



**Weekly Roundup
of
News on Policy**

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Photo Credit: UNICEF

Shadow Over India's Future: 40% of Our Children Face Severe Deprivation

**India Amongst Worst-Affected In The World On Infant Mortality And
Under-5 Mortality;
Lags Behind Sri Lanka, China, Bangladesh And Nepal**

Three recent reports point to a most serious threat to the future of India – the plight of 40% of our children.

The Government of India's *SAARC Social Charter India Country Report 2012* says that "around 40 per cent of India's children are vulnerable or experiencing difficult circumstances characterized by their specific social, economic and geo-political situations. All these children need special attention". The Government says in this report that "the girl child continues to be the most vulnerable member of civil society in India."

Another Government of India report on the status of children in our country says that rapid socio-economic changes have made our children much more vulnerable than before (*'Children in India 2012 – A Statistical Appraisal'*, published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation).

The latest UNICEF Report on the *State of the World's Children 2012*, focusing on Urban Children, paints a dismal picture of the status of India's urban children.

The UNICEF Report ranks India amongst countries with the worst performance in the world in Under-5 mortality and infant mortality (148th and 154th

respectively). In contrast, China ranks 86th in the world in under-five mortality; Sri Lanka ranks 81st (ahead of China); Bangladesh ranks 133rd (ahead of India); and Pakistan ranks 161st. Nepal does better than India on Under-5 Mortality, ranking 145th.

Some of the main points in the three reports are highlighted below.

'Children in India 2012 – A Statistical Appraisal'

'Children in India 2012 – A Statistical Appraisal' highlights challenges faced on child development, child survival and child protection.

HEADLINES

The Report analyses the condition of our children around three parameters: child development, child protection and child survival.

Child Development

Key facts reported on child development include the following.

- Almost half of the country's children today are chronically malnourished. 43% of children under five years of age are underweight; 48% are stunted (short for their age); and one out of every five children in India is wasted (thin for his or her height). While a decline has been observed for stunting and underweight among children under 3 years of age, the percentage of children wasted has increased. Even here the discrimination against the girl child can be clearly seen as the percentage of underweight female children (< 5 years) is much higher than male children.
- Apart from gender, the class divide is also reflected in the fact that the percentage of underweight children in the lowest wealth index category (56.6%) is nearly 3 times higher than that in the highest wealth index category (19.7%).
- Another important observation is that high malnutrition of all types prevails amongst illiterate mothers and mothers with less than 5 year's education.
- States with more than 50 percent children under five years of age underweight are Madhya Pradesh (60%), Jharkhand (56.5%) and Bihar (55.9%)

- In contrast to the dismal record in health, some positive steps have been taken in the field of education as the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) has improved significantly from 84.5% in 2005-06 to 98% in 2009-10. However, NER at upper primary level is far from satisfactory. This shows that although more children are entering the education system, many are not progressing through the system. The existing rural - urban and male - female gaps in school attendance as well as the increasing level of drop-out rates in higher classes is evident from the report.

Child Protection

The report highlights several serious concerns on child protection:

- The Census found an increase in the number of child labourers from 11.28 million in 1991 to 12.66 million in 2001. As per census 2001, Uttar Pradesh (15.22%) recorded the highest share of child labour in the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh (10.76%), Rajasthan (9.97%), Bihar (8.82%), Madhya Pradesh (8.41%), and West Bengal (6.77%).
- The report says that one in every 7 children in the lowest and second lowest wealth index category is working. The percentage of children engaged in work activities decreases steadily with parents' increasing education and increasing wealth quintile. Thus both education and economic factors play a pivotal role

in deciding a child's future.

While analysing the relation between child labour and poverty, the report highlights the impact of child labour on poverty. By driving down adult wages and depriving children of education, child labour results in poverty passing down from generation to generation. It leads to the creation of an unskilled adult labour force which causes early physical decay, economic insecurity, low quality of life and ultimately high poverty. Thus child labour not only leads to a perpetual cycle of poverty for a family, it also depresses the economy.

Child Survival:

The report draws attention to the following facets of our challenge on child survival:

- Though the *overall sex ratio* of the country is showing a positive trend, the *child sex ratio* is showing a declining trend. During the period 1991 -2011, the child sex ratio declined from 945 to 914, whereas the overall sex ratio showed an improvement from 927 to 940.
- Female infants and under-five children continue to experience a higher mortality rate than their male counterparts in all major states.
- There are now 48 fewer girls per 1,000 boys than there were in 1981. The Report says that this is not to be taken lightly, given the drastic implications flowing from acute gender imbalance.
- The divide between the north and south has

HEADLINES

become even more stark, With the exception of Himachal Pradesh, no state in north India now has a child sex ratio above 900. These figures tell the same story of the “continuing preference for boys in society, despite laws to prevent female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child.”

- Despite progress in the health sector in recent decades, precious young lives continue to be lost due to early childhood diseases, inadequate newborn care and childbirth-related causes.
- Another worrisome indicator is the percent distribution of HIV infections for the age group 0- 15 years which has increased from 4.20% in 2008 to 4.36% in 2009, showing increased number of HIV infected children in 2009.

Children & Crime

The report also highlights other grievous issues pertaining to crimes against children and crimes in the commission of which children are entrapped. It says, “The increasing trend in the incidence of both ‘Crime against children’ and ‘Crime committed by children’ point towards some deeper issues plaguing our society, which, if not addressed immediately may snowball into bigger problems at the national level.”

- In 2011, crimes *against* children reported a 24% increase from the previous year and the State of Uttar Pradesh accounted for 16.6% of the total crimes at the national level, followed by Madhya Pradesh (13.2%), Delhi (12.8%), Maharashtra (10.2%),

Bihar (6.7%) and Andhra Pradesh (6.7%).

- In 2011, among the IPC crimes, an increase of 43% was registered under ‘Kidnapping and Abduction’, while rape cases increased by 30%, procuring minor girls recorded an increase of 27% and foeticide reported an increase of 19% over 2010.
- The three major States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra together accounted for 44.5% of the child rape cases reported in the Country in 2011.
- The Conviction rate at national level for the crimes committed against children stood at 34.6% revealing glaring inadequacies in our laws and justice system.
- The increasing trend in incidence of Juvenile Crimes (under IPC) is also a matter of grave concern. The juvenile IPC crimes in 2011 have increased by 10.5% over 2010, most common being ‘Theft’ (21.17%), Hurt (16.3%) and Burglary (10.38%).
- Also it is disturbing to observe that out of the total juveniles involved in various crimes, 81.4% are children living with parents, whereas the share of homeless children involved in various crimes are 5.7% and the remaining are children living with guardians.

Given these statistics, India appears likely to fall short of some of the MDG targets, for example in case of Infant Mortality Rate, the national level figure is likely to be 44 against the MDG target of 27 in 2015..

UNICEF State of the World’s Children 2012 Report: “Focus on Urban Children”

The latest (2012) UNICEF Report on *the State of the World’s Children* focuses on Urban Children.

In a foreword to the Report, the UNICEF Executive Director says, “The data are startling. By 2050, 70 per cent of all people will live in urban areas. Already, 1 in 3 urban dwellers live in slum conditions; in Africa, the proportion is a staggering 6 in 10. The impact on children living in such conditions is significant. From Ghana and Kenya to Bangladesh and India, children living in slums are among the least likely to attend school. And disparities in nutrition separating rich and poor children within the cities and towns of sub-Saharan Africa are often greater than those between urban and rural children. Every disadvantaged child bears witness to a moral offense: the failure to secure her or his rights to survive, thrive and participate in society. And every excluded child represents a missed opportunity – because when society fails to extend to urban children the services and protection that would enable them to develop as productive and creative individuals, it loses the social, cultural and economic contributions they could have made. We must do more to reach all children in need, wherever they live, wherever they are excluded and left behind. Some might ask whether we can afford to do this, especially at a time of austerity in national budgets and reduced aid allocations. But if we overcome the barriers that have kept these children from the services that they need and that are theirs by right, then millions more will grow up healthy, attend school and live more productive lives.”

The India Story in the Global Report

The UNICEF Report paints a dismal picture of the status of

HEADLINES

India's Children.

UNICEF says India loses 17 lakh children each year before they reach the age of 5 years.

Amongst key indicators that show the welfare of our children, India ranks 148th in the world (out of 193 countries) in Under 5 mortality and 154th in the world in infant mortality.

In contrast to India's 148th rank worldwide (of 193 countries), China ranks 86th in the world in under-five mortality; Sri Lanka ranks 81st (ahead of China); Bangladesh ranks 133rd (ahead of India); and Pakistan ranks 161st. Nepal does better than India on Under-5 Mortality, ranking 145th.

The Report calls for "urgent action to:

- Better understand the scale and nature of poverty and exclusion affecting children in urban areas.
- Identify and remove the barriers to inclusion.
- Ensure that urban planning, infrastructure development, service delivery and broader efforts to reduce poverty and inequality meet the particular needs and priorities of children.
- Promote partnership between all levels of government and the urban poor – especially children and young people.
- Pool the resources and energies of international, national, municipal and community actors in support of efforts to ensure that marginalized and impoverished children enjoy their full rights.
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SAARC Social Charter India Country Report 2012 of the Government of India

The Government of India's India Country Report on the "Social Charter" of SAARC mirrors the views of the 2012 Report of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on the crisis facing 40% of our children.

The India country report presents a summary of the main initiatives of the Government to assist children.

Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): To encourage quicker establishment of structures and procedures under the Juvenile Justice Act, the Government introduced, in 2009-10 a comprehensive scheme, namely, the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) under which financial and technical support is provided to State Governments/ UT Administrations.

ICPS brings several existing child protection programmes, under one umbrella, with improved norms. These include, (i) A Programme for Juvenile Justice; (ii) An Integrated Programme for Street Children; and (iii) Scheme for Assistance to Homes (Shishu Gruh) to promote in-country Adoption.

A number of new initiatives have also been incorporated, such as dedicated service delivery

structures at State and district levels, child tracking system, sponsorship, fostercare etc. The objectives of the scheme are to contribute to the improvement in the well being of children in difficult circumstances, as well as the reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children from their families.

Scheme for Welfare of Working Children in Need of Care and Protection: The objective of the scheme is to provide opportunities for non formal education and vocational training to working children to facilitate their entry/re-entry into mainstream education in cases where they have either not attended any learning system or where, for some reasons, their education has been discontinued.

The Scheme lends support to projects only in urban areas and does not support projects in areas covered by the existing schemes of the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

The Scheme provides support for the holistic development of child workers and potential child workers especially those with none or ineffective family support, such as children of slum/pavement dwellers/drug addicts, children living on railway platforms/along railway lines, children working in shops, dhabas, mechanic shops, children engaged as domestic workers, children whose parents are in jail, children of migrant/sex workers, leprosy patients, etc.

The programme components are: facilitating introduction and/or return to the mainstream education system as children at study are not children at work, counseling of parents, heads of families, relatives of the children so as to prevent their exploitation, and vocational training wherever necessary.

Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers: The Rajiv

HEADLINES

Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers provides Day Care facilities to the Children in the age group 0-6 years from families with monthly income of less than 12,000/-.

In addition to being a safe place for the children, the crèches provide services such as supplementary nutrition, pre-school education and emergency health care, etc. The scheme envisages implementation through the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) and Bhartiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh (BAJSS).

Programmes to Help the Girl Child: The Girl Child continues to be the most vulnerable member of civil society in India.

The 2011 Census shows that there has been an improvement in social indicators such as literacy and the gender gap in effective literacy rate and that the overall sex ratio has improved from 933 to 940.

However, at an age-group wise disaggregated level, the status of the girl child continues to be a matter of concern in the country.

The Census 2011 has shown a decline in the ratio of girls per thousand boys in the 0 to 6 age group, i.e, in the Child Sex Ratio as compared to the previous Census.

Child Sex Ratio has declined from 927 in Census 2001 to 914 in Census 2011. Decline in Child Sex Ratio has now spread to as many as 22 States and 5 Union Territories. The National Family Health Survey-3 data on under nutrition in children below 5 years had already flagged that 43% of girls are undernourished.

Dhanlakshmi - Conditional Cash Transfer for Girl Child: A pilot Scheme Dhanlakshmi was launched on 3rd March 2008 with the objective of:

- Providing a set of staggered financial incentives for families to encourage them to retain the girl child and educate her.
 - Changing the attitudinal mindset of the family towards the girl, by looking upon the girl as an asset rather than a liability since her very existence has led to cash inflow to the family.
 - Cash transfers are made under the Scheme to the family of the girl child (preferably the mother) on fulfilling the following conditions:
 - Birth registration of the girl child, Progress of immunization. Full immunization Enrolment to school and retention in school“.
 - “Dhanlakshmi” is being implemented in 11 Blocks across seven States on pilot basis and is being implemented by the State Governments through the District Authorities.
- malnutrition and school dropout; ·
- to achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst various departments to promote child development; and ·to enhance capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.
 - Provision of supplementary nutrition under ICDS is primarily designed to bridge the gap between the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) and the Average Daily Intake (ADI).

Introduction of New WHO Child Growth Standards in ICDS The new WHO standards, globally used, prescribe how children should grow with optimal nutrition and health care.

The child growth standards recognize the breastfed infant as the normative model, provide reference values for assessing childhood obesity, and also the link between physical growth and motor development.

With these new standards, parents, communities, child care workers, programme managers, health and care advocates will know when the nutrition and care needs of children are being compromised. The use of this tool enables them to take timely corrective action at different levels.

ICDS, since its inception, had been using Harvard standards (IAP) for the purpose of monitoring growth among children. In 2008, the Government of India decided to introduce the new WHO Growth standards through ICDS and NRHM.

These standards of Weight-for-Age have been adopted by India. The NFHS-3 Report has also

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world's largest programme for Early Childhood Development.

The beneficiaries under the Scheme are children in the age group 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The objectives of the Scheme are:

- to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years;
- to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child;
- to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity,

HEADLINES

incorporated the new growth standards and brought out the revised levels of malnutrition according to which the average level of malnutrition in the country is 42.5% and severely underweight children are 15.8%. (excerpted from SAARC Social Charter India Country Report 2012).

These three reports underline the need for political parties to turn their attention to addressing and solving the challenges facing the children of India as early as possible.

READ MORE ON THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA REPORT:

http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/Children_in_India_2012.pdf

READ MORE ON THE SAARC INDIA COUNTRY REPORT:

http://www.mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/SAARC_India_Country_Report-2012-31aug12.pdf

READ MORE ON THE UNICEF REPORT:

http://www.unicef.org/sowc/files/SOWC_2012-Main_Report_EN_21Dec2011.pdf

World Hunger Report: India Ranks 65th of 79 Countries

(Sitaram Yechury, *The Hindustan Times*, 29 October, 2012)

Economic inequality is increasing rapidly across the world and especially in India.

In the World Bank Report on Global Hunger, 2012, India ranks number 65 out of 79 countries." Even in the scale of child nutrition, India's rank is abysmal. The economic divide becomes glaringly obvious if we see the number of US Dollar billionaires in the country which has doubled to 52, with their combined assets equivalent to 25% of the GDP. Further, High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) who form merely 0.01% of the total population have a net worth of one-third of India's gross national income. State effort is critically

needed to overcome this gaping inequality. If properly implemented, schemes of Universal Food Security, Employment Guarantee, Right to Education, Pension schemes and comprehensive health coverage can be achieved with the available budget of the government. However, this "requires a qualitative shift from the present trajectory of economic reforms."

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/SitaramYechury/Bridge-the-chasm-now/Article1-951901.aspx>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)

(Anjora Sarangi/Simi Sunny)

Green Belt in Saurashtra Turns into a Haven for Mining Mafia

(*Counterview*, 11 November, 2012)

Reports from the Saurashtra peninsula have indicated how large scale illegal mining has led to ecological imbalance, affecting the economy and communal and cultural life in the region.

Problems have been arising because industrialists have been systematically destroying the natural limestone wall which never allowed sea water to make land saline. The villages which are most affected include Mocha, Gorsar, Balej, Garej, Ratdi, Kucchdi and others.

The report points out based on RTI inquiries that "removal of limestone has created serious problems of salinity ingress and depletion in recharging and maintaining the level of groundwater."

As a result, 9.65 lakh hectares of land in Saurashtra and Kachchh have been damaged as the agricultural land has lost its humidity and turned into dust and sand. Also, mining activity in areas adjoining agricultural land

has ruined crop output due to spread of dust through mining.

This has had serious economic repercussions for the local agro-industry as farmers face poor returns in the absence of good market price. The affected population which mainly consists of "vulnerable communities like dalits, kolis, fisher folk, pastoralists and indigenous people has been facing hurdles in the development of agro-based industry and dairy activity." Illegal mining has also affected the health of local ecology.

There have been increasing cases of eye, respiratory and kidney related diseases. Drinking water has become saline and unfit for use. Extensive industrial development has presented major threats to Gir Protected Areas with animals and trees being adversely affected in the region.

<http://counterview.org/2012/11/11/green-belt-in-saurashtra-turns-into-a-haven-for-mining-mafia-says-report/>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Karishma)

Kerala Bill on Migrant Workers

(*The Hindu*, 14 November, 2012)

The article discusses inter-state migration in India, focusing on Kerala which is experiencing a high inflow of migrant labour along with Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Kerala is an attractive destination for workers from North, East and North-East India, as the state offers high wages and has low work force due to high education level and migration to West Asia. Migrant labour in Kerala is unofficially estimated to be 1.3 million and it is estimated to touch the 2.5 million mark in a decade. It is important for southern states to take measures to ensure the welfare of the migrants and integrate them with local communities.

Kerala has proposed a law titled, *Kerala Migrant Workers (Conditions of Service and Compulsory Registration) Social Security Bill*, which has the potential to be another model from the state, if handled sensitively. It should empower migrant labourers and give them substantive citizenship. However, if the move towards registration is propelled primarily by suspicion of outsiders and possible threat to security, the laws will only further the sense of insecurity felt by migrant labourers.

To avoid this, the writer calls for more interaction between the host state and home states of migrant workers and suggests a revamp of the *Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979*. A pan-Indian law might be more effective to protect the interests of migrant workers.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/workers-without-borders/article4093603.ece>
(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Amrutha Jose)

World Bank Global Survey on Ease of Doing Business: India Fares Poorly

**(Business Standard, 10
November, 2012)**

A World Bank Report titled “Doing Business 2013” ranks India at 132 in a list of 185 countries — 41 places below China, 51 places below Sri Lanka and 25 places below Pakistan in “Ease of Doing Business.” This is 20 years after reforms. India is ranked 127 worldwide in International Trade. An exporter has to fill in nine documents and might take 16 days; an importer must go around for 20 days with 11 documents. Some more details from the report follow:

<http://www.businessworld.in/en/storypage/-/bw/unbusinesslike-india/608028.37506/page/0>
(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

	Rank (of 185 countries)	No. Of Procedures	Time (days)	Cost (% of income per capita)
Starting a business	173	12	27	49.8
Dealing with construction permits	182	34	196	1,528
Getting electricity	105	7	67	247.3
Registering property	94	5	44	7.3
Enforcing contracts	184	46	1,420	39.6 (% of claim)

Microinsurance for Migrants

(ILO, 29 October, 2012)

It is estimated that migrant labourers send US\$ 400 billion to their homes each year to help their families meet expenses.

Despite this, they and their families do not have access to social protection, especially insurance.

Inexpensive micro insurance in this regard would prove to be very beneficial for migrants as it would help protect “poor people against risk, (accident, illness, death in the family, natural disasters, etc.) in exchange for payments tailored to their needs, income and level of risk.”

But policymakers need to factor in challenges like undocumented status of migrants, legal and regulatory restrictions and finally convince the migrants that it will benefit them. However, if challenges are overcome and this policy is implemented, the potential rewards for both insurers and migrant families can be significant.

http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS_191992/lang-en/index.htm

(Date accessed: 12.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

Support for MSME Projects to Create over 36 Lakh Jobs In FY13

(*The Economic Times*, 14 November, 2012)

The Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has announced that a sum of Rs 1,276 crore has been released in the fiscal year 2012-13 to finance 53,826 projects which would facilitate the creation of about 4.31 lakhs jobs.

Also an outlay of Rs 9700 crore has been proposed for the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) in the Twelfth Five Year Plan to initiate 4 lakh projects at the cost of Rs 23 lakh margin money per project with creation of 32 lakh employment.

Under this scheme aimed at employment creation through micro enterprises, urban and rural entrepreneurs in the general category can avail a subsidy of 15% and 25% respectively and for weaker groups, the rate of subsidy stands at 25% and 35% for urban and rural businessmen.

The minister has also asked the Khadi Village Industries Commission to explore further avenues for development of village and cottage industries.

There are about 26 million MSMEs in the country which not only contribute to about 45 per cent of the total manufactured output and nearly 40 per cent to India's exports but also provide employment to more than 60 million people.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/government-releases-rs-1276-cr-to-support-msme-projects-during-fy13/articleshow/17218966.cms>

(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz Calls for Alternative Measures of Well Being at 4th OECD World Forum

(*New Delhi*, 17 October, 2012)

At the 4th OECD World Forum, Professor Joseph Stiglitz laid emphasis on the need for alternative measure of human well being and progress to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) metric.

He pointed out that “if a country measures wrong parameters, it is also likely to commit mistakes in policy making.”

This has aroused concerns amongst governments of many countries about the correlation of increases in GDP and increases in societal well-being.

Stiglitz reflected on the means and ends for achieving a high rate of GDP. While a high GDP may reflect that an economy is growing, it may not indicate whether policy makers are formulating or implementing policies that are conducive to environmental sustainability or, increasing societal well-being.

Similar concerns about the efficacy of the GDP have been raised by R.K Pachuari.

In his article titled “Lost in Statistics”, he mentions that the GDP does not capture all aspects of economic welfare like the negative impacts of current patterns of growth and development. For instance, Stiglitz while pointing out the misleading nature of the GDP as a metric of welfare has asserted that the GDP per capita fails to measure the extent of inequality if there are changes in the income distribution.

It is possible that GDP per capita could be going up and yet most citizens could be becoming worse off.

Pachuari, also pointed out that the GDP excludes the impact/ costs of environmental damage or household level production against the economy. For instance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the US economy placed focus on the 3.8% expansion in Q3, without including the societal impact/ cost of 1,836 preventable deaths, disruption of 600,000 jobs and 850,000 damaged housing units.

In view of these limitations, the French government in 2009 had set up a commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress, chaired by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz. This commission has attempted “a rational assessment of real economic progress quite distinct from measures contained in the GDP of a country.” Stressing on the need to develop such an alternative, Stieglitz succinctly states that “our metrics are important not just because they tell us how we are doing but because they serve as guides in policy-making.”

<http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforumindia/OECD-Day%202012-Press%20release-2.pdf>

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/RKPachauri/Lost-in-statistics/Article1-461560.aspx>

(Date accessed: 19.11.2012)

(Karishma for Simi)

Economic Crisis Triggered by Energy Crisis

(Victoria Johnson, *New Economics Foundation*, 10 November, 2012)

The time of “cheap oil” is coming to an end. High transport costs owing to rising oil prices can lead to economic slowdown and rising inflation, particularly in richer/developed nations.

Economists are increasingly acknowledging the important role of energy in economic growth and many theorize that the current economic crisis is a result of increasing cost and decreasing availability of transport fuels like gasoline, diesel, jet kerosene and ship bunker fuel.

These liquid fuels account for 80% of all oil usage in the UK and about 80-85% in the USA.

In the past the IEA, IMF and G7 have warned that high oil prices are a likely cause restricting “economic growth and economic recovery from the recession.”

In non-OECD countries, growth in oil production has stagnated yet consumption continues to grow.

The run for oil ‘reserve replacement’ is accompanied by “corruption, human rights violation in oil rich developing nations and environmental damage beyond climate change concerns.”

The writer urges that we must avoid repeating the “catastrophic complacency that characterized the banking sector up until 2006.” She is of the opinion that the relationship between fossil fuels and a nation’s economy needs to be broken in order to recover from the current economic crisis. Otherwise, rising cost of fossil fuels will place a “glass ceiling on recovery.”

Alternatives like switching to electricity for vehicles or crop

production for fossil fuel have not received economic support.

A transition to usage of natural gas can be made in developed nations like the UK, albeit with significant time and investment.

The writer points out that a transition to a low carbon economy needs the support of “political leadership and policy certainty to create a long-term, sufficient and consistent incentive structure for renewable energy.”

<http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/2012/11/10/our-dependence-on-oil-puts-a-glass-ceiling-on-economic-recovery>

(Date accessed: 14.11. 2012)

(Karishma)

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Interpreting CAG Mandate

(*The Indian Express*, 09 November, 2012).

Equating the role of the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) to that of the judiciary, this editorial argues that its professional mandate is limited to providing “rigorous and accurate audits, furnish reasons for its assumptions, check with the ministry being evaluated and then present(ing) a report.” It goes to recognize the institution as an important cog in India’s system of checks and balances, and acknowledges that “over the years it has uncovered unfair government discretion, mismanagement and corruption.” However, highlighting that the CAG has been recently “going activist”, it argues that its numbers don’t pass scrutiny. The article raises the example of the CAG report on the coal losses, and argues that the CAG erroneously “valued undeveloped blocks in difficult areas with Coal India’s up-and-running mines; (and) calculated the value at current prices though they were allotted before commodity prices sharply rose in 2007.” Further, by forming judgements on alternative policy decisions, it had moved beyond its Constitutional mandate, and in doing so, relies on questionable premises. The article emphasizes that the CAG reports should “stand up to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour”, and not rely on faulty methodologies or assumptions in producing its reports.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/auditor-s-dharma/1028906/0>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)

(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande)

DEVELOPMENT

Assistance for Weavers: Odisha to Introduce Convergence of Programmes

(*Pragativadi*, 14 November, 2012)

The Government of Orissa has proposed “convergence of different programmes at field level for the integrated development of the weavers’ community.” At a high level meeting it was pointed that there is need to converge the present programmes “at field level taking the weavers’ family as the unit of intervention.”

The convergence is supposed to benefit an estimate of 40,000 weavers’ families in the state. The suggestion for “providing infrastructure support for Tassar godowns, Tassar Seed Infrastructure, Technical Service Centres, rearing house for mulberry, irrigation facilities under SSGY and NRLM,” were also deliberated.

Additionally weavers’ families will be enclosed under “RSBY and other permissible health insurance schemes.”

The Chief Minister has also instructed the Departments of Panchayati Raj, SC & ST Development and Handloom and Textiles department “to work hand in hand with integrated plan for development of weaving community.”

<http://www.pragativadi.com/131112/local2.htm>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

India’s Bailout Program for Highly-Indebted Rural Households

(*Martin Kanz, The World Bank*, November, 2012)

This paper analyses the impact of large scale debt relief programs designed to minimize investment constraints among highly-indebted rural households in India. It finds that the bailout has a persistent and economically significant effect on recipient households. After a year, households that received full debt relief remain significantly less indebted than households entitled to partial debt relief. But despite considerable benefits to individual households, overall the bailout did not reduce problems of debt reduction or increase productive investment among recipient households. Instead, it increased dependence on informal credit, reduced investment, led to a decline in productivity of beneficiary households due to changed expectations about access to institutional credit.

These results have important policy implications. Usually, underinvestment in productive inputs among poor households is associated with the traditional debt overhang model which says, “highly-indebted households face disincentives for investment because the returns of any such investment will accrue largely to debt holders, rather than to the household.”

But this paper endorses a different explanation, based on the important role of expectations in the household’s investment decision. Despite debt cancellation, a significant share of households did not exercise the option of using cleared collateral to access new loans which could be due to the disruption of ongoing credit relationships, and the disgrace of being identified as

a defaulter due to the program, which in turn makes it more difficult for program beneficiaries to access institutional credit in the future.

This implies that an important solution would be to combine debt cancellation with strong incentives for the restoration of longer-term lending relationships rather than focus on one-time settlements.

http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/11/06/000158349_20121106083533/Rendered/PDF/wps6258.pdf
(Date Accessed: 9.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

Scarcity of Drinking Water in the Wettest Place in India

(Shailendra Yashwant, *Infochange*, October, 2012)

Cherrapunji or Sohra (official name) is the wettest place in the Indian sub-continent. However, it faces scarcity of drinking water due to a combination of poor rain water management, deforestation and unscientific coal mining activities. Sohra's drinking water problem can be attributed to entirely man made causes. Incessant rains have washed away topsoil on the plateau and the perennial temperate forests have disappeared due to deforestation. According to a report submitted by the Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board, coal mining and limestone quarrying are a probable reason for water pollution in the area and high levels of acidity in the water samples, which has rendered the water unsuitable for drinking.

The root cause of most problems lies in the government's inability to harvest and store rainwater for a population that has doubled over two decades.

The state government has been unable to reach a consensus on a comprehensive mining policy due to governance challenges which are compounded by the presence of three autonomous councils.

The Meghalaya Government has till date not investigated the grim ecological impacts of coal mining which has been cited as a cottage industry.

The writer proposes that community participation must be encouraged to develop traditional systems of water harvesting and to inculcate an attitude of judicious use of water.

<http://infochangeindia.org/environment/northeast-s-fragile-ecology/the-wettest-desert-on-earth.html>
(Date accessed: 14.11. 2012)
(Karishma)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Overcoming Religious Restrictions on Women

(M A Siraj, *Deccan Herald*, 14 November, 2012)

The recent ban on the entry of women in Haji Ali Dargah, the Darul Uloom Deoband's series of fatwas restricting women's access to education, right to ride a bicycle and validation of triple talaq through SMS, emails and over cell phones are all examples of the social rules and norms that continue to suppress women and impede their integration into the larger society. "Family laws are

stacked against them, cultural practices target them and political expediency subjugates them."

This current trend of strengthening the web of restrictions around the lives of women in the name of religion negates the rich cultural-historical role played by women within the Islamic fold.

Many of the architects of Islamic jurisprudence and theology were impacted by the contribution of Muslim women scholars. A recent encyclopedia from the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies by Akram Nadvi includes 8,000 women who have been cited as narrators of Prophetic sayings.

This clearly shows that there is enough scope within principal sources and early history of Islam to restore an equal and vibrant role for women in social, political and economic life.

This possibility can only be realised with the initiative and efforts of our leaders and policy-makers who need to stop pandering to the misogynist interpreters of Islam and pay greater heed to curtailment of individual rights and freedom as laid down in our constitution.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/291767/plight-muslim-women-challenge-ill.html>
(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Hansa Kaul)

EDUCATION

Funding Education As a Global Public Good

(Rebecca Winthrop and Gib Bulloch, *Brookings*, November 6, 2012)



Global demographic trends indicate that a disproportionate share of world's human capital will be born in developing countries. However, poor education systems in countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa and India may only widen the global talent gap, thus adversely affecting future growth prospects. The writers propose a multi-stakeholder solution to the global educational crisis and advocate a mechanism to fund education as a public good. This solution is based on the premise that "as businesses increasingly look to emerging markets as new sources of growth, it would be naive to assume that struggling education systems on their own will be able to provide the talent and skills that employers need." Such a funding mechanism should be able to catalyse innovation and co-investment from the private sector and technology companies which are well equipped to provide state of the art infrastructure. The author proposes a market mechanism whereby a pooled investment from a partnership of businesses and donors will lead to improved educational access to the desired talent, which can also be the source of future growth to companies. This may call for

businesses to adopt a backward integration process up the talent supply chain to absorb the necessary talent.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/udp-front/posts/2012/11/06-funding-education-winthrop>

(Date accessed: 14.11. 2012)
(Karishma)

How A \$20 Tablet From India Could Blindside PC Makers, Educate Billions And Transform Computing As We Know It

(Christopher Mims, *Quartz*)

Aakash 2, the cheapest, fully functional tablet PC (\$ 20 after subsidy) is being purchased by the Government of India for distribution to almost 1 lakh university students and professors.

Students can attach a keyboard to make it into a functional laptop.

The government may equip every one of the 220 million students with a tablet. This could be transformational since 95% of Indians do not have a computing device.

The Indian government can save the \$13 it spends on shipping texts by uploading ebooks on the table and distribute it for free.

The \$40 investment in the tablet could be recouped over its 3 year lifetime by eliminating textbooks altogether. Aakash, manufactured in Amritsar, India, could be lapped up by even developed nations like USA where close to 40% of the students do not have access to PCs or internet.

<http://qz.com/27984/chinas-new-leaders-are-conservative->

[hardliners-reforms-will-occur-slowly-and-other-realities/](#)

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

HEALTH

50+Aids Patients Lack Support

(Puja Awasthi, *India Together*, 02 November, 2012).

Citing the Technical HIV Estimation Report (see link below) published by the National Aids Control Organization (NACO), the author points out that 2.44 million people in India were HIV positive in 2008. Of these, 12.5 percent were above the age of 50. By 2009, while the total number of people who were HIV positive fell to 2.39 million, the percentage of 50+ HIV positive people had increased to 13.2 percent. So while the overall declining numbers indicated better efforts at controlling AIDS, the rising percentage of older people affected by HIV opens up another set of problems.

First, there is severe under-reporting of cases in the 50+ category, simply because 83 per cent of the HIV infections in the country occur in the 15-49 age group and from a health policy point of view, the biggest concern is reproductive mothers. As a result, older people are most often not tested, and go undetected.

Second, most of NACO's funding (2010-11) went into prevention activities and programmes, and only 16.9 percent went to post detection care, support and treatment. This limits access to proper health care in general, but the situation is exacerbated for 50+ people.

Further, while many drugs are abandoned in other parts of the world for their negative side effects, they continue to be used in India. The negative side effects of such drugs are more pronounced for people in an older age group, something which our

healthcare systems for HIV+ people do not take into account.

Finally, the psychological effects faced by people who are HIV+ lead to withdrawal symptoms and distinctly anti-social behaviour. For people in an older age group, these symptoms are more severe. Amitabh Awasthi, the President of the Lucknow Network for Positive People (LNP+) argues that “older people tend to think too much and are often consumed by guilt... they are thus also less likely to seek support groups or counselling.” The author therefore argues that in the programme to tackle HIV, efforts need to be made to ensure that such breaches need to be effectively plugged, lest an already vulnerable section of society be left out.

<http://www.indiatogether.org/2012/nov/hlt-h50.htm>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012).
(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande)

URBAN

British to Ban Squatting

(Simon Hooper, *Al Jazeera*, 12 November, 2012)

One impact of the recession has been an increase in the number of homeless people- a rise of 25% since 2009. Today with more than 50,000 families in need of emergency accommodation, squatting has become a serious concern for the government of UK. Squatting is not new to UK, as it has been traditionally “associated with political activism and counter cultural protests.” Some have become impromptu art galleries, food distribution centres or cultural spaces. Recession has also meant that thousands of properties are being left abandoned or empty, due to rising rents and property prices. Squatters are settling in these ruins. The government, backed by Prime Minister David Cameron passed a law in September this year to criminalize squatting. The government may want to

safeguard the interests of property owners, but it should also ensure food and shelter for the homeless.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/11/201211572220964248.html>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

How Facebook and Twitter Are Helping Developing Cities

(Luis Alberto Moreno, *Atlantic Cities*, 13 November, 2012)

The Mayor of Mexico City has a Twitter following of more than 600,000. His followers actively use Twitter to bring the civic problems they face from garbage collection, to a rude bureaucrat to his attention. The Mayor promptly follows up, solves them and posts the pictures of the results.

This is catching on, with Mayors across Latin American countries using micro blogging sites and digital platforms not only to reach out to their constituents and solve their problems but also to “give voters concrete evidence of their effectiveness.”

This may seem a good strategy but there is a risk involved. If the Mayors and the municipalities engage with citizens directly with promises of acting on their complaints, but do not have enough funds to address the issues raised by them, it might lead to voter backlash amplified over the same social media.

There is no data yet on whether the social media has led to greater responsiveness or efficiency.

<http://www.theatlanticcities.com/technology/2012/11/how-facebook-and-twitter-are-making-third-world-cities-better/3884/>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

TECHNOLOGY

Why Living Cells are The Future of Data Processing

(Adam Baer, *Popular Science*, 5 November, 2012)

Biological Computers could develop as the future of computing in hostile and complex environments ranging from the bottom of the ocean to the human body and even in extraterrestrial settings where normal computers are unable to operate or survive.

A small scientific community involving researchers based at varied places around the globe such as the University of the West of England (UK), Queens University (Canada) and ETH Zurich (Switzerland) have been actively engaged in both theoretical and practical research on expanding the computing horizons to include “cells, animals, and other living organisms.”

From logic gates that run on soldier crabs to using slime mould to map networks and employing human cells to perform arithmetic calculations, researchers envisage this brand of hybrid technology to “process information less like a computer and more like a brain.”

These developments signal a potential transformation in the “bioelectronics & computer industry” and especially holds immense possibilities for future innovations in our fight against high risk diseases.

<http://www.popsoci.com/technology/article/2012-10/why-living-cells-are-future-data-processing>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(Sumit Chakraborty)

[Google Report Reveals Sharp Increase in Government Requests for Users' Data](#)

(Dominic Rushe, *The Guardian*, 13 November, 2012)

Government surveillance of citizens' online lives is rising sharply around the world, according to Google's latest Transparency Report which reveals how the governments of the world are interacting with the web giant.

The report details two categories of interactions: requests to divulge user data; and requests to pull down content. It presents quite an alarming picture as more and more governments around the world are either asking Google to remove content - or tell them who its users are.

From January-June 2012, in terms of requests to pull down data, India ranked seventh in the Google Report and made the second largest (largest being from US Government) demand for Web user information to Google, both by way of court orders and by way of requests from police.

Many have observed this trend indicated by the report as a sign of the government exceeding its constitutional bounds by demanding removal of material for defamation, government criticism, etc. without a valid court order.

The report also points to a larger issue of dearth of public information about the amount of legal interception and surveillance and the need for more such reports or rather disclosures to "bolster public debate about how we can best keep the internet free and open."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/nov/13/google->

[transparency-report-government-requests-data?INTCMP=SRCH](http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/transparency-report-government-requests-data?INTCMP=SRCH)

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)

[ENVIRONMENT](#)

[Mercury Poisoning in Singrauli](#)

(Sunita Narain, *Down To Earth*, 15 November, 2012)

The report argues that Singrauli, the energy capital of the country, providing 17 per cent of India's coal annually, serves as a classic example of how a resource rich region is exploited for the benefit of the powerful as against the poor and powerless, who have little means to struggle against the growing nexus between the corporate-political and now even the scientific class.

While the electricity it generates lights up others' homes, its own villages remain in the darkness of poverty and backwardness. "The same electricity has poisoned the people and the environment of Singrauli with mercury" which is directly caused by coal mining and particularly coal burning.

The most horrific part is that mercury contamination is not a newly discovered fact but has been known for a long time. A study finding mercury traces in hair and blood of the inhabitants of Singrauli was hushed up.

"It is not just scientists who are part of the conspiracy of silence. Environment regulators are equally complicit." Though in 2009, CPCB/MoEF declared the Singrauli region as the ninth most polluted area in the country and put a moratorium on setting up or expanding industrial units, this was conveniently lifted in 2010 on the basis of an action plan which continues to neglect the issue of mercury contamination and the high incidence of acute and chronic illness in the region as a result.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/silence-best-policy>

(Date accessed: 12.11.2012)

(Hansa for Simi)

[Combine Harvesters Set to Thicken Delhi's Smog](#)

(Jonathan Power, *Inclusive Media for Change*, 10 November, 2012)

Parts of North India, including Delhi, have been enveloped in a thick smog since early November.

A January 2012 paper by Ridhima Gupta of the Indian Statistical Institute of Delhi links the problem to the use of combine harvesters instead of manual labour and semi-mechanised tools in Punjab and neighbouring states.

This happens notwithstanding the ban on burning of crop residue in Punjab. In a paper entitled 'Causes of Emissions from Agricultural Residue Burning in North-West India: Evaluation of a Technology Policy Response', Gupta found that farmers burned 90% of the residue of the rice crop that was left by combine-harvester while only 1% of the residue of the rice plant that they manually harvested was burned. Despite the possible environmental threat, farmers have an economic incentive to use combine harvesters. In Ludhiana, they were found to save around Rs.6000 per hectare by using this technology.

A possible mitigatory measure is to replace combine harvesters with the Happy Seeder machine which, Gupta says, allows the seed to be planted in loose residue, thereby making burning of residue unnecessary.

The Happy Seeder not only helps in sowing the wheat in the standing rice stubbles but also stops rice straw burning and helps in improving soil fertility. The

cost of field preparation remains the same and it saves time as the machine can be brought to the field immediately after rice harvest, enabling farmers to sow wheat into loose rice residue.

<http://www.im4change.org/news-alert/combine-harvesters-set-to-thicken-delhis-smog-18064.html>

(Date Accessed: 12.11.2012)

(Amrutha Jose)

Recovering from Natural Disasters: Need for a Permanent Solution

(The Hindu, 7 November, 2012)

The article is critical of the Andhra Pradesh Government's response after the severe cyclone "Nilam" that recently flooded at least eight districts of the state.

Rather than taking measures to prevent such disasters in the future, the state government and Indian Meteorological Department are still arguing over what really happened and playing a blame game.

More than anything else, it is lack of proper drainage system that led to the tragedy which claimed over 20 lives and caused extensive damage to property and crops.

Since the entire east coast of India is vulnerable to cyclones every year, it is important that the Centre and States invest in permanent solutions rather than in relief measures.

Firstly, we should reactivate all natural drainage systems that are currently blocked. Secondly, the Monsoon Mission that has been cleared by the Centre six months back should be implemented at least before next monsoon. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has already created the basic framework which now needs to be implemented.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/needed-a-permanent-solution/article4071603.ece>

(Date Accessed: 12.11.2012)

(Amrutha Jose)

Indonesia to Propose Another Climate Agreement

(The Jakarta Post, 14 November, 2012)

In the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in Doha, Qatar in December, Indonesia will try to convince the developed nations to adopt a treaty on climate change, and also join a trust fund for its mitigation efforts.

This effort is critical because very few developed nations have signed up for the new targets under the second Kyoto Protocol "commitment period." Japan, Russia, United States, China, together with the other developed and developing countries contribute 85% of global emissions and these countries have refused to adopt this treaty to control the greenhouse gas emissions.

Rachmat Witoelar, chair of the Climate Change National Council (DNPI), said, "We hope that the countries will show their commitment to protecting the environment by adopting the Bali Action Plan. It provides guidelines for long-term cooperation in mitigation strategies, adaptation action plus financial and technical support on climate change for developing countries." The Bali Action Plan that was drafted in 2007 stipulates the funding of carbon-friendly investment and the implementation of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mitigation program. Tazwin Hanif, of Indonesia's delegation to Doha, says that developed

countries should also support the "activation for funding" under the Cancun Agreement, 2010. The agreement stipulates that "in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, developed countries commit to a goal of mobilizing jointly US\$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries."

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/11/14/indonesia-propose-yet-another-climate-agreement.html>

(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

Climate Change Poses Grave Threat to Indian Cities

(Chinmavi Shalya, The Times of India, 12 November, 2012)

In the wake of cyclone Nilam, the recent reports on the ongoing climate study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), does not bode well for Indian cities.

Mumbai is one of the most vulnerable as the OECD study places the Indian financial capital sixth in a list of 20 port cities worldwide at risk from severe storm-surge flooding, damage from high storm winds and rising seas.

The city's rampant concretization and poor urban planning can cause shifts in microclimate and has already reduced the possibility of rainwater getting absorbed into earth to a great degree. According to the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, the combination of change in temperature and humidity which has been so far taken lightly by the citizens as well as the policy-makers, can have dangerous implications like an increase in the spread of diseases. To avoid future catastrophe, development needs to happen away from the city, weather forecast systems and

evacuation facilities for dwellers of low-lying areas need to be strengthened.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/Climate-change-poses-grave-threat-to-Indian-cities/articleshow/17186216.cms>

(Date accessed: 12.11.2012)
(Hansa Kaul)

Climate Change: Food Crisis and Future Hunger Wars

(Rolly Montpellier, *Counter Currents*, 9 November, 2012)

The recent experience of nature's wrath in the form of Hurricane Sandy and Cyclone Nilam has brought the issue of climate change and its catastrophic manifestations back on the global agenda.

But other latent threats like the disruption of food production around the globe, caused by intensification of weather patterns are also cause of worry.

“Rising temperatures during the growing season in many large producing countries are cutting yields below their potential. In the US, raging wildfires, drought, extreme heat has “affected 87 per cent of the land dedicated to growing corn, 63 per cent of the land for hay and 72 per cent of the land used for cattle. The U.S. drought is having global effects including rise in food prices as the world's biggest grain exporter struggles with shortfalls.”

The other significant implication of global warming is increasing water scarcity, especially in regions where snow and glacial mass are the primary sources of water for irrigation, such as in Central Asia, parts of the Himalayan Hindu Kush, China, India and Pakistan. Climate change with consequent melting of glaciers could seriously endanger the current food

production potential, such as in the Greater Himalayas Hindu Kush region and in Central Asia.

“Currently, nearly 35% of the crop production in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan is based on irrigation, sustaining over 2.5 billion people. Here, water demand is projected to increase by at least 70–90% by 2050.” Given the current trend, one of the biggest challenges facing our policy-makers and mankind at large, is the question whether there will be enough food and water for a population of 9 billion in 2050.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/montpellier091112.htm>

(Date accessed: 11.11.2012)
(Hansa for Simi)

AGRICULTURE

Women: Invisible Guardians of Genetic Resources

(Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, *Food and Agriculture Organization of The United Nations*, 1 November, 2012)

The article talks about the major role women play in managing and conserving animal genetic resources. Firstly, women make up the majority of poor livestock keepers, representing two-thirds of the estimated 600 million poor livestock keepers in the world. Secondly, for their greater reproductive role in the economy, rural women have a preference for indigenous over improved breeds because they are easier to look after. Thirdly, being severely disadvantaged as women in terms of land ownership, local breeds turn out to be a better asset as compared to improved breeds as they have better access to common property resources. Lastly, due to out-migration of men to urban sectors, women, even by default, have turned into

main keepers and conservers. This study analyses the roles of women in practising and sustaining livestock production and also looks at changes brought about by global trends. Global data shows that there is a market for natural coloured fibre and specialized meats and dairy products. The importance of local livestock breeds may therefore also include their potential for providing opportunities for secondary product development. The study concludes that although women are the protectors of livestock diversity (silent guardians), but this situation will not continue indefinitely, as women use livestock to build assets that are then deployed to educate their children, who in turn have no interest in livestock keeping.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3018e/i3018e00.pdf>

(Date Accessed: 9.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

Monsanto and Genetically Engineered Food: “Playing Roulette With Our Health”

(Mark Karlin, *Interview-Truthout*, 13 November, 2012)

On being interviewed on the Genetically Modified Foods and their impact on agriculture, GMO expert Jeffrey Smith (who heads the Institute for Responsible Technology) explains the basics of GMOs and the likely health risks that they pose. He lists a series of problems with the immune, gastrointestinal and reproductive systems, organ damage, accelerated aging and insulin and cholesterol issues, as identified by The American Academy of Environmental Medicine. Livestock that have moved from GM feed to non-GM feed also show health improvements. Since GMOs were introduced in the US in 1996,

disorders and diseases are on the rise. For example, Bt Corn produces a toxic Bt-toxin which has been found to create leakages in human cells. GMOs are herbicide resistant and thus have high amounts of herbicides such as Roundup which is in turn linked to cancers, birth defects, endocrine disruption, Parkinson's and other diseases. On being asked about the role of corporate oriented corrupt agencies like FDA and USDA, Smith says that the problem lies in the dangerous combination of corporate corruption trumping science and that things have gone from bad to worse from Bush to Obama administration. He also negates the claim that GMOs increase crop yield by citing a Union of Concerned Scientists' report, *Failure to Yield*, which shows that on an average, the crop yield has gone down. He also talks about how countries like France have banned the use of GMOs by responding to the evidence showing dangers to environment and agriculture. Smith also discusses how it is almost impossible for scientists to research on patented GMOs as they are denied access to companies' patented seeds and even if they manage to publish, they land into trouble through coordinated personal and professional attacks.

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/12715-monsanto-and-genetically-engineered-food-playing-roulette-with-our-health>

(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

LAW AND JUSTICE

Ignoring the Disappeared of Kashmir with Impunity

(South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, 10 November, 2012)

According to the Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), “roughly 2,700 bodies have been found in unmarked and mass graves in Kashmir – some of which were identified as those of local residents and not foreign militants as claimed by the government.”

This growing presence of unmarked graves is an indicator of a larger pattern of state abuses. The International People's Tribunal on Human Rights (IPTHR) fears that many of these bodies belong to civilians believed to be victims of enforced disappearances by security forces in Kashmir.

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance defines enforced disappearances as: “the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State... followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.”

The J&K government continues to insist that most of those gone missing in the state are not cases of enforced disappearances but rather people who have left for Pakistan to train as militants. But its reluctance to disclose information regarding the missing persons or refusal to identify persons killed by security forces tells a different story altogether.

Thus the tragedy for Kashmir remains that even in the age of RTI, families are denied their right to know the truth regarding the fate or the condition of their loved ones.

<http://www.epw.in/commentary/ignoring-disappeared-kashmir-impunity.html>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(Hansa Kaul)

DEFENCE

China to Boost Full Military IT Application

(*China Daily*, 8 November, 2012)

China aims to complete full military mechanisation and achieve full military IT application by 2020.

This includes development of high technology weapons and equipment, modern logistics, training of high-caliber military personnel under computerised conditions and application of IT to develop combat strategy.

China also intends to enhance military preparedness during peace time to be ready for war in a cyber age. Emphasizing the defensive spirit of China's national defence policy Hu Jintao said, “Building strong national defence and powerful armed forces that are commensurate with China's international standing and meeting the needs of its security and development interests is a strategic task of China's modernization drive.” China aims to vigorously engage in international political and security fields through these measures, while continuing to help in maintaining, “mutual trust,” international peace and security.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012cpc/2012-11/08/content_15894740.htm

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

The Incredible, Shrinking Modern Military

(Magnus Nordenman, *The Atlantic*, 12 November, 2012)

Today, military forces of developed nations like France, Britain and USA have become compact, sophisticated and costlier. “In order to attract and retain enlisted soldiers and officers capable of handling the demands placed on them by the ever-increasing sophistication of their weapons, machines, vehicles, and systems, the militaries of the West are forced to offer competitive wages and benefits.”

Britain with the 5th largest defence budget has deployed only 8,000 soldiers to Afghanistan, while 14,000 soldiers were deployed in 1842. Similarly, there is a two thirds reduction in the number of frontline fighter planes from the 1950s to the present, with the US Air Force and its allies.

While it costs roughly \$2,600 to equip a US rifleman during World War II, today the cost is close to \$20,000. Better technology and training enable the modern militaries to outperform their predecessors, but they need a certain minimum number of units to be able to respond to multiple contingencies or to achieve decisive results on the battlefield. Unmanned systems and drones may play bigger roles.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/the-incredible-shrinking-modern-military/264989/>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

India Faces Up to Challenges of Ageing

(Excerpted from Current Affairs site).

India is today a youthful country. Today's youth are tomorrow's senior citizens. India faces a monumental challenge of ageing.

To better equip itself to face this challenge, the Government of India's Ministry of Social Justice established a committee to prepare a draft *National Policy on Senior Citizens*. The draft policy says that "In the years 2000-2050, the overall population in India will grow by 55% whereas population of people in their 60 years and above will increase by 326% and those in the age group of 80+ by 700% - the fastest growing group (see table and graph)."

The draft Policy says, "1/8th of the World's Elderly Population lives in India. Most of them will never retire in the usual sense of the term and will continue to work as long as physically possible. Inevitably though the disability to produce and earn will decline with age. The absence on savings will result in sharp declining in living standards that for many can mean destitution. Therefore this is the challenge of old age income security in India."

As a result of the current ageing scenario, there is a need for all aspects of care for the Oldest Old (80+ years) namely, socio economic, financial, health and shelter.

Years	Total Population	60+ millions	80+ millions
2000	1008	76	6
2050	1572	324	48

The draft National Policy says, "Elderly women and their problems need special attention as their numbers are likely to increase in the future and, given the multiple disadvantages they face in life, they are likely to be grossly unprepared to tackle these

issues." The draft Policy also says, "The poverty in rural areas for older persons is increasing and needs attention. Hence rural poor would need social security in large measure."

"In principle", the draft policy "values an age integrated society". The draft policy says, "[The Policy] will endeavour to strengthen integration between generations, facilitate interaction between the old and the young as well as strengthen bonds between different age groups. It believes in the development of a formal and informal social support system, so that the capacity of the family to take care of senior citizens is strengthened and they continue to live in the family. The policy seeks to reach out in particular to the bulk of senior citizens living in rural areas who are dependent on family bonds and intergenerational understanding and support."

The focus of the new policy is proposed to be on the following:

1. Mainstream senior citizens, especially older women, and bring their concerns into the national development debate with priority to implement mechanisms already set by governments and supported by civil society and senior citizens associations. Support promotion and establishment of senior citizens associations, especially amongst women.
2. Promote the concept of "Ageing in Place" or ageing in own home, housing, income security and homecare services, old age pension and access to healthcare insurance schemes and other programmes and services to facilitate and sustain dignity in old age. The thrust of the policy would be preventive rather than cure.
3. The policy will consider institutional care as the last resort. It recognises that care of senior citizens has to remain vested in the family which would partner the community, government and the private sector.

4. Being a signatory to the Madrid Plan of Action and Barrier Free Framework it will work towards an inclusive, barrier-free and age-friendly society.

5. Recognise that senior citizens are a valuable resource for the country and create an environment that provides them with equal opportunities, protects their rights and enables their full participation in society. Towards achievement of this directive, the policy visualises that the states will extend their support for senior citizens living below the poverty line in urban and rural areas and ensure their social security, healthcare, shelter and welfare. It will protect them from abuse and exploitation so that the quality of their lives improves.

6. Long term savings instruments and credit activities will be promoted to reach both rural and urban areas. It will be necessary for the contributors to feel assured that the payments at the end of the stipulated period are attractive enough to take care of the likely erosion in purchasing power.

7. Employment in income generating activities after superannuation will be encouraged.

8. Support and assist organisations that provide counselling, career guidance and training services.

9. States will be advised to implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 and set up Tribunals so that elderly parents unable to maintain themselves are not abandoned and neglected.

10. States will set up homes with assisted living facilities for abandoned senior citizens in every district of the country and there will be adequate budgetary support.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment organized a "National Conference on Ageing" on 6th and 7th November, 2012 at

Vigyan Bhawan.

The objective of the Conference was to sensitize all on ageing issues, review the various interventions of Central Government, State Governments/ UT Administrations, NGOs and the Civil Society with a focus on best practices and to prepare a Plan of Action for more effective implementation of various programmes for the welfare of senior citizens, so that their concerns are better addressed.

The deliberation was on four themes – (i) Financial and Social Security; (ii) Health Care; (iii) Family and Community Care and (iv) Special Elderly Groups (such as older old, rural elderly, widows, persons with disabilities, Alzheimer, dementia, etc.).

Representatives from the concerned Central Government Ministries/Departments; Welfare Ministers of all State Governments and Union Territories (with Legislature); Social Welfare/Social Justice Departments, Health Departments, Human Rights Commissions, and Planning Boards of all State Governments and Union Territories; International Organizations like WHO, UNFPA, FAO, ILO, World Bank, ISSO, NGOs; reputed Academic Institutions; Senior Citizens' Associations, Corporate Houses, Experts and Activists working in the field of senior citizens participated in the Conference.

<http://socialjustice.nic.in/pdf/dnpsc.pdf>

<http://indiacurrentaffairs.org/national-conference-on-ageing/>

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

What Will Four More Years of Barack Obama Mean for Africa?

(Tolu Ogunlesi, CNN, 12 November, 2012)

The Africans are in favour of Obama, especially sub-Saharan Africans. But no one had a convincing answer as to why they were supporting Obama beyond the fact that he had African roots as Obama has been detached from sub-Saharan Africa “for fear of being branded a Non-American and a Muslim by Rightist, Tea Party types.”

America's detachment has paved the way for China to become Africa's leading trade partner. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, expressing her unease last August said, “the days of having outsiders come and extract the wealth of Africa for themselves, leaving nothing or very little behind, should be over in the 21st century.”

Further, the rise of extremist Islam in West Africa would influence future policies of the White House, as observed recently in the unveiling of a New Sub-Saharan Africa strategy built around four "objectives": Democracy, Trade & Investment, Peace & Security, and Development. However, with the American economy in turmoil, Obama is unlikely to change the status quo anytime soon.

http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/11/opinion/us-election-obama-africa/index.html#disqus_thread

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

How Shadow Banks Rule The World

(Martin Hesse and Anne Seith, Spiegel, 14 November, 2012)

In recent years, “shadow banks” in the form of hedge funds and money market funds have grown from a \$27 trillion industry to a \$60 trillion industry.

“Shadow banks” engage in buying risky loan packages from lenders, thus lending the money of customers to companies whose credit worthiness isn't reliable to qualify for loans from ordinary commercial banks.

Banks, politicians, regulators and economists have raised serious concerns about the burgeoning dominance of “shadow banks” in the international financial markets and fear that if unregulated it might lead to a worldwide financial crisis akin to that of 2007.

These concerns come in the backdrop of a financial turmoil that almost took place in 2008 and 2011 due to the activities of shadow banks in the USA.

According to Svein Anderson, general secretary of the Financial Stability Board (FSB), Switzerland, money market funds need to be regulated because a crisis in the shadow banking industry will immediately transfer the risk to the banking industry.

However the FSB faces challenges in acquiring data for regulation as weak regulation in the past has led to scanty accumulation of data from shadow companies.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/concern-over-lack-of-regulation-of-shadow-financial-institutions-a-866763.html>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Karishma)

UN Rights Chief Warns Australia on Refugees

(Bangkok Post, 14 November, 2012)

Protesting against the “spartan conditions” and “limited access to legal and humanitarian assistance” under the new “No Advantage approach” the bulk of the 400 asylum-seekers on Nauru were reported to be on Hunger Strike.

The hunger strike by refugees “banished” by Australia to the distant Pacific has been perceived as an indication of the “unbearable conditions” of detention and the “uncertainty of their future” by the UN's Human Rights Department.

According to the report, the Australian Government “has an obligation to its own citizens to protect them from unwanted or excessive migration” but the UN official pointed out “there was a double standard when it came to European migrants or those arriving by air.”

Dreading an indefinite detention, UN commissioner said “Detention of asylum-seekers should be the last resort, not the first, definitely not indefinite,” and added that unless Canberra ensured proper protection for refugees, it would be a blight on Australia's good human rights record.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/321193/un-rights-chief-warns-australia-on-refugees>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

ASIA

Asia and the Promise of Economic Cooperation

(Christine Lagarde, *International Monetary Fund*, 14 November, 2012)

Highlighting the enhanced role Asia plays in the global economy, the Managing Director of the IMF has said that Malaysia will contribute significantly to Asia's shared economic destiny wherein Asia is expected to play a key role globally in future.

She substantiates this by highlighting Asia's contribution to two thirds of global growth even during the global financial crisis. She further highlighted that "Asia's share of world GDP jumped from 10 to 30 percent, living standards rose six-fold, and an incredible half billion people pulled themselves out of poverty."

The IMF official focused on three aspects:

1. The policy agenda for advanced economies, and the implications for Asia: It was pointed out that due to the interconnectedness of the economies, the slowdown was affecting previously unaffected regions. Growth in Asia fell to its lowest levels since 2008, partly because of the crisis in the West, but more importantly because of domestic slowdowns in India and China. However, Lagarde argued that Asia had managed to cope better with financial crises even in the past because of sound macroeconomic and structural policies. Since 1990, corporate debt-equity ratios fell by two-thirds in Asia with lower reliance on foreign funding. The most important reason for this was that Asia kept its economies and markets open. Lagarde suggested that the USA must avoid the fiscal cliff, since expiring tax provisions and

spending cuts would reduce growth in USA to zero, and this would severely affect the rest of the world. Similarly, the Eurozone must move forward with greater economic co-operation, via "deeper fiscal and financial integration." For this, she felt that there was a need for a "single supervisory framework...a pan-European deposit guarantee scheme and a bank resolution mechanism with common backstops."

2. The virtues and benefits of further economic cooperation within Asia: The Managing Director argued that the need of the hour is to enhance economic co-operation in the sectors of trade and finance in Asia.

Trade: Acknowledging the fact that intermediate goods account for 70 percent of all Asian exports, (Asian countries send intermediate goods to China, and they are assembled into final goods for export from China), the Managing Director argued that this may change on account of China's changing role from investor to consumer. This, it is pointed out, will open a huge market for ASEAN countries. Towards this end, the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership's emphasis on the service markets will be very productive.

Highlighting that financial integration is lagging behind trade integration, it was pointed out that 90 percent of ASEAN cross border portfolio investment flows was in countries outside Asia. Arguing for the need to reverse this trend, it was said that enhanced regional economic integration would act as insurance against economic volatility, and reduce inequalities by enhancing access to financial services. Finally, Asia can avoid the missteps and excesses of the west through sound macro-economic policies and management.

3. The broader importance of international policy cooperation: Finally, the Director highlighted

the need for greater international cooperation at the regional level through institutions such as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization, and the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO). At the global level, she pointed out that Asia is increasingly playing an important role in "global economic governance", where China, India, and Japan will soon be among the IMF's top ten shareholders, and with six Asian countries represented in the G20.

Finally, highlighting the IMF's role in supporting its 188 member countries, the Director pointed out that the total lending power had increased to \$1trillion, and that Asia had played a crucial role in making this possible. In moving forward towards the future, she argued and reiterated Asia's key role in this, that efforts must be taken by all countries to cooperate to bridge tough times. Citing Tagore who had talked about the "opening of a new chapter in history" after a period of turmoil, she hoped that in future, as he had, "perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises."

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sp/eeches/2012/111412.htm>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012).
(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.)

SOUTH ASIA

Bhutan: Agriculture Support to Farmers' Groups to Increase

(Gyembo Nambgyal, *Bhutan Observer*, 9 November, 2012)



The article discusses the steps taken by the Bhutan government since the last two years to provide enabling conditions for its farmers to produce vegetables. Bhutan has traditionally imported even the most basic necessities, affecting its economy. The Director General of the department of Agriculture, Tenzin Dendup, stressing the need for self-reliance in food, asked farmers to work in groups for better support and bargains. Since the government is not able to reach out to every individual, it is through groups, that support can be rendered.

An agreement signed between two boarding schools and farmers groups for the supply of local vegetables from 2013 to the schools has been an important step taken by farmers who are working in groups. The Director General stated, "We intend to extend all necessary support to our farmers except work on your farm land physically" and also added that measures to control the misuse of subsidized farm machinery, including the restriction of machinery will be put into place. Other important plans include the complementing vegetable supplies in the warmer and colder regions of the country.

<http://www.bhutanobserver.bt/agriculture-support-to-farmers-groups-to-increase/>

(Date Accessed: 9.11.2012)
(Ranjana Adhikari)

Pakistan Watching Own Interest in Trade with India: PM

(*The Nation*, 14 November, 2012)

Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has stated that there will be no compromise on the interests of the domestic industry and that "Pakistan is watching its own interests in trade with India."

The Prime Minister says that "the government is committed to facilitating the business community and we are watching the entire development on the subject and won't compromise on the interests of the country's business community."

The report elaborates that the government is focusing on improving the law and order situation, equitable electricity load shedding and promoting the private sector. He also said that the focus of the government is in promoting private sector growth so as to recover the economic backdrop faced by the country today. The report highlights the various issues that the government of Pakistan and the Prime Minister are working on, and one such is the promotion of coal and solar power projects, which over a period of time would be easily accessible to the consumers.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister has said that the government would be focussing on hydel projects, the Thar coal gasification project overall generating power, connectivity and electricity. It was not only Pakistan, but also India, Middle East, Bhutan, Bangladesh and other SAARC countries that were "facing the demand and supply issue of electricity." The problem

with the business community and Pakistan is the shortage of energy and measures need to be adopted to control the crumbling of the economy.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/14-Nov-2012/pakistan-watching-own-interest-in-trade-with-india-pm>

(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Ranjana Adhikari)

India, Afghanistan Take Steps to Boost Economic Cooperation

(Elizabeth Roche, *Livemint*, 12 November, 2012)

India and Afghanistan are moving towards strengthening economic partnership for mutual benefit.

Kabul and Delhi have decided to focus on small business, agriculture, mining and infrastructure. In a recent meeting, the Strategic Partnership Agreement was renewed. After extensive talks, the two countries have signed four pacts "including one on increasing cooperation in coal resource development." The nation's vast mineral reserves of iron, cobalt, copper and gold (around Rs.55 trillion) are of particular interest to India and China. "Last year, an Indian consortium won the rights to mine three out of the four iron ore blocks in Afghanistan's Bamiyan province." Afghanistan is also eager to encourage Indian businesses to come in along with "sustained international support and cooperation in all respects." Apart from economic ties, the two countries have also signed an agreement helping India to set up small development projects in Afghanistan. India has pledged \$2 billion for assistance and reconstruction in Afghanistan since November 2001.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/zIcOj0VQH5Sruw18D4WfEM/India-Afghanistan-take-steps-to-boost-economic-cooperation.html>
(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

Taming Fiscal Deficit “Most Pressing Macroeconomic Priority For Maldives”: IMF Mission

(Ahmed Naish, *Minivan News*, 14 November, 2012)

Highlighting that fiscal deficit in the Maldives (in 2012) was expected to rise to 16 percent in cash terms, the IMF recommended a series of measures to boost revenue and reduce expenditure. This large deficit is because of an increase in the public debt ratio, which is now 80 percent of GDP. This has aided in the worsening of dollar shortages in the economy and put pressure on the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) reserves. The MMA's reserves are now down to just one and a half months of imports. A World Bank report from May 2010 had argued that the public sector wage bill was the biggest reason for Maldives' ongoing fiscal imbalances- salaries and allowances of government employees were raised by 66 percent from 2006 to 2008, marking, as the report claimed, “the highest increase in compensation over a three year period to government employees of any country in the world.” Similarly, a UNDP paper from December 2010 pointed out that “between 2004 and 2009, the average monthly salary of a government sector worker increased from MVR 3,223 (US\$250) to MVR 11, 136 (US\$866).” Further, the paper also noted that the number of civil servants increased from around 26,000 in 2004 to around 34,000

by 2008, which further exacerbated the public debt.

The IMF's recommendations include hiking the Tourism Goods and Services Tax (T-GST) by 15 percent, to bring it at par with countries like Fiji and Mauritius, and ‘selectively’ reversing import duty reductions. On the expenditure side, the IMF recommended channeling electricity subsidies efficiently to the needy, rationalising and reducing the expenditure on the Aasandha health programme, controlling wages (through the creation of a national Pay Commission “that can set up a rational system of compensation for the entire public service seems like a priority) and a framework for medium term civil service reform. It was also suggested that a tighter monetary policy could “support the exchange rate and the needed external adjustment”, while “higher Treasury bill yields, in conjunction with some technical changes to the monetary operations framework, may also help to ease the government's financing difficulties.”

<http://minivannews.com/politics/taming-fiscal-deficit-most-pressing-macroeconomic-priority-for-maldives-imf-mission-47329>
(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.)

EAST & SOUTH EAST ASIA

India-Myanmar Committee Deliberates On Border Trade

(David Mayum, *Moreh, Seven Sisters Post*, 10 November, 2012)

Discussing various issues, the high level meeting of the India-Myanmar Border Trade Committee formed a sub-committee to meet every three months. Also, a branch of United Bank Of India will be opened in

Rangoon as collectively agreed in the meeting within this month. Besides deliberating on developing and expanding trade through land routes, sources pointed the presence of enormous “disparity” in trade figures specified by both the countries, thereby agreeing to “recompile” trade figures. Responding to complaints raised by Myanmar, both countries decided to work “on a system of tax structure and rules of origin issues.” The need to supplement the existing list of tradable items by 2025 items to the present 40 tradable items under barter trade system through Moreh was also examined.

<http://sevensisterspost.com/india-myanmar-committee-deliberates-on-border-trade/>
(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

Indian Freedom Struggle Is My Inspiration: Suu Kyi

(Smriti Kak Ramachandran, *The Hindu*, 14 November, 2012)

Both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Myanmar's Opposition Leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at a meeting emphasised on larger cooperation required between the Parliaments and judiciaries of the two neighbouring nations.

They also concurred that “people-to-people relations” are very significant. Extending best wishes for the struggle for democracy in Burma, Dr Singh highly acknowledged Suu Kyi's spirited courage for the cause of democracy.

Thanking people, governments, and organizations for supporting the cause of democracy in Burma, delivering the Nehru Memorial Lecture, Ms. Suu Kyi spoke about the influence that Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had on her, and how the principles that guided India's freedom struggle inspired her as she

continues to strive for a democratic Myanmar. During her speech, she also “linked Nehru’s experiences to her own and reflected on the part of their lives that were spent as political prisoners” and cited her learning’s on “law and order” from “Kalhan’s Rajtarangini.”

Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi remarked that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, like Nehru was the finest blend of both the east and the west and yet was embedded in her own country, culture and epitomized all the qualities admired by Nehru.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-freedom-struggle-is-my-inspiration-suu-kyi/article4094877.ece>

(Date accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Junty for Simi)

MIDDLE-EAST

Turkey, Egypt to Collaborate on Africa

(Serkan Demirtas, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 15 November, 2012)



The Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, will be visiting Egypt to boost the trade and economic ties and also discuss the ongoing Syria crisis. The report suggests that this meeting between the Turkish Prime Minister and Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, is likely to produce a dozen agreements and a “joint-vision” for expanding cooperation in the region, especially in Africa. To build economic relations, some 200 business leaders will accompany the Prime Minister and meet their Egyptian counterparts and government

agencies. “Bilaterally, Egypt is turning to Turkey as a source of investment and trade,” Egyptian Ambassador to Turkey Abderahman Salaheldin said on 13 November, recalling the success of RoRo ships between Turkey and Egypt, a transportation alternative formed to bypass Syria. “We are looking at how to develop this to include third-party countries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea,” he said. Abderahman Salaheldin also said that, “This relationship is not only important to us, but also to Turkey as well. Every day we are finding out how close our values and interests are. These are not only in the bilateral sense, but also have a regional dimension.” The replacement of Hosni Mubarak with Mohammed Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood-backed Freedom Justice Party, has improved bilateral relations between what the Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu calls, “regional axis.”

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/africa-to-see-joint-turkey-egypt-bid-with-cairo-visit.aspx?pageID=238&nID=34694&NewsCatID=359>

(Date Accessed: 15.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

AFRICA

Is South Africa Digging its Own Grave?

(Jonathan Power, *Daily Mirror*, 10 November, 2012)

Nelson Mandela, who sacrificed much of his life for South Africa would be in grief seeing the present economic condition of the country where the masses are ignored, feels the writer.

While the black elite have been favoured in multiple ways including employment, loans and land ownership, masses are left to live in impoverished villages and urban slums. Though the government promised

advancement in education, health-care and most importantly, in land reforms, it has not proceeded far. Unemployment amongst youth is very high.

South Africa is following Zimbabwe’s path of decline in multiple ways. The non-implementation of land reforms, unfulfilled promises and inequality in land owning are factors that led to Zimbabwe’s decline.

The article argues that the situation is similar in South Africa too, where only 8 per cent of the land has been redistributed and 75 per cent of the land is owned by whites, although they constitute less than 10% of the population. Farmers have not being given basic irrigation and sufficient electricity supplies. The government’s idea of giving whole white farm to black “community” has not worked as it is a well known fact that smaller independent holdings function better and produce more per acre than big farms. Even now, the president does not seem to realise the danger as is evident from little funds beings spent on agricultural advancement and slum development. At the same time the defence spending for this country with no visible enemies is really high.

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/172-opinion/23374-is-south-africa-digging-its-own-grave.html>

(Date Accessed: 12.11.2012)

(Amrutha Jose)

Using Mineral Wealth to Improve Lives of People in Africa

(Ichumile Gqada, *South Africa Institute of International Affairs*, 13 November 2012)

The Eighth African Development Forum titled “Governing and Harnessing Natural Resources for Africa’s Development” held in October 2012, highlighted the importance of Africa’s natural resources in the socio-economic development of the region. In the past few years, Africa has seen substantial economic growth but this has not translated into equivalent socio-economic development. “This focus was also informed by the recognition that commodities are currently in a supercycle, but one that is arguably approaching decline. The cyclical nature of commodities adds further impetus to the need for Africa to improve the policy and regulatory frameworks governing its minerals sector. This is necessary to ensure greater benefits for exporter countries from higher commodity prices as well as to shield local economies from the vagaries of commodity price volatility.” Apart from this mineral policy interventions engaged in training and education, investment in infrastructure and corporate social investment are also required.

<http://www.saiia.org.za/diplomatic-pouch/mining-and-minerals-for-development-making-the-case-for-africa.html>

(Date accessed: 15.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

EUROPE

UK: Debating Outsourcing

(Tom Gash, *Institute for Government*, 25 September, 2012)

The Confederation of British Industries (CBI) report dated 24 September, 2012 says that the UK government can save over 20 billion pounds without affecting the quality of public service, simply through increased outsourcing. But according to Tom Gash, CBI’s savings estimates are aspirational rather than realistic due to several flaws and assumptions in the calculation. Still, the report helps to highlight that organisations should think carefully on whether to outsource services or not. Also, organisations should assess alternative models and their likely costs, benefits and risks. The report by Institute of Government titled *Commissioning for Success* says that the government will not be able to achieve even a small portion of the benefits pointed to by the CBI without developing its skills and processes.

The report, *Commissioning for Success: How to avoid the pitfalls of open public services*, says that the Government’s vision is attractive “on paper” as outsourcing gives people more choice and introduces competition which will improve quality. But the report is critical of the plan since “making choice and competition work in practice is far from straight forward.” It cites “G4’s failure to deliver on its Olympics security contract and the 2011 collapse of Southern Cross Care Homes” as instances of difficulties in outsourcing. The four main problems in outsourcing as a new model for governance and public services are:

(a) Commissioning skills: Few Whitehall departments understand the skills shortages

they have or have clear plans to address them.

(b) Effective choice: Some departments lack a coherent strategy for ensuring users can make informed choices.

(c) Continuity of service: Many departments need clearer plans to face financial failure of a public service provider.

(d) Collaborative commissioning: When commissioning services, government can end up paying twice for the same (or closely related) outcomes or alternatively can also end up not paying the providers for the value they create.

<http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Commissioning%20for%20success.pdf>

<http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/4907/government-outsourcing-%E2%80%93-too-good-to-be-true/>

(Date Accessed: 13.11.2012)
(Amrutha Jose)

Saving the Swedish Model: Learning from Sweden’s Return to Full Employment in the Late 1990s

(Pär Nuder, *Institute for Public Policy Research*, November 2012)

The article talks about how in the mid to late 1990s, Sweden’s economy showcased a remarkable resurgence from a three-year-long recession which had left it with the largest government budget deficit in the OECD. Between the summers of 1990 and 1993, Sweden suffered three years of negative growth. The dramatic fall in GDP was nearly 5 per cent, total employment fell by more

than 12 per cent from 1990 to 1994, and employment in manufacturing fell by almost 25%.

But in 1994, social democrats came back to power and it took four years for the government to balance the budget. Between 1994 and 2006, the Swedish economy created 400,000 new jobs which is equivalent to about 9 per cent of the labour force, and by the end of 2006, Sweden had the second-highest employment rate in the EU. The Social Democratic government used two fundamental ideas of the Rehn-Meidner model as tools of its policy response- firstly, use of restrictive fiscal policy to control inflation and secondly, “social bridges” to help people manage change. ‘Resource jobs’ were introduced in 1997, ‘activity guarantee’ in 2000, ‘sabbatical leave’ was piloted in 2002 and rolled out nationally in 2005, ‘Plusjobs’ in 2006, ‘Knowledge Lift’ programme in 1997 etc.

The key policies that were responsible for such a turnaround were based on clear value which incorporated such priorities as “lifelong learning, protecting people not jobs, active labour market policies, importance of education, childcare and public finances etc. Pro-employment policies were future-focused, based on a long-term analysis of what the economy would look like after the recession. The politics of budget-balancing and labour market reform were attached to a broader vision, proving that the Swedish model was not dead and turning the fight against unemployment into a national project.”

http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/11/saving-the-swedish-model_Nov2012_9896.pdf

(Date Accessed: 14.11.2012)

(Naina Bhardwaj)

U.S. Fiscal Cliff Risks Dragging Global Economy Into Darkness

(Uri Dadush, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 7 November, 2012)



This article writes about the consequences of Obama’s re-election for the global economy, where under the current scenario, “growth in the emerging markets is hesitant” and the economy of Europe is under a debt crisis.

The article states that Obama’s first agenda is to avoid large amounts of tax increases and expenditure cuts at 4% of the GDP.

If the US falls of this fiscal cliff, the economy would fall into recession and “the outlook for the world economy, already gloomy, will darken further.”

Eventually, the Euro-zone crisis will be difficult to control, thereby escalating the global banking crisis.

The article suggests that Obama will have to compromise by accepting a program of “long-term cuts in social programs” while Republican will have to accept a program of “phased-tax increases.”

For both sides, this is a departure from their electoral platforms. A compromise would “include a claw back of the payroll tax reduction, and of extended unemployment benefits as well as some expenditure cuts, adding up to 1% to 2% of U.S. GDP in 2013.” This implies, that the U.S. “will remain fiscally bound” and the Europeans will have to rely on their own resources to control the

crisis. The U.S. will then turn to emerging nations like China for funds and initiatives.

The article also suggests that the second term of President Obama should also be focusing on environmental regulation, especially controlling carbon emissions and implementing recently ratified trade measures.

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/11/07/u.s.-fiscal-cliff-risks-dragging-global-economy-into-darkness/eis>

(Date Accessed: 6.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

BOOKS

“India Becoming”

(Akash Kapur, *Penguin Books India*, 20 October, 2012)

“Unlike most contemporary accounts of the country, *India Becoming* is not focused on the big cities of the North, but on the villages and small towns of South India.”

The book tracks the lives of ordinary Indians (mostly on the fringes of society) as they come to terms with a rapidly growing and changing country and confront the challenges and opportunities that Modern India holds for them. Akash Kapur thus weaves together his characters in a compelling manner in which the reader can find a common ground between the struggle of a farmer against declining agriculture and that of a young woman working in a call centre trying to deal with the pressures of new found freedom (typical of our dichotomous society). The book paints the changing landscape of India through the eyes of its citizens who have had to cope with transition in their lifestyle, social status and relations with each other.

<http://www.penguinbooksindia.com/en/content/india-becoming>

(Date accessed: 12.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)