

EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Slavery enters human history with the idea of civilization. Hunter-gatherers and primitive farmers had no use of slave, as they collected or grew just enough for survival. Slavery emerged with the idea of creating surplus and glories across the world. Historical discourse of slavery as an institution, where individuals are owned by others can refer back to the creation of Atlantic world. From the first arrival of sub-Saharan African slaves in Europe via Atlantic slave trade in 1441, slavery bonded together the Atlantic world through chains and links of human enslavement. Abolition of such institution was demanded and fought by several movements across the world over time. In 1865, the United States through its 13th Amendment to the Constitution declared end of slavery in America-at least in name. Subsequently many nations followed the path. But the 'reconstruction era' continued 'hiring' and exploiting black workers under terms that were slavery in all but name.

The 'modern era' is no different. Slavery continues as hidden crime in the form of forced labour and human trafficking. The 'human rights' era of today enslaves about 35.8 million people across the world, of which two-thirds belong to Asia Pacific region. They are stuck in unorganized sector like construction, brick making, garment factories and manufacturing units, adding illicit world profit up to US \$ 150 billion a year.

The cover story of this issue highlights some disturbing facts of Global Slavery Report, 2014, where India ranks number one with highest percentage of population in modern slavery. This is followed by China and then Pakistan. About 14.29 crores of Indians are enslaved in various sectors like brick kilns, carpet weaving, embroidery, forced prostitute, domestic servitude, mining and organized begging. They are mostly ramified through inter-generational bonded labours, forced marriage, and trafficking, which has both caste and gender perspective. India's strongest policy response has been through reforms in criminal justice system, targeting human trafficking. 215 anti-human trafficking units are being created across the nation to improve law enforcement. But this is not enough. India needs to do much more for their emancipation through enforcement of education, awareness, movement and activism. Sheer rise in GDP by exploiting such large number of people by denying their rights and freedom may make the country prosperous, but not harmonious and compassionate.

The other pertinent report of the Policy Watch like inclusive wealth versus GDP growth is highly relevant here. This shows that during last two decades, world's GDP has increased by 50%, though inclusive wealth has increased by a petty 6%. In India, GDP rose by 155%, from 1990 to 2010 and inclusive wealth increased by a mere 16%. Thus campaign 'Make in India' of the present government (other story of this issue) can lead India towards prosperity with higher GDP but without inclusion. India urgently needs to battle-out such issues to make her more equitable in the long run.

We look forward to get your feedback

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The Global Slavery Index Report 2014

The Global Slavery Index Report, 2014 defines modern slavery as: A hidden crime that takes many forms, and is known by many names - slavery, forced labour, or human trafficking. All forms involve one person depriving another person of their freedom - their freedom to leave one job for another, their freedom to leave one workplace for another, their freedom to control their own body.

Modern slavery involves one person possessing or controlling a person in such a way so as to significantly deprive that person of their individual liberty, with the intention of exploiting that person through their use, management, profit, transfer or disposal. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, the illicit profits of forced labour are estimated to be US\$150 billion a year.

In 2014, almost two-thirds (65.8%) of the estimated 35.8 million people in modern slavery globally are in the Asia Pacific region. Modern slavery exists in the Asia Pacific region in all its forms, including forced labour, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. Throughout the region, particularly in countries such as India and Pakistan, nationals often including entire families are enslaved through bonded labour in construction, agriculture, brick making, garment factories and manufacturing.

We present here an overview of Global Slavery particularly focusing at the performance of India in the global world by summarizing 'The Global Slavery Index Report, 2014 by the Walk Free Foundation, Australia

Key Findings

- Globally, the estimated number of people in modern slavery is around 35.8 million.
- The countries with the highest numbers of people in modern slavery are: India, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Russia.
- In India the estimated number of people in modern slavery is 14,285,700 which is 1.141% of the total population.
- India ranks 1st followed by China and then Pakistan in terms of percentage of population in modern slavery.
- India ranks 5th amongst 167 countries in terms of prevalence of population in modern slavery.
- India ranks 11th in terms of vulnerability to modern slavery.
- India ranks 8th with a grade of 'CCC' in terms of response of the Government towards various aspects of slavery (The grade 'CCC' indicates that the government has a limited response to modern slavery, with limited victim support services, a criminal justice framework that criminalises some forms of modern slavery, has a national action plan and/or national coordination body, and has policies that provide some protections for those vulnerable to modern slavery).
- India improved its law enforcement efforts by establishing 215 anti-human trafficking units across the country to investigate human trafficking cases.
- Products known to be produced using modern slavery in India are bricks, cottonseed (Hybrid) carpets embellished/embroidered textiles garments, rice, stone.

What is Global Slavery Index?

The Global Slavery Index provides an analysis of the prevalence of modern slavery in terms of the percentage of national population and the total number of people living in modern slavery country by country, region by region. It has quantified data across three dimensions:

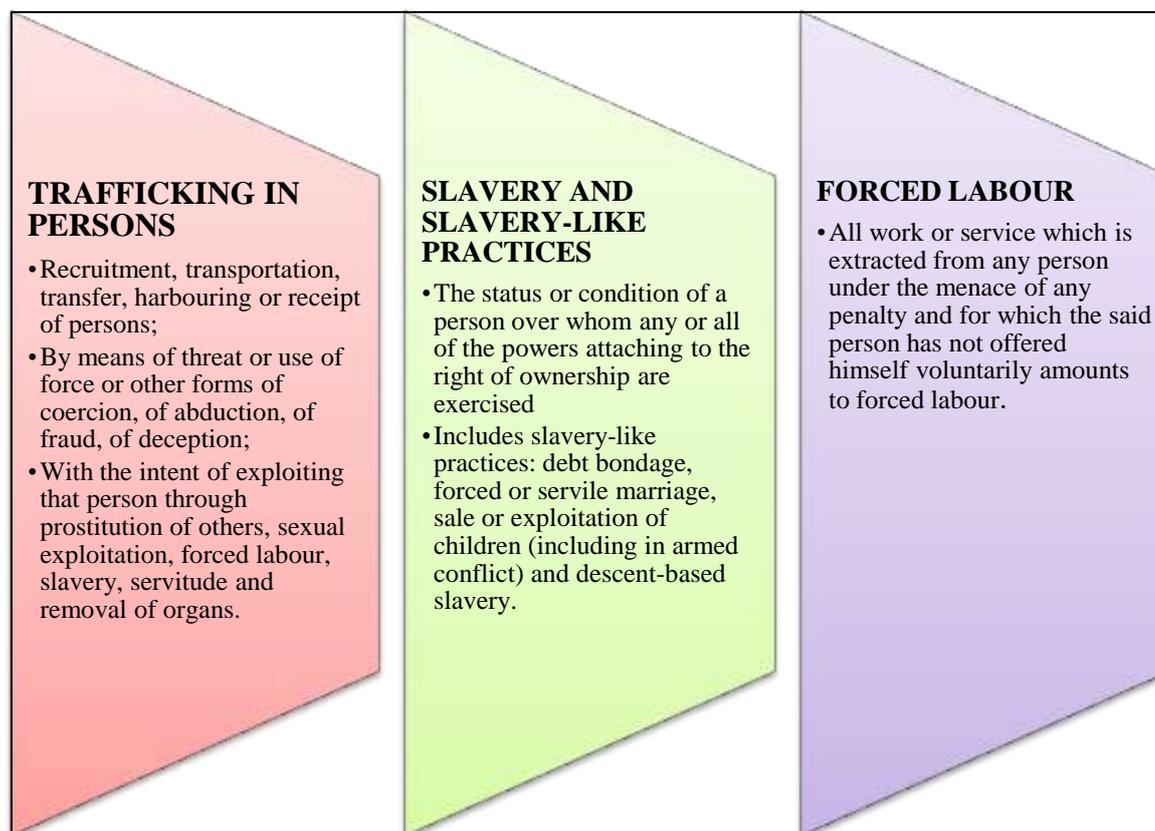
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- ❖ Size of the problem:
- ❖ Government response to modern slavery
- ❖ Vulnerability: Factors that explain or predict the prevalence of modern slavery

The 2014 Global Slavery Index presents a ranking of 167 countries. A ranking of one in the Index indicates the most severely concentrated modern slavery situation. The ten countries with the largest estimated numbers of people in modern slavery are: India, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Thailand. These ten countries account for 71% of the total estimate of 35.8 million people living in modern slavery. Whereas countries like Iceland and Ireland have the lowest prevalence of modern slavery.

Forms of Slavery

The Walk Free Foundation definition of modern slavery encompasses:



Source: Global Slavery Index Report, 2014

India's Performance on Global Slavery Index

Prevalence

India has a population of 1.2 billion out of which according to the report 14,285,700 people are estimated to be in all forms of modern slavery such as inter-generational bonded labour, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. The report states that members of lower castes and tribes, religious minorities, and migrant workers are disproportionately affected by modern slavery. In India modern slavery occurs in brick kilns, carpet weaving, embroidery and other textile manufacturing, forced prostitution, agriculture, domestic servitude, mining, and organised begging rings. Bonded labour is particularly prevalent throughout India, with families enslaved for generations. Bangladeshis and Nepalese, particularly women and children, migrate to India in search of work, many of whom then experience abuse and exploitation.

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Sections of Indian Society Vulnerable to Slavery

In terms of vulnerability to slavery in India, Dalits have the least social protections. Their inability to move out of their community increases their vulnerability.

Women and girls face significant discrimination and high rates of sexual violence across India. Though there has been a series of legislative and criminal justice reforms signalling some progress, women are still at risk of sexual assault and domestic violence. The rates of forced and servile marriage continue to trap women and girls in cycles of domestic servitude with few opportunities for education, meaningful employment or access to reproductive rights, thereby making them highly vulnerable to exploitation and slavery.

Approximately 90 percent of India's labourers are in the informal economy, presenting risks associated with a highly unregulated and unmonitored work environment. The process of migration in India is complex and often tainted by corruption. This leaves the migrant workers with little recourse against practices such as unilateral contracts, dangerous working and living conditions, limited movement and access to communications, withholding of passports and wages, and physical and sexual abuse.

Initiatives taken by the Indian Government

In 2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the 'anti-trafficking portal', which includes information on criminal justice statistics, anti-trafficking police units, government and law enforcement training, the anti-trafficking legislation, and reporting mechanisms, including the Child Line hotline number. However the portal does not appear to provide information about forced or bonded labour, which reflects a broader institutional separation between responses to bonded labour, which is the responsibility of the Department of Labour, and human trafficking, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

India's strongest response to modern day slavery has been the reforms which have been initiated in the criminal justice system specifically targeting human trafficking. In 2013, the government amended the Indian Penal code to include specific anti-trafficking provisions. In 2014, the government expanded the number of police anti-human trafficking units across the country to 215 units. The judiciary and over 20,000 law enforcement have received training on victim identification, new legal framework, and victim-cantered investigations. The government's victim compensation scheme extends to human trafficking victims, however, the amount and efficiency of dispersal is largely dependent on the State administration, and is not available country-wide.

India improved its law enforcement efforts by establishing 215 anti-human trafficking units across the country to investigate human trafficking cases. However, Indian government data suggests only 13 offenders were convicted in 2013.

Although bonded labour is criminalised, it is still a significant issue. The government response to bonded labour is monitored by the National Human Rights Commission that reviews existing policies and practices, and provides training to district Magistrates, Deputy Commissioners, and other government officials. Most States are yet to implement the Supreme Court Order which required District Vigilance committees to undertake surveys to identify and release those in bonded labour, as already required by the Bonded Labour Act. The State of Karnataka is an exception and has made progress on the Order. The SWADHAR GREH scheme is another important initiative of the government that provides temporary accommodation and rehabilitations services for women and girls, including survivors of trafficking.

Asia Pacific Region

Within the Asia Pacific region, the combined total of India, Pakistan and Thailand equal almost 50% of the total number of people living in modern slavery globally. The high prevalence of modern slavery in the region reflects the reality that many countries in South and South East Asia provide the low-skilled labour at the production stage of global supply chains for various industries including food production, garments, and technology.

<p>Estimated Number Living in Modern Slavery 23,542,800</p> <p>Regional Proportion of Global Estimate 65.8% of 35.8 million people in modern slavery are in Asia Pacific</p> <p>Average Government Response Rating CC</p> <p>Average Vulnerability Score 49.9%</p>
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Performance of Pakistan, Bangladesh & China

Index Rank: 6

Estimated number of people in modern slavery 2,058,200

Government response to modern slavery CC

Vulnerability to modern slavery 69.5%

Pakistan: Debt bondage is the most prevalent form of modern slavery in Pakistan. It exists in developing, and sometimes illegitimate and ungoverned industries. The provinces of Punjab and Sindh are hotspots of bonded labour, which is mainly found in the brick making, agriculture, and carpet weaving industries. The intersection of gender inequality and poverty contributes to case of forced child marriages and sexual exploitation in Pakistan.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh experiences debt bondage, forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. Bangladeshi nationals are subject to conditions of forced labour in brick kilns and street begging, and majorly in the production of garments and shrimp, which supply international companies. Children are sold into commercial sexual exploitation in bars, clubs, and registered establishments.

Index rank: 59

Estimated number of people in modern slavery 680,900

Government response to modern slavery CCC

Vulnerability to modern slavery 57.3%

Index rank: 109

Estimated number of people in modern slavery 3,241,400

Government response to modern slavery CCC

Vulnerability to modern slavery 59%

China: China has experienced rapid modernization and urbanization over the decade, which has led to reduction in absolute poverty. This has resulted in large scale migration in search of work, from rural to urban areas, and from western and central regions to the Special Economic Zones on the eastern and southern coasts. In this context, there have been reports of modern slavery within China in a range of industries including construction, manufacturing, mining, brick-making, restaurants, and in domestic and personal carers work.

Possible Way Forward

India ranks first under prevalence of modern slavery in the Asia Pacific region. A government response rating of CCC reflects the lack of political will to address the issue and the weak institutions that help to perpetuate the problem in various forms in India. Despite achieving GDP growth, exploitation of migrants, bonded labour, child trafficking, domestic and sexual servitude is rampant. In terms of the index, India performs worse than Pakistan and Bangladesh, countries whose GDPs are lower.

Meanwhile, countries that rate best in terms of government response have common characteristics such as a strong political will to respond to the issue and a strong rule of law. These countries are also starting to take ownership of the link between business and modern slavery. This is seemingly absent in India. In Brazil, companies that profit from slave labour are named and shamed. In the US, the government has taken steps to ensure its procurement practices are not contributing to modern slavery. In Australia, public procurement rules identify modern slavery as an important issue when considering the ethical behaviour of suppliers.

The report offers the following recommendations for the Indian government to tackle modern slavery:

- Ratify and implement the Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Domestic Workers Convention.
- Update regulations and processes for the implementation of the Bonded Labour Act, and report on its implementation.
- Implement a new National Action Plan that targets the full spectrum of modern slavery.
- Continue to strengthen protections for victims of modern slavery and ensure that they are not criminalised.

It is evident that the sections vulnerable to modern slavery are predominantly the poor, the minorities and the weaker sections. In order to ensure that these sections are protected against exploitation and inhumane conditions, the government must empower them through implementing the said recommendations.

National policies to combat modern slavery and the availability of human rights protections in a country directly affect the vulnerability of the people to be enslaved. Additionally, the level of economic and social development in a country, state stability and extent of women's rights add to the vulnerability to enslavement. The report finds that anti slavery policies will have little

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impact when a country's rule of law has broken down because of civil war, or ethnic or religious conflict. In this regard, it is imperative for India to make a robust effort to maintain ethnic and religious harmony and to strengthen human rights, in order to combat the grave situation of modern slavery that persists in the country.

Prepared by:

Kasturi Mishra & Devyani Bhushan

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- Report (2014), "Global Slavery Index 2014," Australia. Accessed from http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/Global_Slavery_Index_2014_final_lowres.pdf

HEADLINES

Drying Up of Central Funds Makes it Hard for States To Implement MGNREGS

(The Week, December 13, 2013)

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) launched by the UPA government faces an uncertain future due to drying up of central funds allotted for the scheme. The released funds have come down from Rs. 33,000 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 26,000 crore in the current fiscal. Several states are unable to implement the scheme effectively due to the crunch in released funds.

Karnataka got Rs. 439 crore till September this year as compared to Rs 774 last year during the same period. Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister of Tripura, protested against the dilution of MGNREGS in the Capital. The funding to his state decreased from Rs. 1400 crore last year to Rs. 650 crore this year. Mihir Kumar Singh, Bihar MGNREGA commissioner, stated that the state would not be able to continue with the implementation of the scheme unless it got funds immediately.

As per government data there is a 4% increase in the amount of delayed wages in 2014-15. Social activist Nikhil Dey said, "The NDA government is definitely diluting the scheme." The paucity of funds was hitting the demand-driven aspect of scheme. He added that "there are unpaid dues to the tune of Rs. 6500 crore." Activists stated that the Ministry of Rural Development has been instructed to initiate a budgetary cut to the tune of Rs. 15000 crore of which Rs. 3000 crore will be deducted from the MGNREGS budget.

[@](http://week.manoramaonline.com/cgi-bin/MMOnline.dll/portal/ep/theWeekContent.do?programId=1073754900&tabId=13&contentId=18087899&BV_ID=@)

Date Accessed: 14.12.2014
(Afreen Faridi)

Not Including Petroleum Against Spirit of GST, Say Experts

(Jayshree P Upadhyay, Business Standard, December 17, 2014)

"We will not call it 'Goods and Services Tax' (GST) if petroleum and other related products are not in its ambit."

This is the unanimous opinion of tax experts and producers on non-inclusion of petroleum products in a GST.

The centre on December 16, Tuesday reached a consensus with states on GST. They decided not to include petroleum products for a limited period, but compensating states for loss in revenue due to the reformative tax. This is so because states earn 50% of their revenue from taxes on petrol and other petroleum products, and inclusion of these to GST will lead to states loose this revenue. For GST to be implemented, the constitution amendment Bill on a national GST is expected to be tabled in the current session of Parliament.

GST is a value-added tax (VAT) that is to replace all indirect taxes levied on goods and services by India's Central and state governments. GST is considered to be an efficient indirect tax regime without distortions. It is expected to minimise the cascading effect created by multiple taxes in the existing system. Inclusion of petroleum and related products in GST will help achieve the objective considering that it involves various goods and services from stages like exploration, production, refining, etc.

Meanwhile, there also are sections of the market focusing on the positives in exclusion. They say if the condition has not improved, it has not deteriorated, either. "Not including petroleum in GST is accommodation of state government's fear of losing revenue. By this provision, the condition has not improved for producers in the economy. But from the point of view of people in business, the condition has not deteriorated either," said Vivek Mishra, executive director for indirect tax practice, PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Parthasarathi Shome, chairman of the Tax Administration Reform Commission, had earlier said no tax policy designer could call it GST if petroleum products were kept out of it.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/not-including-petroleum-is-against-spirit-of-gst-say-experts-114121600513_1.html

Date Accessed : 18.12.2014
(Shruti Issar)

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

General Inflation Rates in Indian States: December, 2014 (%)

States	Rural	Urban	General
All India	4.02	4.69	4.30
Northern Region			
Jammu & Kashmir	4.02	4.19	4.11
Himachal Pradesh	3.81	3.37	3.67
Punjab	4.40	4.06	4.27
Chandigarh	3.39	4.71	4.64
Uttarakhand	3.68	2.12	3.16
Haryana	3.05	4.09	3.47
Delhi	-1.16	2.46	2.32
Uttar Pradesh	4.35	4.13	4.33
Western Region			
Rajasthan	5.40	3.73	4.77
Gujarat	3.77	3.58	3.62
Maharashtra	4.78	4.72	4.73
Goa	6.13	4.88	5.50
Lakshadweep	9.54	3.90	6.43
Daman & Die	6.32	7.12	6.64
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	1.82	3.00	2.12
Central Region			
Madhya Pradesh	3.74	4.08	3.81
Chattishgarh	2.64	4.17	3.10
Southern Region			
Andhra Pradesh	2.87	4.87	3.60
Karnataka	3.79	7.64	5.81
Kerala	6.42	8.41	7.11
Tamil Nadu	4.53	6.70	5.79
Puducherry	4.18	5.39	5.04
Andaman & Nicobar Island	9.29	3.47	6.35
Northeastern Region			
Arunachal Pradesh	5.08		
Assam	3.36	6.63	3.96
Manipur	1.03	4.57	2.23
Meghalaya	13.69	9.11	12.70
Mizoram	4.96	4.04	4.51
Nagaland	11.54	13.60	9.94
Tripura	10.20	7.73	9.52
Sikkim	3.79	7.72	4.57
Eastern Region			
Bihar	4.74	3.63	4.57
Jharkhand	0.34	2.46	1.04
West Bengal	2.08	3.50	2.70
Odisha	4.61	4.24	4.48

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 seen lowest inflation with 4.53%.

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

Economy: Euphoric, Not Healthy*(Deccan Chronicle, December 11, 2014)*

A booming stock market should normally indicate a booming economy, but the link doesn't always hold. In the case of India, the stock market shooting up by nearly 40 per cent since March this year is largely the result of \$15 billion in foreign portfolio investment flowing into the market. This is an indication of the optimism felt by foreign investors at the promises made by the current government to fix the economy.

While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) isn't yet sure of how long the steep drop in inflation in recent months will last, there are other concerns as well. The most important is the budget deficit lowering which is important to controlling inflation and government finances. The government's fiscal deficit for the first seven months of this financial year was an unprecedented 89.6 per cent of the yearly targeted deficit. In these seven months the fiscal deficit totalled Rs 4.76 lakh crore, compared to the target of Rs 5.31 lakh crore for the entire financial year. The government is also banking on the sharp drop in international oil prices continuing, leading to a drop in fuel subsidies, and reduction of the fertiliser subsidy. It is also considering cutting down on social sector initiatives like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and, more disturbingly, ensuring that funds are no longer disbursed by local bodies like the panchayats but by the state governments, where knowledge of local conditions is poorer, but with greater scope for corruption.

Many other indicators point to a weakening economy. Industrial production has slumped in the second quarter. Export growth has slowed considerably, possibly on account of weak growth in the euro zone and a slowdown in China, which together account for about 30 per cent of India's exports. While this is countered by the reduced expenditure on oil imports, growth in government revenue has been slow. Indirect tax collections in April-July this year have increased merely by 4 per cent over the corresponding period of the previous year. If the looming crisis in the fiscal deficit and how it is likely to be handled is a major concern, equally pressing is the critical state of the banks. Bad loans and restructured loans (or so-called stressed assets) have reached the alarming proportion of over 10 per cent of all loans, doubling in the five years from 2008 to 2013.

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/141211/commentary-op-ed/article/economy-euphoric-not-healthy>

Date Accessed: 14.12.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

Pitfalls of the Make in India Campaign*(Livemint, December 15, 2014)*

This article talks about Raghuram Rajan's warning of the pitfalls in the Make in India campaign and the need for India to be alert of import substitution industrialization. The RBI governor has pointed out the twin dangers in government-led industrialization. He warns of the dangers of the receding scope of export-led growth in the world today and a return to the failed idea of import substitution industrialization (ISI). Make in India campaign aims to industrialize the country in order to move people out of agriculture. However, there is an additional challenge now. The number of people sought to be moved out of agriculture were a couple of million, and is now tens of millions as India is witnessing its largest injection of working age population in this decade.

The most labour-intensive industrial segment in India is the medium, small and micro enterprises sector (MSME). In India, 65% of all employment in the manufacturing sector is in firms with less than 10 employees, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates. This sector is where India's industrial hopes for more employment and greater exports lie. However, this sector employs labour highly inefficiently. Productivity gains are negative in many industries in this sector. Therefore, the government giving preferential allocation of key resources and credit to this sector is dangerous, according to Raghuram Rajan. Import-substitution industrialization has previously led to large inefficient industrial units, both public and private, in India. Make in India plays with the same dangers. Make in India takes the idea of taking China's position of being an export hub; as China re-balances in favour of consumption against exports as the basis of growth. However, Raghuram Rajan warns of this idea as Western countries are facing a structural economic slowdown and so the possibilities of export-led growth have diminished greatly. Export-led growth is also a matter of searching for opportunities and foreign markets and there is nothing fixed about them. India may, thus, find it impossible to replicate China's and Japan's experiences of the past fifty years.

The Governor then states that "India needs to invest in building physical infrastructure such as roads, ports, etc.; allocate resources such as water, land, minerals and power transparently; and link as many citizens as possible financially and electronically to the broader system. If that happens, industries will sort themselves out and the government will not have to indulge in any allocational favouritism." The hope of industrialization in India is based on replicating the experiences of Japanese and German economies where government and industries conferred to solve problems. However, the conditions that made an

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industrial policy, with emphasis on learning and problem-solving, possibly are absent in India. Make in India needs something other than government intervention to be successful.

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/JP6MMbSYOsOX2gqUW7GPNJ/The-pitfalls-of-Make-in-India-campaign.html>

Date Accessed: 16.12.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

UN Report: GDP-Driven Growth is not Sustainable

(Jitendra, *Down to Earth*, December 11, 2014)

UN's Inclusive Wealth Report, released on December 11, 2014 has asked countries to reorient their economic policy planning and evaluation away from GDP targeting. The second biennial Inclusive Wealth Report concludes that, in the last two decades, the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased by 50%, whereas the inclusive wealth has increased by a petty 6%. The report is based on data from 140 countries. It prioritises inclusive wealth which incorporates all assets from which human well-being is derived, including manufactured, human and natural capital, including forests, water and land. The report adds that, in recent decades, GDP-driven economic performance has only harmed inclusive wealth like human capital as well as natural capital. In fact, it finds that natural capital, which is 23% of total inclusive wealth declined by 30% worldwide in the last two decades.

It is noted that the more the world grew in terms of GDP, the more inclusive wealth depreciated. In India, wealth measured by GDP rose by 155%, from 1990 to 2010. However, in the same time, India's inclusive wealth increased by a mere 16%. For US and China, the GDP rose by 33% and 523% respectively. Their inclusive wealth rose by 13% and 47%, in the said time span. In fact, for poor countries, inclusive wealth depreciated fast in comparison to their GDP growth. Countries like Ecuador, Qatar, Tanzania and Uganda experienced negative growth in regard of inclusive wealth.

The report recommends that the countries must, therefore, move away from blind GDP-targeting and include the concept of inclusive wealth while formulating and evaluating economic policies. It asks the countries to "incorporate inclusive wealth accounting as part of a sustainable development agenda."

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/gdp-driven-growth-not-sustainable-says-un-report>

Date accessed: 12.12.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

Government to Allot 101 Mines; Issues Approach Paper

(*Free Press Journal*, December 19, 2014)

The union government has developed a draft bidding mechanism for allotment of 101 coal blocks. Of the total available blocks for allotment, 65 blocks will be auctioned to private players while 36 other blocks will be directly allotted to state-owned companies. While the number of coal mines to be auctioned or allotted in the first tranche has been increased to 101 from 92, there would also be different criteria for auction to regulated sector, including power, and unregulated sectors.

The article states, "Of the 101 blocks to be allotted and auctioned in the first lot, 63 mines would be given to the power sector, while the rest would be for sectors like steel and cement. As per the list of coal mines earmarked for auction, 28 mines will be auctioned to the power sector."

The detail of regulations is yet to be finalized. Government has prepared a draft approach paper on which comments from stakeholders have invited until December 22. According to the approach paper, "A ceiling price will be fixed for coal mines to be auctioned to the power companies having power purchase agreements based on the prevailing Coal India notified price."

"A ceiling price of the prevailing CIL notified price for each coal mine will be fixed and the bidder will be mandated to quote lower than this ceiling price", the approach paper said. Besides, "a fixed reserve price of Rs 100 per tonne of coal shall be payable as per actual production by the mine allottee" It added.

<http://freepressjournal.in/govt-to-allot-101-mines-issues-approach-paper/#sthash.0rxPUJbM.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 19.12.2014

(Jeet Singh)

India 3rd on Black Money List; \$440bn Flows out in 10 years

(*Hindu Business Line*, December 16, 2014)

As per the calculation of Global Financial Integrity (GFI), total outflow of black money from India was about rupees six lakh crores (\$94.76 billion) in 2012. This is the third highest outflow of illicit money from any country in the world. Total outflow of black money from 2003 to 2012 now amounts to INR 28 lakh crores (USD 439.59 billion), which puts it fourth on the list behind Russia, China and Mexico. Every year, on an average, USD 43.96 billion of black money is being sent out of the country.

ECONOMIC

GFI's 2014 Annual Global Update on Illicit Financial Flows was topped by China with an illicit money outflow of USD 249.57 billion in 2012. Russia is a close second with amounts reaching USD 122.86 billion. India now accounts for 10% of all illicit money going out of developing countries. "Over the decade (2003—2012), the study found that illicit financial flows are growing at an inflation—adjusted average rate of 9.4 per cent per year."

Supreme Court directed a Special Investigation Team to look in to the INR 4,479 crore of Indian account holders in HSBC's Geneva branch. Enforcement Directorate and the Income-Tax Department are looking into internal illicit money flow of INR 14,458 crores.

GFI president Raymond Baker noted that huge losses are impacting the emerging economies. The illicit money amount outflows greater than FDI and ODA in some countries. He further stated that sustainable global development will only be achieved if the illicit money problem is tackled first hand.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-3rd-on-black-money-list-440-bn-flows-out-in-10-years/article6696660.ece>

Date Accessed: 17.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

Asia to Become World's Largest E-Commerce Market in 2015: Report

(*NDTV Gadgets*, December 17, 2014)

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Asia is likely to overtake North America as the world's largest e-commerce market. It is estimated that the Asian market is expected to grow at 4.6% on a volume basis to \$7.6 trillion, while North America is expected to grow at 2.5% and Europe at 0.8%.

Laurel West, report editor, said that the Asian market have grown because of the "rising independence and economic power of Asian women and female consumers who are showing great enthusiasm for online shopping". The report comes at a time when there is a great demand for e-commerce, generated by companies like Alibaba.

The report surveyed 5,500 women across major cities in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao, India, Japan, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. "Among the survey respondents, 43 percent were in managerial, executive or professional services jobs. Nearly half of the women agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred online to in-store shopping. When choosing an online retailer, price and quality were the main factors considered, followed by genuine products and convenience"

<http://gadgets.ndtv.com/internet/news/asia-to-become-worlds-largest-e-commerce-market-in-2015-report-635848>

Date Accessed: 17.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Acute Shortage of Primary Teachers in India; UP, Bihar Worst-hit States

(Vikas Pathak, *Hindustan Times*, December 14, 2014)

Despite attempts to universalise education with the Right to Education (RTE), new data shows that India's schools still fall short of 5.86 lakh primary-level teachers and 3.5 lakh upper primary level teachers. The universalisation of elementary education leads to a better trained workforce and an aware citizenry also increases a nation's score in the human development index, which has literacy as a criterion, which is a stated goal of the state policy.

The Human resource Development Minister shared data in the Lok Sabha of 35 states and Union territories regarding vacancies of teachers. Where Uttar Pradesh (UP) alone is short of 2.52 lakh teachers at the primary level and 55,859 teachers at the upper primary level, and Bihar has a shortfall of 1.14 lakh and 82,303 at the two levels.

The RTE, became functional in 2010 under the United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA), also prescribes pupil-teacher ratios. From classes 1 to 5, there needs to be two teachers for up to 60 children, three teachers for up to 61-90 students, four teachers for up to 91-120 children and five for 121-200 children. For classes 6 to 8 there needs to be one teacher per class. There also needs to be one teacher for every 35 children at this level because of overall shortage of teachers the pupil teacher ratio is also getting adversely impacted.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/acute-shortage-of-primary-teachers-in-india-up-bihar-worst-hit-states/article1-1296549.aspx>

Date Accessed: 16.12.2014

(Devyani bhushan)

GOVERNMENT

Punjab Waives Purchase Tax on Sugarcane for 2014-15

(*Business Standard*, December 16, 2014)

Punjab government provided relief to state based private sugar-mills by waiving off purchase tax on sugar cane for 2014-15. The decision was taken by the state cabinet based on the demand raised by the Punjab- based private sugar-mills to rollback purchase tax on sugar, saying low sugar prices had hit the industry hard. The cabinet also decided to recover the previous arrears of purchase and other taxes

from the sugar mills in annual equated installments, as per the sources.

“The Cabinet accepted the recommendations of the committee headed by state chief secretary with regard to waiver of purchase tax on sugarcane for the year 2014-15 as done by Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand,” said an official spokesman.

In Punjab, 16 sugar-mills, including seven in private sector in Punjab, with crushing capacity of 49,766 tonnes crushing a day are running. Currently, Rs. 13-14 a quintal is charged as purchase tax on sugar. For 2014-15, the sugar production is estimated at 4.8 million quintals along with cane production at 72 million quintals.

“These decisions were taken in view of the uneconomic operations of the sugar mills all over the country due to increasing cane price and stagnant prices of sugar. The government intends to support sugar mills so that farmers continue to cultivate sugarcane,” the spokesman further said.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/punjab-waives-purchase-tax-on-sugarcane-for-2014-15-114121601020_1.html

Date Accessed : 17.12.2014

(Shruti Issar)

Supreme Court Questions Centre's Resolve to Secure Eastern Border

(*The Hindu*, December 18, 2014)

The Supreme Court in a 70-page judgement questioned the government's resolve to secure India's eastern border. Justices Ranjan Gogoi and Rohinton F. Nariman expressed concern regarding illegal influx of migrants from Bangladesh.

The Court noted that a porous border without proper fencing could risk the lives of citizens living in the Border States and ordered the Union to undertake effective steps to complete the fencing. The Court also directed the Union to construct motorable roads along the border and installation of flood lights to check incidents like cross-border trafficking and incursion.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the government's resolve to secure the eastern border of the country in its judgement stating, “We are at a loss to understand why 67 years after independence the eastern border is left porous. We have been reliably informed that the entire western border with Pakistan, 3300 km long, is not only properly fenced, but properly manned as well, and is not porous at any point.”

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<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/supreme-court-why-is-eastern-border-still-porous/article6701871.ece>

Date Accessed: 18.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

Fish workers cry foul as Centre goes ahead with fishing policy

(T Ramavarman, *Times of India*, 17 December, 2014)

The centre government has issued revised guidelines for deep sea fishing by big ships owned by multi-nationals in the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) - an area of the sea between 22 km and 370 km from the coast, beyond the territorial waters. Under the new guidelines permission for deep sea fishing can be taken by getting a letter of permission from the centre. The centre issued these guidelines even as fishing communities in 10 coastal states are agitating against an expert committee report that recommended giving letter of permission for more big vessels in EEZ.

The guidelines are for big vessels with a length 15 metre or more that can be owned or acquired by Indian entrepreneurs of the country. Joint ventures with up to 49 per cent foreign investments are allowed to apply for permission. The letter of permit will be valid for a period of five years. This is going to affect the livelihoods of thousands of fishers who use traditional, motorised and mechanised boats to catch fish. The centre has accepted the recommendations of the Meenakumari committee even when states such as Kerala have sent strong views against the state. This committee was formed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a "blue revolution in July". Its objective was to review the Marine Fishing Policy 2004 and make recommendations for drafting a new policy. It suggests that 1,178 deep sea fishing vessels should be deployed in the EEZ to achieve optimum utilisation of the resource potential. This report contradicts the recommendations of P Murari Committee that opposed issuance of further licences to foreign fishing vessels. The Murari Committee had recommended that the existing licences of foreign fishing vessels should not be renewed.

Various organizations are planning protests against the Centre's move. T Peter of Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, a trade union of small-scale artisanal fishers points out that the Centre wants to accommodate tourism industry, real estate and other development sectors and displace the traditional fishing community. However, indiscriminate fishing by big ships not only displaces traditional communities but destroys marine resources and ecology. "According to Charles George, president of Kerala's Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (forum of fisher's

unions), the committee concealed the fact that out of 908 big vessels fishing in the sea, only about 70 have letter of permission from the Central government. All others are engaged in illegal fishing, he adds. Further, these big vessels are permitted to export their catch from the sea itself without making a landing on the shore." He also points out that the committee consisted only of scientists and officials and has no representation from the fisher communities.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/Fish-workers-cry-foul-as-Centre-goes-ahead-with-fishing-policy/articleshow/45545188.cms>

Date Accessed: 18.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

Only BPL families to get free treatment under NDA's proposed health scheme

(Kundan Pandey, *Down to Earth*, December 13, 2014)

The Bhartiya Janta Party's (BJP) flagship programme to provide affordable healthcare, the National Health Assurance Mission (NHAM) is likely to be launched next year. In its election manifesto the party promised to provide, "Health Assurance to all Indians and to reduce the out of pocket spending on health care". However it is now being said that only those people who possess a below poverty line (BPL) cards would be eligible for free treatment. For others who won't be under the coverage the government plans to provide insurance under the NHAM which is all set to replace National Health Mission (NHM).

It is being said that the scheme will be a combination of insurance plus free treatment (for BPL). The NHAM is set to provide 50 free medicines, 30 diagnostics and also 40 facilities coming under AYUSH. These services will be free of charge for BPL card holders, while people who don't fall into this category would have to provide 33 per cent of the total charge. In this case the government would provide the other 33 per cent share with the insurance company providing the rest of the amount.

Clinical pharmacologist Ranjit Roy Chaudhary, who is familiar with the new health model, says "patients who approach a primary health centre (PHC) can avail all facilities free of cost". The plan may also provide secondary and tertiary care for BPL category patients, while others will again have to furnish 33 per cent of the cost. Further he adds that states like Kerala and Rajasthan which currently provide 500 medicines free of cost can continue providing free medicines even when the Centre's plan comes to force. However, the main impact is directed at those states which currently don't provide any free medicines. The government is planning to introduce NHAM by February, even when concerns remain about the quality of facilities under the

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

scheme, especially the generic medicines that would be provided under the scheme.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/only-bpl-families-get-free-treatment-under-nda-s-proposed-health-scheme>

Date Accessed: 19.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

More children falling sick as mid-day meal quality worsens

(Prakash K.Nanda, *livemint*, December 12, 2014)

2014 has witnessed 1504 children being affected by poor quality of food served under mid-day meals, a hike from 442 in 2013, 247 in 2012 and 182 in 2011. This data provided by the human resource development (HRD) ministry shows that the situation on ground remains desperate despite the NDA governments talks of improved implementation and bigger budgets for the flagship scheme. “Moreover, the scheme reached just 78% of the intended schoolchildren, a failing that the HRD ministry feels needs urgent attention. The figure is lower for states such as Jharkhand, where it covers 54% of children, Uttar Pradesh (55%), Delhi (61%) and Bihar (68%).”

According to a Bihar government official there is huge pressure on state governments to improve attendance figures because of the Right to Education Act despite which attendance in schools remains low. He adds that non attendance can be a result of “socio-economic conditions, quality of food, teaching standards in government schools, and poor infrastructure and lack of cleanliness in schools”. However he denied the fact that more students are falling sick due to poor mid-day meals. Yamini Aiyer, director of Accountability Initiative points out that implementation is where the lacuna lies. She adds that other states could learn from states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Chattisgarh which are doing a much better job on implementing the scheme.

http://www.livemint.com/Politics/ppNLYEuqrC6EqhVx8Jk9qM/More-children-falling-sick-as-midday-meal-quality-worsens.html?utm_source=copy

Date Accessed: 19.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

PANCHAYATI RAJ

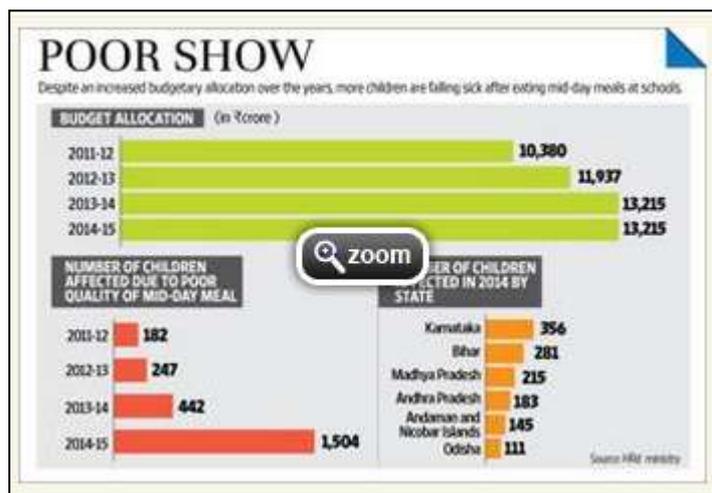
States Ruled by the BJP Lag in Empowering PRIs

(*Hindustan Times*, December 15, 2014)

The Panchayat Devolution Index, 2013-14 showed that states ruled by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) lagged behind opposition ruled states in decentralizing power to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). The index placed Maharashtra (when ruled by Congress-NCP) as the top ranking state followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Rajasthan and Haryana when ruled by the Congress also figured amongst the top ranking states. Only three BJP ruled states viz. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat figured in the top 20 list. Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar trailed in the list.

The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and was conducted by Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi. The study assessed states for creating an environment to enable PRIs to function as institutions of self-government.

“The analysis tests whether states and Union territories have fulfilled the following five mandatory provisions of the Constitution including establishment of state election commission; holding regular panchayat election; reservation of seats for SCs/ STs and women; establishment of state finance commission at regular intervals; and setting up of district planning committees.” States were also tested on



Ever since 2011 the scheme has attracted bigger budgets with every passing financial year. In the present budget the NDA government had allocated Rs 13,215 crore, which is 30% more than the allocated amount in 2011-12. A HRD ministry note had requested state governments to prepare emergency medical plans by the end of 2014. However till date only the Government of Odisha has submitted the plan. In a recent meeting the HRD ministry has initiated a social audit to be carried out in nine states, which include Maharashtra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu to improve monitoring.

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

parameters of physical infrastructure of panchayats, training of elected representative, accounting and audit, Gram Sabha and transparency and anti-corruption.

<http://paper.hindustantimes.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

Date Accessed: 15.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

SECURITY

Pakistan to go ahead with all projects in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir with China

(*Deccan Herald*, December 11, 2014)

In a recent development Pakistan has said that it will continue with all its development projects in PoK. Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam declared her country's stand on the issue at a recently held media briefing. She has also criticised India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj "for asking China to stop infrastructure building projects, including construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, in Pakistan occupied Kashmir."

The External Affairs Minister has also mentioned in the parliament that government has seen reports related to infrastructure projects being developed by China and Pakistan in PoK. She has repeated that the government has conveyed its concerns to China and has asked it to stop the construction of these projects. "China is involved in Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project in PoK. Earlier, it also helped in Mangla Dam rising project on river Jhelum."

The foreign spokeswoman also said that the Pakistan welcomes the statement of UN chief Ban Ki-Moon's where he has expressed his readiness to help India and Pakistan resolve the Kashmir issue, if requested by both the countries.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/447034/pak-go-ahead-all-projects.html>

Date Accessed: 19.12.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

HEALTH

370 Reported Deaths Due to Drug Trials, Only 21 Cases of Compensation Recorded

(*Times of India*, December 15, 2014)

Although clinical trials have come under scrutiny on courts, there has been little impact on the ground realities. Since

February 2013 there have been at least 370 reported deaths during clinical trials. The regulatory panel has examined only 66% of the cases, out of which only 21 cases were eligible for compensation.

As per medical experts, there is lack of clarity on the standards of granting compensation. Experts claim that the norms are subjective, and moreover, the investigators involved in conducting trials are the one who provide the data. This not only makes it possible for them to influence or manipulate data but, makes it difficult for the regulatory agencies to determine the veracity of the data provided.

Dr. C.M. Gulati, the editor of Monthly Index of Medical Specialities said, "The investigator who reports adverse impacts of a drug under trial has conflict of interest because he is paid by the pharmaceutical company conducting the trial." Detailed guidelines for conducting clinical trials and reporting of data related to deaths was notified by the government and drug controller general of India (DCGI) only after being nudged by the Supreme Court .

Lax regulatory environment benefits the drug makers. "These expert committees evaluating registered deaths are in metros whereas companies pick up remote villages and small towns for conducting clinical trials," said a medical practitioner. Although companies claim that they follow best practices however, participants in rural areas are mostly uniformed of the possible consequences of the drug trial.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/370-die-in-clinical-trials-in-2-years-kin-of-only-21-get-compensation/articleshow/45516891.cms>

Date Accessed: 15.12.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

Mobile Alerts to Boost Vaccination Coverage

(*Free Press Journal*, December 18, 2014)

Odisha government is planning to utilize mobile telecommunication technology to improve child vaccination in the State. Health officials in Odisha are thinking a pilot project where parents of a newborn can subscribe to regular vaccination updates via SMS and voice alerts to keep them on track with India's routine immunization programme.

Odisha has a high concentration of rural population, where nearly two-fifths of its 44 million populations are tribal and scheduled castes. Under this scheme parents of new-born will be registered with the slert service to receive timely updates on forthcoming vaccination schedule as per India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). The UIP enables vaccination of children against six preventable diseases:

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tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis and measles. The central government has decided to introduce three new childhood vaccines in the programme, including vaccines against rotavirus, rubella, polio (injectable).

Deputy Director of Immunisation, health and family welfare department, Odisha, Indira Rath said, "Though immunisation coverage has been increasingly consistent over the last few years, we want to strengthen the level of awareness and adherence among the parents who have had new issues."

She further noted, "Since mobile phones are extensively used by the present generation, we hope to tap into the technology to ensure couples are following the UIP schedule and bringing their children for routine immunisation (RI) camps."

<http://freepressjournal.in/mobile-alerts-to-boost-vaccination-coverage/#sthash.gTIuZ4FK.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 19.12.2014

(Jeet Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

New Delhi Losing Battle against Air Pollution, Finds Study

(Asian Age, December 12, 2014)

According to a study by the Centre For Science and Environment (CSE), the national capital is losing its battle with the air pollution. As per the report the air quality was worst late at night and early in the morning, as a result of a combination of the cool air and Delhi's late-night truck traffic. Disputing the commonly held belief that morning walks provide people with a healthy dose of fresh air, the CSE study revealed that in most areas of the city the pollution levels were worse in the morning. The report further stated that People walking and cycling in the morning are highly exposed to pollution.

Even by the government's official air quality readings, over half of the days in October and November this year would be categorised as "severe" or "very poor" in air quality. Yet, the CSE pointed out, there was no health advisory put out by the Government for citizens to take action. The CSE has recommended that Vehicular emission standards needs to be upgraded and the use of cars needs to be disincentivised

<http://www.asianage.com/delhi/new-delhi-losing-battle-against-air-pollution-finds-study-778>

Date Accessed: 14.12.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

Clean India Campaign – Not Facing India's Waste Conundrum

(Satwik Mudgal, Millennium Post, December 16, 2014)

This article analyses the efforts and focus of the Clean India Campaign. Though Clean India campaign has recognized that there is waste around us that needs to be managed, it fails to give deeper thought to the matter. It fails to address the rag-pickers, who fail to benefit from the campaign. It also ignores the recyclers and does not offer them any support. Similarly, communities that have sorted waste for generations, scrap-dealers and entrepreneurs have been left out. If these elements of the society are not an integral part of the campaign, then the entire saga is just aimed at bringing investors who would establish elaborate waste treatment plants that will either burn all the waste or make compost that would not sell. In this regard, it would make more sense for rag-pickers and scrap dealers to accompany the celebrities that merely click pictures sweeping the streets for the photo operation.

India is in need of a policy that treats waste as a resource so as to encourage entrepreneurs to implement innovative ideas of making managing waste environment friendly, socially optimal or even financially viable. However, the government seems obsessed with expensive and complex technologies. These cost the government a few hundred crores, and their suitability in the Indian context is not even considered. Besides, there is an increased shifting of onus on to the public. The government aims to provide the society with a better civic sense so as to stop the public from littering. However, the government must be held responsible for providing, at least, the basic infrastructure in the form of dustbins. Making the public aware is hardly any accomplishment; the local bodies must be expected to improve the infrastructure simultaneously while spreading awareness. In fact, awareness too needs to be brought about through an organised awareness programme in every neighbourhood of the country that tells people what to do with their waste, and that teaches how to segregate and compost waste.

It would be sensible to shift the focus from "financially intensive and socially unacceptable centralised composting or incineration plants to decentralised waste treatment plants". The government needs to encourage small enterprises to manage local waste. Active Residents' Welfare Associations and self-help groups must be helped in their waste management initiatives instead of simply laying down a myriad rules and regulations and carrying out massive photo campaigns.

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/NewsContent.aspx?NID=88949>

Date Accessed: 16.12.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Critical Gaps Remain in Early Warning 10 years After Indian Ocean Tsunami – UN

(United Nations News Centre, December 15, 2014)

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) noted that the Asia-Pacific region is still disaster prone and critical gaps remain in early warning signs especially in reaching the most vulnerable communities.

Even though much has been done to fill gaps in risk reduction, disaster preparedness and early warning systems, the area still remains highly disaster prone. Ms. Sirimanne, ESCAP's Director of Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, noted that work is required to ensure that remote communities at 'last mile' are timely warned about the disasters. This will be possible by developing an efficient end-to-end system.

"ESCAP plays a significant role in galvanizing regional efforts, promoting new technologies and supporting early warning projects through its Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness." The fund has been crucial in providing resources for creation of Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49605#.VJDvFF5tIpE>

Date Accessed: 17.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

OPINION/BOOKS

OPINIONS

The Central Issue is Patriarchy and Power, Not Private Taxi Services

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, December 13, 2014)

Post the December 16 incident, the recommendations made by Justice Verma Committee were made into laws. The recent Uber incident shows that there is no guarantee that women can feel safe with stringent laws. An unreal expectation that stronger law will serve as a deterrent has been broken.

The response of government and media has been to find a scapegoat, the taxi company, and while doing this they have forgotten about the real concern. Even after the 2012 uproar, there are no safe places for women. Even as the rape of women by a stranger catches attention, the fact remains that 90% of the rapes are carried out men known to the victim. There is no reason not to demand justice in any case but the hurry to find scapegoats should not take attention away from central concern.

The recent case raises two questions, one of women safety and the other of regulating private taxi aggregators. Web based services have been a challenge to monitor because they do not fall under the ambit of local laws. As their popularity grew, the government took steps to get them under existing regulatory frameworks. However, in India anyone can cheat the system by providing counterfeit documents. The immediate response of banning the cab service does not serve any of two issues.

The question of women safety in urban spaces has no easy answers. Many argued that better street lighting and efficient public transport might improve things. However, these also have to be coupled with better policy systems and most importantly an effort to change the patriarchal mindset. "While more women are now stepping out into the workplaces, taking up jobs that their mothers had never imagined women could do, the male mindset of what women can and cannot do remains largely unchanged." This leads to increasing violence on women. The patriarchal mindset is at the root of question of women empowerment. Attention needs to be given to destroying institution of patriarchy rather than taxi services.

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/no-safe-spaces.html>

Date Accessed: 17.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

Shale Oil - At OPEC's Mercy?

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, December 13, 2014)

The falling price of shale oil from \$100 a barrel in June to \$65 in November has raised questions of political economy of oil. OPEC has set a floor somewhere around \$60 a barrel to ensure that marginal producers of shale oil in United States (US) go out of business. "OPEC has projected planned production in 2015 at 28.9 million barrels a day, a mere 1.1 million barrels a day lower than what it produced in November, this even in the face of the world economy most probably sliding into a new downturn."

The current price decline can be explained by slowing demand from the world and rising production from the US. After the G-20, Japan revealed that its economy has hit recession. Moreover, 18 countries of Europe have reached stagnation. Major economies like France, England and Germany are also struggling. Only the US economy is in a relatively better shape due to "increase in the production of "waste" as a result of a higher military budget and the boom so far in shale oil." Emerging economies too are under pressure. Russia is facing sanctions from the west; Brazil's economy is expected to fallback into recession again, Indian growth rate has slowed while China will grow at 7.4%, which is the slowest rate for the country since 1990.

Import of oil in US has declined from 60% in 2005 to 33% in 2013. Much of the increase in US domestic production is predicated upon the price remaining at or above \$80 a barrel. With prices at \$65 a barrel and expected to fall further, it is expected that US shale oil companies will go bankrupt, which will affect the financial markets and banks who invested in the junk bonds.

However, will the bankruptcy pose a challenge to the market as a whole? "The new shale oil extraction technology "fracking" requires physical capital formation that has a very short life, and, hence, one can expect an unravelling of a major part of the industry very soon, unless OPEC obliges."

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/shale-oil-opecs-mercy.html>

Date Accessed: 17.12.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

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