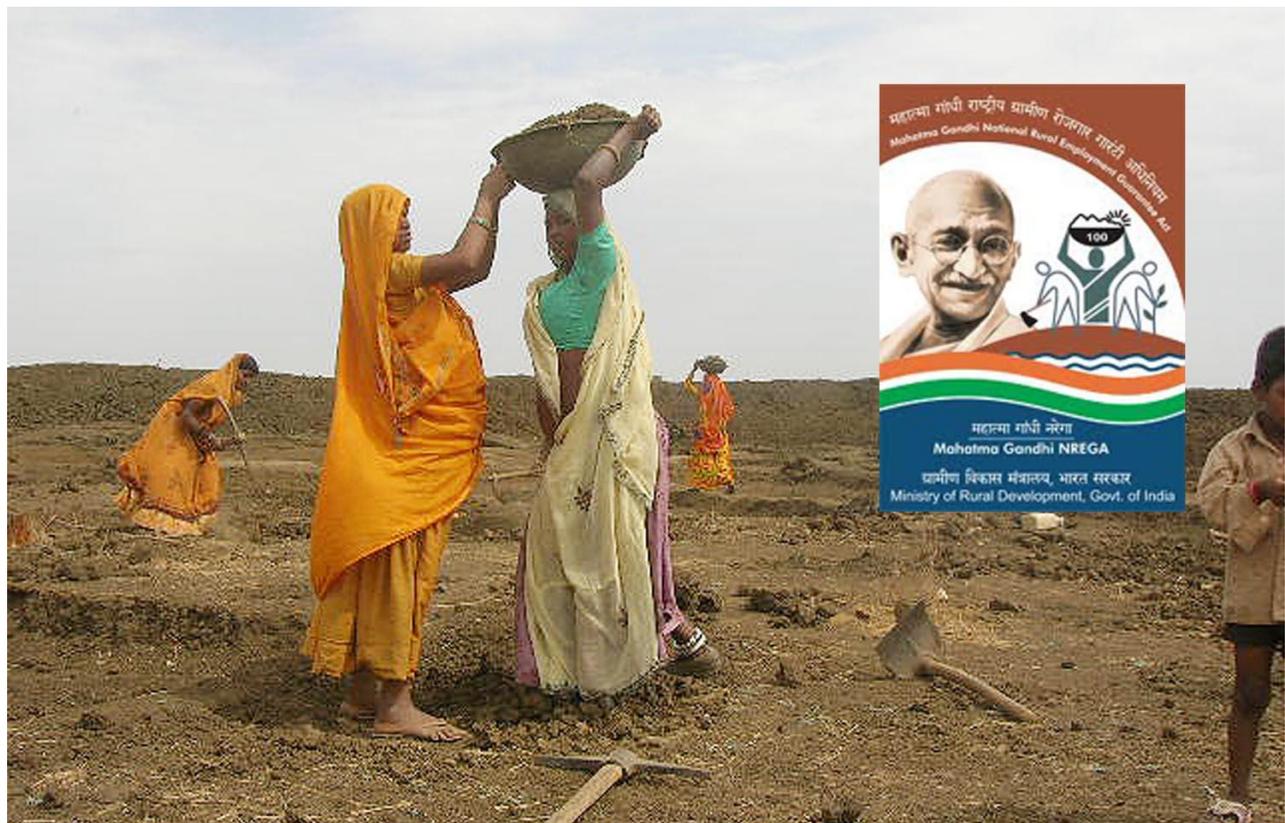


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## COVER STORY

### Implementation of MGNREGA, 2005: Standing Committee on Rural Development (2012-2013)



### WEEKLY ROUND UP OF NEWS ON POLICY

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## Cover Story

### Implementation of MGNREGA, 2005: Standing Committee on Rural Development (2012-2013)

The Standing Committee on Rural Development chaired by Sumitra Mahajan, on August 14, 2013 submitted its report on the implementation of the world's biggest social security employment programme "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005."

Carrying out a detailed examination, the Committee highlighted that the UPA's flagship scheme has achieved success on many fronts such as securing right to work for people in rural areas, large scale participation of women, SCs/STs and other disadvantaged sections of the society, enhancement of wage rate in rural areas, providing thrust to rural economy by creation of assets stressing on sustainable development, empowerment of Gram Sabha by involving them in the process of planning of works, monitoring and introduction of social audit etc.

| Year        | Employment Demanded (in Crore) | Employment Provided by the Households to the Households (in Crore) |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 2006-2007   | 2.13                           | 2.10   |
| 2007-2008   | 3.42                           | 3.39   |
| 2008-2009   | 4.55                           | 4.51   |
| 2009-2010   | 5.29                           | 5.25   |
| 2010-2011   | 5.57                           | 5.49   |
| 2011-2012*  | 5.03                           | 4.99   |
| 2012-2013** | 4.29                           | 4.25   |
| Total       | 30.28                          | 29.98  |

| Year      | Employment provided to the SCs Households (in person days) (in Crore) | Employment provided to the STs Households (in person days) (in Crore) |
|-----------|---|---|
| 2006-07   | 22.95   | 32.98   |
| 2007-08   | 39.35   | 42.07   |
| 2008-09   | 63.35   | 55.01   |
| 2009-10   | 86.44   | 58.74   |
| 2010-11   | 78.75   | 53.61   |
| 2011-12*  | 46.60   | 38.38   |
| 2012-13** | 32.61   | 22.70   |

\* Provisional.

\*\* As on 30.01.2013.

However, the Committee's examination has revealed several disquieting features/irregularities in the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme such as fudging of job cards, delay in payment of wages, non-payment of unemployment allowances, large number of incomplete works, poor quality of assets created and large number of cases of misappropriation and malpractices/corruption etc.

| Year      | Total works taken | Work completed (in Lakh) | Work completion (in Lakh) rate (%) |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2006-07   | 8.35              | 3.87                     | 46.34                              |
| 2007-08   | 17.89             | 8.23                     | 45.99                              |
| 2008-09   | 27.74             | 12.14                    | 43.76                              |
| 2009-10   | 46.17             | 22.59                    | 48.94                              |
| 2010-11   | 50.82             | 25.85                    | 50.86                              |
| 2011-12*  | 74.13             | 15.01                    | 20.25                              |
| 2012-13** | 71.03             | 10.67                    | 15.02                              |
| Total     | 296.13            | 98.36                    | 33.22                              |

\* As on 30.01.2013.

\*\* As on 30.01.2013.

The Committee note that implementing agencies were able to complete only 98.36 lakh works out of 296.13 lakh works undertaken during first seven years (as on 30.01.2012) of implementation of MGNREGA. The Committee's examination has revealed that performance of smaller States such as Kerala, Manipur and Mizoram was better than the bigger States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Committee find it difficult to understand that factors such as time lag between project completion and uploading of information on website, non feasibility of some projects etc. could be reasons for bad performance of implementing agencies.

| States/UTs             | MGNREGA Wage Rate in Rs.<br>per day                      | Work completion Rate in %) |         |         |          |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
|                        |  | 2008-09                    | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12* |
| Assam                  | 152.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Andhra Pradesh         | 149.00   | 31.24                      | 53.96   | 67.25   | 2.55     |
| Arunachal Pradesh      | 135.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Bihar                  | 138.00   | 56.82                      | 45.70   | 40.68   | 0.22     |
| Gujarat                | 147.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Haryana                | 214.00   | -                          | -       | -       | --       |
| Himachal Pradesh       | Non-scheduled Areas — 138.00<br>Scheduled Areas — 171.00 | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Jammu and Kashmir      | 145.00   | 54.95                      | 63.42   | 61.12   | 3.77     |
| Karnataka              | 174.00   | 60.90                      | 22.81   | 20.93   | 19.60    |
| Kerala                 | 180.00   | 88.30                      | 51.52   | 71.04   | 92.38    |
| Madhya Pradesh         | 146.00   | 40.36                      |         | 49.05   | 14.55    |
| Maharashtra            | 162.00   | 42.98                      | 42.58   | 38.02   | 2.52     |
| Manipur                | 153.00   | 74.56                      | 81.26   | 89.01   | 0        |
| Meghalaya              | 145.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Mizoram                | 148.00   | 73.36                      | 82.16   | 85.34   | 8.48     |
| Nagaland               | 135.00   | 83.20                      | 63.44   | 84.86   | 7.78     |
| Odisha                 | 143.00   | 7.64                       | 12.53   | 26.83   | 32.09    |
| Punjab                 | 184.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Rajasthan              | 149.00   | 42.54                      | 45.39   | 26.25   | 7.79     |
| Sikkim                 | 135.00   | -                          | -       | -       | --       |
| Tamil Nadu             | 148.00   | 32.58                      | 38.71   | 45.16   | 19.82    |
| Tripura                | 135.00   | 91.93                      | 26.61   | 90.98   | 73.53    |
| Uttar Pradesh          | 142.00   | 61.23                      | 65.86   | 59.59   | 36.31    |
| West Bengal            | 151.00   | 54.49                      | 66.41   | 58.12   | 46.43    |
| Chhattisgarh           | 146.00   | 53.43                      | 56.39   | 57.15   | 29.33    |
| Jharkhand              | 138.00   | 40.85                      | 47.11   | 20.82   | 17.31    |
| Uttarakhand            | 142.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Goa                    | 178.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Andaman and Nicobar    | Andaman District — 198.00<br>Nicobar District — 210.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Dadra and Nagar Haveli | 175.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Daman and Diu          | 150.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Lakshadweep            | 166.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Puducherry             | 148.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |
| Chandigarh             | 209.00   | -                          | -       | -       | -        |

\* As on 30.01.2013.

**The Committee also pointed out that water related works constitute majority of works (54.58 percent) undertaken in MGNREGA, while work on private lands of SC/ST/BPL/SML and IAY and Land reform beneficiaries, Land development, rural connectivity and others (Bharat Nirman Kendra) constitute the 10.38%, 11.38%, 19.47% and 3.7% respectively.**

The Committee mentions the fact that MGNREGA works are being criticized for poor quality of assets created under it. The Committee's examination has revealed that expenditure limit of 40 percent imposed on material component including skilled and semi-skilled workers is restricting implementing agencies to undertake works requiring material components or skilled workers.

The Committee also pointed out that many States have failed to provide adequate support to PRIs such as dedicated personnel and other necessary infrastructure which is essential for efficient planning and implementation of works under the scheme. Similarly, many States are yet to establish grievance redressal authorities such as ombudsman.

**Therefore the Committee made the following recommendations, based on its findings:**

- Offences such as missing entries in the job cards and unlawful possession of job cards with elected PRI representatives and MGNREGA functionaries should be made a punishable offence under the Act.

Registration and issue of job cards to rural households is basic requirement to avail right of work under MGNREGA. The Committee states that during the last 7 years of the implementation of scheme, as many as 12.46 crore rural households out of 13.83 rural households (2001 census) have been registered and issued job cards in the country by State/UT Governments. However, the Committee note that many discrepancies such as issue of fake job cards, inclusion of fictitious names, missing entry or delay in making entries in job cards, illegal custody of job cards by influential people etc. have been noticed. Similarly, complaints regarding non-issue of dated receipt to job applicants have been widely reported. **The Committee is also of the strong view that there is need to bring reform in the process of issue of job cards.**

| Year                                   | Cumulative number of households issued job cards |
|--|--|
| 2006-07                                | 3,78,50,390                                      |
| 2007-08                                | 6,47,61,146                                      |
| 2008-09                                | 10,01,45,950                                     |
| 2009-10                                | 11,25,48,976                                     |
| 2010-11                                | 11,98,24,434                                     |
| 2011-12*                               | 12,38,76,349                                     |
| 2012-13**                              | 12,46,58,658                                     |
| * Provisional.<br>** As on 02.11.2012. |  |

The Committee also observes that year-wise average person days employment generation during 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 (as on 31.01.2013) were 43, 42, 48, 54, 47, 43 and 36 days respectively. The Committee was dismayed to note that average number of person days of employment provided per household in States with significant BPL population like Bihar (22 to 38 days) and West Bengal (14 to 35 days) were less than national average. The Committee was at the loss to understand the logic of poor demand for work in States which have significant BPL population with less employment opportunities as compared to comparatively developed States. **The Committee is of the view that reasons for poor performance of all States and take corrective bottleneck in implementation of MGNREGA works such as delay in payment of wages and alleged corruption in registration and giving actual work are distracting people in demanding work under MGNREGA.** The Committee, therefore, recommend the Department to analyse steps so that people in rural areas in across the country find it easy to gain employment under MGNREGA as per the objectives of the scheme.

- Since studies have shown that the income of female workers raises the standard of living of their households to a greater extent than their male counterparts, the participation of women must be increased through raising awareness and forming self help groups.

| Year                                  | Women Participation (in percentage) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2006-07                               | 40.20                               |
| 2007-08                               | 42.58                               |
| 2008-09                               | 47.88                               |
| 2009-10                               | 48.69                               |
| 2010-11                               | 47.73                               |
| 2011-12*                              | 48.17                               |
| 2012-13**                             | 54.00                               |
| * Provisional.<br>** As on 30.01.2013 |                                     |

The Committee observes that participation of women under MGNREGA works has been more than 40 percent in each of last seven years and that is more than the statutory requirement of 1/3 of the total beneficiaries. **However, examination of the scheme by the Committee has revealed that participation of women in some States such as Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal has been less than national average. The Committee also note that Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have failed to meet statutory requirement of providing 1/3rd employment to the women beneficiaries.** The Committee in their 1st Report (15th Lok Sabha), while showing concern over low women participation in these States, had recommended the Department to analyse reasons for poor performance of these States and take corrective steps to enhance participation of women in MGNREGA.

- Special works must be identified, meeting the specific needs of disabled people. Special job cards must be issued and personnel must be employed to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities.

| <b>Year</b>         | <b>Disabled beneficiaries</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2006-07             | 1,46,401                      |
| 2007-08             | 3,36,698                      |
| 2008-09             | 2,04,772                      |
| 2009-10             | 2,97,215                      |
| 2010-11             | 2,94,490                      |
| 2011-12*            | 3,85,203                      |
| 2012-13**           | 3,02,536                      |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>19,67,315</b>              |
| * Provisional.      |                               |
| ** As on 02.11.2012 |                               |

The Committee shows that as against 2.1 crore person with disabilities (census 2001) in the country only 19,67,315 have been provided work since inception of the Scheme. The Committee are unhappy to note that implementing agencies have failed to create proper environment for working of disabled persons in MGNREGA works. The Committee are of considered view that identification of proper work as per needs of disabled persons and creation of proper work environment are imperative for encouraging disabled persons to participate in MGNREGA works as per MGNREGA, 2005 guidelines.

- The Department of Rural Development must analyse poor utilisation of funds and take steps to improve utilisation of funds. In addition, it should initiate action against officers found guilty of misappropriating funds under MGNREGA.

The Committee finds that even though Rs. 2,07,679.87 crore were available for implementation of MGNREGA works from 2005-06 to 2012-13, implementing agencies could utilise only Rs. 1,95,321.03 crore during these years. The Committee also noted that the trend of expenditure pattern has been uneven and huge unspent balance has been reported in each financial year. **The Committee are astonished to note that there is a trend of increasing unspent balances over the years which was as high as 27.31% in the financial year 2010-11. Examination by the Committee has revealed that huge unspent balances were lying with some big States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc.**

The Committee also finds that several instances of improper or disproportionate use of funds available under administrative expenditure like booking of salaries of ineligible categories of employees, diversion of funds to other programmes, payment of ex-gratia etc. have been reported to the Department. The Committee are of the view that planning for effective and proper use of funds available for administrative expenditure for manpower and other infrastructure be made available to PRIs and other agencies which is essential for implementation of MGNREGA

- Since states are at various stages of socio-economic development, they may have varied requirements for development and therefore, state governments should be allowed to undertake works that are pertinent to their context. There should be more emphasis on skilled and semi-skilled work under MGNREGA, possibly through greater coordination with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. The Committee recommends convergence with other schemes such as the National Literacy Mission and Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- Dated receipts for demanded work should be issued so that workers can claim unemployment allowance. Funds for unemployment allowance should be met by the central government.

The Committee are also astonished to note that so far only 4078 workers were paid unemployment allowances in 8 States during 2006-09 and Rs. 1,23,589 has been paid to eligible beneficiaries in 2010-11 in six States. The Committee also note that non-issuance of dated receipt of demanded work as pointed out by audit report of C&AG of India, prevents workers to claim unemployment allowance.

- Frequency of monitoring by National Level Monitors should increase and appropriate measures should be taken based on their recommendations. Additionally, social audits must mandatorily be held every 6 months. A nodal officer should be designated to ensure this. Vigilance cells must be established at the state and district level and vigilance and monitoring committees must be established at the local level.

The Committee further points that 2,91,776 Social audits have been conducted during 2011-12 in 1,72,852 Panchayats out of 2,48,204 Gram Panchayats in the country. **Also there is negligible participation of Gram Sabhas during social audits due to lack of awareness and failure of administration to ensure regular meetings of Gram Sabhas.**

- Training and capacity building of elected representatives and other functionaries of PRIs must be done regularly

In order to realize the objectives of world's largest employment guarantee programme the Committee was of the view that capacity building of PRIs for proper planning should be the priority area towards efforts for revamping of MGNREGA. Further, success in engaging PRIs and Gram Sabha for formulation of District Perspective Plan (PPP) will lead to effective utilization of resources allocated for implementation of MGNREGA.

The Committee are of the view that MGNREGA, if properly implemented, has potential to transform the face of rural India. However, there is need for carrying out major reforms in the various facets of MGNREGA viz. planning, implementation, monitoring and auditing of works.

### Reference

- Standing Committee on Rural Development (2012-2013) Fifteenth Lok Sabha, Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development), Implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Forty-Second Report

*Prepared by*

Junty Sharma Pathak

## Raghuram G. Rajan speech on RBI 5 policy pillar

(Raghuram G. Rajan, *RBI*, November 15, 2013)

In his recent speech Mr. Rajan, RBI governor on November 15 emphasised on growth for all by creating jobs for all rather than debating about providing protection or subsidy. He argues that when subsidy is provided one domestic producer gains and other stands to lose.

He also quoted “Our measure of success should be the jobs that are created, not by giving government subsidies or protections to labour-intensive industries or sectors but by developing a facilitating, though competitive, environment that will result in the emergence of the best solutions.”

### This requires focus on four issues:

1. Creating infrastructure and major plans like Delhi- Mumbai corridor
2. Technology enabled education that creates skilled labour for new jobs created
3. Better business regulations, which do not always mean less regulation but mean regulation that is appropriate to the objective and that is enforced. It also requires focusing on labour laws.
4. Better financial system which is necessary for industrial growth. Importantly, the financial system should not require constant subsidies to bail it out.

### 5 Pillars of RBI’s developmental measures

- Clarifying and strengthening the monetary policy framework.
- Strengthening banking structure through new entry, branch expansion, encouraging new varieties of banks, and moving foreign banks into better regulated organisational forms.
- Broadening and deepening financial markets and increasing their liquidity and resilience so that they can help allocate and

absorb the risks entailed in financing India’s growth.

- Expanding access to finance small and medium enterprises, the unorganised sector, the poor, remote and underserved areas of the country through technology, new business practices, and new organisational structures; that is, a strong financial inclusion is needed.
- Improving the system’s ability to deal with corporate distress and financial institution distress by strengthening real and financial restructuring as well as debt recovery.

In the concluding remarks Mr. Rajan, emphasised that the decision making has slowed down in the country and every policy is greeted with suspicion and scrutinised for evidence of malfeasance. This does not just permeate the foreign press and their audiences but also infects the domestic debate.

[http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/BS\\_SpeechesView.aspx?id=856](http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/BS_SpeechesView.aspx?id=856)

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Neha Singh)

## SC serves notice to Centre on plea against commutation of death penalty

(*The Economic Times*, November 19, 2013)

The Supreme Court issued a notice to the Centre on November 18 challenging the former President decision commuting the death sentence of five people to life imprisonment.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed arguing that the convicted, whose death sentences were commuted, were involved in brutal cases of child rape; in one of them the victim-a child was beheaded as well.

The petitioner has urged the court to set a date, and execute the five- Molai Ram and Santosh Kumar Yadav, Sushil Murmu, Satish and Bantu.

Senior counsel Shekhar Naphade, appearing for petitioner Pinki Virani, argued in front of the apex court bench that the Supreme Court had itself laid down parameters under which death penalties are awarded and that Article 72 cannot be used to commute the death sentences in crimes like these of extreme brutality.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sc-serves-notice-to-centre-on-plea-against-commutation-of-death-penalty/articleshow/26004215.cms>

Date accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

## Premature births rising in India: A report

(*The Hindu*, November 16, 2013)

A report by Indian Foundation for Premature Babies (IFPB) finds that the number of premature births is rising in the country- **both in rural as well as urban areas**. The high number of premature births, the report says, is the primary reason for the high infant mortality rate in the country. Experts emphasise that spreading “awareness” can prove instrumental in combating the problem of increasing premature births.

The report, "**Delivered Too Soon**," highlights that “21 per cent of the babies born in India are premature.” According to Lata Bhat, head of the neonatology department at Fortis hospital, the increase in the number of premature births has occurred amongst both- “the marginalised as well as the affluent.” She added that “around three lakh pre-term babies die annually in India.”

There are various reasons for the rising premature births in India. In rural areas, “infections at the time of delivery, poor health of the mother and advanced maternal age are the

culprits.” In urban areas, “late marriage, stress, junk food, lifestyle diseases all lead to infertility amongst women in urban areas.”

As an important suggestion, “**awareness**” can reduce the rising number of premature births. Neelam Kler, head of the department of neonatology at Sir Ganga Ram hospital, emphasises on the need of spreading awareness on “birth spacing and treatment of maternal infections.” She adds that “simple and cost-effective interventions like steroid injections, antiseptic cream for the umbilical cord, and antibiotics” could save three-quarters of premature babies.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/preterm-births-on-the-rise-says-report/article5357283.ece>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013

(Mahima Malik)

### **SC: India needs proper Witness Protection Plan**

***(PTI, November 14, 2013)***

The Supreme Court has expressed concern over absence of a witness protection plan and stated that it has resulted in witnesses turning hostile “frequently” and rise in unmerited acquittals in criminal cases.

A bench of justices Ranjana Prakash Desai and Madan B Lokur said, “Unless the witnesses are protected the rise in unmerited acquittals cannot be checked. It is unfortunate that this important issue has not received necessary attention.”

The court said that the issue of witnesses’ protection is a serious matter which has not been addressed as yet. It made the observation while delivering a verdict in a dowry death case in which the parents of the victim had turned hostile and on the basis of which the trial court acquitted the husband.

The bench reflected the need to ascertain why witnesses are “frequently” turning hostile. It further held, “Such conduct displays greed and lack of compassion. If they were threatened by the appellant and were forced to depose in his favour it is a sad reflection on our system which leaves witnesses unprotected. The reasons why witnesses so frequently turn hostile need to be ascertained. There is no witness protection plan in place.”

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/xnosH4xh0WB1zRV9Bti5NI/Supreme-Court-says-India-needs-proper-witness-protection-pla.html>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013

(Deepti Somani)

## Petroleum, alcohol should be kept out of GST: States

(Gireesh Chandra Prasad, *The Indian Express*, November 19, 2013)

The Empowered Committee (EC) of state finance ministers decided to ask finance minister P Chidambaram to revise the Constitution (115th Amendment) Bill to keep taxes on petroleum products, liquor and entry of goods out of the proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST). EC wants Constitutional provision for compensating states for any loss of revenue from introducing the new unified indirect tax.

The EC of state finance ministers, finalise its views on the Bill that redefines the taxation powers of the Union and state governments, decided to recommend to the Central government changes in crucial provisions. These recommendations are mainly aimed at protecting states' fiscal autonomy. Voting rights in the proposed GST Council, an advisory body, the states contend, should be dispersed enough to safeguard their fiscal independence. "Our country is essentially a federation. Nothing in the bill should go against the spirit of cooperative federalism," Jammu & Kashmir finance minister Abdul Rahim said after the meeting.

States have decided that fuel and liquor should be kept out of GST. The EC has also decided to recommend to Mr. Chidambaram that the bill should not have any provision for declared goods, on which states will have to levy a lower rate of tax than the standard rate, as in the case of value-added tax

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/petroleum-alcohol-should-be-kept-out-of-gst-states/1196644/>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Jeet Singh)

## RMS launched for exports

(*Exim News Service*, November 17, 2013)

The government has launched the Risk Management System (RMS) for exports which is expected to bring down the time taken for customs clearance of export consignments to a few hours. RMS for imports was introduced in December 2005 which facilitated additional revenue and reduced the dwell time for cargo.

The objectives of this system are:

1. To strike an optimal balance between facilitation and enforcement and to promote a culture of compliance.
2. To improve the management of the resources of the department.
3. To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness in meeting stakeholder expectations.
4. To bring the customs processes at par with the best international practices.

"I sincerely hope that with the introduction of RMS for exports, the dwell time which now ranges from 1.6 days to 3.68 days will be brought down to a few hours," said the Finance Minister, Mr P. Chidambaram.

Though, the system will be initially available at 11 Customs stations, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and Tuticorin, but by the end of the year, it will be extended to all Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Customs stations, as per the officials.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=73974>

Date Accessed : 18.11.2013  
(Shruti Issar)

## Action plan soon to boost Services Sector

(*The Business Line*, November 14, 2013)

The Commerce Ministry is working on an action plan for boosting performance in five services sectors

and will soon start inter-ministerial consultations for inputs. The action plan will focus on capacity development and regulation and institutional evolution in the identified sectors. The road-map of the plan will be finalised in a month after which the Commerce Ministry would work on implementing it by approaching the Union Cabinet and Parliament, wherever required. The road-map will focus on diversifying the country's export basket for services and also identifying more potential markets.

Sectors to be covered:

- Logistics
- IT
- Telecom
- Health-care
- Tourism, entertainment & creative arts

"If we want barriers to stay in our country, we cannot expect our trading partners to open up their markets for us," Commerce Secretary, S.R. Rao, said. He pointed out that foreigners are not allowed to practice law or become doctors in the country, which was not in sync with the increasing globalised world.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-corporate/action-plan-soon-to-boost-services-sector/article5348937.ece>

Date Accessed: 18.11.2013  
(Divashri Mathur)

## NSSO data shows an urban wage boom

(**Pramit Bhattacharya and Aishwarya Deshpande**, *Livemint*, November 19, 2013)

This article examines structural shifts in labour markets in urban areas, based on the latest National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data. Its findings reveal that wages of casual labourers grew at 14.8 per cent, while wages of salaried workers grew at 13.8 per cent a year in seven years between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

“Although, wage growth in rural areas has been higher than in urban India, the rise was still significant in the latter between 2004-05 and 2011-12. The economy grew at an average 13.7 per cent in nominal terms during that period. The convergence in urban wages has been higher than in rural wages, with the coefficient of variation across states declining 14 percentage points to 26 per cent between 2004-05 and 2011-12 as low-wage states caught up with high-wage ones.

Delhi saw the highest growth of 20 per cent in wages of urban casual labourers, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Haryana. Manipur saw the lowest growth of four per cent in wages of urban casual labourers, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In absolute terms, Kerala tops the urban list just as in the case of rural India, with average urban wages of Rs.309.9. Delhi, Mizoram, J&K and Tamil Nadu follow. Chhattisgarh has the lowest urban wages of Rs.106.6. Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat also have average urban wages below the national urban average of Rs.170.”

<http://www.livemint.com/Specials/jWBditcoEIVeFBvNGggZVK/Labour-market-The-urban-wage-boom.html>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013

(Karishma Mutreja)

## Doubts over objective of BMB in achieving women empowerment

(M Saraswathy, Abhijit Lele & Somasroy Chakraborty, *Business Standard*, November 20, 2013)

Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB), the country's first all-women commercial bank, commenced its operations with seven branches. The bank has been started with the objective of financial inclusion of women and providing them equal and easy access of financial services.

“However, doubts remain if the bank will succeed in achieving its objective of economic empowerment of women in remote villages. Analysts believe the bank will find it tough to differentiate itself from rivals and will face stiff competition from state-run and private-sector lenders, and microfinance companies, which already have an established presence in rural India. Currently, all the seven branches of the bank are in urban centres — Kolkata, Mumbai, Lucknow, Guwahati, Chennai, Bangalore and Ahmedabad. This could also prove to be a hindrance, at least in the short-term in reaching out to rural women. According to industry analysts, the bank might need to appoint external consultants to understand the actual needs of rural women and women entrepreneurs. The upcoming elections in 2014 also cast a shadow on the bank's future, according to some experts. If the opposition party comes to power, there is a fear that the sops will be rolled back.

BMB has been set up with an initial paid-up capital of Rs 1,000 crore. Led by Usha Ananthasubramanian, all the other eight on the board of directors of the bank are women. The bank aims to increase its branch count to 25 by March 2014. The Minister of Finance has said the bank would get listed in due course, but before that, it needs to get critical mass (of business and branch network). According to the bank's business plan, the bank envisages a business mix (deposits plus advances) of Rs 60,000 crore with 771 branches by 2020.”

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bharatiya-mahila-bank-starts-with-7-branches-113111900752\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bharatiya-mahila-bank-starts-with-7-branches-113111900752_1.html)

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013

(Karishma Mutreja)

## SEBI to make fraud disclosures a must to strengthen investor protection

(Reena Zachariah and K A Shaji, *Economics times*, November 18, 2013)

India's capital market regulator plans to announce stringent rules that will make it incumbent upon companies to make disclosures relating to fraud, litigation against senior executives and their financial implications. These are among a series of changes that will help improve transparency and corporate governance standards.

According to the guidelines, companies will have to make public any fraud committed by directors and employees, litigation against them and the impact of this on financials, reveal details about shareholders and loan agreements besides providing estimates of losses caused by natural calamities.

The move is part of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) ongoing push to bring regulatory norms in line with best practices elsewhere and strengthen investor protection. It also plans to introduce disclosure requirements with regard to shareholding and loan agreements. It wants companies to spell out terms and conditions of shareholding agreements, including special voting rights, the first right to share subscription in case of fresh equity issues and the right to restrict any change in capital structure that could have a bearing on the rights of public shareholders.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/regulation/sebi-to-make-frauds-disclosures-a-must-may-unveil-norms-today-to-improve-transparency/articleshow/25958972.cms>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013

(Neha Singh)

## POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

### Finance Ministry to introduce DTC Bill in Winter session

(*The Hindu*, November 20, 2013)

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is planning to place the amendments to Direct Taxes Code (DTC) Bill for approval in the Cabinet with the intent of introducing the same in the upcoming winter session.

The MoF is currently working on the official amendments to bill which was tabled in Parliament earlier.

Although, the bill proposes no change in the exemption limit at Rs. 2 lakh, it has proposed a 35 per cent tax rate for those who earn more than Rs. 10 crore a year and a 10 per cent tax on dividend income of more than Rs. 1 crore.

At present, those with annual income of Rs. 2-5 lakhs are charged with 10 per cent tax; those earning Rs-5-10 lakhs with 20 per cent; and those above Rs. 10 lakhs with 30 per cent tax.

Officials stated that it is not possible to lower the rate of corporate tax in India. The bill has retained the 30 per cent tax on corporates, which was also recommended by the Standing Committee.

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/finance-ministry-may-bring-dtc-bill-in-winter-session/article5371533.ece>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

### Govt. plans tighter rules on phone tapping, call records

(*The Asian Age*, November 20, 2013)

The government plans to revisit the Indian Telegraph Act and tighten rules to prevent unauthorised phone tapping and access to call records.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will issue new guidelines to states that only officers above the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP) can seek call data records from service providers. Moreover, regular logs need to be kept of all such cases.

It is said that while tightening the rules, the government has plans to change the law to allow some agencies like SEBI to access Call Detail Record (CDR).

<http://www.asianage.com/india/govt-plans-tighter-rules-tapping-call-records-656>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

### Bid to bring Jharkhand on the development track – 5,000 families to get land rights

(*Outlook*, November 19, 2013)

Continuing with the process of distributing land to the landless people in Jharkhand, started from November 15 when the state celebrated its 14th foundation day, Chief Minister Hemant Soren said that about “5,000 families will get rights for one acre of land by the end of this month in Jharkhand under the Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act.”

He said "I am eager to take the state on the development track rather than reflecting on what happened after the state's creation 13 years ago. The past picture is so scary that there would not

be any strength left to move forward if one ponders over it."

He also noted that “the process of teachers' recruitment has already started and it will not only give employment to thousands of youth but also enhance the quality of education in schools.”

<http://news.outlookindia.com/items.aspx?artid=817783>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Ashwin Varghese)

## GOVERNMENT

### Govt. approves amendments to SC/ST Act

(*Business Standard*, November 13, 2013)

The government approved amendments to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, by expanding its scope and providing for harsher punishment in order to strengthen certain existing provisions.

It further added certain new offences against SCs and STs which were so far not part of the 1989 law like obstructing use of common resources such as wells, grounds and socially and economically boycotting SCs and STs, as per the sources.

Preventing SCs and STs from filing nominations for elections has been proposed by cabinet to be treated as a separate crime unlike denial of voting rights which was so far treated as an offence.

National Advisory Council (NAC) had recently lamented that "despite the deterrence assured by the Act, atrocities against these groups continue unabated and legal justice remains out of reach for a majority of victims largely because of poor implementation of the Act".

The Council had observed that victims and witnesses confront hurdles at every stage of the legal process and the conviction rates under the Act remained low.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-approves-amendments-to-sc-st-act-113111301156\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-approves-amendments-to-sc-st-act-113111301156_1.html)

Date Accessed: 18.11.2013  
(Shruti Issar)

## States still have a long way to go on checking tax evasion

(Remya Nair, *LiveMint*, November 20, 2013)

In an indication that states still have a long way to go in checking tax evasion, Permanent Account Numbers (PANs) of only 54 per cent of active dealers matched with their records.

States such as Maharashtra, Odisha, Assam, West Bengal and Gujarat have made rapid strides in ensuring that dealers are quoting their correct PANs during registration, according to a presentation made to the empowered committee of state finance ministers.

An idea for a common PAN-based taxpayer registration system was suggested by the empowered group on Information Technology (IT) infrastructure for **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** led by Nandan Nilekani with the aim of getting a unified view of all taxpayers.

States had agreed to insist on compulsory PAN-based registration of dealers in 2011 as this will not only create a national database, but the use of a single parameter such as PAN to link all indirect taxes levied across India will also help check tax evasion. All central government taxes are already linked using a PAN-based system. Besides checking tax evasion, this will also assist in improving the information-sharing mechanism among states and the centre, which is

crucial for the creation of a unified market.

The government had launched a pilot test in 11 states in collaboration with NSDL, India's largest depository, in June 2011 to check the IT infrastructure of states.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/D2HsQYVEEMsKOB9qLBq6KP/States-still-have-a-long-way-to-go-on-tax-evasion.html>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Deepti Somani)

## Karnataka's new textile policy aims to create 5 lakh jobs

(*The New Indian Express*, November 18, 2013)

Karnataka became the first state to launch its new textile policy which aims to attract an investment of Rs 10,000 crore and create about five lakh new jobs in the next five years. The policy replaces the Suvarna Vastra Neeti that began in 2008 and ended this year. "Karnataka has become a model state by announcing its own textile policy. Even Gujarat and Maharashtra are seeking suggestions from the state to frame their own textile policies."

The new policy aims at making Karnataka a preferred textile destination. It intends to encourage textile and related activities, enhance income of small and medium entrepreneurs depending upon the industry and develop production technology and create market for the output. A budget outlay of Rs 1,000 crore is proposed for the policy period. "The state has been classified into three zones under the policy. Zone-1 includes backward districts with potential for textile activities and will be given maximum benefits. Zone-2 includes areas with either very little or no textile activities. These areas will be provided with marginally lesser benefits. Zone-3 is all areas falling in Bangalore urban district, except

Anekal, which will not be provided any incentive."

<http://newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/States-new-textile-policy-aims-to-create-5-lakh-jobs/2013/11/18/article1896796.ece>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Anjana John)

## Social and Economic Exclusion

## India's 35% population outside banking fold: A report

(Geetanjali Minhas, *GovernanceNow*, November 18, 2013)

As per a report released by McKinsey & Company, 35 per cent of India's rural and semi-urban population is still out of banking fold.

The report titled 'Reimagining Banking in India: Gearing up to meet the new environment' states that despite the presence of nearly 90 scheduled commercial banks, the extent of access is still low, with around 35 per cent of India's population financially excluded, and only 28 per cent total bank retail credit being channeled to rural and semi-urban areas, which constitute 87 per cent of the population.

The report recommends that banks should focus on using digital channels to increase penetration of banking. The report also mentions that banks need to do innovation in their distribution channel and improve productivity and cost-efficiency.

<http://governancenow.com/views/think-tanks/indias-35-percent-population-outside-banking-fold-report>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Deepti Somani)

## EDUCATION

### HRD Ministry to set up 120 community colleges

(*Business Standard*, November 14, 2013)

The Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry will set up 120 community colleges in the country to provide academic and vocational training.

Based on the concept of community colleges in the US, the ministry is looking to set up 200 community colleges to provide academic and vocational training.

The ministry announced that it was doing a pilot project to provide vocational training across high schools in three states. India has a gross enrolment ratio of 19 as compared to a global average of 29. The ministry has also urged the corporate to fund research at universities while pointing out that 75 per cent of the research across universities in US is provided by the private sector.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/hrd-ministry-to-set-up-120-community-colleges-113111400044\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/hrd-ministry-to-set-up-120-community-colleges-113111400044_1.html)

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Deepti Somani)

### Children's education worst affected in strife-torn areas: A study

(*GovernanceNow*, November 14, 2013)

As per the report released by an NGO, in violence affected areas, it is the education of children that is the worst hit, as many schools are destroyed due

to fights between Maoists and security forces.

The report titled 'Caught in Crossfire – Children and education in regions affected by civil strife' states that the strife has either led to destruction or closure of schools and often to occupying of schools by the security forces for setting up of check posts and security bases.

The report recommends that schools should be demilitarised as per the Supreme Court order. Further, the government must focus on development efforts and initiate measures to build confidence amongst the local population by investing in schools, teachers, Anganwadis and health centres. The report also recommends that the government should make efforts to train and sensitise the security forces to deal appropriately with children or make separate provisions under law for children affected by civil strife.

The report also highlights the failure of Right to Education (RTE) in strife torn areas. It also pinpoints the schools in violence affected areas lack not only quality teachers but also no teaching or learning resources. The report also points out that since most schools are located at a considerable distance from their homes, girls drop out after primary schools and become more vulnerable and targets of the armed groups, who use them for various exploitative purposes.

The report draws on the urgent need to change the perception of policymakers about tribal areas as they view it just as mineral-rich areas that need to be developed.

<http://governancenow.com/views/think-tanks/childrens-education-worst-affected-strife-torn-areas-study>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Deepti Somani)

### Govt. scraps 3-yr 'stay in Delhi' rule for EWS kids

(*Shikha Sharma, The Indian Express*, November 17, 2013)

Amending the definition of 'children belonging to weaker section', the Directorate of Education (DoE) has scrapped the minimum three-year residency period that was mandated for seeking admission under the quota.

The Delhi High Court had quashed the three-year residency period rule while coming down heavily on the government for "sub-classifying children belonging to weaker sections" on basis of residency. The Court had also stated that the government could "not issue such instructions, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it" as it went against provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

"The High Court has restricted the meaning of child belonging to weaker section only to mean a child whose parents having a total annual income of less than Rs 1 lakh from all sources. The minimum residency period of three years for applying for admission under Economic Weaker Sections/Disadvantaged Group (EWS/DG) categories has been quashed. The above directions of the court are to be complied with by all private-unaided schools," the DoE notification stated.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/govt-scraps-3yr-stay-in-delhi-rule-for-ews-kids/1195878/>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Ashwin Varghese)

## HEALTH

### Will go to court if rural community health course is introduced: IMA

(*The Hindu*, November 17, 2013)

Cautioning against the introduction of the community health course, saying that it will set-off a nation-wide protest by doctors, Indian Medical

Association's (IMA's) Narendra Saini said: "The Association strongly objects to the approval of B.Sc. (Community Health) course by the Union Cabinet on November 13, as reported by some sections of the media."

IMA national president, K. Vijayakumar, added, "The B.Sc. (Community Health) course will create a cadre of community health workers belonging to rural areas who will be posted at sub-centres, functioning under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) to provide basic Allopathic healthcare after studying a three-year course on basic anatomy and diagnosis and treatment of basic ailment," with the emphasis on training being on conducting normal deliveries, pre-and antenatal care, handling diarrhoea, pneumonia, vaccination, providing tuberculosis treatment and treatment of fevers and skin infections.

Dr. Vijaykumar said that "even the Indian Medical Council Act does not allow anyone except graduates in modern system of medicine to prescribe allopathic drugs. Earlier, the Medical Council of India (MCI) had also expressed its inability to create such a course. We will not accept the proposal as it will create two tiers of medical professionals — one for rural and other for urban population," therefore the association wants that those undertaking the course should be trained for preventing diseases, creating awareness among public about national health programmes and collecting data for different diseases.

He further pointed out that the Parliament Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare has also rejected the proposal, while the doctors of the association feel that the Central government, by implementing its proposal, will be administering inferior healthcare to rural folk as compared to urban people.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/will-go-to-court-if-rural-community-health->

[course-is-introduced-ima/article5359800.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/will-go-to-court-if-rural-community-health-)

Date Accessed: 18.11.2013  
(Ashwin Varghese)

## URBAN

### Lack of toilets in slums in Delhi

(*The Hindu*, November 19, 2013)

On the World Toilet Day, an NGO 'Right to Sanitation Campaign' noted that "there is a huge gap between the number of households and provision of sanitary facilities in the city...majority of women staying at slum clusters in the Capital become vulnerable to sexual assaults and harassment when they have to relieve themselves in the open."

The NGO noted that none of the community toilets is functioning in East Delhi's Kalyanpuri slum, block 11, which has 600 to 6,000 slums. Similarly in Old Seemapuri's Sunlight Colony, "there were only two MCD toilets, which were recently demolished by the Delhi Urban Development Centre to build a gym."

Moreover, the lack of proper sanitation is breeding more diseases. The NGO noted that "because of this, residents have to go to open spaces and naalis. The sweeper cleans the naalis and diverts the filth on to the road and because of this the area has recently seen 800 cases of dengue, chikungunya, and typhoid. In New Seemapuri's ward no. 242, there are 60-seat toilets and one mobile toilet for over 14,000 people."

Also worrying is the provision of sanitation for the differently-abled. "There is less than one per cent differently-abled-friendly toilets in Delhi...a few differently-abled-friendly toilets were constructed in the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) areas during the Commonwealth Games but now they are either locked or broken" noted Anjalee Agarwal, executive director of

Samarthayam, an organisation working for the cause of the differently-abled.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/lack-of-toilets-in-slums-raises-a-stink/article5366311.ece>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Ashwin Varghese)

## TRANSPORT

### Bus owners, drivers to be booked for violating norms

(*The Hindu*, November 19, 2013)

The Transport Department is considering putting a framework of "criminal charges against bus owners and drivers for violating road safety rules following the recent bus mishaps."

The following are pointers from a workshop on "Road safety management in Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) and accident prevention," addressed by Transport Commissioner Anantha Ramu.

#### **Refresher courses**

Efforts are taken "to make drivers of transport vehicles undergo refresher courses from recognised driving schools at least once a year."

The department has also requested the Union government to conduct a study on the suitability of high-end buses to Indian road conditions. Recommendations were also sought for suitable modifications.

#### **Suggestions sought**

APSRTC Vice-Chairman, A. K. Khan, sought suggestions from his staff on measures to increase passenger safety with regard to parameters such as defects in the bus design, automatic door opening system, diesel tank position, air conditioning etc.

**No more defective buses**

The RTC would desist from purchasing defective buses if the staff detected any glaring defects, he said. Drivers would also be trained in tackling emergencies and also help create awareness among passengers on safety issues, he added.

**Tampering of locks**

“Bus manufacturers -- Ashok Leyland, Volvo and others observed that tampering with speed locks for more speed and electric wiring could lead to fires. The representatives of these companies advised bus drivers to take a break after every 200 km of journey.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/bus-owners-drivers-to-be-booked-for-violating-norms/article5368702.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013

(Mahima Malik)

**ENVIRONMENT****Human intervention hinders Tiger Movement in the country**

*(The Hindu, November 18, 2013)*

A recent study report that appeared in the open-access journal ‘Plos One’ states that human intervention, even in the form of roads through tiger habitats, hinders the instinctive quality of the tiger to wander far in search of connectivity with distant populations. “The study ‘Connectivity of Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) Populations in the Human-Influenced Forest Mosaic of Central India’ conducted in six protected forest areas of Central India with appreciable tiger population shows that tigers can wander even 650 km between protected areas for connectivity.”

The study was carried out in the protected areas of Melghat Tiger

Reserve, Pench Tiger Reserve, Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra; Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh; and Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve in Andhra Pradesh. “The study says that many tigers currently live in small protected areas in India, and their survival depends on increasing the connectivity between these areas through tiger corridors.” Further, geo-spatial analyses revealed that tiger connectivity was affected by landscape elements such as human settlements, road density, and host-population tiger density, but not by distance between populations.

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/human-intervention-hindering-tiger-movement-in-country/article5361856.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2011

(Anjana John)

**87% of reported natural disasters caused by extreme weather conditions**

*(Nivedita Khandekar, Hindustan Times, November 19, 2013)*

2.5 million people have died in last 30 years due to natural disasters and global economic losses caused by extreme weather events have risen to about \$200 billion a year over the last decade, says a recent report by the World Bank.

It is the developing nations that are bearing the brunt of mounting losses in lives and livelihoods from increasing natural disasters the most.

The report ‘*Building Resilience: Integrating Climate and Disaster Risk into Development*’ pointed out that disaster-related losses amounted to \$3,800 billion worldwide from 1980 to 2012. Some 87 per cent of these reported disasters (18,200 events)

were caused by extreme weather conditions.

Surely, more can be done to help vulnerable countries adapt to climate change and prepare for and respond to weather-related disasters, said the report released on the sidelines of the United Nations climate talks here.

The report claims Early Warning Systems (EWS) have proven to save countless lives worldwide, and typically yield benefits that are 4-36 times higher than initial cost outlay. India’s cyclone preparedness during Phailin is showcased in the report as an example for ‘proven benefits of early warning and preparedness against disasters.’

World Bank has put Disaster Risk Management (DRM) at the forefront of its agenda. “The Bank portfolio in this area is rapidly growing with two out of every three dollars we invest focused on prevention and preparedness rather than just response,” said Rachel Kyte, World Bank vice-president for Sustainable Development.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/losses-from-extreme-weather-quadruples-in-30-years-as-climate-warms/article1-1152902.aspx>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013

(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

**Climate fund for developing Nations to be launched soon: UN**

*(The Economic Times, November 20, 2013)*

The Green Climate Fund (GSF) pledged by developed nations to foster climate-friendly development in poor and developing countries would be operationalised soon, as demanded by emerging economies like India and China. The Fund will soon be ready to help developing countries foster climate-friendly development.

The GCF is a new multilateral fund that was agreed by parties at the 2010 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in Cancun, Mexico.

“The Board of the Fund has agreed on a number of significant decisions that define a clear work plan for the Fund to operate. The Fund can and will promote a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development.” Full implementation of previous Climate Conference decisions, including the early and substantive operationalisation and capitalisation of the GCF is a key demand of countries including India and China. It also affirmed that readiness and preparatory support are strategic priorities for the Fund.

The Fund’s purpose is to make a significant contribution to international efforts to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius over pre-Industrial Revolution levels, by providing support to developing countries to help limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and to adapt to the unavoidable impact of climate change.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/climate-fund-for-developing-nations-to-be-launched-soon-un/articleshow/26102275.cms>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Anjana John)

## UNEP, UNU launch project to find water quality guidelines for ecosystems

(*India Water Review*, November 12, 2013)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has launched International Water Quality Guidelines for Ecosystems (IWQGES) project, an innovative project that seeks to counteract deteriorating water

quality across the world's ecosystems. The Programme is aimed at improving the sustainable management of global water resources. Population growth poses severe challenges to the ecology and climate conditions. “Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” revealed that “aquatic ecosystems are deteriorating faster than many other natural systems” in 2005.

The UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the Global Water Systems Project (GWSP), launched IWQGES project. The project will “develop a set of voluntary, science-based policy and technical guidelines” for regional, national, and local authorities to improve their frameworks for sustainable water management. It focuses on “assisting developing countries to improve the protection of their aquatic resource base.”

The first phase of the project, an expert group will develop the preliminary guidelines for practical and scientific goals. The comprehensive framework will tackle two issues: a) water quality, including “chemical, biological, and biodiversity aspects,” and b) water quantity including “availability, changes over time and morphology of bodies of water.” Scientific communities and institutions as well as practitioners will also be included in the process of drafting the guidelines in the first phase.

[http://www.indiawaterreview.in/Story/News/unep-unu-launch-project-to-find-water-quality-guidelines-for-ecosystems/1336/1#.Uozj\\_8QbC7g](http://www.indiawaterreview.in/Story/News/unep-unu-launch-project-to-find-water-quality-guidelines-for-ecosystems/1336/1#.Uozj_8QbC7g)

Date Accessed: 21.11.2013  
(Mahima Malik)

## AGRICULTURE

## Farmers urge PM to reject developed nations’ WTO plans

(*Shruti Srivastava, The Indian Express, November 18, 2013*)

15 farmer groups including Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) have urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to stand up against developed nations including the US and EU and reject any proposal that will impact agricultural subsidies and affect over 600 million farmers of the country.

The letter, written by 15 farmer groups including BKU and also sent to commerce minister Anand Sharma and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, comes two days after WTO director-general Roberto Azevêdo's said that "it is all or nothing now" in the ninth ministerial of WTO scheduled to meet in Bali, Indonesia, December.

G-33 countries, including India, Indonesia, and the Philippines, are lobbying hard to ensure that the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) is suitably amended at the ninth ministerial meeting of WTO scheduled to meet in Bali, so that the limits on public stock holding and food aid is removed. The developing nations want that the acquisition of food stocks for food security for supporting poor people should not be treated as subsidies. AoA in its present form allows, subsidies, up to a limit of 10 per cent of total production. The farmer groups have argued that the AoA was framed keeping in mind prices of 1986-88 when the prices were very low. Farmers groups said in their letter to PM, "It does not make any sense for India to trade off the very survival of its 600 million farmers and roughly 830 million hungry for the sake of a successful Doha round.

Responding to WTO's Peace Clause (PC) proposal as an interim solution, farmers groups said that the clause provides only four year after which it will lapse. Further, "only a few crops can be supported under this provision. Also a large number of conditionalities are being imposed on this PC which will make it unusable and meaningless."

The letter also said that the US and the EU are openly continuing their domestic subsidies and export subsidies, with the US more than doubling it from \$61 billion to \$130 billion between 1995 and 2010, while resisting such moves from developing nations.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/armers-urge-pm-to-reject-developed-nations-wto-plans/1196224/>

Date Accessed: 18.11.2013

(Jeet Singh)

## Climate Smart Agriculture practices

(Sharon Dijksma, *Clinton foundation*, November 15, 2013)

Netherlands is promoting an innovative way of agriculture, Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) with help from Clinton Development Initiative (CDI), which promotes natural re-nourishment of depleted soils, water retention within that soil, protection of surrounding watersheds and forests, and reduction of harmful emissions from agriculture.

CDI work encourages economic growth by empowering farmers with the tools they need to support their families and uplift their communities, helping them purchase fertilizer, seed, and other outputs, and expanding their access to bank loans. CDI currently focuses on increasing opportunities for smallholder farmers to generate increased income from their farming operations, and the addition of CSA practices will make their farms and their livelihoods more sustainable.

To date, it has helped more than 21,000 farmers increase their income, many by more than fivefold, and this powerful model for agriculture in Africa can be adapted and scaled to millions of people in the coming years, with the assistance of more partners.

<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2013/11/15/practicing-climate-smart-agriculture-africa>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013

(Neha Singh)

## DEFENCE

### India raises fifty thousand strong force along China border

(*The New Indian Express*, November 20, 2013)

India has begun the process of strengthening its offensive capability against China in the North East with the Central government providing sanction to the army to raise a new 50,000-men potent Mountain Strike Corps at a cost of nearly Rs 65,000 crore. “The army has started the process of raising the new Strike Corps with posting of officers to its headquarters and setting in motion the process of selecting its chief from among the Major Generals, who had been approved for promotion as Lieutenant Generals soon.” The new formation will be called the ‘17 Corps’, but it will be the 14th Corps in the army. It will be only the fourth Strike Corps and the only one facing China, as the other three — one Corps based in Mathura, two Corps at Ambala and 21 Corps at Bhopal — are focused on Pakistan.

China already has a vast rail and road network, and five air bases in Tibet with which it could easily mobilise 30 divisions to its borders with India in case of a conflict. “The cost for raising the new strike corps would be spread over a seven-year period till 2020, with funds flowing during both the 2012-17 12th plan and 2017-22 13th plan periods under its Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP)”, sources said.

<http://newindianexpress.com/nation/50>

[-thousand-strong-force-to-take-on-China/2013/11/20/article1900606.ece](http://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2013/11/20/article1900606.ece)

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013

(Anjana John)

## GENDER

### BMB to emphasise on funding for women's skills development

*(The Business Standard, November 19, 2013)*

India's first bank focusing on women- Bharat Mahila Bank (BMB)- began operations from November 19. The chairperson of the bank- Usha Ananthasubramanian stated in an interview that the bank will emphasise on funding for skill development of women.

She said further that although the bank for women is making debut in metro and urban centres, they will enter into rural areas before March 2014 to provide assistance at places with large women farm labour.

Unlike most newly-opened banks, the BMB is said to simultaneously begin giving loans from the start and not limit their focus on raising low cost deposits.

She elaborated that the bank will have a capital base of Rs 1,000 crore in the beginning. The first priority is to get stability and become visible. While in the long term it will look at various routes to raise capital. It is expected to make operations profitable from the fourth year.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/emphasis-on-funding-for-women-s-skills-development-usha-ananthasubramanian-113111800863\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/emphasis-on-funding-for-women-s-skills-development-usha-ananthasubramanian-113111800863_1.html)

Date accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

## REGIONALISM

### Show-cause notice issued to SSKM medicine shop in Kolkata

*(The Statesman, November 19, 2013)*

The director of Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (IPGMER), Mr Prodigip Mitra, has issued a show cause notice to the fair price medicine shop at Seth Sukhlal Karnani Memorial (SSKM) Hospital for arbitrary selling of a highly priced pacemaker of a single company. This has been opposed by senior doctors and officials of the state government who feel that it is illegal to sell medical equipment of a single company at a fair price medicine shop.

According to sources in the state Health Department, a German -based private company was selling its pacemaker at the SSKM outlet at a rebate of 67.25 per cent on maximum retail price from August onwards.

The market price of a German-make SSI model is Rs 1.16 lakh, while after rebate they are selling it at Rs 38,006 at the fair price medicine shop , while other US models offer cheaper rates.

In 2004 the Calcutta High Court had issued an order specifying that different companies be included in a medical shop selling medical equipment.

The owner of the SSKM fair price shop, on being asked to prepare a report as to why a single company was being given preference, said that they were planning to float a fresh tender inviting other companies to offer their products.

<http://www.thestatesman.net/news/25705-show-cause-on-sskm-medicine-shop.html>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

## INDIA IN THE WORLD

### India 2nd in seeking User Info on Google websites

(*FX News Call*, November 16, 2013)

Google's annual transparency report released on November 15, 2013 reveals that government requests for user data are rising globally. According to the latest transparency report by Google, India stood second in terms of requests made to Google for release of user data of various government agencies between January and June (six months) in 2013. US recorded the highest number of such requests.

According to Google's Richard Salgado, there is an increase of more than 100 per cent in requests for user information. These numbers only include the requests they're permitted to publish. The Indian Government made 2,691 requests during the period of January-June 2013 and asked for user/account details of nearly 4,161 users. Data was provided by the company in 64 per cent of the requests. The report also reveals that "executive branches of the government including police made 122 requests for removal of content for the concerned period."

Similarly, Facebook also mentioned that after the US Government, it was the Indian Government which had the most data requests. About 3,245 data requests were made by the Indian Government for 4,144 users/accounts.

<http://www.fxnewscall.com/surprisingly-india-stood-second-on-google-inc-nasdaqgoog-transparency-report/192093/>

Date Accessed: 20.11.2013  
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### Diabetes kills one person every six seconds: estimates show

(*Bloomberg*, November 14, 2013)

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) warned that the number of diabetic cases has increased showing a 4.4 per cent rise in two years. According to their estimates, diabetes kills one person every six seconds and afflicts 382 million people worldwide.

The number of people affected by the disease is expected to climb 55 per cent to 592 million by 2035.

The majority of cases affect middle-aged people within 40- to 59-years range. According to a survey by the American Medical Association (AMA), China had 12 per cent of adults, or 114 million people, have the disease. The problem is bigger in poorer regions with fewer resources at hand to fight diseases.

The disease, caused by a lack of insulin the body needs to convert blood sugar into energy, has led to \$548 billion in global health-care spending this year, the federation said. It subsequently recommends policy makers across many sectors to devise a concerted action to counter the phenomenon.

Health officials from almost 200 countries in May adopted nine targets, such as reducing average daily salt consumption by 30 per cent by 2025, in a bid to fight cancer, heart disease and diabetes. They also called for curbs on marketing unhealthy food to children.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-11-14/diabetes-kills-one-person->

[every-six-seconds-new-estimates-show](http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-11-14/diabetes-kills-one-person-every-six-seconds-new-estimates-show)

Date accessed: 17.11.2013  
(Pallavi Ghosh)

### Minimum income policy in Switzerland

(*Annie Lowrey, New York, November 12, 2013*)

German-born artist named Enno Schmidt, a leader in the basic-income movement has proposed minimum basic income programme in Switzerland. In Europe wages are stagnant, unemployment is high and tens of millions of families are struggling. Despite record corporate earnings and skyrocketing fortunes for the college-educated and already well-off, the job market is simply not rewarding many fully employed workers with a decent way of life. Millions of households have had no real increase in earnings since the late 1980s.

Conservatives think, such a programme could significantly reduce the size of our federal bureaucracy. It could take the place of welfare, food stamps, housing vouchers and hundreds of other programmes, all at once. Schmidt argued that the basic income would provide some dignity and security to the poor, especially Europe's underemployed and unemployed. It would also help unleash creativity and entrepreneurialism. Switzerland's workers would feel empowered to work the way they wanted to do.

There are strong arguments against minimum or basic incomes, too. This involves a huge cost and it creates a massive disincentive to work is another. But some experts said the effect might be smaller than you would think. A basic income might be enough to live on, but not enough to live very well on. Such a programme would be designed to end poverty without creating a nation of layabouts.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/magazine/switzerlands-proposal-to-pay-people-for-being-alive.html?smid=fb-share&r=2&>

Date Accessed: 19.11.2013  
(Neha Singh)

## SOUTH ASIA

### India eyeing Economic Corridor with Mekong

(Nayanima Basu, *The Business Standard*, November 18, 2013)

As part of India's Look-East Policy and its economic integration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the government is promoting India-Mekong economic cooperation. Both sides are also planning a Mekong-India economic corridor, which will form an integral part of India-Asean connectivity. Currently, the proposal is being studied by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

- Mekong-India cooperation initiative includes India, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam
- The Mekong-India economic corridor will be a network of land and sea infrastructure
- The corridor envisages the linking of vibrant emerging economies in the Asean region with India.
- Recent political reforms in Myanmar have enabled land connectivity between South and Southeast Asia
- India plans to sign a Free Trade Agreement on services and investment with Asean in December
- It is expected trade between India and Asean nations would stand at \$100 billion by 2015

A seminar to discuss the proposal will be organised by the Confederation of

Indian Industry (CII) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on November 19, 2013.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-eyeing-economic-corridor-with-mekong-113111600818\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-eyeing-economic-corridor-with-mekong-113111600818_1.html)

Date Accessed: 18.11.2013  
(Divashri Mathur)

## AMERICAS

### New reforms in undergraduate syllabus for Advancements in Economics Research

(*Institute for New Economic Thinking*, November 11, 2013)

The US has taken a new approach, called the “**Curriculum Open-access Resources in Economics**” (CORE), to introduce wide- ranging changes in the curriculum of economics undergraduates in the US. The approach will be replicated in participating institutes from various countries. The curriculum project, funded by the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET), “provides a new approach to design, content and way of teaching the core economics curriculum for undergraduates.”

The new approach seeks to bring advances in economics research which will equip students to understand economies and their problem better. The curriculum also includes comparative experience of different countries.

The framework is being developed by an international team of academics under the leadership of Professor Wendy Carlin, Department of Economics, University College London (UCL), with technical support

from Azim Premji University in Bangalore. The project will produce open access on-line resources, including e-book course material for students with interactive content including diagrams, data and videos. Participating institutions will be provided the course materials free of cost and will be given assistance to make amendments to suit local context.

CORE will seek input from students, policymakers, academics, businesses, and professional economists from the private and public sector from different countries, including India. Guiding the curriculum will be the view that economics – like other sciences – should confront its proposed explanations with systematic testing using evidence from history, experiments, and data.

<http://ineteconomics.org/blog/institute/institute-new-economic-thinking-launches-project-reform-undergraduate-syllabus>

Date Accessed: 21.11.2013  
(Mahima Malik)