

## EDITORIAL

*Dear Reader,*

*The World Wide Web has become such a fundamental part of our lives that when its very ubiquity is threatened a heated debate is sure to ensue. Not least because the internet doesn't just hold "the key to many of the questions facing humanity today" but because it's a space that has democratized access to information, reduced the barriers of entry for entrepreneurs and even been responsible for the success of movements like the Arab Spring, and closer home, the Jan Lokpal. However, for every note of 'independence' that the internet resonates with there seems to be an equal and opposite 'reaction' - it's a space that allows the smallest voice to be heard but is also used by the dark forces of terror to radicalize vulnerable sections of society; it's a space for dissent but is also being trawled by companies and governments with minimal regard to individual privacy and civil liberties; and most importantly it's a unique platform that provides equally unfettered access to each and every consumer but we now have groups of companies arguing that they should be allowed to control, and charge for, who gets to access, what they get to access and what they don't! This issue's Cover Story presents a short overview of the various aspects of Net Neutrality and we hope that it helps you separate the wheat from the chaff on an issue that is getting increasingly muddled by arguments around "throttling", "zero rating", "digital inclusion" and "neutrality".*

*The other issue that we would like to draw your attention is to take a cradle-to-grave view of the status of women in India, and a few of the articles in this issue throw up some interesting insights here. While we have much to celebrate about the near -gender-parity that India has achieved in the last 15 years as far as school enrolment are concerned, the ratio drops dramatically as we look at adult literacy. The numbers on ownership of land and property are even more skewed as only four per cent women in the country own land and property, whereas 73 per cent of the food is produced by women in rural India. And while it was hoped that all the talk of diversity in the corporate world would have meant that a larger number of women would join the corporate world, not only are these numbers small to start with, a large number of women drop out of the work force as a number of companies consciously put women who are pregnant or have child-rearing responsibilities on the slow track. If we want to really secure a better future for our women, it's time that we focus our policy initiatives to help 48% of the population become (and stay) an active part of the economy!*

*Do also read about the government's plan to raise Rs 41,000 crore through PSU stake sales in the current fiscal and a recent announcement scrapping the MSME Exclusive Items. While the former is a key aspect of the government's plan to divest and raise funds for current expenditure, the MSME list strikes a few curious notes as it includes pickles and glass bangles, begging the question why these 'sectors' would need de-reservation to "boost investment and technological advancement"?*

*And finally, insights on what's ailing the agriculture sector - the unseasonal rains have wrought havoc this season and the government is trying to address farmers concerns via relief packages, loan restructuring and waivers. But there are two broad reasons why we will continue to hear about farmer suicides, and the number of farmers seeking mental health support etc. - the CACP report clearly brings out the fact that input costs remain well above the MSP and there is a crying need for the government to set up a National Farmers Income Commission which should work out an assured monthly package for farmers, depending on their crop productivity and also the geographical location of the farm. The father of the Green Revolution,*

**EDITORIAL**

*M.S. Swaminathan, suggests that the other area of policy focus that will help mitigate this agrarian crisis, is the dichotomy between farmer's needs and the response of government and farm universities i.e. agrarian universities must stop functioning in silos and instead should offer integrated advice to help farmers break free from this cyclical crisis that is beginning to define Indian agriculture again.*

*We hope that this issue of Policy Watch helps you evaluate the key policy issues this week and look forward to your feedback on the same.*

*Ms. Barkha Deva  
Associate Director, RGICS*

## IN THIS ISSUE

### COVER STORY:

- Deciphering Net Neutrality: Understanding Implications in India

### HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:

- Government Lines up 12 PSUs for Stake Sale, to Raise Rs 41000 Crore
- Generating Factory Jobs for the Displaced due to Land Law Unlikely

### SECTION 1: THE ECONOMY

- Government Scraps MSME Exclusive Items List
- India Misses Export Target In FY15; Annual Exports Dip 1.23%
- Justice TS Thakur: Indian Workforce in Unorganised Sector Deprived of Welfare Schemes

### SECTION 2: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Politics and Governance:** Indian Home Ministry's Strictures on Foreign Funding; Corporate Funding of Elections
- **Development:** Centre to Revamp Labs Testing Food for Kids at Anganwadis
- **Connectivity:** CPI (M) wants Internet to be Declared a Public Utility

- **Education:** AAP freezes Hiring Teachers in Delhi University which could Derail the New Academic System; India Nears Gender Parity in Classroom, But Lags Behind in Adult Literacy;
- **Health:** A Truncated Health Budget; Rekindling the Fight against Leprosy
- **Environment:** India 5th Biggest Generator of E-Waste in 2014: UN Report
- **Agriculture:** CACP Reports Show Why Agriculture is in Distress; Holistic Approach to Farming can Mitigate Agrarian Crisis; Agriculture in Crisis
- **Law and Justice:** Norms on Plaints against Judges Put on SC Website; Acid Attacks Still a Burning Issue in India

### SECTION 3: SOCIETY

- **Gender:** Amended Land Law will Threaten Identity of Women: NFIW; Women in Corporate India face Discrimination upon Announcing Pregnancy;

### SECTION 4: INDIA'S WORLD

- **International Affairs:** As Yemen Crisis Deepens, UN Food Relief Agency Calls on Warring Factions to Allow Supply Restock

### SECTION 5: OPINION/BOOKS

- **Opinion:** The Supreme Court has Failed the Citizen on Encounter Killings;
- **Books:** Book Review: History of Education;

## COVER STORY

## Deciphering Net Neutrality: Understanding Implications in India

### Introduction

Tim Bernes-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web and MIT professor

*“The neutral communications medium is essential to our society. It is the basis of a fair, competitive market economy. It is the basis of democracy, by which a community should decide what to do. It is the basis of science, by which humankind should decide what is true. Let us protect the neutrality of the net.”*

Since the turn of the century the internet has provided content providers and application developers with a booming and very easily accessible market that transcends geographic boundaries. Access has been based on the principle of Net Neutrality (NN), the ideal that the communication passing through an electronic network should depend on choices made by Content and Application Providers (CAPs) on the one hand and users on the other- not the intermediary, the End user Connectivity Provider (ECP). Proponents of Net Neutrality credit this principle of freedom for the rise of various revolutionary internet services like Wikipedia, Hotmail, Amazon and Google, that changed the way we communicate and work. What's more, the freedom and reach provided by the internet has been largely credited with the reason for the success of some of the recent social revolutions, be they the Arab Spring or the Jan Lokpal movement in India.

The core idea on which the internet has grown is a basic feature of telecomm connectivity, i.e. the 'best effort' paradigm. Under a best effort network all users are provided unspecified download speeds and delivery time based on current traffic load. All end-user service requests are treated equally irrespective of nature or content. However, even though best effort is the stated principle, traffic management techniques which allow service providers to negotiate traffic by differentiating based on content, applications and users are also in practise.

Net neutrality can be implemented in various ways. It can include a complete proscription of traffic management practices and/or prohibiting any commercial relations between the CAP and ECPs. It can also mean mandating transparency in disclosing network management practices, not blocking lawful CAPs, and not indulging in unreasonable discrimination, as defined in the FCC Open Internet Order of 2010 in United States of America.

### Differing Claims

The current debate has been sparked by the increasing amount of data and increasing varieties of applications that result in demands for capacity enhancements of network by ECPs. The telecomm companies are arguing that Net Neutrality discourages investment in Broadband networks. The rationale is that they would have no incentive to invest in network capacity unless content providers supporting bandwidth-intensive multimedia applications or OTTs (as described in the TRAI consultation paper) pay a premium for heavy internet traffic. In absence of such a payment, the resulting degradation of quality would inhibit applications needing high bandwidth from emerging and succeeding.

Supporters of net neutrality credit it for growth and innovative applications of the internet. They rely on the end-to-end design principle under which the control and intelligence function resides with users at the edge of the network, and not with the core service provider setup itself. This creates an environment that does not require users to seek permission from the ECPs, promoting innovations in internet applications.

### Why Is This A Concern

The crux of the debate relates to the right of the intermediary, the ECP to discriminate between CAPs, either through traffic management or through commercial agreements. However, the power clout of telecomm giants is such that the government is inherently skewed in their favour. This becomes evident on reading the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) consultation paper, which borrows the definition of OTT's presented by companies like Bharati Airtel. Such influence can also lead to unfair pricing that may not merely reflect the cost of bandwidth but also the market power of these companies. The consultation paper also proposes the introduction of licensing for internet services provided by CAPs.

## COVER STORY

- **If the TRAI's proposal to introduce licensing goes through any business that uses the internet- e-retail, media or healthcare- can potentially be regulated by TRAI as an OTT.**

Any such measure would compose regulatory overreach on a grand scale. The problem lies with the definition of the TRAI's definition of an OTT service. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are licensed to provide data services. They transmit data packets generated by user's computers. What is in the packet-video, audio, text or pure data- cannot be categorised, since all data is transmitted in binary form, so effectively you cannot actually tell a 1GB video from a 0.1KB text message without decoding it. This data is generally not subject to regulations. This is why no license is needed to create a website, provide a service through the internet, or an app for use on computers, tablets or mobile phones. What needs to be highlighted is that these are not telecom services but content. All this would collapse if TRAI's definition of an OTT is accepted. By defining any application or service that uses the Internet as an OTT, it becomes subject to TRAI regulation.

If OTT services are to be licensed, India's communication environment will become further out of sync with the rest of the world. There would be long, cumbersome processes of TRAI classifying OTT services that would have to apply for licences. Viber, WhatsApp, Skype, etc, would no longer be available. Every small exporter uses some VoIP and instant messaging combination, and about 40 per cent of international voice traffic is on Skype. The wider economy will be denied the full benefits of the internet if net neutrality is not enforced.

- **The TRAI consultation paper presents no evidence to substantiate the claim that overall revenues for telecom companies have gone down as a result of the growing popularity of OTT services, which is hindering the growth of network infrastructure and consequent social welfare.**

The telecom operators lobby has not offered any evidence that data services do not generate enough revenue; instead figures show revenues growing at a dizzying pace. Their argument, repeated by TRAI, is rather that Internet companies are making tonnes of money, and so they too deserve to get a share. The most cited case, Skype versus voice calls, uses fictitious figures of losses. Telecom companies calculate losses by converting Skype call time to equivalent voice call value; the assumption being that people who use Skype now would actually make voice calls if Skype were not an option. TRAI has backed this argument by calling Skype voice calls "revenue foregone". Comparing SMS's on voice networks to equivalent services such as WhatsApp is also misleading. SMSs became a part of the basic service when the status of mobile services was changed from Value Added Services to basic services. The reality is that that telecom companies offer SMS, essentially a data service at a very high price. This penalises the lower-end users, who don't own smart phones and use the basic 2G services; not high-end users who have migrated to voice and data services and can use applications like WhatsApp.

The TRAI paper also claims that "telecom service providers offering fixed and mobile telephony are currently being overwhelmed by online content" by OTT applications and services. If this is true it can be because of two completely different reasons. One is that telecom operators, despite making enough money are not investing in upgrading their infrastructure. However, the TRAI has made no attempts to audit the telecomm companies to check if this is the case. Ideally the TRAI should have first conducted an investigation into infrastructure expansion by telecomm companies to address the concern, before opting for licensed internet services and compromised net neutrality. The second reason can be that increased data traffic is not generating adequate revenue for telecom operators. If this is the case, then we should ask why the rates for data services are low considering TRAI has allowed operators to set their own rates. It is surprising that these companies have not shared any evidence to support this claim. Instead, their argument, repeated by TRAI, is that the Internet companies are making a substantial amount of money and they too deserve to get a share.

- **Any violation of net neutrality can lead to discrimination between data packets and access speeds based on private agreement with specific internet vendors.**

If the principle is violated, telecom operators would have an incentive to not expand their infrastructure or bandwidth: because once the bandwidth is choked, powerful internet players would be willing to pay network operators to speed up their packets. This may lead to a situation where resourceful CAPs can restrict free internet access to select platforms like

## COVER STORY

Bharati Airtel's Airtel Zero and Facebook and Reliance's internet.org. Both these platforms constitute a bouquet of free access applications and services.

- **No information has been shared about the consultations conducted, if any, by the six member committee of the Department of Telecommunication (DoT), which is to submit a report on net neutrality early next month.**

It remains a valid concern whether the six member committee which is to decide on the future of internet in the country has adequate representation from civil society and telecom experts.

### Taking the debate forward

The net neutrality debate arises in the context of three interrelated issues: network congestion, market power of the ECP and the integration of the ECPs and CAPs. The internet connectivity market has grown from zero to a multibillion dollar market in 15 years. As a result, traffic on networks has also been increasing. According to an estimate by Cisco overall Internet Protocol (IP) traffic has reached 80.5 exabytes per month in 2015. This will place a heavy demand on IP networks. Simultaneously, internet applications are becoming more and more diverse and demanding specific requirements based on their features. Since different applications have different transmission requirements, traffic management may become necessary to allow new applications to appear and grow.

Over the years the capacity of networks has also increased because of advances in coding, multiplexing algorithms and transmission media. Today optic fibre networks have capacity order of tetrabits/sec. Wireless networks have also kept pace with capacities of hundreds of megabits/sec. However, the spectrum available for access networks remains a constraint. Traffic management may mean creating designated transmission pools on the internet. Greater freedom in traffic management can postpone the onset of congestion on the internet. People who support traffic management argue that it can promote desirable competition. However, supporters of net neutrality argue that increased competition can be deleterious if it comes at the cost of a competitive environment among CAPs. This is exactly what can happen if platforms like Airtel Zero or internet.org are made available, since CAPs would then have the option of paying more to boost transmission speeds and access for their services, pushing start-up CAPs out of competition.

To deal with the problem of network traffic the government should first evaluate whether such "overwhelming" traffic levels really exist. If they do, the government should initiate a bigger discussion on traffic management techniques, which considers the views of telecom companies, civil society and industry experts before taking a decision. Various traffic management techniques like flat rate (practised in Europe) and tiered termination fees can them be implemented to deal with increase in network traffic.

### Net Neutrality in Practice

The most recent US Regulations Federal Communications Commission Open Internet Order (FCC 2011) states that fixed and broadband providers must disclose the network management practises, performance characteristics, and terms and conditions of their broadband services. The order disallows the blocking of lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices; also, fixed broadband providers may not unreasonably discriminate in the transmission of lawful network traffic. However, the US regulations do not cover unreasonable discrimination for the mobile operators case.

Chile adopted a net neutrality law in 2011. The law states that ECPs cannot arbitrarily block, interfere, discriminate, hinder, or restrict the use of internet. Netherlands is the first country to apply net neutrality in full for both landline and mobile operators. The European Union is yet to take a firm stand on the issue and is working on a case by case basis. Last month, the European Council, which is made up of the 28 national governments of European Union members, adopted a proposal that would allow telecommunications companies to charge Internet businesses like Netflix and Google fees to deliver their videos and other content to users faster than could smaller companies that cannot afford to pay for preferential treatment.

## COVER STORY

Unfortunately in India, there is no mention of net neutrality in National Telecom Policy 2012. It should be taken into account that the domestic market is full of competition, the growing broadband wireless access network and the tiered pricing models are already in use. Also, telecom connectivity is an essential part of social welfare as we have seen in recent years, considering which a model close to the US regulation system that prevents blocking of competing applications/content maybe the way to go to keep the cost of network connectivity as low as possible, so that more and more get connected to the telecomm networks in the longer run.

### Conclusions

Net neutrality is a complex issue that attracts analytical, legal and technological arguments, and it would be prudent to adopt an approach where liability should be imposed when anti-competitive or restrictive practises are observed.

Some basic principles that can be immediately adopted on neutrality can be:

- 1) Case specific investigation of vertical integration between a service provider and content and application provider (CAP)
- 2) Maintaining enough competition in the broadband market and transparency in traffic management practices

The internet is now a level-playing field. Anybody can start up a website, stream music or use social media with the same amount of data that they have purchased with a particular ISP. But in the absence of neutrality, your ISP might favour certain websites over others for which you might have to pay extra. Website A might load at a faster speed than Website B because your ISP has a deal with Website A that Website B cannot afford. It's like your electricity company charging you extra for using the washing machine, television and microwave oven above and beyond what you are already paying. Internet by far is the most accessible and powerful medium to express one's opinion and question things. It thus falls upon the every citizen of this country to vouch for Net Neutrality, as it essentially has to do with the concentration of power. It also becomes the prerogative of our elected representatives to uphold democratic principles in putting their weight behind this and make sure that no compromise is made on the principle of a neutral net.

Prepared by:  
Rohit Chouhan

### References:

- <http://www.firstpost.com/business/net-neutrality-telcos-misleading-us-calling-apples-oranges-issue-2195984.html>
- <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/pj61D8cXPVQXwO0UJnd67I/The-Airtel-Zero-idea-Splitting-Indias-Internet-into-many-I.html>
- [http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/the-neutral-net-115040801301\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/the-neutral-net-115040801301_1.html)
- <http://tech.firstpost.com/news-analysis/net-neutrality-some-insights-from-countries-which-have-made-it-into-a-law-263072.html>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/business/net-neutrality-nuts-and-bolts/article7102327.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/net-neutrality-privileging-telcos-over-netizens/article7099208.ece>

## HEADLINES

### Government Lines up 12 PSUs for Stake Sale, to Raise Rs 41000 Crore

(Business Standard, April 14, 2015)

Government has recently shortlisted about 12 PSUs for stake sale to achieve the current fiscal's disinvestment target of Rs 41,000 crore. The government has budgeted to raise Rs 41,000 crore through PSU stake sale in the current fiscal and another Rs 28,500 crore through strategic stake sales.

This list of PSUs includes IOC, National Fertilizers, MMTC, Hindustan Copper and ITDC. The sources said, "The Department of Disinvestment plans to divest 5-15 % government stake in these state-owned companies, and has already floated a draft Cabinet note to seek nod for stake sales in certain PSUs."

Following is the roadmap for the stake sale as per the sources:

- 10 % stake each would be diluted in Engineers India Ltd (EIL), NALCO, NMDC and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).
- 15 % stake would be up for sale in National Fertilizers Ltd (NFL), Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL), India Tourism and Development Corp (ITDC), State Trading Corp (STC) and MMTC.
- Besides, the government plans to dilute 5 % stake each in BHEL, NTPC, Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF) and Dredging Corporation (DCIL).

Department of Disinvestment has already secured Cabinet approvals for stake sale of BHEL, NMDC and NALCO. Although a 5 % stake sale in ONGC has also been approved by the CCEA, but a delay in fuel subsidy sharing roadmap could delay the Rs 14,000 crore stake sale in Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), sources said.

Following are the expected gamers from the stake sale of PSUs as per the current market prices:

1. IOC would garner about Rs 9,000 crore,
2. EIL - Rs 700 crore,
3. NALCO - Rs 1,200 crore
4. NMDC - Rs 5,300 crore
5. BHEL - Rs 2,900 crore,
6. NTPC- Rs 6,000 crore,
7. RCF - Rs 190 crore
8. DCIL - Rs 60 crore
9. HCL - Rs 1,000 crore,
10. Tourism company, ITDC - Rs 169 crore
11. MMTC - Rs 800 crore
12. NFL - Rs 240 crore
13. STC - Rs 140 crore

The government has already sold 5 % stake in Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) last week to raise about Rs 1,550 crore, which was the first disinvestment in the current fiscal.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/govt-lines-up-12-psus-for-stake-sale-in-2015-16-115041300515\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/govt-lines-up-12-psus-for-stake-sale-in-2015-16-115041300515_1.html)

Date Accessed: 16.4.2015

(Shruti Issar)

### Generating Factory Jobs for the Displaced due to Land Law Unlikely

(Roshan Kishore, Livemint, April 16, 2015)

Amid the discussions on the land acquisition law, it has become increasingly difficult to put a number to the landless people in India. While launching the Mudra refinancing scheme for micro enterprises, the Finance Minister said 300 million people are landless. However, his office is yet to back the data with a source. The draft national land reforms policy released in July 2013 said 31% of all households are landless. That number is derived from a 2003-04 survey of the National Sample Survey Office and the definition of landless is unclear. More recent data from the 2013 NSSO survey, which surveyed only rural areas, showed that the proportion of landless households is at 7.4%, or 11 million households and 57.7 million people.

The Finance Minister has claimed that the landless, who are poor, dalits and tribals will get employment in India's industrial corridors after modifications in the land law. However, this claim looks empty. Going by India's recent industrial history, creating 300 million factory jobs would not be fathomable. The country's total workforce in 2012 was 473 million, about half of whom were employed in agriculture. An RBI study shows that the industry's share in employment increased by only 1.7 percentage points between 1999-2000 and 2011-12. There were roughly 64 million industrial workers in 2011-12, who accounted for 13.6% of the workforce. During this period, the previous UPA land acquisition law did not exist, so the possibility of acquisition being a hindrance to industrialization and employment generation does not exist. Besides, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India performance audit done in 2014 showed that special economic zones (SEZs), which involve large-scale land acquisition, have failed to achieve 66-97% of their employment projections.

Employment generation is an outcome of the overall economic policy direction of the government and employment figures are unlikely to change substantially just because of changes in land acquisition rules. India's

## HEADLINES

employment elasticity —additional employment generation per unit increase in output —has declined sharply since the 1990s, and this needs to be taken care of. Employment elasticity in manufacturing is among the lowest in the economy. According to Atul Sood, associate professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, “Unless there is a shift away from capital-intensive industrialization and steps are taken to address the low employment elasticity of output, especially in manufacturing, it will not be possible to deliver on promises of drastically increasing employment.”

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/PUzqHSs3xejXk4hm2djT/PM/How-many-Indians-are-landless.html>

Date accessed: 15.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

## ECONOMY

## Macro Economic Dimension of India

Table 1: General Inflation Rates in Indian States: April 2015 (%)

States	Rural	Urban	General
<b>All India</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>5.09</b>	<b>5.23</b>
<b>Northern Region</b>			
Jammu & Kashmir	8.54	5.14	7.05
Himachal Pradesh	10.22	4.73	8.66
Punjab	10.06	6.67	8.49
Chandigarh	13.80	2.17	3.51
Uttarakhand	5.13	4.79	4.66
Haryana	8.03	6.92	7.03
Delhi	7.13	5.63	6.5
Uttar Pradesh	4.34	4.09	3.89
<b>Western Region</b>			
Rajasthan	7.36	6.77	6.93
Gujarat	3.61	5.34	4.57
Maharashtra	7.75	5.18	6.20
Goa	8.61	7.70	7.41
Lakshadweep	16.24	4.87	10.51
Daman & Die	13.82	12.39	12.87
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	19.30	7.01	13.14
<b>Central Region</b>			
Madhya Pradesh	3.77	7.45	5.18
Chattishgarh	8.88	4.86	6.82
<b>Southern Region</b>			
Andhra Pradesh	7.90	5.26	6.72
Karnataka	6.82	4.78	5.76
Kerala	6.96	3.51	5.48
Tamil Nadu	5.03	4.22	4.70
Puducherry	15.66	8.88	11.12
Andaman & Nicobar Island	18.60	2.45	10.18
<b>Northeastern Region</b>			
Arunachal Pradesh	4.57	-	-
Assam	3.50	4.57	2.93
Manipur	19.67	7.26	15.28
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>9.34</b>	<b>0.70</b>
Mizoram	6.05	13.22	3.86
<b>Nagaland</b>	<b>18.89</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>13.39</b>
Tripura	11.11	-1.84	9.69
Sikkim	9.34	3.39	8.50
<b>Eastern Region</b>			
Bihar	5.55	4.66	4.84
Jharkhand	2.92	4.38	7.36
West Bengal	-0.14	3.23	-4.89
Odisha	9.86	3.56	7.36

- 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 (From the month February 2015 onwards the New Series would be with base 2012=100) provided by MOSPI, Government of India.
- The 2014 April data at state-level with base 2010 is here converted to new base 2012 with linking factors of MOSPI 1.22, 1.20 and 1.21 for rural, urban and combined respectively
- The inflation rates have been estimated from provisional figures of MOSPI

## ECONOMY

## Government Scraps MSME Exclusive Items List

(*Business Standard*, April 14, 2015)

In order to boost investment and technological advancement, the government has de-reserved items ranging from pickles to firecrackers, which were reserved only for the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) sector for manufacturing. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the move was taken “to encourage greater investment, including the existing MSME units, to incorporate better technologies, standard and branch building to enhance competition in Indian and global markets for these products.”

This list has been continuously shrinking since 1991. Over the years, the list was reduced from 800 items to 20 at present. Besides allowing for large-scale manufacturing, the move will also allow import of these items. The imports may include pickles, mustard oil, groundnut oil, wooden furniture, fireworks, glass bangles, safety matches, steel chairs, rolling shutters, wax candles and laundry soaps among others.

This was done on the recommendations of an advisory committee that took the decision to scrap in October last year. The release issued, stated, “There is no prima facie justification for continuation of reservation of manufacturing in the MSE sector, since such reservation might inhibit the possibilities based on technologies, economy of scale, etc., vis-à-vis the imported items.”

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-scraps-msme-exclusive-items-list-115041400029\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-scraps-msme-exclusive-items-list-115041400029_1.html)

Date Accessed: 16.4.2015

(Shruti Issar)

## India Misses Export Target In FY15; Annual Exports Dip 1.23%

(*Dilasha Seth, The Economic Times*, April 17, 2015)

India's exports have fallen for the second time in three years, declining 1.23% in FY15 and falling short of meeting the last year's level by \$4 billion. The exports last fiscal year were at \$310 billion, according to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce. Imports on the other hand contracted by just 0.59% during the year. The gap between country's exports and imports has also widened slightly during the year to \$137 billion as against \$135 billion in the previous year.

The outbound shipments in March contracted at the sharpest pace in over three years at 21.06%, fourth straight month of decline. This can be attributed to a range of factors including

sharp appreciation of rupee and demand fall, even in the face of low valuation of crude oil. Most sectors posted a decline in exports during March including gems and jewellery, engineering, electronics, leather, petroleum, etc.

Additionally, the trade deficit in March widened to a four month high on account of sharp uptick in gold imports. Gold imports nearly doubled in March compared to the previous year at \$5 billion whereas silver imports shot up by 193% during the month.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-misses-export-target-in-fy15-annual-exports-dip-1-23/articleshow/46959978.cms>

Date accessed: 15.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

## Justice TS Thakur: Indian Workforce in Unorganised Sector Deprived of Welfare Schemes

(*The Indian Express*, April 12, 2015)

Speaking at inaugural session of the two-day colloquium on ‘Workers in Unorganised Sector — Challenges and Way forward’ organised by the Chandigarh State Legal Services Authority, Justice T S Thakur of the Supreme Court has brought attention to the fact that more than 90% workforce in India is part of the unorganised sector. In fact, even the benefits of various schemes started for their welfare prove ineffective due to poor implementation by the respective government authorities. “The largest constituency of our workers is in the unorganised labour. Of the 46 crore workers, 14 crore are women. Every state has poverty alleviation schemes but the benefits don’t reach them,” said Justice Thakur.

According to him, Rs 750 crore was collected for welfare of labour in Punjab but little has been spent. There is no spending in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and the state has been insensitive towards them. Justice Hemant Gupta, executive chairman of the Chandigarh Legal Services Authority pointed out that of Rs 50 crore, Chandigarh Administration has spent only Rs 80 lakh on welfare schemes such as old aged pension, distribution of blankets and purchase of ambulances. unorganized sector is given wages even lower than the fixed minimum wages, though there is a construction workers’ protection Act, due to the poor implementation by the authorities.

Against this backdrop, the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) has devised Legal Services to the Workers in the Unorganised Sector Scheme, 2010 enabling the NLSA and the State Legal Services Authorities to act as a watchdog for expeditious implementation of beneficial schemes. Supreme Court judge Adarsh Kumar Goel has

## ECONOMY

stressed upon creating a contingency security for unorganised workers alongside social security schemes. There is also a need to give due recognition to the workers engaged in unorganised labour such as house maids, newspaper vendors, fruit and vegetable sellers and rag pickers so as to protect their social, economic and legal rights.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/90-indian-workforce-in-unorganised-sector-deprived-of-welfare-schemes-says-justice-t-s-thakur/>

Date accessed: 15.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

**POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE****Indian Home Ministry's Strictures on Foreign Funding***(Anupam Chakravarthy, Down to Earth, April 3, 2015)*

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reportedly suspended the licence of international non-profit Greenpeace's India chapter. A dossier prepared by MHA suggests that the NGO transferred Rs 53 crore to its accounts without informing the ministry, which the ministry termed as "prejudicial to public and economic interest of the country" and a violation of The Foreign Contribution and Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010. According to the suspension notice issued to Greenpeace India, during the inspection of its records between September 24 and 27, 2014, the ministry found violations of various sections of FCRA pertaining to financial transfers, changes in the organisational structure and employing foreign nationals to strategize campaigns in India. The ministry, in a notice published on its website on April 10, granted Greenpeace 30 days to make a representation before the government.

On June 13 last year too, the ministry had blocked the FCRA account of Greenpeace India. On July 17, Greenpeace gave a representation to the ministry, but the ministry could not furnish any document to support why it had blocked the account. As the government did not issue any orders to unblock its fixed deposit account, the NGO approached the court. On January 19, 2015, Delhi High Court asked the Reserve Bank of India to release funds amounting to Rs 1.87 crore to the NGO. The court asked the ministry to respond to the NGO's allegation that their funds had been arbitrarily blocked

According to Greenpeace India, it has not received any communication from the ministry yet. Greenpeace has been organising campaigns against coal mining across various parts of central India, stating that ecological concerns have not been addressed by successive governments. The campaigns revealed large-scale violations of the Forest Rights Act, Environmental Protection Act, Water and Air Pollution Acts by various governments and private companies involved in coal mining in these areas.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/indian-home-ministry-s-strictures-foreign-funding>

Date Accessed : 16.04.2015  
(Devyani Bhushan)

**Corporate Funding of Elections***(Samya Chatterjee, Observer Research Foundation, April 12, 2015)*

The recent position espoused by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in favour of "transparent and legal" corporate funding of elections is an announcement with far reaching implications for the country. One of their key demands is that both spending and expenditure during elections should be without any caps to the free flow of donations. This recommendation flows from the of-quoted predicament prevalent in the campaign finance regulations in India wherein caps exist for spending by individual candidates during election campaigning, but for spending by political parties, no such caps exist. This loophole in the current provisions of the Representation of People Act, 1951 has often been the source of "black money" during election period with the bulk of the finances being contributed by business houses.

The advocacy of ASSOCHAM is not the only instance, the pending Companies Bill, 2011 has provisions enumerating that corporate funding to political parties must increase from 5% to 7.5% of the average net profits earned by a company during the three immediately preceding financial years. This increase in the amount of funding is despite the fact that the presence of strong corporate funding laws has not hindered companies to squeeze out crores in bribes

The cosy relationship between business houses and political parties is not a recent phenomenon. The growing political-corporate coziness has become a major debatable issue for obvious reasons. Overall, in its current mode, the corporate funding can also possibly throttle democracy in the country.

<http://www.observindia.com/cms/sites/orfonline/modules/analysis/AnalysisDetail.html?cmaid=35752&mmacmaid=35753>

Date Accessed: 16.04.2015  
(Devyani Bhushan)

**DEVELOPMENT****Centre to Revamp Labs Testing Food for Kids at Anganwadis***(Indian Express, April 13, 2015)*

A recent survey found that one in four children in Anganwadi Centers are malnourished. In response, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is planning to revamp its quality control laboratories that monitors nutrition level supplement to about 13.3 lakh children across the country.

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

A senior official in the ministry in the ministry noted that laboratories would conduct random tests on food and raw materials used by the anganwadi centers. Currently, there are four laboratories in each of the metros, which are non-functional. There upgrades will depend on the funds that the Central government releases. However, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program recently faced a significant budgetary cut. Funds were slashed by almost half, causing outrage among activists.

The Integrated Child Development Services is one of the centrally sponsored schemes that may undergo changes in fund sharing pattern. Centre is looking at changing the funding pattern from 50:50 to 75:25.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/centre-to-revamp-labs-testing-food-for-kids-at-anganwadis/>

Date Accessed: 17.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

### CONNECTIVITY

#### CPI (M) wants Internet to be Declared a Public Utility

(*The Hindu*, April 17, 2015)

The Communist Party of India (Marxist), in its 21<sup>st</sup> Congress held on April 16<sup>th</sup>, urged the government to declare the Internet a public utility. It also called upon the public to join in the ongoing struggle across the world against the “unholy nexus between telecom and internet companies.”

The CPI (M) condemned the consultation document of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India on Net Neutrality adding that, “Without Net neutrality, companies can offer limited Internet with few services and slow down sites based on who pays.”

The party in its resolution maintained that the revenue of telecom companies from data services had doubled in 2014 and was sufficient to build infrastructure. It claimed that in absence of net neutrality, telecom companies would gain a perverse incentive not to expand infrastructure to create scarcity. This would allow only big companies and the rich to be able to offer content and services over the internet.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cpim-wants-internet-declared-a-public-utility/article7112812.ece>

Date Accessed: 18.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

### EDUCATION

#### AAP freezes Hiring Teachers in Delhi University which could Derail the New Academic System

(*The Scroll*, April 16, 2015)

The Indian education sector is suffering a shortage of trained teachers, and the University of Delhi especially has been experiencing an acute shortage of permanent staff for years. The situation is set to worsen for the university as the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government has imposed a freeze on fresh appointments of teaching staff. The Delhi government took this decision to crack down on the 28 colleges it funds partially or fully, asking them to form governing bodies with representatives from the government before resuming the appointment process.

Critics claim this to be a move by the government to have a say in the appointment of teachers. As per Professor Inder Mohan Kapahy, a founding member of National Democratic Teachers Front, the move will “inordinately delay the regularisation of at least 2000 young ad hoc teachers.”

In the last five years there has hardly been any permanent appointment made in the university. There are more than 5,000 ad-hoc teachers in the university whose contracts have to be renewed every four years. According to Abha Dev Habib, a faculty member of the university’s Executive Council, the constant hunt for teachers hurts the education system in the longer run as teaching becomes an unattractive option for aspiring teachers and students lose out on quality education.

The colleges face challenges in implementing the proposed credit based choice system as with the Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) as they have to arrange teachers on short notice for short durations. The problem is worsened in cases where colleges have to arrange teachers on an ad-hoc basis, for small batches of students who opt for a particular course. This results in teachers being appointed who are neither competent nor interested in teaching small batches. All of which results in students switching courses in the middle of the semester.

Some colleges have more ad hoc than permanent teachers, and most of them work with 40%-80% of their staff strength comprising of ad hoc faculty, as per Abha Habib. If the current ban stays for long more ad hoc teachers would have to be hired and would exacerbate the existing situation further.

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

<http://scroll.in/article/720495/AAP%E2%80%99s-freeze-on-hiring-teachers-in-Delhi-University-could-derail-the-new-academic-system>

Date Accessed: 17.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

## India Nears Gender Parity in Classroom, But Lags Behind in Adult Literacy

(All Gov India, April 12, 2015)

India has made significant progress in the last 15 years in boosting school enrolment, and is also close to gender parity in the classroom, according to a global report by UNESCO. However, the country is lagging behind in adult literacy and in checking the growth of private schools in urban slums. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015 notes that the girls-to-boys ratio in India's primary classes is already 1.02 while that in secondary school is 0.94. India has brought out-of-school children down by 90 per cent since 1999. Gross enrolment in pre-primary education has touched 58 per cent in 2012, in comparison to 19 per cent in 1999.

However, the report cites the 2014-15 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) to point out wide disparities in students' basic LEARNING skills across states, and highlights the growing number of contract teachers and teacher absenteeism. In 2014, the proportion of all children in class 5 who could read a class 2 textbook was up by a minuscule 1.1 percentage points – from 47% in 2013 to 48.1% in 2014. This implies that every second student of class 5 in rural India cannot read the text of a class 3 levels or below.

UNESCO's report also criticizes India on three counts: the large number of illiterate adults, the quality of learning outcomes and the mushrooming of private schools in urban slums. Of the 781 million illiterate adults worldwide, 265 million are Indians, the report said. As per the report. "The one measurable goal that India did not reach was to reduce its illiteracy rate by 50%. Women represent the majority of illiterate adults with 68 per cent of illiterate adults in India being women."

<http://www.allgov.com/india/news/top-stories/india-nears-gender-parity-in-classroom-but-lags-behind-in-adult-literacy-150412?news=856224>

Date Accessed: 16.04.2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

## HEALTH

### A Truncated Health Budget

(Rupali Mukherjee, *Times of India*, April 15, 2015)

Recent decisions of shelving the free drugs and diagnostics scheme (under National Health Assurance Mission) and spending cuts in major social sector programmes have ensured that 'acche din' in healthcare are still elusive. To make it worse the government has also delayed the implementation of large pictorial warnings on tobacco product packs. In fact, the government's healthcare outlay is stagnant at around Rs 33,000 crore and has not translated to the increase from 1.2% of GDP to 2-2.5% as suggested in the draft national health policy. Public health spending in India at around 1% of the GDP is the lowest when compared to China's 3% and Brazil's 4.1%, and well below the World Health Organization's recommendation of 5%.

According to various health experts the low level of budgetary allocation to health has been extremely disappointing. It appears the states have to take up more responsibility for adequately resourcing and effectively delivering health services. Health requires commitment and coordination across all sectors of the central government as well as a shared vision that creates synergy between state and central initiatives. That level of commitment and clarity has not emerged. Perhaps the new National Health Policy will provide the platform for articulating that vision.

The British Medical Journal has stated that the expenditure on the National Health Mission which supports a network of accredited social health activists (ASHAs) to provide basic services is down by 20%, a similar reduction in budgets for state governments has also been done, while the Integrated Child Development Services scheme, which provides nutrition and other services to pregnant and lactating mothers, and infants, received around 10% less than expected. Even the government's AIDS programme will receive Rs 300 crore less funds next year. The slash in the budget will imply the persistence of huge shortfall of healthcare workers. India has among the worst ratio of doctors and hospital beds population-wise in the world.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/NDA-fund-cuts-put-healthcare-on-the-sickbed/articleshow/46926938.cms>

Date Accessed: 16/04/2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Rekindling the Fight against Leprosy***(The Hindu, April 11, 2015)*

The treatment of Leprosy has become easier and more effective since 1983 after the introduction of Multi Drug Therapy (MDT). This was included in India's health programme that led to a decline in leprosy. However, post 2005 the decline has slowed. "As of 2014, India still accounts for 58% of all new leprosy cases in the world. During 2013-14 alone, 1.27 lakh new cases were detected in India."

Recently produced Law Commission of India's 256th Report, 'Eliminating Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy' highlights the failures in the health system in eradicating leprosy. The recommendations draw from values of constitutional values of dignity, equality and freedom. It recognizes India's commitment in International organizations to curb the disease. These obligations are listed in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons affected by Leprosy, 2010 and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007. Sensitivity to social stigma against persons suffering from leprosy is a theme underlying the document.

"For instance, the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 contains discriminatory provisions wherein higher premium rates are charged from persons affected by leprosy due to a supposedly higher risk to their lives. There are several personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 that are also discriminatory, mistaking leprosy as an 'incurable and virulent disease'. Even the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 does not include all categories of persons affected by leprosy within its purview, denying them special privileges under the law." To create access to educational and employment sectors, the reports suggest affirmative action and non-discriminatory laws.

The report also contains controversial suggestions. It recommends that colonies of leprosy patients should be granted ownership titles. However, these are sights for discriminations and isolation. Ensuring the assimilation of 850 leprosy colonies is a complex task that needs more than granting ownership rights.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/rekindling-the-fight-against-leprosy/article7089985.ece>

Date Accessed: 18.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

**ENVIRONMENT****India 5<sup>th</sup> Biggest Generator of E-Waste in 2014: UN Report***(Daily News and Services, April 19, 2015)*

As per the 'Global E-Waste Monitor 2014', compiled by United Nations think tank United Nations University (UNU), India is the fifth largest e-waste producer in the world after United States, China, Japan and Germany. In 2014, India discarded 1.7 million tonnes (Mt) of electronic and electrical equipment. The volume of e-waste is likely to rise to 50 Mt in the next three years (21% increase). This is going to raise questions of location and composition of the e-waste problem.

In absolute figures, most e-waste in the world was produced in Asia with China (6.0 Mt), Japan (2.2 Mt) and India (1.7 Mt) topping the list in the continent. However, the leading per capita producers of e-waste are the wealthy nations of northern and western Europe, top five being Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Denmark, and the UK. "The lowest amount of e-waste per inhabitant was generated in Africa (1.7 kg/inhabitant). The continent generated 1.9 Mt of e-waste in total."

"In 2014, people worldwide discarded all but a small fraction of an estimated 41.8 Mt of electrical and electronic equipment." These included mostly end-of-life kitchen, laundry and bathroom equipment such as microwave ovens, washing machines and dishwashers. Currently, 7% of the e-waste is made of small information technology equipment such as mobiles and calculators. Almost 60% of the waste comes from mix of mix of large and small equipment used in homes and businesses. These include toasters, electric shavers, video cameras, vacuum cleaners etc. "The 41.8 Mt weight of last year's e-waste is comparable to the distance from New York to Tokyo and back."

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-5th-biggest-generator-of-e-waste-in-2014-un-report-2078756>

Date Accessed: 19.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

**AGRICULTURE****CACP Reports Show Why Agriculture is in Distress***(Devinder Sharma, India Together, April 13, 2015)*

This article presents an analysis of why relief packages and loan waivers can alone not take care of farmer suicides in

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

the country. The government has announced a relief package, directed banks to restructure agricultural loans and insurance companies to settle claims. Ministers were sent to affected areas to assess damage. Although these are welcome steps, a closer look at the state of agricultural returns shows why once the relief packages are given, the farmer will again be forgotten. The incessant farmer suicides in the face of unseasonal rains reflect how fragile the farm economy is.

Farmers have been demanding a higher minimum support price (MSP) for wheat and paddy, while Centre has already conveyed to the SC its inability to raise farm prices by 50% as 'it will distort market prices. The cost and income estimates by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) give a deeper insight into the farm economy. According to the CACP report for the period between 2010-11 and 2012-13, the net return for wheat on all-India basis stands at Rs 14,260 per hectare. For mustard, the return is Rs. 14,960, and for gram Rs. 7,479. Considering cost and price calculations for Uttar Pradesh, where most suicides happen, the average income a farmer gets from one hectare is Rs. 10,758. Since wheat is a six-month crop, the average income that a wheat farmer can expect from cultivating one hectare comes to Rs. 1793 a month. If the farmer cultivates rice, the net returns have been computed at Rs. 4311. Adding the returns for both wheat and paddy comes to Rs. 15,669 or a mere Rs.1306 per month on average. Considering Punjab, whose average would likely be higher than India's, the net returns for paddy for Punjab is Rs. 17,651 while wheat provides the Punjab farmers with an average return of Rs. 18,701 per hectare. Adding the two, since most farmers cultivate wheat followed by paddy, a paltry Rs. 3,029 is the average monthly earning in Punjab from one hectare.

With the scenario in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab being so dismal, the farmers elsewhere in India are subjected to worse. Paddy farmers in Bihar and Assam actually get a negative return, which means they cultivate losses. The loss per hectare in Assam is Rs 3361 and in Bihar Rs 266. The need of the hour is then to set up a National Farmers Income Commission with the mandate to work out an assured monthly package for farmers, depending on his crop productivity and also the geographical location of the farm.

<http://indiatogether.org/farming-crisis-and-farm-suicides-due-to-low-agricultural-returns-agriculture>

Date accessed: 15.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

### Holistic Approach to Farming can Mitigate Agrarian Crisis

(Down to Earth, April 16, 2015)

M.S. Swaminathan, renowned agricultural scientist, has suggested some measures to address the dichotomy between farmer's needs and the response of government and farm universities to mitigate agricultural crisis.

As per Mr. Swaminathan there is an absence of integrated advice to help farmers trapped in agrarian crisis. He points to agrarian universities which he believes have become fragmented and run in silos.

In a press note, the Father of the Indian Green Revolution called on the government to focus on fundamental problems affecting farmers and urged for a more holistic approach to farming in order to address the scenario. He added that India followed the US model to look at farming in a holistic way wherein our agricultural universities were mandated to look at crop, livestock, fish, agro-forestry and agro-processing. He added that, "Unfortunately, both in the organization of agricultural universities and departments, responsibilities are getting fragmented. The agriculture university which was to serve farmers on a farming system basis has now been split into veterinary, animal sciences, fisheries and horticulture universities."

Mr. Swaminathan rued the fact that the farmer fails to get any integrated advice covering conservation of natural resources, cultivation on the evergreen revolution pattern, consumption and commerce either from the research or the development sides. The farm universities in India need to restore their original vision viz. to carryout research, education and extension on a farming system basis. This would help farmers to balance they're farm and non-farm incomes, thereby saving themselves from the vagaries of the agricultural cycle..

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/holistic-approach-farming-can-mitigate-agrarian-crisis-m-s-swaminathan>

Date Accessed: 17.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

### Agriculture in Crisis

(Jayati Ghosh, Frontline, April 17, 2015)

Across the country, farmers, especially small cultivators, are facing severe problems with already dire outcomes. There has been a spike in farmers' suicides in several States. In Maharashtra, it is estimated that there has been a 40 per cent increase in farmers' suicides in the past seven months compared with the corresponding previous seven-month period. Reports from Rajasthan, Punjab and elsewhere also

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

point to more suicides by those from the farming community. In much of northern and western India, unseasonal rain and hailstorms have battered standing crops of pulses and vegetables, and lower harvests are the primary source of concern here. It is estimated that nearly one-third of the acreage under the rabi crop has been adversely affected. In West Bengal, potato farmers are struggling because of too much output; post-harvest potato prices have collapsed and the appalling but continued lack of adequate storage facilities means that farmers are forced to simply let their crops go to waste. In Maharashtra, farmers face a double whammy: cotton and sugar prices are down even as bad weather has meant lower output. In southern India, agriculturalists are suffering the impact of the global decline in prices of cash crops, accentuated by the adverse effects of the various trade agreements signed by the Central government.

The difficulties farmers face ranging from accessing credit at reasonable rates to arranging finance for agricultural productions have become more intense in the recent past. Institutional credit to agriculture did increase under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Recently, things got worse in this regard, despite all the grand talk of financial inclusion under the Jan Dhan scheme, as small farmers have once again been forced to take recourse to local moneylenders and input dealers who charge exorbitant interest. The rigidity of the institutional loan structure, as also the public humiliation of defaulters by many commercial and cooperative banks, makes it difficult to deal with even for farmers who can access such loans.

In the first year of the NDA government, the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) advance estimates of national income suggest that growth of value-added in agriculture will be only 1 per cent compared with 3.7 per cent in the previous year. But even this may well be an overestimate given the damage to the rabi crop because of freak weather conditions. Instead of higher crop prices, farmers had to face declining global trade prices of most cash crops and a near-stagnant minimum support price (MSP) for important food grains and sugarcane. In addition, the Central government has now declared that it will procure crops only from farmers in deficit States. The past year has experienced sweeping cuts in some essential items of Central government expenditure that impact farmers directly. Public spending on agricultural development and on research and extension has already fallen in real terms and is set to decline even further in the coming year. The money for irrigation has been cut. The unseasonal rain and other weather changes have had such a devastating impact on so many farmers. The Central government is effectively treating this as the responsibility of State governments, passing the buck on this critical area of public intervention to States that are already hugely financially stretched

because of the reduction of so much other central social spending.

<http://www.frontline.in/cover-story/agriculture-in-crisis/article7048078.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 16.04.2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

## LAW AND JUSTICE

### Norms on Complaints against Judges Put on SC Website

(Free Press Journal, April 17, 2015)

The apex court registry has uploaded the 'in-house' procedures, on taking 'suitable remedial' action against judge, accused of misconduct and impropriety on its website. Following the direction of court while deciding a sexual harassment complaint of a former women judicial officer against a sitting judge of Madhya Pradesh High Court, the apex court disclosed the procedure adopted by the Supreme court way back in 1999.

In 1997 a panel of five-judges, consisting of SC judges, Justices S C Agrawal, A S Anand, and S P Bharucha and two senior-most Chief Justices of High Courts, P S Misra of the Andhra Pradesh High Court and D P Mohapatra of the Allahabad High Court, developed a set of procedure. Supreme Court in its full court meeting on December 15, 1999 adopted procedures suggested by the panel with some changes.

The in-house procedures prescribes three different sets of procedures for taking action on complaints against judges of the High Courts, Chief justices of HCs and judges of the Supreme court respectively. "The procedures to deal with complaints against HC judges says that if a complaint is received by the Chief Justice of the High court concerned then 'he shall examine it'. "If it is found by him (CJ) that the complaint is of a serious nature involving misconduct or impropriety, he shall ask for the response thereto of the judge concerned," the report said, adding if the CJ is satisfied that no further action is needed, then he shall close the proceedings and inform the CJI accordingly. If the Chief Justice is of the opinion that the complaint needs 'deeper probe', then he shall forward to the CJI the complaint alongwith the response of the judge concerned and his own comments."

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/norms-on-complaints-against-judges-put-on-sc-website/#sthash.ZxYdZKA3.dpuf>

Date accessed: 17.4.2015

(Jeet Singh)

## GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

## Acid Attacks Still a Burning Issue in India

(Neeta Lal, *Inter Press News*, April 15, 2015)

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2015/04/acid-attacks-still-a-burning-issue-in-india/>

Date Accessed: 16.04.2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

Acid attacks in India have ravaged the lives of thousands of young women whose only fault was that they repudiated marriage proposals, rejected sexual advances from men they didn't fancy, or were caught in the crossfire of domestic disputes. In India's patriarchal society, men who take umbrage at being spurned turn to acid as a retributive weapon. The Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI), a London-based charity, tentatively estimates that some 1,000 acid attacks occur every year in India. As per the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013, a person convicted of carrying out an acid attack in India can be sentenced to anything from 10 years to life imprisonment. The Supreme Court ruled on Jul. 16, 2013, that all states regulate the sale of easily available substances like hydrochloric, sulfuric, or nitric acids common choices among perpetrators adding that buyers must provide a photo identity card to any retailer, who in turn should record each customer's name and address.

Horrible form of gender-based violence will not end until the government makes it much harder for offenders to procure their weapon of choice; currently, one-litre bottles of acid can be purchased over the counter without a prescription for as little as 33 cents. The Supreme Court has condemned the Centre for failing to formulate a strong enough policy to curb acid sales. In early April, the Court directed private hospitals to treat acid attack survivors free of cost, and additionally ruled that states must take action against medical facilities that fail to comply with this directive. Experts say India should learn from neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh by firming up implementation of existing laws. In Bangladesh, acid assaults have plummeted from 492 cases in 2002 to 75 last year, according to ASTI, since the government introduced the death penalty for acid attacks. Stiffer legislation in Pakistan has resulted in a 300-percent rise in the number of women coming forward to report the crime. Progress in India has been slower, although the state governments of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have set a good precedent by funding the entire cost of medical treatment for some acid attack survivors.

While acid attacks have traditionally been perceived as a problem involving male perpetrators and female victims, advocates say that attacks on men are also surging, with a third of all cases reported each year involving males embroiled in property or financial disputes. However, until the government formulates and enforces a multi-pronged approach to ending this grisly practice, scores of people in this country of 1.2 billion remain at risk of suffering a fate that some say is worse than death.

## SOCIETY

**GENDER**

### **Amended Land Law will Threaten Identity of Women: NFIW**

*(Free Press Journal, April 15, 2015)*

The National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) tried to highlight the anti-women provisions of Land Acquisition ordinance, re-promulgated on April 3, by Modi government. NFIW allege that amendments carried out by the Narendra Modi government to the 2013 Land Acquisition Act will threaten identity of women which they get through owning land. NFIW appealed to the government to ensure provision of consent clause with say of women in deciding whether to hand over land to private or public party.

Insisting on land reforms, the NFIW president and activist Aruna Ro said, "Land gives identity to women. Land gives her existence whether it is productive or not. It has social and cultural implications for women." Jaya Mehta, an economist said, "(Until now), consent was taken from men as land titles were in their names. Women had no say in this. So, we think women must have a say when it comes to deciding about land."

"The NFIW claimed that only four per cent women in the country have ownership or land and property, whereas 73 per cent of the food is produced by women in rural India. The federation said offering land and property rights to women are an important stepping stone in their empowerment." The Federation also criticized government for taking the ordinance route. According to the Roy, re-promulgation of land ordinance is undemocratic. In a statement she said, "the Ordinance was passed in corporate interest and they (corporates) will use land in worst possible way."

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/amended-land-law-will-threaten-identity-of-women-nfiw/>

Date accessed: 16.4.2015

(Jeet Singh)

### **Women in Corporate India face Discrimination upon Announcing Pregnancy**

*(Scroll, April 16, 2015)*

Even as a section of the private sector has been consciously adopting gender-sensitive policies like flexible hours and crèche services for working mothers, there are others where women are harassed and discriminated against after announcing that they are pregnant. Although firing women

on account of pregnancy might be uncommon and is illegal under the Maternity Benefit Act,, experts believe that Corporate India still has a discriminatory policy towards working mothers.

Women candidates are asked questions about their marital status and maternity plans- questions almost never asked of male job candidates. Women face multiple issues after announcing their pregnancy or when returning from maternity leave. One of the common problems is denial of promotion to women on maternity leave as promotions are largely performance-based in the corporate world. Maternity leaves are often recorded as time with no or average performance which impact the working mother's chance of getting a promotion.

Insensitive companies consider working mothers a short term asset- especially as they believe that most women would not return to work after their maternity leave. Sometimes bosses convey to new mothers that they can no longer contribute significantly to the organization. "Most companies do not provide crèches or flexible hours, forcing women to choose between work and the home," as per Persis Sidhwa, a lawyer at Majlis, a non-profit organisation in Mumbai working in the field of legal rights for women.

<http://scroll.in/article/718166/Women-in-corporate-India-complain-of-another-bump:-getting-back-on-track-after-maternity-leave>

Date Accessed: 17.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

## INDIA AND WORLD

***INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS*****As Yemen Crisis Deepens, UN Food Relief Agency Calls on Warring Factions to Allow Supply Restock**

*(United Nations News Centre, April 16, 2015)*

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), with its partners, hopes to reach 1.05 lakh-displaced people in in Yemen's main southern city of Aden. It recognizes that the conflict has affected millions and food supplies are running low. WFP has requested warring factions to allow agencies to restock their supplies.

Over two weeks of conflict has left many Yemen citizens trapped in cities without food. There is a severe food shortage in Aden and areas of the capital, Sana'a. Situation has worsened, as half of Yemen is already food insecure. "WFP in 2014 found that 10.6 million people, or 41 per cent of the population in Yemen, was food insecure. Of these, 5 million people were found to be severely food insecure and in need of food assistance. It is estimated today, following the escalation of violence, that more than 12 million Yemenis are food insecure." Yemen imports 90% of its basic food supplies. The conflict will limit trade movement affecting food supply whose worst sufferers would be poor and marginalized communities. A rapid assessment of the crises by UN showed food shortage and lack of cooking oil.

WFP has supplied food supplies to last April and May and cover 16,000-refugee camp outside Aden. Two-month ration has also been provided to camps housing 13,000 refugees around northern Sa'ada. The agency is supplying cash transfers and monthly cash assistance in some regions. About a million dollars have been given in this way to more than 76,000 people.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50599#.VTD2GktIpF>

Date Accessed: 17.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

## OPINION/BOOKS

## OPINIONS

### The Supreme Court has Failed the Citizen on Encounter Killings

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, April 11, 2015)

The increasing instances of extrajudicial killings crudely referred to as “encounter killings,” is threatening the lives of citizens. On paper, it is a spontaneous shoot-out between the police and armed civilians where police in ‘self-defense’ kill the civilians. However, in practice there is hardly any difference between fake and legitimate encounters. In majority of such incidents police fabricate the evidence by planting guns near the scene, bodies are cremated before autopsies can be conducted and police officers rarely sustain injuries in the cross firing. Police officers are often rewarded for such actions that further incentivize staged killings.

Witnesses say that in most of the cases police round up people for execution. Encounters are thus a violation of the right to life. If it were not for advocacy groups and family members of the victims most of these cases would not have been reported. But even when cases reach the court, justice is not a guarantee.

“This situation is largely attributable to the Supreme Court’s failure to enunciate clear procedural guidelines for reporting and investigating extrajudicial killings.” This is exemplified by the Court’s indefinite stay of proceedings of a 2009 extrajudicial killings case- AP Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) vs The Government of AP. The case was appealed from the AP High Court decision. In 2014, the Supreme Court laid out the procedures for investigating police encounters. These can serve as yardstick to investigate the recent encounters in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. “However, the AP Police Association’s challenge to the AP High Court judgment is yet to be taken up.”

The decision by Andhra High Court on the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) appeal clarified the law relating to judicial killings to ensure that all cases are reported and there is scrutiny of all cases. The court held that each case must follow proper legal procedure that involves registration of each killing as a culpable homicide in an FIR, proper investigation of each incident by an independent body and judicial determination of the criminal culpability by the officer. By indeterminately staying the appeal, the Supreme Court has failed to clarify the law relating to extrajudicial killings and has allowed law enforcement bodies to continue the practice without scrutiny.

Absence of mandatory FIR allows officers to escape judicial oversight regarding the killing. It is a common practice for officers to administratively protect fellow officers involved in encounter killings. Home Affairs does not even maintain proper records of extrajudicial killings. “The National Crime Records Bureau, for instance, provides only four “occasions forcing police firing”: “riot control,” “anti-dacoity operations,” operations “against extremists and terrorists,” and the vague category of operations “against others.” The latter category encapsulated 49.9% of all police firing deaths and casualties in 2009.” Most of killings are fake-encounters. As per the National Human Rights Commission, out of the 2,560 encounter reported cases since October 1993, 1,224 were proved to be fake.

The ambiguous response by the Supreme Court reflects a wider social tolerance of the practice. This acceptance is also reflected in the prominence of the so-called “encounter specialists”. In its hesitation to clarify the law, the Supreme Court is party to violation of human rights and constitutional principles.

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/extrajudicial-executions.html>

Date Accessed: 17.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

## BOOKS

### Book Review: History of Education

(Catriona Ellis, *EPW*, April 4, 2015)

New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education edited by Parimala Rao offers an interesting addition to the existing debate on the aspirations and role of education during the late colonial era. Her fundamental ambition is to provide a history of education which is based on “factually accurate, chronologically documented historical events” rather than a pre-existing ideological or political viewpoint. The volume uncovers the relationship between the nationalist political elites, the attempts to deny education to marginalised groups such as women and Dalits and the continuing social oppression of these groups.

Forms of discrimination are dealt with, first. Eleanor Zelliot argues that from the mid-19th century the Dalit community recognised that education was vital to the self-respect of the community and the key to social mobility. For this, Zelliot provides a list of Dalit initiatives to encourage education that were a base for BR Ambedkar’s work. Parallels have been drawn between the experience of the Indian Dalit community, the changing position of educational

## OPINION/BOOKS

establishments in post-apartheid South Africa, and attempts to desegregate black education in the United States. The volume goes on to analyse the experience of girls receiving education and how these educated women too operated within strict patriarchal controls over their employment, political interests and outward appearances. Fundamentally, education for girls was about the production of the companionate wife/housekeeper and the promotion of an ideal that gave women opportunities in nurturing professions. "Political Context of Education," talks about the failed introduction of compulsory primary education in India between 1840 and 1947. The volume finds a chapter on different forces in the education sphere, some more secular such as Gokhale and the more nationalist such as Tilak. Secondary and higher education as an important space of interaction between missionaries and the Indian population is talked about. A chapter compares the vocational education schemes of Gandhi and Juan Domingo Perón, former President of Argentina. A narrative account of Curzon's reforms and the Indian Universities Act 1904, which included radical change to the administrative and teaching structure of Indian universities has been provided.

The volume provides a non-ideological evidence-based narrative of multiple aspects of the history of education in India since the late 19th century, with a focus on the role of marginalised groups. The volume fails to engage with some more works such as that on the impact of Western education on Muslim and women's education, on indigenous maths education in South India, the nuances of the British administrative position and studies of the impact of progressive pedagogy in missionary schools. Merely looking at education within formal establishments misses many historical perspectives. However, the volume discusses important issues and is well-researched with a sound archival base.

<http://www.epw.in/book-reviews/history-education.html>

Date accessed: 18.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

**Issue Coordinator: Mr. Jeet Singh**

Connect with RGICS at: [info@rgics.org](mailto:info@rgics.org); [www.rgics.org](http://www.rgics.org)



Disclaimer: The articles referenced in RGICS Policy Watch are summaries of the original articles and the headlines have been changed in certain cases. For the original articles please click on the link given below the article. Views presented here are not of the trustees of RGF. The document has been prepared by RGICS staff and not seen by the trustees.

To unsubscribe, please write to us at [info@rgics.org](mailto:info@rgics.org)