

RAJIV GANDHI INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

RGICS POLICY WATCH

Vol.-II, ISSUE-010 : October 14, 2013

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COVER STORY

Census 2011 Data on Slums and Its Policy Implications



WEEKLY ROUND UP OF NEWS ON POLICY

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Jawahar Bhawan, New Delhi.

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Cover Story

Census 2011 Data on Slums and Its Policy Implications

Newly released data on slums show that **over a third of India's slum dwellers live in unrecognised slums**. Lack of government recognition, in the Indian context, implies entrenched barriers to legal rights and basic services such as water, sanitation, and security of tenure. The "Primary Census Abstract for Slum"(2011), published on 30th September, 2013 is of interest to policy makers in multiple ways, right from its definition of slums to the data on assets and amenities of slum dwellers.

We present here an overview of the census data, the shortcomings of the census report and the key implications arising out of it.

Definition of Slums

"A Slum, for the purpose of Census, has been defined as residential areas where dwellings are unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of street, lack of ventilation, light, or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to the safety and health."

For the first time, the 2011 census data included slums besides those already identified or notified by the Government. Also, while the exercise was earlier carried out only in statutory towns having a population of 20000, in Census 2011, Slum Blocks have been delineated in all statutory towns irrespective of population size. **Three types of slums have been defined in Census, namely, Notified, Recognized and Identified.**

(i) *Notified Slums:* All notified areas in a town or city notified as 'Slum' by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government under any Act including a 'Slum Act' may be considered as Notified slums.

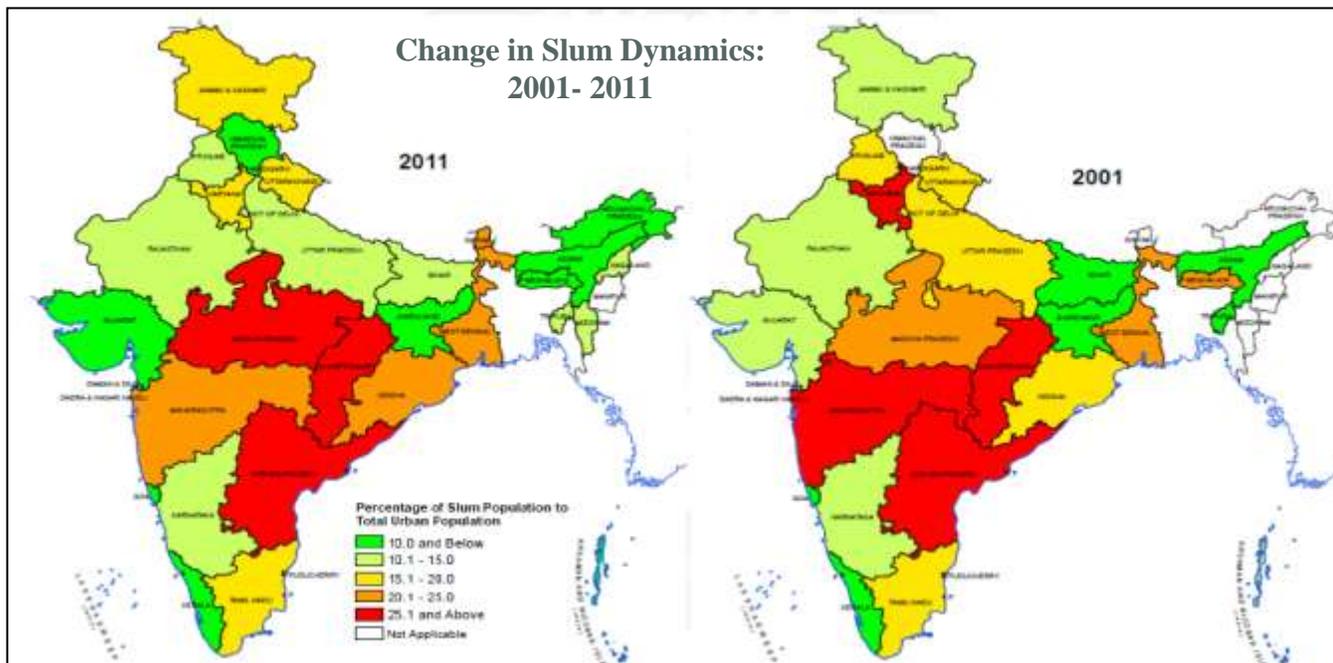
(ii) *Recognized Slums:* All areas recognised as 'Slum' by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government, Housing and Slum Boards, which may have not been formally notified as slum under any act may be considered as Recognized slums.

(iii) *Identified Slums:* A compact area of population of at least 300 people or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities. Such areas should be identified personally by the Charge Officer and also inspected by an officer nominated by Directorate of Census Operations. This fact must be duly recorded in the charge register. Such areas may be considered as Identified slums.

Slum Data Highlights

- **Out of the 4,041 Statutory Towns in Census 2011, Slums were reported in 2,543 Towns (63%).**
- 34% of the slums were notified, 29% recognised and 37% identified. As is evident, **the largest category is identified slums which implies they are neither recognised nor notified**, and hence lack many amenities.
- **While 9 states/ UTs did not report slums in 2001, the number reduced to 4 in 2011. The only state which did not report a slum in 2011 is Manipur. The rest are union territories: Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.**
- **The proportion of slum population to urban population has fallen slightly** with the slum population growing at a slower pace than urban areas as a whole. **The household size of slums has witnessed higher reduction and is now at par with that of non-slum urban areas**, which is about 4.7.
- **The share of Scheduled Caste in slum population has increased in the last decade and now, one out of every five slum residents belong to SC.**
- As is the All-India scenario, in slums too, it is the better off communities with access to sex determination technologies and reproductive services who have the worst sex ratios. **In slums, the scheduled tribes have the best sex ratio of 985, followed by the scheduled castes with 959, way better than the rest of the population with a sex ratio of 918.**
- **The child sex ratio (0-6 years) of an average slum household is 922 girls for every 1,000 boys, compared to 905 for urban India.**

- **The literacy rate in slums too has gone up to 78%.** The jump in female literacy in slums (from 63% to 72%) is higher than the increase in male literacy from 80% to 84%. However, literacy rate is lower than 70% in slums in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.



Million Plus Cities	Proportion of Slum HHs to Total Urban HHs (%)
1. Greater Visakhapatnam M Corp.	44.1
2. Jabalpur Cantt (CB)	43.3
3. Greater Mumbai (M Corp.)	41.3
4. Vijayawada (M Corp.)	40.6
5. Meerut (M Corp.)	40.0

Top 5 States Reporting Slum Households	
State	Proportion of Slum HHs to Urban HHs (%)
Andhra Pradesh	35.7
Chhattisgarh	31.9
Madhya Pradesh	28.3
Odisha	23.1
West Bengal	21.9

Shortcomings of the 2011 Census on Slums

Two major shortcomings of the census data are regarding exclusion of slums in the data:

- ! **3894 towns ignored while counting slums.** While there are 7,935 towns in the country, slums were counted only in the 4,041 statutory towns. The rest 3894 are census towns which lack a notified municipal entity. Hence, the census data is an under-count on slums
- ! **A cut-off of 60-70 households in a cluster for it to be identified as slum excludes many.** While the introduction of a third category called “identified slums” has definitely lead to the inclusion of non-notified and unrecognised slums, the ones that have less than 60-70 households are excluded. These could be many in number. For instance, 2001 data indicates that 48% of slums in the Chennai Metropolitan Area had less than 50 households.

Interpreting the 2011 Census Data with Caution

Gautam Bhan and Arindam Jana of the *Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS)*, Bangalore, point out that the slum data should be approached with caution on three counts: “correlation between the definition of ‘slum’ and urban poverty; the dimension of quality when estimating access to basic services; and the question of why so few cities and towns report any slums.”

i) **Correlation between the definition of ‘slum’ and urban poverty :**

Many of the newspaper reports treat slums as a special expression of urban poverty, and hence interpret the increase in amenities and assets in slums as an indicator for improvement of conditions of the urban poor. While the Census identifies only slums with at least 60-70 households, there exist a large number of clusters with lesser number of households and poor living conditions. Due to multiple cycles of eviction and resettlement many slum clusters have been broken down to smaller ones which in turn are not captured in the Census data. “In smaller, less organised clusters, their ability to mobilise political or other patronage to gain access to services is also further reduced”, argue Bhan and Jana in their commentary “Of Slums or Poverty”. Therefore, **it should not be concluded that a narrowing “slum” and “non-slum” gap indicates a reduction of urban vulnerability or poverty.**

ii) **The dimension of quality when estimating access to basic services:**

“The all-India figures for access to drinking water, latrines and electricity suggest a closing gap or, in one case, even better service access between slum households and their non-slum counterparts.” For instance, 65% of slum households have access to treated tap water as compared to 61% in other non-slum households. This appears to imply that the delivery mechanism for treated water is better for slums as compared to other households. However, **“access to treated tap water” does not imply individual household connections.** “Access” thus must be qualified as being shared across a number of households as opposed to non-slum households where it is highly likely that a significant proportion of households have individual connections (Centre for Science and Environment 2011).

The census data also suggests that 58% of all slum households have a “flush/pour flush latrine” within the household. Yet only 48% have either treated or untreated tap water within the household. The possible gap (of nearly 10% or 1.3 million households) indicates households where a physically built flush latrine may or may not have sufficient water to function effectively, points out Bhan and Jana.

Questions of quality and access together seem to be prevalent strongly in both slum and non-slum households. Such an interpretation of the data rather than one that sees the “narrowing of a gap” can aid policies and programmes to better target actually existing gaps in access and quality of services.

iii) **The question of why so few cities and towns report any slums.**

Only 14.4% of all towns and cities in Jharkhand report having any slums at all. The figure is 34% for Odisha, 28% for Uttar Pradesh, 14% for Assam, and Manipur, at the extreme, reports not a single town or city with a slum. We have already pointed out in the previous section the basis for ignoring 3894 towns while counting slums.

Relevance of Census Data on Slums

Since slum dwellers constitute major segment of the urban poor, it is important to know their correct count. **Non-availability of authentic statistics on State-wise slum population has lead to faulty planning and under-estimation of financial requirements.** Inadequacies of basic amenities and infrastructural resources make living conditions in the slums highly unhygienic and disease prone. Unless there is an authentic database to assess the magnitude of the problem, it is not possible to undertake formulation of plans, policies and schemes so that potential beneficiaries are targeted in a meaningful manner.

The Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) extends benefits to not just the notified and recognised slums but identified slums as well. Earlier this year, the then Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Minister Mr. Ajay Maken said that the high proportion of slum households in the unrecognized category was a serious problem, and committed to the ministry extending benefits like the RAY to such slums too. A robust database on slums and getting a definitive understanding of the magnitude of the problem is critical for implementation of schemes like RAY. While the new census exercise has resulted in the inclusion of more towns, the 60-70 household cut-off and the omission of census towns still results in the exclusion of many slums. These slums might be ignored in the RAY. In this regard, it is important to note that **the vision of Slum Free India can be achieved only on the foundations of sound plans based on sound data.**

Read More at:

<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-Documents/Slum-26-09-13.pdf>

http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/2013_48/18/Of_Slums_or_Poverty.pdf

Prepared by,

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India Adopts UN's Growth Agenda for Disabled

(*The Echo of India*, 03 October, 2013)

India has adopted a landmark document of UN General Assembly aimed at inclusion of disabled persons in all aspects of development and giving them due consideration in the post-2015 UN development agenda.

“At the meeting on Disability and Development in the United Nations General Assembly, India also called upon the international community to identify measures and formulate policies for the disabled to help enhance their accessibility to education, healthcare and employment.” The meeting had adopted an agreed “outcome document,” stressing the need to ensure accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development. “The outcome document is expected to become a landmark declaration which will serve as a guide for framing laws and policies by all nations in the disability sector in the days to come.”

The outcome document seeks to ensure that the inclusion of disabled in development policies including poverty eradication, social inclusion and productive employment amongst others. It also seeks the development of specific plans including the enactment or amendment and enforcement of national legislation, recognition of right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination by making primary education accessible, free and compulsory.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/new-york-india-adopts-uns-growth-agenda-disabled-39937>

Date Accessed: 04.10.2013
(Anjana John)

UGC Act to be Amended to Confer Degree Granting Powers on Autonomous Colleges

(*Press Information Bureau*, 07 October, 2013)

The Secretary, Higher Education University in a meeting with Principals of Autonomous Colleges, State Government representatives with The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC), shared with them the proposed initiatives for bringing about reforms in University Affiliation systems while informing them about the provisions of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a scheme of MHRD wherein autonomous colleges desirous of converting themselves into universities can be provided with funding upto Rs.55 crores each. The total amount earmarked for XII FYP for this scheme is Rs.2475 crores.

While some universities have more than 800 affiliated colleges, where universities are consumed mostly in routine administrative work, other universities despite high potential of research are not allowed to grow due to limits prescribed by the university system. The Secretary felt that the system of Autonomous Colleges could provide a way out of this limiting role of affiliation system. This could be done by upgrading the autonomous colleges with ‘A’ NAAC accreditation (46 out of 441 colleges are ‘A’ grade) the status of a Deemed University, State University or just give them degree granting powers by amending the UGC Act.

The following was decided to be done-

- The UGC Standing Advisory Committee on Autonomous Colleges will finalize its

recommendations within two months including a draft Regulations for autonomous colleges.

- The central government will explore ways to confer degree granting powers on autonomous colleges by way of amending the UGC Act.”
- At least 10% of all eligible colleges in the country will be conferred with autonomy by end of XII Plan.
- The suggestions of colleges were taken into account to finalize programmatic norms under RUSA. It was decided that 45 autonomous colleges would be converted into Universities by end of XII Plan.
- The governance structure is the crux of the reforms in RUSA. Therefore all states and autonomous colleges were exhorted to undertake governance and academic reforms.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99896>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

Lighting Rural India: Feeder Segregation is Not the Only Concrete Answer

(*The World Bank*, 01 October, 2013)

A World Bank report ‘**Lighting Rural India: Experience of Rural Load Segregation Schemes in States**’, finds that a standard rural feeder segregation (which means separate electricity infrastructure for rural agriculture and non-agriculture power consumers) is unlikely to help improve the rural power situation in the long term, unless it is supported “by robust data collection and analysis which will allow for greater transparency around agricultural consumption of electricity and better identification of subsidy targets.” The report analyzes different approaches to rural feeder segregation across eight

Indian states but particularly surveys and studies in detail the two states that have had the longest experience with feeder segregation - Gujarat and Rajasthan. "According to the survey, prior to feeder segregation, more than 80% consumers in both Gujarat and Rajasthan complained of low voltage problems, which came down to 6% post segregation." Additionally, a number of socio-economic benefits including creation of jobs accompanied these projects.

The report also finds shortcomings and gives suggestions on the part of government to realise their full potential:

- State governments have been under-utilizing the potential benefits of using the data from the segregated feeders to better target subsidies by estimating agriculture consumption accurately.
- It is the "large farmers who gain from these subsidies in most states; most small and marginal farmers continue to lack access to reliable electricity."
- The report suggests that "automated metering of agricultural consumers is essential to obtain consumer-specific consumption information and, subsequently, better direct subsidy delivery. There is an urgent need to use IT-enabled rural power supply systems to collect and analyze electricity input and consumption data; improve load management. It also stresses the need for constant monitoring and evaluation of the data emerging to ensure that the benefits do not get eroded."

Based on the findings of the study, the government has planned to set up a "Knowledge Hub" to facilitate experience sharing across states under the assistance of World Bank. Bihar has been identified as one of the potential Hub design for rural power supply system in five/six districts.

In conclusion, the report advocates that there is a need for a national guidance framework outlining the

broad principles that will help make rural electrification economically viable. Each state should prepare their rural power supply improvement proposal based on their specific needs.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/10/01/lighting-rural-india-is-feeder-segregation-the-only-answer>

Date Accessed: 9.20.2013
(Mahima Malik)

Hope of Malaria Vaccine by 2015 After Successful Trials

(Sarah Boseley, *The Guardian*, 08 October, 2013)

Glaxo Smith Kline- a British drug company- has said to have come up with the world's first malaria vaccine as reports of trial treatments in seven African countries indicate a 50% reduction in the number of cases detected between the age group of 5 to 7 years. It has also reduced the number of cases among babies aged 6 to 12 by 25%.

The RTS,S vaccine is supposed to provide protection against malaria for 18 months.

However, there is some doubt reading the efficacy of the vaccine overtime.

Every year, around 660,000 people die from malaria, most of them small children under the age of five. There are about 219 million cases of the disease a year worldwide.

The company intends to apply for a regulatory licence for its use in Africa under a special provision of the European Medicines Agency. It has said that a 5% additional cost will be charged for further research and development work on tropical diseases.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/08/malaria-vaccine-trial-children-babies>

Date: 08.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

New Scheme Offers Flexi Entry and Exit Points in Vocational Courses

(M Saraswathy, *Business Standard*, 09 October, 2013)

AICTE launched National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) for implementation in polytechnics, engineering colleges and other university colleges from 2012-13. The programmes are sector-specific, and sectors such as information technology (IT), media, entertainment, telecommunications, mobile communications, automobile, construction, retail, hotels and fashion designing, among others, have been identified for implementation.

India has 25 million students entering colleges after the 10th, 11th and 12th standards and almost the same number of students drop out. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) creates employable students but the skills provided are often terminal in nature. With no progression possible to acquire a degree or a diploma such training seldom have succeeded beyond a point and have remained an option only to a certain section of society.

Highlights of the scheme

- **The scheme addresses lack of uniformity in qualifications across institutions and no formal recognition of informal (prior) learning.**
- **Helps students exit education system and enter job market as and when they desire. They can come back to education later.**
- Scheme to have seven certificate levels with each certificate level having approximately 1,000 hours each
- Each 1,000 hours to be made of certain number of hours for vocational competency-based skill modules
- Rest will be for general learning simultaneously integrated and providing a diploma for vocational education after the

certificate level five or leading to a degree for vocational education after level seven in the university system (subject to their statutory approval)

- Colleges can become community colleges to offer courses under NVEQF
- Sector skill councils to set the occupational standards
- AICTE partners with American Association of Community Colleges for collaborating with community colleges in the US
- **360 colleges have signed up for National Vocational Education Qualification Framework**

MHRD is looking to skill 500 million people in India by 2022, through its various initiatives. National Policy on Skill Development, approved by the government, has set a target for skilling 500 million persons by 2022. The National Council on Skill Development (NSDC) has a target of skilling 150 million by 2022.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/management/new-scheme-offers-flexi-entry-exit-points-in-vocational-courses-113100901101_1.html

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013
(Neha Singh)

Reserve 3% Govt. Jobs for Disabled: SC to Centre, States

(PTI, 08 October, 2013)

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre and all state governments to provide 3% job reservation to disabled persons in all their departments, companies and institutions.

A bench headed by Chief Justice P Sathasivam also clarified that the principle of not exceeding more than 50% reservation would not be applicable while granting quota for disabled persons.

The apex court directed the authorities to compile the number of vacancies in all their departments to give jobs to disabled persons under three per cent

reserved quota within three months. The bench said it is an "alarming reality" that disabled persons are not getting jobs because of various social barriers forcing them to live life in poverty and negligence. It further held that the government has "categorical obligation" to protect the right of disabled persons and passed a slew of directions for providing jobs to the differently-abled.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/reserve-3-per-cent-govt-jobs-for-disabled-sc-to-centre-states-113100800260_1.html

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

India to Top Infrastructure Goods Imports by 2020: Report

(P.R Sanjai, *Live Mint*, 08 October, 2013)

India will surpass the US as the biggest importer of goods needed for infrastructure projects by 2020, according to the latest trade forecast report released by HSBC on Tuesday.

India will continue to hold this position till 2030, as it builds civil infrastructure, bolstering demand for overseas goods, the report said. China is set to become the top importer of investment equipment (machinery required by businesses to boost production) by 2030 as it continues to invest in manufacturing productivity. Rising aspirations of the middle class and urbanisation “will force India to upgrade its civil infrastructure, thus pushing up demand for overseas infrastructure-related goods”.

India is not featured in the top five list of largest exporters of infrastructure-related goods forecast in 2013, according to the report. China tops this list followed by the UAE, the US and Germany.

Growing Asian economies will take an increasing share of infrastructure-related imports over time, with Malaysia, Korea and Vietnam moving up the rankings, the report said.

The report said that trade in investment equipment will increase more rapidly than trade in goods for infrastructure in the years to 2030, in part due to the pivot in China’s economic focus towards consumer-led growth and next generation technology.

“Asia is forecast to see the most rapid growth in merchandise trade in the decade to 2030 led by India, China and Vietnam at an average of more than 10% a year. Yet advanced European economies—such as the UK, France and Germany—are also

forecast to expand their exports of goods at rates of 4-5% a year on average over this period, while average growth in US goods exports will be closer to 6%,” it said.

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/tvnvkzUVDqleEvVk8A7JrJ/India-to-top-infrastructure-goods-imports-by-2020-report.html>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

India to Benefit from SMEs Deploying IT: Study

(Moulishree Srivastava, *Live Mint*, 09 October, 2013)

An increase in the adoption of technology by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in India can add \$56 billion to the country’s economic output and create more than one million additional jobs, said a Microsoft-Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study. “The leaders in technology adoption across industry sectors were successful in increasing their annual revenue 15 percentage points faster than companies with lower level of technology adoption,” the report said. “They also created jobs almost twice as fast as other small businesses.”

China ranks the highest among the countries surveyed with SMEs contributing 75% to the formal workforce and 60% to the country’s GDP. Nearly 90% of SMEs in India have no access to the Internet, compared with only 22% of SMEs in China and 5% in the US.

“BCG estimates SMEs’ revenue could grow by a combined \$770 billion in just five primary countries surveyed, if they deployed more IT tools. India still has to go a long way when it comes to technology adoption in SMEs. However, among technology leaders in India, 80% of them are using cloud technology, as against 60% of technology leaders in

developed countries, which is a positive sign for India.”

<http://www.livemint.com/Companies/bs19D8DZEuta2rqSUhtQ7J/India-to-benefit-from-SMEs-deploying-IT-study.html>

Date Accessed: 9.10.2013
(Karishma Mutreja)

Signs of Worst Being Over for India’s Current Account Deficit, Now Focus on the Overall Health of External Sector

(*The Hindu*, 11 October, 2013)

The article says that India’s soaring current account deficit (CAD) has shown signs of improvement and this is the time to take measures to improve the health of the external sector in totality- which goes beyond simply meeting the CAD yearly target.

The article highlights various reasons why the economic situation in the country seems to be reviving. The following are mentioned:

- **Fall in CAD:** Recent RBI report highlights the improvement in says that after being at record high levels (CAD was pegged at 4.9 per cent for April-June 2013-14), “analysts expect CAD to be contained within the official target of \$70 billion” with the current policies to control gold imports and improved exports in selected categories.
- **Reduction in trade deficit:** “The Commerce Ministry’s trade data for September, showed the merchandise trade deficit narrowing down to a 30-month low.”
- **Revival in exports:** “Exports grew in double digits for the third month in succession.” The sharp rupee depreciation encouraged competitiveness of Indian exports products, particularly engineering

goods, textiles and leather. Demand for Indian products also revived in Europe and the US

- **Curtailling non essential imports:** “The country’s imports fell by more than 18 per cent on a year-on-year basis, to a 30-month low of \$34.43 billion.” This was achieved by “fiscal and administrative measures to check the inflow of gold. Demand for oil has been lower and the government has been taking steps to curb non-essential imports.”

The article suggests that an improving CAD and trade deficit will translate into improvement in macroeconomic health if concrete structural reforms are brought. For this, health of the external sector must be addressed because “India’s external debt profile is skewed towards short-term debt.” This means a huge burden when repayments have to be made. Also, unless structural changes are brought about, high coal imports and negligible iron ore exports will keep the current account under pressure.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/cautiously-optimistic/article5222180.ece?homepage=true>

Date accessed: 11.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

India Among Bottom 35 countries with Major Trust Deficit between Citizens and Politicians: World Economic Forum Report

(*GovernanceNow*, 05 October, 2013)

A report released by the World Economic Forum Citizens report ranks India among the bottom 35 countries with major trust deficit between citizens and politicians.

Highlights of the Report can be summarised as follows:

- On global competitiveness, India slips to 60 with a score of 4.28
- On infrastructure, India is ranked at 85
- India ranks at 94 on favouritism in decision of government officials
- India ranks at 98 on diversion of public funds
- On judicial independence from influences of government officials, India is ranked at 40.
- The debt-to-GDP ratio is the second highest among the BRICS nation
- On technology readiness (98th), India is again ranked very low
- With ratio women-to-men of 0.36 (137th), India has the lowest percentage of working women outside the Arab world
- A prime cause of India's low productivity is very poor public health and education levels where it stands 102nd
- India is ranked 72 in institutional pillar, two places down from the last year data
- On annual inflation, India ranks at 130
- On government budget balance to percentage of GDP is concerned, India fares lowly at 141

WEF studied data from its own annual executive opinion survey of 13,000 business leaders across the globe and data sourced from various international organisations. It also analysed institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health, education, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation to prepare the ranking.

<http://www.governancenow.com/view/s/think-tanks/no-trust-vote-against-politicians>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013

(Deepti Somani)

Meghalaya State Planning Board a Rehab for Failed, Rejected Politicians: Paul Lyngdoh

(*Meghalaya Times*, 09 October, 2013)

United Democratic Party (UDP) legislator, Paul Lyngdoh described the Meghalaya State Planning Board (MSPB) as a “rehab centre” for failed and defeated politicians. Critical of the State board's performance he said that “said that it has failed to live up to the aspirations of the people” and added that there is a “general belief that membership to board is an act of tokenism for such politicians.”

Lyngdoh further pointed out that “without any statutory powers, the board is a mere advisory body and on most occasions the Government and board does not have the same wavelength. He also rued about the fact that there were few technocrats, experts and people from the civil society who could guide the Government in developmental plans.”

Chief Minister of Meghalaya Dr Mukul Sangma, in his reply said that “politicians were better placed to handle the problems of the common

man and plan on their behalf as they are closer to the ground realities and understand the aspirations of the people at the grassroots.” Dr Sangma also pointed out that “the State Planning Board does have the powers to invite experts from any field and seek their opinion while formulating developmental plans for the State.”

“Lauding the present chairperson of the State Planning Board and former Chief Minister SC Marak for his vision, Dr Sangma said that eight working groups have been formed by the board to deal with specific issues of the state. The Chief Minister further added that the State Planning Board and the Government is working in close coordination so that the developmental plans suggested by the board could be implemented on the ground more efficiently.”

<http://meghalayatimes.info/index.php/front-page/22197-state-planning-board-a-rehab-for-failed-rejected-politicians-paul-lyngdoh>

Date Accessed 09.10.2013

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

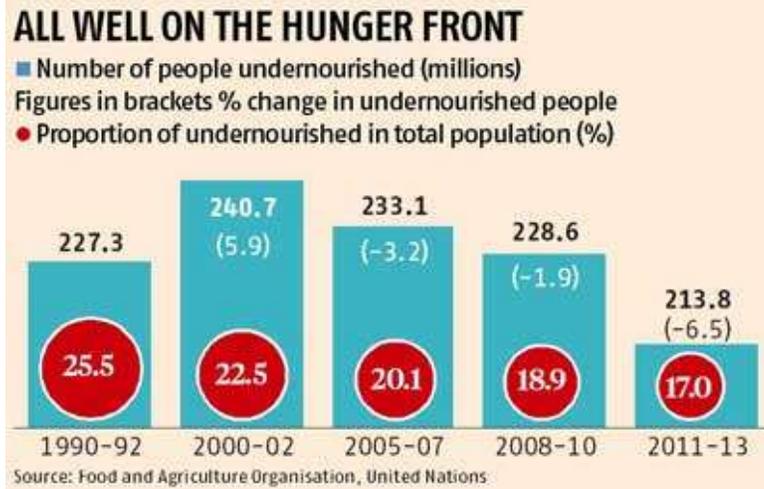
DEVELOPMENT

Undernourishment in India Falls at Steepest Rate in 2011-13 Over Two Decades : UN

(*Somesh Jha, Business Standard*, 07 October, 2013)

The number of people suffering from chronic hunger in India has declined at the fastest pace in 2011-13 by 6.5% since 1990-92, according to a joint report by United Nations' food agencies.

“Over the last 20 years, food availability in developing regions has risen faster than the average dietary energy requirements, while the quality of diets has improved,” as per the report by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the



International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme.

The proportion of undernourished people in India also declined from 18.9% in 2008-10 to 17% in 2011-13. However, the report, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, stated that decline in undernourishment in India at this pace might not be sufficient to reach Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Whereas, as per UN bodies, the target can be met, provided that additional efforts to reduce hunger are brought underway.

The New Food Security Act 2013 is described to be a step towards this aim as per the experts.

The number of people suffering from undernourishment in India has reduced from 227.3 million in 1990-92 to 213.8 million in 2011-13.

Thus as per the agencies long term commitment to mainstreaming food security and nutrition in public policies and programmes is the key to hunger reduction. "Keeping food security and agriculture high on the development agenda supported by sustained social protection, is crucial for achieving major reductions in poverty and undernourishment."

<http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy->

[policy/assault-on-hunger-picks-up-pace-113100600348_1.html](http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/finance-ministry-rules-out-reduction-in-export-duty-on-iron-ore/article5217523.ece)

Date Accessed : 07.10.2013

(Shruti Issar)

GOVERNMENT

Finance Ministry Rules Out Reduction in Export Duty on Iron Ore

(Sujay Mehdudia, *The Hindu*, 09 October, 2013)

Notwithstanding the demand from the domestic iron ore producers to for a cut in exports duty from the current level of 30 per producers, Commerce Secretary, S. R. Rao on Wednesday said the Finance Ministry has ruled out reduction in export duty on iron ore." Mr. Rao also said that the finance minister has already stated that there will be no duty reduction in iron ore exports.

"While the Ministry of Steel had opposed the cut in duty, the Ministry of Mines had batted in favour of it. India was once the third-largest exporter of iron ore, the raw material for steel making, but outbound shipments had slumped more than 80 per cent in three years to hit 18 million tonnes in the last financial year." Exports of iron ore fell from a high of 117.4 million tonnes 18 million tonnes

in 2009-2010 to 12 million tonnes in 2012-2013 respectively. Exports this year are expected to remain low with "a ban on exports from major producing states Karnataka and Goa being in force."

The Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) had termed that the decision to reduce duty drawback rates for the engineering sector would negate the positive impact of rupee depreciation. "Further, Mr. Rao said India's exports are unlikely to be hit on account of the US shutdown which has been going on for more than a week now."

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/finance-ministry-rules-out-reduction-in-export-duty-on-iron-ore/article5217523.ece>

Date Accessed: 10.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

LAND ACQUISITION

Land Law no Constraint on Industry: Jairam

(Girija Shivkumar, *The Hindu*, 05 October, 2013)

Rural Development Ministry, to allay industry concerns over the new land acquisition law, will ask States to release land to investors for uninterrupted industrial and urbanisation processes.

Mr. Jairam Ramesh in a function by the Confederation of Indian Industry, responding to investors who pointed out that certain provisions in the law would lead to industrial slowdown, to avert which private industries should be allowed to acquire land available with the state governments. He said, "Most State governments have adequate land for them to release for industrialisation. They are actually squatting on the land. Government is the largest squatter of the land. There is no way I can impose [a law in this regard]... But certainly it would be part of the guidelines."

The Minister said the draft rules, procedures and guidelines of the 2013 Land Acquisition Act would be out in a week and a consultative and participative approach...would be adopted in finalising the rules and comments, and feedback on the Act [would be] invited for 45 days. The Act would be notified, after finalisation, on either January 1 or April 1, 2014.

Further, Mr. Ramesh said, “timelines for procedures were clearly delineated in the Act and penalties would be invited for any delay. Some procedures could run concurrently and would be completed in 36-42 months. The government would shortly complete mapping to identify wasteland and barren tracts through the National Remote Sensing Agency and make this information available for public use.”

The Minister assured India Inc. that nothing in the law should discourage private sale and purchase of land.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/land-law-no-constraint-on-industry-says-jairam/article5202838.ece>

Date Accessed: 05.10.2013

(Ashwin Varghese)

UN Experts Point Out Forced Evictions and Human Rights Violation ; Urge Posco to Halt Steel Plant in India

(Katy Daigle, *Live Mint*, 01 October, 2013)

“A United Nations (UN) panel of experts urged South Korean steel giant Posco on Tuesday to suspend plans for a \$12 billion steel plant over concerns the project threatened the rights and livelihoods of tens of thousands in Orissa. The report, based on a year-long investigation, was published by

the International Human Rights Clinic at New York University’s School of Law and the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” It points out that this project is an example of forced eviction and human rights violations.

“The report finds that India’s attempts to forcibly evict these communities stand in violation of international and domestic law. International legal standards require that India exhaust all feasible alternatives to forced evictions; engage in genuine consultation with project-affected communities; ensure the provision of adequate compensation for affected properties; and follow procedures established by law. According to the report, India has systematically failed to live up to each and every one of these standards.

In addition, under India’s Forest Rights Act, the government must secure the consent of forest dwelling communities before diverting forested land. Affected communities have passed several village resolutions fervently rejecting the diversion of land for the POSCO-India project, resolutions that the Indian government, as per the findings of the report, has effectively ignored.”

The POSCO-India project has witnessed violence and arbitrary arrests and detentions. Local police have barricaded villages, occupied schools, levelled thousands of homes, allegedly fabricated criminal charges against individuals opposing the project, and refused to protect individuals from consistent and sometimes fatal attacks by private actors who are allegedly motivated by the interests of the company and of the State.

“As a result of these abuses, for the past eight years, entire communities in the project-affected area have been living under siege and have suffered clear violations of their rights to security of person and freedom of movement; their rights to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention; and their right to be free from discrimination—particularly on the

basis of political or other opinions. Living under siege has also resulted in significant disruptions to many villagers’ ability to access health care, schools, markets, and crops, undermining their rights to health, education, work, and food.”

In conclusion, UN expert says people should not be impoverished in the name of development and their rights must take precedence over potential profits.

<http://www.livemint.com/Companies/rCzUgAbhyhVIW6eMQFlvLI/UN-experts-urge-Posco-to-halt-steel-plant-in-India.html>

<http://www.escr-net.org/node/365209>

Date Accessed: 9.10.2013

(Karishma Mutreja)

Korea Rejects UN Report, Hopes Start of POSCO in 2014

(Outlook, 07 October, 2013)

Rejecting a UN panel recommendation for halting POSCO’s port-to-steel plant project, both the Republic of Korea and the Odisha government are planning to conduct the ground-breaking ceremony of the proposed facility early next year.

POSCO has been trying for almost eight years to establish its proposed 12 mtpa greenfield steel plant at an investment of Rs 52,000 crore. Though the state government has acquired over 2,700 acres of land, the physical possession of land by the company has become difficult due to opposition from local villagers.

Asked about the UN Human Rights panel recommendation which asked POSCO to halt the Odisha project alleging possible displacement of thousands of people and disruption in their livelihoods, Korean ambassador Joon-gyu Lee expressed his disappointment and termed it “one-sided”. “They have not come to Bhubaneswar or met people at the ground. They came in few numbers to

Delhi and met people who are opposing the project."

On the possible impact of the project on local people, the diplomat said POSCO was doing the project not only for profit, but for development of the state and the country.

On the MoU with POSCO-India which lapsed since June 2010, Lee said "I understand that they will sign new MoU soon." Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also exuded confidence about an early start to work on the project.

Besides land acquisition issue, the project is also facing problems on environmental point of view. The National Green Tribunal (NGT), which has stopped all activities on the project site following a petition by a local environmentalist, has not disposed the case till now. The project is yet to get captive iron ore mines even though the state government has recommended for Prospecting License of Khandadhar mines in Sundargarh district.

<http://news.outlookindia.com/items.aspx?artid=812823>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

Rural Ministry to put up Wasteland Maps for Land Acquisition

(Aesha Datta, *Business Line*, 04 October, 2013)

The Ministry of Rural Development will put up maps demarcating the availability of wasteland in the country to help in the process of land acquisition. "Ideally, non-irrigated land should be the first to be acquired," Minister Jairam Ramesh stated. He also added that acquiring multi-crop irrigated land for industrialisation should be the last resort and putting up wasteland maps on its Web site would help in the process of land acquisition. However,

several State Governments have expressed concern that urbanisation in their States would be hit as majority of land available in states such as Punjab, Kerala and Haryana is farm land. "The maps, demarcating multi-crop irrigated, irrigated, barren land, wasteland and other such areas, are likely to be put up on the Ministry Website in two-three weeks."

Industry members had highlighted a number of issues with the new land acquisition Act including the 80 per cent consent clause, the requirement to give back land if it is unused for five years, and the long time period for the acquisition process to be completed." Regarding this, the Minister has clarified that the many of the processes are supposed to be completed in parallel and the process will take about 3 to 3.5 years.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/rural-ministry-to-put-up-wasteland-maps-for-land-acquisition/article5200740.ece>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Anjana John)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Bihar Lags Behind in Utilization of Coaching Scheme for Schedule Castes, OBCs

(*Bihar Times*, 07 October, 2013)

Bihar has been ranked third from the bottom of the list of States and Union Territories in utilizing Central government scheme of providing free coaching to Schedule Caste and OBC students who want to compete for jobs in Central services. Chandigarh and much smaller Nagaland are behind it. Maharashtra tops the list to be followed by Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. There are 15.1 per cent SCs and roughly 38 per cent OBCs in

Bihar. Except Paswans or Dussadhs, the other 21 SC sub-castes have been included in the list of Maha-Dalits by the government. Yet it failed to use the central government fund for them.

According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment the Bihar government's proposal recommends only 950 students from reserved category for free coaching this year. This is much less than the figure of other much smaller states likes Assam, Manipur and Puducherry.

<http://www.bihartimes.in/Newsbihar/2013/Oct/newsbihar07Oct4.html>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Anjana John)

EDUCATION

UGC Act to be Amended to Confer Degree Granting Powers on Autonomous Colleges

(*Press Information Bureau*, 07 October, 2013)

The Secretary, Higher Education University in a meeting with Principals of Autonomous Colleges, State Government representatives with The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC), shared with them the proposed initiatives for bringing about reforms in University Affiliation systems while informing them about the provisions of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a scheme of MHRD wherein autonomous colleges desirous of converting themselves into universities can be provided with funding upto Rs.55 crores each. The total amount earmarked for XII FYP for this scheme is Rs.2475 crores.

While some universities have more than 800 affiliated colleges, where

universities are consumed mostly in routine administrative work, other universities despite high potential of research are not allowed to grow due to limits prescribed by the university system. The Secretary felt that the system of Autonomous Colleges could provide a way out of this limiting role of affiliation system. This could be done by upgrading the autonomous colleges with 'A' NAAC accreditation (46 out of 441 colleges are 'A' grade) the status of a Deemed University, State University or just give them degree granting powers by amending the UGC Act.

The following was decided to be done –

- The UGC Standing Advisory Committee on Autonomous Colleges will finalize its recommendations within two months including a draft Regulations for autonomous colleges.
- The central government will explore ways to confer degree granting powers on autonomous colleges by way of amending the UGC Act.”
- At least 10% of all eligible colleges in the country will be conferred with autonomy by end of XII Plan.
- The suggestions of colleges were taken into account to finalize programmatic norms under RUSA. It was decided that 45 autonomous colleges would be converted into Universities by end of XII Plan.
- The governance structure is the crux of the reforms in RUSA. Therefore all states and autonomous colleges were exhorted to undertake governance and academic reforms.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99896>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

HRD Ministry to Open 50 Educational DTH Channels

(Press Information Bureau, 08 October, 2013)

Ashok Thakur, Secretary, Higher Education Ministry, announced that the HRD Ministry will soon launch 50 DTH educational channels, which will eventually be increased to 1,000.

He said that the Ministry has spent more than one billion dollars for ICT. Over 400 universities and twenty thousand colleges have been linked with bandwidth... Highlighting the potential of the National Programme on National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT), the Secretary said that the entire country can be made into a big classroom which will help improve quality of instructions in engineering colleges particularly belonging to the remote areas...the Ministry may approach AICTE to make on-line education mandatory and integral part of education system. Asking to promote virtual lab, Sh. Thakur said it should be possible to share classes from IITs to other engineering colleges by making the system more user friendly.

Dr. S.S. Mantha, chairman, AICTE, said that rapid expansion in institutions has led to the decline in quality. The need of the hour therefore is to nurture quality in the institutions.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99919>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

HEALTH

Hope of Malaria Vaccine by 2015 After Successful Trials

(Sarah Boseley, *The Guardian*, 08 October, 2013)

Glaxo Smith Kline- a British drug company- has said to have come up with the world's first malaria vaccine as reports of trial treatments in seven African countries indicate a 50% reduction in the number of cases detected between the age group of 5 to 7 years. It has also reduced the number of cases among babies aged 6 to 12 by 25%.

The RTS,S vaccine is supposed to provide protection against malaria for 18 months.

However, there is some doubt reading the efficacy of the vaccine overtime.

Every year, around 660,000 people die from malaria, most of them small children under the age of five. There are about 219 million cases of the disease a year worldwide.

The company intends to apply for a regulatory license for its use in Africa under a special provision of the European Medicines Agency. It has said that a 5% additional cost will be charged for further research and development work on tropical diseases.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/08/malaria-vaccine-trial-children-babies>

Date: 08.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

Medical Advances Push Up Treatment Costs

(Mayur Shetty, *TNN*, 07 October, 2013)

With advanced medical technology, health insurance claims are shooting up, with some treatments seeing a 50% jump in costs due to new procedures.

People with health insurance policies are opting for less painful and time consuming procedures, which usually leads to increased treatment costs.

From the insurance providers' point of view, procedures are accepted when proved to be safer and are not at the trial stage said one industry person.

The dilemma for insurers remains whether to admit these claims and push up the cost of health insurance for all or to ask claimants to share the cost.

According to an official in a public sector insurance company, claims are settled by comparing them with industry average. If the claim is way beyond the average industry claim for an ailment, it stands rejected.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Insurers-in-spot-as-medical-advances-push-up-treatment-costs/articleshow/23617508.cms>

Date: 07.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

India Needs to Get Serious About Its Tobacco Problem

(Kiran Nazish, *The Diplomat*, 26 September, 2013)

Production of tobacco has shifted to developing countries as a result of inexpensive leaves and lax agricultural policies that allow farmers to use chemicals banned in the West. This has created opportunities for countries like India, which is now the world's

second largest producer of tobacco after China.

The extremely low prices of tobacco products in India make these often addictive products widely available to consumers of all ages and income levels. India is home to an estimated 275 million tobacco users. Gaps in legislation and poor enforcement are only making the problem worse.

There are about 75,000 to 80,000 new cases of oral cancer each year in India – the world's highest incidence. Oral cancer specialist Dr. Rajiv Chopra, suggests that around 2,000 people die every day in India from tobacco related illnesses.

The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project, released findings suggesting that India's ban on smoking in public places is neither comprehensive nor routinely enforced.

In August, Maharashtra enacted a five-year ban (the longest permitted by law) on the production, sale, transport and possession of *gutka* (the most widely used form of tobacco in India). The ban had little effect. *Gutka* is still widely available in small packs as ubiquitous in the state as chewing gum.

Several sections of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act (COTPA), 2003 require enforcement on the community level which is impossible without the active participation of local police.

Kimberly Rhoten, a research fellow at Jindal Global Law School says, "Reforms at the supply level are needed to address tobacco use in a country where enforcement at the demand level fails." Taxation and limits on production are two possible ways to reign in the industry at the level of supply.

<http://thediplomat.com/the-pulse/2013/09/26/india-needs-to-get-serious-about-its-tobacco-problem/>

Date Accessed: 30.09.2013
(Gayatri Verma)

India is 20 Years behind in Managing Non-Communicable Diseases, Shows Survey

(Kundan Pandey, *Down To Earth*, 05 October, 2013)

A pilot assessment conducted by MAMTA Health Institute for mother and child, a health and development organization working in many areas including HIV/AIDS and NCDs has revealed that high prevalence of non-communicable diseases like hypertension and diabetes in India. The assessment was supported by international organization Medtronic Philanthropy with the aim to develop the socio-technical framework for NCD management in the country. Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) with other two organizations presented the results of assessment on 4th October, 2013.

The assessment was carried out in two districts- Shimla in Himachal Pradesh and Udaipur in Rajasthan. Alarmingly, one in three individuals above the age of 55 years in both districts was found to be hypertensive, while one in six is diabetic. Total 52 per cent of the 3,430 individuals surveyed in Shimla were not aware of the signs and symptoms of hypertension. This coupled with the higher than expected prevalence of hypertension, which is a leading risk factor for heart disease.

The survey has also shown the poor health infrastructure in the two districts. The survey reveals that primary health centres (PHCs) in both Shimla and Udaipur districts have only 37 per cent and 30.1 per cent facilities respectively.

At the system level, the community health centre and primary health centre need significant improvement in both the districts. While major policy directives and guidelines remain uniform, local situation analysis followed by specific action

plan needs to be developed for successful implementation of strategies for prevention, early diagnosis, management and long-term follow-up of persons with NCDs.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-20-yrs-behind-managing-non-communicable-diseases-shows-survey>

Date Accessed: 11.10.2013

(Simi Sunny)

India launches First Indigenous Vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis

(Vidya Krishnan & Nikita Mehta, *Live Mint*, 05 October, 2013)

The Health Ministry on Friday introduced Jenvac, the country's first indigenously developed vaccine for Japanese encephalitis, which will reduce India's dependence on imports from China to immunize nearly 4 million children annually.

Japanese encephalitis is a viral disease that infects animals and humans. It is transmitted by mosquitoes and causes inflammation of the membranes around the brain. It is the most common cause of viral encephalitis in Asia-Pacific. Symptoms include high fever, headache, light sensitivity, vomiting, confusion and, in severe cases, seizures, paralysis and coma.

One in four cases of Japanese encephalitis is fatal. Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) is a serious public health challenge for India with approximately 4 million people affected in 171 nearly endemic districts over 19 states. India needs about 10 million doses of the vaccine for comprehensive coverage.

Jenvac is based on an Indian strain of the virus and is therefore expected to be more effective, besides available and affordable.

The vaccine has been jointly developed by scientists at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), National Institute of Virology (NIV)

and Bharat Biotech International Ltd. Though more expensive (Rs.70) than the Chinese import (Rs. 20), it will be administered free of cost under the National Immunization Programme.

The Ministry of Health has targeted interventions in 60 priority districts in Assam, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal through a comprehensive multi-pronged strategy and a budget of Rs.4,000 crore.

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/NYyUE8DUW3pPhiHFmIA2H/India-launches-first-indigenous-vaccine-for-Japanese-encepha.html>

Date Accessed: 05.10.2013

(Gayatri Verma)

URBAN

Safe and Inclusive Cities: IDRC and UK's DFID Join Forces to Reduce Urban Violence

(IDRC- CRDI, 11 September, 2013)

The Safe and Inclusive Cities initiative (five year old and composed of 15 project, funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), aims to propose strategies “to reduce violence in 40 cities across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America.” This initiative is built on the hypothesis that emerging cities, which are unable to tolerate the rising diverse population, would result in various kinds of “organised crimes” linked with national politics as well as “militias replacing public authorities, offering services and protection to communities.” Research focused on India “will assess how cities planned in collaboration with the poor can reduce social tensions and violence.”

Past research has established a considerable understanding of indirect impacts of violence (such as population displacement, disruption of social services, reduced economic growth, brain drain, and higher spending on law enforcement) and direct impacts of urban violence on the poor. This initiative will try “to identify knowledge gaps, test the effectiveness of urban violence reduction strategies, and examine what works and what doesn't to reduce violence in urban centres.”

Researchers will prioritise on different issues for different countries and regions. India specific strategies will “investigate the urban poor's survival strategies and their efforts to push for better city planning in slums and informal settlements of Ahmedabad, Delhi, Guwahati, and Patna. Researchers will assess how cities planned in collaboration with the poor can reduce social tensions and violence.” They will also examine how “displaced people cope with risks associated with eviction, nutrition, the basic needs of women and children, legal status, and protection in three urban areas of Sri Lanka and India.”

Thus by establishing the connections between urban violence, poverty and inequality, this project will identify the most effective strategies for addressing these challenges.

<http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Media/Pages/news-release-SAIC.aspx>

Date accessed: 06.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

ENERGY

ONGC Aims at Commercial Production of Shale Gas by Next Year

(*The Hindu*, 04 October, 2013)

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has announced that it had drawn up plans to start commercial

production of shale gas next year ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Sudhir Vasudeva, in the 'Oil and Gas Summit' said the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had allowed ONGC and Oil India Ltd (OIL) to tap shale resources in blocks allotted to them on a nomination basis. "We are planning to drill 10 wells this year and hope to start commercial production next year", he added.

Shale gas is the new focus area in the U.S., Canada and China as an alternative to conventional oil and gas. As per available data, six basins—Cambay (in Gujarat), Assam-Arakan (in the North-East), Gondawana (in central India), KG onshore (in Andhra Pradesh), Cauvery onshore and Indo-Gangetic basins, hold shale gas potential. Various studies have estimated recoverable reserves of shale gas at between 6 trillion cubic feet and 63 trillion cubic feet.

ONGC plans to start drilling for the unconventional shale hydrocarbon resource in Gujarat, this month, for which it is getting technological support from Conoco Phillips.

In the first phase, ONGC and OIL have been permitted to explore for and produce shale oil and gas from onland blocks that were allotted on a nomination basis before advent of the New Exploration Licensing Policy in 1999. The government will offer shale oil and gas blocks to other companies through an auction, planned after such a policy is taken to the Cabinet for approval in the next few weeks.

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/ongc-aims-at-commercial-production-of-shale-gas-by-next-year/article5201496.ece>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

TECHNOLOGY

Scientists Use Lightning to Charge Cell phone

(The Times of India, 03 October, 2013)

University of Southampton, UK, has developed a technology to harness the power of lightning for personal use, for the first time. The finding could potentially see consumers tap one of nature's significant energy sources to charge their devices in a sustainable manner.

The study was undertaken to investigate how natural power resources could be used to charge a mobile phone with an energy simulation similar to that of a bolt of lightning. The challenge presented to the university by Nokia includes using an alternating current driven by a transformer, over 200,000 volts and sending across a 300mm gap giving heat and light similar to that of a lightning bolt. The signal was then stepped into a second controlling transformer, allowing to charge the phone.

The discovery proves that devices can be charged with a current that passes through the air, and is a huge step towards understanding a natural power like lightning and harnessing its energy. This is a first for any mobile phone company to trial this kind of technology.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/science/Scientists-use-lightning-to-charge-cellphone/articleshow/23452393.cms>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013
(Neha Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

Groundbreaking Treaty On Toxic Mercury

(Human Rights Watch, 06 October, 2013)

The article urges governments around the world to sign the Minamata convention on mercury, which becomes poisonous when it reacts with water or gold. This causes health hazards such as ill-health, brain damage, life-long disability, birth defects and even death.

The convention makes it mandatory for member nations to reduce mercury exposure in mining, promote mercury-free alternate methods and protect small-scale mining communities.

Minamata, from which the disease and the convention derive their name, is a town in Japan where mercury poisoning had killed as many as 1,700 people in the 1950s according to official figures.

Small-scale gold mining, which employs an estimated 10 to 15 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America, uses mercury to extract gold. The fumes emanating from the amalgam is poisonous which causes health hazards.

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/06/groundbreaking-treaty-toxic-mercury>

Date: 06.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

Longer Life for Humans Linked to Further Loss of Endangered Species

(Science Daily, 09 October, 2013)

According to a new study by the University of California, as human life expectancy increases, so does the

percentage of invasive and endangered birds and mammals.

The study, published in the September issue of *Ecology and Society*, examined a combination of 15 social and ecological variables from tourism and per capita gross domestic product to water stress and political stability. **Human life expectancy, which is rarely included among indexes that examine human impacts on the environment, surfaced as the key predictor of global invasions and extinctions.** The study analyzed data from 100 countries, which included roughly 87 percent of the world's population, 43 percent of global GDP per capita, and covered 74 percent of Earth's total land area. Additional factors considered were agricultural intensity, rainfall, pesticide regulation, energy efficiency, wilderness protection, latitude, export-import ratio, undernourishment, adult literacy, female participation in government, and total population.

The findings include:

- New Zealand, the United States and the Philippines had among the highest percentages of endangered and invasive birds.
- New Zealand had the highest percentage of all endangered and invasive species combined, largely due to its lack of native terrestrial mammals.
- The study said that in the past 700 to 800 years since the country was colonized, it has experienced massive invasion by non indigenous species, resulting in catastrophic biodiversity loss.
- African countries had the lowest percentage of invasive and endangered birds and mammals. These countries have had very little international trade, which limits opportunities for biological invasion.
- As GDP per capita, a standard measure of affluence increased in a country, so did the percentage of invasive birds and mammals.
- As total biodiversity and total land area increased in a country, so did the percentage of endangered birds. (Biodiversity

refers to the number of species in an area.)

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131009130122.htm>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

India to Set Up Agency for Monitoring Water Efficiency

(Archana Chaudhary, *Bloomberg*, 09 October, 2013)

Water resource ministry unveiled the plans for setting up The National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency on the lines of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) by the end of this fiscal year.

In past six decades water availability of India has shrunk by 70 percent. Mismanagement and inefficient utilization of water has lead to huge wastage which has further added to this problem. It is also expected that industrial water demand in India, the second-most populous country may surge 57 percent by 2025. According to HSBC Holdings Plc estimates, India is the most water-stressed of the Group of 20 nations that includes China. 80 percent of the water supplies go for agriculture and food crops, but 60 percent of the water supplied to India farms is wasted, so there is a need to label irrigation equipment and help factories to set standards for water use.

Advisor to the National Water Mission, suggested that once in place, such a bureau will oversee labelling, certification and incentivisation for urban local bodies as well as for industries, such as those manufacturing household water fixtures and appliances. This monitoring agency will help meeting the target of cutting leaks and waste by a fifth and improved water use will help India save 500 billion rupees (\$8 billion).

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-10-09/india-to-set-up-agency-for-monitoring-water-efficiency.html>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

LAW AND JUSTICE

Vote and Get a Receipt

(*LiveMint*, 08 October, 2013)

In a judgment having far-reaching consequences, the Supreme Court has asked the Election Commission (EC) of India to make available “paper trails” to voters, providing details of the vote cast by them.

The judgement was in response to a PIL was filed by Subramanian Swamy who had claimed that electronic voting machines were not transparent, implying that this made it possible for them to be rigged—so that while the voter thinks he has voted for Party A, the machine registers a vote for Party C. He had asked the court to direct the commission to provide a printed receipt to every voter verifying the vote cast. He further argued that while EVMs may be efficient, it violates the constitutional principle of transparency and if transparency cannot be ensured by issuance of receipts, usage of such machines should be discontinued and the use of ballot paper must be revived.

Chief Justice of India P Sathavisam, while delivering the judgment stated that the move would restore the confidence of voters in the electoral process and termed it as “an indispensable requirement for free and fair elections.” The Court has asked the Election Commission to implement it in “a phased manner”.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/hlvqLXrcOR3jcrejulwz2I/Vote-and-get-a-receipt.html>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013

(Deepti Somani)

Reserve 3% Govt. Jobs for Disabled: SC to Centre, States (PTI, 08 October, 2013)

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre and all state governments to provide 3% job reservation to disabled persons in all their departments, companies and institutions.

A bench headed by Chief Justice P Sathasivam also clarified that the principle of not exceeding more than 50% reservation would not be applicable while granting quota for disabled persons.

The apex court directed the authorities to compile the number of vacancies in all their departments to give jobs to disabled persons under three per cent reserved quota within three months. The bench said it is an "alarming reality" that disabled persons are not getting jobs because of various social barriers forcing them to live life in poverty and negligence. It further held that the government has "categorical obligation" to protect the right of disabled persons and passed a slew of directions for providing jobs to the differently-abled.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/reserve-3-per-cent-govt-jobs-for-disabled-sc-to-centre-states-113100800260_1.html

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

Modesty of a Woman has to be Strongly Guarded and Courts Should Not Show Any Leniency to the Offenders: SC (LiveLaw, 07 October, 2013)

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court held that with the social condition prevailing in the society, the modesty of a woman has to be strongly guarded and the Courts should not show any leniency to the offenders even if the offender is a minor.

The Bench consisting Justices B S Chauhan and S A Bobde said that , "The provisions of S. 354 IPC has been enacted to safeguard public morality and decent behavior. Therefore, if any person uses criminal force upon any woman with the intention or knowledge that the woman's modesty will be outraged, he is to be punished."

S. 354 of the Indian Penal Code lays down the punishment for assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty.

<http://www.livelaw.in/modesty-of-a-woman-has-to-be-strongly-guarded-and-courts-should-not-show-any-leniency-to-the-offenders-sc/>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

Govt. Sanction is Necessary to Mandate to Investigate Public Servant: SC (LiveLaw, 01 October, 2013)

In a judgment having far reaching consequences, the Supreme Court held that a Magistrate cannot order investigation against a public servant in a corruption complaint if there is no sanction given by the government.

A bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and A K Sikri said, "Once it is noticed that there was no previous sanction, the Magistrate cannot order investigation against a public servant while invoking powers under Section 156(3) CrPC (for directing probe)".

The decision will have an impact on many investigations pending in the country and most of them will become invalidated because none of the investigations are started with previous sanctions.

<http://www.livelaw.in/government-sanction-is-mandatory-to-investigate-a-public-servant-rules-supreme-court/>

Date Accessed: 02.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Minorities, BCs to get benefits being given to SCs and STs

(The Hindu, 08 October, 2013)

Karnataka government decided to provide more benefits to minorities and backward classes in the state. Municipal Administration and Minorities Affairs Minister Qamar-ul-Islam has said that the State government has, in a major policy decision, decided that all benefits being given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will henceforth be extended to minorities and backward classes too.

As a first step, the government has cleared a proposal for sanctioning taxis through the Tourism Department to beneficiaries from minority community from this year. Mr. Qamar-ul-Islam told presspersons that 2,000 taxis will be distributed to minority community members with Rs. 2 lakh subsidy for each vehicle, and the balance amount will be the loan component to be paid by the beneficiary. So far, only Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were getting this benefit.

He said that agricultural land would be granted to landless beneficiaries belonging to minority communities and backward classes this year. Such land would be provided irrigation facility and electricity connections, he said. Admitting the fact that there was some shortfall in the utilisation of funds in the first two quarters released by the government for minority development activities, he said that the shortfall was mainly due to non-release of funds for taking up the construction of shadi mahals and development of burial grounds of minorities. He said, "We wanted to introduce transparent practices in the selection as well release of funds to avert their misuse."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/minorities-bcs-to-get-benefits-being-given-to-scs-and-sts/article5210876.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013
(Jeet Singh)

DEMOGRAPHY

World Not Ready for Aging Population: Study

(The Times of India, 01 October, 2013)

In a report released by United Nation and elder rights group ranks the social and economic well-being of elders in 91 countries, with Sweden coming out on top and Afghanistan at the bottom. It reflects the urgency for coping up with the needs of population greying faster than ever before. By the year 2050 for the first time in history seniors, older than 60, will outnumber children younger than 15.

The Global Age Watch Index (www.globalagewatch.org) was created by elder advocacy group, Help Age International and the UN Population Fund in part to address a lack of international data on the extent and impact of global aging. The index, released on the UN's International Day of Older Persons, compiles data from the UN, World Health Organisation, World Bank and other global agencies, and analyzes income, health, education, employment and age-friendly environment in each country.

The report fits into an increasingly complex picture of aging and what it means to the world. On the one hand, the fact that people are living longer is a testament to advances in healthcare and nutrition, and advocates emphasize that the elderly should be seen not as a burden but as a resource. **On the other, many countries still lack a basic social protection floor**

that provides income, health care and housing for their senior citizens.

Many governments have resisted tackling the issue partly because it is viewed as hugely complicated, negative and costly which is not necessarily true, says chief executive of HelpAge International. Prosperity in itself does not guarantee protection for the old. The world's rising economic powers, BRICS nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa rank lower in the index than some poorer countries such as Uruguay and Panama. However, the report found, wealthy nations are in general better prepared for aging than poorer ones. Sweden, where the pension system is now 100 years old, makes the top of the list because of its social support, education and health coverage, followed by Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada. The United States comes in eighth.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/science/World-not-ready-for-aging-population-Study/articleshow/23345184.cms>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013
(Neha Singh)

India Ready to Sign FTA With ASEAN, Says PM

(The Sangai Express, 11 October, 2013)

Unveiling a roadmap to boost economic ties in the 11th ASEAN-India Summit, "India pledged to sign an agreement with the 10-member ASEAN bloc on services and investment by this year end and to reach an accord on FTA by next year."

Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh said "that India was ready to sign an FTA with ASEAN on services and investment to boost their bilateral trade to USD 100 billion by 2015, from USD 76 billion last year." He also added that initiatives have "been taken by the Federation of Indian

Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to revitalise the ASEAN-India Business Council and to set up an ASEAN-India Trade and Investment Centre.”

The Summit, attended by “Heads of Government of the member States and Prime Ministers, welcomed India’s Look East policy and the decision to set up a separate mission for the Association of South East Asian Nations and a full time resident Ambassador for the region.”

<http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/tseitm-31230-india-ready-to-sign-fta-with-asean-says-pm/>

Date Accessed 11.10.2013
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

REGIONALISM

Meghalaya Mulling Education Reforms

(The Telegraph, 06 October, 2013)

In order to create better employment and educational opportunities for the youth, the Meghalaya government is ready to lend support to its youth to facilitate them getting into the National Institutes of Technology.

The Community colleges that is to function shortly after its recent approval from the Centre is also intended to enhance educational and employment prospects in the north-eastern state by offering courses to enhance employability prospects of students.

The chief minister’s career counselling and guidance programme is also required to be implemented in a more aggressive way to enable students gain the right kind of knowledge and expertise before they appear for such examinations.

Among other things were early completion of IIM Shillong and NIT Sohra campuses and setting up more Navodaya Vidyalyas for the marginalised.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131007/jsp/northeast/story_17432075.jsp#.UIKMv1Awo14

Date: 08.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

DISABLED

Policy to Help Differently-Abled Access Govt. Websites Approved

(Moulishree Srivastava and Anirban Sen, LiveMint, 05 October, 2013)

The government has approved the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility which is likely to make hundreds of government websites accessible to people with disabilities, especially the visually impaired. The policy acknowledges the need to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disabilities and facilitates equal access to electronics and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

According to industry experts, most government websites do not comply either with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which is the international benchmark for accessibility, or with the guidelines of the National Informatics Centre. Even the use of Unicode, which is promoted by the government, is not being strictly adhered to.

A survey by Centre for Internet and Society (CIS) in 2012 points out that almost 25% of 7,800 government websites failed to open and the remaining had accessibility barriers.

Efforts to make accessibility easy for the disabled began in 2007 when India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In 2009, the National Informatics Centre came out with guidelines that required all government websites to adhere to strict accessibility

guidelines. In 2010, the department of information technology, along with several companies such and disability experts such as started drafting the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility.

Citing the example of the Maharashtra’s recent efforts to get e-governance projects accessible to everyone, technology and disability experts believe that the new policy will boost e-governance projects and potentially open up a huge market for electronics and technology firms to tap into. Experts say that it can be seen as a landmark initiative as the private sector will get boost to develop software, apps, and devices for the ‘new customers market’ that was ignored and will help create equity.

Although this initiative has been applauded by technology and disability experts, there is an apprehension that implementation of the policy is likely to face several hurdles.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/d73YvBjCGtpkguvXqtxpPJ/Policy-to-help-differently-abled-access-govt-websites-approv.html>

Date Accessed: 07.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

India Adopts UN's Growth Agenda for Disabled

(The Echo of India, 03 October, 2013)

India has adopted a landmark document of UN General Assembly aimed at inclusion of disabled persons in all aspects of development and giving them due consideration in the post-2015 UN development agenda.

“At the meeting on Disability and Development in the United Nations General Assembly, India also called upon the international community to identify measures and formulate policies for the disabled to help enhance their accessibility to education, healthcare and employment.” The meeting had

adopted an agreed “outcome document,” stressing the need to ensure accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development. “The outcome document is expected to become a landmark declaration which will serve as a guide for framing laws and policies by all nations in the disability sector in the days to come.”

The outcome document seeks to ensure that the inclusion of disabled in development policies including poverty eradication, social inclusion and productive employment amongst others. It also seeks the development of specific plans including the enactment or amendment and enforcement of national legislation, recognition of right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination by making primary education accessible, free and compulsory.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/new-york-india-adopts-uns-growth-agenda-disabled-39937>

Date Accessed: 04.10.2013

(Anjana John)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

India, Bangladesh set to sign motor pact in trade push

(Nayanima Basu, *Business Standard*, 05 October, 2013)

India and Bangladesh are set to sign a historic deal to allow cargo trucks from both sides to ply within each other's territories. This will be for the first time India enters such an agreement with any of its neighbours. This 'Motor Vehicles Agreement' and falls under the SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) framework.

At present, trucks from both sides are allowed to enter 150 km within each side of the border where they unload and pick up the cargo. Under the proposed deal, trucks from Bangladesh and India will get permission to drive till their destinations where it will unload the cargo.

According to a study by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), inadequate warehousing, cargo handling equipment, customs and immigration facilities and means of communication at some of the road- and rail-based land ports on both sides continue to impede the two-way trade.

Positive impact:

- Reduce heavy congestion on the border
- Address inadequate infrastructure problems
- Foster seamless cross movement of cargo up to the delivery point

- Reduce cost
- Boost trade

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-bangladesh-set-to-sign-motor-pact-in-trade-push-113100300642_1.html

Date accessed: 05.10.2013

(Divashri Mathur)

India Tops the List for Drop in "Internet Freedom"

(*The Atlantic*, 03 October, 2013)

Freedom House's annual 'Freedom on the Net' report ranks India, Brazil and US as the worst performing nations in terms of "online freedom" with India facing the biggest drop.

The following reasons are cited in the article that point out why these nations in particular have faced a major decline in 'online freedom'.

India : India stepped up internet surveillance and there have been a couple of arrests (around 11) "for doing things like tagging and liking social media posts within closed groups." A number of websites have been blocked that are considered to

carry "religiously inflammatory" content (like access to the "Innocence of Muslims" clip and multiple Twitter handles).

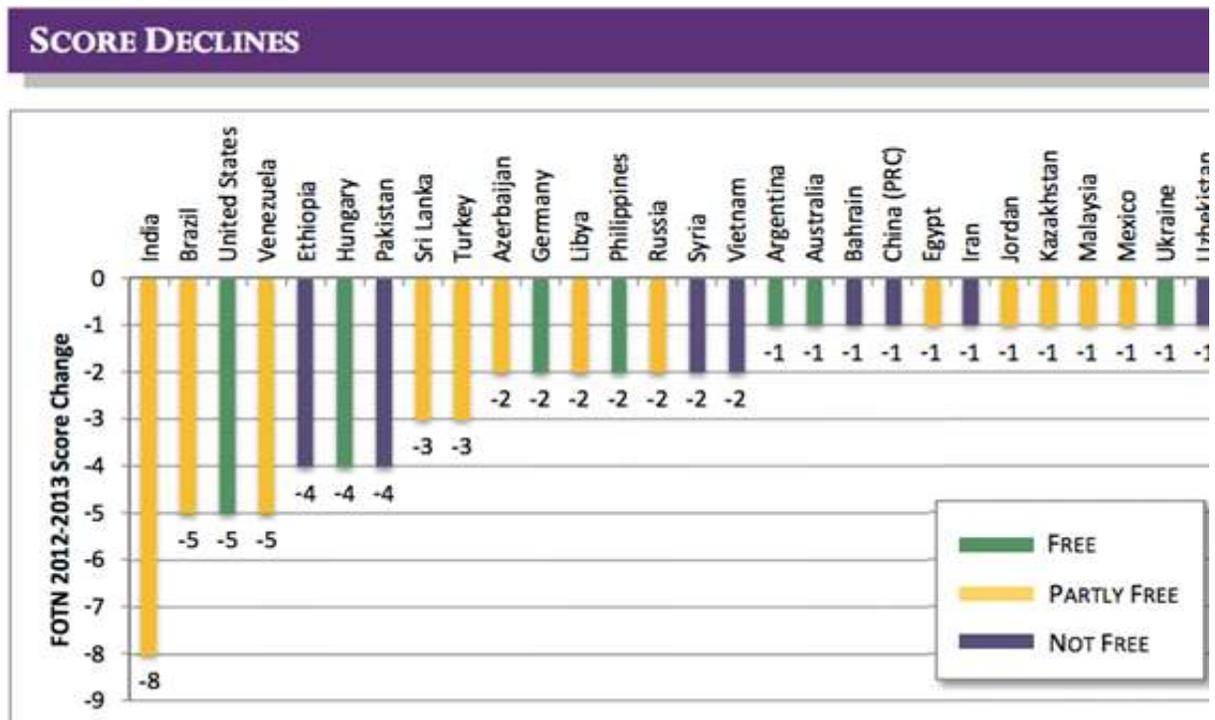
Brazil: "Brazil bans any campaign ads or videos that 'offend the dignity or decorum' of a candidate—including satire." The Brazilian government ordered the arrests of Google's top two executives for not removing a certain clip from YouTube. Greco-Stoner writes that, "violence against online journalists and bloggers has also been on the rise in Brazil."

U.S.: PRISM/NSA revelations have exposed the government's efforts to control the internet world. U.S. appears fourth in the list (under Germany but above Australia and France).

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/10/here-are-the-countries-where-internet-freedom-has-declined-most/280243/>

Date accessed: 01.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)



The Global Implications of India's Food Security Law

(Nikhil Inamdar, *Business Standard*, 07 October, 2013)

The passage of the food security bill in India has global consequences and India will have to convince negotiators, at the WTO meeting in December, that this new law will not have 'market distorting' effects on trade.

India needs an amendment of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) which restricts from exceeding 'market distorting subsidies' that it gives to farmers, beyond 10% of total production. India is risks exceeding this 10% threshold, with the new law.

"India will have to defend its right to subsidise, because the livelihood security of small farmers is at stake," says Devinder Sharma, a food and trade policy expert India will spend about \$20 bn annually on food subsidy. That is a pittance compared to the \$400 bn that rich countries spend subsidising their farmers.

Andy Mukherjee, a Reuters Breaking views columnist, warns that India will "start exporting food inflation in the years to come" to poor countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Bangladesh and Indonesia if India's imports swell in a drought year.

The challenge is to defend national policy while mitigating the global consequences of the food subsidy.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/the-global-implications-of-india-s-food-security-law-113100700229_1.html

Date accessed: 07.10. 2013
(Divashri Mathur)

Food Subsidy Issues Need to be Addressed: WTO

(*The Hindu*, 08 October, 2013)

The new food security programme of India would soon be breaching its Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) commitments to WTO. The newly elected Director-General of WTO (World Trade Organization), Roberto Azevedo, sought a positive solution for breaching Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS by India. He said some countries had expressed concern over the procurement and distribution of highly subsidised foodgrains.

Mr. Azevedo said India had asked the WTO to work out a solution as it was keen to win legitimacy for its ambitious food security law that promised highly subsidised foodgrains to rural and urban poor. The WTO Director General said, "We have agreed in Geneva on a certain issue, and are working on a 'peace clause' to find a permanent solution to the issue. India will soon be breaching its AMS commitments in the WTO. So, they are asking for some kind of action in Geneva that could allow those programme to continue to work unaffected till a final solution is found."

He said the Bali Ministerial meet would look at how this permanent solution would come. The Peace Clause in Article 13 of the agreement on agriculture (AOA) has been there for nine years. India is open to accepting a Peace Clause as an interim mechanism till an acceptable final solution is arrived at. India is also ready to commit that procured foodgrains would not be released for international trade and the management of public stocks would be done in a transparent manner, the official said.

Mr. Azevedo underlined the need for national governments to show flexibility to evolve a consensus on a

multilateral trade package that was meaningful and doable.

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/food-subsidy-issues-need-to-be-addressed-wto/article5210832.ece>

Date Accessed: 08.10.2013

(Jeet Singh)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Islamabad Turning into a Lucrative City for Extortions

(*Dawn*, 07 October, 2013)

Pakistan's capital Islamabad is turning into an extortion hub for terrorists who have taken to kidnapping, extortion and bank robberies, as foreign aid funding their activities have shrunk considerably. Money extorted from rich businessmen and traders and is then transferred to UK and Manchester for onward delivery to the terror network.

Tehrike-i-Taliban- a banned terrorist organisation- is suspected to be one of the major groups involved in these extortion cases. Tracking these terrorists is difficult as there is a flourishing trade of illegal numbers that are exchanged easily through the internet. Moreover, many of these cases remain unreported making it harder for the police to book the culprits.

<http://dawn.com/news/1047969/terror-group-sees-islamabad-as-a-lucrative-city-for-extortions>

Date: 07.10.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

SOUTH ASIA

Trade Measured Through Gross Figures Gives Flawed Results

(Otaviano Canuto, *Economonitor*,
20 September, 2013)

An analysis, based on OECD-WTO initiative emphasizes that the current practice of determining the value of trade (exports and imports) based on gross figures and not in “**value added terms**” gives flawed results. Using gross figures for trade variables are misleading because they might lead to flawed calculations as-

- a) Products cross multiple borders (while being processed) and recording each time implies multiple counting,
- b) Given the increased imported intermediate goods and services in processing for final use, exports also carry contents of imported inputs, and
- c) Exports of intermediate products may be embedded in final products that are imported.

To determine trade values based on value addition, it is important to do accounting of “intra- and cross-sector trade”.

Analyzing 2000-09 data presents three results on south-south trade. Firstly, rising weight of South-South trade in the 2000s has been overestimated. Secondly, “the share of commodities is higher for South-South trade on a value added basis than in gross terms **reflecting to a large extent the North-South content embedded in Southern manufacturing exports**” Thirdly, “**bilateral trade relations among countries change dramatically in some cases once figures are adjusted to a value added basis,**” for eg. in value added terms, China’s trade surplus with the US is reduced by one third.

The report concludes that **there is a need to analyze trade values in**

value added terms for “approaching global imbalances, market access, trade disputes, cross-country macroeconomic shocks, trade and employment and many other themes developed.”

<http://www.economonitor.com/blog/2013/09/south-south-trade-through-value-added-glasses/>

Date Accessed: 29.09.2013
(Mahima Malik)

BRICS Nations Can Set Up Mechanism for Local Currency Trade: South Africa Minister

(*Business line*, 06 October, 2013)

South African Trade Minister Rob Davies suggested that, the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), a grouping of major developing economies which are facing currency volatility, can work out a mechanism to settle trade in local currencies.

Last year in March, in an initiative to promote trade in local currencies, the BRICS nations signed two agreements to provide line of credit to business community and decided to examine the possibility of setting up a development bank on lines of multilateral lending agencies.

The pact on extending credit facility in local currency is being perceived as a step towards replacing the dollar as the main unit of trade between them. India, too, has been trying to enter into bilateral agreements to promote trade in local currencies with a view to arrest the decline of the value of rupee against US dollar.

The Commerce Ministry has formed a task-force to look into the issues pertaining to the swap of national currency for trade purpose. The terms of reference of the task force are to examine various types of trading of

goods in local currencies and their implications for India’s trade deficit. Besides, it will study the pros and cons of trading of goods in local currencies for trade.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/international/brics-nations-can-set-up-mechanism-for-local-currency-trade-sa-minister/article5206913.ece>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013
(Neha Singh)

OPINIONS

Growth will Follow Efficient Resource Allocation :

World Bank

(Somesh Jha, *Business Standard*, 08 October, 2013)

According to World Bank's Development Report 2014, India's economic growth could be increased by 60% through higher factor productivity. The World Bank laid focus on easy exit and entry norms for companies to fuel growth since increase in competition can promote innovation by adopting new technologies and reallocating resources.

Quoting the renowned theory of "creative destruction" by Joseph Schumpeter in his book 'Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy', the world bank said this process of renovation can generate substantial adjustment costs, but may be the only way an economy remains resilient and prosperous in the face of constantly changing conditions.

As per the report, India needs to reduce and simplify the number of labour laws. According to the report, the focus of labour reforms should be on making labour employable and not protecting their jobs. It says, "The overall principle guiding reform efforts should be protecting workers - through such means as social assistance, skill building, and help finding jobs- rather than protecting jobs."

The report particularly appreciates the United Progressive Alliance's (UPA) flagship programme- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and mentions that MGNREGA illustrates how good governance and social mobilization can go hand-in-hand.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/growth-will-follow-efficient-resource-allocation-world-bank-113100700677_1.html

Date Accessed : 08.10.2013

(Shruti Issar)

Is Media Spreading Hopelessness?

(Shahid Iqbal, *Pakistan Observer*, 07 October, 2013)

The author argues that media's portrayal is a biased, monolithic and gloomy view of the world.

He takes up the case of a tragic incident wherein a young man- Syed Hassan Rizvi- committed suicide along with his nephew and sister-in-law. The author argues that Rizvi's uploading of a clip of the movie 'Bol', wherein the movie challenges the legitimacy of parents to bring children into a world of sufferings and abstaining all responsibility from it, is evidence enough to prove the negative impact of media on people.

The author states that the messages of media are too encoded and that these messages have the potential of being misinterpreted by the vulnerable viewers, who then resort to extreme measures like Rizvi.

In the light of improved technology, the impact of media has also increased manifold. Therefore, the author urges all to speak up against media for thriving by spreading hopelessness instead of challenging age-old and trusted traditions that have stood the test of time.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=220284>

Date: 07.10.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

NOTA Option Essential for Electoral Democracy

(Rajeev Dhavan, *Times of India*, 04 October, 2013)

The author notes that In the PUCL judgment of September 27, 2013, the Supreme Courts insistence on secrecy and upholding NOTA (None of The Above) vote would have the effect of the public knowing the percentage by which all candidates were rejected. This would expose how unrepresentative Indian democracy is.

He argues that India's claim to the largest live democracy rests on: electoral democracy, a powerful media, activism reinforced by the Right to Information and judicial custodianship of justice and the rule of law. It fails because of ineptitude, massive corruption and opportunism. Further noting that, the flaw of India's electoral democracy is its failure to produce representative results. Take an example. There are 100 votes: 50 abstain, 20 are for the lesser parties. The winning candidate gets 16 votes, the second candidate gets 14. The candidate with 16 votes out of 100 wins! Of course, there are many ways around this, for example, proportional representation based on second and third preferences...the requirement could be that no candidate should be declared elected unless he gets 50 out of 100 votes. This could be combined with transferable votes to ensure 50% majorities, to avoid constant re-elections. This solution needs working out and may not succeed if there are massive abstentions or what is called NOTA.

Chief Justice P Sathasivam rightly says, "the election is a mechanism, which ultimately represents the will of the people. Not allowing a person to vote negatively defeats freedom of

expression and (the right to liberty in) Article 21.”

The author notes that, “if we argue that no one will get elected without a proper majority (for example 40%) of those present and voting, there will have to be repeated elections which will be expensive, uncertain and result in the election in some constituencies being nullified. This will affect cabinet formation formidable.”

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-10-04/edit-page/42667442_1_electoral-democracy-16-votes-political-parties

Date Accessed: 04.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)