



Weekly Roundup *of* News on Policy

Compiled by

RGICS,

Jawahar Bhawan, New
Delhi.

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info@rgics.org

Universalization of Education: Global Report Identifies Critical Challenges Facing India

India Praised for Reducing Number of Out-of-School Children from 2 crores to 20 lakhs in 8 years and for RTE; But Ranked 102 of 120 Countries Overall

The newly issued Global Monitoring Report (2012) of UNESCO's Education For All Campaign has ranked India 102 of 120 countries in terms of the progress of the campaign.

Education for All (EFA) is an ambitious UNESCO-led global movement aiming to ensure that the learning needs of all children, youth and adults are met by 2015. Progress is measured through the Education For All Development Index (EDI).

Japan has the best record in the world, followed by Sweden, Norway and the U.K. Ranking ahead of India are Mexico (48), Indonesia (64), Philippines (84), Egypt (87), Ghana (97) and Bhutan (98). Close behind India's ranking are Nigeria (108), Pakistan (113) and Ethiopia (116).

The India Story: Achievements

The UNESCO Global Report says that, "India has made tremendous progress in reducing the number of out-of-school

children, from 20 million in 2000 to 2 million in 2008."

The UNESCO Global Report highlights the unique achievement of India in establishing the Right to Education. The Report says, "The experience of India demonstrates that guaranteeing the right of all children to free compulsory education is a major step forward, but underlines the need to reinforce the right with clear rules and adequate financing for its implementation. Moreover, organizational challenges must be

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overcome to ensure that possible violations are investigated and brought to justice.” The Report says, “Implementing the [right to education] legislation has not been straightforward. There has been disagreement among central, state and local governments over the sharing of financial responsibilities for meeting the education standards stipulated by the law. Monitoring has also proven difficult. The law made it possible to prosecute institutions or individuals who may have violated children’s right to education. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the government body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the law, received 2,850 complaints related, among others, to admission procedures, discrimination,

teacher attendance, reserved places in private schools, charging of fees and inadequate infrastructure. However, as of March 2012 the Commission had only resolved about one in four complaints.”

The India Story: Areas of Concern Identified in the UNESCO Global Report

The Global Report identified a number of areas of concern of particular concern to India.

(1) Child Malnutrition

The first goal of the Education For All programme is to improve early childhood care because the health of the child is fundamental to its development.

Expressing grave concern about the poor state of child health and early childhood care in India, the Global Report says in this regard, “Stunting rates in India have remained persistently high because of poor maternal nutrition, low birth weight, high levels of poverty and low levels of maternal education. Many Indians still struggle to meet their most basic needs, including access to sufficient food and health care. The fact that almost half of children under 5 are malnourished is a ‘national shame’, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said. Yet the main policy tool for tackling malnutrition, the network of Anganwadi centers, which cater for children under 6, pregnant women and lactating mothers, is not fulfilling its potential. A

WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR ALL?

Education For All (EFA) is a global movement aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

The movement was launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand by 155 countries, as well as representatives from some 150 organization. The parties to the Conference agreed to “universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade”. The Conference adopted the World Declaration on Education for All proclaiming as a fundamental human right and asking countries to strengthen their efforts to improve education in order to ensure the basic learning needs for all were met.

The international community met again at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000.

As many countries were far from having reached the goals established at the World Conference on Education for All, the participants agreed on the Dakar Framework for Action which re-affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All and gave the world an additional five years to achieve the target of universalizing primary education (till 2015).

The Framework established a new deadline of 2015, and identified six key measurable education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

In addition, the forum reaffirmed UNESCO’s role as the lead organization with the overall responsibility of coordinating other agencies and organizations in the attempts to achieve these goals.

The six goals established in The Dakar Framework for Action are:

Goal 1: Expand early childhood care and education

Goal 2: Provide free and compulsory primary education for all

Goal 3: Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults

Goal 4: Increase adult literacy by 50 per cent

Goal 5: Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015

Goal 6: Improve the quality of education

Japan has the best EDI in the world, followed by Sweden, Norway and the U.K.

India ranks 102 out of 120 countries. Ranking ahead of India are Mexico (48). Indonesia (64). Philippines

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survey of more than 74,000 mothers found that only 19% of them reported receiving nutrition counseling. By contrast, in Brazil and China, child malnutrition began declining dramatically around the mid-1990s, which led to the elimination of the urban-rural gap in Brazil and its reduction by more than two-thirds in China. In Brazil, the expansion of primary schooling (leading to improved maternal education), maternal and child health services, and — to a lesser extent — the improvement of water supply and sanitation systems are considered the main determinants” of success.

where inequality is evident throughout the cycle, from access through to completion. Some West African countries follow a pattern of unequal access, but once in school, children demonstrate similar progression through the cycle. In India’s Andhra Pradesh state, for example, pre-school enrolment in rural areas is highest among the richest 20% of households, where almost one-third of children attend private institutions. Almost all children in pre-school from the poorest households attend government providers. There are also marked differences in urban areas, with almost all children

and Turkey “large proportions of young people from rich households are able to attain foundation skills, regardless of whether they are male or female. Gender discrimination occurs among the poorest households.”

The Report says that, therefore, “in countries such as India, Morocco, Pakistan and Turkey, strategies need to target young women from the poorest households. “Women who do find work are often paid less than men. In India and Pakistan, men earn 60% more than women, on average. The wage gap is widest for those with low levels of

The Education for All Development Index (EDI)

In order to evaluate each country’s progress with regards to the EFA’s goals set in the Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO has developed the Education for All Development Index (EDI).

The four goals measured in the EDI are:

Goal 1: Expand early childhood care and education;

Goal 4: Increase adult literacy by 50 per cent;

Goal 5: Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015; and

Goal 6: Improve the quality of education .

The EDI improved in forty-one of the fifty-two countries between 1999 and 2010.

(2) Illiteracy

The Report says, “India alone contains 37% of the global number of illiterate adults. A large improvement in its adult literacy rate, from 48% in 1991 to 63% in 2006, has been counterbalanced by population growth, so the total number of illiterate adults in the country has remained stagnant over the period.” The Report says that India has four times the number of illiterates as China – 62 million and 287 million respectively.

(3) Inequality in Educational Opportunity between Rich and Poor

The Report says, “Inequality between the poorest and richest children — in access, progression or both — takes different forms. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and Kenya exhibit patterns similar to Uganda’s,

from rich households attending private pre-schools, compared with around one-third among the poorest households. Girls are more likely to be enrolled in government pre-schools. Where private provision is of better quality, this could further reinforce inequality between the rich and poor and between boys and girls.

The Report says, “Even in a rapidly growing economy like India’s, opportunities for acquiring foundation skills can be very unequal, with some states doing much better than others (Figure 3.8). In Kerala, almost all of those aged 15 to 19 acquire foundation skills – boys and girls alike. In Bihar, by contrast, only around 45% do so overall: 57% of boys and 37% of girls.”

(4) Gender Discrimination

The Report says that in countries such as India, Morocco, Pakistan

literacy and numeracy. Yet education can make a big difference to women’s earnings.

The Report says that “In India, 39% of women are not counted as being in the labour force, compared with 12% of men. For uneducated urban women the share is as much as 70%. Many women, often those with lower levels of education, are obliged to work in undesirable jobs. Uneducated rural Indian women have around a 55% chance of being unpaid family workers, and almost a 25% chance of being in casual work of some kind. In Pakistan, while men have an 8% chance of being out of the labour force, the figure for women is 69%, and it drops only for the few women with more than ten years of schooling. Such women are rare in Pakistan: only 18% reached that stage in 2007. For those who do find work in India and Pakistan, men earn 60% more than women, on average. The

wage gap is widest for those with low levels of literacy and numeracy.”

Says the Global Report, “Education can make a big difference to women’s earnings. In Pakistan, women with a high level of literacy earned 95% more than women with no literacy skills, whereas the differential was only 33% among men.”

The Report says that, “From these patterns in India and Pakistan it appears that the cultural expectation is for women, including more educated women, to stay in the home to care for the family. Years of education, therefore, have a very limited effect on labour market participation for women in general. Yet education can have a strong effect on their earnings, suggesting that investing in women’s education can pay dividends, provided they can participate in the labour force and find work.

The Report says that, “India and Malawi have introduced affirmative action programmes aimed at increasing the share of women in training, but in the absence of other strategies addressing the multiple challenges young women face in gaining access to training, they may not achieve the desired outcomes”.

The Report emphasizes “the need for more redistributive approaches if young people are not to suffer the effects of labour market marginalization because of their gender and where they live.”

(5) Poverty

The Global Report discusses the impact of poverty on education in India. It says, “Evidence from a survey on school-aged children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam found that the degree of self-esteem at age 12 was positively associated with higher levels of schooling at age 15 in all four countries. Self-esteem was also found to be associated both with occupational aspirations and

educational attainment. A long-term programme for children and adolescents in slums in Mumbai shows that targeted interventions can substantially improve non-cognitive skills among children and young people from deprived families.

(6) State Variation

In India, intake and progression vary between states, from high intake and high retention in Tamil Nadu to low intake and low retention in Gujarat (Figure 1.20).

Policy Responses

The Global Report discusses several policy initiatives in India to respond to the challenges.

It expresses concern about the need to increase public expenditure on education. It says that “although India receives the second largest amount of aid [for education] in absolute terms globally, the share of aid is small relative to the government’s own spending on education – just 1%.

(1) Training and Vocational Education

The Global Report highlights India’s multi-pronged approach to the use of training and vocational education to achieve education for all.

The Report says, “India’s training policy historically focused on the formal sector and operated on a small scale. By the mid-2000s, the overwhelming majority of urban youth had received no training. Resulting skills shortages risk hampering India’s rapid economic growth and reinforcing inequality.” Since 2008, India has embarked on an ambitious strategy to raise the number of skilled workers to 500 million by 2022. “

The Global Report notes, “The National Council on Skill Development formulates principles and provides policy advice, while strategy design is entrusted to national and state

boards. A non-profit partnership between the government and the private sector, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), is in charge of implementation, for which a National Skill Development Fund has been created. The overall approach is to finance short-term courses (no more than six months) delivered by either public or private providers, including apprenticeships, and to assure the relevance of training to rapidly changing market and technological conditions through cooperation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).”

The Report says, “A National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework is also being proposed. Skills development in informal businesses is vital, as they employ most workers and are linked to formal companies. The NSDC has identified the ‘unorganized sector’ as a priority area and proposed a framework for a Labour Market Information System that would cover that sector. Detailed analysis was conducted of labour demand and skills gaps in activities where employment is mostly or entirely informal, such as construction, textiles, transportation, tourism, jewelry, domestic work and private security. “

The Report says that “A comprehensive Action Programme for the Unorganized Sector proposed by the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, appointed in 2004, was not fully implemented, however. For the time being, India’s principal focus remains on formal institutions such as (public) Industrial Training Institutes and (private) Industrial Training Centres, working with high growth sectors such as automobiles, textiles, food processing, tourism and banking.” The Report warns that “access to such training and employment remains difficult for marginalized urban youth, who lack foundation skills, who cannot take time off

even for free training and whose mobility is constrained by gender- or caste-based discrimination.”

The Report says that “Some national and local governments have taken measures to facilitate training of subsistence workers. India’s National Policy on Street Vendors states that, as street vendors run microenterprises, they should receive training to upgrade their technical and business skills so they can increase their income and look for alternative work. In Malaysia, the economic crisis of the late 1990s led to large losses of jobs in the formal sector through mergers, downsizing of production units and outsourcing of work to the informal sector. Many laid-off workers became street vendors, whose numbers increased sharply between 1990 and 2000. The Department of Hawkers and Petty Traders regulates and controls their activities while funding credit and training programmes in areas such as business skills, accounting, health and hygiene, as food stalls account for a large share of street shops.

The Report says that, “In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, interactive multimedia instruction is used to train sugarcane growers in new production practices. These skills, formerly taught in traditional lecture-style classes, are communicated via text, audio, video, graphics and animation. The multimedia module, which covers all stages of sugarcane production from planning to harvesting, is broken down into sections to allow the learner to go at his or her own pace. The module was designed according to a detailed qualitative needs assessment with farmers. It adopts new cultivation technologies at the appropriate stages. Standard written materials supplement the interactive module. Wherever text is used, there is voice commentary to assist weaker readers. Each class lasts one hour. ...A sample of farmers from three villages participated in a trial. They were mostly literate, and around three-quarters had a secondary or

tertiary education. A preliminary test found that all three groups had similar baseline knowledge of sugarcane farming techniques. Group I received multimedia training only, group II was given lectures as well as the multimedia module, and group III was given only lectures. Scores on tests after the training were between 19 and 29 percentage points higher than scores on the initial test. Those receiving both multimedia and traditional training benefited the most. The use of audio and video, and the interactivity of the multimedia approach, was said to be more interesting, capturing learners’ imaginations.

The Report uses this experience to suggest that “in getting farmers to learn vital new technologies, the medium matters. The farmers in the study were well educated and owned their own land and only 9% were female, which indicates that the most marginalized did not take part. In addition, most farmers lack access to the necessary equipment unless they go to a training centre “

The Report says that “In southern India an NGO programme uses mobile phones to train women with limited schooling in how to care for and get the most from their animals. Participants receive voice messages on their phones every day regarding livestock care, and self-help group members meet weekly to discuss and to learn from each other.”

(2) Adolescent Education Programme

The Report says, “In India, the Adolescent Education Programme aimed to empower young people to respond to real-life situations by adopting a life skills approach. Development began in 1998 and the programme was launched in six pilot states in 2002. However, it was shelved between 2003 and 2006 because of opposition to the content of the curriculum, which was seen as being too explicit and targeting children who were too young. Moreover, the programme’s development was

viewed as a top-down process with limited consultation at the state and district levels. The programme was reintroduced in the state of Odisha in 2007 as the Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health curriculum, after consultation with a range of interested parties, including adolescents themselves. The consultation highlighted the need for close involvement of family and community members, and for training and support for teachers. Implemented by the state government, the compulsory curriculum targeting 13- to 16-year-olds is being scaled up to all districts. A recent evaluation in five states, including Odisha, found that knowledge of HIV and AIDS was higher and discriminatory attitudes lower, among students and teachers in schools that had been part of the programme.”

(3) Use of Technology

The Global Report has extensive discussion on the use of ICT to advance the goals of education for all. The Report says, “Prevalence of ICT in some parts of the world does not mean that this is the cheapest or even most effective type of technology for educational purposes. In the developing world, the radio – so-called old technology – has a powerful reach, particularly in rural areas or sparsely populated regions. Radios are everywhere, with at least 75% of households in developing countries having access to a radio.” The Report contains examples of use of ICT for education in various countries.

(4) NGO/Civil Society Initiatives

The Report highlights the work of NGOs/civil society organizations in the field of education. It says, “The work of some domestic foundations shows that they can support broader government efforts in education in ways that can have a large impact. In India, Azim Premji, chairman of Wipro, one of the largest ICT

corporations in India, transferred US\$2 billion worth of shares from his company to found the Azim Premji Foundation, which aims to improve the quality of the public education system. Over the past ten years, the foundation reports, it has reached over 2.5 million children in 20,000 schools across thirteen states in India.

The Global Report says, “An NGO programme in India illustrates how in-service teacher training can be combined with other interventions to improve learning outcomes. The NGO, Pratham, has successfully implemented a large programme providing in-service training for government school teachers in the teaching of reading. The programme includes training to help teacher’s articulate clear learning goals and use appropriate teaching– learning activities and materials. Initial results of a randomized experiment conducted in 2008/09 and 2009/10 in rural areas of Bihar and Uttarakhand states showed that teacher training was effective only when complemented with other interventions. In schools that received teacher training, monitoring and support, combined with supplementary learning materials for children and after-school support by Pratham volunteers for students who were lagging behind, the achievement of all children, as measured by speed of accurate reading and writing in Hindi, improved significantly. But there was no such impact in schools that received teacher training only. The impact was limited by low teacher and child attendance, a curriculum unrelated to children’s initial level, and wide diversity of learning needs in the classroom.”

The Report will be a very useful tool for Indian policy makers to consider necessary action to move India closer to the goal of education for all.

TO READ MORE:
www.unesco.org/new/en/education/...the-international-agenda/efareport

Fragmentation of Health Care Along Disease-Specific Lines

(Thomas Abraham, *International Herald Tribune*, 19 November, 2012)



The article raises the crucial issue of fragmentation of global health programs along disease-specific lines.

The malaria program has “no real interest in helping polio immunization, since this is not what its funding is for.” Equally, the polio program has “no stake in helping measles immunization, which it would see as a distraction from its primary aim of eradicating polio.”

There has been an increasing demand from affected communities to complement the polio campaign with other immunization programs.

Recipients of polio immunization in many countries have questioned the degree of resources and attention directed towards polio eradication campaigns vis-a-vis other diseases like malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea and other local health needs.

In a top-down approach, donor countries, aid agencies, international financial organizations and philanthropies have a greater say in deciding which programmes should be funded. This process is “devoid of consultation or input from the people who are supposed to benefit from these programs.”

On the contrary, a bottom up process would respond to the most urgent needs of communities.

Governments of developing countries can play a significant role in this process by asking donors and international organizations to fund projects needed by people rather than the other way around.

In order to respond to the urgent needs of communities, global health programmes need to reorganize their structures in a bottom up process through better engagement with local leaders and communities.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/opinion/global/ridding-the-world-of-polio.html>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)
 (Karishma Mutreja)

“Pension Reforms Must be Fast Tracked”

(Bureau, *The Economic Times*, 15 November, 2012)

The article argues for expediting reforms in the National Pension System (NPS).

One of the foremost reforms that has been proposed is to give employees who joined post-2004 the choice in asset allocation in the NPS. There has also been a demand to delink the investment norms for civil servants' NPS contributions and those for Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO). The flexibility in investment rules will not only ensure better returns for civil servants but also promote long term funds into the stock market which will reduce “excessive dependence on foreign-fund inflows.” Another demand being raised is to lift the restriction that only public sector fund managers can manage civil servants' NPS. And finally that the government should give private sector workers the choice to migrate to the NPS from the EPFO.

http://articles.economictimes.india.com/2012-11-15/news/35133191_1_civil-servants-fund-managers-epfo
(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)
(Simi Sunny)

PM For Boost to ASEAN-North East Trade

(Kalyan Barooah, *The Assam Tribune*, 18 November, 2012)

India aims to strengthen trade relations with neighboring countries of the North Eastern States as part of its ‘Look East’ policy. This was the focus of Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh’s attention in the 10th ASEAN Summit and Seventh East Asia Summit (EAS) in Cambodia. The EAS is the leading forum for promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. The Government of India plans to negotiate with ASEAN and its FTA partners for a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The Union Commerce and Industry Minister stated that “engagement with ASEAN is aimed at unleashing the full potential of the North-east.” To this effect, trade routes have already been reopened between Bangladesh and Myanmar and the North Eastern States of Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram. Further, the North Eastern States have been persuading the Centre to reopen traditional trade routes with neighboring countries to improve the local economy and deter unemployed youths from joining militancy. The Union Minister also said with regard to the delay of implementation of linking projects that mega projects need time for implementation. India, Myanmar and Thailand have agreed to work closely to complete the trilateral highway project.

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=1912/at05> (Date accessed: 20.11.2012)
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

Japan to Give Fresh Infra Loan of USD 2.26 bn to India

(*Samachar*, 20 November, 2012)

Japan’s Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has announced that Japan will provide the second round of loans under Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for the second phase of the Dedicated Freight Corridor and a third infrastructural project in South India for which it will lend an amount of USD 2.26 billion. This investment by Japan has been welcomed by Indian PM Manmohan Singh who also indicated that India would prefer investment in infrastructural projects like Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. Japan’s PM Noda has also indicated Japan’s interest in carrying forward the consultation on high speed railways with India.

http://www.samachar.com/Japan-to-give-fresh-infra-loan-of-226-bn-to-India-mlupSLjdbdd.html?source=recommended_news
(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

Why Hoard Foodgrain When High Food Prices are A Burning Issue?

(The Times of India,
19 November, 2012)

The report strongly criticizes the Government's policy of continuing to hold excess food grain against the backdrop of rising inflation. The report says that the country's estimated food grain stocks with the government on October 1, 2012 stood at around 70 million tones, as against the existing storage capacity of only 66 mt. - which inevitably means rotting of huge quantities of food grains. But the current issue is not only limited to excessive food grain hoarding and rotting. The leaky Public Distribution System and agencies that are very inefficient in offloading stocks also need to be revamped. Till proper mechanisms are put in place, the promise of guaranteeing 'Right to Food' will be difficult to realize. Instead of introducing a new, "mammoth scheme of food security, without foolproof targeting of beneficiaries and requisite logistical support", it would be wiser to first look towards investments to plug storage-infrastructure gaps, argues the author.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-11-19/edit-page/35186427_1_foodgrain-stocks-high-food-food-security

(Date accessed: 20.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

India's Uphill Battle Against "Black Money" in Real Estate

(Aditi Shah And Swati Pandey, *Reuters*, 20 November, 2012)

“Real estate accounts for more than a 10th of India's \$1.85 trillion economy...[About \$6 billion, or 30 percent of total transactions in the property sector, was executed using black money, between January and the year to June 2012], according to Lias Foras, a consultancy”, says Reuters. The Reuters report goes on to say that “Real estate accounts for a large share of illicit transactions [in India], thanks to lax regulation and the numerous approvals needed for projects, making many ordinary people party to corruption and pricing some of the emerging middle class out of the market.”

The Reuters report says that the proposed Real Estate Bill, likely to be introduced in Parliament in this session, is unlikely to have any impact because the illegal practices of this industry are closely entwined with politics.... Black money is tied in or shifted through land transactions and the regulator will have no jurisdiction over that."Central bank rules prohibit bank loans to fund purchases of land, a regulation designed to curb speculation and reduce balance sheet risk for banks. To fill that void, wealthy individuals, including politicians, are widely believed to invest "black money" in real estate. Some of that money can later be poured into election campaign donations from developers, say private equity investors, real estate consultants and sector analysts. Those same developers might be awarded with plots of land at attractive prices or assisted in getting project approvals. Black

money comes in handy for bribing corrupt officials.”

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/20/us-india-blackmoney-realestate-idUSBRE8AJ1GY20121120>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Karishma Mutreja)

Nature of Poverty

(Samar Harlankar, *Hindustan Times*, 12 October, 2012)

Through the stories of a quarry worker from Bangalore and an unemployed person named Rajkumar from Gurgaon, the author of this article tries to explain how anti-poverty measures in India need to be restructured in accordance with the changing aspirations of the poor. There have been two different approaches to the debate on poverty in India. While one faction, including Congress President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has argued that increasing welfare spending is the only way of dealing with persistent poverty and inequality in the nation, the other view, led by the Prime Minister feels that the huge social sector spending is slowing growth and escalating fiscal deficit. But what we actually need is a balance of these approaches to create “a blend of subsidies, investments and re-imagined public services.” Though growing economic uncertainties have made the subsidies and schemes vital, they “cannot be India’s long term fix.”. It has been argued that schemes like NREGA have skewed the labour market. Many such schemes have failed to deliver substantially in terms of poverty alleviation. It is therefore time for India to learn ways to make these investments more effective.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/Samar/Nature-of-poverty/Article1-756579.aspx>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Simi Sunny)

Need for Technology Policy to Foster Innovation and Research

(Jaideep Mishra, *Economic Times*, 15 November, 2012)

The article argues that it is high time that we “go beyond explanations such as relatively dearer cost of credit, loose fiscal policy and lack of investment” and promote productive technology which will allocate resources for innovation and research in a better way. According to the Approach Paper to the Twelfth Five-Year Plan, India spends a low 0.9 percent on research and development in comparison to 2-3 percent by most of the other countries. Even the major proportion of this expenditure is concentrated among the “few prestige projects in the public sector.” The 12th Plan therefore would attempt to deal with challenges faces by the R&D sector. Firstly, it has set a target of 50% of the total expenditure for private sector R&D. Secondly it has suggested national missions in the areas such as health, water, energy etc with active participation of stakeholders. The Approach Paper highlights the necessity of revamping the technology policy framework and appropriate policy support, which is the need of the hour to achieve the maximum out of our resources.

http://articles.economicstimes.india.com/2012-11-15/news/35133275_1_innovative-activity-cumulative-industrial-growth-institutes

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Simi Sunny)

Bal Thackeray's Legacy

(Ram Puniyani, *Counter Currents*, 20 November, 2012)

Mumbai came to a halt on the announcement of the demise of Bal Thackeray. But the author in this article speculates whether this was completely out of reverence or did the fear factor also come into play? Thackeray was born out of, and practiced, identity politics in Maharashtra, which was built around the ideology of "sons of the soil." He came to prominence with his open threats against South Indians, Gujaratis and Biharis and the fight against Left-supported trade unions. He soon shifted to the extremely rightist Hindutva bandwagon. Despite continuous efforts to spread anti-Muslim sentiments in the state, he escaped the law. He was even indicted by the Shri Krishna Commission Report which probed the violence after the Babri demolition and riots. Over the years Thackeray openly propagated communal frenzy by his statements, acts and writings. Parallel to his divisive politics of Hindutva, he strongly opposed the welfare of deprived sections of the society. Today, as the media portrays him as "the voice of Marathi mannos, the truth is that a large section of poor peasants, workers and Dalits know that Thackeray has never been their representative."

<http://www.countercurrents.org/puniyani201112.htm>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Simi Sunny)

2G Spectrum Auction Generates Plenty of Lessons

(*The Times of India*, 16 November, 2012)

The recent 2G auction managed to raise just Rs 9,407 crore - far less than the government's target of Rs 40,000 crore and measly compared to Rs 67,719 crore raised via 3G spectrum bidding. Some attribute the dismal failure of the whole exercise to the expectations of market demand pitched at outlandish levels. Many point out that the latest auction could have scored better "had the reserve price been less eye-popping and India's investment climate more propitious." But apart from this, there are some more important lessons to be learnt from the failed auction. One is that "outrage over corruption scandals shouldn't blind us to issues of jurisdictional propriety and economic sense." Nothing justifies CAG and the courts encroaching upon the policy-making area.

Finally, the long term solution lies in the expansion of the telecom sector, which cannot possibly grow to its full potential till the time exorbitant costs of entry continue to be enforced. This not only distorts competition by barring smaller players, but also financially burdens companies and raises prices for consumers. Efforts should be aimed at boosting infrastructure and making the system more transparent through better and innovative mechanisms like the single-step e-auctions that can work well with safeguards.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-11-16/edit-page/35134322_1_spectrum-auction-amount-of-3g-spectrum-fcfs

(Date accessed: 18.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)

Equipping Democracy to Deliver Sustainable Development

(Halina Ward, *unrisd.org*, 16 June, 2012)

The world is already witnessing the effects of climate change but governmental mechanisms to cope with it are not in order. The author argues that democracy as a political system is ill-equipped to deal with climate change due to the following reasons:

1. Democracies run on short term electoral and political priorities while climate change needs sustained long term strategies and action. Also many of those who are to be affected by climate change, like children, do not have voting rights.
2. Politicians often tend to prioritize economic growth over societal well being.
3. Tackling climate change requires sustained and consensual intergovernmental efforts, which is lacking as of now.
4. Ensuring that 'science' gets its space in a democracy even though at times it may challenge existing cultural notions.

Policy, legal and (formal) institutional innovations will also be among the key shapers of democracies' systemic responses to climate change.

[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/web/site/newsview.nsf/\(httpNews\)/8B320AF6C83DF02EC1257A21004DDC80?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/web/site/newsview.nsf/(httpNews)/8B320AF6C83DF02EC1257A21004DDC80?OpenDocument)

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

GOVERNMENT

Ernakulam Vying to be First Child-Friendly District

(The New Indian Express, 21 November, 2012)

Ernakulam witnessed the kick start of a one year campaign for adoption of a model child protection policy by every child care institute. The campaign was jointly organized by Child Line, Rajagiri Outreach and Don Bosco with the help of Child Welfare Committee and the Juvenile Justice Board. Few childcare institutions adhere to a proper child protection policy and most of the institutes are ignorant of the fact that such policies exist. The effort is also aimed at bringing awareness amongst the institutes about the pros of such policies and also stringent actions if there is failure to adhere/ violation of rules. The policy highlights children's right to safety and security. This will not only ensure their protection against discrimination, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence but also bring about psychological, intellectual, moral and cultural development. It also looks into the aspects of Individuality, age, gender and recognition of the special needs and vulnerability.

<http://www.samachar.com/Ernakulam-vying-to-be-first-childfriendly-district-mlvIKJdbgij.html>

(Date Accessed: 21.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

HEALTH

Combating an Epidemic

(Dr P.K. Rajagopalan,
Frontline, 17-30 November,
2012)

Over half a century ago, in 1957-58, Tamil Nadu witnessed a Japanese encephalitis (JE) epidemic. Today Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh is seeing frequent occurrences of JE. Borne by mosquitos, JE occurs in regions where droughts are followed by floods. High cattle population can also lead to increased chances of spread of the disease. The disease can be fatal unless early treatment takes place and even then there is a high chance of neurological complications. Children are worst affected by it. Experts, think tanks have meetings on this but no concrete steps have been taken. Prompt hospitalization and symptomatic treatment can prevent deaths. "The animal husbandry, meteorology, agriculture and revenue departments should make coordinated efforts to contain the disease." There is also an urgent need for a safe and effective vaccine to prevent JE. States should collect data on states where the disease is prevalent and make adequate provisions to treat and prevent JE.

<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/stories/20121130292310900.htm>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

Draft Drug Price Policy 2011

(Sakthivel Selvaraj and Habib Hasan Farooqui, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, 17 November, 2012)

Through the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy 2011 (NPPP), the government is planning to move towards market-based pricing from the current cost-plus-based pricing system for drugs under price control.

Drug companies, especially multinational and large domestic ones, have actively sought dismantling of the existing price control regime which they feel is too intrusive and responsible for slow introduction of new drugs in

the country and squeezing of profit margins.

But what has to be kept in mind while drafting this new policy is the fact that the pharmaceutical market is characterized by monopoly/ oligopoly elements, where one or few players tend to dominate the entire market." While product patent rules are major forces behind market dominance, drug makers are also able to penetrate, perpetuate and sustain their market power through brand promotion, marketing prowess and "information asymmetry." Typically, in healthcare, it is often either the physicians, the chemists or the suppliers, who create demand and decide and choose what medicines are required to be procured and consumed on behalf of the patient. Many fear that in a free market environment, the new mechanism will lead to a sharp increase in the cost of medicines and ultimately legitimize sky-high drug prices. The unfortunate part is that even though adequate supplies of medicines are produced in the country, a large section of our people cannot afford them and hence remain at the margins of public health care. In order to address this problem a strong, efficient and effective public health delivery mechanism is required to channel our production capacity for better accessibility to medicines for all.

<http://www.epw.in/commentary/draft-drug-price-policy-2011.html>

(Date accessed: 18.11.2012)
(Hansa Kaul)

URBAN

Urban Renewal Programmes Need To Be Inclusive

(The Times of India, 22 November, 2012)

Indian cities have largely been ineffective in utilizing their

heritage assets for poverty reduction and inclusive development, in spite of having an abundance of wealth in cultural heritage. A workshop held recently at Varanasi to discuss inclusive heritage-based city development programme (IHCDP) has suggested that “in order to be relevant and sustained over time, the current approach to urban renewal activities requires a shift from being preservationist and sector-centric to being citywide inclusive.” In this context, the speakers pointed out that historic areas in most Indian cities have malformed to “pockets of entrenched poverty” due to combined issues of “unplanned urbanization, overcrowding, crumbling infrastructure, decaying buildings, encroachment and poor sanitation.” Despite being designated as an 'urban renewal mission', the demand on the JNNURM programme raised by cities for urban renewal activities accounts for a meager 1.1% of total funds released. The workshop highlighted that despite policies for the conservation of monuments in India, “the linkage between cultural heritage, city development planning, and local economy development remains largely unclear in practice.” The key challenges identified are “fragmented, uncoordinated institutional arrangements, weak capacity at the urban local body (ULB) level, and lack of adequate regulations and guidelines.” It emphasized that the protection, conservation and presentation of individual monuments should be linked with the “revitalization of the urban context in which the monuments are located, and within a larger service provision and urban development and planning framework.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/Urban-renewal-programmes-need-to-be-inclusive/articleshow/17321474.cms>

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)
(Sumit Chakraborty)

No One Knows How Much Money India's Cities Are Spending

(Mark Bergen, *Atlantic Cities*, 01 October, 2012)

Most of India's cities do not release financial reports, so tracking the usage of funds, whether it be for buildings or subways, parks or metros, becomes extremely difficult for ordinary citizens. According to a report by IBM, India needs to spend \$1.2 trillion over the next two decades to develop smart cities. While most of the funding for cities now comes by the way of central and state grants, this may not be the case in future. Indian cities cannot borrow money from bond markets because their finances are not transparent. Though Bangalore became the first city to issue bonds in 1997, the initiative has not caught on widely because debt finance implies full financial disclosure. While Mumbai puts out reports on its nearly \$5 billion budget, it is difficult to interpret and has not yet been put up on its website. Local governments also do not have bankruptcy protection laws. Only 40% of the 63 largest Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are considered investment grade. Financial disclosures are essential to attract investments to Indian cities.

<http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/10/no-one-knows-how-much-money-indias-cities-are-spending/3385/>

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)
(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

Air Pollution in India: The Case of Delhi

(The Economist, 06 November, 2012)

An estimate puts death toll due to Delhi's smog at 10,500 people a year. Between 2001 and 2010, on average, levels of nitrogen oxide almost doubled from 29 micrograms to 55 micrograms. A measure of particulate matter known as PM10 (any dust with a diameter less than 10 micrometers) has also more than doubled, from 120 to 261, while the prescribed limit is 100. Waste bonfires in North India are causing an almost greenhouse effect over Delhi, NASA has reported. Converting the around 1000 brick kilns surrounding Delhi to something cleaner or moving them farther away from Delhi might reduce some pollution. One fifth of pollution is still caused by traffic. Improving grid reliability will cut down the usage of polluting diesel generators. Paving of dusty roads will reduce particulate pollutants. These and more measures are urgently required in the interest of the citizens as well as because Delhi is now in an unpleasant competition with Beijing, Karachi, Dhaka for the title of most polluted city in Asia.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/11/air-pollution-india>

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)
(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

TRANSPORT

How Technology Can Ease Your Commute

(Doug Newcomb, *Wired.com*, 21 November, 2012)

IBM is testing new traffic management technology in a pilot program in Lyon, France that blends real-time data and historical information to predict traffic giving “real-time decision support” to the city’s traffic engineers. The Decision Support System Optimizer (DSSO) combines old and new data to predict future traffic flow. “The system ‘learns’ from successful outcomes to fine-tune future recommendations.” In areas which do not have sufficient data, DSSO uses data from similar areas to construct a model. When an incident occurs, DSSO allows traffic engineers to analyze different scenarios on how to resolve the problem and predicts the outcome of, say, adjusting traffic signals, opening up another lane and routing traffic using statistical analysis. Such technologies if successful could be deployed at scale in traffic clogged Indian cities.

<http://www.wired.com/autopia/2012/11/big-data-commute/>

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

ENERGY

The Social Side of Biofuels in Brazil, India and Indonesia

(Mairon Bastos Lima, *unrisd.org*, 20 July, 2012)

With an increasing focus on emission reduction and a shift away from fossil fuels, biofuels are gaining popularity. This will help create energy self

reliance and also an additional market for agriculture. India has attempted to build a bio-fuel sector based on its established sugarcane agro-industry and on the cultivation of non-edible oilseeds such as *Jatropha curcas*. However it is the industry that makes the most out of the government incentives while for the small farmers the situation remains unchanged. The biodiesel policy of *Jatropha curcas* cultivation on “marginal lands” aimed at creating an additional production chain has not worked out and instead has led to a widespread conflict of interests between the government, private companies and customary land users, with the latter often being more vulnerable due to unclear land ownership and lack of tenure security. Meanwhile, *jatropha* cultivation has also proven unsuccessful due to low yields resulting in small landholders being worse off than before. Rural industrialization and organization capacity needs to be developed for this to work out.

[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/web/site/newsview.nsf/\(httpNews\)/C2241B5AE1EBE36DC1257A4100306D53?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/web/site/newsview.nsf/(httpNews)/C2241B5AE1EBE36DC1257A4100306D53?OpenDocument)

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

Global Wind Energy Outlook, 2012

(*Global Wind Energy Council*, 14 November, 2012)

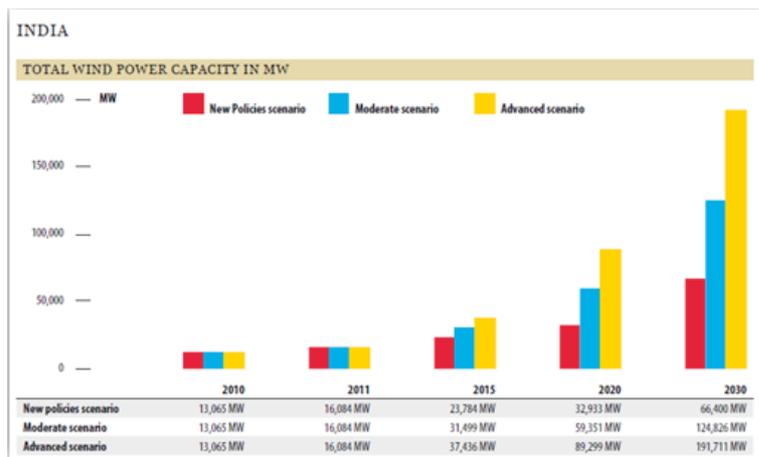
The Global Wind Energy Outlook (GWEO), 2012 points out that the power sector alone is responsible for more than 40 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions, and about 25 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). It goes on to argue that the most effective way to reduce worldwide dependence on fossil fuel emissions is switching to renewable energy. A significant portion of energy needs from the renewable energy sector would come from wind energy, which can reduce emissions by about

400 million tonnes in 2012. However, the recession in the OECD countries, the EU’s problematic trading system, and weak domestic policies, both in the USA and elsewhere, have contributed to slower growth in the wind energy sector. Currently, the commercial wind power installations in about 80 countries in 2011 totalled only 240 GW.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) points out how, in spite of major capacity additions, there is a huge mismatch between supply and demand of electricity in India. Consequently, India experiences frequent power shortages, and a significant portion of the population has no access to electricity. It estimates that by 2020, 327 GW of power will be needed, implying a threefold rise in demand, and the addition of 16 GW per year. Renewable energy accounted for 12.1 percent of total installed capacity, and wind power accounts for 70 percent of this. In this backdrop, India has installed an additional 3 GW of new capacity via wind energy, reaching 16,084 MW of installed capacity. This has been partially aided by the enactment of the Electricity Act in 2003, after which the wind sector has grown annually by 28.8 percent. Because of amendments in investment policy, India saw 7.76 billion Euros being invested in clean technology of which 3.4 billion Euros were in wind energy. These accounted for four percent of the world’s clean technology investment in 2011. The report of the sub group for wind power development, of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has pegged India’s wind energy capacity to grow to 25, 000 MW in the next five years.

However, for this to happen, the grid infrastructure needs to be urgently overhauled. Further, India will have to introduce clear, stable and long term support policies that work in tandem with the state governments. If it does these effectively (fitting the GWEO Advance Scenario), India could have 89 GW of wind power

in operation by 2020, which Telecommunications Union



would save 131 million tonnes of Co2 emissions per year. It would also supply 219 TWh of electricity per year, and employ 179, 000 people per year. The report thus estimates that investment in the wind sector could be crucial for the development of India.

<http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/global%20wind%20energy%20outlook%202012.pdf>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012).
(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande)

TECHNOLOGY

Google Rallies Opposition to UN Takeover of Internet Governance

(Timothy B. Lee, *ARS Technica*, 21 November, 2012)

In the past two years, governments across the world have enacted 19 laws to limit online freedom of expression and 42 countries filter and censor content. Google fears that the upcoming World Conference on International Telecommunications (3 December 2012) will be used as an opportunity by these governments to further their own cause and make important decisions about the future of internet. The International

(ITU), was founded in 1865 to manage inter connections and later telegraph lines. But with the coming in of internet ITU which played a major role in managing telecommunication policy in the past has seen it influence wane and has been replaced by other organizations. Google and other critics are wary of the upcoming developments as it they think that ITU will try to recapture power and this is dangerous “because ITU is a strictly inter-governmental body, with no representation for private companies like Google, non-profits, or ordinary citizens.” They also fear that it will legitimize monitoring, cut down access and also threaten privacy.

<http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2012/11/google-rallies-opposition-to-un-takeover-of-internet-governance/>

(Date accessed: 22.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

ENVIRONMENT

World Bank Fears Devastating 4.0 Degree Warming

(Washington, *Channelnewsasia.com*, 19 November, 2012)

Without immediate action, global temperatures could rise by four degrees this century with the

potential to ravage the developing regions, the World Bank has warned. Issuing a call for action, the World Bank President said “We will never end poverty if we don't tackle climate change. It is one of the single biggest challenges to social justice today.” Studies indicate that if governments undertaking to combat climate change are not achieved, by the 2060's, the earth could warm 4.0 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said that there is an urgent need to “hold nations to their commitment, made last year in Durban, South Africa, to put in place a legally binding new climate agreement by 2015.” The report carried out by German-based Climate Analytics and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research pointed that with rise in temperatures, regions will undergo different effects- acidity of the oceans, rising sea levels etc. and this may see an adverse impact on food production, flooding, and heat waves.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_world/view/1238095/1/html

(Date accessed: 20.11.2012)
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

State of the World's Forests 2012

(*Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2012*)

This article talks about the crucial role that forests play in sustainable production and consumption systems. In the 1990s, there were serious divisions among the countries of the world regarding forest policies, but today there is common agreement on the importance and key elements of sustainable forest management. “Trees have provided the most important fuel and building material of human societies since prehistoric times but the history of

human civilization is also a history of deforestation.” Rapid economic development is often accompanied by high rates of deforestation. In the two decades following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the world economy has increased from USD 24 trillion to 70 trillion of annual production and consumption but this extraordinary growth has been achieved at the cost of natural resource sustainability, and economic benefits are unevenly spread. Therefore new ways of thinking about progress are needed, which will require an increased consumption of mass based products based on photosynthesis. The global economy can be sustained for an indefinite period through the widespread use of renewable energy, including wood-based energy which will also generate additional employment, create real and durable assets, and help revitalize the lives of millions of poor people in rural areas. For a sustainable future, four strategies are required:-

- Planting of trees and an increased investment in ecosystem services
- Promotion of small and medium forest based enterprises and gender equity.
- Use of wood for energy; reuse and recycling of wood products and
- Enhancing communication and coordination of development activities

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3010e/i3010e.pdf>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012)

(Naina Bhardwaj)

Globalization

Global Challenges Require Updated Global Institutions, Says UNDP Chief

(United Nations Development Programme, 13 November, 2012)

Globalization and interdependence has spun off global challenges like pandemics, refugee flows, transnational crime, and climate change. According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark, global challenges like these need to be tackled by updated global institutions designed for the 21st century. Since global public goods cannot be protected and secured by any single nation, emerging threats and challenges require coordinated responses. According to the article, in the absence of strong and more representative global governance, emerging powers may look to pursue their interests through alternative-regional, bilateral, or unilateral mechanisms. Global challenges most impact the poorest and most vulnerable and therefore, global institutions must be designed to include the voice and decision making power of such sections of the world.

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2012/11/13/global-challenges-require-updated-global-institutions-undp-chief-says.html>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Karishma Mutreja)

GENDER

Can a Quota System Help Close the Gender Gap?

(Al Jazeera, 06 November, 2012)

“Women make up half the world's population, but only a small fraction gets as far as the corporate boardroom.” The gender gap is thus palpable in terms of the inconsistency in opportunities available to men and women. The European Union (EU) aims to make companies reserve 40 percent of seats for women to bridge this gap. This has already been implemented by several EU countries such as France, Italy, Spain and Netherlands. Across the world, representation of women in the corporate sector is abysmal. In India, there are less than 5% of women in the boardroom. Women have consistently been discriminated against even in other sectors such as “healthcare, education, political participation, and economic equality.” Some people say that it is a means for achieving equal opportunity, however, the anti- quota group claims that it is a form of preferential treatment and that companies should emphasize on valuing women and their contribution.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2012/11/201211672117264390.html>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Anjora Sarangi)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

Afghanistan As Investment Destination

(*Echo of India*, 14 November, 2012)

As Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai invites the Indian business community to invest in Afghanistan, claiming that the opportunities are better, India needs to assess not only the opportunities but also the prevailing investment climate, especially when US and NATO troops are scheduled to leave Afghanistan in the next two years. Since the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001, there has been no noteworthy investment and all Afghanistan has received is foreign assistance from US and India. The total US aid pledged till 2013 is USD 62 billion while the total international humanitarian aid is to the tune of USD 26.7 billion. Even India has made a modest commitment of \$2 billion as development aid. Apart from this aid, the single largest investment in Afghanistan has been by a consortium of seven Indian companies who have been awarded the mining rights of the country's biggest iron ore deposit at Hajigak by the Afghan government. The reason for such lack of investment is the unstable security situation. India has great stake in Afghanistan's stability because it is overrun by Taliban and Pakistan's ISI. With foreign troops retreating, there is going to be a direct impact on India's security. The situation therefore is very unfavorable for investment.

<http://echoofindia.com/editorial/afghanistan-investment-destination-15414>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012)
(Naina Bhardwaj)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India says No to UN Vote Against Death Penalty

(*Khaleej Times*, 20 November, 2012).

On 19th November, 2012, 110 countries backed a resolution at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Committee calling upon member States "to respect international standards that provided safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of persons facing the death penalty, as set out in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution." UN data estimates that 150 countries have either abolished capital punishment or have established a moratorium. The 2012 vote saw 36 countries abstaining, while 39 countries voted against the non-binding resolution. These included the United States, Japan, China, Iran, India, North Korea, Syria and Zimbabwe. Israel joined the European Union nations, Australia, Brazil and South Africa etc. and backed the motion. The resolution also called for States not to impose the death penalty on children below 18 years of age or pregnant women. Held every two years, the last vote on the same issue had seen 107 votes, and this increase was hailed by Norway, which has championed the cause for the abolition of the death penalty for a long time.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/international/2012/November/international_November700.xml§ion=international
Original available on:
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/gashc4058.doc.htm>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012).
(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande)

Obama in Southeast Asia: Symbolism or Substance?

(*Vikram Nehru, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 17 November, 2012)

The crucial reason for the visit by Obama is to solidify the "region's importance in U.S. foreign policy," and to "rebalance U.S. foreign policy" especially in Myanmar. Interestingly, prior to Obama's visit Myanmar officials released prisoners as a goodwill gesture to Obama's arrival. This visit is also to encourage the reform efforts of Myanmar. Obama has to not only support the progress but also emphasize that there is a long way to go and Myanmar must improve on the functioning of its democracy, respect human rights, and also advance relations with the ethnic minority of Myanmar. President Obama's visit to Thailand will reinforce military ties, and liberalize trade and investment in the region. Thailand is critical to the long-term security purpose for U.S. Also the most important factor of this visit would be to applaud Thailand's wish to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (also encouraging the other countries to join) and the free-trade initiative in Asia-Pacific. The U.S. President's attendance at the East Asia Summit will bring about major topics of discussion, especially maritime security and the issue of territorial claims in the South and East China Sea. If the President is able to resolve the clashes over the disputed claims, it would signify a strategic victory for the summit. Trade is also going to be another important topic for discussion; and before Obama arrives in Cambodia, Washington will also promote the benefits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and encourage countries to sign up.

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/11/17/obama-in-southeast-asia-symbolism-or->

[substance/ejm8](#)

(Date Accessed: 17.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

Praise and Pressure for Obama on Historic Myanmar Visit

(*Live Mint*, 19 November, 2012)

Barack Obama's recent visit to Myanmar was the first visit by a serving US president to the country. He met the President of Myanmar, Thein Sein and the Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. His visit was an attempt to both appreciate efforts by the nation to fight off military rule as well as emphasize for need of more reform. Though sanctions against the government will not be revoked completely, US officials say that US aid will resume in Myanmar with an assistance of \$170 million in 2012-13 provided further reforms are initiated. The ban on import will also be removed. On the issue of ethnic violence between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, Obama will engage in direct talks with the country's leaders. Obama's visit to Myanmar is seen as a looking eastwards strategy to "lure China's neighbours out of Beijing's orbit." US also sees Myanmar as a possible success story for the Obama administration.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.livemint.com/Politics/LLJw68cJn eJ6T9iNL4AvBK/Obama-to-balance-praise-pressure-in-historic-Myanmar-visit.html>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Anjora Sarangi)

SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan Releases Nine Taliban for Peace Process in Afghanistan

(Masoud Popalzai and Shaan Khan, CNN, 19 November, 2012)

In the hope of negotiating peace in Afghanistan nine members of the Taliban have been received by Pakistan with an assurance of safe passage back to Afghanistan. Supporting Kabul's effort to sever Taliban links with al Qaeda, the peace council is attempting to build peace between the Taliban, the Afghan government and Western powers. Besides Salahuddin Rabbani, chairman of Afghanistan High Peace Council has agreed to the release of more Taliban as requested by the Afghans. Though more releases are likely, senior intelligence official of Pakistan are cynical about the effectiveness of the released Taliban prisoners in peace negotiations because of generational conflicts.

http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/17/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-release/index.html?hpt=ias_c2

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

Sri Lanka: Tamil Politics and the Quest for a Political Solution

(*International Crisis Group*, 20 November, 2012)

The article addresses the increasing ethnic tensions due to the lack of any serious negotiation between the Tamil leaders and the Sri Lankan government. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party of Mahinda Rajapaksha has refused to honour any alliances or negotiations with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and has not been

successful in implementing constitutional provisions for the minimal devolution of power in the Tamil-speaking areas of the North and the East. Problems such as the militarization and discriminatory economic development in the Tamil and Muslim areas are building pressure on the Tamil leaders and Tamil political parties. The article suggests that International organizations should establish elected provincial councils and complete restoration of a civilian government in the North alongside carrying forward negotiations with the elected Tamil representative in the North and East. It is believed that the elimination of the LTTE would allow solution of such problems and negotiations between the Tamils and the government. The government has "adopted a policy of promising negotiations and expanded devolution in discussions with India, the U.S., and the UN Secretary-General, while denying these same things when addressing its Sinhala voting base" and refusing talks with the Tamil government which are to break off in January 2012. The Sinhalese government demanded that the TNA joins the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) which is a strategy known to "dilute responsibility and buy time", especially in the elections in the northern provincial council. Negotiations with the international community, especially India and the U.S., could help. They should build pressure on President Rajapaksa to reduce the military influence in the north and hold "credible northern provincial council elections in advance of the March 2013 meeting of the UN Human Rights Council." To improve the condition of the Tamils, the TNA must articulate the grievances of the people and the value of a devolved power structure in a manner that is acceptable to the larger community of Sinhalese and Muslims. To overcome this suppression, the Tamil leadership must strategically and practically build links between "its struggle for rights and power sharing and

the growing unease among Sinhalese at the corruption and abuse of power characteristic of the Rajapaksa government.”

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/239-sri-lanka-tamil-politics-and-the-quest-for-a-political-solution.aspx>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

Bhutan Switches Focus to China

(Vishal Arora and Vijay Simha, *Asia Times*, 20 November, 2012)

Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Y Thinley's first-ever meeting with his Chinese counterpart on the sidelines of the Rio+20 summit has raised concerns in India.

India, which inherited the suzerainty over Bhutan after the independence in 1947, has traditionally enjoyed almost exclusive influence over Bhutan's foreign and defence policy and has been its largest trade and development partner for decades. “A 1949 treaty required Thimphu to be guided by the advice of New Delhi in regard to its external relations; a clause which was later removed in a 2007 treaty -but only on paper” as Thimphu continued to rely on India for various policy matters. But now, Bhutan seems quite weary of her overdependence and is geared up to pursue a foreign policy independent of India.

India's relations with Bhutan have an important bearing on her security framework with respect to the unreliable Chinese state. China has long pressed Bhutan to have diplomatic relations and give access to a disputed patch of land bordering India in northwest Bhutan.

Given the changing equations between South Asian countries, it might be time for India to re-evaluate its nature of diplomacy, especially with her immediate neighbours like Bhutan and Nepal where its influence seems to be gradually replaced by the presence of the other Asian giant.

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South Asia/NK20Df01.html>

(Date accessed: 20.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)

EAST & SOUTH EAST ASIA

Thailand Develops a Myanmar Port: Strategic Implications for the Region

(Banyan Asia, *the Economist*, 14 November, 2012)



The Economist (Banyan blog) reports that Myanmar and Thailand “are constructing a \$1 billion highway connecting Thailand's Laem Chabang port, via Bangkok, to the yet-to-be-built deep-sea port in Dawei, in Myanmar's Tanintharyi region.” The highway is to become a multi-purpose corridor, for rail, road and pipeline.”

The blog argues that Dawei “is [in reality] a Thai project. The biggest construction company in Thailand, Italian-Thai, holds the 75-year concession to develop and operate the Dawei project. Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Board claims to think the project will raise Thailand's annual GDP by an implausible 1.9%. Put differently, the board believes the project to be a tremendous sort of stimulus: according to its estimate, Dawei would shorten

the time it takes for their national economy to double in size, from 14 years to just ten.”

The Blog asks, “How valuable is the connection in the first place, and to whom?”

The Blog analyzes India's strategic interests in the project as follows: “Dawei promises to cut the shipping time between Bangkok and the Indian port of Chennai from six days to three, by circumventing the congested Malacca straits.... To what extent a port some 600km south of Myanmar's commercial capital, Yangon, will help Myanmar trade with India is questionable (for Myanmar, the development of a deep-sea port and industrial complex at Thilawa, 30km from Yangon and well-situated for its China trade, is much more important). If the India trade were like the China trade, those three days saved might make a lot of sense. But Thailand's annual trade with India is worth only one twelfth the kingdom's trade with China. So the commercial case for the \$50 billion project is at least debatable, from the Thai point of view. India is at work on a deep-water port in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state in Myanmar, 539km from Kolkata. India has touted the Sittwe port as a “trade gateway” for its own landlocked north-eastern states. A combined conduit of dredged riverbed, road and pipeline for Burmese gas is to connect the seaport to a river port at Paletwa in Myanmar's Chin state. From the Chin Hills, goods could flow up to Myeikwa, on the border with the remote Indian state of Mizoram. The project is supposed to be operational by mid-2013.”

The blog then analyzes China's interest in the project: “China has already secured direct access to Myanmar's coast and the gas-rich Bay of Bengal. An 800km-long gas-and-oil pipeline, with a nice road alongside and an enormous security detail, will come online next year. Those pipelines will run from Kyauk Pyu, the epicentre of Burmese violence

against the Rohingya minority and a site earmarked for the development of a massive, Chinese-backed port and economic zone, in the restive Rakhine state, via Mandalay, and through war-torn Kachin state, before entering China's Yunnan province. In a move to steal a march on India, China last month chipped in \$200m to upgrade an airport in the Bangladeshi city of Cox's Bazar, near a potential deep-water port which could serve the landlocked parts of India, Myanmar and China. The new construction should relieve China's anxiety about the strategic vulnerability imposed by its reliance on the Malacca strait; at present, fourth-fifths of its energy imports pass through that narrow channel near Singapore... Pipelines, expected to generate \$29 billion in revenue for Myanmar over the next 30 years, are arguably the most important project along this long stretch of coast that ships can't cross. These will radically change the route that brings Middle Eastern oil into China. Eventually the equivalent of 10% of China's current annual oil imports will travel through this vexed corridor."

The blog analyses US interest in the project and says that "in private, Thailand's tycoons are wondering whether America's interest in countering Chinese influence might turn Dawei into a business opportunity for them. Thailand's military allies, America and Japan, are trailing hopelessly behind China in the race for maritime access and political and economic influence with its immediate neighbours. In October Myanmar was invited to attend a major American- and Thai-led multinational military exercise. The speculation is that a great flow of American dollars might chase any Thai initiative to boost trade and strategic ties to bind the two sides of South-East Asia."

The blog says that, "Both governments have stepped up efforts to get the Dawei seaport project off the ground. Thailand's

prime minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, and Myanmar's president, Thein Sein, agreed on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September that building Dawei will be a priority."

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/11/renavigating-south-east-asia>

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/11/renavigating-south-east-asia>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012).

Obama Must See the Dark Side Of Burma's 'Reforms'

(Maung Zarni, *the Irrawaddy*, 17 November, 2012)

The reforms initiated in Myanmar have led to a thawing of relations between Myanmar and the rest of the world. However, the author points out to the visiting US President that the reforms are "more about the interests and longevity of the country's military and army-bred cronies, than about peace, public welfare or democracy." According to Aung San Suu Kyi, the proposed reforms are "contradictory, reversible and fragile" and are limited to concerns of the middle class Western liberals, venture capitalists and multi-national corporations. These include new business regulations and investment laws, but limited freedom of speech. They completely bypass any policy reforms in active conflict zones, strategic buffer areas and resource rich lands. In fact, when implemented in economically and strategically important regions on the country's borders, where ethnic minorities who constitute 40 percent of the total population reside, the reforms would "translate into forced displacement, a rise in militarization, a sharp increase in war-fleeing refugees, loss of livelihoods" etc. It is in these very areas that mega-development

initiatives, commercial projects, resource extraction, special economic zones and industrial agricultural schemes have been proposed. As such the author believes the reforms in Burma are 'hyped up' and lack the potential for creating a "new democratic polity."

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/19088>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012).

(Pushparaj V. Deshpande)

UNFPA, BKKBN Launch New Report on Population and Development

(Eli Burhaini Faizal, *The Jakarta Post*, 14 November, 2012)

A new report published by State of World Population, 2012 titled "By Choice, Not By Chance: Family Planning, Human Rights and Development" states that millions of people around the world are still denied their rights to family planning. It states that ignoring these rights of the people will have a serious impact on poverty, social exclusion, poor health and gender inequality. This report has published various remedies to be pursued by civil society, governments and the international organizations. "UNFPA executive director Babatunde Osotimehin states in the report's foreword that a rights-based approach to family planning can produce tremendous achievements." The report statistically shows that of an estimated 867 million, 1.52 billion women in the reproductive age need contraceptives and 645 are using modern contraceptives. The report also states that around 40 million of the total unintended pregnancies are affecting women who lack access to modern contraceptives. Babatunde Osotimehin said, "This is inexcusable. Family planning is a human right. It must therefore be

available to all who want it. But clearly this right has not yet been extended to all.”

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/11/14/unfpa-bkkbn-launch-new-report-population-and-development.html>

(Date Accessed: 16.11.2012)

(Ranjana Adhikari)

China should Change Growth Model

(The People's Daily, 16 November, 2012)

Recently Robert Wihtol, Director General for Asian Development Bank's East Asian Department said that China should move from its “highly successful export-and-investment growth model towards reliance on domestic demand to facilitate sustainable economic growth.” Such an alternative model will create more jobs for citizens since it would be based on consumer demand. Moreover, it protects the domestic economy from external shocks and volatility, and can reduce dependency marginally. The old growth model of China also needs to be replaced with a knowledge based production system to avoid the “the middle-income trap”, which China is slowly moving towards. Acknowledging the inefficient energy use, the author also expressed the need to reduce the use of the commercial energy for industry.

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/102774/8022088.html>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Simi Sunny)

MIDDLE-EAST

The Bright, Shiny Tinderboxes Of The Persian Gulf

(Pankaj Mishra, *Bloomberg*, 19 November, 2012)

“There are some things -- political stability, above all - that money can't buy, especially in the age of global capitalism.” This article argues that the social contracts underlying most of the monarchic and autocratic Gulf countries, which bought political acquiescence through the redistribution of wealth to key stakeholders, is under serious threat of breaking down. Warning of a domino effect, the author argues that the ingredients of mass uprisings (declining natural resources, overspending, a young population confronted with rising unemployment and widening inequalities) are increasingly evident in the Gulf States.

The biggest problem is widening inequalities. The elite and middle classes reap the benefits from oil and gas revenues while warlords and mafia dons from the countries affected by the Arab Spring movement, and the new plutocrats of Afghanistan increasingly divert their wealth to these countries, further augmenting trickle down benefits. The author takes the example of Christopher Davidson's book, “After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies” which outlines that the Gulf monarchies/autocracies have so far managed to keep away external pressures by endowing Western Universities, donating to disaster relief funds, buying major shopping chains, aiding NATO troops in Afghanistan militarily, and most importantly, by continuously buying arms and ammunition from American and European armaments manufacturers. Internally, they rely on a repressive police force (or even resort to hiring mercenaries). Davidson argues that “most of these regimes at least in their present form will be gone within the next two to five years.” The author takes from this, and draws examples from the Qaddafi regime in Libya to make the case that “neither large scale bribery of the masses nor renewed business and security links with the West” will be able to dam the inevitable.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-11-18/the-bright-shiny-tinderboxes-of-the-persian-gulf.html>

(Date Accessed: 20.11.2012).

(Pushparaj. V. Deshpande)

‘Culture Is Not Just In the Opera House’

(Omar El Adl, *Daily News Egypt*, 19 November, 2012)



The report discusses a new campaign in Egypt that reminds Egyptians of their cultural rights, and features startling imagery and quotes on the streets of Cairo and Giza. “The campaign is endorsed by the Sawy Culture Wheel and is initiated by the National Group for Cultural Policies, operating under the Mawred Al Thaqafy organisation.” The campaign would be hosted especially in the low-income areas, and slogans quoting, “culture is in Tanta and Shubra; culture is not just for the cultured, culture is for all Egyptians; it is my right to colour; and it is my right to dance” will be put up. This is a very interesting approach of conveying that the idea of culture is not just a topic of discussion among the intellectuals, but also directly relevant to the Egyptians. One of the posters displays Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” The core focus of this campaign is to make the citizens of Egypt aware of their cultural rights, and eventually garner public support

to eventually frame a cultural policy for Egypt.

<http://dailynewsegypt.com/2012/11/19/culture-is-not-just-in-the-opera-house/>

(Date Accessed: 19.11.2012)
(Ranjana Adhikari)

AFRICA

Rwanda Eyes UN Security Council Seat

(Reuters, 16 October, 2012)

Regardless of charges levelled by the UN expert panel for commanding a rebellion in Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda is most likely to win a seat in UN Security Council election on Thursday. Presently there is no opposition to Rwanda's election in Security Council for a two year term in place of South Africa; however Rwanda still requires approval by two-thirds of the UN General Assembly members present. "It was theoretically possible that Rwanda would fail to secure the necessary votes for election, although they said that was highly unlikely" said UN diplomats who also argued that Rwanda features as the sixth biggest troop contributing nation for peacekeeping, in addition to leading the Millennium Development Goals and having a "post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building" record.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/rwanda-eyes-un-security-council-seat-1.1091049>

(Date accessed: 20.11.2012)
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

AMERICAS

"US-India Military Ties can Alter World Power Dynamics"

(Postnoon, 20 November, 2012)

A report titled "US-India Military Engagement: Steady as They Go" by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) suggests that there is a need for India and the US to strengthen military ties in order to reap strategic benefits "including the enhancement of military capabilities, building long-term professional relationships, as well as strategic signaling to allies, partners, and potential adversaries." India is however reluctant to become too closely aligned with the US as it interferes with its foreign policy orientation of 'strategic autonomy' "which eschews excessively close relations with any single power." However, despite obstacles, bilateral military cooperation can aid in establishing a stable and secure environment between the two countries as well as the larger Indo-Pacific region especially since the "twenty-first century is poised to be an Asian one."

<http://postnoon.com/2012/11/20/us-india-military-ties-can-alter-world-power-dynamics-says-think-tank/89048>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)
(Anjora Sarangi)

Opinions

Electronic Voting Machines: “Tamperable and Unconstitutional” (Pramod Das, Op-Ed, *Sentinel*)

The article reasons that it is time India reforms its voting system to ensure that “the electoral verdicts reflect the true will of the people of the country.” Several attempts made by criminals showing how Electronic Voting Machines could be easily manipulated, require a detailed examination. It argues that the use of faulty EVMs be banned in India, as EVMs are already abandoned worldwide due to the possibility of vote fraud, lack of transparency and verifiability associated. Not only the software but the hardware of the EVM is also not safe from manipulations. The Indian EVMs may also be considered unconstitutional because the “right to vote is a legal right but how that vote should be exercised by a voter is his/ her individual expression, covered by Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.” The article concludes by saying “There could be many malpractices associated with electronic counting. Everybody watches polling closely. Nobody watches counting as closely.”

http://www.sentinelassam.com/op_ed/story.php?sec=33&subsec=0&id=139352&dtP=2012-11-20&ppr=1#139352

(Date accessed: 20.11.2012)

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

Indonesia Could Bridge Obama's 'Pivot' to Asia

(Tom Plate, *Japan Times*, 19 November, 2012)

The article focuses on the importance of Indonesia as a “huge untapped geopolitical and diplomatic resource” for the United States of America in balancing its relationship with China and improving its relationship with the Islamic world. The writer proposes that Obama should prioritize the US foreign-policy goal to advance its “connections, cooperation and level of trust with the Muslim world”, wherein Indonesia with its constitutional secular democracy and “deep Muslim culture” can become a special ally of the US. Indonesia can be well suited for this role as it “represents a secular state that practices a sensible, social Islam, while cracking down with increasing determination on the violent strains that otherwise many Muslim leaders loathe.” Moreover, Indonesia has the largest Islamic population anywhere (according to the writer, 90 percent of Indonesians are Muslim). The U.S. policy though “pivoting” towards Asia, must also focus on Indonesia. This may help bridge America to the Middle East from Asia, rather through Europe, which has been the norm so far.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/eo20121119tp.html>

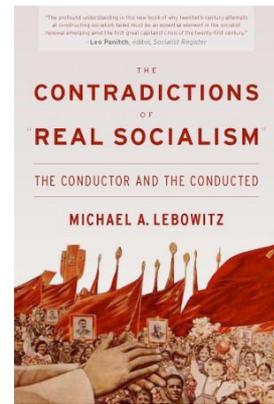
(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Karishma Mutreja)

BOOKS

The Contradictions of “Real Socialism”

(Michael A. Lebowitz, *Monthly Review Press*, 20 October, 2012)



In his book, Michael A. Lebowitz reflects on the nature, tendencies, and contradictions of twentieth-century socialist societies which led to the demise of “real socialism” (a term which originated for the purpose of distinguishing those socialist societies from abstract, theoretical socialism) and gave way to capitalist tendencies. Lebowitz points out the lacunae within inner relations of “real socialism” which he identifies as “vanguard relations of production.” These relations manifested as a “form of a social contract where workers obtain benefits not available to their counterparts in capitalism, but lack the power to decide within the workplace and society.” Under this relation, “the separation of thinking and doing” prevented workers from achieving their full development potential. This led to the “deformation of workers and those elements necessary for the building of socialism” and created an environment through which “enterprise managers emerged as an incipient capitalist class.” Describing this as the crisis of “real socialism”, he stresses the “necessity to go beyond the hierarchy inherent in the relation of conductor and conducted to

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create the conditions in which people can transform themselves through their conscious cooperation and practice—i.e. a society of free and associated producers.”

<http://monthlyreview.org/press/books/pb2563/>

(Date accessed: 21.11.2012)

(Karishma Mutreja)

Taking Sides

(Rudolf C. Heredia, *Penguin Books India*, 20 October, 2012)

The recently released book ‘Taking Sides’ explores the debate on reservations for minority communities in India from different angles and perspectives. The author argues that “while the Constitution of India affirms equal justice for all, the manner in which legislatures and courts operate often compromise these rights in the name of political pragmatism.” The impact of these political exigencies is most deeply felt by those who remain at the margins of society. The book outlines a credible roadmap to aid the quest for an inclusive and just society. Rudolf Heredia makes a persuasive argument for justice premised on liberty, tempered by equality and moderated by fraternity—a justice beyond politics.

<http://www.penguinbooksindia.com/en/content/taking-sides>

(Date accessed: 19.11.2012)

(Hansa Kaul)