



**Weekly Roundup  
of  
News on Policy**

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## Natural Resource Overuse a Threat to Economic Performance: New UN Report

*Demand for Natural Resources Exceeds the Planet's Ability to Provide  
them by 1.5 Times;*

*India Especially Vulnerable Because of Overuse of Natural Resources*

Natural resource scarcity and environmental degradation threaten the ability of national governments to borrow funds (sovereign credit). India is especially vulnerable in this regard. This is the important new finding of a recent report issued by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) ("*E-RISC: Environmental Risk Integration in Sovereign Credit Analysis*")

In the aftermath of the current global financial crisis investors no longer see debt instruments issued by national governments as risk free. After seeing debt instruments issued by the US and Euro zone countries downgraded, investors are today closely and anxiously examining sovereign risk – the risk that national governments may default on their sovereign bond repayment obligations. Sovereign bonds (debt instruments issued by national governments) are especially important for investors

because they are one of the most important asset classes held by investors around the world -- valued at a massive 41 trillion US dollars at the end of 2010, they represent over 40 per cent of the global bond market according to the UNEP Report.

The Report, jointly prepared by UNEP and the *Global Footprint Network*, says that investors are in particular seeking a broader understanding of systemic risks outside of the financial system.

Environmental degradation is one such critical non-financial system risk.

A country's natural assets are fundamental to its economic growth, stability and long term development. Natural resources (such as fossil fuels, ores and minerals) are critical inputs for production. Many sectors such as forestry, pulp and paper, energy, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and chemicals are directly or indirectly dependent on natural

resources.

The Report says that demand for renewable, biological natural resources and services now exceed the planet's ability to provide them by one and a half times and rising.

Countries are therefore seeing their import bills for many biological resources (fish, timber, wheat and other soft commodities) and fossil fuels rise. This reverses more than two decades of stable or falling prices.

The economic performance of countries may therefore be profoundly affected by lack of availability, unreliable availability or higher cost of natural resources. In turn, this may affect the ability of national governments to meet sovereign debt obligations.

Yet, risks arising from increasing global natural resource scarcity, environmental degradation and vulnerability to climate change

are not adequately reflected in traditional credit risk analyses.

The UNEP Report *introduces a new E-RISC (Environmental Risk in Sovereign Credit analysis) methodology* that would enable environmental risks to be adequately considered in analyzing sovereign credit risk.

E-RICS focuses on the development of metrics and methods for quantifying natural resource and environmental risks so they can be incorporated into sovereign credit risk assessments.

The 3-step E-RISC methodology includes (1) assessment of the resource situation of a county; (2) analysis of the economic significance of resource risks; and (3) evaluation of the financial resilience of the country to adverse shocks.

The E-RISC methodology is based on a comparison of the *Ecological Footprint* of a country to its *Bio capacity*.

Ecological Footprint is a “*population’s demand on nature*, measured in terms of the biologically productive land and marine area required to produce all the resources it consumes and to absorb the waste it generates, using prevailing technology and resource management practices.

“Bio capacity” (or biological capacity), is “*the capacity of ecosystems to provide services to people including production of useful biological materials* (food, fibre and timber) and absorption of waste materials generated by humans, using current management schemes and extraction technologies.

“Useful biological materials” are defined as those demanded by the human economy. Bio capacity is usually expressed in global hectares – biologically productive hectares with world-average productivity. Like two sides of a financial balance sheet, a country’s Ecological Footprint can be compared with its bio

capacity.” Bio capacity is a subset of the *Natural Capital* of a country, i.e., the earth’s natural assets (soil, air, water, flora and fauna), and the ecosystem services resulting from them. Natural capital represents the *flow of biological resources* from fisheries, forests, and cropland, as well as *waste absorption* such as the service of CO2 absorption provided by forests.

The methodology used for the E-RISC project complements bio capacity data with data on fossil fuels, metals and minerals, encompassing more elements of Natural Capital. Even so, there are important components of Natural Capital that are not covered by this project such as climate regulation, species diversity, water filtration and others.

The E-RISC report is the first output of a joint project between UNEP-Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI), Global Footprint Network and a number of financial institutions. It represents a first step towards mapping the connections between natural resource risks, the broader environmental implications and the economic and financial materiality for sovereign credit risk.

Crucially, the report also provides a first attempt on how such natural resource criteria can be factored in sovereign credit risk models.

The Report applies the E-RISC methodology to assess the impact of environmental degradation on sovereign risk in five countries: Brazil, France, India, Turkey and Japan.

The Report says that Brazil has 20 times more bio-capacity per person than India. *The Report says that India has the least amount of bio-capacity among the five countries studied.*

The Report says that Brazil is a net exporter of commodities derived from natural resources (as

measured by its bio-capacity) while France’s imports drive the increase in its Ecological Footprint. “*India, on the other hand, has negligible trade in bio-capacity meaning that the growth in its Footprint is being driven by growing demand on its own ecosystems to provide natural resources and services.*”

The Report says that “increasing global natural resource scarcity also puts security of supply at risk for some countries. Exposure to such risks depends largely on how dependent a country is on imported resources for its own consumption and economic activities. *Countries such as Brazil or India that still meet over 90 per cent of the demand for renewable natural resources from domestic sources are less at risk than a country such as Japan that is dependent on imported resources for nearly two thirds of its consumption.*”

The Report warns, “*Some countries also face threats to their economic performance if resource overuse leads to a loss in bio-capacity (as is the case for India).* Overharvesting of resources does lead over time to the degradation of the productive capacity of ecological assets. Economically, this risk will have greater impact for countries that depend on agricultural activities for a large share of total output and employment.

## Global Warming: Emission Reduction by Countries Lagging Behind Target, Warns UNEP

*(United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], November 2012)*

The third Emissions Gap Report seeks to ascertain the gap between the projected and actual emissions levels of individual countries, if they are to maintain global temperatures to the agreed upon two degrees in 2020. The 2010 report indicated that there would be a huge emissions gap in 2020, but estimates differed based on assumptions of how country pledges would be adhered to. The 2011 report pointed out that the technology existed to reduce the gap, and recommended urgent action by countries.

The 2012 report updates these assessments in light of new data, and estimates the level of global emissions consistent with the two degree target in 2020, 2030 and 2050.

The report points out that current global emissions are much higher than what they ought to be if the world is to meet the 2020 target. Current global GHG emissions are estimated to be 14 percent higher than the median estimate (50.1 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e as against the target of 44 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e). Emissions have risen by 20 percent since 2000, and are estimated to increase even more, as economies pick up after the global recession in 2008 and 2009. Depending on how well emissions targets by individual countries are met, the current emissions gap is 8 to 13 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e.

The report argues that even if this gap is met, the 2020 target is

unlikely to be met because there is a serious “doubt that governments may agree to stringent international accounting rules for pledges.” In this situation, in order to keep meet the overall century target to below 1.5 degrees, the report estimates that the 2030 target would have to be approximately 37 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e (range: 33 to 44 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e). This would put added pressure on individual countries to reduce emissions after 2030. A significant part of this would be to meet emissions targets through negative emissions (by planting forests or through carbon capture and storage). The report cautions that achievement of such negative emissions is relatively simple in analytical models, but in reality would imply the application of unproven technologies or technology combinations on a large scale. For example, many studies that meet the 2°C target assume a significant deployment of bio-energy systems that may have unforeseen negative impacts on food production and biodiversity.

The report endorses the IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation and the Global Energy Assessment (GEA) which emphasizes the “importance of accelerating demand-side efficiency and conservation measures for future reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.” This curtailing of demand would make it possible to reach targets without relying of nuclear energy or carbon capture and storage (whose efficacy is not yet proven). But for this to happen, governments have to urgently accelerate the current rate of energy efficiency improvements. Some other suggestions by the report include implementing the conditional pledges vociferously (resulting in a 2 Gt Co<sub>2</sub>e reduction), minimizing the use of lenient Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) credits and surplus emission credits (resulting in a 3 Gt Co<sub>2</sub>e reduction), and avoiding the double-counting of offsets and

improving the additionality of CDM projects (resulting in a 1.5 Gt Co<sub>2</sub>e reduction).

Pointing out that climate mitigation is not a priority for countries; the report argues that “the challenge is the current pace of action. Even if the potential remains the same there is basically one year less to achieve this reduction, implying steeper and more costly actions will be required to potentially bridge the emissions gap by 2020.” In concluding, the report recommends concerted and rapid action failing which we could see dramatic climate shifts in our lifetime.

<http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/2012%20emissions%20gap%20report.pdf>  
(Date Accessed: 26.11.2012)  
Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.

## New Report Examines Risk of a Warmer World by End of Century

*(United Nations Environment Programme, 19 November, 2012)*



The World Bank has commissioned a new report, stating clearly that if the global community fails to take any measures toward climate control calamitous changes like extreme heat waves, declining global food stocks, and rising sea-level would heat up the world by 4 degrees by the end of the century. According to this article, the poor would suffer the worst blows. “A 4 degree warmer world can, and must be, avoided - we need to hold warming below 2 degrees,” said World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim. “Lack of action

on climate change threatens to make the world our children inherit a completely different world than we are living in today. Climate change is one of the single biggest challenges facing development, and we need to assume the moral responsibility to take action on behalf of future generations, especially the poorest.” The report has also stated the destruction this increasing temperature will harbour the flooding of coastal cities because of the rising sea level; a high risk of food production and increasing malnourishment; the drying of the already dry regions, heat waves, water scarcity, and a major loss of biodiversity. Interestingly, the report notes, with a sustained policy action, the warming can be held back by 2 degrees, a goal that is already adopted by the international community.

“The world must tackle the problem of climate change more aggressively,” Jim Yong Kim said. “Greater adaptation and mitigation efforts are essential and solutions exist. We need a global response equal to the scale of the climate problem, a response that puts us on a new path of climate smart development and shared prosperity. But time is very short.” The report however states that, “the science is unequivocal that humans are the cause of global warming, and major changes are already being observed. The global mean temperature has continued to increase and is now about 0.8°C above pre-industrial levels.”

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2698&ArticleID=9333&l=en>

(Date Accessed: 26.11.12)

Ranjana Adhikari

## 17 Per Cent of Indian Working Women Face Sexual Harassment

(New Delhi, *Sentinel*, 27 November, 2012)

According to a survey conducted by Oxfam India and the Social and Rural Research Institute in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmadabad, Lucknow and Durgapur, 17 per cent of working women in India, from both the organised and unorganised sector have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace. Incidences of non physical harassment were reportedly higher. Sexual harassment cases were highest among labourers (29 per cent), domestic helps (23 per cent) and small-scale manufacturing units (16 per cent). Women in the unorganized sector are said to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment because of lack of awareness of legislation and their economic vulnerability. Though 87 per cent of the general population and 93 per cent of working women respondents were aware of sexual harassment of women at workplace, “a majority of the victims did not resort to any formal action against the perpetrator” in fear of layoffs, stigmatization, nonexistence of any complaints mechanism at the workplaces and lack of awareness about redressal mechanism. Nearly 80 per cent of the respondents voiced the “need for a separate law for dealing with sexual harassment at workplace.”

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/national/story.php?sec=2&subsec=3&id=140515&dtP=2012-11-28&ppr=1#140515>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

## Death Penalty Questioned

(Manoj Joshi, *India Today*, 26 November, 2012)

On 19th November India, along with 41 other countries, opposed the UN General Assembly resolution for ending death penalty. The very next day, Ajmal Kasab, the sole surviving terrorist of the 2008 Mumbai attacks was hanged in Pune. Apart from the opposition of death penalty, a new debate has now arisen around the concept of ‘rarest of rare case’. The ‘rarest of rare’ principle formulated in 1980 has become judge centric rather than principle centric. One concern that has emerged from this ongoing debate is about the uniform application of death penalty. It is not enough to abolish death penalty as heinous crimes need to be punished. Judges argue that what is needed are mandatory, standardised sentencing guidelines. They also argue that the President and Governors should not have a central say in granting remittances because discretionary powers are often the root of corruption.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/death-demands-uniform-penalty-india-today/1/234718.html>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

## Eurozone Crisis ‘Greatest Threat to the World Economy’: OECD

(*Economic Times*, 27 November, 2012)

The OECD has warned in its second yearly economic outlook that the debt crisis in the recession that has hit the Euro Zone is the greatest threat to the world economy. It slashed down its May forecast of global growth from 3.4 percent to 2.9 percent for this year and from 4.2 percent to 3.4 percent for 2013. According to OECD chief economist Pier Carlo Padoan, the zone remains in a state of fragility, not only because of recession but also for the different negative policy feedback loops between sovereign debt, the banking situation and exit risks. He also urged policy makers to get “the grip of the debt crisis” to control the diverging financing conditions in Europe. OECD has advised Central Banks across the world, especially the European Central bank, to continue with the monetary easing measures and has recommended that China and Germany pursue temporary spending to revive global growth.

[http://articles.economictimes.india.com/2012-11-27/news/35385610\\_1\\_oecd-forecast-pier-carlo-padoan-euro-zone](http://articles.economictimes.india.com/2012-11-27/news/35385610_1_oecd-forecast-pier-carlo-padoan-euro-zone)

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Simi Sunny

## USSR to Rise from Ashes through Joint Eurasian Currency

(Maria Snytkova, *Pravda English*, 19 November, 2012)

The idea of a Eurasian currency is slowly taking shape. There is an air of scepticism due to the Euro zone crisis, although there are some who think otherwise. “Only a single currency may actually unite the single economic space” said Razuvayev, Ph.D. and Director Analytical Department of Alpari. The new currency may come into force on January 1, 2015. It would also give rise to a Eurasian Central Bank and mark the restoration of Soviet Union, on new market and capitalist principles but on a smaller scale. Ukraine is holding out from joining the Customs Union as it wants to join the EU, but if the Euro zone crisis worsens, it may rethink its position. According to Razuvayev, only 200-250-million people strong markets can be self-sufficient. Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus would fall short of this number without Ukraine. Russia can pressurize Ukraine to join the Union by holding back the gas supply like it did in the past. Russia has world's third largest international reserves, more than 500 billion dollars, and Russia's GDP this year is about 2 trillion.

<http://english.pravda.ru/business/finance/19-11-2012/122851-joint-eurasian-currency-0/>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

## POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

### UN Assesses Effectiveness of Women's Reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions

(Anne F Stenhammer, *Hindustan Times*, 26 November, 2012)

On the 20th anniversary of decentralized governance in India, UN Women and the International Centre for Research on Women conducted a study to understand gender equality in local governance in India.

Decentralised governance aimed at equal participation of women by providing them reservation of at least one-third seats in PRIs,

The study revealed that though “ensuring women’s participation through affirmative action is an important step towards democratizing and stimulating local governance”, it does not assure effective governance especially in relation to women’s issues.

Often, women are forced to withdraw from re-contesting because of the responsibility of household duties. A significant observation made by the study was that PRIs are not considered a space to raise gender specific issues such as domestic violence. Such constraints render women leadership ineffective in bringing about a transformation in governance. If we really want reservations to work in favour of emancipation of women, there is an urgent need to “alter these public spaces into truly democratic and gender-equitable realms both at policy and individual level.”

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/ColumnsOthers/Look-beyond-reservations/Article1-964723.aspx>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)  
Simi Sunny

## DEVELOPMENT

### Why We Simply Can't Hurry into Direct Cash Transfers

(*Firstpost*, 27 November, 2012)

Scholars Lant Pritchett and Shrayana Bhattacharya have argued that rushing hurriedly into the direct cash transfer scheme by January 2013 may not produce desired results as the system to support it isn't conclusively in place. Cash transfers may be a pure and direct transfer of purchasing power and may facilitate a socially desirable distribution of money. However, they feel that it may not help in tackling market failures and attain a socially desirable form of behaviour, as the poor may not use the subsidy amount for good nutrition and health outcomes. They argue that direct cash transfers may benefit them if they have access to the goods they need to improve their condition and that requires better transport of goods. Further, the banking system may not be well equipped to ensure a leak proof system. Lack of digitized records, difficulties in opening bank accounts and inadequate amount of verification of welfare recipients are problems that need to be addressed foremost to prevent a leaky welfare scheme.

<http://www.firstpost.com/economy/why-we-simply-cant-hurry-into-direct-cash-transfers-536743.html>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)  
Karishma Mutreja

## Fisher folk Pushed to the Edge

(*Down To Earth*, 21 November, 2012)

According a recent report by the National Coastal Protection Campaign, fisher communities are rapidly losing their source of livelihood because of the constant encroachment of coastal area for development activities. While on the one hand, construction of ports and industries have taken over more than half of the Indian coast, on the other hand, the shorelines are eroding at close to 30 percent because of haphazard sand mining.

Ports have become one of the major reasons for coastal land-grab. Around 45 percent of the Indian coast is affected by construction of ports, Maharashtra having the highest number of 44 ports followed by Gujarat with 32 ports. The loss of beaches and restricted access to sea due to seawalls is affecting the activities of the fishing communities in several coastal villages. Alongside this, the fisher communities are also bearing the brunt of competition from industrial fishing, which employs only 34 percent fishers but brings in 70 percent of the total fish catch.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/fisher-people-pushed-edge>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)  
Simi Sunny

## SECURITY

### Assam: Alarming Increase in Crime

(*Sentinel Assam*)

Assam, known as a law crime state three to four decades ago, today seems to have undergone a drastic change.

It is now the second worst state after Uttar Pradesh in the number of rape cases. These increased from 1,438 in 2008 to 1,700 in 2011. In 2011, Assam had almost double the rape cases that Bihar registered (934) and almost three times the rape cases registered in Delhi.

There has also been an increase in murder, which is more often than not a result of abduction for ransom. Failure of the administration to detect such crimes swiftly and ensure punishment of criminals can be attributed as one of the reasons for this increase in crime rate. The involvement of many police officials in crimes has also given rise to other crimes such as robbery, cheating, land – grabbing as criminals do not fear the law anymore.

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/editorial/story.php?sec=3&subsec=0&id=140453&dtP=2012-11-28&ppr=1#140453>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

### Good Policing is About Social Integration -- Not About 'Zero Tolerance'

(An interview with Dr Leon Carlos Arslanian conducted by Rodrigo Aguilar Benignos, Citymayors, 25 July, 2010)

According to Latin American security expert and Argentinean judicial reformer, Carlos Arslanian, known for his progressive ideas for overcoming security threats in Latin American cities, the criminal law functions through police, courts etc. only after the event. He strongly feels that “Zero Tolerance” and “Tough on Crime” policies have been a failure and that they create a criminal law system that fools citizens. He calls for “a new paradigm in security where the emphasis needs to be on the origins, causes, the whole *aetiology* of violence in our cities.” To do this, social policies on public health, human development, infrastructure, education, labour, economic development are very important. The fight against social exclusion phenomenon – inequality, iniquity, poverty will reduce rising crime rates. These are the main sources of violence that sooner or later will transfer into criminal acts. Apart from this the police should be given training in values, ethics and human rights and efforts should be made to integrate police with the community.

<http://www.citymayors.com/security/latin-american-security.html>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

(B. Varun Kumar Reddy)

## HEALTH

### Private Sector Contributes to Providing Cheap Health Care

(Jyoti Pande Lavakare, *India Ink*, November 26, 2012)

Private sector participation in improving affordable health care has seen a burgeoning rise in India. So far, a major share of the spending comes from the government, however the trend seems to be changing with the establishment of start-ups, partnerships and for-profit organizations that have begun to “churn out prototypes and pilot projects aimed at this market, from inexpensive, life-saving, portable ventilators, etc.” An ecosystem of health and medical technology innovators and entrepreneurs specializing in “affordable health care” has sprung up in Delhi and Mid-tech parks have been set up in many southern Indian states besides a host of innovation labs and training centres for entrepreneurs and community health workers. The focus of these innovators lies in “developing technology to provide better health care to poor people and those with limited access to medical services, while, for the most part, making a profit at the same time.” The new focus on health care by private investors has arisen because of opportunities embedded in the size and growth of the health care industry which is expected to double to a \$100 billion industry by 2015(Fitch Ratings, 2011). Private sector annual revenues in “affordable health care” are estimated at up to \$20 billion in India alone. Health care companies are looking to take advantage of India’s low-cost engineering and low-cost manufacturing to re-engineer standard technologies to improve efficiency and reduce costs, thus benefitting the poor at large.

<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/26/in-delhi-a-sand-hill-road-for-cheap-health-care/>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Karishma Mutreja

## Women in Sunderbans: Trapped in Depression

(Sharmistha Chowdhury, *The Hindu*, 27 November, 2012)

A recent survey conducted by Future Health Systems (FHS) with support from the UK's Department for International Development and the Institute of Health Management Research (IHMR) has revealed an alarming rise of mental health problems among women in the Sunderbans.

The most visible indicator of psychiatric disorders is the prevalence of deliberate self harm (DSH) or "attempted suicide." In the period of six months between April and September 2008, a total of 1,181 cases of non-fatal DSH were registered in the 13 Block Primary Health Care Centres (average of such cases per month in each of the BPHC has gone up from 11 to 15 between 2001 and 2008) – roughly one attempt every two days. The share of pesticides or chemical poisoning in DSH cases has also increased to 89%. The pressure to produce a male child, along with poverty and livelihood insecurity is major causes. In addition to these factors, malaises like marital conflicts, alcoholism and resultant torture, etc adds to the problem. The most common mental diseases, as found in one study, are major depressive disorders, followed by Somatoform pain disorder, post traumatic (animal attack related) stress disorder and adjustment disorder.

In addition to this, women indulging in fishing and collecting forest food are vulnerable to animal attacks. Also, there is always a lurking fear of

widowhood (every time the man /husband ventures in the forest for the purpose of livelihood).

The study states that psychiatric disorders swell with increasing suicide attempts because neither the people nor the providers consider their prevention as a serious health action. The challenge is to bring about "positive behavioural changes that will encourage and prompt the community to ensure medical attention to women when they are seen to be displaying disturbed or unstable behaviour."

<http://www.thehindu.com/health/policy-and-issues/trapped-in-depression/article4140018.ece>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

(Naina Bhardwaj)

## Moral Medicine: The Cuban Way

(John M Kirk and Chris Walker, *New Internationalist*, November, 2012)

This article discusses Cuba's revolutionary conception of health which works on cooperation and not aid. Cuba has got more healthcare personnel serving abroad in case of contingencies than all G8 nations combined. To date some 135,000 health workers have participated in medical missions abroad. Cubans follow a very different model of sustainable medical care where the local population is trained to play an important part, and living in the same community, they don't charge for their medical services. Access to healthcare is seen as the most fundamental human right and is embedded in the Cuban Constitution. A patient is not treated for just one ailment but is viewed in a wider bio-psycho-social context. Unlike the curative approach followed in most industrialized countries, Cuba focuses on prevention which is very cost effective. Also, Cuba produces 80% of its own medical products and they are sold at a fraction of the price they would cost elsewhere. Cuban

medical personnel spend a lot of time in public health education campaigns. Humanitarian considerations rather than political sympathies remain the key to Cuba's approach. Medical support has been sent to even those countries which have not been in very friendly terms with Cuba. Cuban medical internationalism is representative of Cuba's commitment to accessible and sustainable healthcare, free to all and especially the marginalized.

<http://www.newint.org/features/2012/11/01/moral-medicine-cuba/>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

(Naina Bhardwaj)

## NGOs Want Mechanism to Facilitate Organ Donation

(Post Bureau, Guwahati, *Seven Sisters Post*, 24 November, 2012)

A few NGOs and likeminded organisations in Assam have collectively decided to urge the State Government to develop a mechanism to facilitate organ donation and transplantation by forming an expert committee which would convince families of those with brain death for organ donation. The state Government will be soon handed a draft prepared by these organisations.

Insisting that the Government come forward and provide crucial infrastructure, legal support for transplantation of organs and tissues from deceased donors, it was also pointed out that Assam lacks the infrastructure and network for organ transplantation from a deceased donor in addition to having no infrastructure for tissue banking which assists in the treatment of seriously burnt patients.

<http://sevensisterspost.com/ngos-want-mechanism-to-facilitate-organ-donation/>

(Date accessed 27.11.2012)  
Junty Sharma Pathak

## India Sees Highest-Ever (35,000) Dengue Cases In 2012

(*Northeast Today*, 27 November, 2012)

Over 35,000 dengue cases were reported in 2012 in India, making it the highest figure in a year and also accounting for a total 216 dengue deaths till mid November. This is a sharp rise from 18,860 cases and 169 deaths in 2011 and 28,000 dengue cases and 110 in 2010.

As reported, by mid November Kerala accounted for the maximum number of dengue cases, followed by Karnataka and Delhi. Highest dengue deaths were reported from Tamil Nadu, claiming a life of 60 people, preceding Maharashtra and Delhi.

Increasing growth in population, unplanned rapid urbanisation and inadequate waste management and also “increased distribution and densities of vector mosquitoes due to man-made, ecological and lifestyle changes” were cited as the primary causes of the epidemic. “Water supply mismanagement, gaps in public health infrastructure, increased mobility of population, and poor infrastructure in the states to monitor mosquito breeding” were pointed as the other causes for the outbreak.

<http://www.northeasttoday.in/national-news/india-sees-highest-ever-35000-dengue-cases-in-2012/>

(Date accessed 28.11.2012)  
Junty Sharma Pathak

## URBAN

### World Bank’s Urban Water Report on India

(Milind Sohoni, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 December, 2012)

Since 2000, World Bank’s water reports have brought about significant changes in Maharashtra, from influencing rural drinking water supply, to setting up the Maharashtra Water Services Regulatory Authority (MWRRA). The latest World Bank (WB) report on India’s Water Scenario is titled “India: Improving Urban Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) Service Provision.” The report deals with (a) policy and institutional recommendations, (b) finance structures and business plans, (d) global best practices, and (c) a policy for creating a WSS Service Provider (WSSSP).

Although the primary requirement for financial restructuring comes from the desire to involve private players, such attempts would be futile as long as the roles and functions of these urban local bodies remain ill-defined, for e.g. their responsibility towards the urban poor. Also, WB’s recommendations of “unbundling” WSS functions into separate entities (such as infrastructure design and service provision) are questionable in the context of scarcity-driven activities such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater extraction, etc, which will lead to excessive systemic complications.

As part of capacity building, it is suggested that a multi-disciplinary approach to WSS is desirable, and Engineering institutions, with MHRD, should collaborate with urban bodies for the same.

<http://www.epw.in/commentary/world-banks-urban-water-report-india.html>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)  
Hansa Kaul

## ENERGY

### Replacing Fossil Fuel with Renewable Energy Will Create More Jobs and Provide Cheap Electricity

(*Greenpeace India*, November 16, 2012)

The *India Energy [R]evolution Report* jointly drafted by Greenpeace, the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC) and the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC) propagates that the government must push for significant investments and long term support policies in the form of a National Renewable Energy Law as the future of India’s growth lies with massive expansion and deployment of renewable energy technologies like solar, wind and geothermal energy vis-a-vis polluting fossil fuels like coal.

The report highlights how diversifying the country’s energy generation and distribution will help India achieve her twin objective of “sustaining high GDP-based economic growth and providing access of modern energy infrastructure to its people while at the same time, maintaining its pledge to not exceed its per-capita emission from that of developed nations.”

According to the report, following this path will cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 1.4 to 0.3 tonnes by 2050.

A flourishing renewable energy supply will also facilitate in the creation of 24 lakh new jobs in the next eight years. India’s renewable energy currently industry employs 2 lakh people. However, this can be multiplied by 14 times by 2030 with the adoption of renewable energy at a

massive scale. Further, a shift to renewable energy on a long term basis will enable savings of around one-fourth of energy spending; the report predicts that the pricing of electricity generation will remain stable at INR 3.70 per unit by 2050. By investing in fossil power to the tune of INR 1, 00,000 crore per year, we could build up a local renewable energy industry with an annual turnover of more than-INR 54,000 crore.

One also needs to keep in mind that “there is no cheap coal available without destroying forests, displacing people and wild animals and it is a heavy price to pay without any guarantee to meet the growing demand.”

<http://www.greenpeace.org/india/en/Press/Greenpeace-launches-the-new-version-of-Energy-Revolution-for-India/>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Karishma Mutreja

## TECHNOLOGY

### Don't Muzzle Net Dissent

(Manoj Mitta, *The Times of India*, 23 November, 2012)

There have been a number of “wrongful” arrests in recent times under the “draconian” section 66A of the IT Act, the latest case being of 2 girls in Mumbai for a Facebook post apparently irreverent of Bal Thackeray. Section 66A deals with “offensive messages”, and makes the sending of the same a cognizable offence. The implication is that the police can register a case and arrest the accused persons.

It is time for us to look at the systemic problem in “institutionalizing pre-legislative consultation”, which, in this case, went against public interest. Various interest groups got the chance to voice their opinions

before an expert committee set up by the IT department, which led to the reasonable original bill in 2006, under which the sending of offensive messages was a non-cognizable offence, i.e., could be dealt with only at the level of a judicial magistrate. However, a multi-party parliamentary committee, which submitted its report in 2007, suggested making it cognizable and increasing the maximum imprisonment for offensive messages from 2 to 3 years. It seems the changes under the standing committee were due to the tough stance taken by the CBI.

Making the offence cognizable is a decision which requires re-visiting, as even defamation is non-cognizable in general criminal law. Further, a sub-clause was added regarding “annoyance”, which implies that anyone may be put behind bars just because a recipient was annoyed by the receipt of a message.

[http://author.toiblogs.com/Legalists/entry/dont\\_muzzle\\_net\\_dissent](http://author.toiblogs.com/Legalists/entry/dont_muzzle_net_dissent)

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Hansa Kaul

## ENVIRONMENT

### Doha Climate Talks: Stark

#### Warnings

(Rob Bailey, *Chatham House*, 24 November, 2012)

The author contextualizes the forthcoming Doha UNFCCC climate change negotiations, in light of the failure at Copenhagen, the modest successes at Cancun and the partial resuscitation at Durban. He starts by pointing out that most experts agree that the current rate of emissions will lead to a situation with higher temperature rises and drastic climatic shifts, exceeding previous forecasts. He attributes this to the global politics of

climate change and energy, which have exacerbated, rather than collectively solving the situation after 18 years of negotiations. This is partly because “countries (and industries) facing short term costs from a transition away from fossil fuels have proven highly effective at stalling and blocking progress.”

Policy makers meeting in Doha in 2012 face two key questions when trying to formulate a global deal that adheres to the Kyoto Protocol (currently the only instrument under which countries can take on legally binding emissions targets). These include forging an actionable and effective roadmap that accommodates emerging economies (the Annex II States), and also the United States of America. There are also questions of funding the efforts of poorer countries making the shift to clean technologies and increasing overall emission reduction targets.

Despite the pressing agenda, the author argues that none of these questions are unlikely to be resolved this time, and any decisions would be postponed to 2015, making them unachievable. In light of increasing dependence on fossil fuels, and entrenched interests (nearly two thirds of the 1200 new coal fired power stations planned worldwide are in India and China), the shift to clean energy seems a remote possibility.

Ultimately, the author argues that climate change itself will unlock negotiations, and cites the increasing number of natural disasters to substantiate his claim. He ends by warning that “as the human and economic costs of extreme weather begin to accelerate, so too may the demand for decisive collective action on climate change.”

<http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/187391>

(Date Accessed: 26.11.2012)

Pushparaj. V. Deshpande

## Delhi, Mumbai among Cities Most At Risk from Climate Impacts: Study

(*Samachar*, 28 November, 2012)

A report by an engineering and design consultancy, Atkins, together with the University College of London's Development and Planning Unit and the UK Government's Department for International Development has assessed the risks, vulnerabilities and capabilities of 129 cities in 20 countries.

The report shows that cities in developing countries are most vulnerable to risks from climate hazards due to increased urbanization and fast pace of development, which in turn puts immense pressure on natural resources and energy. The report indicates that already more than 50% of the world population lives in cities and it is expected to increase to 75% by 2050.

This urban expansion is going to be maximum in developing countries which are now highly at risk. Despite occupying a minute share of only 2% of the earth's land, cities account for 60%-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions.

Environmental degradation has already had cost implications on many countries in terms of their GDP.

In South Asia, cities like Mumbai and Kolkata are prone to risk along with Dhaka and Karachi. These four cities are home to over 32 million people who live in poverty which highlights the scale of the challenge. To tackle this problem, urban planning and governance needs to be strengthened and cities need to

work in tandem with national and regional governments. Cost effective policies such as urban agriculture, micro-generation, public transport information improvements etc should be adopted. A lot of financial assistance will be required for this process as many cities of developing countries do not have projects which meet private sector investment criteria.

<http://www.samachar.com/Delhi-Mumbai-among-cities-most-at-risk-from-climate-impacts-study-ml2vMviihga.html>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

## Cyclone Nilam and the Cauvery Basin: Lessons Learnt

(*Roomana Hukil, IPCS, 23 November 2012*)

The Cauvery water issue, which has been going on for years, has turned into a matter of social justice for millions in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu this year.

Cyclone Nilam that largely struck in Tamil Nadu, destroyed cultivated crops due to abnormal downpour, but it also reduced pressure on Karnataka to release water.

Clashes between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu state governments led to severe delays in executing the official order, which affected cultivation.

The Cyclone has led to a temporary solution to the longstanding problem though long term policies are yet to be determined.

Meanwhile, there is also the question why Karnataka is not releasing water to Tamil Nadu for reconstruction purposes.

In this regard, the Cauvery Monitoring Committee (CMC) had directed "Karnataka to release

5.5 tmcft to Tamil Nadu till 15 November 2012 on a daily basis." Cyclone Nilam though wreaking havoc in Tamil Nadu "came as a blessing for Karnataka, having drastically reduced the pressure to release water from its Cauvery basin."

<http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/cyclone-nilam-and-the-cauvery-basin-lessons-learnt-3759.html>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

## Saving the Bears

(*Elizabeth Soumya, Postnoon, 23 November 2012*)

This year, New Delhi is the host for the International Conference on Bear Research and Management with participants from 37 countries. In India, animals such as tiger, elephant, rhino and snow leopard have received special focus as representatives of the wildlife, thus requiring protection. Out of 8 species of bears 4 are found in India. Also, bears are found across the country in 26 states "making them an ideal representation of the country". Bear trade due to the custom of dancing bears has come to an end and the dancing bears have been rehabilitated. However bears continue to face atrocities due to "poaching for body parts, illegal pet trade, and conflict with local communities and degradation of its habitat". The conservation and welfare of bears has become a pressing concern in India which will be discussed in the conference. India will also launch a national plan in this regard which will summarise the "threats faced by bears in India, and will outline management actions to be undertaken by each state".

<http://postnoon.com/2012/11/23/ti-me-to-save-the-bears/89648>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

## **LAW AND JUSTICE**

### **Justice Essential for Development Says UNDP Chief** ***(UNDP, 19 November, 2012)***

Delivering justice is an essential national action that governments must shoulder to put a stop to cycles of violence and conflict, and to lay a foundation for reconciliation, peace, and human development. According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark, global justice will be delivered globally and on a large scale only when individual governments deal with crime and atrocities seriously. Building good judicial institutions is inseparable from development and effective governance. Good governance and the rule of law can together foster development. Such efforts are particularly vital if countries seek to overcome legacies of violence, human rights abuses, and conflict. Otherwise, weaknesses in the rule of law may cause exclusion, suffering, and poverty of many people. Many countries across the world that are recovering from massive crimes or atrocities often have large numbers of victims and perpetrators, at the very time their judicial system may be least capable of delivering justice. In this context, the UNDP has helped countries like Bosnia, Rwanda and Serbia to develop justice mechanisms. As a case in point, it has been seen in Serbia that integrating international law in the curriculum of the Judicial Training Academy has helped judges deliver justice by applying international standards.

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2012/11/19/nations-must-lead-and-own-justice-for-crimes-atrocities-undp-chief-says.html>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Karishma Mutreja

## GENDER

### 17 Per Cent of Indian Working Women Face Sexual Harassment

(New Delhi, *Sentinel*, 27 November, 2012)

According to a survey conducted by Oxfam India and the Social and Rural Research Institute in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Durgapur, 17 per cent of working women in India from both the organised and unorganised sector have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace.

Incidences of non physical harassment were reportedly higher. Sexual harassment cases were highest among labourers (29 per cent), domestic helps (23 per cent) and small-scale manufacturing units (16 per cent). Women in the unorganized sector are said to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment because of lack of awareness of legislation and their economic vulnerability.

Though “87 per cent of the general population and 93 per cent of working women respondents reported awareness of sexual harassment of women at workplace, a majority of the victims did not resort to any formal action against the perpetrator” in fear of layoffs, stigmatization, nonexistence of any complaints mechanism at the workplaces and lack of awareness about redressal mechanism.

Largely 80 per cent of the respondents voiced the “need for a separate law for dealing with sexual harassment at workplace.”

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/national/story.php?sec=2&subsec=3&id=140515&dtP=2012-11-28&ppr=1#140515>

(Date accessed 28.11.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Why Five Adivasis are Back in Chaibasa Jail after 20 years

(Xavier Dias, DNA, 26 November, 2012)

Five adivasis from Noamundi, in south Jharkhand have been sent to jail in connection with a case from 1991. Employees of TISCO (as Tata Steel was previously known) molested a group of adivasis women on Holi that year. After initial refusal the police finally registered a case following a sit-in in front of TISCO by the families of the basti. TISCO’s private security men opened fire on the adivasis at its pelletizing plant in Moodhi, another village which was supporting their cause. The police made it out to be a police firing and subsequently lodged criminal cases against some of the villagers and the student activists. The group of 15 against whom cases were registered has reduced to seven as the rest have passed away. In 2010, the lawyer handling the case gave up his law practice to join Abhijeet Steel Company without handing over the matter to another lawyer. As a result, the court has issued an arrest warrant against the surviving activists.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/comment-why-five-adivasis-are-back-in-chaibasa-jail-after-20-years-1769413>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

## Gay Rights Parade Demands Greater Tolerance

(*The Himalayan Times*, 25 November 2012)

Several gay rights activists marched through New Delhi on 25 November demanding freedom and the right to live with dignity irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Though gay sex was decriminalised by judicial decision in 2009, homosexuality has still not seen social acceptance in India. Gay activists want the extension of “anti discrimination laws to schools, workplaces and public and private spaces”. Some of the demands of the gay activists are: legalisation of gay marriage, government should “allow people to record gender category of their choice in national census, voter identity and other documents”. It is only in big metropolitan cities that homosexuality is slowly gaining acceptance. It is through the media, television campaigns, films that attitudes among families in urban India are gradually beginning to change and though the pace is slow.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Gay+rights+parade+demands+greater+tolerance+&NewsID=355571>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

### Caste & FDI

(Kancha Ilaiah, *The Asian Age*, 26 November, 2012)

The introduction of FDI in Multi-brand retail has evoked mixed reactions from various sections, and its impact on peasants, consumers and small retailers has been hotly debated upon.

But few have thought of or tried to analyse the implications of such a measure for the caste hierarchy that characterises this business. The author supports the introduction of FDI because of the social and caste-related changes it may be expected to bring about. It is noted that the grocery and *kirana* business is overwhelmingly dominated by local banyas and marwaris. These communities have “historically practiced untouchability” and discouraged members of the lower caste from engaging in retail. Meat, ropes, leather and other “un-Hindu” items were sold by those who made them. Only banyas sold “Hindu” items such as groceries and salt, even though they were mostly produced by Shudras and Dalits. As a result, shop-owners accumulated and buried large sums of black money, which was not re-invested, and hence hampered industrial development, leading to a vicious cycle. In wholesale, too, there existed the same monopoly. The effect of Muslim traders entering the market was limited by the collusion of banyas and the British. The author hopes FDI will free the market of its “caste-controls” and employ SCs, STs and OBCs to the tune of 50%. Coupled with NREGA, these new jobs may lead to more income for the masses, so they too can become buyers in these shops.

<http://www.asianage.com/columnists/caste-control-fdi-324>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Hansa Kaul

## ELDERLY

### “PFRDA Will Correct Flaws in New Pension Scheme” says PFRDA

(*Samachar*, 27 November, 2012)

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Chairman Yogesh Agarwal announced that the authority will take all the necessary steps to improvise the New Pension Scheme and overcome all its flaws. New Pension System was initially launched for Central Government employees joining service from January 1, 2004, but later it was extended to all citizens from May 1, 2009. The new NPS guidelines allow the PFRDA to increase the number of fund managers from the present six to an unlimited number along with liberalising it. It also proposes to increase the fee charged by the pension fund managers which will incentivise them. These measures will make NPS the best option for the people.

<http://www.samachar.com/PFRDA-will-correct-flaws-in-New-Pension-Scheme-Yogesh-Agarwal-Chairman-ml1pKSibfjh.html>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### PM Visits Spain with High Attention to Economic Ties

(*Hurriyet Daily News*, 27 November, 2012)

The report discusses a government delegation to Spain for intergovernmental meetings between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. The focus of the trip is to increase bilateral investment with a political agenda, especially at a time when the trade figures have been falling. This is because Turkish exports to Spain have declined by 13.25% to 1.56 billion Euros in the first six months, and a fall in imports of 2% to 2.3 billion Euros according to data provided by the Spanish Commerce and Competition Ministry. The core purpose of this visit is to present to Spain an increase in mutual investment opportunity.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pm-visits-spain-with-high-attention-to-economic-ties.aspx?pageID=238&nID=35540&NewsCatID=344>

(Date Accessed: 28.11.2012)

Ranjana Adhikari

### Secret Courts Bill Suffers Humiliating Defeat in House of Lords

(Tom Whitehead, *Telegraph*, 21 November, 2012)

The House of Lords on Wednesday rejected the Government's amendments to the much debated Justice and Security Bill which has been dubbed by many as the "Secret Courts Bill."

Some of the key clauses proposed by the Government were rejected on the grounds that they were "a radical departure from the cornerstone of justice."

The clauses allowed civil cases involving national security to be heard behind closed doors so sensitive material can be disclosed.

This was to avoid having to settle out of court so as to prevent such information being exposed. Claimants would not be allowed to hear the secret evidence against them.

However, watering down the amendments, the House of Lords decided to give the judges greater control over the instigation and process of Closed Material Procedures, including looking at alternatives and exercising greater control over the initiative of the process. The critics of the Bill have remarked that passing of the Bill would mean lot of critical information like the case of Afghan torture going unheard and would hence be "against the integrity of the judicial process."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9694776/Secret-courts-suffer-humiliating-defeat-in-House-of-Lords.html>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

Simi Sunny

## SOUTH ASIA

### Australians Intend To End Child Hunger in Bhutan

(*Bhutan Observer*, 23 November, 2012)



A team of Ambassadors and Fund Raisers representing "Yum Australia" (a group of 3 world-famous brands, KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell) are evaluating the school feeding system in Bhutan, with the purpose to make Australians learn about "the importance of ending hunger and nutrition among children." Interestingly, the Yum Australia, who is visiting the World Food Programme (WFP) school meal program in Bhutan, would produce a video which would be used to raise funds as a part of World Hunger Relief Australia Campaign. The fund raised would be donated to United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) which would then be divided among the needy countries. Marie Hatcher, a team member says, "Because not many Australians knew where Bhutan is, it was difficult to raise funds." The Yum Australia Programme has been supporting the school feeding system in Bhutan through the World Food Programme since 2009 and until now it has contributed a sum total of USD 285,633 to WFP Bhutan. This programme has increased overall enrolment and attendance rate of children, and also reduced the dropout rates. The system of school feeding has also drastically improved the nutritional status of these school-going children. The

WFP school meal programme provides meals to 22 million school children in 60 countries, costing only 25 US cents to feed a mouth a day, and USD 50 to feed a child in school for an entire year. Through such programmes, poor children would be motivated to come to school, and help them work for their future.

<http://www.bhutanobserver.bt/australians-intend-to-end-child-hunger-in-bhutan>

(Date Accessed: 27.11.2012)  
Ranjana Adhikari

## Economic Challenges for Pakistan Going Into 2013

(Shaukat Tarin, *The Nation*, 25 November, 2012)



The author, a former Finance Minister of Pakistan, puts forward the economic strategies of Pakistan for the year 2013 in order to restore the economy from a 6 per-capita to an 8-10 per-capita in the coming five years. The Pakistan government has to focus on an equitable and sustained economic growth, especially during the National Elections of 2013. The article points out various social and economic problems that have impacted Pakistan such as the inability of the government to balance the Public sector expenses and budgets by increasing the taxes to its GDP ratio; insignificant amount of expenditure in the education and health sector; a large fiscal deficit and high unemployment and low economic growth. The article argues that to reduce such a fiscal deficit, primary focus should be on increasing taxes, and implement what is called a “tax

plan.” Secondly, the acute shortage of electricity and energy, for which the government must “merge the Ministry of Petroleum and the Ministry of Power and make it into an Integrated Energy Board”; and make optimum use of the domestic energy available in, Hydel, Coal, Wind, Solar. Thirdly, the expenditure in education and health care must be increased, which means a diversion from the expenditure in administration and instead in these sectors. By increasing taxes, the government must push the Agriculture and Manufacturing sector, generating employment on a large scale and also increasing global competition. The author recommends that Pakistan must focus on immediate growth and create jobs for the “Youth Tsunami” that Pakistan has started to experience and are unskilled and partially literate.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/25-Nov-2012/economic-challenges-for-pakistan-going-into-2013>

(Date Accessed: 25.11.2012)  
Ranjana Adhikari

## Working with an Emerging New Afghanistan

(Vishal Chandra, *Deccan Herald*, 25 November, 2012)

A significant achievement of the international intervention in Afghanistan has been the process of democratisation, however weak, and inclusion of the erstwhile factional and militia leaders. This has been termed the “**New Afghanistan**”, in light of the broader ambition that the country has set for itself today. India, although “not a considered a leading force” in Afghanistan, is the largest regional partner in rebuilding Afghanistan. Indian assistance, including military training, has evolved from focusing on large projects to capacity building programmes.

However, in light of the imminent Western pullout of Afghanistan in 2014-15, Indo-Afghan relations may need to be re-examined. The broad themes which have been identified in the current debate on India’s possible stand post 2014 are: (a) Neutral: a non-partisan, neutral approach, keeping out of the “proxy politics”, (b) Balanced: maintaining relations with the complete variety of Afghan leaders, including the Taliban willing to work with the government, and (c) Pro-active: providing military assistance, either directly or as a UN Peacekeeping force. It is noted that Pakistan’s presence will be a challenge; the best would be to help stabilise Afghanistan to deal with Pakistan’s age-old policy of using militant organisations against her neighbours.

The long term objective should be a gradual economic connectivity with Afghanistan, leading to greater cooperation.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/294222/working-emerging-afghanistan.html>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)  
Hansa Kaul

## Nepal's Rural Communities are Taking Electric Power into Their Own Hands

(Anurag Acharya, *Nepalitimes*, 23 November, 2012)

Community managed rural electrification started in Nepal in 1990’s. A recent addition to this has been the village of Chhisti, a remote village of Nepal. 627 logs were carried over 3 years across a river to set up transmission lines that connected their village to the national grid. The community ensures that the power distribution is efficiently and honestly managed. Community management approach has many advantages like minimising pilferage and voluntary

monitoring of leakages. Women can now grind and husk grain in electric mills, children have quality lighting at night for studying. Farmers now have greater access to information on agriculture through TV. “A small policy change is all that is needed to ensure that electricity from thousands of microhydro plants all over the country is fed into the national grid. This could add up to 10MW of power if it can connect small hydroelectric stations all over Nepal and help reduce technical losses by improving transmission in rural areas”.

<http://www.nepalitimes.com/issue/2012/11/28/Nation/19807#.ULW8SYeJyy8>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

## **EAST & SOUTH EAST ASIA**

### **Golden Triangle: After Obama’s Visit to Rangoon, What’s Next for Burma-China- U.S. Relations?**

(Hannah Beech, *Time.com*, 23 November, 2012)

This article highlights a norm most emerging countries are familiar with, that development and modernization seem to exclusively benefit the entrenched upper echelons and not the vast majority of the population. It analyses China’s role as a major investor in Burma in context of its tacit support of the junta and its human rights violations.

Spurred by the search for natural resources, the benefits accruing from China’s foreign investment in hydropower, timber, natural gas

and jade among others in Burma has benefited Chinese labour and staff, as also the Burmese generals and their business cronies. Any benefits, direct or indirect, have not trickled down to the local population, and it has been argued that “the Myanmar people’s mindset is that Than Shwe was selling Myanmar to China” (Hla Maung Shwe, vice-president of the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce).

Bearing a striking similarity with India’s struggle to balance the rights of indigenous communities and its thirst for natural resources, most of Burma’s natural bounty is in its hinterlands, where ethnic minorities have been by and large ignored by the government.

For example, the Shwe pipeline (which will transport energy from Burma’s far west to China) will provide no electricity to the ethnic Arakanese (who have no access to electricity). Further, these massive multi-billion projects often displace and marginalize fisherfolk and farming communities, and this often sparks widespread protests.

However, these protests, supported by high profile political prisoners, have led to a churning in the polity, and to a partial moratorium. For example, construction on the Myitson dam (a mega-project that would have sent nearly all the generated electricity to China, leaving locals literally in the dark) has been suspended. This situation is estimated to benefit the USA, which has also eased its sanctions post the 2011 reforms. The demand for greater democracy in Burma fits in nicely with America’s recent foreign policy pivot towards Asia, and regional government’s struggling to balance an increasingly aggressive China. Strategically poised to benefit from the economic and military rivalry between USA and China, Burma’s government will undoubtedly seek to reap even more of the benefits than earlier,

foretelling greater problems for the local population.

<http://world.time.com/2012/11/23/golden-triangle-after-obamas-visit-to-rangoon-whats-next-for-relations-between-burma-china-and-the-u-s/#ixzz2DUyNt8kh>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012).

Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.

## **MIDDLE- EAST**

### **UN Nuclear Agency Reports Being Hacked**

(Vienna, *CNBC*, 27 November, 2012)

A group called “Parastoo” “critical of Israel’s undeclared nuclear weapons program” has reportedly claimed responsibility for hacking International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) server and posting “contact details for more than 100 experts working for the U.N. nuclear watchdog” on its website and insisting that the experts sign a petition demanding an open scrutiny into Israel’s nuclear agenda.

While Israel “has neither confirmed nor denied its status” it is commonly known that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. “It says Iran is secretly working to make nuclear arms — something Tehran denies — and describes the Islamic republic as the greatest threat to the Mideast. But Iran and Arab countries say the Jewish state’s nuclear capacities pose the greatest menace.”

While regretting the publication of stolen information an IAEA spokeswoman assured that “no further information is vulnerable.”

<http://www.cnbc.com/id/49983498>

(Date accessed 28.11.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

## AFRICA

### Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo: "Let the People Die but the Minerals Must Flow"

(Mwangi S. Kimenyi, *Brookings*, 26 November, 2012)

For the last few months the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been reeling under a major crisis resulting in untold human sufferings. However, this has received scant attention in the media and from the international community. The crisis is a result of the feud between the March 23 Movement (commonly referred to as M23), who comprise the National Congress for the Defence of the People, and the government of DRC.

According to the article, "although the crisis in the DRC has a long history, the current escalation has the potential to generate into one of the most serious humanitarian crises in Africa." The rebels have taken control over the eastern part of the country, many border crossings and now seem to be intent to control the entire country by capturing the capital city of Kinshasa. The crisis has resulted in precarious living conditions, food insecurity, disease and loss of more than 5.4 million lives.

According to the writer, the crisis is receiving paltry amount of attention from developed countries and neighbouring nations due to "rational self interests." The DRC is probably the richest country in the world in terms of mineral reserves and is endowed with the largest deposits of some of the most valuable minerals such as copper, uranium, cobalt, gold and diamonds. Many international companies are doing lucrative business in these

circumstances due to cooperation with cartels and illegal groups, including armed brokers. "Neighbouring countries, too, are involved particularly in the illegal cross-border trade in minerals."

In the end, the writer infers that instability in the DRC has created some incentive-compatible conditions for business, illegal groups and corrupt officials. Unless concerted international effort is made, the crisis may only lead to loss of more lives while minerals will continue to make their way to international markets.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/11/26-conflict-congo-kimenyi>

(Date accessed: 27.11.2012)

Karishma Mutreja

### Uganda Lawmakers to Vote on Anti-Gay Law

(David McKenzie and Laura Smith-Spark, *CNN*, 24 November, 2012)

Like most East African countries, Uganda too is on its way to ban homosexuality most likely before Christmas. Ugandan policy makers are soon to vote on the new anti-homosexuality bill that will order a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and harsh confinement for consensual same-sex behaviour. Homosexuals in the region already face physical assaults and are deemed as social outcasts, but the proposed bill purports harsher penalties. As per the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association countries like Nigeria, Sudan, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia and Iran have imposed death penalty for consensual same-sex relations.

An anti-gay legislation was first proposed in 2009 and it was condemned by world leaders.

A few countries warned against aid to Uganda over its poor record on same-sex rights.

Amnesty International has urged the Ugandan parliament not to pass the bill as the bill would have lasting, harmful effects on Ugandans and notably impede the work of human rights advocates and public health professionals.

Also the "bill violates the principle of non-discrimination as guaranteed under international and regional treaties to which Uganda is a party. Although certain provisions of the bill have been amended, the content of these amendments have not been made publicly available."

[http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/23/world/africa/uganda-anti-gay-vote/index.html?hpt=iaf\\_c2](http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/23/world/africa/uganda-anti-gay-vote/index.html?hpt=iaf_c2)

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

## AMERICAS

### The Missing Living Wage Agenda

(Annette Bernhardt and Dorian Warren, *Truth Out*, 24 November, 2012)

The author highlights the need to give America's workers a living wage and voice; and to tackle problems associated with the exclusion of workers of colour, immigrants and women from good jobs etc.

To fix the extreme inequalities, the author suggests that first the minimum wages should be raised and health and safety regulations must be updated.

Second, workplace characterized by temporary jobs must be reorganized. A model solution would be California's law making companies liable for minimum wage and overtime violations. Third, enforcement has to be

strengthened and government's capital should be leveraged in a more optimal and efficient manner. This can be done through either responsible contracting policies, living wage laws or accountable economic development policies. Last, labour market discrimination should be broken down explicitly. The author also suggests that these policies would be politically viable as all communities across the nation seek justice on job and investment in local communities.

<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/12927-the-missing-living-wage-agenda>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

(Naina Bhardwaj)

## OPINIONS

### Through All The Tears For Bal Thackeray

(Javed Anand, *The Indian Express*, 23 November, 2012)

“Hindutva is the Maoism of the Indian elite” argues the author, a co-editor of ‘Communalism Combat’, who contextualizes the “power sharing parampara of Maharashtra” in light of the funeral arrangements of Bal Thackeray. Arguing that the Shiv Sena has been running a parallel government in the state, he points out that the Sena’s thokshahi (constructive violence) has been integral to the Congress’ lokshahi (democratic governance).

Tracing the history of this outcome, he argues that this was a natural conclusion of the “collective complicity” of the people and the political parties. To this end, he cites the Bombay riots of December 1992 and January 1993, where “Muslims were taught a lesson” under the watch of the Sudhakar Naik Congress Government. Justice Bakhtawar Lentin, describing the situation to the then PM, Narasimha Rao had argued that “in the last few days, the streets of Bombay have resembled the streets of Nazi Germany.”

The Justice B.N. Srikrishna Commission that probed the pogrom which claimed over a thousand lives and Muslim property worth hundreds of crores concluded that “there is no doubt that the Shiv Sena and Shiv Sainiks took the lead in organising attacks on Muslims and their properties under the guidance of several leaders of the Shiv Sena from the level of Shakh Pramukh to the Shiv Sena Pramukh Bal Thackeray who, like a veteran general, commanded his loyal Shiv Sainiks to retaliate by organised attacks against Muslims.” Despite this, both the

Bombay High Court (in 1994) and the Supreme Court refused to entertain petitions seeking to prosecute Thackeray for “hate Muslims” editorials published in Shiv Sena’s Saamna before 1992-’93.

Lamenting the fact that full state honours were extended to Thackeray despite his role in the pogrom, the author argues that the Congress-NCP alliance had completely disregarded the “rule of law principle enshrined in the Constitution,” and hence makes the case that “hindutva is the Maoism of the Indian elite.”

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/through-all-the-tears-for-bal-thackeray/1034936/0>  
(Date Accessed: 23.11.2012).  
Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.

### Ranking of the Best Countries to Live In: In 1988 and Now

(Laza Kekic, *The Economist*, 21 November, 2012)

“*The World in 1988*” index was a study that ranked 50 countries according to the ones that were most liveable based on 11 criterion. The USA topped the chart that time around as the best place to be born in. Building on that study, the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) attempts to measure “which country will provide the best opportunities for a healthy, safe and prosperous life in the years ahead.”

The EIU study ranked Switzerland as the best place to be born in, followed by Australia. Surprisingly, smaller economies (of which half are European and the Netherlands the only representative from the Euro zone) do much better as opposed to the larger European economies (Germany, France, and Britain). The Nordic countries on the other hand, outshine the crisis affected areas of the South of Europe.

“America, where babies will inherit the large debts of the boomer generation, languishes back in 16th place.” India is ranked a dismal 66th, below Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Iran. It fell lower than its 1988 rank, when it was placed 27th.

Some of the variables that were considered included:

- 1 **Social:** The quality of family life, based primarily on divorce rates; Quality of community life (based on membership in so-cial organisations).
- 2 **Economic:** Material well being as measured by GDP per head (in \$, at 2006 constant PPPS); life expectancy at birth; Job security (measured by the unemployment rate);
- 3 **Political/ Governance:** The state of political freedoms; Governance (measured by ratings for corruption); Gender equality (measured by the share of seats in Parliament held by women); Risk to life (based on recorded homicide rates and ratings for risk from crime and terrorism).
- 4 **Miscellaneous:** Climatic conditions (measured by two variables: the average deviation of minimum and maximum monthly temperatures from 14 degrees Celsius; and the number of months in the year with less than 30mm rainfall).

The study factors in some probabilities based on their socio economic and political forecasts for 2030. The indicators that are estimated to drive the quality of life included incomes per head, varying indicators from the Euro-zone crisis, declining global output growth rate, increasing life expectancy and greater political autonomy, especially in North African and Middle-East territories.

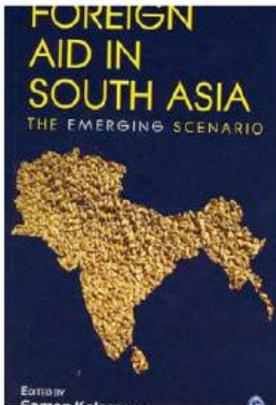
<http://www.economist.com/news/21566430-where-be-born-2013-lottery-life>

(Date Accessed: 28.11.2012)  
Pushparaj. V. Deshpande.

## **BOOKS**

### **Foreign Aid in South Asia**

(C.T. Kurien, *Frontline*, 01-04 December, 2012)



Foreign Aid in South Asia: The Emerging Scenario  
Edited by Saman Kelegama  
Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2012  
Pages: 317  
Price: Rs.750

A few decades back, the ‘underdeveloped third world countries’ of Asia and Africa were heavily dependent on the ‘developed countries’ of the West to lead them towards growth and thus financial aid was a necessity. But with the turn of the millennium, these underdeveloped nations have emerged as fast growing economies with enough savings to sustain themselves. China, India and other South Asian countries have also started providing aid to other less developed nations. However, dependence on foreign aid even among these donor countries continues till date. This is partly because countries in Africa still remain poor. Further, issues such as the recent economic crisis have an impact on foreign aid. Today, aid has become a means for ensuring cooperation between the donor and receiver countries. It is also seen as a measure to ensure sustainable development. Countries are increasingly competing with each other (such as in the case of India and China) to provide aid to nations so as to win friends. Non economic

factors also play a major role in determining foreign aid. “In the case of Pakistan, for instance, military considerations have played a major role as far as foreign aid is concerned.” The pattern of foreign aid is changing rapidly. It no longer consists only of government-to-government transactions. The book talks comprehensively about the changing dynamics of foreign aid and the emerging scenario especially with relation to South Asia.

<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/stories/20121214292408100.htm>

(Date accessed: 28.11.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

### **Macro View on Microfinance**

(MS Sriram, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 December, 2012)

SL Shetty’s book: *Microfinance in India: Issues, Problems and Prospects: A Critical Review of Literature* explores the history of Microfinance in India and the various issues that surround it today.

The government has always been interested in providing financial services to the poor of the country. Initiatives taken in this regard include brainstorming sessions for drafting policies, setting up organisations and implementing quotas, subsidies etc. However, they were limited in scope, as the private sector was not involved in this movement. Hence, Public sector banks were at the centre of the change. Later, the NGO sector entered the arena, particularly looking at providing microcredit services on “commercially viable terms.” An important case brought out in this context is that of poor women, who were earlier not regarded as a significant group, but as the author puts it, “almost define microfinance in the Indian context” today. The author also discusses the existing regulatory framework for microfinance, guidelines from the finance ministry and RBI, and what the

roles of the RBI, State and Central governments should be.

<http://www.epw.in/book-reviews/macro-view-microfinance.html>

(Date accessed: 26.11.2012)

Hansa Kaul