

EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Pollution is commonly defined as an 'undesirable change in the physical, chemical or biological characteristics of air, water and land brought about by man's activities that may harmfully affect living organisms and other resources'. Man's activities related to economic development in the contemporary period are highly resource-driven, and are barely conscious about its impact on environment. This has created a dreadful environmental pollution and has become a major source of health risk throughout the world today. Ideas of faster economic growth and profit seeking unavoidably created environmental imbalance through irrational extraction and utilization of natural resources. Such a risk is generally higher in developing countries which have weak environmental regulations and policy perspective, added with low level of investment in modern technology and mechanism to arrest high pollution levels. High pollution in developing nations is also due to other challenges like unsafe water, high poverty, lack of awareness and low level of sanitation and hygiene. A theoretical study by Jayshri Bansal and Pratosh Bansal therefore says that problem of pollution many not solely be understood from technology issue, but needs to be correlated to various other behavioral and social issues. Thus the fast changing human values over time have affected the whole ecosystem and have caused large scale disequilibrium in the nature. These have degraded the basic human values to harmonize with nature and to protect environment in a sustained manner. Such lack of values affects humanity and its well-being in the long run.

Author like David Briggs says that 'an association between environmental pollution and health outcome are however, complex and often poorly characterized.' Thus an absence of detailed monitoring and inevitable variations within any population group leads to unknown and uncertain levels of exposure. Such exposures may occur via a range of pathways and exposure processes. He is of the opinion that individual pollutants may be implicated in a wide range of health effects, whereas few diseases are directly attributable to single pollutants. Long latency times, the effects of cumulative exposures, and multiple exposures to different pollutants which might act synergistically causes serious health hazard. Nevertheless, in recent years, several attempts have been made to assess the global burden of disease as a result of environmental pollution, either in terms of mortality or disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). About 8–9% of the total disease burden may be attributed to pollution, and considerably more in developing countries.

In India, air pollution alone causes around 62 lakhs yearly deaths. Amongst many cities in the country, Delhi is now exposed to a highest level of air pollution in the world for various reasons. It is geographically a landlocked area, which is affected due the crop burning issues of the neighbouring states like Punjab and Haryana. More than 60% of its pollution is also caused due to large scale truck movements within and across the boundary of Delhi. Our cover story has taken up this very pertinent issue of air pollution and its impact in India and in Delhi more specifically. Unless proper actions are taken at policy level with some stringent measures through legislation, it would result in perpetuating a poor quality of life. It is an alarming bell to the present Union Government, which is emphasizing primarily on faster economic growth and ease of doing business by diluting several provisions of environmental protection. This will undoubtedly increase the level of pollution and its related challenges, and will put the health of the coming generation at high risk. Thus a value-based approach at policy level, recognizing the role of technology can help to ensure economic development with sustainable environment; or else, this may turn India's current demographic dividend into demographic disaster in near future.

Hope our readers find this cover story useful.

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Air Pollution and Its Impact

Introduction

Air pollution, “a physical, biological or chemical alteration to the air in the atmosphere,” is now a commonly used term that our ears are attuned to. We hear about pollution in passing but seldom do we attach considerable importance to its impacts and thus, the efforts being made to combat it are often insufficient. This cover story seeks to highlight the current concerns with regard to air pollution in India, especially Delhi, the inadequacy of the government’s response and policy prescriptions for the same.

Situation in India

I. *Environmental Performance*

1. The 2014 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), ranked 178 countries in total. Among them, India was placed at the 155th position, with an index score of 31.23 points. India’s rank is also lower than the BRICS nations. (Times of India, 2014).
2. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has stated that 77% of Indian urban agglomerations exceeded National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for respirable suspended particulate matter (PM10) in 2010 (CPCB 2012). (EPW,2015)
3. India has been following European emission norms, though with a time lag of five years. BS IV or Euro 4 fuel emission norms are at least nine years behind Europe. The much more common BS III or Euro 3 norms are 14 years behind Europe. In fact, India is almost a decade behind developing countries such as Turkey and Brazil in introducing cleaner-burning fuel. (Bharat stage emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.)

II. *Pollution and its Impact on Health*

1. A study, led by Michael Greenstone of the University of Chicago and involving environmental economists from Harvard and Yale universities, stated that the life of 660 million Indians, about half of the country’s total population, is being cut short by around three years due to severely polluted air.
2. Of the pollution-related risks, a substantial increase has been observed in the cases of ischemic heart disease (which can lead to heart attacks), cerebro-vascular disease (which can lead to strokes), chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, lower respiratory infections, and cancers (in trachea, lungs, and bronchitis).(Hindu, 2015)
3. According to the data from India’s Central Pollution Control Board, the 2010 average for respirable particulate matter concentration across 180 monitored Indian cities was six times what the World Health Organization considers safe and twice India’s own national standards.
4. According to the WHO report¹³ of the 20 cities in the world with the worst fine particulate (PM2.5) air pollution are in India with New Delhi, Patna, Gwalior and Raipur taking the top four spots. (PM is a type of air pollution, consisting of numerous tiny particles suspended in air. PM affects the cardiovascular and respiratory systems and has consistently been shown to be dangerous to human health. PM air pollution is called by different names, depending on the size of the particles)

III. *Environmental Norms*

1. At present, BS-IV norms are applicable on cars in 33 cities in the country where the required grade of fuel is available. (The Economic Times, 2015)

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2. As per the timeline in the national auto fuel policy, BS-IV standards are to be adopted across the country by 2017, and BS-V by 2020. BS-VI is to be introduced in 2024.(Economic Times , 2015)
3. Eliminating PM2.5 emissions requires upgrading to Euro 5- equivalent fuel that cuts sulphur content to a level that allows diesel particulate filters to be fitted to cars. India's Bharat V standard would require all diesel passenger cars to have those.(Economic Times, 2015)
4. Air pollution is not just restricted to the outdoors. Indoor pollution in India is as big a threat as outdoor pollution. Various factors result in indoor pollution, most of them are closely related to livelihoods and household habits. It is the lower income women who are most vulnerable to indoor pollution because they use biomass fuels/chulhas, cook in a multipurpose room, spend long hours in kitchen, and are more exposed to smoke, heat, pollutants. The conditions are exacerbated because they live in substandard housing, in one room leading to congestion/crowding and with no ventilation.(Maxwell Scientific Organisation, 2012). In rural India, the use of biomass as cooking fuel is the primary cause of indoor air pollution. According to estimates from the last Census in 2011, biomass is used for cooking in 67 percent of all households in India, including 87 percent of rural households. (Comparative Study on Emissions from Traditional and Improved Biomass Cookstoves Used in India, 2014) .The other major concern with regard to indoor pollution is the rampant use of kerosene as a fuel for lighting and other purposes. (DNA, 2015)

Air pollution, both indoor and outdoor, is a serious concern in India. Technical solutions alone, like introducing CNG or changing standards for vehicles and industries, will not be sufficient to control air pollution in Indian cities. What is needed is a realistic institutional change, so that the government, departments and citizens work together to deal with this challenge.

Situation in Delhi

According to the WHO report on Ambient Air Pollution (AAP), Delhi is the most polluted city in the world when it comes to air quality. The national capital has the highest concentration of PM2.5 particulate matters less than 2.5 microns form of air pollution, which is considered most serious. This form of concentration consists of tiny particles that put people at additional risk of respiratory diseases and other health problems. A 2008 CPCB report titled "STUDY ON AMBIENT AIR QUALITY, RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS AND LUNG FUNCTION OF CHILDREN IN DELHI" stated that there is a reduction of lung function in 43.5% schoolchildren of Delhi compared with 25.7% in control group. Delhi's children had increased prevalence of restrictive (20.3% vs. 14.3%⁸ in control), obstructive (13.6% vs. 8%), as well as combined (both restrictive and obstructive) type of lung functions deficits (9.6% vs. 3.5%). Besides higher prevalence, the magnitude of lung function impairment was much more in Delhi.

Various factors have resulted in Delhi having high levels of air pollution. Some of them are:

- According to experts Delhi's problems with respect to air pollution is magnified due to lack of a coastline and no sea breeze to clear out pollutants. Geographical location is also a problem as Delhi is a landlocked and congested city. The pollution from the neighbouring states also accumulates here. (IBN LIVE,2015)
- According to Aishwarya Madineni, of Climate and Energy Team, Greenpeace crop residue burning in regions of Punjab and Haryana has also been established as a major reason for Delhi's soaring pollution levels. (Business Today, 2015)
- A 2015 study for IIT Delhi's Transport Research and Injury Prevention Programme (TRIPP) pointed out that trucks contribute more than 60% of the main pollutants in the air such as PM 2.5 (particulate matter of less than 2.5 micron), carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide in the "greater Delhi region" as more than 80,000 trucks enter the city at midnight. (Indian Express, 2015) Diesel-operated vehicles in Delhi contribute 60 percent of the main air pollutants because most of them do not adhere to the vehicular emission standards. A majority of them run on a mixture of kerosene and diesel to save money. (Firstpost, 2015)

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- Several lakh tonnes of stones, cement and sand enter Delhi from neighbouring states, overnight by trucks. En-route, some of it flies in adjoining areas while the rest lies in the open at construction sites for months till the project is over. This is a major contributor to particulate matter less than PM10, in the ambient air, which has raised pollution worries in recent times because it silently lodges in the respiratory system. (India Today, 2015)

Delhi has lost the gains from the CNG programme introduced in the city to reduce particulate pollution, especially toxic diesel emissions. The reasons why Delhi lost out on the progress that it had made under the CNG programme are:

- Over a period of time the price gap between CNG and diesel fuels in the city narrowed considerably hurting the programme. High CNG costs hurt public transport and undermine clean fuel programme.(EPCA Report, 2014)
- Rapid motorisation based on poor quality fuel and vehicle technology will make air pollution trend irreversible(EPCA Report, 2014)
- Lack of Uniform emission standards have allowed vehicles specially trucks and buses to use unclean fuel and technologies that has polluted the city(EPCA report, 2014)
- Delhi has seen a considerable increase in the number of cars. Car users pay nothing or pay a miniscule amount for using valuable public space to park their personal vehicles. Delhi and other Indian cities have the lowest parking charges in the world. This too results in air pollution. (EPCA Report, 2014)

In order to curb the hazard of air pollution the city needs to reduce the growing dependence on personal vehicles that is adding to toxic pollution within its breathing zone, scale up integrated public transport systems with efficient last mile connectivity, walk and cycle infrastructure.

Steps Taken by the Government

Multiple environmental crises that confront our country have created an alarming situation. Given this concern the current Union Government seems to be shirking its responsibility on the issue of environment, in general. This is clearly visible in the Union Budget of 2015-16. The Union Budget 2015- 16 has reduced the allocation for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, from Rs 1,764.22 crore (RE) to Rs 1,679.6 crore (BE). The fund allocation for this ministry has gone down by Rs 85 crores within a year from 2014-15 to 2015-16. Out of 14 schemes which are being run by the Ministry of Environment only two that is 'Project Tiger and 'Project Elephant' are now fully supported by the Union Government but with declining budget allocation. Rest of them will now come under the changed sharing pattern between the Centre and the States including the 'Green India Mission'.

After a series of reports on deteriorating air quality in Delhi and National Capital Region, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and its counterparts in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan have finally come up with a framework to curb pollution. The steps, which have to be taken before 2 July, include ban on burning of waste, waste-to-energy conversion system, banning polluting vehicles, conversion of coal plants into gas facilities, automatic identification of overloaded vehicles and adhering to upcoming norms on handling of construction waste (Firstpost, 2015). Delhi government has asked the Centre to make strict provisions in law to impose hefty penalty on vehicles more than 15 years old entering the city from other states.

The Central Government launched India's first-ever Air Quality Index. In the composite index, measuring several air pollutants will cover Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Faridabad, Ahmadabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, and will later be expanded to more cities. The index will permit citizens to easily find if there is a spike in any one or more of specific pollutants. The index website will also provide the degree of danger that the spike could

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cause to public health based on a simple colour coding. However, there exists a huge monitoring infrastructure issue which needs to be taken care of. While some cities have multiple air-monitoring stations, some have only one. Often, the monitoring stations do not work and the index is unable to function due to insufficient data. (Live Mint, 2015) The sheer numbers of monitoring stations are also unsatisfactory. As one point of comparison, Beijing has 35 monitoring stations, while Kolkata, the Indian city with the most monitoring stations, has only 20 such monitoring stations. (EPW, 2015) The Union Environment and Forests Minister, further stated that standards for construction-related dust would be brought out soon. The government plans to expand the monitoring mechanism across 66 cities, but it has not revealed any plan to take pollution-abatement action based on such an index. (Business Standard, 2015)

However, with a slew of provisions, the government has diluted several provisions for environmental protection, under the garb of improving “ease of doing business.” Under the UPA-era system which was based on the effect of industrial clusters on air, water, land, health and ecology, industries in 17 critically polluting sectors came under the red category for which most states give annual consent, the orange category ones needed approval every five years and the green ones every 10-15 years. However, this system is being discarded under the NDA government and environment minister Prakash Javadekar said, “We are doing away with the annual consent so the industry owners don't have to visit government offices again and again.” The government has decided that the approval to operate will be valid for five years in case of the most-polluting red category units, 10 years for the slightly less-polluting orange category, and the cleaner green category units will require one-time approval. The UPA government, based on the Comprehensive Environmental Assessment of Industrial Clusters (CEPI) ranking system, had imposed a ban on allowing new industries in several regions, including Vapi and Ankleshwar in Gujarat. However, in the revamped CEPI, a ban on new industries will be the exception rather than the rule. (Hindustan Times, 2015)

According to Vandana Shiva, a prominent environmental activist, the Government's ‘Make in India’ policy might make the pollution crisis even worse. There are no ecological or social criteria about “making” in India. On the contrary, environmental and labour laws are being diluted to attract investors, without social and ecological conditions. (Dw, 2015). Additionally, with the safeguards of environmental regulations being diluted, India runs the risk of inheriting China's sunset industries. China has launched a massive drive to relocate outdated and polluting technologies to neighbouring countries including Vietnam, Laos and Bangladesh. It is now looking at India for a possible location because of the advantages made available under the ‘Make in India’ policy. (Times of India, 2014) In the absence of clear preventive measures, these industries are bound to exacerbate the air pollution problem.

The Environment Ministry also introduced standard terms of reference (ToRs) for conducting scoping studies for projects to reduce time needed for getting environmental approval to the shortest time possible. Project proponents will not be required to submit their proposals before expert appraisal committees of different sectors for issuing the TORs as this will happen automatically in the new mechanism after a project's registration on the ministry's website. A similar system will be adopted for proposals cleared by state governments. This government considers environmental regulations a “hurdle to economy growth.” (Hindustan Times, 2015) As a result, the environment is bound to not get its due share of importance.

Way Forward

In order to deal with the problems arising out of air pollution, the current steps seem grossly inadequate. Environmental experts made the following policy recommendations to the Government:

- The accuracy and coverage of pollution monitoring needs to be improved, both in ambient air and at source. More monitoring stations built in more locations, and in a collaborative manner with independent scientists, will allow for continual improvement in monitoring and the wider use of monitoring data for source apportionment and other scientific purposes. (EPW, 2015)

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- Regulators must ensure that the monitors are calibrated well and functional and that the data is accessible to the public. Wide public release can play an important role as a health advisory system and increase pressure on polluters to comply with regulatory standards. (EPW, 2015)
- Environmental laws and regulations need to be restructured around civil penalties, which are realistic, easily applicable and in accordance with the polluter pays principle.¹ (EPW, 2015)
- Introduction of uniform emissions standards across the country. The practice of limiting improved emissions standards only to a few cities and to a smaller proportion of urban population violates the fundamental right to healthy life for all. This also does not allow trucks to move to cleaner fuel and technology and they heavily pollute cities during transit and aggravate pollution in cities. (DTE, 2015)
- There needs to be a roadmap that enables India to close the time lag between emission standards of India and European countries, by introducing Euro VI emissions standards by 2020-21. (DTE, 2015)
- Due attention needs to be given to diesel toxicity. Diesel vehicles emit seven times more PM 2.5 and five times more NO_x (Nitrogen Oxide) than petrol vehicles. The government, currently, is encouraging dieselization of cars with favourable tax policy for fuel and lax emissions standards. Beijing has rightly incorporated prohibition of sales of diesel cars without particle filters.
- Unlike India, where diesel costs considerably lesser than petrol, China doesn't have differential pricing for the two fuels. There are several restrictions on sale/use of diesel vehicles. Sri Lanka deters use of diesel cars with several-fold higher duties on them compared with petrol cars. It also uses taxation to discourage car imports.
- The French government, which is considering making Paris diesel-free by 2020, does not allow diesel cars to run on severe smog days. In India, diesel is not subsidized anymore, yet it remains cheaper than petrol because of lower taxes. This serves as an incentive to buy diesel cars.
- The government should enforce superior emission norms-BS V and BS VI-to reduce the difference in emissions from diesel and petrol engines, and subsequently work on reducing the price differential between the two fuels.
- The challenge to the environment from indoor sources of air pollution is also very severe. The need of the hour is to encourage innovation, spread awareness, enhance stakeholder participation and create effective policy incentives to encourage the use of renewable power. (DNA,2015)

In India, focus has always been given to economic growth and development while very little regard is given to the environment. One does not wish to stop economic progress that could give millions of people better lives. However, the Government should promote sustainable development that combines environmental care and economic growth. Unsustainable growth trends increase the vulnerability of the economically weaker sections to environmental pollution and degradation, as most of them are directly dependent on natural resources.

In the absence of alternatives, the imbalance in competition for natural resources could significantly contribute to weakening the support base of the poor and might also result in perpetuating a poor quality of life. What is needed is to adopt a holistic approach where all the stakeholders, including the general public, are engaged to curb the threats of air pollution that has had severe impact on the health of people especially women and children.

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¹ **Polluter pays Principle:** In environmental law, the 'polluter pays principle' does not refer to "fault." Instead, it favours a curative approach which is concerned with repairing ecological damage. This is a market-based mechanisms for environmental regulation which involves, monitoring and the penalties for violations, to reduce pollution at the lowest possible cost.

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HEADLINES

Odisha to Freeze Funding to Eight Schemes

(Business Standard, April 21, 2015)

The Odisha state government has decided to freeze distribution of Budgetary allocations for eight important schemes, which have been already de-linked from union support in the Union Budget 2015-16. These schemes include National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), Backward Region Grants Funds (BRGF), modernisation of police forces, Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyaan, schemes meant for developing state's export infrastructure, setting up of 6,000 model schools, upgradation of tourist infrastructure and National Mission on Food Processing (NMFP). Further, the administrative departments have also been instructed to look at the new sharing pattern of 24 centrally sponsored schemes from the concerned ministries of Government of India and incur expenditure accordingly. They are also required to limit their expenditure under the schemes commensurate to the availability of central share as per the allocation of funds by union government.

"The administrative departments shall not distribute allotments under these programmes/schemes and expenditure out of the provision made in the Budget estimate of 2015-16 shall not be incurred till a conscious decision is taken in the matter. Accordingly, the respective Budget provisions will be blocked in the Odisha treasury portal and no drawal will be allowed from those provisions", additional chief secretary (finance) R Balakrishnan wrote to secretaries of all departments.

The administrative departments are required to furnish proposals based on the emergent need for incurring the expenditure to the finance department. Based on this scenario, the finance department has stressed on complying with the norms of Cash Management System (CMS) to arrest rush of expenditure towards the end of a financial year.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/odisha-to-freeze-funding-to-eight-schemes-115042101302_1.html

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015
(Shruti Issar)

New GDP Figures Questioned by the Parliamentary Panel

(Business Today, April 25, 2015)

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance questioned the credibility of new data on GDP stating that it was not convinced with the data showing a sudden jump in the growth rate of the economy. The committee also flayed the Statistics Ministry for its vague reply on the authenticity of the data.

In a report tabled in the Parliament on Friday, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance said, "The new series of national accounts with 2011-12 as base year has raised more questions than answers ... the reply of the ministry regarding authenticity and creditability of new series is also vague." The new data shows that the GDP growth rate has increased from 1% to 1.5%, capital formation from -3% to 3% and a sudden jump in growth rate in various sectors of the economy.

"On the basis of new series with 2011-12 as base year, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under Statistics Ministry on February 9 estimated the real GDP growth at 7.4 per cent in 2014-15 and 6.9 per cent in 2013-14.

The economic growth was pegged at 4.7 per cent for 2013-14 as per old series with 2004-05 base year. Similarly, growth rate for 2012-13 was revised upwards to 5.1 per cent, from earlier estimate of 4.5 per cent (on base year 2004-05)." The new data was also questioned by the RBI Governor R. Rajan and the Chief Economic Advisor A. Subramanian among others.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee suggested an annual revisiting of the national accounts to pre-empt such controversies.

<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/parliament-panel-questions-new-gdp-figures/1/218576.html>

Date Accessed: 25.04.2015
(Afreen Faridi)

ECONOMY

Macro Economic Dimension of India

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

States	Rural	Urban	General
All India	5.67	5.09	5.23
Northern Region			
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
Western Region			
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
Central Region			
Madhya Pradesh	3.77	7.45	5.18
Chattishgarh	8.88	4.86	6.82
Southern Region			
Andhra Pradesh	7.90	5.26	6.72
Karnakata	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
Northeastern Region			
Arunachal Pradesh	4.57	-	-
Assam	3.50	4.57	2.93
Manipur	19.67	7.26	15.28
Meghalaya	-0.24	9.34	0.70
Mizoram	6.05	13.22	3.86
Nagaland	18.89	5.52	13.39
Tripura	11.11	-1.84	9.69
Sikkim	9.34	3.39	8.50
Eastern Region			
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

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**Poor Implementation of Rural Development Schemes***(The Hindu, April 24, 2015)*

The progress in implementation of some of the rural development schemes has been poor since the Modi government assumed power. Documents laid in the Lok Sabha show that the progress in implementation of schemes such as the Indira Awas Yojana and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been particularly bad.

Shri. Sudarshan Bhagat, Minister of State for Rural Development, said that there was a decline in the number of person days created under the MGNREGA scheme during 2014-15. Only 40 days per household of work was available to rural households on an average as per the provisional data for 2014-15. The law guarantees 100 days of work under MGNREGA. During 2012-13 and 2013-14, the days per household of work given averaged at 46.

Mr. Bhagat listed a number of irregularities found in the implementation of MGNREGA such as delays in payment of wages or wages given below minimum levels in states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir.

The worst performing states in average days of work provided were Arunachal Pradesh (12), Puducherry (13), Manipur (20) and Nagaland (21) while the best performer was Tripura (88).

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/govt-performs-poorly-in-rural-job-scheme/article7136079.ece>

Date Accessed: 25.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

12,000 ITIs Brought Under Skill Ministry*(Sushant Singh, Indian Express, April 18, 2015)*

In a major development last week, the Union Government transferred the Training and Apprenticeship department of the Directorate General of Employment & Training (DGET) from the Labour Ministry to the newly constituted Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. This means that nearly 12,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) spread across the country will now be under the administration of the Skill Development Ministry. However, the government did not transfer the Employment Department of DGET, which governs all employment exchanges in the country, to the new ministry.

The control of ITIs, Employment Exchange and Apprenticeship has remained a point of contention between the Labour Ministry and Skill Development Ministry. The Labour Ministry was of the view that the newly formulated Skill Development Ministry should be policy formulation agency, while execution and implementation should remain with the Labour Ministry.

“With the transfer of the Training vertical, 26 “training of trainers” institutions will also come under the Skill Development ministry. The Rs 488 crore plan for setting up another 25 Advanced Training Institutes under the PPP mode will also move to the newly formed ministry. The National Council for Vocational Training also comes to the Skill Ministry with this decision.”

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/12000-itis-brought-under-skill-ministry/>

Date Accessed: 23.04.2015

(Rohit Chauhan)

Cyber Bullying Rampant in India, Legal Vacuum Persists*(Deccan Herald, April 19, 2015)*

“According to the 'Tweens, Teens and Technology 2014 Report' by McAfee, **50 percent of Indian youth have had some experience with cyber-bullying (been cyber-bullied online or witnessed others being so treated), out of which one-third (36 percent) have themselves been cyber-bullied.**” The report added that 33 percent said that they witnessed cyber-bullying of others. 46 percent said that the victims deleted their social media accounts and 42 percent said that the victims became less social, clearly underscoring its tremendous emotional impact.

According to Debarati Halder, advocate and managing director, Centre for Cyber Victim Counselling, “Cyber bullying is a typical type of online harassment, which can be defined as hurling harsh, rude, insulting, teasing remarks through the message box or in open forums targeting one's body shape and structure, educational qualifications, professional qualifications, family, gender orientation, personal habits and outlook.” According to experts online abuse has increased with the penetration of the internet within the country.

Anjana Kovacs, project director at Internet Democracy Project, feels that bullying needs to be checked not only online, but also at school level. She believes that a larger discussion around harmful effects of bullying and its experiences needs to be initiated at the school level, so that Children can understand about the consequences of such abuse. According to law, if any teenager or juvenile puts any

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defamatory writing or pornographic picture of others on a Facebook page, then he/she can be apprehended under the relevant sections of the IT Act. If found guilty in such a case, a minor can be sent to a reformatory home, while an adult can be awarded a jail sentence of up to 5 years. Sameer Malhotra, director of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Max Hospitals, informs us that effects on the victim can include low self-esteem, depression, anxiety related symptoms and psychosomatic problems. In extreme cases victims can be driven to acts of self harm, anger outbursts, disturbed sleep patterns, paranoia and a feeling of insecurity.

According to Anjana Kovacs there are no laws dealing with cyber-bullying and online abuse. She also believes that no such law should be directed at children or juveniles. According to the recent judgement on the Shreya Singhal Case (striking down the section 66A of the IT act) criminalisation of speech is only acceptable in a very narrow set of cases. Bullying or verbal abuse directed at women is also not covered under the ambit of the IT Act. She insists that the solution to these problems lies in non-legal measures. Debrati Halder is of the view that sensitisation is a must, and that there should be better cooperation between NGOs, stakeholders, experts and the police when it comes to checking online abuse.

Raksi Tandon, who is an advisor to the cyber crime cell of Gurgaon Police, said that the primary reason why most cases of cyber-bullying go unreported is that people are not aware of how to and where to report, alongside their lack of awareness about cyber laws.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/472554/cyber-bullying-rampant-india-legal.html>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2015

(Rohit Chauhan)

DEVELOPMENT

Over 380,000 Indians Displaced Due to World Bank-Funded Projects: ICIJ

(Ramakrishnan M., *Livemint*, April 21, 2015)

A report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has revealed that the projects funded by the World Bank have, physically or economically, displaced 3.4 million people globally, over the past decade. Although World Bank India claims the projects cleared by it followed rigorous procedures, which included consultations with the affected families, the report identifies 33 projects with confirmed or possible displacement between 2004 and 2013, representing 23% of

all the World Bank-financed projects in the country. It estimates 388,794 people to have been displaced by 24 projects. For the remaining projects, it is difficult to arrive at an estimate of those displaced because the World Bank doesn't have information on the effects. The report warns that these might be underestimated as the Bank often does not or under counts the number of people affected.

ICIJ identifies the second phase of Kerala State Transport Project, which has displaced 103,480, as the project having displaced the most in India. Other projects named in the report include the Lucknow-Muzaffarpur National Highway Project, the first phase of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (that includes 10 states) and the Vishnugad Pipalkoti Hydro Electric Project in Uttarakhand. The report adds that the World Bank "often neglects to properly review projects ahead of time to make sure communities are protected, and frequently has no idea what happens to people after they are removed. In many cases, it has continued to do business with governments that have abused their citizens, sending a signal that borrowers have little to fear if they violate the bank's rules, according to current and former bank employees."

In response, the Bank has reported that it has considered the feedback and will release a revised draft with "the strongest, most state-of-the-art environmental and social safeguards." Globally, India ranks third in the estimated number of people displaced by World Bank-funded projects, behind Vietnam and China. This is of concern to the government, in view of the increased displacement in the name of development, with no regard to communities.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/N9UMjzKmuVYXVQ4NBzvR7K/Over-380000-Indians-displaced-due-to-World-Bankfunded-proj.html>

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/world-bank-projects-displaced-380-000-in-india-report-115042200001_1.html

Date accessed: 22.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

Drinking Water Shortage in 3.14 lakh Rural Habitations: Government

(*Zee News*, April 23, 2015)

Drinking water supply is less than the prescribed norm of 40 litres per capita day (lpcd) in over 3.14 lakh rural habitations. Moreover, water supply to 66,000 habitations is contaminated with arsenic, fluoride, nitrate, iron or salinity. As per the ministry these households can be classified as having shortage of drinking water.

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Out of a total of 16.96 lakh rural habitations, 13.16 lakh habitations were provided with 40 lpcd of safe drinking water. As per the Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, the water access has increased since the inception of National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) in 2009-10. Number of habitations fully covered under the programme has increased from 11 lakh to 13 lakh habitations. As of 20 April 2015, habitations not getting quality water has reduced from 1,79,999 habitations to 66,093 habitations. The minister noted that more needed to be done to ensure water supply to rural habitations.

On being inquired whether there has been a decline in water levels of water bodies in rural areas, the minister stated that there is no official information on the matter.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/drinking-water-shortage-in-3-14-lakh-rural-habitations-govt_1583627.html

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

Is PM Narendra Modi's Flagship Swachh Bharat Grounded Before Take-off?

(Daily News and Analysis, April 22, 2015)

Secretary Vijaylaxmi Joshi, in a presentation before parliamentary panel that scrutinized grants for ministry of drinking water and sanitation noted that unclear guidelines and inadequate funding might be the cause for doom of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). She also noted that there is no clarity regarding funding pattern (presently Centre and State share is 75:25; whether it would be 50:50 or 60:40).

The budget allocated only Rs 2,625 crores, to department of drinking water and sanitation as against the requirement of Rs. 12,500 crore with plans to build one crore toilets were afoot with states. "Earlier for 2014-15, the budget allocation for rural sanitation was Rs 4,620 crore, which was reduced to Rs 2,850 crore in the revised estimates." The cut was done by Finance Ministry because of unspent funds under the programme. Due to problems of implementations, expenditure has been slow. "Out of Rs 2,134 crore allocated to states, they could spend just Rs 1,974 crore till the end of last financial year." States like J&K, Maharashtra, Telangana did not spend the amount sanctioned to them. Only a few Northeastern states, Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh were able to spend the amount.

As per estimates by the ministry rural component of SBM would require at Rs 1,34,386 crore for attaining full household sanitation coverage by 2019. Money is expected

from budget allocations and contributions to Swachh Bharat Kosh.

Finance ministry points out that clarity of funding is under discussion and is likely to be made clear in the finance minister's final budget speech in the second part of parliament session. Ministry is working on preparing a list of elite services (such as telecommunications, insurance, manpower recruitment agencies, air conditioned hotels and restaurants) that will have to pay an additional 2% surcharge.

The SBM was launched to improve sanitation and cleanliness in the country. But even the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is complaining that they are yet to receive extra funds.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-is-pm-narendra-modi-s-flagship-swachh-bharat-grounded-before-take-off-2079452>

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

GOVERNMENT

Govt Delay Leads to Longer List of Vacant Posts in Statutory Bodies

(Bharti Jain, Times of India, April 20, 2015)

Chief election commissioner's retirement has added one more vacancy to the long list of unoccupied posts in constitutional and statutory bodies that the government needs to fill up. While Election Commission now has two posts of election commissioners in the three-member body vacant, the Central Vigilance Commission too has been operating without a regular central vigilance commissioner and one vigilance commissioner since September last year. The situation is no different in Central Information Commission, where there is no central information commissioner since Rajiv Mathur completed his term on August 23 last year. In addition, posts of three information commissioners (the RTI Act provides for a CIC and a maximum of 10 information commissioners) are also unoccupied for almost a year. With RTI activists approaching the court against the delay which has led to a backlog of 37,000 cases in CIC, the Delhi HC recently decided to intervene and oversee filling up of top posts in the information panel.

According to government, the delay in appointment of CVC and VC is essentially on account of a petition filed in the Supreme Court by NGO 'Centre for Integrity, Governance & Training in Vigilance Administration',

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challenging the lack of transparency in the selection process and alleging that the choice was limited to only retired bureaucrats. Though the government later put out an advertisement inviting applications for the top vigilance posts, the SC in December asked the government not to appoint CVC and VC without its go-ahead. The government has now gone back to the SC claiming that appointment of CVC and VC by the PM-led selection panel is its statutory right and needs no pre-selection scrutiny. The posts of CVC and VC remain vacant till date, leaving acting CVC Rajiv as the sole member in the apex vigilance body.

The delay in filling up top posts in CIC and CVC comes despite the RTI Act and CVC Act covering the scenario of a vacancy in the post of leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, who in the normal course must be on the respective selection panels headed by the PM. Both the Acts allow the leader of the single largest opposition party in LS to take part in the selection where there is no recognized Leader of opposition.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Govt-delay-leads-to-longer-list-of-vacant-posts-in-statutory-bodies/articleshow/46982077.cms>

Date Accessed: 20.04.2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

PANCHAYATI RAJ

Rs 60 crore for 250,000 Panchayats

(Jitendra, *Down to Earth*, April 30, 2014)

Finance Minister in the Union Budget of 2015-16, slashed the plan outlay of the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) to a meagre Rs 94 crore from Rs 7,000 crore allocated last fiscal. The budget allocated to the ministry this time is even lesser than what it had received in the first budget in 2005-06. The Centre has also transferred one of the ministry's flagship schemes—Backward Regions Grants Funds (BRGF)—to the state, and drastically reduced the funds of the other, called the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA), to Rs 60 crore from Rs 1,006 crore allocated last year 2014-15.

Both the schemes were designed to strengthen local governance when the ministry was conceived in 2004. While BRGF is being implemented in 272 backward districts of the country to fund development programmes through involvement of panchayati raj institutions, RGPSA aims to improve and strengthen their capacity. The drastic reduction in funds for RGPSA has particularly made the situation problematic. A budget of Rs 60 crore is meagre to strengthen 250,000 village panchayats across the country.

The Centre says its decision, based on the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, will flush states with huge funds for empowering panchayati raj institutions. The Commission had suggested increasing states' share in the net proceeds of the Union tax to 42 per cent from the current 32 per cent, and make the funds available to local bodies, both rural and urban. Mani Shankar Aiyer, the country's first panchayati raj minister, appreciates devolution of funds for panchayats but says the government has misinterpreted the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations and assumed that everything will fall in line once the fund is directly devolved to states. The Commission has only dealt with the financial aspects and has not taken governance into account while recommending the devolution of funds.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/rs-60-crore-250000-panchayats>

Date Accessed: 21.04.2015

(Devyani Bhushan)

'Over Rs 5,000 Cr For Panchayati Raj Schemes Remains Unspent'

(*Outlook*, April 23, 2015)

The Standing Committee on Rural Development whose report was recently tabled in the parliament noted that as on 31.12.2014, Rs. 5129.48 crore was lying unspent with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. This includes the unspent amount of Rs. 4524.94 crore under the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF).

In response, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has stated that it will write to all states regarding "the unspent money for already approved projects and issue advisory to ensure that they are completed so that there is no infructuous expenditure."

The Standing Committee also expressed deep concerns over a 98% cut in the funding to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Funds proposed by the Panchayati Raj ministry for the plan schemes for 2015-16 amounts to Rs. 10,150 crore. However only Rs. 94 crore has been allocated. Committee recommended that ministry must pursue the matter of inadequate funds with the Ministry of Finance and Niti Ayog. It also recommended that the ministry must engage and partner with state governments to complete approved projects and strengthen panchayati raj institutions.

<http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/Over-Rs-5000-Cr-For-Panchayati-Raj-Schemes-Remains-Unspent/893308>

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

EDUCATION

Censoring Artistic Expression

(Scroll, April 25, 2015)

Freedom of expression is being threatened in various educational institutions in India as many Indian universities try to curb dissent. In a recent turn of events, an art college in the University of Hyderabad is enforcing strict measures where fine art students are required to submit their works before a screening committee for approval before they can be allowed to be publicly exhibited.



In a notice signed by the head of the department at the Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, all students are required to submit their work's images in a Compact Disk to the screening committee for 'reviewing and sanctioning'. The notice has caused concern amongst the outgoing batch of students of painting and sculpture who organize a public exhibition each year.

On March 31, a meeting was held in the department proposing to screen works of final year students. Anoop Daniel, a student of the department, said that the meeting made it clear that any work deemed inappropriate would not be displayed in the exhibition. "They said we can't do anything which is obscene or, in any way, controversial. This committee should advise students on how to improve their work instead of censoring their expression through their artworks," said Daniel.

Another student added that such committees, having no clear directives or procedures, could be manipulated by "people in power, according to their ideological orientations."

The students have started a Facebook campaign against the move.

<http://scroll.in/article/719971/these-stunning-drone-photographs-would-be-totally-illegal-today>

Date Accessed: 25.04.2015

(Afreen Faridi)

HEALTH

Parliamentary Panel Recommends Price Cap for All Drugs

(Kundan Pandey, *Down to Earth*, April 22, 2015)

A parliamentary panel in its report asked that all drugs should be put under price control. It noted that all medicines are not included in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM). The committee held the opinion that scope of price control needs to be enlarged. Standing committee on chemicals and fertilizers has a similar view that all medicines should be available at affordable prices.

Currently, a "total 509 formulations covering 348 drugs come under the list of National List of Essential Medicine (NLEM)." This means that the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) caps the prices of these drugs. However, it has been pointed out that these make only 12 per cent of the total medicines sold in the country. According to experts, total number of medicine formulations available is in thousand.

Committee also pointed out that India spends a lot of money importing drugs. In 2013-14, about Rs. 17,944 crores was spent to import medicinal and pharmaceutical products. The department explained that imports are high because of quality and not because of shortage. Committee rejected this explanation. To address this, the committee recommended incentivizing domestic drug industry and discouraging importers.

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“The committee also suggested to the Central government to revive public sector units which have the capacity to manufacture drugs in bulk. It also asked department to accelerate the policy formulation for production of active pharmaceutical ingredients in India.”

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/parliamentary-panel-recommends-price-cap-all-drugs>

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

TECHNOLOGY

App Launched to Aid ASHA Workers in Maternal, Child Healthcare Duties

(Free Press Journal, April 22, 2015)

An IT service company has developed a mobile App for Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) in Andhra Pradesh. According to the company, the App will help ASHAs to access requisite guidelines on pre and post-pregnancy care anywhere and at any time. The company launched its application on the occasion of AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's 65th birthday in the presence of various ministers and officials.

The company said, “It is an initiative to provide pregnant/lactating women and newborns with high-quality healthcare using latest digital technologies was introduced; this needed ASHA workers to have constant access to easily-retrievable information.”

The company has revealed that it is working to enhance this application further. The company representative said, “we stepped in to develop a full- fledged, easy-to-use interactive guidance system with Telugu, the regional language, as the medium of instruction to enable ASHA workers to better assist those in rural areas. “The audio-visual application further allows ASHA workers to record the health parameters of women and children and store data for future reference. Workers are sensitised on recognition of danger signs in pregnancy, symptoms of high- risk pregnancy, desired nutritional status and timely immunisation, among others.”

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/yes-bank-to-raise-usd-1-bn-through-equity-sale-2/#sthash.PpID8tWP.dpuf>

Date accessed: 23.4.2015

(Jeet Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

Expert Committee Report Favours Bigger, Foreign Players in Fisheries

(P.N. Venugopal, *India Together*, April 18, 2015)

This article reflects on the Expert Committee chaired by Dr B Meenakumari, Director General, Fisheries, ICAR. The Expert Committee report has the potential to drastically alter the marine fisheries scenario of the country. The Committee was appointed in August 2013 with eight members and submitted its report in August 2014. The tasks assigned to the Committee, among others, were to review the Comprehensive Marine Fishing Policy, 2004 (CMPF 2004) and to suggest a new policy, to review the existing guidelines for deep sea fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and to suggest full exploitation of catch potential in EEZ and international waters.

Though the government is yet to accept the report, some of the government's orders are based on the report. The report recommends allowing foreign and joint venture companies to fish in Indian territorial waters, potentially resulting in use of 65-90km long nets equipped with the most modern solar fish finders by 270 foreign trawlers. To this effect, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has already invited companies to apply for permission to fish in the EEZ. It has also been made clear that it could be in joint ventures with foreign companies. There exists a trawling ban during June-July annually intended for protecting the spawning species. The expert committee now wants to exempt deep-sea vessels from the ban, as the ban period does not coincide with the spawning season of tuna. This is contentious, as even the most sophisticated technology cannot distinguish between tuna and other smaller varieties while capturing. Tons of small fish that are caught are dumped back into the ocean and they rot in the sea whereas, if any of these were to land in any of the Indian fishing harbours, it would have had its own use and money value, at least as fish meal, in line with the zero wastage principle.

Another recommendation has to do with compulsory employment of foreign crew in deep-seas fishing vessels, and payment of minimum wages of \$25,000 per season. Indian fishermen claim they have the necessary expertise and require only short training. Meanwhile, the major stakeholders, the traditional fishermen, have not been made a party to the discussions prior to the finalisation of the report, and had never even been consulted. “The Expert Committee with no fishery environmentalist, fishery economist, oceanographer, statistician and legal expert among its members was perhaps compelled to adopt an over-simplistic approach in framing the policy document.”

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The government's steps so far have agitated the fishermen and any further steps in accordance with this report are likely to distress them further.

<http://indiatogether.org/expert-committee-report-on-marine-fishing-policy-and-fishermen-government>

Date accessed: 21.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

India Agrees To Phase Down HFC, Seeks More Time

(Vishwa Mohan, *Times of India*, April 18, 2015)

In a major development around environment India has decided to relent from its opposition to the Montreal Protocol. India has moved a formal proposal to amend the protocol to bring the phasing down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFC's) under its ambit. HFC's are primarily used as coolants in refrigerators, air-conditioners and insulating foam. India's primary opposition was that HFC's should be dealt with under the Kyoto Protocol and not under the Montreal Protocol because the latter deals with ozone-depleting substances which HFC's are not. These greenhouse gases are already listed amongst those that need to be progressively phased out under the Kyoto Protocol, which deals with lots of greenhouse gases. India also wanted to stay with the Kyoto Protocol because it requires differentiated responsibility levels from rich and developing nations. Unlike the Montreal Protocol which is legally binding on all its signatories, if HFC's remain under the Kyoto Protocol then the sole legal responsibility to phase out HFC's remains with the 40 rich nations of the current climate change regime. There would be no such responsibility on developing nations like India and China.

The working group of the Montreal Protocol is meeting in Bangkok on April 22-24. If India's proposed amendment is accepted, then all developing countries, including India, will have to compulsorily, phase down HFC's. However, India has asked for a 15-year grace period for developing countries to phase out HFCs and shift to newer technologies. That means whatever deadline is fixed for developed countries (the likely year is 2035 to reach 15 per cent of the current levels), developing countries should get another 15 years post that.

The change in stance can be attributed to the bilateral agreement declared during the joint address by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S President Barack Obama, where it was stated that the US will help provide India financial and technical support during the transition phase. Through the amendment India has also asked for more financial help and flexibility in dealing with phase down schedules. India's proposal would be up for discussion in

the meeting next month. If accepted by the working group members, India will have to take on the challenge of bringing down HFC's in a time bound manner.

"Under UPA rule, India was the most vocal opponent to phasing down HFCs under Montreal Protocol, a strategy first proposed in 2009 by the Federated States of Micronesia, and quickly followed by a proposal by the US, Mexico, and Canada. While the US, Canada and Mexico had submitted their joint amendments in March, the EU is expected to submit it next week."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-agrees-to-phase-down-HFC-seeks-more-time/articleshow/46965227.cms>

Date Accessed: 23.04.2015

(Rohit Chauhan)

AGRICULTURE

Farmers Denied Crop Insurance in Haryana

(Komal Amit Gera, *Business Standard*, April 21, 2015)

The Haryana government on one hand announced Rs 12,000 per acre as crop loss in the 2014-15 season, but on the other hand, has failed to notify the crop insurance scheme for the 2014-15 rabi season as yet. The government publicised the loss as the highest, to help farmers tide over crop losses due to excess rain and hailstorm. Haryana, with more than 230,000 farmers and more than half of these in the small and marginal category, has not yet prepared a crop insurance cover to the farmers for the next season. For the sake of comparison, Delhi had announced compensation of Rs 20,000 an acre.

Agriculture Minister Om Prakash Dhankar told Business Standard, "the state was looking at a public-private-partnership model to provide extensive coverage to farmers. The new policy was being formulated and so the notification was missed this season, he added, without giving details of the PPP model."

As per the sources from the insurance sector, there has been no notification issued in the state for the insurance cover after rabi 2013-14 season. At the same, even the central government has pulled out its insurance premium contribution, leaving the state to bear the entire burden as per the sources.

"Crop insurance is available to a farmer in the notified area for the relevant crop. In weather-based insurance, 50 per cent subsidy on premium is borne by the state and the Centre shares half of the subsidy. In the National

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Agriculture Insurance Scheme, 10 per cent subsidy on premium is given to the farmer, which is equally divided between the state and the Centre."

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/farmers-denied-crop-insurance-in-haryana-115042101228_1.html

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015
(Shruti Issar)

REGIONALISM

An Imperial Mindset behind Renaming Delhi

(Scroll, April 21, 2015)

The Delhi government is planning to rename Lutyens' New Delhi as the 'Imperial City of Delhi' and the walled city, also known as Old Delhi, as the 'Imperial City of Shahjahanabad'. Although no confirmation of such news has come yet but, it is likely such a change might occur. Renaming of places is common in India and the present government will also try to embed itself in the city's history by renaming it rather than taking up the arduous task of transforming it into a post modern city.

By coming up with two names, the government is splitting up the city into two imagined Delhis: one colonial another Mughal. It is strange that the government is seeking to make distinctions between the two when they have coalesced into a single city in the minds of Delhiites and through seamless integration due to the Metro's expansion.

The proposed renaming and division hints at the colonial mindset of the Delhi government to capture for themselves the colonial part of the city and its lush parks and plush bungalows, while dismissing and cutting off the proletariat at the periphery. A similar mindset was borne by the British who imagined a city structure where the elite inhabited the centre while the 'unsanitary' were pushed to the fringes.

The most intriguing aspect of this renaming process is that while other governments chose to shed the colonial past, here the attempt is made to recall its glory. The government is also under the simplistic impression that a colonial name tag will lead to a heritage status and subsequent flocking by tourists.

<http://scroll.in/article/719455/ behold-the-new-colonialist-modi-governments-plan-to-rename-delhi-reveals-an-imperial-mindset>

<http://www.firstpost.com/india/welcome-to-the-imperial-city-modi-sarkars-bizarre-proposal-to-rename-delhi-2185583.html>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2015
(Afreen Faridi)

PDP Government's New Employment Policy: Recruits to be Paid Half, Seven Years Probation

(Indian Express, April 23, 2015)

Jammu and Kashmir government sparked criticism by announcing its new policy on employment. The state government announced a policy to fill 15000 vacancies through a fast track process. Through this policy, government is set to skip norms; it will pay recruits half of their salaries for seven years. The probation period for new recruits will be of seven years. Announcement made by the government after cabinet meeting said that thousands of gazette and non-gazetted vacancies will be filled on contractual basis.

While clarifying its decision, the government said, "this policy is only meant to fast track the appointments of close to 12000-15000 employees especially in the remote areas of the state where there is a dearth of doctors, lectures and teachers." A minister in the government said that the government is planning to submit Jammu and Kashmir Special Recruitment Ordinance to the governor to operationalise new job police at the earliest.

"J&K's former Finance Minister and senior NC leader Abdul Rahim Rather termed this new policy as a farce. They are trying to put an end to the proper norms of appointment. By adopting this policy, it will be now up to Deputy Commissioners and few district officials to give jobs to people. These officials could be easily manipulated by their political bosses."

Economist, Prof Nisar Ali believes the new recruitment policy is unwarranted. "In our state there are already well established institutions like SSRB, PSC, but the government has started sidelining those institutions," he said.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/pdp-govts-new-employment-policy-recruits-to-be-paid-half-seven-years-probation/99/>

Date accessed: 23.4.2015
(Jeet Singh)

INDIA AND WORLD

*INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS***UN Health Agency Reports Deaths top 1,000 in Yemen, Hospitals Risk Shutdowns amid Hostilities**

(United Nations News Centre, April 22, 2015)

World Health Organization (WHO) recently reported that the death toll in Yemen has crossed 1000 in the past month. Over 4,000 people have been injured in the violence. Moreover, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Yemen noted that 7.9 million children out of 15.9 million people (60% of population) require humanitarian assistance.

As per latest updates from Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) aid could not be distributed to people staying in schools due to spread of street fighting in Aden. However, another relief organization was able to supply water "in Al Dhubayiat area of Al Dhale'e governorate, which has had no water and electricity for more than a month."

Number of cases of bloody diarrhea has doubled in children under age of five in the past month. Situation is likely to worsen as hospitals may shut down due to lack of power, oxygen and fuel. WHO continues its support to the Yemen health ministry with aid.

After the halt in month-long campaign of aerial strike, most people are staying indoors to 'wait-and-see'. "In the city of Aden, the coalition's announcement has sparked violence; ground fighting involving tanks is taking place throughout the city and militants are entering residential areas." An office of international organization was damaged due to aerial bombardments near the Aden airport.

The humanitarian crisis is being fuelled by "widespread insecurity, large-scale displacement, civil strife, political instability, chronic food shortages, breakdown of social services, endemic poverty and refugee influxes."

http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50659#.VTm_5UttIpF

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

OPINION/BOOKS

OPINIONS

Crucial Committee Finds No "Indian Evidence" That Tobacco Consumption Leads to Cancer

(Economic and Political Weekly, April 18, 2015)

Recently, the Central government held back the decision to increase the pictorial sign on tobacco after a Committee on Subordinate Legislation on Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 said that the government should reconsider the case for health warnings. The Chairperson of the committee stated that all surveys and studies linking cancer to tobacco were done abroad and there was no such "Indian study." Moreover, one of the members of the committee is also known as the 'bidi baron' of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Even though the conflict of interest was obvious the member was not excused.

Health activists came out in opposition stating that there were many studies linking tobacco use and cancer. One such report was the "Report on Tobacco Control in India" brought out by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in 2004. After the incident became a political embarrassment Prime Minister stepped in increase the pictorial warning on tobacco packs from 40% to 65% of the packet's area. However this was a compromise from the earlier promised 85% coverage. Studies have shown that increasing pictorial warning on tobacco products robs cigarettes of their 'glamour' status amongst youth and increased awareness of its harms. Sellers of gutka and bidis argue that these products are less harmful than cigarettes though studies show otherwise.

In May 2014, the Public Health Foundation in its report 'Economic Burden of Tobacco Related Diseases in India' "calculated the costs, direct and indirect, due to diseases caused by tobacco use in 2011 at Rs 1,04,500 crore a year". This is 12% more than the total expenditure on health by Central and state government combined.

The chairperson of the committee went on to say that over four crore people were employed in the bidi-making and tendu leaves industry. Why did the BJP government not think of the livelihood of the farmers when banning beef? No sustained efforts have taken place to reduce tobacco farming. As a signatory to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) since 2003, India is expected to reduce tobacco farming by 2020. However, today women and children have to take to bidi rolling to survive. They have often complained about ill effects of spending long hours handling tobacco but they have no choice.

Even previous governments have deterred the introduction of pictorial warnings. The controversy over pictorial warning is a stark reminder of how those in authority treat issue of health.

<http://www.epw.in/editorials/where-proof.html>

Date Accessed: 23.4.2015

(Shriyam Gupta)

BOOKS

Studying Women Seeking Abortions

(Leela Visaria, EPW, April 18, 2015)

Studying Women Seeking Abortions, edited by Andrea Whittaker, has 11 papers on the abortion laws and services available in a few East Asian and South Asian countries, namely, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Bangladesh. The book contains two sets of papers: five papers present narratives and lived experiences of mostly poor and vulnerable women from Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and India, and of Burmese women near the Thai border, who have had to make hard choices about having to undergo abortions. Four papers deal more broadly with the political, legal and religious complexities involved in evolving abortion laws and reforms in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. Apart from Vietnam, Cambodia and India where abortion is permitted, abortion everywhere else is illegal, and is allowed only if the life of the woman is in danger, or in rare situations.

In spite of repeated demands by women activists where abortion is illegal to liberalise it in the interest of women's well-being, the ground reality of the deplorable condition of the abortion seekers is yet to change. In fact, even in countries with liberal abortion laws, abortion is unsafe in most situations, except in Tamil Nadu (India) and one or two other states, where women generally prefer private qualified providers. Women reported having to incur huge expenses to undergo abortions. The book documents that for poor women in these countries, the quality of abortion care, support and counselling is hugely compromised; they face inadequate care due to outdated techniques, discrimination, little or no privacy, blame, and in some cases, forced sterilisation. The book contains testimonies of women who indicate that in all settings, women seek abortions when they are left with little choice to continue their pregnancy. The decision to abort ceases to be a personal decision, and is guided by strong political and economic contexts such as financial or marital instability, insecurity, violence or social pressures.

OPINION/BOOKS

The narratives show that these women prefer easy abortion services; however, the laws, often made by men, are insensitive to their needs. The patriarchal nature of Asian societies and the imbedded structural and social inequalities shape women's decision-making related to pregnancy terminations. The vulnerabilities and risky reproduction experienced by them is highlighted. The book gives country-specific chapters where some nuanced observations are highlighted, dealing with different experiences in states within the same country. It brings attention to the degree of control women and men have over reproductive decision-making, and how cultural processes shape the meanings of their reproductive decisions. The book deals with the sensitive issue of abortion and rightly emphasizes the state of women being left at the mercy of the system in which they live, often subjected to absolute injustices.

<http://www.epw.in/book-reviews/studying-women-seeking-abortion.html>

Date accessed: 21.4.2015

(Kasturi Mishra)

Book Review: Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India

(Gargi Gupta, *dna*, April 19, 2015)

In *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India*, Harsh Mander writes a stinging critique of the privileged in India, arraigning them for their indifference to the poverty and injustice around them, and arguing that it is their very act of "looking away" that allows the sorry state of affairs to persist. "My worry," he argues, speaking with a passion that belies his soft-spoken, carefully considered articulateness, "is not about the facts of inequality, but the normative framework within which this inequality is considered inevitable, even legitimate. Equally, it is not about the condition of minorities as much as the kind of legitimised prejudice against them that I hear and see around us."

Mander says that whenever and wherever he has spoken about it, people have come up and told him that he could well have named Brazil, or the US, or France. The problem, as Mander sees it, is generational. In his view, the middle classes at the time he was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s engaged with a sense of responsibility and sensitivity to the suffering around them. "So mothers would tell children not to waste food because there were hungry children outside; wearing branded clothes was considered vulgar, and a patch on a suit was considered elegant. My memory of college is of most of our conversations being about how to make the world better. There was an idealism; it was part of our world to believe that there should be a more just, humane society." The contrast with the present couldn't be starker. Mander takes a weekly class of first-year students at his alma mater, and often begins his first lecture by asking how many had been inside a slum. "Not one hand went up. Their only interaction with the poor had been as people who served them."

Mander has an interesting thesis about what led to the change in middle class attitudes. "I believe three demolitions were responsible - first, the Berlin Wall which not just brought down the Soviet Union but also discredited the idea of state action to bring about a just society. The second was the Babri Masjid demolition and the third, 9/11.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/review-book-review-looking-away-inequality-prejudice-and-indifference-in-new-india-2078671>

Date Accessed: 20.04.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

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