pending accumulated liabilities are over Rs 14,000 crore. This has happened because panchayats have gone ahead and undertaken works promising payments to workers and material suppliers but the funds are not being disbursed. Over Rs 7,864 crore is stuck at various levels in the hierarchy, from blocks, through districts to state-level bodies. The logjam has severely affected ongoing works across the states. Over 26 lakh works that were begun under MGNREGA earlier are reported to be running behind schedule by up to 90 days.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rural-job-guarantee-scheme-chokes-as-funds-dry-up/articleshow/45291321.cms>

Date Accessed: 29.11.2014  
(Devyani Bhushan)

## HEADLINES

## Questionable Green Law Seeks to Subsume Existing Authorities

(Nitin Sethi & Somesh Jha, *Business Standard*, November 29, 2014)

A committee set up to review laws related to protection of environment and forests, headed by former Cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian, has recommended a green law, comprising several items, that will not only absorb existing legislation, but also have the capacity to go back on existing judicial pronouncements on environmental issues. The proposed law will get rid of all existing authorities created under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Though the report has not yet been made public, a review by *Business Standard* revealed that if the proposal for the Environment Laws (Management) Act 2014 is accepted, it could do away with the Supreme Court-appointed central empowered committee (CEC) on forestry issues, as well as the Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA).

The draft reviewed stated that all (existing) appellate or revising authorities would cease to have jurisdiction over all areas covered by the Act. The panel has also recommended that once the new Act is in place, powers of courts to intervene in environmental governance should be severely curtailed. The draft further said, "The provisions of this Act shall prevail over anything to the contrary contained in any judgment or order of any court or tribunal and other enactments, including the environmental laws dealt with under this Act." The draft proposes to create a National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), and a State Environmental Authority (SEMA), which will act as full time processing, clearance and monitoring agency thereby replacing the existing bodies such as Forest Advisory

Committee and Expert Appraisal Committee. It also proposes an Appellate Authority for issues dealt right now by the National Green Tribunal. The National Green Tribunal will judicially review the decisions taken by this board but it will not be able to carry out a technical review of the clearances, as it is empowered to do as of now. Another suggestion is made for special environmental courts that will be solely empowered to deal with infringement of environmental laws.

The CEC formed in May 2002 by the SC after several instances of environmental irregularities, has looked into various critical issues across the country. The issues include widespread illegal mining in parts of Odisha, Goa, Karnataka and the Western Ghats. Based on the recommendations of the CEC, the SC has cancelled many mining leases. EPCA, among other things, had recommended a ban on diesel vehicles in Delhi. It also played an advisory role on fuel quality and vehicle emissions. It is therefore questionable whether these can be subsumed under the proposed legislation that stands to seriously undermine accountability and environmental review in the country.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/green-law-to-subsume-existing-authorities-mooted-114112900772\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/green-law-to-subsume-existing-authorities-mooted-114112900772_1.html)

Date accessed: 30.11.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## ECONOMIC

## Macro Economic Dimension of India: Inflation Rates for the Month of October, 2014

General Inflation Rates in Indian States: October 2014 (%)

States	Rural	Urban	General
<b>All India</b>	<b>5.60</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.60</b>
<b>Northern Region</b>			
Jammu & Kashmir	4.83	8.07	5.22
Himachal Pradesh	5.98	4.78	5.77
Punjab	5.60	5.21	5.44
Chandigarh	3.67	5.66	5.80
Uttarakhand	6.60	4.07	5.71
Haryana	4.85	5.58	5.07
Delhi	1.97	4.34	4.19
Uttar Pradesh	6.68	6.27	6.59
<b>Western Region</b>			
Rajasthan	6.62	5.23	6.09
Gujarat	4.73	4.17	4.22
Maharashtra	4.89	5.12	5.06
Goa	7.83	5.59	6.68
Lakshadweep	8.48	6.69	7.50
Daman & Die	6.81	6.24	6.58
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	1.83	2.07	1.89
<b>Central Region</b>			
Madhya Pradesh	3.90	4.84	4.34
Chattishgarh	4.46	5.04	4.67
<b>Southern Region</b>			
Andhra Pradesh	3.70	5.51	4.37
Karnakata	4.03	7.81	5.89
Kerala	7.57	8.48	7.83
Tamil Nadu	4.34	5.73	5.10
Puducherry	5.41	5.58	5.54
Andaman & Nicobar Island	8.35	3.73	6.20
<b>Northeastern Region</b>			
Arunachal Pradesh	6.81		
Assam	6.41	7.96	6.47
Manipur	1.56	5.96	3.08
Meghalaya	15.28	10.09	14.14
Mizoram	7.46	5.88	6.60
Nagaland	13.72	7.33	11.13
<b>Tripura</b>	<b>10.99</b>	<b>10.46</b>	<b>10.85</b>
Sikkim	7.14	7.82	7.32
<b>Eastern Region</b>			
Bihar	7.37	6.24	6.98
Jharkhand	2.49	5.86	3.61
West Bengal	4.83	5.52	5.18
Odisha	9.83	7.37	9.03

All – India Inflation rate has come down from 7.86% in the month of August to 6.46% in the month of September 2014 along with its rural and urban decline. Amongst the states also the inflation rate has come down except for few states like Kerala, where its rural and combined rates have gone high from its previous month. Similarly in Odisha and Gujarat, the combined inflation rate has gone high from the previous month. For the month of September, Meghalaya has seen highest inflation with 14.30% and Andhra Pradesh has see lowest inflation with 4.

Source: State-wise monthly inflation rates are estimated from year on year Consumer Price Index (CPI) data of MOSPI. There is one month time lag in CPI data (New Series 2010=100) provided by MOSPI, Government of India.

## ECONOMIC

## IT Investments in Gujarat Fail to Take Off

(Pradnya Deo, *Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy*, November 28, 2014)

Gujarat has recently come up with its own IT/ITES policy that aims to push investments in the Information technology (IT) sector by five times than the present level. An array of incentives has been announced in this regard, above those provided in its earlier IT Policy of 2006-11. Since the announcement of the IT Policy of 2006-11, Gujarat has attracted Rs. 370.5 billion over the past eight years.

However, most of these investments have failed to take off since their inception. Out of the Rs. 43.6 billion announced in 2006-07, Rs. 17.5 billion was for Vadodara alone. Out of this, only Rs. 3 billion worth of IT/ITES SEZ project saw completion in 2010. The rest has been rendered as dead investment with no update on their progress. Another Rs. 21.2 billion investments were announced in the Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar-Kheda belt. Presently, only the Rs. 7 billion Charodi IT/ITES SEZ Project is under implementation. The implementation of the Rs. 12 billion Acqualine Properties project at Koba was stalled in August 2014, as the company cited unfavorable market conditions. Another Rs. 2 billion investments announced in the year are lying idle due to lack of any progress. No information is available on the project announced by Microsoft Corporation (India) in Ahmedabad as well. There is also no progress on the Rs. 30 million Rajkot IT Project and Reliance Communication's Ahmedabad Call Centre project.

While there was no announcement of any new IT investments in 2007-08, investments worth Rs. 308 billion were announced in 2009-09, Rs. 300 billion of which came from Dholera Nano City Project. However, the project ran into troubles when it was issued a notice to pay the required money for land, failing which the MoU signed to create an IT/ITES enabled city would stand canceled. The project is now in a stage of uncertainty as there has been no development on the project since its announcement.

In the years from 2009-10 to 2012-13, new IT investments worth Rs. 23.6 billion were announced in Gujarat. A few out of these failed to take off. A major Ognaj IT SEZ Project that began in 2009 has seen slow progress since. Gujarat did not attract any new IT investments in 2013-14 and in the first half of 2014-15 as well.

Gujarat has the second highest amount of outstanding investments as on quarter ended September 2014 at Rs. 365.9 billion, of which only Rs. 37.8 billion are under implementation. It ranks way below other states at the ninth position in terms of IT investments under implementation.

Against this backdrop when the investments announced earlier are already failing to take off/progress, another set of incentives is questionable. However, the new policy mentions that only those units, which begun commercial operations during the operative period of the policy, will be entitled to benefits. Again, those projects/units proposed earlier could perhaps avail these incentives if they have not yet entered a MoU and do so during the current policy period.

<http://statesofindia.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=wshreport&nvdt=20141128185817953&nvpc=040000000000&nvtype=INSIGHTS>

Date Accessed: 30.11.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

**POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE****States Oppose Railway Ministry's Plans to Manage GRP***(Deccan Herald, November 27, 2014)*

The States have resisted the move of the Railway Ministry to take over the operational control of Government Railways Police (GRP) for effective policing of passengers and assets. At least 17 states have opposed the move when the ministry had asked for their opinion as it wanted optimum utilisation of the two police forces – the Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force (RPF) at its disposal. While the RPF is under the ministry, states have jurisdiction over the Government Railway Police (GRP) that essentially performs the duties much like that of a district police in their own jurisdictions.

Railways Minister, replying to queries on passengers safety, told the Lok Sabha that to bring synergy in the role of the GRP and the RPF, the Centre had sought states views on taking over operational control of the government railway police.

The Railway Minister stated that while some states supported the idea, 17 states have not given their concurrence. “To create a more effective security mechanism over Indian Railways, a proposal for amendment in the RPF Act has been moved by the Ministry of Railways with the approval of the Ministries of Law and Home Affairs.” The reason given by the minister for such a move was that it will empower the RPF to deal with serious crimes in passenger areas.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/444281/states-oppose-ministrys-plans-manage.html>

Date Accessed: 29.11.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

**Government Eyes Private Cash to Build Railways to its Ports***(Krishna N.Das, Tommy Wilkes, Business Today, November 24, 2014)*

At a time when the country is suffering from delayed coal imports that result in a power crisis, the government is planning to attract private investments of around \$1 billion to build rail lines that would connect ports with national networks. This would provide a continuous supply of coal for power plants across the country. This investment would be way more than the \$400 million that the railways received ever since limited private participation was allowed. “The cash-starved rail system has added just

11,000 kilometres of track in the 67 years since independence, and the network has come to symbolise the poor state of country's infrastructure. China has managed 14,000 km of new lines in the five years to 2011.”

Overcrowding at ports continue to delay the delivery of coal and iron ore for power and steel manufacturers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants private companies to invest in last mile freight lines. Private companies have always faced difficulties in gaining government approvals. The government is now set to allow companies to part-own these new rail lines for variable periods of time. Although, the government is yet to decide its policy on the subject, approvals have already been granted to two infrastructure companies, Navayuga and Balaji Infra, to work on 316 kilometres of lines. “The ministry also wants foreign operators which own stakes in Indian ports, like Denmark's Maersk, to invest but so far none had shown any interest.”

According to government estimates port operators are set to spend \$8 billion to expand capacity to meet increasing imports over the period of next 2 years. “That rapid expansion worries port operators, who say the government's proposed \$1 billion worth of last mile railway links won't help with bottlenecks on the wider network.” Due to overcrowding of the railway lines, cargo is supplied through road networks, which leads to transport losses. . “On a critical line between the eastern coast and the capital Delhi, demand exceeds capacity on four of every 10 kilometres. That forces cargo onto clogged roads and raises transport losses, which consultancy McKinsey says could cost India \$140 billion in 2020”

Essar Ports, a large ports operator, wants to build new rail lines since it expects a doubling of its cargo handling capacity. But the state owned railways, which has the monopoly over the provision of good wagons, has failed to meet the demand. Domestic companies will benefit if the government allows more wagons and it will improve the railways own finances in turn. “Most Indian ports only have access to two-thirds of the wagons they need, and the shortage is one reason why ships have to wait for two days more to get berthed and unload than the international average, according to Deutsche Bank.”

<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/govt-eyes-private-cash-to-build-railways-to-its-ports/1/212652.html>

Date Accessed: 3.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

### CAG Report Says that SEZ's have Failed

(Sheerupa Mitra Jha, *Governance Now*, November 28, 2014)

A recent report from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) shows that Special economic zones (SEZ's) all over the country haven't met the set targets of job creation and most are plagued by fraudulent land deals. The report very clearly states that national databases on economic growth, trade, infrastructure, employment etc do not show any rise following the establishment of SEZ's.

"The report indicated that the sampled SEZs numbering 152 had non-performance in employment generation ranging from 65.95% to 96.58%, investment from 23.98% to 74.92% and export ranging from 46.16 to 93.81%". The few SEZ's that have contributed to job creation were established before the SEZ act was enacted. The report has indicated that there are no "measurable performance indicators to gauge the socio-economic benefits out of SEZ's for citizens and the state". The report states that "out of the 45,635.63 hectares allotted for SEZ's, work commenced in only 28,488.49". In some cases land was first notified for SEZ's and later de-notified to gain benefit from price. 39,245.56 hectares of land was notified for SEZ's in six states out of which 5,402.22 hectares was later de-notified and given for commercial purposes.

In between 2007-07 and 2012-13 SEZ's received tax concessions worth Rs 83,104.76. "Tax exemptions also revealed that ineligible exemptions/deductions to the tune of Rs 1,150.06 crore and systemic weaknesses in tax administration to the tune of Rs 27,130.98 crore." The CAG has also indicated that lack of internal audit facilitated misrepresentation of facts by developers which amount to Rs 1,150.06 crore. India today has 496 SEZ's which cover 61,000 hectares of land with an investment of 3 lakh crores.

<http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/sezs-have-failed-deliver-shows-cag-report>

Date Accessed: 3.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## DEVELOPMENT

### India to Get 25 New Solar Parks

(Aruna Kumarankandath, *Down To Earth*, December 01, 2014)

The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is all set to spend Rs 4,046.25 crore under a new scheme to develop 25 solar parks across the country. A solar

park has "installations of multiple solar photovoltaic modules by different firms at one set location which provides all infrastructural facilities."

Each plant to be set up would have a capacity ranging between 500 to 1,000 megawatt (MW). As of now 12 states have shown interest in setting up solar parks, which have a collective capacity of 12 gigawatts (GW). Joint Secretary of MNRE Tarun Kapoor indicated in a recent interview that the state of Mizoram may be the next on the list. He also mentioned that the solar plants in Rajasthan and Gujarat would serve as models for the new plants to be set up.

In 2014 the ministry has released a "draft scheme for development of solar parks and ultra mega solar power projects" in August 2014 but it is yet to release the final version." Piyush Goyal, the minister of state for power, coal and new and renewable energy indicated that the cost for the development of these solar parks would be Rs 0.95 crore per MW, while Rs 6.91 crore needs to be invested to develop a grid-connected solar power project. "The draft scheme proposes a grant of Rs 20 lakh per MW or 30 per cent of the project cost, including grid connectivity cost." The total cost to be incurred by the ministry is estimated to be Rs 4,046.25 crore. Rs 500 crore would be spent in 2014-15 as part of phase I. The amount will go up to 1400 crore in 2018-19.

If the scheme achieves its generation target then India would have an installed capacity of 25 GW. Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, the other major national project aims to achieve a target of 22 GW by 2022. However, neighbouring country China plans to generate 100 GW of solar power by 2020. "The move will be a shift from highly fossil-fuel-dependent economy to a more renewable-energy oriented one."

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-get-25-solar-parks>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

### China to Push Polluting Industries to India through 'Make in India'

(Saibal Dasgupta, *Times of India*, November 28, 2014)

According to an article in the Global Times newspaper, by Ding Gang, a senior editor of People's Daily which is one of the organs of the Chinese Communist Party, the real hope for Prime Minister's Make in India's success lies in absorbing sunset industries, which China is pushing out. The article points out that India will need to learn from China's manufacturing experience and import its industries just like China had once imported the same from Japan and the four Asian Tigers namely Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea,

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

and Taiwan.

However, what it really implies for Make in India is that the program will end up importing the highly polluting outdated industries of China which are desperate to relocate their plants to India. China has already been relocating its sunset industries to neighbouring countries like Vietnam, Laos and Bangladesh. It has since been looking for an entry into India, which only be made easier under the advantages provided by Make in India. Leaders and businessmen have recently visited India from China, in search of opportunities in various sectors like textiles, chemicals, iron and steel, low-end motors and machines. Plants in China are choked with overcapacity and rising production costs which will be averted by transferring plants to India. The article, however, does not mention that these businessmen are looking to escape hurdles that include government censure for high-polluting industries, and rising cost of labour, land and components and are therefore turning to India.

The article even suggests that India must dilute some further strict controls in order to allow Chinese firms to bring “not only capital and order, but also technologies, managerial expertise, market and support in other arenas”. However, this only further shows the desperation on part of the Chinese industries and the need for greater sensibility in inviting industries to set up in India.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/China-wants-to-push-polluting-sunset-industries-to-India/articleshow/45310294.cms>

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/893863.shtml>

Date Accessed: 30.11.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

GOVERNMENT

Jindia Improves Rank on Global Corruption Index

(The Hindu Business Line, December 03, 2014)

Transparency International has ranked India 85 out of 175 nations in its latest corruption index. This marks an increase in 11 notches from last year rank of 94. Denmark topped the list while North Korea and Somalia shared the last place. India’s neighbor Nepal and Pakistan were ranked at 126 while China fell 20 places from 80 to 100<sup>th</sup> position.

The improvement in India’s index score is based on two data sources- the World Economic Forum (WEF) and World Justice Project’s index. A better WEF score shows that businesses view “environment favourably with regards to their perception of corruption and bribery in the country.”

The Justice Project index shows that public perception of public sector corruption has decreased slightly.

The data was collected before the change of government this year. Nine out of ten independent data sources were used including the World Bank and WEF.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-improves-rank-on-global-corruption-index-data-collected-before-govt-change/article6659032.ece>

Date Accessed: 4.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

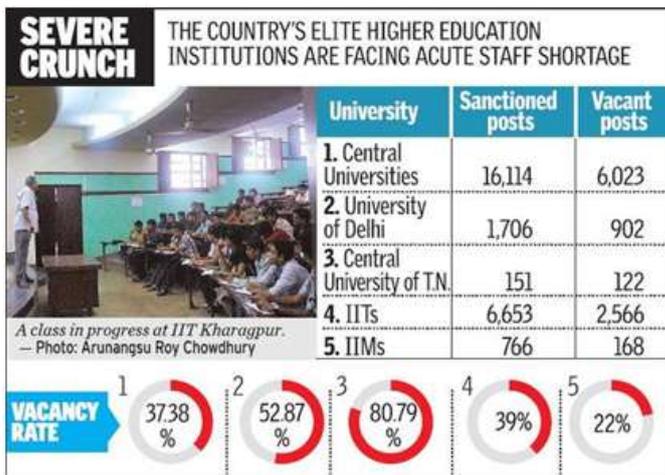
EDUCATION

Severe Crunch of Staff in Institutions of Higher Education in India

(The Hindu, December 03, 2014)

As per the latest official data, massive faculty vacancies exist in institutions of higher education in India.

In the 39 Central Universities across India 40% of faculty positions remain vacant, with the problem more prevalent in newer Central Universities. More than 50% of faculty positions in the Delhi University are unoccupied.



In the Indian Institute of Technology about 40% of faculty positions were yet to be filled, while Indian Institute of Management posted faculty vacancies at over 20%.

The official data on the number of vacancies was submitted to the Rajya Sabha by the Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani.

The minister said that in order to overcome the shortages of faculty in such institutions “Contract, adjunct and visiting

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

faculty” would be used. In addition to this the use of “online mode of teaching” was mooted.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/40-pc-faculty-posts-vacant-in-central-varsities/article6656243.ece>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

### HEALTH

#### Sterilisation Focus More on Women: UN Report

(J.V. Siva Prasanna Kumar, *Deccan Chronicle*,  
November 28, 2014)

India does not seem to lag behind numerous countries in resorting to sterilisation as an effective means of birth control. World over, sterilisation is the most widespread form of birth control. According to 2013 data from the United Nations, over 35 per cent of Indian women who were married or in a relationship were sterilised.

When compared to other countries, only Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador ranked higher. Even China, which is known for its one child policy and forced sterilisation policies, ranked lower than India. The rates of sterilisation for men in India are far too less and globally, also, male sterilisation rates are low. Only few countries like Britain, Canada, and New Zealand have vasectomies on the higher side.

Brazil and India have also shown declining fertility trends since the last three decades and much of the fertility decline has been fuelled by an increase in the use of female sterilisation. Kerry McBroom, a New Delhi-based advocate with the Human Rights Law Network, says, “The entire system is geared towards funding women towards sterilisation.” Coerced and forced sterilization are prohibited under international human rights law. Yet, “family planning” policies in India which focus on the sterilization of women prioritize population control over the autonomy and rights of individuals.

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/141128/lifestyle-health-and-wellbeing/article/sterilisation-focus-more-women>

Date Accessed: 30.11.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

#### Giving Dengue Its Due

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, November 29, 2014)

For the past seven years, dengue outbreaks have not been given their due. Last year 55,000 cases and 132 deaths were

reported. However studies show that cases of dengue fever in India is 282 times higher than the official figures. Though dengue is a primarily an urban phenomenon, rural out breaks have been also common since late 1990s.

Dengue spreads from garbage, unhygienic surroundings, garden patches, flowerpots and pet baths. These act as breeding grounds for the disease. Though the disease affects people of all socio-economic background, the burden of it is heavier on the poor. Public hospitals are under staffed and not well-managed forcing patients to show other options. They have to visit private hospitals, which charge them hugely.

The cause of dengue outbreaks can be ascribed to rapid urbanization and lack of planning. But the two leading causes include “poor vector surveillance and anti-larval work by the respective district health authorities.” Health experts have long been calling for a better prevention through community participation. Prevention of tuberculosis, malaria or dengue requires surveillance data, which is not available in the Indian context.

The response of the government has been ineffective. It denies the seriousness of the outbreak. Moreover, the limited response is limited to spraying pesticides all around the city or putting up hoarding boards about the disease. Both of them have been ineffective and cannot replace the important work done by public health workers.

The most critical response to the disease is to create “access to potable water, a functioning sanitation system, greater focus on planned urban development, an accessible and responsive public health system, and, most important, strict surveillance and encouragement of community participation in preventing the disease.”

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/giving-dengue-its-due.html>

Date Accessed: 4.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

#### Half of India's HIV Cases from Andhra, TN, Karnataka and Telangana

(Adarsh Jain, *Times of India*, December 01, 2014)

Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka account for 3.6 lakh HIV cases, which makes about 50% HIV patients in the country. Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) has the highest number of HIV cases in the country with over 1.7 lakh people affected by the disease. Maharashtra is a close second with 1.43 lakh people and Karnataka has just over one lakh people with HIV.

Experts attribute the rising number of reported cases in the southern states to efficient screening of the virus during the

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past few years. High population states such as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have reported low cases of HIV.

“The total number new cases has reduced almost 50% across the country in three years—from 3.1 lakh fresh cases in 2010-11 to 1.5 lakh cases in 2013-14.” Such a drop can be attributed to the raising awareness of among public and especially risk-prone communities such as sex workers, homosexuals and transgender.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Four-states-in-south-make-up-50-of-HIV-cases/articleshow/45329796.cms>

Date Accessed: 4.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

### ENERGY

#### Power Cuts Ahead as 53 Plants Stressed Due to Fuel Shortage

(Iftikar Gilani, *DNA*, November 28, 2014)

The Central Government has identified 53 power projects belonging to both public and private sector companies that are stressed for want of fuel both coal and gas. The amount stuck in these power plants is approximately Rs 1.54 lakh crore.

As many as 25 power projects are stressed due to non-availability of coal, putting at stake an amount of Rs 89,757.37 crore. Out of these six projects are in Maharashtra and three in Karnataka. Adani's 1,320 mw Tirora TPP power plant in Maharashtra, already commissioned at a cost of Rs 9,631 crore, is also running out of coal. The case is same for Jindal's Tamnar TPP power plant of 1,200 mw capacity in Maharashtra coming at a cost of Rs 4,277 crore. Out of 33 gas-based power plants running out of fuel two are in Maharashtra, 11 are in Gujarat and 15 in Andhra Pradesh. The amount at stake in gas based stressed projects comes to Rs 64,431 crore.

Another cause of worry for the Government is that the trade unions have blamed the government for not creating adequate infrastructure of the state-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) for enhanced coal production and giving the excuse of CIL working at a less than optimal capacity to encourage private companies to explore the country's black gold. Currently CIL alone can excavate and sell coal to the end-users, but it has not increased its production over the years, while the Supreme Court's judgment cancelling all coal block allocations also debars the state governments from selling any coal.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-power-cuts-ahead->

[as-53-plants-stressed-due-to-fuel-shortage-2039049](http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/274-tiger-deaths-four-years-india-records-highest-toll-between-two-censuses)

Date Accessed: 29.11.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

### ENVIRONMENT

#### With 274 Tiger Deaths in Four Years, India Records Highest Toll Between Two Censuses

(Kumar Sambhav, *Down to Earth*, November 28, 2014)

The Government is all set to release latest assessment of the tiger population of the country. However the news appears to very grim. As per the Union Environment Minister, at least 274 tigers have died in the last four years. This figure is the highest for any given period between two assessment cycles. The result of the Tiger population census will be released next month.

According to the 2010 census, India had approximately 1,706 tigers (between the lower limit of 1,520 and upper limit of 1,909). Between 2006 and 2010, around 180 tigers were reported to have died. From 2002 to 2006, 105 tigers had died, while 146 tigers were reported dead between 1998 and 2002. Out of the 274 tigers only 82 tigers died due to natural reasons. More than 70 per cent of tiger deaths were due to poaching.

The government has hardly addressed the mortality of tigers outside tiger reserves. Of the 105 tigers that died outside tiger reserves in the last three years, only 13 are reported to have died due to natural reasons. Ninety-two tigers were either poached or the reasons for their deaths have not been identified. Government policy is, however, focused only on the reserves. There is no policy to effectively address habitat destruction, human-tiger conflicts and poaching of tigers outside reserves.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/274-tiger-deaths-four-years-india-records-highest-toll-between-two-censuses>

Date Accessed: 29.11.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

#### Green Regulator to Be Set Up Without Penal Power

(Somesh Jha, *Business Standard*, November 28, 2014)

The Union government has agreed to set up an environment regulator that will have powers to appraise industrial projects. But it will not have powers to penalise violators of green laws. This new body will have the following powers:

- to appraise industrial projects for environment

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clearance

- to oversee the process of accreditation of environment impact assessment (EIA)
- to ensure enforcement of the conditions stated in the environment clearances

The announcement is in contrast to the recommendations of the high-level committee constituted by the Union environment ministry under former Cabinet Secretary TSR Subramanian to review environmental laws. The committee had suggested an independent National Environment Management Authority and State Environment Management Authority to take over the powers of the existing pollution control boards. The ministry of Environment and Forest was silent on the proposed authority's penal powers. At present, only courts have the authority to impose penalty on the basis of complaints filed by authorised officers, a winding process that has hardly ever led to action.

It was also not clear whether the role of the state pollution control board (SPCB) and various regional offices of the ministry would be subsumed in the environment regulator or whether these would become an arm of the body. Experts said without the power to prosecute offenders, the regulator will have no significance. "This will be a toothless body."

The Supreme Court had, on January 6, directed the government to appoint a national regulator under Section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The court had suggested an independent body be set up for appraising projects, enforcing environmental clearance conditions and imposing penalties. However, in April, the Union environment ministry had conveyed to the apex court that the regulator to be set up under the EPA could not be authorised to impose penalties without further legislation. The idea of setting up an autonomous body for appraising projects was mooted by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2010.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/environment-regulator-to-be-set-up-without-penal-powers-114112800017\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/environment-regulator-to-be-set-up-without-penal-powers-114112800017_1.html)

Date Accessed: 30.11.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

### Obama-China Deal Puts India Under Pressure

(Natalie Obiko Pearson, Alex Morales, *livemint*, December 01, 2014)

US President Barack Obama recently signed a deal with China to significantly reduce fossil fuel emissions. As a consequence the pressure is now on all the other major economies, including India, to enter similar agreements on

emission cuts at the United Nations. Other member countries of the U.N would certainly expect India, the country with the third largest emission to cut them down in the wake of this agreement. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) India will witness an increase of 34% in carbon emissions till 2020, which is set to double by 2030.

Pressure would be on India to become a part of the agreement to facilitate a global agreement at the U.N. President Barack Obama may push India to be a part of the deal for him to receive support at home for his deal with China. It becomes mandatory since the U.S senate rejected the Kyoto protocol back in 1997, when emission limits were only accepted for rich nations. Under this agreement the U.S has agreed "to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 26 below 2005 levels by 2025, while China is planning to meet 20% of its energy demand using renewable sources by 2030". China has until now sided with India, South Africa and Brazil in their opposition to accept the same emission cut targets as set for rich countries.

The U.N is set to push for a deal at Paris in 2015 that would limit fossil fuel emissions for both rich and poor countries. The U.S, China, EU and Russia have already come out with their plans. Developing nations including India are still trying to balance the demand for emission reductions and economic growth. Environment minister Prakash Javdekar has not commented on these developments. The NDA government which promised to provide universal access to electricity has claimed that it won't compromise growth for climate goals. However, IEA has declared that India is set to overtake the U.S by 2020 as the second-largest coal consumer. Power minister Piyush Goyal has indicated that coal will continue to dominate our power sector for the years to come. His ministry has plans to double the share of renewable energy in consumption in the next 5 years. The government is also planning to generate 100 gigawatts through solar power plants by 2020. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given conflicting views on the matter so far. Officials from EU, UK and the US have already expressed their wish to see India as a part of the agreement that the U.N envisions for Paris 2015.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/NIEEUdYReuJItb0m2B6gBJ/Obama-China-pact-raises-stakes-for-India-as-climate-talks-be.html>

Date Accessed: 02.12.104

(Rohit Chauhan)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

**AGRICULTURE****Farm Distress Under-Reported by Government: NGOs**

(Sayantan Bera, *Livemint*, November 26, 2014)

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/pVBsXcX1A1MJkTimPYVLZN/Govt-admits-301-farmer-deaths-due-to-distress-NGOs-report-f.html>

Date Accessed: 28.11.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

This article highlights the instances of farmer suicides in the country and the inadequate response on part of the government. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, in response to a query, there have been at least 301 cases of farmer suicides due to farm distress in the country in this year so far. The highest prevalence is in Maharashtra, followed by Telangana and then Karnataka. Maharashtra reported 204 suicides (up to April), Telangana (up to October) and Karnataka (till date) reported 69 and 19 farmer suicides, respectively. Gujarat (up to October), Kerala (up to October) and Andhra Pradesh (up to June) reported three farmer suicides each. Agriculture, along with agricultural indebtedness, is a state subject. It is therefore the responsibility of the states to compensate the affected families and to develop the sector. The Ministry of Agriculture added that the central government could contribute only to supplement the efforts of states through policy measures and budgetary support.

However, the agriculture ministry's data on farmer suicides grossly under report the incidents, as compared to the estimates provided by NGOs. According to the Rythu Swarajya Vedika, an umbrella organization of farmers groups and non-profit organizations working in Telangana, the state alone has seen more than 375 farmer suicides between 2 June and 4 November 2014. Prolonged dry spells, crop failures, high levels of indebtedness plagued Telangana with additional problems as farmers were growing cotton in a rain-fed region. The ministry's response also did not speak of Uttar Pradesh, which sees multiple cases in the Bundelkhand region. Sanjay Singh, national convenor of the Jal Jan Jodo Abhiyan, a Jhansi-based non-profit organization said, "In seven districts of Bundelkhand, at least 200 farmers have committed suicide this year—mostly from Hamirpur, Mohaba, Chitrakoot and Banda, which were worst affected in Uttar Pradesh." However, no attention has been given to the area.

The June-to-September monsoon season ended with a 12% rainfall deficit, for the entire country. Several regions in Telangana, Maharashtra, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh recorded deficits of over 20%. Out of these, only Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have declared a drought. Even the government in Telangana has, meanwhile, not announced any relief for the affected families who are doubly burdened as cotton prices have crashed to below-MSP levels.

## SOCIETY

**GENDER****Disabled Women in India Locked Up and Abused***(Reuters, December 03, 2014)*

At least 70 million Indians have psychological disabilities like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and more than 1.5 million have intellectual disabilities like Down's Syndrome. Despite this only 0.06% on India's health budget is spent on mental health as per the Human Rights Watch (HRW) titled "Treated Worse Than Animals."

The report stated that there existed only 43 government mental hospitals and three psychiatrists and 0.47 psychologists per million people in India. The lack of mental health services is even more acute in rural parts of India.

HRW said that Women and girls with disabilities are often sent to mental hospitals and institutions where they are abused frequently. They mostly live in overcrowded and squalid conditions with medical treatments forced upon them against their will.

HRW researcher Kriti Sharma said, "Women and girls with disabilities are dumped in institutions by their family members or police in part because the government is failing to provide appropriate support and services."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/03/us-india-women-disabilities-idUSKCN0JH1O420141203>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

**SOCIAL JUSTICE****Tobacco Farmers Seek Alternative Cash Crop***(The Pioneer, December 04, 2014)*

Tobacco growers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka demanded alternative crop before imposing regulatory amendments on consumption of tobacco products such as cigarettes. Upset over Centre's move to ban sale of loose cigarettes, tobacco farmers met Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister M Venkaiah Naidu, Health and Family Welfare Minister J. P. Nadda Commerce Minister Nirmala Sirharaman and Agriculture Minister Radhamohan Singh.

According to news article published in Daily Pioneer, the

tobacco farmers said, "the proposed regulatory amendments like banning sale of loose cigarettes will only result in shift in consumption" from cigarettes to other cheaper tobacco products like bidis, chewing tobaccos and other ways "without curtailing the overall tobacco consumption."

Farmer's group asked J P Nadda not to take any hasty step that could affect the interest of the tobacco and areca nut growers. Farmers in their meetings with various Union Ministers stressed that in many parts of the country livelihood of farmers is dependent on these cash crops only and there is a need to provide a suitable alternative cash crops in tobacco and Areca nut growing areas before reducing tobacco consumption through regulations.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/nation/loose-cigarettes-ban-tobacco-farmers-seek-alternative-cash-crop.html>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2014

(Jeet Singh)

**REGIONALISM****Assam Moots Free Medical Treatment for Poor***(Free Press Journal, December 04, 2014)*

Assam government is planning to formulate 'total healthcare' policy for the families of below poverty line (BPL). Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has directed health and family welfare department officials to formulate the policy. Chief Minister said, his government has planned to provide free treatment and medicine to BPL families. He said, "Free treatment and medicine will be provided to BPL families in government hospitals as well as in private nursing homes within the state."

In a move to strengthen health care services in the state, Gogoi directed health officials to ensure availability of medicines in all government hospitals and health centres across the state. He also asked the department to fill up vacant post in all medical colleges and health establishments.

Chief Minister has also asked for the revival of the "Mamata scheme", under which babies born in government hospitals are given talcum powder, towels, mosquito nets, blankets etc. as gifts.

<http://freepressjournal.in/assam-moots-free-medical-treatment-for-poor/#sthash.q0D9qinz.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 05.12.2014

(Jeet Singh)

## Groundwater and Soil Contamination Still Prevalent Thirty Years after Bhopal Gas Tragedy

*(The Hindu, December 2, 2014)*

Contamination from the leak of 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate from the Union Carbide plant still continues to affect Bhopal's residents thirty years after India's worst industrial disaster.

Evidence of groundwater and soil contamination has been revealed through studies by many institutions over the years. Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in its 2009 study found pesticide contamination in regions as far as three kilometres from the plant site. Furthermore, contamination is seen as increasing towards north-west direction. The pollutants include heavy metals like lead, mercury and chromium besides pesticides and other organic chemicals as per Amit Khurana of the CSE.

The contamination from the leak still haunts families. "Children even in the third generation are physically and mentally challenged, they suffer renal failures, eye ailments and other health problems. In areas near the factory, several people have cancer and a combination of many ailments. Entire savings of families have been wiped out, yet the documentation of ailments among the successive generations have still not been fully done," said rights activist Abdul Jabbar.

The Union Carbide plant has still not been cleaned up due to pending legal disputes. A time-bound action plan was formulated after consultations with experts from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Indian Institutes of Technology, civil society and other organisations however, institutional log-jam stopped its progress. The action plan sought to involve local people under the management of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The plan suggested immediate measures, like "fencing of the site and preventing rainwater runoff," in addition to medium and long-term measures. The plan seeks to ban contaminated Solar Evaporation Ponds, clearing of contaminated and toxic materials and incineration of combustible materials under the supervision of CPCB. These measures can be undertaken and completed within three to six months according to the plan.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/contamination-still-hounds-bhopal-residents/article6652799.ece>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## INDIA AND WORLD

**INDIA IN THE WORLD**

### **India Votes against United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Nuclear Weapons**

*(Firstpost, December 03, 2014)*

India has, with the backing of United States, voted against a UN general assembly resolution which asked India to give up its nuclear weapons. The resolution was aimed at achieving a nuclear weapons free world. It also targeted Israel and Pakistan and was passed by a majority. The US and India voted against an important part of the resolution which asked the three nations “to immediately and unconditionally accede possibility to Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear states and put all their nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards”. This would have led to the India losing its current nuclear arsenal and all of its nuclear production capacity.

Israel and Pakistan also voted against the resolution while Bhutan, France and Britain did not vote at all. The resolution with passed with 165 votes in the 193 member UNGA. However, the fact remains that such resolutions remain symbolic and are not binding under the UN charter. India has also voted against similar clauses in other resolutions as well. India has taken a firm stand against the NPT, which upholds the hierarchy of the five permanent members. India’s ambassador and permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament D.B Venkatesh Varma rejected the possibility of India becoming a part of the NPT. Recent “India voted against another resolution pushing for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and abstained on another urging nations not to carry out nuclear tests. These resolutions passed by overwhelming majorities.” Two other resolutions that asked countries to take efforts to limit the access of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists and for lessening international tension by reducing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons on high alert were passed by the UN.

<http://www.firstpost.com/world/india-votes-against-unga-resolution-on-nuclear-weapons-1832165.html>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

**SOUTH ASIA**

### **Standing Committee on External Affairs Asks Government to Present a Bill to Ratify LBA with Bangladesh**

*(The Indian Express, December 02, 2014)*

The standing committee on external affairs, headed by Shashi Tharoor, noted that the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) with Bangladesh was in the national interest of the country and that the government should present a bill to ratify the Indo-Bangla LBA.

The Constitutional (119th Amendment) Bill, 2013 seeks to ratify the Indira-Mujib pact of 1974 which was the basis of the LBA. “India will exchange 111 enclaves, measuring 17,160 acres, with Bangladesh and receive 51 enclaves, covering 7,110 acres. Almost 51,000 people reside in these enclaves.” The LBA shall bring about changes in the territories of Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Tripura.

The standing committee noted that once the LBA came into force the difficulties faced by people living in enclaves of India and Bangladesh would end. Indians citizens living in such enclaves would be able to return to ‘mainland’ and in addition to this several Bangladeshi citizens living in such regions would be granted Indian nationality.

The standing committee also observed that influx of population from the enclaves would raise security concerns which need to be considered by the government. Law –and–order machinery in the region needs to be upgraded and that a mechanism to determine ‘bonafides’ of Bangladeshi citizens to be granted Indian nationality needs to be established.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/bring-bill-to-ratify-indo-bangla-boundary-pact-panel-to-house/>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## INDIA AND WORLD

***MIDDLE-EAST*****WFP Suspends Food Aid for 1.7 Million Syrian Refugees****(Tom Miles, Reuters, December 01, 2014)**

Due to shortage in fund, the World Food Programme (WFP) has cut funding to 1.7 million Syrian refugees residing in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. An additional \$64 million is needed to assist refugees in December. The worst affected area is Lebanon, which has 1.1 million Syrian refugees, scattered across 1,700 communities.

Currently, the electronic voucher program has already supplied \$800 million into local shops. With the cut in funding it is unclear how hungry refugees might fill the gap. There are similar talks of suspending funding to 7.6 million internally displaced refugees in Syria. "The Rome-based agency has already cut rations for 4.25 million people it is providing food supplies to in Syria."

The United Nations refugee agency has said that a shortage in funds has forced it prioritise help in harsher regions such as colder altitudes and vulnerable refugees such as newborn babies.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/01/us-mideast-crisis-food-idUSKCN0JF20G20141201>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## OPINION/BOOKS

**OPINIONS****The Crime in Nithari***(Economic and Political Weekly, November 29, 2014)*

On October 28, Supreme Court rejected Surinder Koli's plea to review his death sentence. Aside from the severity of the crime, the evidence to convict him has not been clear. "The ambiguity in this case is yet another example of the troubling nature of the finality delivered by capital punishment, which leaves little room for later setting right a possible error in the trial proceedings."

In his confession Koli accepts committing rape, murder, cannibalism and necrophilia. He also says that the police had tortured him to get this confession. However, the latter statement has been ignored. Section 24 of the Indian Evidence Act dismisses confession taken under duress, and still the entire case of murder and missing children was based on this confession. The motivations behind the confession have been ignored. On face value they point to deep psychological issues that need treatment rather than punishment.

The crime of using children for organ donation has been under-investigated. Children had been going missing before Koli came to work in Pandher household. They were going missing when the confession was being recorded and they are still going missing. A committee appointed by Ministry of Women and Child Development showed that there might be a possible organ trade racket functioning in the area.

However, since the submission of the report in 2007, no action has taken place. A senior medical official who examined the body showed that they were cut with surgical precision. "The claims of cannibalism by Koli could, the committee pointed out, quoting the expert's views, also be a ruse to brush the possibilities of the trade of organs of the victims under the carpet." DNA samples match only 8 of the 18 missing children.

"The appeal by the Peoples Union for Democratic Rights to commute his sentence to life imprisonment, challenging the delay in the hearing of Koli's mercy petition, is the final chance to start a process that could reverse what seems an incorrect course of action in the story of the missing children and murders in Nithari."

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/crime-nithari.html>

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(Shriyam Gupta)

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