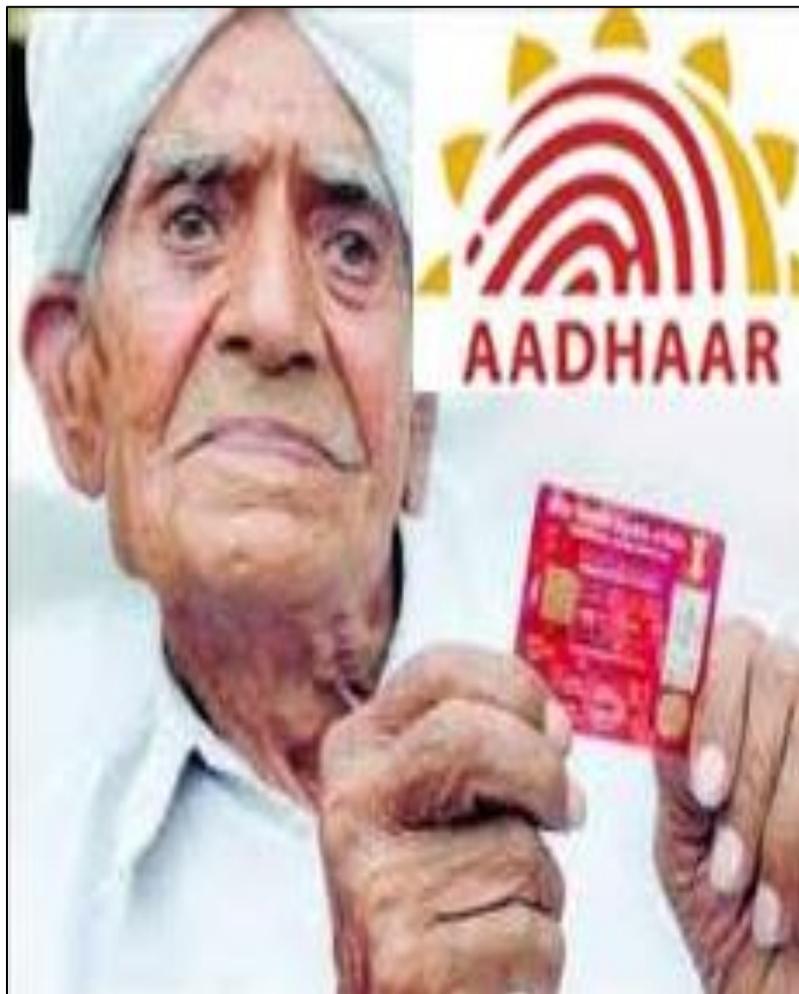


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COVER STORY

Unique Identification Number (Aadhaar): Inclusive or Exclusive?



WEEKLY ROUND UP OF NEWS ON POLICY

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Unique Identification Number (Aadhaar): Inclusive or Exclusive?

Unique Identification Authority of India, on behalf of the Government of India has been issuing a 12 digit individual identification number (Aadhaar) to residents in India, Non-Resident Indians and foreigners residing in India, irrespective of their age or gender and who satisfy the verification process laid down by the UIDAI.

On 28th January, 2009 that the Central Government, constituted the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) for the purpose of issuing unique identification number, The UIDAI being executive in nature, is at present functioning under the Planning Commission. The UIDAI's mandate is to issue every resident a 12 digit unique identification number linked to the resident's demographic and biometric information, which they can use to identify them anywhere in India, and to access a host of benefits and services. The unique number has been named 'Aadhaar', which translates into 'foundation', or 'support'.

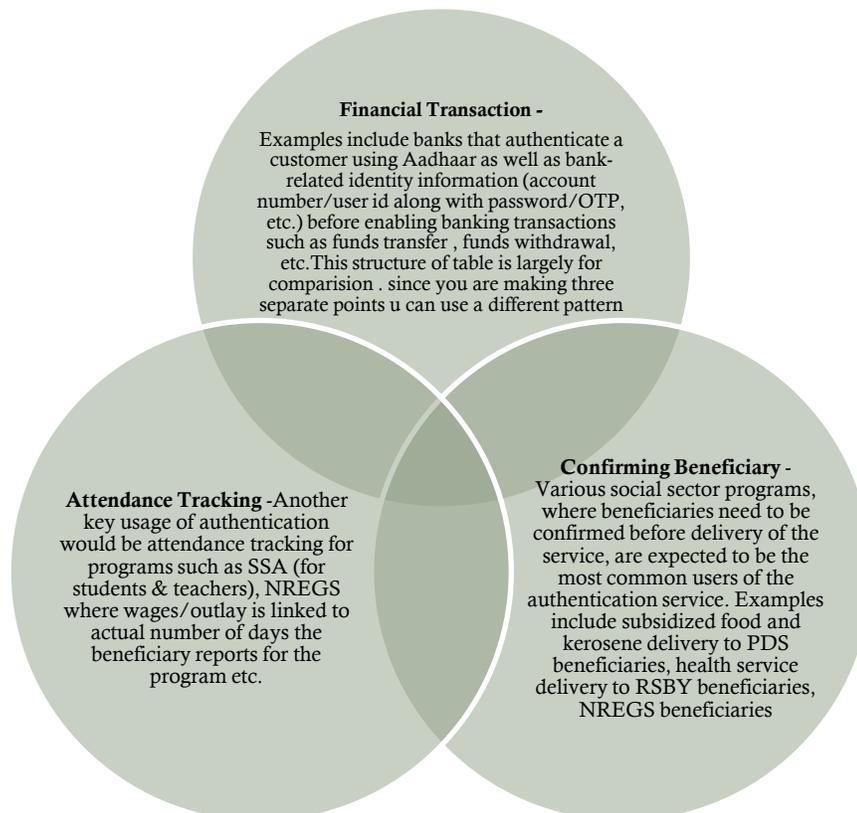
"With the view to ensure the benefits of centrally sponsored schemes reaches to right person and not misused, the central government decided to identify each beneficiary through this unique number. The purpose of Aadhaar is to open up public services to larger population, especially disadvantaged section of society, in an effective and efficient way. It addresses the issues of access of public services, identity of beneficiary and efficiency of governance. Aadhaar can be leveraged effectively across industry domains for improving service delivery to the residents irrespective of service being delivered by government, public sector or private sector. Aadhaar is an IT enabled identity solution which needs to be leveraged appropriately by service agencies along with required business re-engineering and computerization of their services through e- Governance and ICT initiatives."

The entire concept of Aadhaar has led to several discussions and debates ever since its inception. What have come under the scanner are issues of security of data, nationality of card holder, its link with public service delivery, technology used, authority of UIDAI and its implementation. Adding to fuel to the fire is the recent interim order of Supreme Court, based on a hearing of a petition by some social activists not to make Aadhaar compulsory for accessing public services,.

Aadhaar Linked Welfare Proposed by GoI

The key rationale for Aadhaar was to provide an identity infrastructure for delivery of various social welfare programs and for effective targeting of these services. While welfare is the prime focus of Aadhaar, it can also be utilized by other enterprises and service providers such as banks, telecommunication and others for improving their service delivery.

Aadhaar and identity authentication can be used by the service delivery provider mainly for the following 3 broad usage types:



Source: http://uidai.gov.in/images/authDoc/whitepaper_aadhaarenabledservice_delivery.pdf

Stakeholder Benefits Analysis:

The Unique Identification number (Aadhaar), will create an opportunity to address the existing limitation in financial inclusion. Stakeholders across the domain of social welfare and financial inclusion will find Aadhaar easy and efficient to deliver services to the poor beneficiary.

A brief stakeholder benefits analysis is given below:

Government (State services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better reach and targeting by ensuring inclusion of those without proper ID proofs. • Remove duplicates and reduce leakages by linking beneficiary record with Aadhaar and using Aadhaar authentication at the point of delivery. Able to utilize scarce development funds more effectively. • Reduce cost of service delivery by using direct payment to Aadhaar linked bank account of beneficiaries. • Enhance accountability and traceability of service delivery to actual beneficiaries. • Better engagement with residents through self service applications. • Facilitate direct subsidy transfer to beneficiary accounts using Aadhaar linked bank accounts. • Aadhaar number and its authentication can become an enabler for providing information to residents on status of service delivery
Industry/Enterprises (Telcos, Banks, Insurance, Oil & Gas companies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower customer acquisition cost and better compliance using Aadhaar for KYC. • Reduced transaction fraud by enhancing customer verification using Aadhaar authentication. • Prevent subsidy leakages and enable direct subsidy transfers using Aadhaar and Aadhaar linked bank accounts. • Easier to implement single customer view across services using Aadhaar number as linkage.
citizens/ people of India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable and universal identity, able to authenticate anytime, anywhere. • Receive full eligible welfare payments directly from the government without any delay. • Able to conduct financial transactions from any micro ATM near their home using Aadhaar linked bank accounts, allowing residents to save travel time and money. • Eliminate fraud related to rent seeking by middleman and benefits being siphoned off by an intermediate.

Source: http://uidai.gov.in/images/authDoc/whitepaper_aadhaarenabledservice_delivery.pdf

Current Debates and concerns about Aadhaar:

The Supreme Court's Interim Order: The recent interim order of Supreme Court on September 23, 2013 restrained the government from making Aadhaar card mandatory for transfer of social welfare benefits to beneficiaries. It has challenged the legal status of Aadhaar Card and its linkage with the delivery of social welfare schemes such as food subsidy and LPG connection along with many other issues is being challenged by petitioners in various courts of India.

The order said, "In the meanwhile, no person should suffer for not getting the Aadhaar card in spite of the fact that some authority had issued a circular making it mandatory, and when any person applies to get the Aadhaar card voluntarily, it may be checked whether that person is entitled for it under the law and it should not be given to any illegal immigrant. ."

Voluntary Versus Mandatory Enrolment: under the UIDAI scheme is purportedly voluntary- yet many welfare schemes of the state seem to mandate the need for an Aadhaar number to access those schemes. Making Aadhaar mandatory for seeking benefits under various welfare schemes such as PDS, MGNREGA, pensions, scholarships, Janani Suraksha Yojana and LPG connections meant for economically weaker sections violates the fundamental rights of citizen whose lives and livelihood depend on such schemes. Though the government claims the enrollment for the UID number is demand-driven and on a voluntary basis, the harsh disqualifications for non-enrollment virtually makes obtaining a UID number compulsory

Demographic and biometric details: of the citizens collected by private contractors and NGOs hired by UIDAI for enrolment in Aadhaar without any safeguard makes it prone to misuse not only the private actors but also by the state.

A petition in Supreme Court argued that there is an empirical research to show that the biometric identification denoted for UID, namely the Iris Scan and finger print identification, is faulty and there are chances of misuse of data. The petitioners said, “Without a statutory framework determining accountability, data-protection, offences for violation etc., UID is putting in jeopardy not only life and rights of people but also security of our country.”

Usage of Aadhaar is dependent on machines; any technical failure would mean delay with no alternative.

UIDAI claims that persons with no document to prove their identity can be introduced by other individuals with UID who can certify their identity. It will give rises to various security risks and the possibility of fake identities, which can compromise national security.

Government Action:

First Experiment with Aadhaar Enabled Payment of Subsidies- Government of Jharkhand together with UIDAI decided to undertake a Financial Inclusion and Welfare Payments pilot project in 12 blocks in year 2011. In order to enable Aadhaar-enabled payments there were several businesses and IT infrastructure re-engineering activities undertaken. Based on field experience and approach, UIDAI has devised a comprehensive check list for all stakeholders.

It was observed from the pilot project that beneficiaries, especially women beneficiaries, had a sense of empowerment. The coordination and support of various stakeholders including Central and State Governments, RBI and banks is significant and critical to the success of the program. Implementation of the Aadhaar-based unified payments infrastructure can ensure that every beneficiary receives their entitled amount at their doorstep through a business model that is commercially viable for the financial system.

Direct Cash Transfer - Union government launched ‘direct cash transfer’ of subsidies through Aadhaar in 51 districts across 15 States from January 1, 2013. Subsidies on LPG, kerosene, pension payment, scholarships, MGNREGA wage payment and other government welfare programmes are made directly in these 51 districts. Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said, “The scheme would aim to cover the entire country by the end of 2013³.”

Legislating UIDAI - The Union Cabinet has approved the National Identification Authority of India (NIAI) Bill on September 8, 2013 to accord UIDAI a statutory backing. The approved NIAI bill will give legal status to 12 digit Aadhaar number. The Bill prohibits the sharing of data without the consent of the resident, unless approved by a court order or for national security. It also defines penalties in case of misuse of data collected.

Global Experiences

Aadhaar as a biometric identity storing personal data of individual is not a new concept. Many countries in the world have experimented with such idea; few examples are briefly described as follows:

Country/scheme	Purpose	Coverage	Data Security	Outcome
<p><u>Brazil</u> Bolsa Familia (Family Grant) Started in 2003</p>	<p>Direct cash transfer scheme, to extremely poor families with children six year of age and under.</p>	<p>Card is given preferentially to a female head of household</p>	<p>Single registry of the poor in Brazil and also functions as a debit card in more than 14000 Caixa ATMs nationwide.</p>	<p>16.2 million Brazilian out of extreme poverty through increased access to education, health, sanitation, electricity and productive inclusion in addition to direct cash transfer</p>
<p><u>Sweden</u> Personnummer (personal number) Started in 1970s</p>	<p>The number is widely used by public service delivery system such as Income tax to record tax deduction and wages, Medical organizations to store health status, Public insurance etc.</p>	<p>Every one living in Sweden must have a social security number. In 1970s the number was much debated and criticized, because of the potential risk</p>	<p>The ‘Swedish Data Act’ regulates how computerized personal information may be used.</p>	<p>The single registry system used by Swedish resident to access social services.</p>

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		for invasion of privacy.		
<u>United Kingdom</u> UK ID Card Started in 2006	To store all biometric, demographic and other ID details such as insurance number, driving license etc in one card	Mandatory for all residents of United Kingdom	Contains demographic and biometric details of citizen and is regulated through 'Identity Card Act, 2006'	UK has abandoned its ID project (repealed its Identity Card Act, 2006) citing a range of reasons, which includes high cost, unsafe, untested and unreliable technology, and the changing relationship between the state and the citizen etc.

Conclusion:

There is much confusion, ambiguity and concerns around implementation, execution, security of data and required infrastructure for the Aadhaar linked service delivery of welfare programme. The contradictory terms of voluntary option for enrollment in Aadhaar and at the same time it being mandatory for accessing social welfare services raises a number of questions about its inclusiveness and exclusiveness characteristics. All these issues must be debated across domain area and such critical issues should be addressed in an appropriate manner. Going digital and online in Indian context has always proven to increase access, convenience and transparency to the common man such as banking and railway reservation. UID can also play important role in promoting inclusive growth of India as it proved in developing countries like Brazil and Mexico. But, there is a need to learn lessons from the successful and unsuccessful stories from similar initiatives across the globe.

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India Refuses to Co- sponsor UN-led Resolution to End Child Marriage

(Nilanjana Bhowmick, *Time World*, 14 October, 2013)

Despite housing the largest number of child brides in the world, India did not co-sponsor a U.N-led resolution that calls for elimination of early marriage. “The first-of-its-kind proposal, initiated by the U.N. Human Rights Council and co-sponsored by 107 countries, calls for the ending of child marriage to become part of the global development agenda after 2015.”

Syed Akbaruddin, a foreign ministry spokesperson said that although the government was not a co-sponsor it nonetheless “supported the objectives of the resolution.”

A statement issued by the Centre for Reproductive Rights says that while several countries with high rates of child marriage adopted the resolution, including Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Honduras, and Yemen, “not a single South Asian country with significantly high rates of child marriage co-sponsored the proposal — specifically India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan or Pakistan.”

India’s 24 million child brides represent 40% of the global total of 60 million. South Asia as a whole accounts for more than half of the world’s child marriages. While the legal age for marriage in India is 18, rights groups say that the law is not adequately enforced.

Combating child marriage is important as it is detrimental to the physical and mental well-being of the child wives, putting them at risk of domestic abuse and marital rape, and making them economically dependent.

<http://world.time.com/2013/10/14/india-criticized-for-not-co-sponsoring-u-n-child-bride-resolution/#ixzz2hxVt2IsY>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

Call to Adopt National Competition Policy

(Sujay Mehdudia, *The Hindu*, 12 October, 2013)

“Competition Commission of India (CCI) chairman Ashok Chawla has called for adoption of a National Competition Policy to help address entry barriers in public and private sectors.” Calling it the need of the hour, he said, “It was important to adopt the policy in the country where the state still plays a major role in the economic sectors. The policy paradigm in the liberalised era still has a tilt towards control by the state.”

“Mr. Chawla said the policy will lead to more robust economic welfare and provide governance to the country”, while stating that the policies prior to 1991 have been institutionalised and we need independent agencies to review and make them competition compliant.

“National Competition Policy committee former chairman Dhanendra Kumar was of the view that while competition in markets will be monitored by the CCI, anti-competitive outcomes of government policies, rules and regulations need to be reviewed through implementation of the competition policy. The policy broadly refers to government measures, policies and regulations aimed at controlling the behaviour of enterprises and structure of markets.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/tata-power-arm-to-buy-wind-farm-in-gujarat/article5214436.ece>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

India Ranks 63rd on Global Hunger Index

(Trithesh Nandan, *Governance Now*, 14 October, 2013)

According to the GHI 2013 report released by international think-tank International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), “India and Timor Leste have the highest prevalence of underweight children under five more (which is) than 40 percent in both countries.” India has moved two spots up on the global hunger index (GHI) worldwide compared to last year’s ranking. The new ranking may cheer Indian policymakers but the problem of a huge chunk of children below the age group of five being malnourished persists.

Among 78 countries that were studied, India stood at 63 with a score of 21.3. However, the country still remains in the orange category tagged ‘alarming’ level of hunger as per the study. India had scored 22.9 in 2012 and ranked on the sixty-fifth position. The GHI score is calculated based on three counts: the proportion of people who are undernourished, the proportion of children under five who are underweight, and the mortality rate of children below the age group five.

The study notes that poor people are worst affected from natural and man-made disasters. In addition, most of the countries (including India) in the fourth quadrant are perennially vulnerable to floods and droughts. The study shows, “Most countries where the hunger situation is already ‘alarming’ or ‘extremely alarming’ are vulnerable to the negative effects of extreme weather events, climate change, population pressure, conflicts and economic crises.”

IFPRI research fellow Derek Headey says, “Adopting a resilience lens is challenging. We need to build consensus on what it means and on that basis adopt programs and policies that bridge the relief and development sectors.”

<http://governancenow.com/news/regulation-story/india-ranks-63rd-global-hunger-index>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Jeet Singh)

RTI Ratings: India Secures 2nd Position among 95 Countries

(LiveLaw News Network, 14 October, 2013)

India has secured second position in world rankings after Serbia in a list of 95 countries, including US and UK, after scoring high on the legal framework of the Right to Information (RTI), as per rankings prepared by Centre for Law and Democracy, an international human rights organization based in Canada. The rankings are based on various parameters of the Act including right of access, scope, requesting procedure, exceptions and refusals, appeals, sanctions and protections and promotional results.

India and Slovenia share the second spot in the list with 130 points each whereas Serbia tops the list with 135 points. Ironically, developing countries have mostly bagged top spots in the ranking, with UK being placed at 25th while US finds itself on the 42nd place in the list.

The report states that, "National legal frameworks for RTI in countries around the world are constantly changing. As a result of these changes and as a result of our constant and ongoing process of monitoring and expert review, several countries have seen their scores rise or fall in the months since the RTI Rating was first launched. This is expected to be an ongoing phenomenon."

<http://www.livelaw.in/rti-ratings-india-secures-2nd-position-among-95-countries/>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

Migrants Contributors, Not Burden on Cities: UN Report

(The Times of India, 17 October, 2013)

A UNESCO report on social inclusion of internal migrants in India has broken the myth that internal migration is burdening the cities. It has been found that in contrast they are major contributors to the gross domestic product and "is proving a subsidy". A major reason for their increasing input in the GDP is the increasing contribution to the cheap labour especially manufacturing and service sector. "Far from being a drain and burden, migrants are in fact proving subsidy since they take up the dirty, dangerous and degrading jobs which the locals do not want to do".

The report warns that by not accepting migrants or providing facilities to them, governments are merely increasing the risk and costs of migration and reducing its development potential. Policy makers and urban planners mostly view migration as negative process and have therefore created an inconducive and unsupportive environment through neglect and inaction. The issue of internal migration is crucial for India since internal migration constitutes about one-third of India's urban population and this proportion has been increasing.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Migrants-contributors-not-burden-on-cities-UN-report/articleshow/24283832.cms>

Date Accessed: 18.10.2013
(Simi Sunny)

Study: Slums are Hub of Productivity (*The Indian Express*, 17 October, 2013)

A study has confirmed that slums are hubs of productivity. An empirical study by Indicus Analytics and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) suggests that slums are remarkably productive, contributing roughly 7.5 per cent to the GDP. They are investment multipliers- a small increase in income leads to a larger participation in the economy. Majority of them are self-employed, rather than casual or wage labourers.

The challenge is to improve services for them.

“There is a gap between employment opportunities and housing availability in big cities. In 2005, it was found that 4,413 police constables and 81 police inspectors lived in Mumbai slums, forced to both speak for the law and subvert it. Living in a slum involves tradeoffs between cost of housing, tenure security, safety and access to work. And a policy approach towards slums should consider not what they are, but what they do — and what they lack. They are kept on the legal margins and managed by a political harness, they lack regular access to water, sanitation and electricity, banking services etc. Improving these — that is, taking the slum out of the slum — is a more sensible and humane approach than arbitrarily relocating slum-dwellers at the city's edges.

There have been many proposals on how to improve services and make better use of slum land, often combining commercial redevelopment of the land and providing accommodation for the residents in high-rise flats. The Rajiv Awas Yojana was an innovative plan to give in situ property rights, marketable and enforceable, to slum dwellers (as opposed to land rights), letting developers use the eased-up portion of the land. These property titles could be leveraged as collateral, potentially

releasing a wave of micro-innovation. These are fine plans, but given that slums are mixed-use environments of residential, manufacturing and commercial space, vertical building must accommodate livelihood issues as well.”

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/s-horing-up-the-city/1183659/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2013

(Karishma Mutreja)

To Unlock FDI, Govt to Ease Lock-In Period for Realty

(Nayanima Basu, *Business Standard*, 15 October, 2013)

Unlike currently, where investors can only exit before three years of putting in money with the permission from the Foreign Promotion and Investment Board (FIPB), now those investing in India's construction sector might be allowed to exit before the mandatory three years stipulated after completing the project and procure completion occupancy certificates from local authorities.

According to a Cabinet note, being prepared by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), foreign developers will be allowed to take back the entire invested amount before three years, after obtaining the government's approval, as per the officials.

Developers had long been complaining that restrictions, such as the lock-in norms, deterred them from investing in the Indian market. At present, at least \$10 million of paid-up capital is required in wholly-owned subsidiaries and \$5million in joint ventures. DIPP is expected to soon finalise the final cabinet note.

“There will be general easing of conditions in the lock-in norms. If they (foreign developers) want to exit, they should not be scared to come to us for an approval,” the official said.

India allows 100 per cent FDI through the automatic route in townships,

housing, built-up infrastructure and construction-development projects, subject to certain conditions.

Between 2000 and 2013, the construction development sector has received about \$22 billion, however, since 2012; FDI in the sector has slowed down significantly. In 2012-13, it was down to \$1.33 billion, against \$3.14 billion the previous year.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/to-unlock-fdi-govt-to-ease-lock-in-period-for-realty-113101400697_1.html

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Shruti Issar)

SEBI Proposes Tougher Norms on Insider Trading, Illegal Money Raising

(Anirudh Laskar, Sunil B., *Live Mint*, 14 October, 2013)

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) recently proposed tighter norms to deal with cases related to insider trading and front-running in the listed space. SEBI is planning to bring in laws which are consistent with international best practices.

The move assumes significance in the backdrop of a recent ruling by the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT), asking SEBI to reconsider a case of alleged insider trading by Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) for consent. At present, under the consent mechanism norms, an entity can settle cases of alleged defaults with SEBI by paying a certain amount and the consent order disposes of the case against the entity without admission or denial of guilt.

SEBI in a consultative paper, to be named as (Settlement of Administrative and Civil Proceedings) Regulations, 2013, said it will not accept requests for settling any proceeding that involves alleged commission of insider trading; serious

fraud and unfair trade practices such as front running; failure to make an open offer; and defaults or manipulative practices by mutual funds, among others. Illegal money raising activities will also not be entertained for settlement. SEBI also proposed to make public details of every case, including those disposed of through settlement. The new regulations will not apply to cases whose proceedings are pending before the tribunal or any court. SEBI is seeking public comment on the paper till 30 October.

SEBI has taken a strong stance on cases involving illegal money-raising by issuance of financial instruments or through simple pooling of funds, such as chit funds, deposit taking firms and Ponzi schemes, without a valid SEBI licence for collective investment schemes. Alleged manipulations by mutual funds which may have caused substantial losses to its unit holders also cannot go for settlement.

<http://www.livemint.com/Money/lfDaFxmB3NW299YpzEYki/SEBI-proposes-tougher-norms-on-insider-trading.html>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

Confidence of 800 Million Youth Sinks As Jobs Dry Up in Torpid Economy

(Vikas Dhoot, *Economics Times*, 4 October, 2013,)

India with 800 million citizens under the age 35 is not able to enjoy the fruits of high demographic dividend as there are no jobs for these youths. According to a survey conducted by CII in 28 cities, three out of four young Indians reckon the economy is worse now than it was after the 2008 global crisis and more than 50% were of the opinion that it is the worst time for job-hunting. Nearly 60% are postponing decisions like buying a car or a house or starting a family. And more than 40% would take a pay cut if that improves job security.

The under-40 group that was polled gave answers that showed confidence levels of young Indians are probably the lowest in the 20-odd years since 1991. **Plenty of experts, employers, sector specialists and even politicians agree that there is a confidence crisis amongst the young. This is the most disturbing micro impact of the macro slowdown.**

Andhra Pradesh has over 700 engineering colleges and 3.5 lakh seats - the highest in any Indian state. But just 2 lakh seats were filled up this year because just 20% of the classes of 2013 have got jobs. All engineering and management colleges bar IIMs and IITs and a few other blue chip colleges are in situations similar to that in Andhra institutions. In Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu around 2 lakh engineering seats have had no takers this academic year. Just 25% of Maharashtra's 46,000 MBA seats have been filled. Many engineering colleges and B-schools are now shutting down with 116 have already sought an exit from the technical education regulator in the first six months of this financial year, compared with 100 in the whole of 2012-13.

Employment expert says that educated young in tier-2 and tier-3 cities are particularly affected and the election session is not helping to fulfil their promises. Businesses that are especially sensitive to the political-economic fallout of the impending elections are the ones who have gone more slow on hiring. Experts also suggest that youths should be given specialized training beyond engineering and IIM in areas which are still growing.

http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-04/news/42718244_1_young-indians-jobs-crisis-patel

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

India Needs a National Gold Policy

(Soumya Kanti Ghosh and Saket Hishikar, *Live Mint*, 15 October, 2013)

Gold imports have declined significantly in the first half of this fiscal. The decline may have been a blessing in disguise, but challenges remain in containing gold imports in rest of the year. For example, historical trends suggest that close to 40% of the imports take place in the period from October to January. These facts suggest that a national policy on gold is a more appropriate approach to find a long-term solution instead of ad hoc fiscal measures such as raising import duty on gold. This is not a new idea as comprehensive policy on gold had taken seed at the start of the financial sector reforms in 1991-92 when the import of gold was liberalized.

Gold is a surrogate for foreign exchange and is a hybrid between a commodity and a financial asset. Thus in a liberalized regime, comprehensive policy on gold is also linked to capital account convertibility (CAC). The Tarapore committee report had also recommended among other things a comprehensive policy on gold as a precondition to CAC. The stress was on the need to develop gold-related financial products. Another crucial element in respect to gold policy is how such a policy should be integrated with financial sector reforms and CAC.

Gold today constitutes an important item in the balance of payments, accounting for 8.7% of total imports. In national income accounting, the head "valuables" (which includes gold and other valuable items) accounted for 4.6% of gross domestic product in Q1 FY14 (2.7% in Q1 FY13). Neither the popular perception that the household purchase of gold constitutes physical savings nor the perception that it constitutes consumption by household is reflected in national income accounting. A 2011 working

paper by the Reserve Bank of India highlighted this anomaly. Hence, it may be incorrect to treat valuables and, hence, gold purchases by households as GCF in the economy from technical as well as behavioral point of view.

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/TiX5TsqqVLIAQqgVXBU8AO/India-needs-a-national-gold-policy.html>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

India Post **Launches 'Instant** **Cash' International** **Money Transfer** **Service**

(Press Information Bureau, 15 October, 2013)

India Post, which has the largest postal network in the world, has signed an agreement with Wall Street Exchange (a company of the Emirates Post Group of UAE) to launch of an International Electronic Money Transfer service through 'Instant Cash' product of the Emirates Post Group.

'Instant Cash' services are available in 59 countries through more than 60,000 locations. They provide instant money transfer service. The service, in India, will be rolled out nationally in a phased manner and will be made available at approximately 17,500 post offices. The service will be provided through the International Financial System (IFS) of Universal Postal Union. "This tie-up offers the Indian diaspora worldwide - especially in the gulf region - a safe, secure and reliable money transfer service for their families back home. This new service has its own significance going by the fact that globally, India is the largest recipient of remittances with over USD70 billion annually, half of which come from the Gulf."

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99984>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Ashwin Varghese)

DEVELOPMENT

Rural Ministry Makes a Three Year Road Map for Modernization of Land Records

(Urmi A Goswami, *Economic Times*, 15 October, 2013)

The Ministry of Rural Development has initiated the Land Records Modernisation Programme, a three-year roadmap for modernization of land records. The policy aims to build a transparent and integrated system of real-time land records thereby increasing transparency in ownership, reducing disputes and ensuring fair compensation for land acquired for developmental work.

The aim is to move to a system of conclusive titling system that would minimise land and property disputes. Modernised land records will ensure availability of updated record of rights, sale deeds and registration process in electronic form. These records will be available in electronic format and will ensure greater transparency and accuracy in determining ownership of land. This will help in calculation of fair compensation on the basis of the latest market rate and ease the acquisition process.

The programme's objectives include ensuring a system of automatic mutation. To this end, the government (state and central) will move to make the requisite legal changes to facilitate modernisation of records. This includes amending the Registration Act, 1908 and the State Stamp Act.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/rural-ministry-makes-a-three-year-road-map-for-modernization-of-land-records/articleshow/24169907.cms>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Deepti Somani)

GOVERNMENT

Packed Food Grains Via Ration Shops Being Mulled

(*Business Standard*, 15 October, 2013)

The government is considering to distribute the cheaper food grains under the new food law to 67% of nation's population in packs of 5 kg in order to block leakages in the existing Public Distribution System (PDS), unlike the present where food grains in PDS shops is sold in loose form to the beneficiaries and are procured and packed in 50 kg bags for distribution to PDS shops.

"There is a suggestion to supply 5 kg foodgrains in packs via the PDS. We are looking into this seriously," said Food Minister K V Thomas while addressing an event on World Standards Day. The Centre was discussing how food grains can be packed in small quantities during procurement in Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, as per the Food Minister.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has also been asked to examine this issue since they have more responsibility to ensure quality standards, the minister added and even called on Indian companies to adapt their business practices in sync with global standards to benefit from the global trade.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/packed-foodgrains-via-ration-shops-being-mulled-113101400679_1.html

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Shruti Issar)

Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Rejects ILP Demand

(*Meghalaya Times*, 10 October, 2013)

"The 9th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly rejected the Inner Line Permit (ILP) demand for the state through voice vote. The ILP demand was voted out by MUA-II government in favour of a comprehensive, integrated and institutionalized mechanism to check illegal immigration into the pre-dominantly tribal state."

Replying to the Resolution Motion tabled by Hills State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) legislator, Ardent Basaiawmoit, Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma said, "Government of Meghalaya would soon take up with the Centre a proposal for appropriate amendment to the Representation of People's Act in order to ensure that outsiders in the state would not get voting rights." He added that "the state government is serious in its motive to contain influx and is putting a more comprehensive, integrated and institutionalized legal framework to address the current situation." "The proposed Regulation of Landlords and Verification of Tenancy Bill, 2013 has been drafted and its implementation would regulate the stay of outsiders, especially the floating population in the state, including in the industries and mining belts," he further stated.

Earlier, moving the resolution, Opposition member Ardent Basaiawmoit said "political parties should stop looking at migrants as vote banks and unite to implement ILP, which, according to him was the most suitable way to check influx and illegal immigration."

Hitting at the proposed Tenancy Bill of the state government, Basaiawmoit said the Bill is nothing but "the same tenancy law that is implemented

elsewhere to define the role and relationship between a landlord and a tenant.”

Participating in the debate, United Democratic Party (UDP) legislator Paul Lyngdoh said “the government should rather concentrate in establishing its control over sectors such as mining where outsiders take advantage to stake their claims of citizenship.”

<http://meghalayetimes.info/index.php/front-page/22222-meghalaya-legislative-assembly-rejects-ilp-demand>

Date Accessed 18.10.2013
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

PANCHAYATI RAJ

Gram Panchayats to Get 15 Must- have Amenities Soon in Karnataka

(Anil Kumar Sastry, *The Hindu*, 15 October, 2103)

The Karnataka government has identified 15 basic amenities to enhance quality of life in villages. It has asked gram panchayats (GPs) to make all these facilities available to the people. These include drinking water, playgrounds and open-air theatres. “The move is aimed at arresting the migration of rural people towards urban areas.” A recent circular of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department says that of the 6.11 crore population of Karnataka, nearly 61 per cent live in rural areas. There are 59,532 habitats and 27,397 villages within 5,629 Gram Panchayats. The foremost priority of the government is to enhance quality of life in villages so that it is at par with urban areas, the department said.

Since the government is committed to provide at least 55 litres per capita day (LPCD) of water to every family in a village, the gram panchayats should

focus on providing tap connections to individual households. The other major concerns are construction of toilets for each household and educational institution under the MGNREGA and the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. The gram panchayats should also provide animal shelters for cows and sheep. This would encourage dairy and sheep-rearing activities. Also, community harvesting facilities should be provided to enable small and marginal farmers to join in.

“Having concurred with the department of e-governance to extend e-governance facilities, the RDPR Department said each panchayat should establish citizen service centres in their limits. This is to avoid village people approaching taluk headquarters to get services, including land records and utility payments.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/the-15-must-have-basic-amenities-in-villages/article5235936.ece>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Anjana John)

SECURITY India the Third Largest Supplier of Troops to UN Peace Keeping Force

(Heather Timmons and Neha Thirani Bagri, *The New York Times*, 16 October, 2013)

India is one of the leading nations-following Bangladesh and Pakistan- in supplying troops to the UN peacekeeping forces. While it is voluntary for member states to provide army help, it is observed that generally developing nations provide their armies for peacekeeping forces. On the other hand, developed nations-namely United States, Japan and Britain- bear the expenditure of financing the force (\$7 billion annual bill). Defence analysts say that this “division is rooted in history and economic necessity,” implying that

developing nations provide such support for reasons like revenues, their relative willingness “to bear the human loss of life” and to increase their “goodwill” in the Security Council.

The article cites various reasons to explain the trend of developing nations providing troops in large numbers to the UN missions.

Firstly, nations get revenues by providing troops to the UN. The Indian government pays soldiers in rupees but receives payments from the United Nations in United States dollars implying foreign currency inflows. “Governments of these states are reimbursed for each soldier they provide at the rate of \$1,028 per soldier per month. In addition, countries get payments for the equipment they send, whether it is personnel carriers or tanks. The peacekeepers draw their usual army salary, plus additional payments from the Indian government.”

Secondly, countries which aim to secure a seat in the Security Council (like India) earn a lot of goodwill. “Whether you call it peacekeeping or peacemaking, it all adds to India’s case for a permanent seat on the Security Council, as perhaps one of the strongest enforcers of the U.N. writ and a responsible state,” said Bharat Karnad, Center for Policy Research.

Thirdly, it is claimed that “developing countries appear to be more willing to bear the human loss of life.” Developed nations are more unwilling to send their troops to difficult areas which, and “whenever developed countries such as the United States have sent troops to foreign countries, the deaths of soldiers have led to a lot of popular resentment against the government.” Additionally, it is observed that permanent members of the Security Council follow their own foreign policy and agendas when they send troops to “volatile areas.”

Indian troops in the United Nations force stand at a count of 1.1 million-soldiers. Recently, five Indian soldiers

were killed in South Sudan. According to the UN, "About 30 peacekeepers were escorting a civilian convoy when they were ambushed by some 200 armed, unidentified men near the settlement of Gumuruk in Jonglei, a firefight erupted as the Indian peacekeepers tried to protect the civilians." Analysts also say that this division means bad for the developing nations, particularly India, as it implies huge loss of life of soldiers posted in "difficult areas" for the sake of maintaining "goodwill" in the UN.

<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/poor-nations-fight-rich-nations-pay/>

Date Accessed: 09.10.2013
(Mahima Malik)

CONNECTIVITY

Vodafone to Invest Over \$2 Billion in India: Kapil Sibal (Times Of India, 15 October, 2013)

Following the lifting of the 74 per cent cap on investment in telecoms by foreign companies, the British company-Vodafone- is said to pour in more than \$2 billion in, according to Telecommunications minister Kapil Sibal's statement on the 15th of October.

Sibal said that the government wants consolidation in India's 12-player telecoms market. It also hopes to allow deals between carriers with a combined market share of up to 60 percent in new merger and acquisition rules expected by the end of this month.

He also said that the government could possibly hold another auction of third-generation (3G) spectrum, which would be the first since 2010. He also added that there are plans to auction 4G airwaves in the 700 megahertz band in "a year or so".

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Vodafone-to->

invest-over-2-billion-in-India-Kapil-Sibal/articleshow/24201753.cms

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

Govt Eyes Marketing NE in Tourism Fest

(The Shillong Times, 18 October, 2013)

Over 150 foreign delegates from the US, the UK, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, Russia, South Korea and Sweden will take part in the three-day International Tourism Mart to be organised in Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) beginning this Friday with the objective to "sell brand North East to the outer world."

The Tourism Mart is being organised by the Union Ministry of Tourism. The Tourism Deputy Director General Sanjay Shreevats reported that "North East has so much variation in its culture that a glimpse of a big country can be seen and the proposed conclave aims to showcase the diverse culture of the region to the world." He also added that "Although hundreds of domestic delegates will take part, our focus will be on foreign invitees."

The foreign delegation will mainly comprise international tour operators and senior media personalities, so far, over 160 foreign delegates have confirmed their participation. "Nearly 150 persons, mainly tour operators, will also take part from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim and West Bengal."

<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/10/18/govt-eyes-marketing-ne-in-tourism-fest/>

Date Accessed 18.10.2013
(Janty Sharma Pathak)

EDUCATION

Where Knowledge is Poor

(Krishna Kumar, The Hindu, 12 October, 2013)

Poverty is seldom mentioned directly in policy documents on education. As a result its impact on children's lives at school and learning is understood rather vaguely not just by educational planners, but teachers too.

Education necessarily demands long-term horizons. Poverty, on the contrary, compels people to remain embedded in immediate or short-term concerns. The two are therefore inherently incompatible.

Poverty also has a corrosive effect on children's health and mental capacities. Frequent illnesses which are common and limited resources to eat well and regularly, translates into poor attention and attendance. The success of the minimalist mid-day meal scheme that has improved enrolment and retention is proof of how hunger and malnourishment play a major role in pushing children out of education.

Poverty also leads to children's helping augment the family's income. Whether they work at home or outside, their effort to juggle work-related responsibilities with classroom routines makes their life at school impossible. Teachers rarely know what life at home really means for such children. Once a child starts to lag behind others, he or she becomes an object of stereotyping by classmates and teachers. A vicious cycle sets in.

Teachers can only make a difference if their training equips them with the awareness of what poverty means, which is not the current reality. A widespread unchecked belief in social Darwinism makes teachers believe that since survival is the proof of being the fittest, only the exceptional child from a poor family is endowed by nature to succeed. Naturally such an education system makes little impact on the majority of children from poorer backgrounds.

Education alone cannot address poverty. However, it must be an important strategy used to loosen the grip that chronic poverty has on its victims. In India, the efforts are often mainly symbolic. Schemes for the poor are themselves so emaciated and stiff that they cannot be expected to make a significant difference in the lives of their beneficiaries.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/where-knowledge-is-poor/article5226209.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 12.10.2013
(Gayatri Verma)

HEALTH

All Children of J&K to Get Free Treatment under RBSK: Shabir

(Kashmir Observer, 16 October, 2013)

“Minister of State for Health Mr. Shabir Ahmad Khan has said that Rashtriya Bal Sawasthya Karyakarm (RBSK) for free healthcare facilities to the children would be launched in Jammu and Kashmir from next month. He said under this scheme the children from the age group of 0-18 years would be screened through early detection of birth, deficiencies, development delays and other diseases by involving mobile medical teams at block levels.”

The scheme under NRHM will cover all children of 0-18 years of age group in rural areas and urban slums besides children enrolled in classes 1 to 12th in government and government aided schools. For this the “government is making 234 medical mobile teams consisting 2 AYUSH[Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy] doctors and one ANM[auxiliary nurse midwife] in each team to screen the children for providing treatment against the diseases.”

Further, district health societies will engage 773 AYUSH doctors and other para-medical staff under NRHM besides setting up the District Early Innervation Centres (DEIC), in districts of Srinagar, Baramulla, Anathnag, Ganderbal, Jammu, Udhampur, Doda, Rajouri and Leh in this fiscal year. For this the Centre has sanctioned Rs 17.54 crore to the State to implement the scheme.

<http://kashmirobsrver.net/news/local-news/all-children-state-get-free-treatment-under-rbsk-shabir>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

Child Malnutrition is Down: Survey

(Kundan Pandey, *Down To Earth*, 15 October, 2013)

According to survey conducted by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) the status of nutrition among children has improved over the past four decades but food intake of people in rural India has been declining.

“The NNMB survey conducted to find out time and trends in the diet and nutritional status of rural population in 2011-12, highlights that the prevalence of underweight, stunting and wasting has been declining in the past four decades. It shows that there is reduction in the prevalence of underweight children from 76 per cent to 43 per cent among boys and 74 per cent to 42 per cent among girls. Stunting also declined from 83 per cent to 46 per cent among boys and 81 per cent to 43 per cent among girls. Similarly, wasting or moderate malnutrition decreased from 29 per cent to 20 per cent among boys and 24 per cent to 19 per cent among girls in the same period.”

But interestingly, food and nutrient intake in general has decreased. The average intake of energy has declined by about 500 kilo calories per consumer unit per day (Kcal/CU/day) over the period. This decline is highest in states of Karnataka followed by

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The stark contrast between the nutritional status and food and nutrient intake can be attributed to non-notional factors like increased access of safe drinking water, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation etc.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/child-malnutrition-down-survey>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2013
(Simi Sunny)

ENERGY

Centre to Get Tough on States Not Meeting Clean Energy Targets

(Vishwa Mohan, *Economic Times*, 15 October, 2013)

The Centre may get tough on states which are not meeting the clean energy target. The Union ministry of New and Renewable energy has written to the power ministry suggesting that it make it mandatory for states to fulfill their 'Renewable Purchase Obligation' (RPO) if they want to get central support for financial restructuring of their electricity distribution companies.

Once the power ministry agrees to the suggestion, the states will have to purchase a certain percentage of their energy requirement from clean (solar or wind) sources. If they fail to do that, they will not be able to get concessions from the Centre to make their ailing distribution companies financial viable.”

The move will help the government not only achieve its clean energy target under the National Action Plan on Climate Change but also promote renewable energy generation in a big way. India is supposed to increase its share of renewable energy in the total

energy mix to the extent of 15% by 2020.

The Electricity Act, 2003 mandates State Electricity Regulatory Commissions across the country to set targets -- known as RPO -- for distribution companies to purchase certain percentage of their total power need from renewable energy sources. However, most states - except renewable power-rich Gujarat and Rajasthan -- miserably failed to comply with their targets last year.

The move comes in the backdrop of the recent decision of Maharashtra to crack the whip on electricity distribution firms to meet their obligation of buying renewable energy.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/environment/developmental-issues/centre-to-get-tough-on-states-not-meeting-clean-energy-targets/articleshow/24170562.cms>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Deepti Somani)

Tata Power Arm to Buy Wind Farm in Gujarat

(The Hindu, 09 October, 2013)

In a bid to scale up its renewable energy portfolio, Tata Power plans to acquire a 39.2 MW wind farm in Gujarat. "Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd. (TPREL) has signed a share purchase agreement (SPA) with AES Corporation for acquisition of the U.S. Company's 100 per cent shareholding in AES Saurashtra Windfarms Pvt Ltd. (ASW)."

"The project has been fully operational since January, 2012, and ASW has executed a power purchase agreement with Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd. for sale of electricity at a tariff of Rs. 3.56/kWh for the duration of the project."

Anil Sardana, Managing Director, Tata Power, said that the company is committed to generating 20-25% of its

total generation through clean energy sources. "With this deal, Tata Power's wind operational generation capacity will go up to 437 MW, with wind turbine generators located across five states, including Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka."

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/tata-power-arm-to-buy-wind-farm-in-gujarat/article5214436.ece>

Date Accessed: 11.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

TECHNOLOGY **Electronic Payment Can Save 1.6% of India's GDP: WB**

(Somesh Jha, Business Standard, 12 October, 2013)

According to the World Development Report 2014, the rising use of payment by electronic medium can help save 1.6 per cent of India's GDP. "Cash can carry significant handling and transportation costs, and run the risks of theft, loss, and counterfeiting."

Benefits of Electronic Payment:

- convenient online authorisations
- easier record keeping
- availability of dispute resolution mechanisms
- manage fraud and leakage risks in government payment programmes
- improve transparency and accountability
- contribute to the economy in the form of remittances

"Importantly, electronic payment instruments must be linked to a deposit account either at a deposit-taking institution (bank) or in the form of e-money that can be used by banks, other financial firms, or mobile network operators," the report noted. The report has significant implications for economic policy. Given that the size of India's GDP was Rs 1,00,20,620 crore in 2012-13, India could save Rs 160,329 crore due to electronic payments.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/electronic-payment-can-save-1-6-of-india-s-gdp-wb-113100900278_1.html

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Divashri Mathur)

ENVIRONMENT **Wildlife Crime: Kerala Tops the Absconders' List**

(Toby Antony, The New Indian Express, 15 October, 2013)

Though the general belief is that Kerala has a healthy number of wildlife populations, the state tops the list of absconders in wildlife crimes registered. According to the officials of Forest Department, one of the reasons for the high number is the lack of proper investigation when wildlife crime is detected and the absence of enforcement activities by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). As per details with the Bureau, 141 absconders are involved in wildlife crimes like poaching, smuggling and sale of wildlife products.

"The Ministry of Environment and Forests has started giving training under the CBI to forest officials in wildlife crime investigation, but none from the state has received the training yet." Forest officials believe that poachers in the state are now targeting marine species, especially the vulnerable ones, due to their high value in the international market. But the Forest Department does not have any infrastructure to prevent their poaching.

"The WCCB, which had set up a sub-regional office at Kakkannad here for Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands five years ago, is yet to get fully operational in the state. Senior Forest officials are not even aware of any such an agency operating in the state." Although the WCCB often make declarations regarding enhancing the activities of the Kerala

sub-regional division, nothing has been done so far.

<http://newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/Wildlife-crime-State-tops-absconders%E2%80%99-list/2013/10/15/article1836443.ece>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Anjana John)

A Third of Western Ghats to Get Protective Cover

(Press Club of India, 15 October, 2013)

“The Environment Ministry has decided to turn approximately 60,000 square kilometres of the Western Ghats across six States into an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), banning mining, quarrying, thermal power plants and polluting industries over the entire range. All other projects would be allowed only with the prior consent of gram sabhas (village councils) in the zone.”

The Environment and Forests Minister Jayanthi Natarajan took this decision as a follow-up on two reports on the Ghats (ecologist Madhav Gadgil’s report and Planning Commission member K. Kasturirangan’s report). The decision “would make the identified region of the Western Ghats complex the largest protected forests in India ranging over 1,500 km linear distance from the Tapti river in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. Going with the recommendations of the high-level panel that was headed by Mr. Kasturirangan, the Ministry has decided to declare the ESA over 37% of the Western Ghats under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.”

The government, under the Environment Protection Act, will issue a ‘red list’ banning certain industries, usually considered to be the most polluting.

“Going against the recommendation of the Environment Secretary, the Minister retained the criteria to leave areas with high-density of population

out of this regulated zone’s ambit... Within the ESA prior consent from the gram sabhas and strict adherence to the Forest Rights Act would be made mandatory for any of the projects that are not on the negative list. This too would be done after studying cumulative impacts of the projects in the region.”

<http://pressclubofindia.co.in/a-third-of-western-ghats-to-get-protective-cover/>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

AGRICULTURE

Bihar to Exempt Chewing Tobacco from Tax

(Bihar Times, 11 October, 2013)

Bihar government has decided to exempt chewing tobacco or ‘khaini’ from tax to help thousands of farmers who grow tobacco in the state. “Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has announced exemption of khaini from tax in view of the demand made by the farmers.” the production of khaini is their main source of livelihood, but it was being seized and taxes and fines imposed on them. Khaini is consumed by millions of people in Bihar and across the country.

Also, tobacco is the only cash crop of farmers in north Bihar districts of Samastipur, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Sitamarhi. Traders from Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh purchase the yield from them, an official said. “A Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) has revealed that every second adult in Bihar is addicted to khaini. About 63 percent of the men and 35 percent of women in Bihar consume it.”

<http://www.bihartimes.in/Newsbihar/2013/Oct/newsbihar12Oct10.html>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Anjana John)

LAW AND JUSTICE

Brutality Not Sole Criterion for Awarding Death Penalty: SC

(J Venkatesan, The Hindu, 11 October, 2013)

Commuting the death sentence of a convict accused for triple murder, the Supreme Court held, “In a civilised society a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye ought not to be the criterion to clothe a case with the ‘rarest of the rare’ jacket and the courts must not be propelled by such notions in a haste resorting to capital punishment.”

A three-judge Bench of Justices H.L. Dattu, S.J. Mukhopadaya and M.Y. Eqbal while reiterating the principle that in murder cases awarding of the death penalty is an exception and life sentence is the rule held, “Our criminal jurisprudence cautions the courts of law to act with utmost responsibility by analyzing the finest strands of the matter and it is in that perspective a reasonable proportion has to be maintained between the brutality of the crime and the punishment. It falls squarely upon the Court to award the sentence having due regard to the nature of offence such that neither is the punishment disproportionately severe nor is it manifestly inadequate, as either case would not sub-serve the cause of justice to the society. In jurisprudential terms, an individual’s right of not to be subjected to cruel, arbitrary or excessive punishment cannot be outweighed by the utilitarian value of that punishment.”

The Bench said: “All murders are inhuman, some only more so than others. The degree of brutality has to be ascertained in contrast with other cases and the criteria and the tests laid down in a catena of cases must writ large upon the courts the caution which must be borne in mind while declaring a crime so revolting and

diabolical that it warrants nothing less but capital punishment...We cannot lose sight of the fact that brutality also cannot be the only criterion for determining whether a case falls under the 'rarest of rare' categories."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/brutality-not-sole-criterion-for-awarding-death-penalty/article5222426.ece>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013

(Deepti Somani)

CASTEISM

Conviction Rates in Crimes against SCs Remarkably Low

(Deeptiman Tiwary, *The Times of India*, 16 October, 2013)

The national average in terms of conviction rate in cases of crimes against Scheduled Castes is remarkably low, with Bihar among the bottom rankers.

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, while the national conviction rate for overall IPC crimes stood at 38.5%, it was only 23.9% in case of crimes against SCs, with Bihar among the worst standing at 12.4% conviction in crimes against SCs even though conviction rate for overall IPC crimes in the state was 15.9%. "Bihar is among the states with maximum number of crimes against dalits (4,821); next only to UP and Rajasthan."

Surprisingly UP, which had maximum number of cases of crimes against SCs (6,202) in 2012, had the best conviction rate among big states standing at 51.4%, next only to Sikkim (66.7%) and Uttarakhand (54.5%). However, the other two states "have low populations, very few such cases and hardly any caste conflicts in their society."

In terms of Prevention of Atrocities against SCs and STs Act, "the performance of the justice system was even worse. The national conviction rate in these cases was merely 18.8%, worse than the national average for overall crimes against SCs (23.9%)." However the data available is also not absolute, a senior IPS officer said that "a lot of false cases are registered which ultimately fall flat in court. Several times, dalits become pawns in the fight between two upper caste landlords in a village and file false cases."

Despite that, the "issue of justice denied to dalits was a serious one and the data on overall crimes against SCs in terms of conviction rate only proved the point."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Bihar-not-alone-in-denying-justice-to-dalits/articleshow/24222362.cms>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Ashwin Varghese)

GENDER

UNICEF Report on "Communication For Development" for Adolescent Girls

(Linda Raftree and Keshet Bachan, *The Guardian*, 11 October, 2013)

A new UNICEF Report suggests that mere innovation in techniques to educate girls, such as information communication technologies (ICTs) and programs that involve computer or mobile devices will not go a long way in true empowerment of girls unless there are complementary mechanisms which enable girls to break barriers which limit their access to this resource. The report suggests adoption of a new mechanism by which innovation should go beyond mere implementation and should be directly tied with "outcomes". The report interprets this integration as "Communication for Development (C4D)" which aims at creating a "holistic and inclusive" mechanism to help girls effectively break barriers that suppress their voice.

"The report suggests that when measures are taken to overcome the barriers girls face, the inclusion of new ICTs into proven C4D strategies can help in expanding and extending girls' connection, engagement and agency, increase girls' access to knowledge and improve governance and service delivery.

The report also cites various examples of such a mechanism bearing positive

impacts all over the world. A Girls' Security Mapping Initiative, implemented by Map Kibera and supported by Unicef, enabled girls to use digital mapping as a way of identifying places where they felt unsafe. They then engaged community leaders in addressing their concerns. In Nepal, the Rural Voice of Youth programme added SMS as a new option for young people to join discussions on issues affecting them and saw a large boost in participation from populations outside of urban areas.

UNICEF makes five recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of innovations in education. Firstly, that girls should be an active participants in programme designing. "Holistic programmes designed together with girls tend towards being more successful." Programs that are community driven and that adjust to local conditions are important which can be achieved by way of multilevel and multi-platform approach which can be accessed by even the most marginalised sections. Secondly, "every programme should conduct a thorough risk analysis of proposed approaches to ensure that girls are not placed at risk by participating, sharing and consuming information, or publicly holding others to account." Thirdly, "better documentation would improve understanding of what programmes are the most effective, and what the real added value of ICTs are in these efforts." Fourthly, "organisations should support a comprehensive training process for staff to cover areas such as programme design, effective use of new ICT tools in combination with existing tools and methods, and close attention to privacy and risk mitigation." Lastly, "one policy recommendation for these types of programmes is the use of free and open source software. In addition, child protection policies, measures and guidelines should be updated to reflect changes in technology, platforms and information sharing."

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals->

network/2013/oct/11/international-day-of-girl-ict-empowerment

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Mahima Malik)

UN Report on Women Representation in Parliament

(Lisa Mahapatra, *The International Business Times*, 12 October, 2013)

UN data estimates the proportion of women in government all around the world with the interesting revelation that “Rwanda, south-central Africa, is the country with the highest proportion of women in parliament - more than 56 percent of seats are held by women.” The United States (around 18 percent) and many European countries have much smaller proportion of women in governance - even less than the world average.

Following trends emerge from the report:

In 2012, “women held the largest proportion of parliament seats in Latin American and Caribbean governments (25.5%) followed by sub-Saharan African nations (21.5%).” Latest estimates reveal that top five nations with the most women in parliament are: Andorra (50 percent), Cuba (45.2 percent), Sweden (44.7 percent) and Seychelles (43.8 percent) India has recorded a constant proportion of around 11 percent since 2009, which is an improvement from 2008 estimates (a dismal 9 percent). Countries with no women representatives are: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Vanuatu, Palau and Micronesia.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/women-power-where-world-do-women-hold-most-seats-parliament-1422946>

Date Accessed: 12.10.2013
(Mahima Malik)

MIGRATION

India Receiving Refugees Warmly But Without Any Recognition

(*Hardnews*, October, 2013)

The absence of a ‘refugee regime’ in India or in any of the South Asian countries has marred the legal process for identification of individual refugees.

Since India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, the treatment of refugees falls under India’s Registration of Foreigners Act of 1939, the Foreigners Act of 1946, and the Foreigners Order of 1948. None of these Acts distinguishes between undocumented migrants and refugees. However, in the case of Afghans, while the Indian government does not officially recognize them as refugees, it has allowed the UNHCR to operate a programme for them.

Refugees cannot work in India because they have no residence permits and no status as refugees so it has become difficult for them to survive. For Chin-Burmese refugees in India, in 1988, the Indian government issued orders for their protection and provided support to refugee camps established along the border. The Tibetans seem to be in a better situation. Though India does not recognize the Tibetan government in exile, with the support of the UNHCR and other foreign donor agencies, it has been successful in establishing 44 settlements. The refugee colony in the north of Delhi is home to around 6,000 Tibetans.

These refugees contribute in a big way to the Indian economy. They run hotels, guesthouses and restaurants, located between the Yamuna and Delhi’s Outer Ring Road, it reserves a large population cramped in closely-

built houses, several floors high, inside narrow by lanes. The area houses a market of retail stalls, including bookshops, curio shops selling Tibetan handicrafts and stores selling the latest fashion wear and gadgets, with metal smiths, beauty parlours, Internet cafes and travel agencies, plus a small monastery and a Buddhist temple, spreading message of cultural harmony and peace.

<http://www.hardnewsmedia.com/2013/10/6085?page=2#sthash.HfDl8Buq.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Neha Singh)

REGIONALISM

India Plans 'New Mumbai' as Overcrowding Chokes City

(Dean Nelson, *The Telegraph*, 4 October, 2013)

Maharashtra’s state minister for housing, Sachin Ahir, has backed a plan to transform and develop Uran into a new and promising city that can absorb the high level of existing and continuous migrant workforce in Maharashtra. There have been growing concerns that Mumbai’s ‘carrying capacity’ has been exploited and the overcrowded city now faces stagnation.

Mumbai is home to “more than 20 million people” and faces threats of stagnation- traffic, migration from other regions and housing are already major problems in the city. In its efforts to decongest Mumbai, Navi Mumbai was developed in its outskirts but the efforts have gone in vain as Navi Mumbai has already reached a population count of around a million.

The plan proposes initiatives under which Uran, a fishing village of 23,000 people, will be transformed into a metropolis. The plan calls out to the “private sector” for its help and assistance. “Uran already has a major

port and Maharashtra's housing authority is already planning new housing estates in the town. Roads and boat links to Mumbai will be boosted by new rail services to Navi Mumbai." The plan also seeks to "integrate two private ports, a gas power station and other major infrastructure projects to lure people from Mumbai." Thrust will be placed on transport developments.

"There is a need to create more space, land for more housing. We're trying to create a new satellite city for the people who come here but never want to go back. They will be able to live their Mumbai dream, in Uran," Mr Ahir said. The Plan claims that if the plan succeeds, Uran will grow to "a quarter of the size of Mumbai itself."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/10357164/India-plans-New-Mumbai-as-overcrowding-chokes-city.html>

Date Accessed: 10.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

DISABLED

A Better Life and a Healthier Mind

(Vandana Gopikumar, *The Hindu*, 10 October, 2013)

In recent years, the impact of mental illness on the social and economic health of nations has been well understood, placing mental ill health as one of the leading causes of disability adjusted life years (DALY) worldwide. There has been much focus on early intervention, integration of mental health into primary care, stigma reduction and access to affordable health care, all very relevant and essential policy recommendations. However, we may not be addressing a related and critical area, sufficiently aggressively, if we are to respond comprehensively to what may well emerge as a health crisis, costing nations productivity and resources

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has drawn our attention to the

close interplay between poverty and mental ill health by documenting evidence that those affected by poverty, hunger, unemployment, debt or are living in poor, overcrowded housing are far more susceptible to common mental disorders. It also reports that 75 per cent of the global burden of Neuro Psychiatric Disorders occurs in low and middle-income countries. The results of their trial show diminished cognitive functioning among those experiencing the strain of poverty, causing them to often make bad decisions, ignoring long-term benefits because of their more immediate preoccupation with money. This could result in poor mental health outcomes, as well.

While the administrative systems could respond, a measure such as this calls for strong political will and action. Besides ensuring that schemes reach the poor, an important construct of social care in mental health is yet to be managed -the disability allowance. The Persons with Disabilities Act ensures an allowance for those affected by mental illness based on compliance with certain set criteria. This benefit will ensure that the poor user and caregiver have access to some reprieve and help address socio economic challenges that we now know influence the people's behaviour and their health. This may well encourage treatment commitment; a common and critical challenge one faces in the mental health sector.

The good news is that India has launched a progressive attempt to both introduce a Mental Health Care Bill (that will encourage the common man to view mental health care as a right, making services mandatory) and a Mental Health Policy that will focus on precisely which the diverse needs that promote well-being.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-better-life-a-healthier-mind/article5218373.ece>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

ELDERLY

India Ranks 73rd in Global Age Watch Index 2013

(*The Shillong Times*, 3 October, 2013)

According to a UN-backed study on the wellbeing of the elderly in a rapidly ageing world, "India stands a dismal 73rd in the list of 91 countries." "Global Age Watch Index 2013" released the rankings which studies welfare of older people through variables like incomes, health, education, employment and their environments.

Sweden ranks first, implying that the country is best prepared to consider and maintain the welfare of its ageing population. Afghanistan occupied the last position in the report. The index is compiled by the HelpAge International advocacy group and the UN Population Fund. It is significant to consider the findings of such an index as "the number of people over the age of 60 is set to soar from some 809 million today to more than two billion by 2050."

The Index points out the following pointers:

- Interestingly, the report finds that while developed countries (Western European nations, the US and Japan) ranked well, many low income countries (Sri Lanka and Bolivia) also have schemes and programs in place that ensure the welfare of ageing population.
- "The survey ranked many African and South Asian countries as the worst places to be retired, with Tanzania, Pakistan and Afghanistan rounding out the bottom three."
- "Bolivia offers free healthcare to its older citizens despite being one of the poorest surveyed countries, and Sri Lanka provides long-term investments in health and education."

- It is also reported that the now developed countries had policies for the elderly in place even when they were emerging economies.
- Brazil and China ranked 31st and 35th in the survey.
- “On a positive note, the survey found that some countries and regions that were ageing the fastest were already preparing for the democratic shift.” Latin American countries, which face a doubling of their elderly populations by 2050, are at a better off position in the rankings (Chile and Uruguay in 19th and 23rd place).

<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/10/03/india-no-country-for-old-men-un-report/#OubLF745QqgSC0OU.99>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

The New Global Powers: China, India and Brazil

(Erich Follat, *Spiegel Online*, 16 October, 2013)

According to the 2013 United Nations Human Development Report, "the rise of the South is unprecedented in its speed and scale." For the first time in 150 years, the combined output of the developing world's three leading economies -- Brazil, China and India -- is about equal to the combined GDP of the longstanding industrial powers of the North -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States. Management consulting firm Deloitte projects that by 2017, China followed by India and Brazil will be the most competitive countries in terms of industrial production.

It is not just large population and land mass in these three countries that have resulted in their rise. They are also stunning the world with their impressive performance in many areas, including research and technology. Politically speaking, the new major powers are also becoming increasingly self-confident -- and sometimes form a united front against the West. A few years ago, the three emerging economies joined forces with Russia and South Africa to form the BRICS group. In March, the BRICS leaders decided to launch their own development bank, with a starting capital of \$100 billion. With Beijing's and New Delhi's votes - and against the wishes of the United States - Brazilian Roberto Azevêdo was chosen as the new head of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in May, and is now in a position to help shape the flow of goods around the world.

On the downside, China, India and Brazil are currently being shaken by inner turmoil. In all three countries, people are taking to the streets to protest corruption, nepotism and inefficient government. At the same time, the economic recovery is flagging.

The three new powers may be in agreement most of the time when it comes to opposing Western dominance and a possible dictate on CO2 emissions, but their political differences are substantial. China is a centralist, one-party dictatorship with clear elements of brute capitalism. India is a federal, chaotic democracy that is often its own worst enemy. And Brazil has a presidential governing system with a calcified party landscape. According to Amartya Sen, democracy, despite its setbacks is better as it, unlike autocracy, helps to correct extreme aberrations. Sen says, "One country's weakness is another country's strength. China has achieved greater successes in expanding basic medical care and education. Life expectancy is high and the illiteracy rate is low. India fares better when it comes to protecting civil rights. The governments must comprehend that development means freedom - freedom from poverty and tyranny."

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/essay-on-challenges-faced-by-emerging-economies-a-928113-2.html>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

India, US to Jointly Target Financial Networks of LeT and JuD

(*India Today*, 14 October, 2013)

India and the US have agreed to work together to target the financial network and fund raising activities of terror outfits like

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the Haqqani network and individual terrorists associated with these organisations. The decision by the two countries, in this regard, was taken during a meeting between Finance Minister P Chidambaram and US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew. They have also agreed on commitment to deepening dialogue on implementation of international anti-money laundering, combating the financing of terrorism and expanding cooperation on countering illicit financing.

These commitments were also reflected in a joint statement issued after the meeting between the two countries.

"They also agreed to enhance cooperation between our agencies in fighting against counterfeiting currency and illicit financial flows," the statement said.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-us-to-jointly-target-financial-networks-of-let-jud/1/314483.html>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013
(Anjana John)

India Becomes Biggest Rice Supplier to Singapore

(*The New Indian Express*, 12 October, 2013)

According to the recent statistics, India has overtaken Thailand as the biggest rice supplier to Singapore. Statistics from the International Enterprise Singapore showed that Singapore imported 92,865 tonnes, or 32.9 per cent, of its total demand for rice from India between January and August, making India the top supplier.

Thailand was second over the same period, at 85,816 tonnes or 30.4 per cent of the total. Thailand had been the top source of the staple in Singapore since at least

1998, accounting for over half of overall supply between 1998 and 2011. Last year, this fell to 35.3 percent.

There are several factors driving the shift in the supply patterns among major rice suppliers. "Importers are taking advantage of the lower prices of Indian rice compared to Thai rice." Supplies from India and other countries such as Vietnam and Myanmar have grown as much as nine-fold since 2004.

According to the Singapore General Rice Importers Association, the shift began when global rice prices began surging in 2008. "Back then, massive floods in Thailand led to a supply shortage. Other rice-producing nations also curbed exports to ensure adequate domestic supply and importers here hastened to look for alternative sources." Importers say the changing palates of Singaporeans are also a factor. "The influx of foreigners with different preferences may also be fuelling demand for non-Thai rice."

<http://newindianexpress.com/nation/India-becomes-biggest-rice-supplier-to-Singapore/2013/10/12/article1833009.ece>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013
(Anjana John)

30% of Indian Elected Leaders Since 2008 Face Criminal Charges

(Ellen Barry, *The New York Times*, October 13, 2013)

The article argues that Indian politics is enmeshed in corruption and criminal activities. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms-a Delhi-based research group-30 percent of winners in national and regional elections since 2008 face criminal charges.

Kameshkar Baitha of Jharkhand has the longest criminal record according to the research group's findings, yet enjoys tremendous public support in the State. The article highlights an ironical trend that has surfaced over the years with corrupt leaders facing criminal allegations have managed to garner popular support. The author cites the case of the recently fodder scam convicted Lalu Prasad Yadav and Jagan Mohan Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, also accused of corruption.

Rahul Gandhi, the Vice President of the Congress party, had recently backed the Supreme Court order in July disqualifying convicted politicians from holding office in the government. According to the author, as India's democratic system evolved, candidates depended heavily on thuggish "muscle men," and later "money men," to influence voters and elect them into office. Low spending limits and negligible penalty for false accusations are among the other reasons that encourage politicians to bend the law to get elected. Moreover the article argues that for a country that draws its independence movement from civil disobedience, lawbreaking is enmeshed in the political culture.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/14/world/asia/in-indias-politics-jail-time-is-a-badge-of-honor.html?hp>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

UN to Elect 5 New Security Council Members

(Edith M. Lederer, *Associated Press*, 17 October, 2013)

"The UN General Assembly elects five new members to the Security Council on 17th October

and the winners are virtually certain because there are no contested races - Nigeria, Chad, Saudi Arabia, Lithuania and Chile. The five winners will replace Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo. New members will assume their posts on January 1 and serve through the end of 2015.

Chad, Saudi Arabia and Lithuania have never served on the UN's most powerful body while Nigeria and Chile have both been on the council four times previously. Security Council seats are highly coveted because they give countries a strong voice in matters dealing with international peace and security, such as Syria, sanctions against Iran and North Korea and the UN's far-flung peacekeeping operations.

The 15-member council includes five permanent members with veto power - the US, Russia, China, Britain and France - and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms."

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/elect-security-council-members-20594115>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2013
(Karishma Mutreja)

Fukushima Radiation Now a Global Disaster: Japan Finally Asks World For Help, Two Years Too Late

(Dave Smith, *International Business Times*, 7 October, 2013)

Japan government has asked for global aid and technical support to mitigate the adverse effects of the March 2011 crisis at the Fukushima nuclear power plant-touted as world's second worst nuclear disaster. Chernobyl and Fukushima were the only two

nuclear disasters to measure “Level 7” on the “International Nuclear Event Scale”- while Chernobyl contained 180 tons of nuclear material prior to the catastrophe, Fukushima contained an alarming 1,760 tons of nuclear material.

Tokyo is named the host for the Summer Olympic Games in 2020, and the Japan government has, since the disaster broke out, tried to assuage fears by assuring world governments that it would handle the disaster on its own and would not let it alleviate into a global concern. However, Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe recently said that the “radioactive water leaks continue to contaminate the Pacific Ocean’s ecosystem, and thus, the entire world’s food supply.”

Engineers and industrial experts have blamed Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which was the operator of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant for its carelessness in handling the contaminated water. They have pointed to protective barriers that are too low, insufficient inspection records of the tanks, a lack of water gauges, and the company’s decision to lay connecting hoses directly on the grassy ground. There has been a long list of hazardous substances released in the sea. According to Russia’s “ITAR-TASS” news agency, the safe level of radiation is 1-13 millisieverts per year; at Fukushima, however, the level of radiation is estimated at 100 millisieverts per *hour*. It is reported that “more than 110 gallons of contaminated water spilled when workers overfilled a storage tank without a proper gauge. Tepco admitted that a cumulative 20 trillion to 40 trillion Becquerel of radioactive tritium had ‘probably’ leaked into the Pacific Ocean since the disaster; the legal limit of radiation in water is 30 becquerels per liter.”

Japan’s efforts to provide solutions (protective barriers and

redefined radiation levels) have not gone down well with other countries as they feel levels are too low. Also, the Japanese government approved a plan regarding the burial of pipes at a certain depth in the ground in order to “freeze the ground to prevent water flow.” Many countries, including France and Russia, have supported help to Japan to control the impact of radiations.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/fukushim-a-radiation-now-global-disaster-japan-finally-asks-world-help-two-years-too-late-1416058>

Date Accessed: 16.10.2013

(Mahima Malik)

SOUTH ASIA

Number of Pilgrims Plummet at Hajj

(Dawn, 14 October, 2013)

A sharp decline in the number of pilgrims visiting the holy space in Mecca is noticed this year. The number of pilgrims visiting the holy site dropped by more than half to 1.5 million this year, against the 3.2 million recorded last year.

The dip has been considered to be due to fears linked to the (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) MERS virus which has claimed as many as 51 lives in Saudi Arabia itself out of the 60 lives lost worldwide. The multi-billion-dollar expansion work at the Grand Mosque is also one of the reasons. Efforts are being made to almost double the mosque’s capacity to around 2.2 million worshippers. Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, had earlier slashed hajj quotas to reduce the number of pilgrims from abroad by 20% in June this year citing construction work at the mosque as the rationale behind the reduction.

70,000 nationals and expatriates were turned back, 38,000 arrested

and 138,000 vehicles seized for various violations.

<http://dawn.com/news/1049700/islam-strictly-forbids-terrorism-says-grand-mufti-in-hajj-sermon>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Pakistan Anti-Corruption Court Reopens Five Cases Against Former President

(JURIST, 14 October, 2013)

Having lost immunity post-term fulfilment, Pakistan’s former President Asif Ali Zardari faces allegations in five corruption cases against him. These cases involving money laundering, favouritism and receiving kickbacks have been reopened by the National Accountability Bureau.

The Swiss authorities have however refused to reopen corruption cases against the ex-President.

Despite constant Supreme Court orders mandating Zardari to appear before the court, the erstwhile President remained away from judicial purview throughout his five-year term. The apex court had even removed two Primes Ministers in office last year convicting them for contempt of court by not acting upon the court’s order to reopen cases against Zardari.

Consequently the National Assembly of Pakistan has passed a Bill shielding senior official from being charged of contempt of court, which worked in favour of Zardari when in power but whose fate is likely to be tried in court now.

<http://jurist.org/paperchase/2013/10/pakistan-anti-corruption-court-reopens-five-cases-against-former-president.php>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

Malaysia: Rejects Police 'Shoot First' Policy

(*Human Rights Watch*, 8 October, 2013)

The article is a sharp retort against the Malaysian Home Minister's support for police to 'shoot first' when apprehending criminal suspects. Cases of killings of suspected criminals in regular shootouts have been on the rise. The article points out a number of cases where contradictory accounts of such encounter have left the veracity of official claims suspicious, if not tainted.

The Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi remarked in a speech in Malacca on October 6 this year that blamed the minority Indian Malaysians for escalating criminal activities. He said that 28,000 of some 40,000 gang members in the country were Indian Malaysians who prey on the majority ethnic Malay population. According to him, 'shoot first' policy is the way to tackle the escalating crime rate that has taken a heavy toll on the native Malaysians, who have mostly been victimised by these criminal activities.

Such a policy is clear violation of international human rights law and standards and should not be tolerated by the Malaysian Prime Minister, argues the article.

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/08/malaysia-reject-police-shoot-first-policy>

Date Accessed: 14.10.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Instead of Sending Soldiers,

Send Teachers

(Maysa Jalbout and Sarah Dryden-Peterson, *Brookings*, 8 October, 2013)

In war, dedicated teachers are on the front lines of the battle for hope and equality. Facing harrowing conditions, teachers are often unsupported in their responses to the pleas of children and parents for access to meaningful education. The international community must also support these teachers and their students' right to learn.

Attacks on schools are on the rise in places like Nigeria, Thailand and Syria, transforming schools from sanctuaries of learning to scenes of horror. Yet many teachers persist. In the Central African Republic, teachers take refuge with their students in bush schools in the forest. Here, there are no books or blackboards. Rather, enthusiasm and the will to learn bring education to life. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, female teachers defy daily threats and violence from extremists by educating the girls about whom they care so much.

Even as they risk their lives for their students by working under treacherous conditions, teachers in conflict-affected countries are mostly underpaid or, worse, not paid at all. In Lebanon, where 300,000 children are currently enrolled in public schools, there are now more than 500,000 additional school-age Syrian refugee children. Many teachers have gone from teaching classes of 40 students to working with classes of 90.

However, over 28 million children in 32 countries affected by conflict are waiting for education. A refugee teacher from the Democratic Republic of the Congo described arriving in Kampala, Uganda and finding no education available for refugee children.

Action is also awaited from the international community. Despite the level of resolve and innovation shown by children, parents and

teachers in conflict zones, education remains severely underfunded in humanitarian aid responses, slipping from 2 percent of total aid in 2009 to 1.4 percent in 2012, and consistently well under the 4 percent threshold called for by the international community.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/education-plus-development/posts/2013/10/08-world-teacher-day-jalbout-peterson>

Date Accessed: 15.10.2013

(Neha Singh)

AFRICA

Africa Still Losing its Fight against AIDS

(Donald G. McNeil Jr., *The New York Times*, 07 October, 2013)

Almost a dozen countries hit hard by AIDS have reached a "tipping point" which means they are winning their battles against the disease, according to the recent analysis. However, the world as a whole and Africa in particular are still losing the fight. The analysis, by AVAC, an organization that lobbies for AIDS prevention and treatment, compares the number of people in each country who are newly infected with H.I.V. each year to the number of infected being put on treatment for the first time. The ratio shows whether that country's epidemic is growing or shrinking.

"Rwanda, Botswana and several other African countries are now in the "winning" column, as is Haiti. South Africa, which has more infected people than any other country, is also among the winning countries." But a few heavily populated countries are doing so badly that they keep the world as a whole in the "losing" column. "Nigeria is doing the worst, with four Nigerians infected each year for each Nigerian who is receiving treatment. The only non-African

country doing nearly as badly is India, with more than two infected for each Indian treated.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/08/health/measuring-nations-success-battling-aids.html>

Date Accessed: 11.10.2013

(Anjana John)