

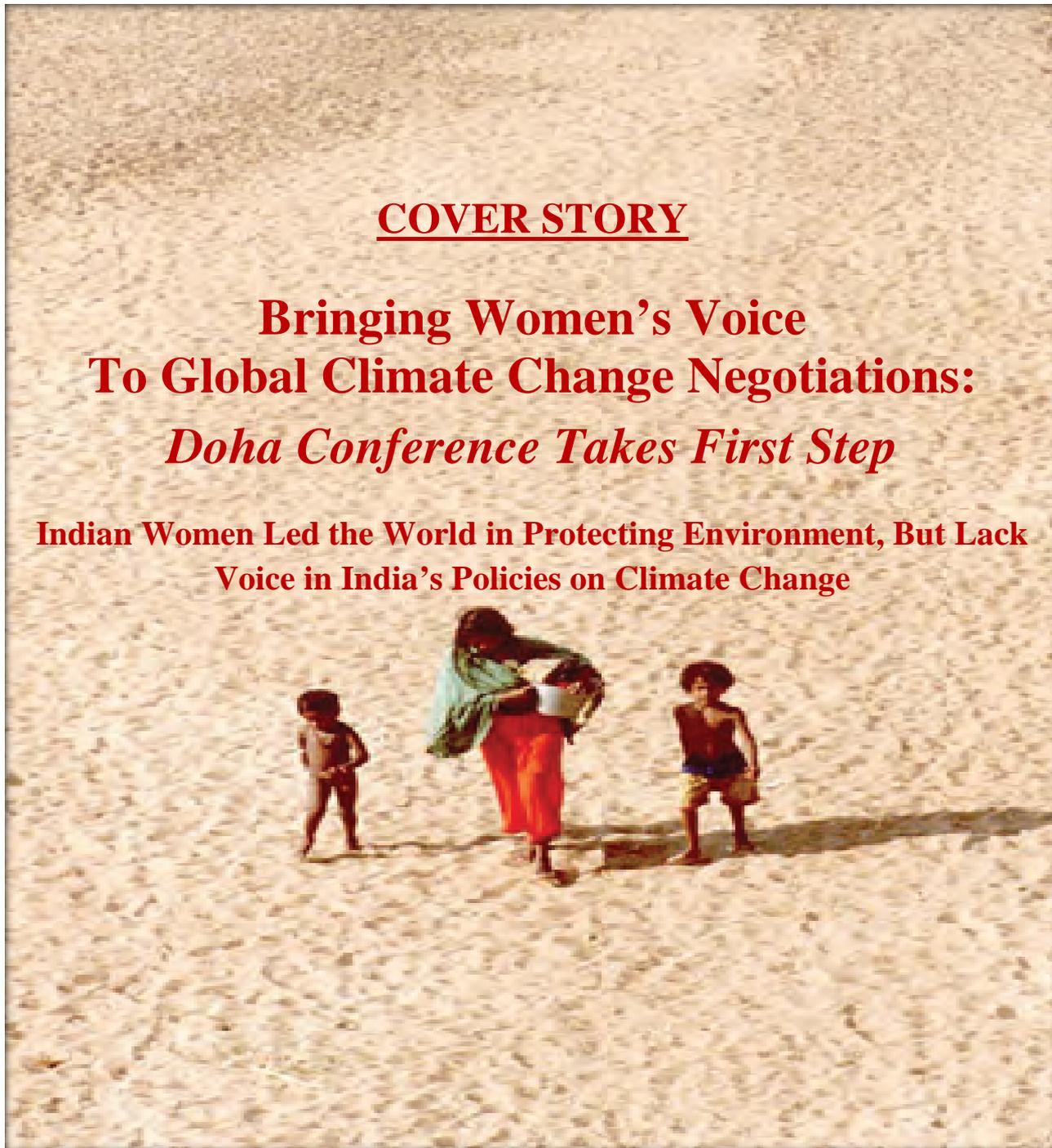
RAJIV GANDHI INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES
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COVER STORY

**Bringing Women's Voice
To Global Climate Change Negotiations:
*Doha Conference Takes First Step***

**Indian Women Led the World in Protecting Environment, But Lack
Voice in India's Policies on Climate Change**



WEEKLY ROUND UP OF NEWS ON POLICY

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Cover Story

Bringing Women's Voice to Global Climate Change Negotiations: Doha Conference Takes a First Step

194 countries, parties to the global agreement on climate change, decided on December 8, 2012 in Doha to promote the participation of women in climate change negotiations.

With this historic action, the world recognized formally that climate change is not gender neutral, and took the first step towards giving women equal voice in global climate change negotiations.

World governments met in Doha for the 18th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 18). The meeting was also the 8th session of the Conference of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP8). The meeting took place in Doha from 26th November to 8th December, 2012.

During the meeting, COP 18 decided to improve the participation of women and gender balance by nominating women in bodies established pursuant to the convention or the Kyoto Protocol so that gender responsive climate policy responds to the differing needs of men and women in national & local contexts.

Women's Demand for Voice in Climate Change Negotiations

The COP decision was in response to a concerted drive led by the UN's Women's Wing, "UN Women" and its partners to achieve greater voice for women in global climate change negotiations.

The demands of these women's organizations include:

- Women's concerns must be heard and their participation ensured. It should also be consistent with the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Gender equity should be an integral part of the policy and decision making processes.
- There is a need to empower women with the knowledge to help facilitate solutions to climate change.
- There are insufficient numbers of women at the tables where major decisions about climate change and the environment are made. In UNFCCC negotiations over the past decade, women accounted for only 30% of registered country delegates and 10% of heads of delegations.
- Use of sex-disaggregated data for policy design, monitoring and reporting is necessary.
- The UNFCCC should review progress in mainstreaming gender in all parts of the Convention.

Women and Climate Change

Women's contribution to environmental degradation and GHG emissions is insignificant. Yet, they are the most affected by climate change.

Women contribute in various ways to ensure preservation of the environment. "At the community level, women contribute to influencing sustainable consumption and production, safeguarding the natural environment and biodiversity, preserving traditional knowledge, and allocating adequate and sustainable resources within the household and community. Within the context of the care economy, women living in poverty have to manage the allocation of scarce resources, including water

and energy, and when confronted with environmental degradation, women's care burden increases."

In developing countries, women's livelihoods often depend on local natural resources. Representing a majority of the world's small-scale farmers, women produce much of the world's food. Women are usually the primary caregivers, child rearers, and food providers for their families. They are often responsible for their homes water and energy supplies.

An example of how climate change affects women can be seen in the matter of water shortage and accessibility. "Climate change may exacerbate existing shortages of water. Women, largely responsible for water collection in their communities, are more sensitive to the changes in seasons and climatic conditions that affect water quantity and accessibility. This brings in more burdens for women". Further, the rise in sea level has an impact on fishermen and fisherwomen in terms of both catching fish and water scarcity. The rise of sea level also results in inundation, triggering large scale migration which in turn affects women. It is often the men who migrate leaving women behind. The female headed households are often the poorest.

Natural disasters as a result of climate change also have dire effects on women. "In disasters such as intense rainfalls, floods, cyclones and storms, women suffer more due to their restricted mobility, inability to swim or run, pressures from family and household responsibilities and less exposure to trainings and information such as early warning signals".

The Need for Gender Based Approach to Tackle Climate Change

A gender based perspective on climate change tackles many issues that cannot possibly be dealt with by other approaches:

- Since, as already mentioned, men and women are affected in different ways by climate change

HEADLINES

and they have different capacities and knowledge, we also require specific measures that take their respective gender-differentiated conditions into account.

- A gender-based approach will be effective not just to combat climate change but also to facilitate a social change by establishing equitable relations between men and women. Women are vulnerable not because they are “naturally weaker” but because they face different conditions of vulnerability than men. “Gender inequality can be corrected if the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men are recognized and their interests, needs and priorities are taken into consideration – recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.”
- According to the 2007 Report of the Sub-Group on Gender and Agriculture for the 11th Five Year Plan, women constitute 40 percent of India’s agricultural workforce, and this proportion is rising. In some mountainous regions in India, women undertake 4.6 to 5.7 times the agricultural work men carry out (source: ICIMOD). Considering the impact of climate change on agriculture and the large percentage of women employed in the sector, differential impact of climate change on women cannot be neglected and their voice needs to be incorporated in policies on climate change.
- Women have different perspectives and experiences to contribute (for example, in implementing adaptation measures).
- The gender approach looks at the different ways in which men and women interact with ecosystems. Therefore, it may contribute to building more capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change, insofar as it affords a clearer and

more complete view of the relations people have built with ecosystems.



The India Story

- Indian women showed the way to the world by taking the lead to fight environmental destruction and climate change. As far back as in the 1970s, the famous Chipko Movement to protect trees was spearheaded by a group of peasant women from Reni village in Uttarakhand.
- A collective of 5,000 women spread across 75 villages in Andhra Pradesh are offering a chemical-free, non-irrigated, organic agriculture as one method of combating global warming.
- In 2011, women from 60 gram panchayats in Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh got together to form paani panchayats (water councils) in their villages, which have become a model for local self-governance to address water and employment problems in rural areas.
- However, **India’s own Climate Change Policies do NOT adequately reflect Women’s Voice. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008) and Delhi’s Climate Change Agenda (2009-2012) do not address the gender dimension of climate change nor do they explore the potential of women’s knowledge and empowerment for action on climate change and sustainable cities.**

By: Amrutha Jose and Anjora Sarangi

Read More at:

http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Outreach_COP18%20Day2_Women.pdf

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/undp_climate_change.pdf

http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/doha_nov_2012/decisions/application/pdf/cop18_gender.pdf

Preventing Pneumonia: India's Dismal Performance

(Based on: Aarti Dhar, *The Hindu*, 9 December, 2012)

According to International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC's) latest Pneumonia Progress Report 2012 on 15 developing countries, the global mortality rate of pneumonia deaths in children under-five years of age is the highest in India.

Pneumonia continues to be the number one killer of children around the world—causing 18 per cent of all child mortality, an estimated 1.3 million child deaths in 2011 alone.

According to the report, *none* of the 15 countries have reached the 90 per cent Global Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia (GAPP) target which suggests “interventions in three areas: vaccination, breastfeeding and access to care and antibiotic treatment. If 90 per cent of coverage is reached, these interventions could prevent two-thirds of all childhood pneumonia deaths.”

India and Nigeria have performed the worst with an average intervention coverage rate of 55% and 40% respectively.

The report emphasizes on India's need to strengthen its comprehensive approach in fighting pneumonia infection, including introduction of a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine.

Pneumonia has also been the cause of morbidity in India, resulting in socio-economic pressures on families and the country as a whole. Therefore, prevention of pneumonia is not only about saving child lives but also preventing illness, hospitalisation and related economic costs.

One positive aspect in India is its slow yet encouraging uptake of the two vaccines that can prevent Pneumonia: Hib vaccine and the measles vaccine.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala have already introduced the Hib vaccine in 2011 and six more states will do it shortly. .

<http://www.thehindu.com/health/policy-and-issues/fasten-the-pace-of-prevention/article4181154.ece>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

India: Inflation Slows

(Based on: *BBC News*, 14 December, 2012)

Compared to 7.4% in October and 7.8% in September, India's inflation has further declined in November, helped by an easing of fuel and manufacturing prices in Asia's third-largest economy.

The central bank has been under pressure to lower borrowing costs in order to help revive India's slowing economy but it has not lowered interest rates since April because of inflation, fuelled by a weak rupee and more expensive oil imports, which has remained above 7%.

With a fall in inflation rate, RBI is expected to cut interest rates but analysts have suggested that this drop in inflation rate may not be noteworthy enough to prompt the central bank to cut interest rates. But, the probability of a rate reduction in January has now gone up.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-20722798>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

India Faces Another 'Harsh' Year in 2013: Kaushik Basu

(Based on: *Samachar*, 14 December, 2012)

Chief Economist of the World Bank, Kaushik Basu has predicted that 2013 will be another harsh year for India as the European situation "will remain very difficult up to the end of 2014."

However, he remarked that India has enough fundamental strength that if it works towards growth oriented goals, then within the next 2-3 years it will bounce back to a 8-9 per cent growth path.

But for now, a 6-7% growth rate will be good for India as an initial step towards recovery.

The World Bank has projected growth of about 5.5 per cent for the calendar year 2012 for India and below 6 per cent for 2013. However for 2014 and 2015, it has projected a growth rate of about 7%. He also said that the reform measures, including the direct cash transfers (Aadhaar) will help the poor and the vulnerable sections of the society the most.

<http://www.samachar.com/India-will-see-another-harsh-year-in-2013-Kaushik-Basu-mmovMGjjdd.html>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

Household Savings Rate Needs to Be Improved for Sustained Growth

(Based on: Rajshri Singal, *The Economic Times*, 13 December, 2012)

There is great concern about weak capital expansion and investment in infrastructure and plant and machinery during the current economic slowdown. Yet, says the author, the Government has not given adequate attention to the issue of household savings.

The author argues that it is not sustainable to promote investment and economic growth without steady growth in savings rate.

Household savings is a crucial component of savings, equal to the combined size of private corporate savings and government savings.

But surprisingly, the household savings rate has remained constant at 23 percent between 2004 to 2008 despite the economy growing at almost 9 percent. The stagnation was attributed to “the impact of demographics (dependency ratio), anecdotal evidence on increasing consumerism and the entrenchment of (urban) lifestyles in India, apart from the easier availability of credit and improvement in overall macroeconomic conditions.” In the last few years, Indians have moved away from savings in financial instruments towards physical assets like gold. This is not good news for the government since physical assets are “unavailable to the economy for investment activity.” Policy makers most urgently have to tap the household savings to boost the economic growth.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/comments-analysis/government-must-think-of-innovative-ways-to-make-households-save-more/articleshow/17593174.cms>

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)
Simi Sunny

Policies Should be Based on Better Understanding of Choices Made by the Poor

(Based on: Vivek Kaul, *Firstpost*, December 14, 2012)

Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at MIT, ponders over the rationale employed by poor people universally in making choices and decisions. Through behavioural economics, he tries to explain decisions taken by poor, like not getting immunized despite immunization being free, buying a TV set instead of purchasing food and declining nutritional level in a Chinese village in spite of subsidised rice vouchers. Decisions like these might appear to be irrational to many of us but as individuals and policy makers we need to ask ourselves what is it that makes them make that choice. Unless, we ask that question, we are often tempted to impose our own conditions on their lives and not offer the right incentives to them through policies. As a result, our policies may in fact not be reflective of what the poor may actually desire.

<http://www.firstpost.com/economy/why-television-is-more-important-than-food-557010.html/2>

(Date accessed: 13.12.1.2)
Karishma Mutreja

FDI in Retail Continues to be Questioned

(Based on: Nilanjana Bhowmick, *Time*, 07 December, 2012)

The UPA government has won the FDI debate in both houses of the Parliament which will allow 51% foreign investment in multi-brand retail stores, enabling retailers such as Walmart and Tesco to open in India.

The move is a step forward towards bringing the lagging economy back on track and steer further economic liberalization.

However, the debate over FDI continues.

The government asserts that the reform will create about 10 million new jobs in the next three years, reduce food wastage and improve the food distribution system. The supporters of FDI in retail say that organised retail sector is already present in India and has not led to the wiping out of the small scale sector.

However, many believe that though FDI would modernise the retail sector, “mega-retailers could devastate millions of small-businesses owners.” “Small traders control an estimated 90% of India’s \$450 billion retail sector.” Prof. Ravi Aron of John Hopkins University says that the traditional middlemen who are the biggest winners of the today’s retail structure will be the biggest losers and hence they are against FDI.

<http://world.time.com/2012/12/07/why-indias-fdi-fight-is-far-from-over/#ixzz2F0CdClSb>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)
Anjora Sarangi

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

MGNREGA Fund Scam in Bihar Could Have Been Prevented

(Based on: Alok Gupta, *Down To Earth*, 11 December, 2012)

Recent reports and studies have exposed systematic embezzlement of funds disbursed for MGNREGA in Bihar.

In 2010, the Nitish Kumar Government inaugurated a project using Information Communication Technology (ICT) to issue E-Shakti cards to encourage transparency in the implementation of the scheme. This technology used biometric identification of labourers to prevent duplication of cards and chances of fake muster roll creation. Other important programmes like the Public Distribution System and the Indira Awas Yojana were also supposed to use these cards.

After a year of the launch, it was decided that the project would be integrated with the UID-Aadhar scheme. It was later announced that the Central government would not roll out Aadhar in Bihar.

The net result was that neither the E-Shakti scheme nor the Aadhar scheme was implemented in Bihar

A report by the Centre for Environment and Food Security has revealed that siphoning off MGNREGA funds could have been prevented by the adoption of biometric smart cards under one of these schemes.

The Government's proposal is to remit wages directly to the Bank accounts of the beneficiaries. However, the lack of banking facilities in rural areas in Bihar makes the Government's plan of sending the MNREGA wages directly

to the bank accounts of the labourers highly doubtful.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/mgnrega-funds-scam-bihar-could-have-been-prevented>

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

Simi Sunny

Rehabilitation and Amnesty Policy for Youth Returning from POK: Issues to be Addressed

(Based on: Editorial, *Kashmir Times*, December, 2012)

The J&K Government's Rehabilitation and Amnesty policy for youth "who had crossed the borders for arms training and wish to return to lead normal lives" is flawed in several ways, argues the author.

The policy lacks effective mechanisms and understandable agreement between the India and Pakistan to ensure that recipients benefit from the policy.

The official figures on beneficiaries are much more than the number of people who actually receive benefits. The returnees complain of harassment by security, indeterminate legal status of their families and other difficulties in their resettlement. Allegations by Indian officials against the returnees that they are working after their return as informers and spies have also impeded the rehabilitation process. The policy is also seen as restrictive and should be extended to people who fled because of additional reasons not currently covered by the policy such as harassment, fear, kidnapping, and political persecution.

The lack of a clearly grounded and transparent mechanism based on an agreement between India and Pakistan is also an impediment to the implementation of the policy.

The author fears that the policy will remain ineffective and "eventually

slow down" because the returnees are not receiving what they have been assured of.

<http://www.kashmirtimes.com/newsdept.aspx?q=9173>

(Date accessed 14.12.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

Arunachal Pradesh Tending Towards Lawlessness

(Based on: Patricia Mukhim, *The Statesman*, 18 November, 2012)

The author argues that tribal politics in Arunachal is playing a "toxic role" with diverse ethnic groups competing for "political resources" with each other. In fact "the ethnic divide is as acrimonious in Arunachal Pradesh as it is in any of the tribal majority states of the region."

Referring to the controversial attempt to murder prominent woman journalist, Tongam Rina, the author accuses the police of inaction in spite of having knowledge of the culprits. It has become very "dangerous" to write and speak up the "truth." Citing similar instances, he says "this has become almost a pattern. You can shoot, kill and extort and get away with it." As the political class rely on the "sundry militant groups or armed gangs" to achieve political power, they are also having to give in to such forces. Therefore with the increasing use of power play, fear has stunningly "silenced" the civil society.

The article argues that civil society has become highly politicized and therefore is not playing the non-partisan role expected of it. The author argues that this is one of the causes for increasing and deep rooted lawlessness getting manifested in the state.

http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=431333&catid=52

(Date accessed 14.12.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

DEVELOPMENT

How Mineral Rents Can Finance Social Policy

(Based on: Katja Hujo, et al, UNRISD, December, 2012)

Rents from mineral extraction can play a major role in social development.

While many argue that mineral wealth is a curse as it leads to conflict, foreign interference, corruption and other problems, it cannot be denied that developing and under developed nations can benefit from their mineral resources. For this to happen, countries need to “manage the challenges of a mineral-led growth successfully, countries need to design and implement comprehensive, inclusive and rights-based social policies; build strong democratic institutions; and be given the policy space to foster productive diversification while safeguarding macroeconomic stability.”

Using mineral wealth to finance social policy will help build trust among people and will increase the credibility of the state. Democracy plays a very important role in enabling this. Policy recommendations in the research brief include:

- “Build state capacity and foster positive institutional change”
- “Design policies that foster stability, diversification and equality”
- “Channel mineral rents into comprehensive social policies”
- “Make foreign investors commit to national development strategies and create fair rules on global commodity markets”
- “Open up other avenues of domestic revenues through diversification of revenue sources

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(LookupAllDocumentsByUNID\)/C3C55CD888A5AECC1257ACA004C8FA9?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(LookupAllDocumentsByUNID)/C3C55CD888A5AECC1257ACA004C8FA9?OpenDocument)

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

SECURITY

Provident Fund: Proposal to Include Allowances in Calculating “Basic Salary” Criticized

(Based on: *The Echo of India*, 12 December, 2012)

In order to increase the savings of employees, the Government has decided that not only the basic salary but all allowances including the dearness and medical allowances will be taken into account and deductions will be made accordingly while calculating the provident fund contribution by employees. It is being argued that this will mean higher savings by way of PF accruals although it will reduce the carry-home pay of employees. However, the article points out, this will harm the employees in the following ways. Firstly, it will reduce the amount of direct cash in hand an employee takes home and therefore he will have to curtail his current expenses of necessity goods like food and clothing. Secondly, the claim that it will mean higher savings is also not true. Considering steadily rising inflation, the real value of the accruals to the PF will be substantially less by the time an employee reaches superannuation age. For the employees, it will merely be a tax measure to augment the government’s revenues. Reducing the pay packet will only lead to bitterness among the employees. What is particularly problematic is the proposal to include medical allowance in computing an employee’s basic salary. The writer feels that the government should give up this idea of clubbing all allowances

drawn by an employee as constituents of their “basic salary.”

<http://echoofindia.com/editorial/needle-ss-provocation-17733>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Naina Bhardwaj

EDUCATION

Approaches Towards Home Work for Students

(Based on: Louis Menand, *The New Yorker*, 17 December, 2012)

“The educational system is supposed to be an engine of opportunity and social readjustment, but in some ways it operates as a perpetuator of the status quo. The dirty little secret of education reform is that one of the greatest predictors of academic success is household income.”

French President Francois Hollande is considering reforming French education by banning homework for all primary and middle-school students, shortening the school day and diverting more resources to schools in disadvantaged areas.

There are two major complaints against homework in USA. First is that homework has no effect on academic achievement. The second is that homework is increasing.

Research proves them wrong. According to a new evaluation of educational systems by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Finland with virtually no homework ranks first in the world. South Korea, where 90% of primary-school students attend after school tuitions, is ranked second. Both approaches are successful because the schools are doing what their people want them to do. The Finns want to bring everyone up to the same level and instil a commitment to equality while the South Koreans want to enable hard workers to get ahead. Socialist educationist M. Hollande

says that homework can create inequality as there are parents who can help children with homework while others can't. The more affluent parents do not want homework as they want the children to attend music classes etc. while the parents from the poorer sections of the society want homework to keep their children away from the streets.

http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2012/12/17/121217taco_talk_men_and#ixzz2F5YHLMiX

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

HEALTH

“Floating” Operation Theatre for Riverine Areas in Assam

(Based on: North East Today, 13 December, 2011)

Assam government has decided to launch a “pilot project for introducing a floating operation theatre”, equipped to perform Caesarean operations in order to improve health care facilities in the riverine areas of the state. 100 health sub-centres would be set up in the riverine areas.

This step is expected to improve the infant mortality rate (IMR) and the maternity mortality rate (MMR) in Assam, which is currently higher than the national average. However, as stated by the State Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam will need 10 more years to equal the national average. He also informed that the project is expected to be completed by 2013 and further stated that if the project is successful, the number of boats will be extended to 40.

The Government is also planning to propose a bill that makes it mandatory for medical students coming from riverine, tea garden areas and who take admissions in reserved seats, to serve in these areas for no less than 10

years after finishing their medical studies, in addition to increasing the number of reserved medical seats for these areas.

<http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/assam/boat-operation-theatre-for-riverine-areas-in-assam/>

(Date accessed 14.12.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

URBAN

Mumbai in Urgent Need of Governance And Management Reforms

(Based on: Prakash M Apte, CityMayors, 10 December, 2012)

With a population of 12,704,022, Mumbai is the largest city in India, along with being its premier economic centre and home to major industrial ventures. Mumbai contributes 10% of India's factory employment, 25% of industrial output and has a per capita annual income of USD 2840 which is three times the national average. It also generates 33 per cent of India's income tax. But it has lost the capacity to deliver public services, because of negligence as well as insufficient financial and physical resources. Nearly 42% of its residents live in slums. Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) spends 62% to 68% of its revenues to pay employees, and only about 32 % of revenue for services delivery and development. Short term goals driven by political compulsion are diverting focus away from long term challenges. Revenue collection by MCGM is inefficient. Its financial management is restricted to annual budgeting and to managing working capital. There is a pressing need for professionalization of civic services delivery. A single coordinating authority that deals with the city's development is essential. The bigger question here is whether the existing system of elected municipal corporation is providing the right kind of leadership. “Democratic

political institutions are supposed to ensure services delivery and overall development. This representative method of allocating goods and services is considered the better option, but fails to work properly when hampered by bureaucracy.”

<http://www.citymayors.com/governments/mumbai-government.html>

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

Why More Densely Populated Cities Are Smarter and More Productive

(Based on: Richard Florida, Atlantic Cities, 10 December, 2012)

“Density plays an important role in economic growth. Density brings people and firms closer together which makes it easier to share and exchange information, invent new technologies, and launch new firms.”

A recent study provides insights into how density makes our cities more productive. “The study provides new evidence of the relationships between density, human capital, and urban productivity.” Important findings of the study are as below:

1. “Doubling density increases productivity by an average of two to four percent.”
2. “Density plays a bigger role in cities where levels of skill and human capital are higher. Metro areas with below average levels of human capital realize no productivity gains from density, while doubling density in metros with above average human capital gain productivity benefits that are roughly twice the average.”
3. “The effects of density are even more substantial in industries with high levels of knowledge and creativity. This is particularly true in the information, arts and entertainment, professional services, and finance industries where the exchange of

information and sharing of ideas are important parts of the production process.”

<http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/12/why-denser-cities-are-smarter-and-more-productive/4049/>

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

ENERGY

Nuclear Power: Need to Take People into Confidence

(Based on: *The Hindu*, 11 December, 2012)

With regard to nuclear power projects, there are certain lessons that India can learn from France. When the French government recently gave approval for the construction of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), its primary effort was to maintain transparency. The government also ordered enquiries, the results of which the public could use to frame an opinion. By making people an integral part of the approval process, the government was able to win their confidence.

Across the world, the nuclear industry is known for the opacity that it maintains and for not taking measures to win public confidence. Added to that, in the Kudankulam issue in India, the problems also include the hurried manner in which environmental assessments are carried out and the secrecy surrounding the project. Much of the public apprehension in India has been developed because of the lack of transparency. As evident from the ITER approval, public are not unreasonable, and hence, India too should take the public into confidence by providing them relevant information. Winning people's approval is necessary because of two reasons: first, “the Chernobyl catastrophe and the 2011 Fukushima

disaster are fresh in people's mind”, and secondly, the government is planning to construct many nuclear power plants across the country.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/setting-an-example/article4185296.ece>

(Date Accessed: 13.12.2012)

Amrutha Jose

For New Lamps, an Unlikely Energy Source: Gravity

(Based on: Colin Lecher, *Popsci*, 12 December, 2012)

A start-up has invented a radical new form of lighting called ‘GravityLight’ that is powered by gravity, a source we have in abundance.

Originally it was designed for villages in Africa to replace ubiquitous damaging kerosene lamps widely used in remote areas of Africa. A weight is attached to the ‘GravityLight’ and as the attached weight falls due to the force of gravity, a dynamo converts the energy from the falling weight into power for the light. As long as the weight is reset every 30 minutes, it makes for a green, battery-free, continuous light source. This light can power reading light, radio or simply recharge batteries. The light costs less than 10 dollars for the villagers and has no running costs. This invention can help on saving kerosene costs for villagers. If this invention is used in developing countries across the world it will not only provide a cheap and continuous source of light for off grid rural areas but also prevent usage of kerosene lamps that are bad for people's health and the environment.

<http://www.popsci.com/technology/article/2012-12/new-light-fully-powered-gravity>

(Date accessed: 13.12.12)

Karishma Mutreja

ENVIRONMENT

U.S. Failure to Act Swiftly on Global Warming Imperils The U.S. and The World

(Based on: Sherwood Ross, *Countercurrents*, 6 December, 2012)

The article questions the failure of U.S. to respond to the impending issue of global warming. The author tries to relate global warming to the increased number of natural catastrophes. According to a recent report by the Bloomberg Business Week, the number of natural disasters since 1996 more than doubled compared to the previous 15-year period. The report also notes that “nowhere in the world is the rising number of natural catastrophes more evident than in North America.”

Environmentalists all over the world have raised concerns over the plans of US to build the Keystone XL oil pipeline to tap the tar sands of Alberta, Canada. Building the pipeline would hasten the extraction of exceptionally dirty crude oil, using huge amounts of water and heat, from the tar sands, which would then be piped across the United States, refined and burned as fuel, releasing a vast new volume of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

The project is a blotch on America's effort to develop cleaner sources of energy. It is of critical importance that America realizes that the toxic greenhouses are not just a concern for other nations but it is also imperilling in its own environment and is only mounting the losses due to disasters like Hurricane Sandy.

<http://www.countercurrents.org/ross061212.htm>

(Date accessed: 13.12.12)

Simi Sunny

World Not Ready to Take Climate Call

(Based on: Sunita Narain, *Tribune India*, 09 December, 2012)

The article comments on the unproductiveness of the recently concluded 18th Conference of Parties (CoP) to the climate convention in Doha. Even while scientists warned the conference of the impending disaster due to climate change, it resulted in no plan of action, but mere talk. The Doha conference had three items in its agenda: to conclude negotiations on Bali Action Plan, to reach agreement on the second commitment period of Kyoto protocol, and to agree on an action plan to cut emissions post-2020. But the decision that emerged from the conference has to do nothing with combating climate change. While the European Union claimed that it has already reduced its carbon emissions by 20 per cent after 1990, the U.S refused to reduce more than 3 per cent, and countries like Australia and Japan blew away the commitments already made under Bali Action Plan. The industrialised world also went back on its promise made at the 2009 Copenhagen CoP to finance developing countries for adopting low carbon technologies. “The final document only agrees to talk about how and when funds would be generated.” What one needs to know is whether the already rich countries are ready to share the ecological and economic space to tackle climate change. While it was agreed in 1992 that rich countries will reduce their emissions to accommodate the rest, they are no longer willing to do so. This is the basic question that the negotiations under the new framework (to be decided by 2015) have to deal with.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121209/edit.htm#1>

(Date Accessed: 10.12.2012)

Amrutha Jose

GLOBALIZATION

China and India: Common Challenges En Route to Great Power

(Based on: Dr. Chris Ogden, *Foreign Policy Centre*, December, 2012)

The 21st century is seeing the rise of two great Asian powers – India and China. China and India each respectively accounted for 29.0% and 22.4% of total world GDP when they were at their peak during the 1600s. Between 1980 and 2010, China’s share of world GDP rose from 1.75% to 9.3% while India’s grew from 1.6% to 2.7%. The rise of both India and China is most clearly affecting global security priorities and there is increasing concern focused upon their rising military budgets. While much has been made of the US’s military budget continually surpassing that of most other states put together, it is the rates of expansion witnessed by Asia’s rising powers that is causing alarm, especially in conjunction with high GDP growth rates. It is Asia’s rapid rise versus the West’s relative stagnation that is driving these perceptions, underscored by empirical data. “In particular, India will be second only to the US in terms of aircraft carriers by the end of this decade, giving her solid global power projection capabilities.” India and China more importantly need to work urgently on environmental degradation, the spread of disease, energy security, water access, drug and people smuggling. This is because power can no longer focus only upon economic growth leading to military supremacy. Instead, soft power (in terms of aspirational and non-coercive values) needs to be the guiding principles and values underpinning international relations.

<http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1515.pdf>

(Date accessed: 14.12.2012)

B. Varun Kumar Reddy

LAW AND JUSTICE

Freedom of “Cyber Speech” Under Threat

(Based on: V. Venkatesan, *Frontline*, 15-28 December, 2012)



The provision for freedom of speech has sufficiently been provided by the Constitution and legal system in India but not enough has been provided to ensure freedom after speech.

The new social media is unencumbered unlike the traditional one and does not subject itself to professionally accepted norms. This has led the government to become insecure leading it to “curtail civil liberties under the pretext of legal provisions.”

In the first half of this year, India made 2,319 user-data requests to Google, next only to the US along with requests for “removal of content pertaining to religious offence, impersonation, privacy and security, defamation” etc. In the past few months, several instances of threat, detention and arrest to curb the media have emerged and the authorities have invoked provisions under Section 66A of the Information Technology Act (ITA) to coerce social media users. Amendments made in the Act in 2008 added two clauses one of which says: “any electronic mail or electronic mail message for the purpose of causing annoyance or inconvenience or to

deceive or to mislead the addressee or recipient about the origin of such messages, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term, which may extend to three years and with fine.” A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional sanctity of the section as it is susceptible to misuse by the authorities. There is widespread demand now to either amend the controversial provision or repeal it.

<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/stories/20121228292512900.htm>

(Date Accessed: 13.12.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

Recommendations of the Select Committee on the Lokpal Bill Criticized

(Based on: Prashant Reddy Thikkavarapu, *Open*, 12-18 December, 2012)

The writer comments on the poor quality of the report prepared by the Select Committee on Lokpal Bill, particularly, the two instances where it deals with the role of the public prosecutor.

Firstly, the committee does not suggest any amendment to the clause in the Bill which allows the Lokpal to create its own prosecution wing and appoint a Director of Prosecutions who would function under the control of the Lokpal.

Secondly, the committee suggests an amendment to the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, whereby it wants the CBI to have a statutory Directorate of Prosecutions who will function under the CBI Director. The writer wonders how the Director of Prosecutions will be able to function independently, if placed under the CBI Director.

Also, this recommendation stands in variance with the report of the

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law & Justice which asked for the delinking of Prosecution Wing of the CBI from its Investigative Wing. The demarcation of investigation and prosecution wings already exists in the US and the UK, and the same has been recommended by the Law Commission of India in its 14th, 154th and 197th reports. Due to their conflicting roles, there is a need to separate investigating agencies working under the Executive from the Prosecutors who are officers of the court. The Director of Public Prosecution should be given control of the prosecution process right from the stage of charging the accused.

Neither the Select Committee nor the Standing Committee on Law & Justice refers to a single Law Commission report. “This culture of skimpily reasoned reports by Parliamentary Committees must end”, opines the writer.

<http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/nation/persecuting-the-prosecutor>

Date Accessed: 11.12.2012

Amrutha Jose

GENDER

Supreme Court Issues Guidelines to Combat ‘Eve Teasing’

(Based on: Kalpana Vishwanath, *Hindustan Times*, 13 December, 2012)

The Supreme Court recently issued guidelines to address eve-teasing. This has been lauded by all quarters since India, for long, has lacked a strong legal framework to deal with sexual harassment in public places. Section 294 and 509 have been noted as insufficient since it constitutes vague terms like “outraging the modesty of women” and dependence on women for burden of proof.

The guidelines “fix responsibility on a range of actors, and firmly place it as a violation of one’s constitutional right.”

It is crucial since the National Crime Records Bureau statistics show a 7.1 percent increase in crimes against women between 2010 and 2011.

Apart from calling for stricter punishment, the Court also noted that the Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill 2012 should be reframed.

The Court issued directions such as increased policing at public places, installation of CCTVs in strategic locations, making heads of educational institutions responsible for initiatives aimed at prevention of harassment, public messaging on the issue etc. to deal with such challenge.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/ColumnsOthers/No-getting-away-with-it/Article1-972428.aspx>

Date accessed: 14.12.2012

Simi Sunny

Media and NGOs To Counter Increasing Cyber and Mobile-Related Crimes Against Women in Manipur

(Based on: Yumnam Rupachandra, *Seven Sisters Post*, 07 December, 2012)

While discussing the role of media in eliminating violence against women in Manipur, Women Action for Development (WAD) pointed out that despite various efforts, crimes against women especially cyber crimes, a new dimension of violence against women through mobiles and internet, are alarmingly increasing in the state.

According to WAD, though there are no official records of cases reported under Cyber Crimes (IT Act) and IPC in Manipur, several cases of cyber crimes has been detected in the state.

Furthermore, “ in two of every four cases, men in uniform are involved.”

Other NGOs present in the discussion claimed that besides “traditional violence, women in Manipur are now facing developmental violence” also.

As a result women are getting harassed from “womb to tomb.”

It was concluded that both the NGO’s and the media in Manipur are “vulnerable,” therefore there is need for both to “work together to give voice to voiceless.”

<http://sevensisterspost.com/cyber-and-mobile-related-crimes-rising-in-manipur/>

(Date accessed 14.12.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

outside school premises to check harassment of students.

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/editorial/story.php?sec=3&subsec=0&id=141843&dtP=2012-12-10&ppr=1#141843>

(Date accessed 14.12.2012)

Junty Sharma Pathak

Delhi Primary Schools to Hire Guards for Girls' Security

(Based on: Editorial, *Sentinel*, 13 December, 2012)

In response to increasing cases of harassment and molestation of girl students, Commissioner of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), Manish Gupta, informed that by the next academic session, private security guards from government-approved agencies will be deployed in phases at the gates of every civic agency-run primary school in the SDMC area.

He also mentioned that the proposed project is intended to pull girl students back to school, who are too young to “tackle roadside molesters” as they fall within the age bracket of 5 to 13. The guards will watch over the girls and if necessary “escort” girls to their homes.

If the project is successful, it will be extended to schools in East and North Delhi Municipal Corporation as well. Previously in 2010, MCD had installed CCTV cameras in and

DEMOGRAPHY

Use of “Two Child” Policy Questioned

(Based on: S.A., *The Economist*, December 6, 2012)

The “two-child norm” policy or “2CN” makes a subtle presence in many welfare schemes. However, the writer argues that the two-child norm seeks to reward, rather than force, family planning.

According to critics, such welfare schemes and policies exclude the poorest Indians—who tend to have more children—from all sorts of welfare schemes. The two-child norm is ensconced in the Janani Suraksha Yojana, a “national scheme launched in 2005 that distributes a cash bonus to women who go to hospital to give birth.” However, it allows mothers to claim their Rs.600-1,400 handout for only their first two live births. Similarly, a handout of Rs. 500 for each safe home birth is limited to two deliveries. Another national scheme, launched on a pilot basis last year, pays women to attend ante-natal check-ups, but it covers only a mother’s first two children. The author also points out some laws that are conditioned using the 2CN but appear to be unconnected to family welfare. “In Maharashtra, home to both India’s commercial capital Mumbai and swathes of sugarcane fields, a 2005 law gives farmers with more than two children lower irrigation subsidies.” States like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan, bar people with more than two children from running in village and district council elections. However, a rule like this does not apply for people standing for national level elections.

Policies like these also encourage female foeticide because “many parents see having fewer children as having fewer chances to produce a son, thus discouraging larger families simply encourages female foeticide.” Policies enacted to address India’s population growth must address the

problems that give rise to large families. For instance, weak public services, especially health care, incentivize parents to have several children, as those who survive amongst all the children act as an insurance policy in their old age. Also, poor women’s rights and education spur parents to procreate until they have at least one son.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/12/india-and-population-growth>

(Date accessed: 13.12.1.2)

Karishma Mutreja

HISTORY

Protecting Our Monuments

(Based on: *The Hindu*, 04 December, 2012)

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010 (AMASR Act) promised to improve the protection for centrally protected monuments through stricter rules, high penalties and establishment of new authorities. But the problem is not just legislation. It includes poor institutional infrastructure and a languid approach. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) that has declared 3,677 historic structures as nationally important monuments has just focussed on keeping the structures sound, without taking care of the surrounding area. While other countries have been creating buffer zones since 1961, it is only in 1992 that the ASI framed rules to regulate new constructions within 300 metre of protected monuments. But this rule is enforced with laxity as evident from the high rise office buildings that have come up near Jantar Mantar even after 1992. India has to learn from countries like England where local authorities are actively involved in conservation of monuments through site-specific plans. In India, though the AMASR Act, 2010 enabled the setting up of a new competent authority in all states, many states have not got their plans

ready and the encroachments still remain. Hence, it is important to integrate conservation plans with development plans that are administered by local bodies.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/propping-up-our-monuments/article4161132.ece>

Date Accessed: 10.12.2012

Amrutha Jose

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

China Flexes its New “Superpower” Muscle

(Based on: Ravi S Buddhavarapu, *Tehelka.com*, 8 December, 2012)

The article describes provocative actions by China aimed at asserting its regional power in light of the recent statement of Xi Jinping who, after becoming party chief of the Chinese Communist party, declared that, “*qiangguo meng*, or China’s “superpower dream”, was within grasp -for the first time in China’s history.”

The article says that China has claimed dominion over all of the South China Sea – a claim which it terms “plainly ridiculous”.

The article says that “the legislature of China’s Hainan province, located on the coast of the South China Sea, passed a law that grants its police the power to “board, seize and expel all foreign ships” from the South China Sea waters 1 January, 2013 onwards.”

China’s enforcement of its claim over all of the South China Sea would, says the article, “theoretically block vital shipping lanes and bring trade to a halt.” It says that “roughly half of India’s trade passes through here. This law would block shipping routes and eventually bring trade to a halt.” Countries that would be affected by this are, besides India, “Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore”, whose economies depend on their maritime access to the world. For Japan, their products would face a boycott in China as China is the largest export market for Japan, especially the automobile company.

“Another irritant for the Southeast Asian nations and India was the issue of a new Chinese passport, which

incorporated maps showing disputed areas as part of China. They hit back by issuing visas on separate documents. India called the passports “unacceptable.” Philippines President, Benigno Aquino retorted by addressing his nation about renaming the part of South China Sea as the “West Philippine Sea.” “China, meanwhile, wants to talk to each nation separately, to more easily intimidate them,” says the article.

<http://tehelka.com/a-sea-of-contention/>

(Date Accessed: 12.12.2012)

Ranjana Adhikari

SOUTH ASIA

India and the Impasse in Nepal

(Based on: *Economic Times*, 13 December, 2012)

In the wake of the political and constitutional stalemate in Nepal, this article argues that India has an important role to play to prevent the instability from getting violent.

While Nepal struggles to reach a consensus on its main task of writing the Constitution and forming a national government, India has the opportunity to “recalibrate its intervention and recast itself in the role of the impartial big neighbour, with stability and democracy in Nepal alone guiding its policy.”

One of the main reasons for the lack of consensus is the disagreement between political parties. The opposition party Nepal Congress has been fundamentally against the Maoist-led Government and has still not defined its stand on the controversial issue of federalism. On the other hand, the Government is reeling under differences between the hard-line faction and the Baburam Bhattarai-Prachanda faction.

It is a crucial moment in the diplomatic relations of India and

Nepal since the resentment against the over interference by India in its affairs can cause Nepal to drift towards China.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/india-must-play-impartial-role-in-trying-to-end-impasse-in-nepal/articleshow/17593319.cms>

(Date accessed: 13.12.2012)

Simi Sunny

Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan meet to Discuss Common Challenges

(Based on: *The Nation*, 14 December, 2012)

This report in the Pakistani media says that the heads of the state of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey met at the 7th Trilateral Summit held recently in Ankara. The purpose of the meeting was to combat terrorism and various other regional challenges, through the combined efforts of the three countries.

The Summit focussed on the threat of terrorism, and the Turkish President Abdullah Gul said that militancy “is not the problem of any one country” and the method to eliminate this plague is “with joint struggle.”

At the Summit, the leaders emphasized on building “connectivity at all levels” and focused on promoting trade and commerce, communication and cultural interaction.

Interestingly, at the summit, “the question of an assassination attempt at Afghan Intelligence Chief Asadullah Khalid”, also came up, and to avoid any further complexities, Pakistan and Afghanistan decided to form a “joint working group of concerned agencies of the two countries to probe the matter.”

This article also suggests that this “get-together” has helped resolve the “misunderstandings” between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which would otherwise be an obstruction to the peace and reconciliation process underway in Afghanistan.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/editorials/14-Dec-2012/trilateral-summit>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Ranjana Adhikari

EAST & SOUTH EAST ASIA

China Turns to New Economic Model

After Three Decades

(Based on Zhang Monan, *The New Shape of China's Economy*, *Live Mint*, 09 December, 2012)

The writer, a Chinese scholar, argues that after three decades of growth on a scale unprecedented in human history, China's new leaders are facing a historical turning point. He says that “rising wages, weakening external demand and increasing competition from other emerging economies indicate the exhaustion of [China's] three decade old growth model premised on exports and investment.”

The author argues that these factors, and the 2008 global financial crisis “have forced Chinese officials to forge a new path for future growth under which export-led growth must give way to domestic economic drivers...”

He says that under the new approach “China's huge internal market will gradually become a new long-term driver of domestic and international growth. This model presupposes that China will develop domestic capital, rather than simply relying on foreign

investment. With 90 trillion renminbi in banking assets and \$3.2 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves, China is now playing a significant role in global finance.” The new approach also “implies the need to upgrade China's industrial structure, accelerate the formation of human capital, facilitate technological progress and undertake further institutional reforms.”

Whether China successfully changes its economic model ultimately will determine its prospects not only for further growth, but also for continued stability. If successfully implemented, this agenda is likely to reverse global savings and consumption patterns that have underpinned large imbalances in recent years”. Zhang is a fellow of the China Information Center, fellow of the China Foundation for International Studies and a researcher at the China Macroeconomic Research Platform.

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/dpkvJLvyaINSaAoPLzI7FI/The-new-shape-of-Chinas-economy.html>

(Date Accessed: 10.12.2012)

China Improving Its Juvenile Justice System

(Based on: *Daily Mirror*, 05 December, 2012)

Everybody knows that the Chinese Government does not hold a good record on human rights, with dissidents being imprisoned and more than 3000 people being put to death every year.

But the government has presented progress in at least one area - the treatment of juvenile suspects and offenders.

In 2010, around 80, 000 juveniles were arrested and 64 per cent of them received custodial punishment as against the 27 per cent in US.

With the introduction of “conditional non-prosecution” next year, this will change. Committing of minor offences

will not result in jail sentence, steps for rehabilitation will be established, and behavioural and psychological assessments will be used for adjudication.

High levels of internal migration are one of the reasons for China's high juvenile crime rates. As migrant children do not have educational and employment opportunities and are discriminated against, they tend to turn towards petty thefts.

Since 2007, the government has taken steps to address this problem. In 2007, China's Supreme People's Court began a pilot programme to establish independent juvenile courts; the government increased its cooperation with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Supreme Court began sending study missions to learn “best practices” from foreign countries.

There have also been multiple exchanges between China and the US to work together towards improving each other's human rights records which has resulted in substantial progress. This shows that, “in human rights, as in business, sometimes one needs to give a little to get a little.”

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/172-opinion/24005-innocence-lost.html>

(Date Accessed: 13.12.2012)

Amrutha Jose

AFRICA

UNEP Launches New Initiative to Support Climate Change Adaptation in Africa

(Based on: *United Nations Environment Programme*, 6 December, 2012)



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) aims to support the African community in adapting to the problems of climate change.

This programme will aim to help prevent coastal erosion, and also tackle the pressures of food supply. For this programme, the “Africa Adaptation Knowledge Network” will serve as the centre for knowledge, research, collaborative partnerships on climate change adaptation. This would help mobilize knowledge and introduce solutions to the major impact that climate change has had on the lives in Africa. The natural calamities that have affected Africa in the past, like the droughts in Sahel in 2012, and the Horn of Africa in 2011 have brought into focus the disaster caused on water, land, soil, and other resources that are directly linked to climate change; and the immediate need to build a buffer against it.

African countries depend on “climate-sensitive sectors” such as water, agriculture, energy, tourism, and fisheries; whereas temperature in Africa has been projected to continue to increase by 3-4 degrees over the next century and the continent lacks the resources to tackle this problem that will eventually have economic consequences. If strict measures are not carried out, it could result in a loss of up to 20% of Africa’s GDP.

Therefore for Africa, financial investment and policy support must be scaled-up to other regions to help control climate changes.

To support the climate change adaptation in Africa, the “Africa Adaptation Knowledge Network” proposes to provide the following services:

- Combine the necessary information that is pertinent to climate risk and share the knowledge across the region and countries.
- Develop a strategic planning process for climate change adaptation.

-Build partnerships with governments, research bodies, NGO’s for the purpose of “supporting climate change response.”

“The Africa Adaptation Knowledge Network (AAKNet) aims to harness the valuable knowledge and experiences gained from such initiatives, and to share these with governments, regional authorities, and communities facing similar climate challenges.”

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2700&ArticleID=9349&l=en>

(Date Accessed: 13.12.2012)

Ranjana Adhikari

AMERICAS

Recovery from Hurricane Sandy: The Case for Disaster Bonds

(Based on: Robert Puentes and Patrick Sabol, Brookings, December 10, 2012)

The article mulls over using Sandy Disaster Bonds to redevelop damaged communities affected by Hurricane Sandy. **Disaster Bonds, an important part of America’s policy toolkit, are innovative financing techniques that can help the public and private sectors share the costs and responsibilities of rebuilding.** With nearly 40-70 billion dollars in physical damage and economic losses, homeowners, private companies, insurers, and governments at all levels are struggling to figure out their financial responsibility for redeveloping damaged areas and communities. **Similar to private activity bonds, disaster bonds are tax-exempt debt instruments that direct private sector money into communities recovering from hurricanes, floods, or other calamities.** The mechanics of disaster bonds involves targeting a geographic area where the bonds may be used,

setting a cap on the total value of the bonds issued and lastly, determining what taxes the government want to waive to encourage private investment. To ensure fair and transparent implementation of such a program, the design must be “flexible (to adapt their funding criteria to match communities, evolving needs by engaging with city governments, local businesses, and non-profits;) and transparent to ensure the taxpayer subsidies are appropriately allocated.”

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2012/12/10-natural-disaster-bonds-puentes-sabol>

(Date accessed: 13.12.12)

Karishma Mutreja

Improving the Plight of Native Americans

(Based on: Al Jazeera, 06 December, 2012)

Barack Obama recently hosted the fourth White House Tribal Nations Conference to discuss problems faced by Native American communities. This conference was attended by 566 federally recognised tribal nations.

The Native Americans, according to a report by James Anaya, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights Of Indigenous Peoples, states that they fare the worst among all social groups. They have high rates of poverty, low life expectancy and higher than the average rate of illness.

The Native Americans have been subjected to worst kinds of discrimination with their lands being taken away by conquest, force and fraud over the centuries, their children being removed, apart from the diseases that white explorers got with them which played havoc with their population. “A series of laws passed in the 1970s took initial steps toward rectifying some injustices” by returning remains of sacred objects, prioritising custody of indigenous children and supporting recovery of indigenous languages. However many

SECTION 4: INDIA AND THE WORLD

natives seek real sovereignty over their natural resources.

The recommendations for the government include addressing claims of treaty violations, making efforts to heal historic grievances and giving up colonial era doctrines, restoring indigenous people's access to sites of cultural and religious significance.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestoryamericas/2012/12/201212644149886282.html>

(Date Accessed: 14.12.2012)

Anjora Sarangi

OPINIONS

Are We Still Committed to Human Rights for All?

(Based on: Paul Seils, *Al Jazeera*, 10 December, 2012)

As the world celebrates International Human Rights Day on 10 December commemorating the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the author asks whether we still believe in human rights for all, equal treatment without discrimination and freedom and dignity of individuals.

The Universal Declaration requires states to ensure protection of their citizens with support from the international community. However recent incidents prove indifference on the part of states and the international community to mitigate conflict.

For example, “the recent violence in Goma in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is an indictment of both President Joseph Kabila and the international community at large.” “It would be easy to say that human rights protection is really just a cynical manipulation of politics as usual” which is not necessarily a criticism.

This shows that even though it is stunted, nevertheless there has been progress because fifty years ago institutions for addressing human rights issues themselves did not exist.

“The enjoyment of fundamental human rights rests on more than accountability, but without accountability for the violations of human rights, we will see more and more cynical abuse of the very ideas that were born out of the horrors of the Second World War.”

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/12/2012121064539398923.html>

(Date Accessed: 13.12.2012)
Anjora Sarangi

BOOKS

“Socialist Register 2013”

Edited by Leo Panitch, Greg Albo and Vivek Chibber
(Based on: *Monthly Review*)

The book ‘*Socialist Register 2013*’ addresses two important challenges that socialists face in today’s era and critiques some unhelpful radical thinking that obstructs the reconsideration of socialist strategy for the 21st century.

The author is of the view that socialists today cannot avoid the question of reforms and a gradualist path out of capitalism. Secondly, the author feels that left politics today must deviate away from the structures and principles that were adopted by left politics in the 20th century. The book asks questions such as: “how have the occupations of public squares around the world changed the political scene? What are the most useful forms of political organization in the new conjuncture? Which features of past organizational models should be retained, and which discarded?” Thus, the book seeks to explore and clarify a strategy for the Left in the light of new challenges and new opportunities.

<http://monthlyreview.org/press/books/pb3393/>

(Date accessed: 13.12.1.2)
Karishma Mutreja