

## In This Issue

*Dear Reader,*

*In the new pattern that we have introduced in Policy Watch, we now have two or three lead articles instead of one cover story. In this edition the three lead articles are on the Naga accord, the Mahila Samakhya Programme and the Indian Citizenship Act. All the articles speak of actions that impact particular sections or groups. The Naga accord is important for not only Nagaland but also Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The Mahila Samakhya Programme has changed the lives of women in different parts of the country and finally the Indian Citizenship Act directly affects refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh.*

*In 2012, it seemed that the Naga problem would be finally resolved. The final points of a settlement were being sorted out through negotiations between the Union government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah). The NSCN (I-M), the major player among Naga groups, withdrew its demand for the integration of contiguous Naga-inhabited areas including those in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, and of redrawing State boundaries. What was even more important was that the NSCN(I-M) had also mellowed in its demand for “Naga sovereignty,” thereby allowing an outcome that can conform to the basic structure of the Constitution. However, the accord was not signed by 2013 as envisaged. A few weeks ago, it was announced that the Naga accord has been signed. There are questions and ambiguities about it. The lead article explores this and more.*

*The second article is on a successful government programme called the Mahila Samakhya. It is active in 12000 villages, 60 districts and 9 states. In spite of positive evaluations, the present government wants to merge it. What are compulsions and how will it affect people is what the article discusses. The final article, is again on a very topical issue, that of amending the Indian Citizen Act, 1955. Can a state which proclaims to be secular in its preamble decide to give refuge to only those to belong to a certain religion? This is what the amendment aims at. It gives priority to Hindu refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh. This would impact the border states which see an influx of refugees. Assam in particular wants action to be taken against illegal immigrants. The BJP had promised that all illegal immigrants, especially Muslims, will be sent back to their respective countries. This amendment will just open a can of worms.*

*As you may have noticed that the news articles also have become shorter. This is to enable our readers to access Policy watch easily on their phones or tablets.*

*Dr. Sushree Panigrahi  
Fellow*

## In This Issue

### **LEAD ARTICLES:**

- Is Integration A Democratic Solution? Concerns Regarding The “Naga Accord”
- Mahila Samakhya: An Uncertain Future
- Implications of Amending of the Citizenship Act, 1955

### **HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:**

- India’s Super Rich Grow by 17% in FY15
- Activists Decry LPG Subsidy Withdrawal

### **SECTION 1: THE ECONOMY**

- How the Rich are Building a Defence Against the Black Money Law
- Yuan Devaluation may hit India’s Exports
- RBI asks Banks to Provide Short Term Crop Loans at Lower Rate

### **SECTION 2: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- **Politics and Governance:** How the Naga Accord Will Affect Politics in the Rest of the North-East; Cheap Imports are Threat to Viability of the Steel Industry: Cyrus Mistry; Land Acquisition Bill off till Winter Session; MHA to Setup National Fingerprint Database to Record Pan-India Criminal Data
- **Technology:** Decoding the Aadhaar Judgment: No More Seeding Till the Privacy Issue is Settled by the Court
- **Environment:** NGT Bans Cutting of Trees near the Taj Mahal; India’s War on Greenpeace
- **Law and Justice:** Criminal Justice Reform; The DNA Bill is a Recipe for Disaster

### **SECTION 3: SOCIETY**

- **Demography:** In 2100, India Will be the Highest-Populated Country on Earth

### **SECTION 4: INDIA AND WORLD**

- **India in the World:** India Bid for Permanent Seat Suffers Blow as US, Russia, China Oppose UNSC Reform Talks; India Through Chinese Lens; India Needs Two Countries Like Itself to Sustain Current Consumption Levels
- **International Affairs:** IMF Welcomes China’s New Mechanism to Value Currency
- **Middle East:** Al Qaeda after Omar: Why His Death Could Hurt the Terrorist Group and Empower ISIS

### **SECTION 5: OPINIONS/BOOKS**

- **Opinions:** India’s Inverted Abortion Politics; National Commission for Women: A Symbolic Presence

## Lead Article-1

### Is Integration A Democratic Solution? Concerns Regarding The “Naga Accord”

The BJP-led NDA Government has announced a supposedly “historic” agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (IM), the largest armed outfit claiming to represent the interests of the Naga nationalist movement, the oldest insurgency movement in India. While new developments regarding the deal are being revealed every day, the actual details of the accord are still unknown. What are the possible outcomes of this deal and the consequences of the same? This lead article examines the main demand of the Naga insurgents: Integration of all Naga inhabited areas in North East India. Given the diversity of claims and demands in the region, it asks if integration is a viable solution. What other possible solutions can be developed to resolve the demands of the Naga people?

#### The Historical Context

The Nagas are a collective of tribes that inhabit most of the Indian state of Nagaland, some sections of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur, and some areas of Myanmar across the border. According to Naga nationalist history, the Nagas and the territory they occupy, have been partitioned twice: first, in 1826 by the Treaty of Yandaboo, where the British divided Naga occupied territories between British India and Burma, and second, in 1963 when independent India established the state of Nagaland, excluding some areas occupied by Nagas in what are presently the states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The partition of Naga territory was perceived as a denial of Naga self-determination over the territory they occupy. The main Naga nationalist demand, therefore, has been a claim for a common administrative unit, constructed and sustained as a yearning for a homeland for all Nagas called Nagalim (Vashum 2000).

The demand for an independent Nagalim was made first by the Naga National Council (NNC) led by Angami Zapu Phizo. To strengthen this demand, in March 1952, Phizo formed the underground Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) and the Naga Federal Army. Their demand for independence was backed by an organized campaign that constructed a Naga idea of the self and treated India as the other, arguing that the Nagas were ethnically different from other Indians, had a distinct social life, manner of living, laws and customs and methods of governance (Nag 2009, 52). This claim was not strong enough to convince the Indian establishment. With regard to tribal communities in the North East, under provisions like the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule and, later, through Sections 371 A-G, the Indian Constitution explicitly protects and maintains the right of tribal communities to retain their customary ways of life and autonomy over administrative procedures across territories they occupy. Following this constitutional precedent, the thrust of Nehru’s Naga policy was to grant Nagas the fullest autonomy so that their traditions, customs and culture could be protected and perpetuated (Nag 2009, 49).

At the same time, the recourse to violence by the FGN led to the Government of India taking recourse to military assistance to control and counter the attacks on its existence in this region. The strategic location of Naga inhabited areas’, with their shared border with Myanmar that provided access to the rest of South-East Asia, was an important point of consideration in all deliberations the Indian state with the FGN. The organization that is NSCN (IM) today was formed by several FGN leaders including Isak Swu, T. Muivah and S.S.Khaplang in 1975. While this outfit fought for what they perceived as the right of the Nagas for their own nation, they were also responsible for several violent attacks on members of other tribal communities such as the Kukis and Meiteis before they agreed to a ceasefire with the Government of India in 1997 (Singh 2008). The Indian Army also carried out several human rights violations in their fight against the NSCN cadres, and have got away with these violations due to the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the region (Tarapot 2003). Since the signing of the ceasefire declarations with the Government of India, however, the NSCN (IM) has remained loyal to its agreements and employed political dialogue with the Indian state to further its cause.

#### The Demand for Integration

The main demand of the NSCN has been integration of Naga inhabited areas. However, this demand faces a huge opposition from different parties. Various state governments, including Assam and Manipur, argue that the integrity of the territories of their states cannot be violated for the Naga nationalist demand. This opposition is the loudest in

## Lead Article-1

Manipur. The claim for Integration demands that four out of the eight undisputed districts of Manipur: Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenlong and Chandel be part of Nagaland. These are all districts with Naga majorities. However, along with the hill district of Churachandpur, dominantly inhabited by Kukis, these 5 districts contain 90% of the territory of the state. According to the 2011 Census, these districts are inhabited by only 34% of the state's population, mostly members of Naga and Kuki-Chin-Zomi tribal communities (Census of India 2011). If the four districts dominated by Naga communities were to become part of a larger state of greater Nagaland or Nagalim, then Manipur as a state would be left with very little land and with a denser population. The Meiteis, or the Manipuri speaking people of Manipur, have strongly, and sometimes violently, resisted any compromise on the territorial integrity of Manipur state. In 2001, when the Government of India was negotiating a ceasefire agreement with the NSCN that could have led to the changing of the borders of the state, there were anti-ceasefire protests in Imphal valley by the Meitei's that made several resident Nagas (from Imphal) flee the valley. Any territorial compromise of Manipur in the latest Naga Accord might lead to a similar backlash from the dominant communities in Manipur.

At the same time, the tribal communities in these hill districts of Manipur do not come under any special provision of the Indian Constitution such as the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule. Article 371 C, instituted in 1971, empowered the Governor of Manipur to report directly to the President regarding the administration of the hill areas. But this has been seen as an attempt by the State to control hill areas instead of granting these areas autonomy like the districts of Nagaland which have functioning Autonomous District Councils under Section 371 A. The demand from these hill districts to be part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution has been long standing and stands out as one possible solution for the demands of the Naga people. There is a problem with granting Autonomous District Councils (ADC) to these areas, however. They are not just inhabited by the Nagas but also by other tribes such as the Kuki who have their own customary laws and practices. This might create some friction at the level of the ADC between the two tribal communities. However, resolving this friction at the district level might be a better solution than integration of all Naga occupied lands into the state of Nagaland. This might lead to minority tribal communities in the region losing the agency they currently possess.

### Who represents the Nagas?

While the demand for integration of all Naga inhabited areas is something that the Nagaland Assembly Government has also supported through resolutions as recent as July 2015, the signing of any accord with only one armed group in the region might not lead to Integration easily. The Government of India will also have to resolve the problem of other armed outfits in the region in general. The Naga nationalist movement itself is a contested space. There are two big camps claiming to represent this movement today: (i) The NSCN (IM) led by Isak Swu and T. Muivah with which the Government of India has signed the framework accord. (ii) The NSCN (K) led by Khaplang whose training camps in Myanmar were cleared out by the covert operation carried out by the Indian Army. The NSCN (K) is reported to have joined hands with other Insurgent movements in the region like the ULFA to launch a new insurgent movement against the Indian State. The GOI claims to be reaching out to the other factions as well, but will it succeed in doing so given the new alliances these groups have made with each other? A pact signed with the NSCN (IM) alone might not represent the aspirations of the different groups who claim to represent the Naga cause.

### Major Concerns

First, protecting the rich cultural heritage and ways of life of the Naga people has been a concern for the Nagas throughout their history. This accord will have to ensure that these concerns will be protected and be allowed to thrive. However, those who are formulating this accord have not shown much partiality to these demands in the past. The Naga nationalists have not made the preservation and development of Naga culture a priority in their agendas. In the process they have failed to see the importance of Naga culture as a resource (Haksar 2015). The ruling party at the Centre, the BJP, is a party that has been demanding a Uniform Civil Code for a long time. This demand has been of concern for those who follow differential systems of law, especially customary laws protected by the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule and Section 371 A, in the case of Nagaland (Ngaihte 2015). Will the BJP's emphasis on the Uniform Civil Code affect the protections that the Accord ought to grant Naga people, including those of the hill districts of Manipur who have no constitutional protection currently? Nehru's vision on providing autonomy to the tribal populations of India to function according to their own ways of life is important for maintaining the legitimacy of the Indian state in these regions.

## Lead Article-1

Second, the details of the accord have not been made public. The PM and the Central Government sent out signals that a deal with the NSCN(IM) has already been signed to the exclusion of the numerous other state and non-state actors in the region. With no details being revealed even after ten days of the announcement of an Accord, however, questions are being raised if there is any substance to the accord at all. If this is the case, why has the Centre made an announcement that has clearly unsettled the citizens of the region?

Third, anonymous sources have mentioned that the boundaries of Nagaland and Manipur would not be redrawn. However, the framework involves the creation of a “larger cultural body of the Nagas” living in Nagaland and Manipur Hills to reflect a notion of greater Nagaland (Dholabhai 2015). Will this larger cultural body be like an umbrella body over the Autonomous District Councils that some Naga inhabited districts have? If so, given the territorial jurisdiction that Autonomous District councils have, will such a move not compromise the integrity of state boundaries? How will the state respond to the expected backlash from such an act? If the Government is planning to create a cultural body without any political jurisdiction, then why is it doing so with the NSCN (IM), an armed outfit that has been making strictly political and territorial claims, and which has given little priority to the customary norms and practices of the Naga people?

Fourth, In India, and especially in the North-East, there is a complex cartography of federal relations. The Tribal District Councils enjoy a high degree of power in administrative governance and according to section 371 A in Nagaland, no law of the Central Government can apply until approved and passed by the State Government. These institutions will all be affected by the accord. There are also various other state governments besides that of the Nagaland Government whose states will be affected by the accord. These parties, however, have not been included in the negotiations. The direct intervention of the Centre, without any consultations with states or district councils on a matter with which they stand to be seriously affected damages the way federal relations have flourished in India. Cooperative Federalism, signifying an interdependent relationship between the Centre and lower administrative units like the states or autonomous district councils allowed various regions to evolve a life of their own. However, the current Government, in the name of national unity and “Act-East” policies, is dismissing any assurance of organic interdependence that the States can have with the Centre. Will its attempt to undermine dissent and differences on the Naga accord lead to the assimilation of Naga communities into a “nationalism” very different from the kind that they have been fighting for over six decades?

### Prepared by

Shaunna Rodrigues

### Bibliography

- Census of India. 2011. *www.census2011.co.in*. Accessed August 13, 2015. <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/manipur.html>.
- Dholabhai, Nitish. 2015. "Centre, NSCN - IM sign draft truce - Momentous, says Muivah." *The Telegraph* August 3. Accessed August 13, 2015.
- Haksar, Nandita. 2015. *The Future of the Centre-Naga Accord*. August 5. Accessed August 13, 2015. <http://www.thecitizen.in/NewsDetail.aspx?Id=4644&The/Future/of/the/Centre-Naga/Accord>
- Nag, Sajal. 2009. "Nehru and the Nagar: Minority Nationalism and the Post-Colonial State." *Economic and Political Weekly*.
- Ngaihte, Thankkhanlal. 2015. *How the Naga Accord Will Affect Politics in the Rest of the North East*. August 13. Accessed August 13, 2015. <http://thewire.in/2015/08/13/how-the-naga-accord-will-affect-politics-in-the-north-east-8367/>
- Singh, Aheibam Koireng. 2008. *Ethnicity and Inter-Community Conflicts: A case of Kuki-Naga in Manipur*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.
- Tarapot, Phanjoubam. 2003. *Bleeding Manipur*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.
- Vashum, Reisang. 2000. *Nagas' Rights to Self Determination: An Anthropological-historical Perspective*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

## Lead Article -2

### Mahila Samakhya: An Uncertain Future

#### Introduction:

Mahila Samakhya (MS) is a full-fledged scheme of Ministry of Human Resource and Development of Government of India. It was started in 1988-89 to mobilize poor and marginalized women on issues related to education and empowerment. The scheme was formulated in such a way, so as to create an enabling environment for women to participate in decision-making processes in their family, in society and in governance. Currently the MS programme has a network of more than 1.4 million women working in different parts of the country. According to the latest review of the programme by MHRD, nearly 90 per cent of these women are from socially and economically disadvantaged sections of society such as Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims. The programme helped Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim women and girls in selected educationally backward blocks to mobilize and organize. MS is a centrally supported programme and currently being operated in 11 states of India. The Department of International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom government provided financial assistance to MS from August 2007 to September 2014.

Realizing the importance and the invaluable impact of MS especially on lives of disadvantaged women, the twelfth five-year plan proposed continuation of the programme after utilization of funds provided by DFID. The 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan reads, “The large pool of trained women associated with MS would be used to achieve goals of the RTE, namely, equity and equality in and through education. Once the external funding is completely utilised, the programme would be brought under RTE-harmonised SSA with 100 per cent internal funding.” It was also decided that the MS would be extend in other areas with increased financial allocation during twelfth five-year plan. Moreover, the planning commission made it clear that the MS would continue as an independent programme with full operational and programme autonomy.

Going against the policy decision on this programme made by twelfth five-year plan on the recommendation of MHRD, the NDA government had decided to withdraw this project. After utilization of DFID fund for the programme in 2014, the MHRD communicated to state MS societies to wind up their activities by March 2015. Meanwhile, the ministry had also conducted a national review of MS. The review of MS had recommended specific strategies for discontinuation of the programme from some districts and emphasized that the abrupt discontinuation would adversely affect volunteer driven MS programme. The decision of MHRD about discontinuation of Mahila Samakhya has come as a shock to the stakeholders and women engaged in this programme. MS societies in several states and state governments have demanded extension of the programme. Realizing the immediate pressure from field for continuation of the MS, the MHRD on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 agreed to finance the programme for one more year (2015-16). While informing MS societies in the states about one-year extension of MS, the MHRD made clear that they should explore possibilities of merger with NRLM in their respective states. The discussion on broadening the scope of MS in last few years reached a consensus that the MS should build linkages with other flagship projects of Government of India. The move of MHRD under NDA government from building linkages of MS with bigger projects to the merger of the MS is the second shock to the people engaged in this programme.

The current move of the Union government seems to be an effort at diluting the ultimate goal of the programme. Merging MS with NRLM is not a viable decision as the two programme have different goals and strategies. There was a demand of linking MS with some big and flagship projects such as SSA and NRLM while retaining the autonomy of the programme to broaden its scope. However, the step towards merging of these two programme will culminate into abrupt withdrawal of MS. This article is an attempt to highlight the relevance Mahila Samakhya and upcoming threats in terms of merger with NRLM.

#### Mahila Samakhya and its Relevance:

The Mahila Samakhya (MS) introduced in 1988-89 by the Union government was a direct outcome of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. The NPE emphasized on women’s education as an effective tool for women empowerment<sup>1</sup>. The policy realized that enhancing educational infrastructure alone would not redress the problem of

<sup>1</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/Genesis\\_ms.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Genesis_ms.pdf)

## Lead Article -2

women illiteracy and educational opportunities. In order to make education as tool of empowerment, the policy had suggested redressing traditional gender imbalances in educational access and achievement. The NPE document reads, “The empowerment of women is possibly the most critical pre condition for the participation of girls and women in the educational process”. Mahila Samakhya was conceived to make the vision of NPE a reality for socially and economically disadvantaged women and girls.

The Mahila Samakhya programme in its initial phase was launched in 10 selected educationally backward districts of three states in India. The programme was conceptualized after due consultation and discussion with policy makers and civil society activists. During initial phase of the programme, the Dutch government provided financial assistance to implement MS. Subsequent governments decided to expand the programme in other districts in order to cover more socially and economically deprived women. During 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan and few years of 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan (2007 to 2014) the MS received financial assistance of 35 million US dollar from Department For International Development (DFID) of government of United Kingdom. During this period, the DFID contributed 90% and Government of India contributed 10% of the total cost of Mahila Samakhya programme. Knowing that the programme is important and has been instrumental in mobilizing and organizing disadvantaged women, the twelfth five-year plan recommended the continuation of the programme after 2014.

Realizing the concerns of the NPE the MS programme was launched on a much broader scale than the literacy initiative. According to a report of Joint Review Mission (JRM) of MS in 2011, the MS “is a process of collective, critical reflection and active self determination to change conditions constructing women’s live. It brings social justice and gender justice agenda together, through a focus on empowerment of socially and economically marginalized women<sup>2</sup>.” To work on such fundamental subjects, the MS was given full autonomy to develop its strategy and adopt actions as per the needs of local communities. The scheme has been implemented by the registered Mahila Samakhya societies in every state constituted by the representatives of state government, central government and non-government persons.

Small groups of women organized by MS in every operational village are building blocks of the entire programme. MS has been instrumental in mobilizing women through women groups called ‘Sangha’ in each village. The ‘Sangha’ provides the space where women can meet, reflect, , ask questions and discuss issues. Women facilitators called ‘Sahayogini’ appointed by the MS societies are responsible for organizing ‘Sanghas’ and providing them necessary help. The programme does not provide any tangible monetary or other benefits to the women of Sangha so it is important to the Sahyogini to develop rapport with the women and make them to reflect on various issues pertinent to women and girls in their society. Media in the last two decades has reported number of incidences of social initiatives taken up by Sangha with the help of MS societies across the country. To make women’s voice more powerful and collective the Sanghas have been federated in district and state level federations. Each federation has been constituted as a network of some sanghas at district and state level. These federations have been effective in amplifying voices of small sanghas. The latest national review of the programme has found that the women are using federation platform to develop rapport with block and district level officers. According to a report on MS by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development many of these federations are now functioning autonomously<sup>3</sup>.

### Target Group and Achievements:

Sanghas and federations constituted by MS are managing and monitoring a range of activities to support women. Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSK), Nari Adalats, Counselling centres, Sanjeevani Kendras/herbal medicine and Information centres are some of them. Sanghas and federations are also active in addressing issues of gender violence such as challenging discriminatory traditional rituals and practices, stopping child marriages and dedication of girls as Devadasis in some states, ensuring information dissemination to the very marginalised, providing legal and counseling support, and ensuring better delivery of services among other things. MSKs have been opened to provide condensed courses and to create a cadre of educated and aware young women. These kendras provide condensed quality and gender sensitive education to adolescent girls who have never gone to school.

<sup>2</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/3rd Joint Review Mission -2011.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/3rd Joint Review Mission -2011.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/Agenda.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Agenda.pdf)

## Lead Article -2

Various evaluations of the Mahila Samakhya in last 10 years have appreciated its impact on lives of poor women. Two latest evaluations namely the final project report of DFID and national review of MS conducted by IIM-Ahmadabad in 2014 have also argued that the programme should be continued as it is helpful to the women it is aimed for. Few of achievements of MS highlighted by these two reports are as follows:

- The MS programme currently covers 11 states, 126 districts, 638 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) where literacy rates for women are below the national average.
- MS has successfully mobilized marginalized women; nearly 90% of the sangha membership is drawn from the disadvantaged sections of society. SC and ST constitute 56% of the sangha membership at the national level.
- More than 50,000 sanghas (women's collectives) constituted by MS have a membership of nearly 1.4 million women.
- Political mobilization of members of Sangha and federation is another remarkable achievement of MS. Thousands of women participated in governance through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). During the period of 2007 -2014, 34387 members of Sangha contested for PRI offices and 14811 of them were elected for various positions in PRIs.
- There are 95 Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSK) operating in 11 states providing gender sensitive education to out of school adolescent girls. So far these MSKs have helped 28015 girls to pass out condensed course offered by MS. Out of those who have passed the course 16391 girls enrolled themselves in formal schools.
- Apart from MSKs the MS programme also provides educational services through Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Residential Bridge Course, NPEGL and strengthening the schools management committee. Data shows that the Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) of India, where Mahila Samakhya is being implemented have shown significant increase in girl's enrollment in schools and sharp decline in dropout rate from schools during last seven years.
- In these EBBs the enrollment in elementary education of SC girls has increased from 8.7 lakh in 2007 to 14.5 lakh in 2014. The enrollment of ST girls has increased from 5.5 lakh to 13.6 lakh during same period.
- Similarly, the dropout rate of girls in elementary school has decreased from 11.58% in 2007 to 3.5 in 2014.
- Sangha women also find representation on the school management committees: there are 30,377 School Management Committee (SMC) members who are also sangha members.

### Merger or End of MS:

Studies and evaluations of Mahila Samakhya in last two decades acknowledged that the programme is one among the most successful programmes of women empowerment in India. Almost every evaluation of the programme has argued that the MS is necessary in its current format to mobilize and organize disadvantaged women on issues of gender equality and violence in order to create an enabling environment for women's education. The programme as a full fledged project with its innovation and people oriented activities in last two decades has substantially contributed in empowerment of women who are victims of multiple deprivations. Women and girls in Sanghas and federation of MS are mostly from disadvantaged sections of the society. These women and girls are not deprived just because of their gender but they have also been deprived because of their caste, religion and poverty. Various evaluations of MS have found that the programme is playing a vital role in the empowerment of these women. The proposed merger of MS with NRLM seems to be a step towards winding up of Mahila Samakhya. In its decision to merge the MS with other programmes the MHRD is going against of the major evaluations of MS, commitment of planning commission, sub group report of MHRD for 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan in 2011 and working group report of MS national society. The merger of MS with NRLM may dilute the Mahila Samakhya in following three ways:

- 1- **Autonomy of the MS:** The latest national review of Mahila Samakhya conducted by IIM-Ahmadabad in 2014 attributed the success of programme to the autonomous structure of MS societies, Sanghas and federations. It is been argued that the autonomy of the programme helped in innovation by MS societies and Sanghas according to the need of local communities. Sanghas and federations have been taking issues and planning strategies according to their will, knowledge and capacity. The current move of MHRD regarding merger with NRLM not only ignores the autonomy of the MS but also ignores autonomy of millions of women associated with these Sanghas and federation. The ministry had not consulted Sanghas and federations in this respect. Contrary to this, last year a working group constituted by MS national society recommended linkages of MS with some flagship projects of government of

## Lead Article -2

India. The twelfth five-year plan suggested its merger with SSA but it made clear that the Mahila Samakhya would work as a full-fledged scheme under SSA.

- 2- **Dilution in the purpose of MS:** NRLM focuses on empowerment of rural people through promotion of economic entrepreneurship. In order to achieve this, NRLM has adopted strategies of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federation of SHGs. whereas, the MS is a programme that deals with social issues such as gender inequality, education, gender violence and women's participation in governance. Both of these programmes have been engaged and trained in different sets of issues. There is no doubt that all these issues are relevant and important in the process of empowerment but the merger of these two programmes will undermine original concerns of MS. Being a flagship program of GoI, the NRLM will use the network of MS to push forward its issues and concern by knowingly or unknowingly cornering issues of MS.
- 3- **Lack of capacity:** A working group on issues of assets and livelihood of Mahila Samakhya in its report presented in a National Resource Group (NRG) meeting on August 19, 2014 advocated for building linkages with national level flagship projects such as NRLM and MGNREGA. The latest national review of MS has recognized the efficiency of Sanghas and federations in performing task of social mobilization, organization and activities of women empowerment. However, the report has found that these institutions are not capable of to promote economic activities. The finding of the national review on financial capabilities of sanghas and federations is natural, because they were constituted for some other purpose. Now through merger these federation will not be promoted for the work they are good at but they will be forced to do financial activities for which they are not capable. This entire process will destroy the hard work of millions of women.

### Conclusion:

Going against the recommendations of various assessments of Mahila Samakhya, the NDA government seems to be firm on its decision of discontinuation of the programme. The recent letter from MHRD has asked every State MS societies to explore possibilities of merging MS with NRLM. There are two basic problems with this merger and both of them will adversely affect the process empowerment of millions of deprived women of this country. The first problem is related to the sustainability of the programme. In the name merger, the MHRD will abruptly withdraw MS from all 11 states without putting any mechanism to sustain around 25 years long efforts of MS. Secondly, the merger of MS with NRLM will completely quash any chance of autonomous sanghas and federations to continue their original task of social change through gender equality. NRLM will keep all these sanghas and federations busy with activities of income generation. Further, there are high chances that the merger may also lead towards poor implementation of MS in these blocks. Evaluations of MS have shown that these sanghas and federations are not capable of handling activities related to economic promotion. The proposed merger of these two programme will harm a successful women movement of India organized and mobilized by Mahila Samakhya.

### Prepared By:

Jeet Singh

### References:

- MHRD, 2011, 'Sub Group Report for the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan', Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD, GoI.
- Planning Commission, 2013, 'Twelfth Five Year Plan (Social): 2012-2017', Sage Publication, India.
- DFID, 2014, 'Programme Completion Report (Top Sheet)', DFID, India
- MHRD, 2014, 'Record of Discussions of the National Resource Group Meeting of Mahila Samakhya held on 19-08-2014', retrieved from:  
[http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/Minutes\\_of\\_NRG\\_meeting\\_held\\_on\\_19th\\_August\\_2014.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Minutes_of_NRG_meeting_held_on_19th_August_2014.pdf)
- IIM-Ahmadabad, 2014, 'Mahila Samakhya 2014: A National Review', IIM- Ahmadabad, Retrieved from:  
[http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/Report-MSP.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Report-MSP.pdf)

## Lead Article -3

### Implications of Amending of the Citizenship Act, 1955

The BJP led NDA government at the Centre is preparing a Bill to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to grant citizenship to undocumented migrants who were religiously persecuted from Pakistan and Bangladesh. As per media reports this would include Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians, Sikhs and Christians.<sup>4</sup> The genesis of this move can be found in a speech made by the current Prime Minister in his first public rally at Assam during the 2014 election campaign, where he declared that if the BJP came to power, Hindu Bangladeshis would be removed from camps and given citizenship. The cut-off date proposed for victims of religious persecution from Pakistan and Bangladesh who can apply for citizenship is December 31, 2014. Citizenship by registration (a minimum stay of seven years) and naturalisation (a minimum of 12 years) will be the two routes for obtaining the same. Until they obtain citizenship such religiously persecuted individuals will be not termed as 'illegal migrants' and will be provided with long term visas.<sup>5</sup> The amendment in the Citizenship Act, 1955 would also require amendments to Foreigners Act, 1946, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950.

Granting citizenship to migrants will be a cause for worry for the States bordering Pakistan and Bangladesh as they will have to bear the majority of the brunt of accommodating these religiously persecuted migrants. This issue of accommodation of migrants is not a new one. In order to curtail the continuous influx of illegal migration of Bangladeshis in Assam, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Central and State governments, All Assam Student's Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) in 1985. According to this Accord the foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with the law. This accord is also incorporated under Section 6-A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Recently the Supreme Court heard writ petitions filed by the members of Assam Sanmilita Mahasanga, Assam Public Works and All Assam Ahom Association against the Union of India on the issue that the sovereignty and integrity of India was at stake as a massive influx of illegal migrants from the neighbouring country has affected the core constitutional value.<sup>6</sup> In its verdict passed last year, the Supreme Court bench passed directions on the issue of border fencing, border patrolling, border roads and provision of flood lights. The court gave these instructions because it is a known fact that the influx of Bangladeshi immigrants threatens to dilute the local Assamese population. Therefore, it is interesting to understand why the current government should be rather 'encouraging' in welcoming migrants to India by going a step further and making it easier for them to obtain citizenship.

This move of providing shelter to religiously persecuted Hindus is being given a humanitarian colour since it grants refuge to migrants fleeing from the harassment and persecution subjected to them by the neighbouring countries. But the strong political undertones of this action cannot remain hidden. Political parties in Assam believe that the Bengali Hindus there were 'tortured' at the time of Partition because of which they had to flee the country and therefore they must be given a chance to find shelter in India.<sup>7</sup> The fact that this proposed amendment, targeting only a section of the religiously persecuted persons, is coming at a time when Assam is heading for polls next year is not a mere coincidence. The Hindu

<sup>4</sup> Article(2015), 'Citizenship soon for those who fled religious persecution', The Hindu, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://m.thehindu.com/news/national/citizenship-soon-for-those-who-fled-religious-persecution/article7500491.ece> Accessed on 11.08.2015

<sup>5</sup> Article(2015), 'India to legislate citizenship for Hindu and Christian asylum seekers from Pakistan and Bangladesh', The Pakistan Christian Post, August 10<sup>h</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=5533> Accessed on 11.8.2015

<sup>6</sup> Writ Petition (Civil) No. 562 of 2012 & Ors.

<sup>7</sup> Article (2015), 'Grant citizenship to Hindu Bangladesh migrants: Congress to Centre', The Times of India, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Grant-citizenship-to-Hindu-Bangladesh-migrants-Congress-to-Centre/articleshow/47505020.cms> Accessed on 13.8.2015

## Lead Article -3

Bengali voters have traditionally supported the BJP and appeasing them through this move clearly leaves no doubt that this is nothing but a political manoeuvre.<sup>8</sup>

### BJP's Stance on the Persecuted

Following the BJP's declared policy of India being the 'natural home of persecuted Indians'<sup>9</sup> the government after taking charge in 2014 has extended long-term visas in Madhya Pradesh to nearly 19,000 refugees, around 11,000 in Rajasthan and another 4,000 in Gujarat.<sup>10</sup> At the end of April 2015, the BJP government has approved citizenship for 4,230 Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Afghanistan who have sought refuge in India, compared with 1,023 granted by the Congress-led UPA-II.<sup>11</sup> The constant emphasis on granting refuge on the basis of religion is in keeping with the Hindutva ideology popularly advocated by the current government.

It is interesting to note that the BJP has come a long way from its stand on illegal migrants. Ten years ago, in 2003 when 213 'Bangladeshi citizens' were stranded in the no man's land between India and Bangladesh, neither country accepted them.<sup>12</sup> It was the then BJP government in the same year that introduced an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955 in order to include the definition of 'illegal migrants'.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that the political gains in the upcoming Assam assembly polls are being given predominance over the massive problem of immigrant influx especially in the North-East.

### Selective Strategy on Refugees

This idea behind providing refuge to religiously persecuted individuals from neighbouring countries seems to be firmly based on communal and political lines. Or else seeing the plight of the Rohingya Muslims being persecuted in Myanmar, there can be no argument against them qualifying for long term refuge in India. Similarly, the Ahmaddiya Muslims, a minority sect amongst the Muslims, have been religiously persecuted by extremist Muslim groups and have been subjected to deadly violence in Bangladesh and Pakistan over the years<sup>14</sup> However since India is only 'the natural home of persecuted Hindus' and not necessarily of those who are victims of religious persecution, a similar offer for acquiring Indian citizenship has not been made to them.

At this stage it is significant to take note of the fact that a considerable number of Burmese Hindus are also being persecuted.<sup>15</sup> However, they are not being included in the proposed changes to the Citizenship Act. This could probably be explained by the fact that they do not have any real affinity towards the RSS/BJP. Thus the act of protecting persecuted Hindus is just a ruse to alter the voter base in the upcoming Assam polls, without really addressing the issue of persecuted Hindu's from other countries, or those practicing other religions in our neighbouring countries.

<sup>8</sup> Article (2015), 'Assam: Congress seeks citizenship for Hindu Bengalis, Buddhists who migrated from Bangladesh', The Economic Times, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/assam-congress-seeks-citizenship-for-hindu-bengalis-buddhists-who-migrated-from-bangladesh/articleshow/47514296.cms> Accessed on 8.8.2015

<sup>9</sup> Article (2015), 'Exclusionary intent', The Hindu, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-on-policy-for-granting-citizenship-to-hindu-immigrants-from-bangladesh/article7198470.ece> Accessed on 11.8.2015

<sup>10</sup> Article(2015), '4,300 Hindus, Sikhs from Pakistan, Afghanistan get Indian Citizenship', The Dawn, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188236> Accessed on 8.8.2015

<sup>11</sup> Article(2015), 'Steep rise in citizenship to Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Afghanistan under PM Modi led government', The Economic Times, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Available at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-21/news/62459829\\_1\\_indian-citizenship-citizenship-requests-citizenship-act](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-21/news/62459829_1_indian-citizenship-citizenship-requests-citizenship-act) Accessed on 8.8.2015

<sup>12</sup> Article(2014), 'Politics of Illegal Migration and India Bangladesh Relations', The Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Available at [http://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/PoliticsofIllegalImmigration\\_sspattanaik\\_160514.html#footnoteref7\\_ltkm7uq](http://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/PoliticsofIllegalImmigration_sspattanaik_160514.html#footnoteref7_ltkm7uq) Accessed on 8.8.2015

<sup>13</sup> Section 2(1), The Citizenship Act, 1955

<sup>14</sup> Report (2013), 'Breach of faith persecution of the Ahmaddiya Community of Bangladesh', The Persecution of Ahmadis, 2013. Available at <https://www.persecutionofahmadis.org/breach-of-faith-persecution-of-the-ahmadiyya-community-in-bangladesh/> Accessed on 10.8.2015

<sup>15</sup> Article(2012), 'Rescue Bengali speaking Hindu', Struggle for Hindu Existence, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Available at <http://hinduexistence.org/2012/11/10/rescue-bengali-speaking-hindu-buddhist-people-from-rohingya-muslim-camps-in-myanmar/> Accessed on 10.8.2015

## Lead Article -3

### Legal Ramifications

This very intensely political move of accepting only Hindus who are religiously persecuted has legal ramifications that do not just stop at the amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955. Section 6-A of this Act while incorporating the Assam Accord treats all migrants that come into Assam at par, without any religious bias. However, the amendment suggested by the Narendra Modi led government will only accept religiously persecuted Hindus from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Such a stipulation based on one's religion is a blatant violation of our constitutional principle of equality enumerated under Article 14 which guarantees Right to Equality before law to all persons within the territory of India and they cannot be discriminated on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Even if this amendment is passed by the Parliament, such a law will be struck down by the judiciary when it is challenged since it is fundamentally against the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

It is inconceivable that a secular state like India could allow an amendment that is favouring one religion over the other while deciding the fate of a group of individuals all of whom have suffered the plight of being religiously persecuted in neighbouring countries. India has prided itself on being secular through the ages, making the right to profess, practice and propagate religion a fundamental right.<sup>16</sup> The present government's stance of extending help only to one religion is deplorable to the say the least and an attack on the principles of secularism enshrined in the Constitution.

To further the argument that this move of the current government is nothing but a political manoeuvre, it is important to note that India is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951. The present government has not indicated that it is interested in being a signatory to this Convention either. This document is the centre piece of international refugee protection. It finds its grounding in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. India is a signatory to the UNDHR which means that it does recognize the right to provide asylum to religiously persecuted individuals. But it has not ratified the Refugee Convention of 1951.

The Convention of 1951 is a comprehensive document laying down a detailed framework that the State must follow when it deals with refugees. It states that the refugees can earn wages<sup>17</sup> and are allowed to practice liberal professions if they hold diplomas in the State that provides them with asylum.<sup>18</sup> They can even be brought within the ambit of taxation.<sup>19</sup> Further they can receive products through the rationing system<sup>20</sup> and avail the benefit of public education system.<sup>21</sup> All these benefits cannot be availed by the large number of refugees (from Pakistan and Bangladesh among other countries) already living in India since it is not a party to the Refugee Convention.

The logical inference that can be drawn from the BJP-led government not making a move to ratify this Convention for protecting religiously persecuted individuals but instead choosing to amend the Citizenship Act is three-fold. One, it wishes to position itself as a government which helps those who practice one religion, the Hindus. Two, it intends to accept refugees only from Pakistan and Bangladesh, while ratifying the Refugee Convention would mean that it will have no control over the influx of refugees from any State. Therefore, even if there are Hindus being persecuted in other countries they will not be extended the same privilege. Third, the current government is keen on giving these individuals citizenship specifically, and not just protection from being victimised. While naturalization of the refugees (providing citizenship) is accounted for under the Convention, awarding religiously persecuted individuals' citizenship by amending the Act will be faster. Once granted citizenship they can be placed on the electoral rolls, a privilege that cannot be extended to refugees. The fact that it is particularly the Hindu community which is being offered citizenship makes the agenda of the present government even more obvious, when it is already a known fact that Bengali Hindus have supported the BJP in the past.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Article 25 of the Constitution

<sup>17</sup> Article 17 of the Refugee Convention, 1951

<sup>18</sup> Article 19 of the Refugee Convention, 1951

<sup>19</sup> Article 29 of the Refugee Convention, 1951

<sup>20</sup> Article 20 of the Refugee Convention, 1951

<sup>21</sup> Article 22 of the Refugee Convention, 1951

<sup>22</sup> Refer footnote 3

## Lead Article -3

### Conclusion

The noble idea of providing asylum to victimised and persecuted persons is being used as a fig leaf for the BJP's communal agenda. Why are minority sects of Muslims who are being religiously persecuted in the neighbouring countries not being made the same offer as Hindus? It appears that the BJP-led government's thinking behind this is that Muslims got a nation for themselves at partition and they cannot be religiously persecuted in their countries.<sup>23</sup> Their underlying belief seems to be that 'India is a Hindu nation and must foster the interests of the victimised Hindus'. Such a sentiment is completely against the principles of secularism that India as a country has always stood for. The State has always left religion and its practice out of the domain of the State.<sup>24</sup> To segregate victims of the same crime on the basis of their religion is evidence of an intensely communal bias held by the current government. Additionally, and on a much more serious note, the proposed amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955 will flout the tenets of the basic structure of our constitution by introducing a provision in the legislation which will be a means to discriminate on the basis of religion. Hence this move must be condemned and should not be allowed to be passed by the Parliament since it poses a serious challenge to the religious solidarity of India.

**Prepared by:**  
Niharika Bapna

---

<sup>23</sup> Article (2015), 'A small problem with BJP's sympathy', The ABP News, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Available at <http://www.abplive.in/author/aakarpatel/2015/08/08/article678592.ece/A-small-problem-with-BJPs-sympathy> Accessed on 11.8.2015

<sup>24</sup> Article (2014), 'India's new Hinduism is about order, not wonder', The Guardian, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2014/may/02/india-hinduism-bjp-2014-election-religion> Accessed on 11.08.2015

## Headlines

### **India's Super Rich Grow by 17% in FY15**

*(Business Standard, August 12, 2015)*

A number of ultra-high networth households (UHNHs) in India have seen a growth of 17% in FY15. This growth can be attributed to factors like growing opportunities in e-commerce, a rising stock market and an optimistic economic outlook.

In the current financial year, the number of families with net assets (excluding residence) of more than Rs 25 crore was around 137,100, against 117,000 a year back, according to Kotak Wealth Management's annual wealth report. The report further estimated that by 2020, there will be 3.48 lakh families with net assets of over Rs 25 crore.

Read more: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/india-s-super-rich-grow-by-17-in-fy15-115081101256\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/india-s-super-rich-grow-by-17-in-fy15-115081101256_1.html)

Date Accessed: 12.8.2015

### **Activists Decry LPG Subsidy Withdrawal**

*(Deepa H. Balakrishnan, The Hindu, August 17, 2015)*

Child rights activists and experts, who strongly oppose the decision of the Ministry of Finance to withdraw the subsidy for LPG cylinders for the mid-day meal scheme, say the move will be a setback to the scheme and lead to malnutrition among children, especially those in rural areas.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/activists-decry-lpg-subsidy-withdrawal/article7548453.ece?homepage=true?w=alstates>

Date Accessed: 17.08.2015

## Economy

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

States	Rural	Urban	General
<b>All India</b>	<b>6.25</b>	<b>4.76</b>	<b>5.40</b>
<b>Northern Region</b>			
<b>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</b>	<b>8.38</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>6.71</b>
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	<b>11.49</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>9.51</b>
<b>Punjab</b>	<b>9.29</b>	<b>6.70</b>	<b>8.07</b>
<b>Chandigarh</b>	<b>16.05</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>1.03</b>
<b>Uttarakhand</b>	<b>5.18</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>6.35</b>
<b>Haryana</b>	<b>7.57</b>	<b>6.69</b>	<b>7.88</b>
Delhi	9.22	5.52	8.40
Uttar Pradesh	4.23	3.94	6.58
<b>Western Region</b>			
Rajasthan	7.23	7.30	5.02
Gujarat	4.64	5.36	5.03
Maharashtra	8.63	4.74	6.25
Goa	6.56	8.91	7.29
Lakshadweep	17.17	4.85	10.99
Daman & Die	17.83	10.47	14.45
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	21.50	7.69	15.19
<b>Central Region</b>			
Madhya Pradesh	5.60	5.89	5.56
Chattishgarh	12.58	4.64	9.17
<b>Southern Region</b>			
Andhra Pradesh	10.12	6.34	8.39
Karnakata	8.76	3.73	6.13
Kerala	6.58	3.53	5.34
Tamil Nadu	5.64	4.99	5.44
Puducherry	17.55	9.06	11.74
Andaman & Nicobar Island	10.63	2.76	6.67
<b>Northeastern Region</b>			
Arunachal Pradesh	6.60		
Assam	5.31	2.62	4.23
Manipur	20.95	5.88	15.17
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>-3.54</b>	<b>6.59</b>	<b>-2.29</b>
Mizoram	3.91	2.83	3.05
<b>Nagaland</b>	<b>12.54</b>	<b>5.46</b>	<b>9.34</b>
Tripura	8.46	6.47	7.48
Sikkim	9.94	1.87	8.66
<b>Eastern Region</b>			
Bihar	4.88	3.31	-0.10
Jharkhand	5.38	3.49	4.24
West Bengal	0.04	3.48	1.41
Odisha	9.46	2.75	7.13

- 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 is introduced with base 2012=100) provided by MOSPI, Government of India.
- The 2014 June 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.

## Economy

### **How the Rich are Building a Defence Against the Black Money Law**

(Dev Chatterjee & Sudipto Dey, *Business Standard*, August 11, 2015)

India's top moneybags have started planning their defence mechanism as September-end deadline to disclose unaccounted money fast approaching. They have started planning for multiple-level trust structures, change of residency, and even transferring assets to third parties abroad, to escape what they refer to as a draconian law.

Read more: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wealthy-build-defence-against-black-money-law-115081100028\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wealthy-build-defence-against-black-money-law-115081100028_1.html)

Date Accessed: 12.8.2015

### **Yuan Devaluation may hit India's Exports**

(*Daily News & Analysis*, August 12, 2015)

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2015, when the Chinese government devalued its currency by 1.9% in a desperate effort to pump up its exports, the markets were caught unawares. Yuan devaluation by the Chinese central bank has adversely affected the South Asian currencies including the rupee which immediately plunged to a two-month low. India's exports which have contracted for seven straight months until June 2015 are likely to come under further pressure from Chinese exports.

Read more: <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-yuan-devaluation-may-hit-india-s-exports-2113475>

Date accessed: 12.08.15

### **RBI Asks Banks to Provide Short-Term Crop Loans at Lower Rate**

(*Indian Awaaz*, August 14, 2015)

Reserve Bank of India has asked all banks to provide interest concession of 2 per cent on short term crop loans of up to 3 lakh rupees. In a notification issued yesterday, the RBI said that interest subvention of 2 per cent per annum will be made available to public and private sector banks provided they lend short term credit at the ground level at 7 per cent per annum to farmers.

Read more: <http://theindianawaaz.com/business-awaaz/rbi-asks-banks-to-provide-short-term-crop-loans-at-lower-rate/>

Date Accessed: 14.08.2015

## Governance and Development

### ***POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE***

#### **How the Naga Accord Will Affect Politics in the Rest of the North-East**

(Thangkhanlal Ngaihte, *The Wire*, August 13, 2015)

The accord, whatever its substance, has further expanded the perception that the BJP-led NDA government is a government that gets things done: while the BJP is a party of action, the Indian National Congress (INC) is a party of the status quo, at least in matters concerning the northeast.

Read more: <http://thewire.in/2015/08/13/how-the-naga-accord-will-affect-politics-in-the-north-east-8367/>

Accessed on August 13, 2015

#### **Cheap Imports are Threat to Viability of the Steel Industry: Cyrus Mistry**

(Ramnath Subbu, *The Hindu*, August 13, 2015)

The Indian government needs to create a level playing field for the Indian industry and ensure that it is not unfairly harmed by low priced subsidised imports. Addressing shareholders at Tata Steel's 108th annual general meeting, Chairman Cyrus Mistry said India had the potential to be the manufacturing hub of the world including in steel "but unless the issues are addressed, it is unlikely to see an increased capital investment in the steel sector."

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/cheap-imports-are-threat-to-viability-of-the-steel-industry-cyrus-mistry/article7531391.ece?w=alauto>

Date Accessed: 13.08.2015

#### **Land Acquisition Bill off till Winter Session**

(*The Asian Age*, August 11, 2015)

The contentious Land Acquisition Bill will now have to wait for the Winter Session of Parliament, as the joint panel examining it could not wrap up its exercise by its August 11 deadline, with Congress and Trinamool Congress MPs on the panel seeking more time to give their comments on various issues. The government has also indicated that it is no longer in a hurry on the Land Acquisition Bill and it would go by the recommendations of the joint panel. The panel chairman, BJP leader S.S. Ahluwalia, accepted the demands of Congress and TMC members for more time to complete the exercise. He told members that the panel would seek time from the Lok Sabha Speaker to submit its report in the first week of the Winter Session in place of Tuesday as had been scheduled earlier.

Read more: <http://www.asianage.com/india/land-bill-till-winter-session-086>

Date Accessed: 11.08.2015

#### **MHA to Setup National Fingerprint Database to Record Pan-India Criminal Data**

(Aman Sharma, *ET Bureau*, August 17, 2015)

The home ministry has decided to establish a national fingerprint database of nearly 28 lakh convicts and those arrested for criminal offences, by collating records from all the states. The move is expected to aid in the speedy identification of criminals and investigation of crimes across the country.

Read more: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/mha-to-setup-national-fingerprint-database-to-record-pan-india-criminal-data/articleshow/48506455.cms>

Date Accessed: 17.08.2015

## Governance and Development

### TECHNOLOGY

#### **Decoding the Aadhaar Judgment: No More Seeding Till the Privacy Issue is Settled by the Court**

(Dr. Usha Ramanathan, *The Indian Express*, August 12, 2015)

The Interim Orders passed by the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court hearing the cases challenging the UID/Aadhaar project are significant. One, that the government shall widely publicise in the electronic and print media that it is not mandatory for a citizen to obtain an Aadhaar card. Two, that the production of an Aadhaar card will not be a condition for obtaining any benefits otherwise due to a citizen. Three, that the UID number or Aadhaar card may be used in the PDS “in particular for the purpose of distribution of foodgrains etc., and cooking fuel, such as kerosene” and in LPG distribution. Importantly, the UID number “will not be used by the respondents for any (other) purpose”. Moreover, ‘seeding’, a matter of grave concern in the UID project, has now been put to rest by the Interim Order. Seeding is the introduction of the number into every data base. Once the number is seeded in various data bases, one’s personal information is easily converged, enabling the state, as also others who learn to use what is called the ‘ID platform’, to ‘see’ the citizen at will.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/decoding-the-aadhar-judgment-no-more-seeding-not-till-the-privacy-issue-is-settled-by-the-court/>

Date Accessed: 12.08.2015

### ENVIRONMENT

#### **NGT Bans Cutting of Trees near the Taj Mahal**

(*The Statesman*, August 11, 2015)

In an interim order, The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure that no unauthorised construction activities are permitted and no trees cut in the eco-sensitive zone near the Taj Mahal, and has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to set the boundaries of the forest land and reserved forest areas in the 10,400 sq. km Taj Trapezium Zone in Agra, Mathura and Firozabad districts. Environmentalists here welcomed the order and pressed for early action by district authorities to curb builders and colonisers who had grabbed huge chunks of Yamuna flood plains in Vrindavan, Mathura and Agra.

Read more: <http://www.thestatesman.com/news/latest-headlines/ngt-bans-cutting-trees-near-taj/81750.html>

Date Accessed: 11.08.2015

#### **India’s War on Greenpeace**

(Samanth Subramanian, *The Guardian*, August 11, 2015)

A simmering suspicion of foreign influences is written deep into the BJP’s nationalist DNA, and it plays marvellously with its most loyal voters – many of whom proclaim their belief, loudly and often, that western powers are eager to throttle India’s rise. Even within this hothouse of hostility, no organisation has been lavished with as much unwelcome attention as Greenpeace. For a few torrid weeks in April and May, all the money that Greenpeace India had in its bank accounts – those receiving funds from its international parent, but also those holding funds raised in India – was frozen, asphyxiating its operations and raising the prospect of an imminent demise. When a court granted Greenpeace a reprieve by releasing its domestic funds, another government order placed its registration as an NGO under review. “We’re very sure there’s a pattern,” says Binu Jacob, Greenpeace India’s fundraising director. “They’re getting all their mechanisms together to do this.”

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/11/indias-war-on-greenpeace>

Date Accessed: 11.08.2015

## Governance and Development

### *LAW AND JUSTICE*

#### **Criminal Justice Reform**

(John Malcom, *The Heritage Organisation*, July 24, 2015)

Sentencing reform is a difficult issue. Some believe that our current sentencing regime is unfair, that too much discretion has been removed from judges, that the pendulum has swung too far in terms of imposing harsh sentences, and that increased incarceration has led to other inequities in our society. Others believe that increased incarceration and harsh sentences have taken some very dangerous people off of the streets and have resulted in dramatic decreases in crime, and that if such sentences are cut, crime may well increase to the detriment of society. I understand both of these perspectives and understand why people of good will passionately disagree about this issue.

Read more: <http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2015/criminal-justice-reform>

Date Accessed: 4.8.2015

#### **The DNA Bill is a Recipe for Disaster**

(*India Together*, August 12, 2015)

The Centre for Internet & Society (CIS) participated in the Expert Committee for DNA Profiling constituted by the Department of Biotechnology in 2012 for the purpose of deliberating on and finalizing the draft Human DNA Profiling Bill. While CIS appreciates this opportunity given to it, it dissents from the January 2015 draft of the Bill. Sunil Abraham, Executive Director of CIS, explains how the Bill does not address the privacy concerns despite a seemingly powerful language.

Read more: <http://indiatogether.org/dna-bill-issues-laws>

Date Accessed: 13.08.2015

## Society

### *DEMOGRAPHY*

#### **In 2100, India Will be the Highest-Populated Country on Earth**

(Steve Connor, *The Independent*, August 11, 2015)

According to the latest UN forecasts, India will be the most populous nation on the planet in 2100. The UN in its report said, “The concentration of population growth in the poorest countries will make it harder for those governments to eradicate poverty and inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, expand education enrolment and health systems, improve the provisions of basic services and implement other elements of a sustainable development agenda to ensure that no-one is left behind.”

Read more: <http://i100.independent.co.uk/article/these-will-be-the-10-mostpopulated-countries-on-earth-in-2100--bkyViNS8Vx>

Date Accessed: 11.08.2015

## India and World

### **INDIA IN THE WORLD**

#### **India Bid for Permanent Seat Suffers Blow as US, Russia, China Oppose UNSC Reform Talks**

*(Economic Times, August 12, 2015)*

In a setback to India's bid for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council, the US, along with Russia and China, has opposed negotiations to reform the powerful UN body, refusing to contribute to a text that will form the basis for the long-drawn reform process. Even Russia, which had supported India's stand, now holds that talks should proceed through the Inter-Governmental Negotiations route.

Read more: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-bid-for-permanent-seat-suffers-blow-as-us-russia-china-oppose-uns-c-reform-talks/articleshow/48450187.cms>

Date accessed: 12.08.15

#### **India Through Chinese Lens**

*(Saurabh Kumar, The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, August 4, 2015)*

Public opinion in India has, at present, no way of figuring out how the country is viewed by its important neighbour to the North, the People's Republic of China (PRC). An ambitious project recently launched at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, attempts to address that situation, by aiming to provide complete translations of news reports and commentaries on India (and other SAARC countries too eventually) in the Chinese media on an on-going basis in near real time.

Read more: [http://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiathroughtheChineseLens\\_skumar\\_040815.html](http://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiathroughtheChineseLens_skumar_040815.html)

Date Accessed: 4.8.2015

#### **India Needs Two Countries Like Itself to Sustain Current Consumption Levels**

*(Vidya Venkat, The Hindu, August 14, 2015)*

Global consumption of natural resources has reached dangerously unsustainable levels. On August 13, the earth would have used up its budget of available natural resources, mainly land, water and forests, for the entire year. Observed as 'Earth Overshoot Day', this day marks humanity's ecological footprint exceeding what the earth can regenerate this year. Every year the Global Footprint Network calculates the number of days in that year for which the earth can support humanity's ecological footprint with its available natural resources. The remainder of the year corresponds to the global overshoot.

Read more: [http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-needs-two-countries-like-itself-to-sustain-current-consumption-levels/article7535334.ece?utm\\_source=MostPopular&utm\\_medium=National&utm\\_campaign=WidgetPromo](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-needs-two-countries-like-itself-to-sustain-current-consumption-levels/article7535334.ece?utm_source=MostPopular&utm_medium=National&utm_campaign=WidgetPromo)

Date Accessed: 14.08.2015

### **MIDDLE-EAST**

#### **Al Qaeda after Omar: Why His Death Could Hurt the Terrorist Group and Empower ISIS**

*(Barak Mendelsohn, Foreign Affairs, August 9, 2015)*

Al Qaeda has been threatened by the ISIS' rise to power and propagated its ally, Taliban leader Mullah Omar's status as a self-declared *Emir* to challenge ISIS' claim to represent all Muslims. In this way, it refused to submit to the ISIS and signalled its loyalty to other outfits like the Taliban. But now, with Mullah Omar's death, al Qaeda's strategy could crumble paving the way for the expansion of the ISIS in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Read More: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2015-08-09/al-qaeda-after-omar>

Accessed on August 13, 2015

## OPINIONS/BOOKS

### OPINIONS

#### India's Inverted Abortion Politics

(Manal Suri, *The New York Times*, August 3, 2015)

The government is trying to reduce the qualifications required of providers so that poor women will have easier access to abortions, while doctors are the ones opposing this relaxation of rules. Ipas, an international abortion care organization, estimates that about five million abortions were carried out in India in 2013, with more than half of them unsafe. On average, an Indian woman dies every two hours from such procedures, and perhaps a hundred times as many are left with temporary or lifelong disabilities.

Read more: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/03/opinion/indias-inverted-abortion-politics.html?emc=edit\\_ty\\_20150803&nl=opinion&nid=71538857&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/03/opinion/indias-inverted-abortion-politics.html?emc=edit_ty_20150803&nl=opinion&nid=71538857&r=0)

Date Accessed: 4.8.2015

#### National Commission for Women: A Symbolic Presence

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, August 8, 2015)

Ever since the National Commission for Women (NCW) came into existence in 1992, its composition and functioning have been contentious and controversial. It has been accused of being a “talking shop,” of its chairperson always being a woman who is close to the political party in power and of at least one member being there by virtue of being a bureaucrat. Women’s groups and civil society organisations often have low expectations that the NCW will take a stand that is unambiguously in favour of victims of gender violence and discrimination, especially when it would go against the views and interests of the ruling dispensation. The “toothless” nature of the NCW and the state commissions has for long been cited as the reason for their overall ineffectiveness. The chairpersons and members who are appointed are not necessarily experienced in dealing with women’s issues, nor do they have a history of close association with the women’s movements. Gender sensitivity therefore is not a given. As things stand now there seems to be little political will to make the NCW a truly autonomous body or invest it with enough powers to deal with issues affecting women. Under earlier governments the NCW remained only a token nod to the demand for women’s rights and empowerment, and a fief for political sinecure, and the present government, for all its brave words, has done nothing to change this.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/editorials/symbolic-presence.html>

Date Accessed: 11.08.2015

Issue Coordinator: Mr. Jeet Singh

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



**Disclaimer:** This document has been prepared by the RGICS staff and has not been seen by the Trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Further, the views presented in this document in no way reflect the views of the RGF Trustees.

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