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A Universal Truth: No health without a workforce



Source: The Hindu

WEEKLY ROUND UP OF NEWS ON POLICY

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A Universal Truth: No health without a workforce

Overview of Universal Health Coverage

Despite all difficulties, the commitment of the international community to improving the health of all is stronger than ever. After pledging to achieve specific health outcomes as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Member States of the United Nations (UN) have now engaged in the process of guaranteeing universal health coverage to their populations, and the Member States of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have agreed new commitments to social protection floors and accelerating the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of essential health services, particularly maternity services.

Although, there is debate on the understanding of universal health coverage, it is recognised that all countries, irrespective of their level of economic development, are challenged to attain, sustain or accelerate progress on universal health coverage.

India is among the world's 83 countries which do not meet the minimum requirement of having 22.8 healthcare workers for every 10,000 persons.

We present here an overview of a World Health Organisation (WHO) report, recently released in Brazil, which says that nearly 83 per cent of physicians in India are males. The report, titled "A Universal Truth: No Health without a Workforce", released at the Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health (HRH), blames the shockingly less number of females in healthcare workforce for dismal state of reproductive healthcare in India.

The report uses a conceptual framework that speaks to the key principles of both the right to health and minimum social protection floors: the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health services to identify the key drivers, emerging trends and issues common to all countries.

Availability

The report created a global snapshot in comparison to three density thresholds of skilled health professionals (midwives, nurses and physicians) per 10 000 population. The three thresholds were purposively selected to highlight the variation in health workforce availability. The report makes clear that the thresholds are not developed to promote targets that a country should or must achieve but are used to illustrate the pattern of availability globally.

- 83 countries fall below the threshold of 22.8 skilled health professionals per 10,000 population
- 100 countries fall below the threshold of 34.5 skilled health professionals per 10,000 population
- 118 countries fall below the threshold of 59.4 skilled health professionals per 10,000 population
- 68 countries are above the threshold of 59.4 skilled health professionals per 10,000 population

Accessibility

Variations in spatial accessibility to health services are an inherent feature and challenge in most countries, irrespective of their level of economic development. All 36 profiled countries report that reducing imbalances in the geographical distribution of health workers is an important policy objective. Many policy tools are available to distribute the health workforce more equitably.

Available policy tools:

- Providing financial incentives to health workers in remote postings.
- Ensuring that continuing professional development and training is available beyond urban areas.
- Prolonging the residency period during which workers have less choice over their posting and providing non-financial incentives such as free housing.
- Better diagnostic facilities.
- Security.
- Access to health care free of charge.

Acceptability

Acceptability is enhanced when users of services have access to a health workforce that meets their expectations in terms of its profile, sex and age composition, its skills mix, and cultural awareness. The creation and expansion of various types of workers, deployed close to communities, can be an effective and efficient way to make services more accessible and acceptable.

The report founds :

- A wide variation in health workforce configurations and no major pattern in skill mix.
- Only high-income countries demonstrated a tighter clustering in the ratio of nurses to physicians, but even these countries had health systems that remained heavily reliant on physician-led services.

Quality

The report defines quality according to the competencies of health workers, as influenced by the enabling environment of education, regulation and association. Although, improving the quality of health workers and the care they provide is a high policy priority in some countries, it is absent in others. The report used the existence of an accreditation system for education institutions and regulation of access to professional practice as proxy indicators of conditions that positively influence the quality of the health workforce.

The report founds :

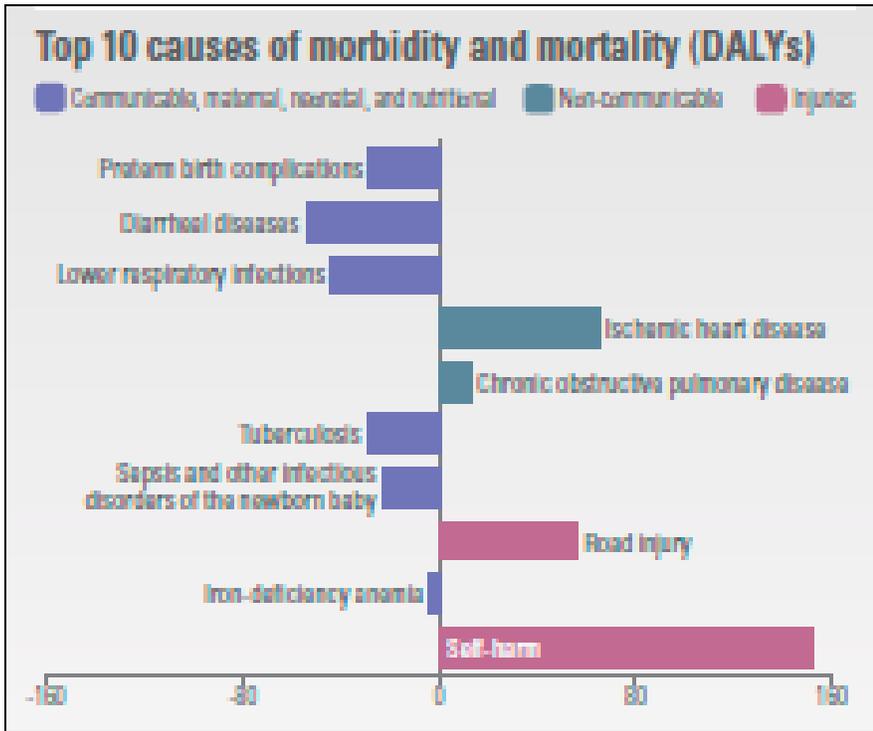
- A total of 33 countries have some formal or informal mechanism for accrediting educational institutions in place or being developed.
- 27 countries have started or plan to improve the quality of education of health professionals.
- 35 countries in place to regulate the access to the practice of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. The situation is more varied for midwifery and nursing. However, the effectiveness of such mechanisms is not always clear.
- In general, there is no proactive surveillance of the quality of practice in the form of periodical site visits. Performance is deemed to be correct until some complaint is formulated or some error, misbehavior or health problem is detected.

India's Profile

POPULATION AND HEALTH		
Population [all (000s); proportion under 15 (%); proportion over 60 (%)]	240.7; 27; 8	(2010)
Average annual rate of population change (%)	1.2	(2010-2015)
Population living in urban areas (%)	51	(2011)
Gross national income per capita (PPP int. \$)	4500	(2011)
Population living on <\$1 (PPP int. \$) a day (%)	22.64	(2008)
Total expenditure on health as a percentage of gross domestic product (%)	2.7	(2011)
General government expenditure on health as a percentage of total expenditure on health (%)	34	(2011)
External resources for health as a percentage of total expenditure on health (%)	1.2	(2011)
Life expectancy at birth (years) [all; female; male]	69; 71; 68	(2011)
Total fertility rate (per woman)	2.1	(2010)
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	15	(2011)
Infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	25	(2011)
Under-five mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	32 [28-40]	(2011)
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births)	220 [130-350]	(2010)
Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	79.8	(2010)
Antenatal care coverage - at least one visit (%)	93.3	(2007)
Antenatal care coverage - at least four visits (%)	81.5	(2007)
Diphtheria tetanus toxoid and pertussis (DTP3) immunization coverage among 1-year-olds (%)	63	(2011)
Postnatal care visit within two days of birth (%)	70.3	(2007)

India is among the world's 83 countries which do not meet the minimum requirement of having 22.8 healthcare workers for every 10,000 persons. The report says that nearly 83 per cent of physicians in India are males. Women physicians are 17 per cent of the total of physicians, and the ratio of nurses to physicians is below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.

India's Health profile

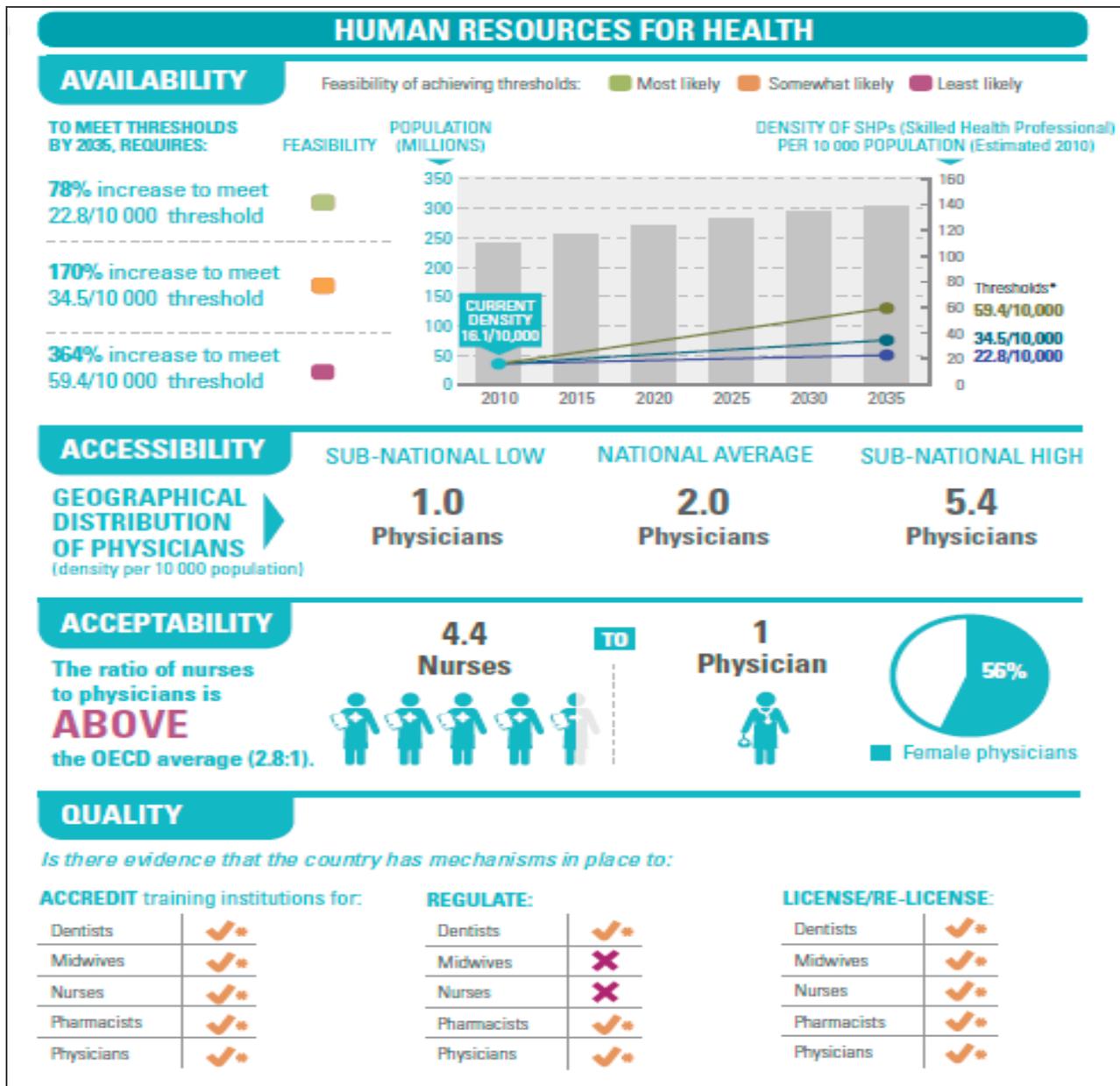


Source : WHO report, 2013

Highlights from 2011

- 51 per cent of India's population is living in urban areas in India
- 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic product (GDP) is spent on health expenditure in India.
- 34 per cent of total health expenditure is general government expenditure on health in India.
- Life expectancy was recorded to be 69 years for all and 71 years and 68 years for female and male respectively.
- 79.8 per cent of births were attended by skilled health personnel in 2010 in India.

India's Representation of Human Resource for Health



Source : WHO report, 2013

Important Highlights

- The availability of skilled health professionals is currently below the 22.8 per 10 000 population threshold, but scaling up to meet indicative thresholds by 2035 appears feasible.
- Inequalities in access (both geographical and income-based) persist. At the present rate of 15.8 skilled health professionals for every 10,000 persons, India is among the worst rated countries.
- The nurse to physician ratio in India is much below the globally accepted standard of 2.8 nurses per physician. India has only 0.1 nurses per physician.

Policy mechanisms for human resources for health development, including government leadership and collaboration with key stakeholders, and mechanisms to provide reliable data on the health workforce require strengthening. However, there are efforts to review and revitalise health professional education as part of a five-country network, also involving China, Bangladesh, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) quantify both premature mortality (YLLS) and disability (YLDs) within a population. The top 10 causes of DALYs are ranked from top to bottom in order of the number of DALYs they contribute in 2010.

Bars going right show the percent by which DALYs have increased since 1990. Bars going left shows the percent by which DALYs have decreased.

Key Findings

- There are shortages of some categories of health workers and more are forecast.
- The health workforce is ageing and replacement is a challenge.
- Although, skills-mix imbalances persist, advanced practitioners, midwives, nurses and auxiliaries are still insufficiently used in many settings.
- Availability and accessibility continue to vary widely within countries because of difficulty in attracting and retaining workers.
- Adapting education strategies and the content of pre-service education is a major challenge.
- Health workers need to be kept motivated in an enabling environment.
- Performance assessment and quality of care are afforded insufficient priority.
- Country capacity to estimate future human resources for health needs and design longer-term policies varies.
- Human resource information data and systems to meet the needs of decision-makers require strengthening and investment.

Way Forward

1. Recognise the centrality of the health workforce in translating the vision of universal health coverage into improved health care on the ground.
2. Assess the gap between the need for a health workforce, actual supply (stock, skills mix and competencies) and the population's demand for health services.
3. Formulate human resources for health policy objectives that encapsulate the vision for the health system and services.
4. Build the data, evidence base and strategic intelligence required to implement and monitor the policy objectives and to sustain effective management.
5. Build and sustain the technical capacity to design, advocate for and implement policies.
6. Build political support at the highest level to ensure continuity in the pursuit of universal health coverage.
7. Reform the governance and institutional human resources for health environment.
8. Assess the cost of the various scenarios of health workforce reforms.
9. Encourage international partners to focus their support and to report on their official development assistance for building the capacity of health systems.
10. Encourage international partners to address transnational issues and strengthen global human resources for health governance, collaborative platforms and mechanisms.

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<http://www.im4change.org/latest-news-updates/too-few-women-docs-to-blame-for-poor-reproductive-healthcare-in-india-who-jyotsna-singh-23331.html>

Prepared by

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India's current account deficit narrows sharply to 1.2% of GDP

(Satyanarain Iyer, *Business Line*, December 02, 2013)

“With a pick up in merchandise exports and a dip in imports, the country’s current account deficit narrowed sharply to a more manageable 1.2 per cent of GDP in the second quarter. Current Account Deficit (CAD) — the excess of all goods, services and transfers imported in a period over the total exports — fell to \$5.2 billion in the July-September quarter from \$21 billion in the year-ago period. This was also lower than the CAD of 4.9 per cent of GDP in the previous quarter, ended June 30, 2013.

Both the government and the RBI feel that a CAD of 2.5 per cent of GDP is manageable in the current economic context. In November, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram had revised the CAD target to \$60 billion for the full year. For the first six months of the fiscal, CAD totaled about \$27 billion, helped by a sharp fall in gold imports and a rise in the exports of textiles, leather and chemicals. However, the government did not receive adequate capital flows to fund the CAD. The country’s Foreign Exchange (FX) reserves fell \$10.4 billion as they were used to fund the deficit. The exclusive dollar swap window announced by RBI governor Raghuram Rajan in September had found favour with foreign investors as they brought in \$34 billion in just two-and-a-half months. The window was shut, as scheduled, on November 30.

The latest CAD figure and the GDP recording a growth of 4.8 per cent in the second quarter are likely to strengthen the rupee. However, a high fiscal deficit that has already touched 84 per cent of the projected Rs 5.42-lakh crore is likely to play spoilsport with some investors. While the government seems to have virtually won the battle on the CAD front, it

faces an uphill task on the inflation and the fiscal deficit flanks.”

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/indias-current-account-deficit-narrows-sharply-to-12-of-gdp/article5414516.ece>

Date Accessed: 3.12.2013
(Karishma Mutreja)

India can send a rocket to Mars and fight poverty at the same time

(Leo Mirani, *The Atlantic Cities*, November 05, 2013)

On November 05, India successfully launched its Mars vehicle *Mangalyaan* to space. While India’s scientific mission costs only \$73 million, NASA’s next Mars mission will cost \$671 million and do the same thing as India’s craft.

The writer feels that “the secret to India’s low-budget space programme is a simple one: operating within constraints and without luxuries”

According to the *Economic Times*, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) adapts what technology it can, has a tight schedule, reduces costs wherever it can and is staffed with modestly-paid yet incredibly hard-working scientists. It also takes more risks, for example by building just one physical model of its craft compared to the three employed by NASA.

While *Mangalyaan* is an impressive achievement, one piece on a U.S. site asks “How does a country with one of the lowest development levels in the world justify spending on a space programme?” This is as familiar and predictable a formulation as the articles by foreign correspondents that begin by calling India a “land of contrasts”.

ISRO’s founding father addressed this criticism several decades ago: “We do not have the fantasy of competing with the economically advanced nations in the exploration of the moon or the planets or manned space-flight.

But we are convinced that if we are to play a meaningful role ... we must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society.” Indeed, India’s space research and other advanced technological efforts played a great role in boosting its technology industry.

Moreover, the \$73 million India spent on *Mangalyaan* is not adversely affecting the poor. Two months ago, the government signed into law the Food Security Bill, which will cost almost an estimated \$20 billion every year. *Mangalyaan* costs less than 0.4 percent of the bill’s annual budget.

Questioning a poor country’s decision to launch a space programme also implicitly ignores the fact that rich countries have poor people too. In 1962 when President John F Kennedy declared to Americans that “We choose to go to the moon”, 21 per cent of the nation was living below the poverty line. Last year, it was still 15 per cent.

<http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2013/11/india-can-send-rocket-mars-and-fight-poverty-same-time/7485/>

Date Accessed: 28.11.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

Women and Child Development Ministry wants to lower juvenile age

(Ritika Chopra, *Economic Times*, November 29, 2013)

The Women and Child Development Ministry is working on a Cabinet note that would seek punishment for juvenile offenders over 16 under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), if convicted in heinous crimes like murder and rape. The effort came in effect after data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports the alarming rise in number of crimes committed by ‘minors’. December 16 gang rape and murder too had

provoked a serious debate on the behaviour of juveniles and the corresponding punishment.

On an earlier occasion, the Supreme Court too had rejected a batch of petitions which wanted the juvenile age for

Iran deal to help India's oil imports; boost bilateral trade

(The Indian Express, November 25, 2013)

The deal between Iran and six world powers including the US will help in sourcing of oil imports from the Persian Gulf state and boost trade with India.

After four days of negotiations, representatives from the US, the UK, Russia, China, France and Germany (P5+1 group of nations) have reached an agreement with Iran in Geneva. Under the deal, Iran has agreed to give better access to inspectors and halt some of its work on uranium enrichment. But Iranian negotiators insisted they still had a right to nuclear power. In return, there will be no new nuclear-related sanctions on Iran for six months. "The deal would not only reduce India's import bill as energy prices ease, but also make a big difference to inflation, which has remained bane of the Indian economy for the last six years, more so at the retail level." India is likely to resume paying Iran in Euros.

Iran will also stop enriching uranium beyond five per cent, the level at which it can be used for weapons research, and reduce its stockpile of uranium enriched beyond this point. Iran will also receive sanctions relief worth about USD 7 billion on sectors including precious metals.

"India's total exports to Iran were merely USD 3.7 billion in 2012-13, much less than potential, under the impact of sanctions." India can export a large number of items to Iran if unhindered access is provided to the market.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/iran-deal-to-help-india-s-oil-imports--boost-bilateral-trade/1199420/>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2013
(Anjana John)

Crime & Punishment

Juveniles Held in 2011: *

Rape: 1,231	Murder: 1,168
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- An overwhelming majority of them were in the 16-18 years age group
- Maximum punishment for them is three years in a correctional home

DEMAND FOR LOWERING OF juvenile age from 18 years for criminal trial was endorsed early this year by a House panel on empowerment of women

IN JULY, THE SUPREME COURT rejected petitions that wanted the juvenile age for heinous crimes to be reduced

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION for Child Rights Protection is also against any changes to the definition of juvenile

* Source: NCRB report, 2011

"If you don't allow a minor to fight his case in a court, then how can you even try him as an adult?"
Kushal Singh, Chief, National Commission for Child Rights Protection

Currently, the criminal age of majority is 18, which means irrespective of the gravity of the offence committed; offenders below this age cannot be tried under the IPC. Juvenile offenders are instead tried under the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, which mandates a maximum punishment of three years in a correctional home.

However, it is unlikely that the proposal will be accepted at the Cabinet meeting, as India is signatory to United Nations Convention on Child Rights (UNCRC) and the Beijing and Riyadh rules that define a child as anyone aged less than 18 years. This Convention has made it mandatory that JJ (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 increased the cut-off age for adulthood for boys to 18 years from 16.

heinous crimes to be reduced.

The data compiled by the NCRB shows that the number of juveniles apprehended on rape charges exceeds the number of those held for murder. According to the data, while 1,168 juveniles were held in 2011 on charges of murder, 1,231 were arrested on charges of rape. The data further reveals that an overwhelming majority of juveniles apprehended were in the 16-18 age.

http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-11-29/news/44575817_1_juvenile-age-jj-act-juvenile-justice-act

Date Accessed: 28.11.2013
(Mahima Malik)

RBI issues draft norms on banks' entry into insurance business

(Dinesh Unnikrishnan, *LiveMint*, November 29, 2013)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has unveiled draft norms for entry of banks into insurance broking, which would allow commercial banks to offer policies sold by multiple insurers, besides those of their own insurance subsidiaries. The move is aimed at enabling banks "to leverage their branch network for increasing insurance penetration".

The norms, if they come into force, would permit banks to undertake insurance broking departmentally after seeking the specific prior approval of the banking regulator. In the draft norms, it is stated that the final approvals for banks to undertake broking business will factor in the regulatory and supervisory comfort on various aspects of banks' functioning, such as corporate governance, risk management and the arrangements proposed for insurance brokerage and so on.

However, banks offering insurance broking services shall not enter into any arrangement for corporate agency or insurance referral business to avoid any conflict of interest. Approvals granted for insurance broking will be initially for three years and will be reviewed after that.

Currently, banks like State Bank of India (SBI) and ICICI Bank Ltd, among others, distribute insurance products of their own subsidiaries under the so-called banc assurance channel. Under the agency model, they cannot sell products of other insurance companies. However, once they decide to become a broker, they can sell products of multiple insurance companies.

Detailing the draft norms, RBI said banks that want to offer insurance broking should have a comprehensive board-approved policy. They should also have a net worth of not less than

Rs.500 crore and capital adequacy—a measure of financial strength expressed as the ratio of capital to risk-weighted assets—of not less than 10 per cent.

Experts said banks engaged in the insurance business through joint venture subsidiaries are likely to choose to remain corporate agents if indeed the draft norms take final shape.

The draft norms stipulate that banks should have a standardised system of assessing the needs of the customer across all branches offering insurance broking services, besides having a robust internal grievance redressal mechanism in place to resolve issues related to services offered. It also emphasises transparency of operations.

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/xz4fk1gWmDcH93nlKg9BMP/RBI-issues-draft-norms-on-banks-entry-into-insurance-busine.html>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Deepti Somani)

Manufacturing activity picks up pace in November – Survey

(Rahul Karunakar, *Reuters*, December 02, 2013)

A recent data on Asia's third largest economy revealed that it grew at a higher-than-expected rate in the three months through September. The article notes that the growth in the manufacturing sector has contributed to the revival.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is the highest since March and has finally surpassed the watershed level of 50 that divides growth from contraction in four months. There has also been a rise in demand in six months.

This revival is a welcome relief especially for a government struggling to gain lost popularity ahead of elections due to slowing growth and high inflation. According to the

survey, both input and output costs rose at a softer pace in November.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/12/02/india-manufacturing-pmi-idINDEE9B104E20131202>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Government regulators have to be cautious about virtual currencies

(*Hindustan Times*, December 2, 2013)

After the currency notes made way for credit/debit cards, the online trading space is facing yet another challenging development- the growing popularity of virtual currency like Bitcoin. Bitcoin is a decentralised digital currency which is an open source peer-to-peer electronic mode of payment. Virtual currency presents various risks since there is no authorised regulator. "With an almost zero physical presence the fear is that this could be misused by fraudsters to lure gullible investors. Its virtual and unregulated nature makes it suitable for online gambling, illegal drugs, etc."

India has still not decided on a plan of action regarding virtual currencies like Bitcoin but pressure is building up as United States and China and even various online sites have started accepting Bitcoin.

India needs to prepare itself and lay down proper checks and balances before opening out its market for Bitcoin. With millions of transactions daily the world over and a total circulation estimated around \$1.5 billion, Bitcoin by its sheer volume demands that government financial regulators keep the situation under control.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/comment/govt-regulators-have-to-be-cautious-about-virtual-currencies/article1-1158409.aspx>

Date Accessed: 05.12.2013

(Simi Sunny)

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Expanding access to justice

(C Raj Kumar, *The Hindu*, November 28, 2013)

The article highlights that the proposed reform to expand and establish more permanent benches of High Courts in different parts of the country will improve the justice delivery mechanism in the country. The proposal was also stated in the "Law Commission of India: 230th Report" which backs the projection that the reform will bring important benefits like increased access to justice, reduction in costs of litigation and will provide more practice to lawyers.

The article emphasises that the Indian Government has tried successively to democratically decentralise power, most important reform being the 73rd and 74th amendment to the Constitution of India. However, the justice delivery mechanisms continue to be centralised and the existing court systems are based on a hierarchical governance structure.

The Judicial System in India faces many challenges. The existing legal and institutional mechanisms for promoting access to justice are not adequate. The civil and criminal justice system is facing "lack of capacities" in dealing with disposal of cases. There is need for democratisation of the legal profession and this will not happen until we improve the quality of legal education. A number of people who are aggrieved are not able to seek justice because of the prohibitive costs of litigation and the delays that come along with them.

A range of reforms — legal, judicial and institutional — will bring important benefits to secure and expand people's access to justice. One

such proposal is "the creation of new benches of High Courts".

- The 230th Report of the Law Commission of India notes that advocates take a myopic view on the issue of creation of more benches and object to the creation of new benches. But, "lawyers being officers of the court have duties and obligations to society at large."
- Setting up more permanent benches is in the interest of the litigants. They will ensure that litigants do not have to travel long. It will help in doing this by making available to citizens a wider range of new lawyers who were hitherto not involved in the appellate litigation process receiving opportunities to pursue their legal practice.
- Legal education currently offered in Indian law schools needs to be improved by providing greater access and opportunities for young law students. Establishing additional benches will create new possibilities for lawyers to engage in practising law and will have a direct consequence in improving the quality of the legal profession. There should be a conscious effort to provide opportunities for law students to the extent possible to regularly observe court practice in Courts. This will be possible only if there are more High Courts in the country.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/expanding-access-to-justice/article5398212.ece>

Date Accessed: 28.11.2013

(Mahima Malik)

RTE ignored in party manifestos, rues Delhi education forum

(*Deccan Herald*, December 02, 2013)

A Delhi based education forum said it is regrettable that "major political parties failed to include effective implementation of Right to Education (RTE) Act in Delhi in their manifestos".

"While the parties talk about a few dimensions of the RTE, the manifestos failed to provide strategies to improve quality education and ensure the right is well implemented in the state."

"Party manifestos are silent about setting up of School Management Committees (SMCs) and providing adequate budgets for the schools to effectively implement RTE," said Annie Nammala, one of the conveners of the Delhi RTE Forum.

The forum demanded that "school availability and infrastructure needs to be increased and enhanced specially in the urban peripheries, unrecognised colonies, resettlement colonies and jhuggi-jhopri clusters and urban villages."

The forum had recently also held 'Vote for Education' campaign demanding serious attention towards improving the quality of education in the state.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/372377/rte-ignored-party-manifestos-rues.html>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Ashwin Varghese)

Karnataka passes ESMB; makes striking at work non-bailable offence

(First Post, December 4, 2013)

Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance Bill, 2013 (ESMB) passed by the Legislative assembly in Belgaum recently made striking work a non-bailable offence and police can arrest a striking employee without warrant under the new bill. **The bill is to put an end to employees working in water, power, health, transport and service sectors going on strikes, inconveniencing people.**

As per the bill, the definition under ESMB for essential services include any service connected with the production, generation, storage, transmission, supply or distribution of water or electricity and any transportation service for the carriage of passengers or goods by motor vehicles. It gives government the power to declare even those services that the state has powers to make laws for under List II of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution, as essential services. Upon conviction, those who commence a strike or continue to go on strike or takes part in any strike will be punished with a sentence up to one year or with fine up to Rs 5,000 or both. Those instigating or financing strikes also face the same punishment. Those giving financial aid to illegal strike also will be booked under law. The order will come into force for a period of one year from the date the government publishes the order. However, it can be extended up to six months.

http://www.firstpost.com/india/karnataka-passes-esma-bill-makes-striking-at-work-non-bailable-offence-1266513.html?utm_source=ref_article

Date Accessed: 05.12.2013

(Neha Singh)

DEVELOPMENT Govt tweaks cargo support policy to help Indian shipbuilders

(P Manoj, LiveMint, November 30, 2013)

According to a government policy change aimed at boosting the sales of Indian-made ships, ships that are manufactured and registered in India will be given first preference for moving cargo on local routes.

The country's coastal trade is reserved for Indian-registered ships and foreign ships can be hired to operate in Indian territorial waters only when Indian ships are not available—that too with the approval of India's maritime regulator.

According to rules set by the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) to develop the local shipping industry, an Indian ship (owned by Indian entities and registered in India but not necessarily built in India) has a so-called right of first refusal to match the lowest rate quoted by a foreign flagship and take the contract. If the right of first refusal is not exercised by Indian-registered ships that are not built in India, then preference was given to foreign registered ships that were manufactured in India, followed by ships purchased by Indian citizens, companies or co-operative societies through a so-called Bare Boat Charter Cum Demise (BBCD) route, in that sequence.

The government has now added a new category of ships to this list—Indian built, Indian flag vessels—that are eligible to get first preference for the right of refusal for carrying Indian cargo.

The change in the eligibility criteria for exercising the right of first refusal will potentially create a reliable market for local shipbuilders by incentivising the purchase of ships

manufactured by Indian shipyards, the idea being to encourage a “Buy India” framework for ships. A similar policy is followed in the US, Brazil and Indonesia.

Industry experts have termed it as a half-hearted measure, (taken) without knowing the ground realities and not likely to benefit ship owners or shipyards.

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/vq4jPoatTmMc2we0d8JNqM/Govt-tweaks-cargo-support-policy-to-help-Indian-shipbuilders.html>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Deepti Somani)

Kerala begins project to validate popular ayurvedic medicines

(The Business Standard, December 02, 2013)

In an attempt to promote Ayurvedic medicines and gain international recognition, the Kerala government along with Confederation for Ayurvedic Renaissance- (CARE Keralam) - a facility centre- will identify 20 popular formulations for scientific validation. These are currently marketed mostly as food supplements.

CARE Keralam, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and other national agencies were also planning an Ayurveda summit to identify and highlight key products for scientific validation with the support of the industry.

One of the products-NKK- bagged a great response recently during a clinical trial of the formulation that required a minimum 500 subjects to establish the efficacy and safety of the product as per global standards.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/project-to-validate-popular-ayurvedic-medicines-on-113120200181_1.html

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

Andhra Pradesh to formulate new mining policy

(The Hindu, November 29, 2013)

The Andhra Pradesh government will formulate a new mineral policy to facilitate sanction of more mining leases and establishment of mining projects.

Minister for Mines and Geology Galla Aruna stated the State's objective was to have proper legislation as envisaged in the National Mineral Policy (NMP) for accelerated development in the mining sector. She further said: "We have also asked the industry to ensure mining is done responsibly and in an eco-friendly manner keeping ecological balance in mind and support local community with better livelihood and job creation."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/andhra-pradesh-to-formulate-new-mineral-policy/article5400896.ece>

Date Accessed: 01.12.2013
(Deepti Somani)

4 crore missing toilets in rural and urban India

(Governance Now, December 02, 2013)

According to a report collated by the Right to Sanitation Campaign (RtS) based on government figures, there are 3,75,76,324 missing toilets in rural and urban India.

'Missing Toilets' are toilets that exist on paper but not on ground. These toilets "were 'built' (as per government record) in the last 10 years as part of total sanitation campaign but were never constructed. Hundreds of Community Toilet

Complexes (CTCs) are either not built or are dysfunctional."

It is estimated that "62.6 crore Indians still defecate in the open." Only 31.9 per cent households in rural India have access to sanitation. Half of India's 1.2 billion people have no toilets at home. 77% people from Scheduled Caste (SC) communities and 84 per cent from Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities do not have toilets at home." Similarly in Urban India 18 per cent households do not have access to sanitation. 51 per cent households do not have access to toilets in on notified slums."

According to World Bank estimates, 6.4 per cent (or \$53.8 billion) is the loss India's GDP suffers due to lack of sanitation. Moreover, "India is lagging behind 11 years to meet the millennium development goal (set in 2000) by 2015."

Rajesh Upadhyay, executive director, National Confederation of Dalit Organisations says, "At present, the government has a sanitation budget that is below 1 percent (of GDP). We demand an increase in the budget allocation for sanitation. It is also the responsibility of the government to provide sanitation and community toilet infrastructure that the poor can access."

<http://governancenow.com/views/think-tanks/4-crore-missing-toilets-raise-stink>

Date Accessed: 03.11.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

GOVERNMENT

Bengal Assembly passes bill to prevent use of land for real estate

(Business Standard, November 29, 2013)

The West Bengal Assembly on November 29 passed the Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill, 2013 which would prevent use of land, earmarked for township development, in excess of the prescribed ceiling for real estate purpose.

The bill was passed in the absence of opposition Left Front and Congress. According to Minister of State for Land and Land Reforms Department, Swapan Debnath the amendment of Section 14Z of the Act would exclude the provision for retention of land in excess of the prescribed ceiling for township development from the purview of the section. Amendment of Section 50 of the Act will introduce digital signature in accordance with the provision for Section 3 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 to ensure a more scientific authentication of all 'Records of Rights'.

In addition, the minister also said unlike during the erstwhile Left Front regime, when excess land holding was used for building real estate, now any surplus land could be used for poultry or dairy farming for the benefit of rural people and boost rural economy.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/bengal-assembly-passes-bill-to-prevent-use-of-land-for-real-estate-113113000048_1.html

Date Accessed: 2.12.2013
(Shruti Issar)

Cabinet proposes to treat juvenile

offenders over 16 as adults for heinous crimes

(The Times of India, December 03, 2013)

The government has proposed that youngsters above 16 years of age guilty of heinous crimes be treated on par with adult offenders.

This will deny protection to young offenders under the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act.

The Women and Child Development (WCD) ministry's proposal is likely to make the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) as the authority to evaluate evidence, heinousness of the crime and other parameters like previous behaviour and socio-economic and psychological condition of the accused.

The Supreme Court had rejected petitions for lowering the age of juvenility from the existing 18 years in July. However, it has recently said that it would examine whether juvenility be considered on a case-to-case basis keeping in view the maturity of the offender and the heinousness of the crime.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Cabinet-readies-to-treat-16-plus-in-heinous-crimes-as-adults/articleshow/26707294.cms>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Govt to amend AICTE Act

(Manu Balachandran & Kalpana Pathak, Business Standard, November 30, 2013)

The government is planning an amendment to the AICTE Act to restore the powers of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

"We are bringing an Act to restore the relevance of AICTE. Currently, we are working on it and hope to get it

approved soon. We had planned an Ordinance, but we do not think we will go ahead with that," said Minister for Human Resource Development (HRD), Pallam Raju.

In April, the Supreme Court allowed private colleges to conduct Master's in Business Administration (MBA) and Master's in Computer Applications (MCA) programmes without AICTE's permission. In response, AICTE had filed a review petition against the order, claiming that the authority had played the role of a regulator for many years and it couldn't suddenly become wrong.

AICTE filed a review of petition because the order limited the role of AICTE to play an advisory and prescribe uniform standards of education for affiliated members of a university.

"We do not want damage to students. There could be tremendous amount of exploitation and unstructured growth. We do not want that to happen," said AICTE Chairman, Shankar S Mantha.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-to-amend-aicte-act-113113000056_1.html

Date Accessed : 2.12.2013

(Shruti Issar)

Bengal Assembly passes resolution on Aadhar

(Outlook India, December 02, 2013)

The West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution on Aadhar cards that said the Centre should immediately withdraw its decision to link the cards with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme.

The resolution, moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Partha Chatterjee, mentioned that only 15 per cent people of the state had got the Aadhar cards. In such a scenario, 85 per cent of the people would not be able to get nine subsidised LPG

cylinders as the Centre had linked the Aadhar card to the direct cash transfer to the respective bank accounts.

Leader of the Opposition and CPI (M) member Surya Kanta Mishra supported the resolution moved by the ruling party. He said that the Centre legally cannot make biometric enrolment mandatory and that the entire process was unscientific as there was a scope for margin of error to the extent of 20 per cent. Resolution said, "a lot of unresolved issues still exist with Aadhar cards", which was greeted by the CPI (M) members.

Speaking to media later, Mishra wondered "how the Centre can make Aadhar card mandatory for LPG cash transfer when no law has yet been passed in this regard." He further said, "The Supreme Court has also made observations against making Aadhar card mandatory for obtaining LPG subsidy by the people".

<http://news.outlookindia.com/items.aspx?artid=819323>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013

(Jeet Singh)

Centre launches awareness campaign for MGNREGA

(Jitendra, Down to Earth, November 28, 2013)

In the view of the declining demand of work under the ambitious Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has launched a campaign "Kaam Mango Abhiyan", which literally means "ask for work".

Rural development minister Jairam Ramesh launched the awareness campaign last week. To begin with, the focus will be on six districts—Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, Nashik in Maharashtra, Raichur in Karnataka, Katihar in Bihar, West Singhbhum in Jharkhand and Sundergarh in Odisha.

This will present a model for a nationwide campaign that will be launched on February 2, 2014, the MGNREGA Day.

The campaign, launched on the recommendation of Programme Advisory Group (PAG) for Implementation of MGNREGA, also involves Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and civil societies to spread awareness about the Act among people to realise its potential. The government plans to train officials and institutionalise the monthly Rozgar Diwas (employment day) in every panchayat as part of the campaign.

As per the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) report, the total demand for work under MGNREGA in the last seven years was 302.8 million, but only 299.8 million households have been employed.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/centre-launches-awareness-campaign-mgnrega>

Date Accessed: 2.12.2013
(Divashri Mathur)

Panel wants minimum wage linked to MGNREGA levels

(Girija Shivakumar, *The Hindu*, December 02, 2013)

A committee has been set up by the MoRD) to revise wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to “suggest a proper index for revising the MGNREGA wage rates every year, by protecting the wages against inflation.”

“Currently, MGNREGA wages are lower than the minimum wages in several States, including in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.”

“A key recommendation is that any State which raises the minimum wages arbitrarily will have to bear the extra

cost from its own resources. However, this increase will be taken into account once the base index is revised every five years.”

The Committee also recommended that “it will be better to link the wages to an established index rather than trying to create a new one.”

Nikhil Dey, a member of the Committee said that “the decision about which index to use is a secondary issue. The significant issue is to link the minimum wages in States to MGNREGA wages. Mr. Dey also reiterated that this was an opportunity to address matters relating to wage disparity.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/panel-wants-minimum-wage-linked-to-mgnrega-levels/article5415174.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

A group of Afghanistan’s tribal elders supersedes constitutional bodies during national crises: parallel govt

(Kaushik Das Gupta, *Down to Earth*, December 15, 2013)

Afghanistan’s president Hamid Karzai opened a mass gathering of representatives from various ethnic, religious and tribal communities in Afghanistan called Loya Jirga, the assembly of 2,500 delegates to discuss the role of US troop after their combat mission ends in 2014 on November 21. Under a tentative US-Afghan deal, a reduced number of US troops will remain in Afghanistan, primarily to train and assist the Afghan military in its battle against the Taliban.

“Loya Jirga is not an official decision-making body. It is a centuries-old institution that has been

convened at times of national crisis or to settle national issues. The dispute is mediated by a religious leader or a village notable to hear both sides in front of mass people. This method originates from the pre-Islamic local practice called shura or consultation. Its decisions are not legally binding and its verdicts must be approved by the two houses of the Afghan Parliament and the president. Unofficially, however, the Loya Jirga’s decision is seen as final, with the president and Parliament expected to rubber stamp it.”

The exchange may or may not result in an agreement. But the process itself leads the parties to maintain a certain level of formal communication, thus ensuring peace. Historically, it has been convened to approve a new constitution, declare war, choose a new king, or to make sweeping social or political reforms. The current government in Kabul was itself forged through jirgas.

Many social scientists believe the jirgas are discordant with democracy. “In most of the jirgas, rulers strived to impose their own plans and objectives on the people. The jirga’s processes are flexible and delicate, not well understood by the outside world. At the same time, the jirga still has enormous impact on the lives of those living in areas where the government’s influence is low. Yousufzai, political scientist however, notes that the council is deeply patriarchal and has sanctioned honour killings in the past despite evidence of women participating in the early jirgas.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/parallel-government>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013
(Neha Singh)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Muslim dalit demand removal of religious bar from Article 341

(The Indian Awaz, November 28, 2013)

The representation of the Muslims in various elected bodies like state legislature and parliament is very low, to rectify which thousands of Muslims staged a dharna organised by Awami Vikas Party (AVP), the Samajwadi Party and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on November 27 demanding reservation of dalit muslims as it is available to other scheduled caste under article 341. Barring a provision for Anglo-Indian representation, there is no constitutional provision for quotas for minorities or backward castes in the legislatures or parliament.

Article 341 provides the status of Scheduled Castes to Dalits. It also provides special aid and facilities for the advancement of Schedule Castes people in every walk of life. But para 3 of the article imposes religious restrictions making the provision applicable only to those who profess Hindu religion. Members of all religious minorities are debarred.

“There was no religious restriction in the law passed in 1935 for the same purpose. Dalits of all religion were entitled to avail of this facility. In 1950, members of all minority communities were debarred from this facility by a presidential order through which a religious ban was imposed. However, two amendments were made in this order and thereby two minorities, Sikhs (1956) and neo-Buddhists (1990) were re-included in this category. But Muslims and Christians have still been out”.

Demanding suitable legislative amendments in article 341, the member of muslim group said that if the Muslim backward classes were not given reservation by August 10 next year they would intensify their agitation.

AVP Chief Shamsheer Khan Pathan said in 2009 only 28 Muslims were elected to parliament which is barely five per cent of parliament's strength comprised Muslims and added that they asking for reservation for only dalit and backward muslims.

http://theindianawaz.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15568&catid=12

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013
(Neha Singh)

EDUCATION

HRD revives coordinating forum for IIMs

(Anubhuti Vishnoi, The Indian Express, December 02, 2013)

Union Human Resource Development Ministry (HRD) in its latest draft of the proposed IIM Bill revived and retained the controversial ‘coordinating forum’. The forum was opposed by IIMs as they felt such an overarching body would undermine their autonomy. But their arguments have been firmly rejected by the HRD Ministry in the draft Bill.

The council, to be chaired by the HRD Minister, will coordinate activities of all 13 IIMs, deliberate on matters of common interest, review achievement of policy objectives and prepare reports on each institute.

The draft bill, which offers degree-granting powers to IIMs, also plans to introduce the concept of a Visitor in the institutes. The President of India is already the Visitor/ex-officio Visitor of all Central Universities, NITs and IITs. The Visitor has the power to appoint IIM Directors and nominate members to the executive committee, board of management, court and

selection committees of institutions. The Visitor may also exercise powers in matters of amendments, additions and repeal of status; suspension and disallowance of Ordinances, etc.

An overarching council was first proposed by an IIM review committee, led by R C Bhargava, in 2009. The forum was opposed by IIMs, particularly IIM Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Calcutta, as they felt such an overarching body would undermine their autonomy. But their arguments have been firmly rejected by the HRD Ministry in the draft Bill.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/hrd-revives-coordinating-forum-for-iims/1202153/>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013
(Jeet Singh)

HEALTH

Free medicine for the poor: Tamil Nadu shows the way

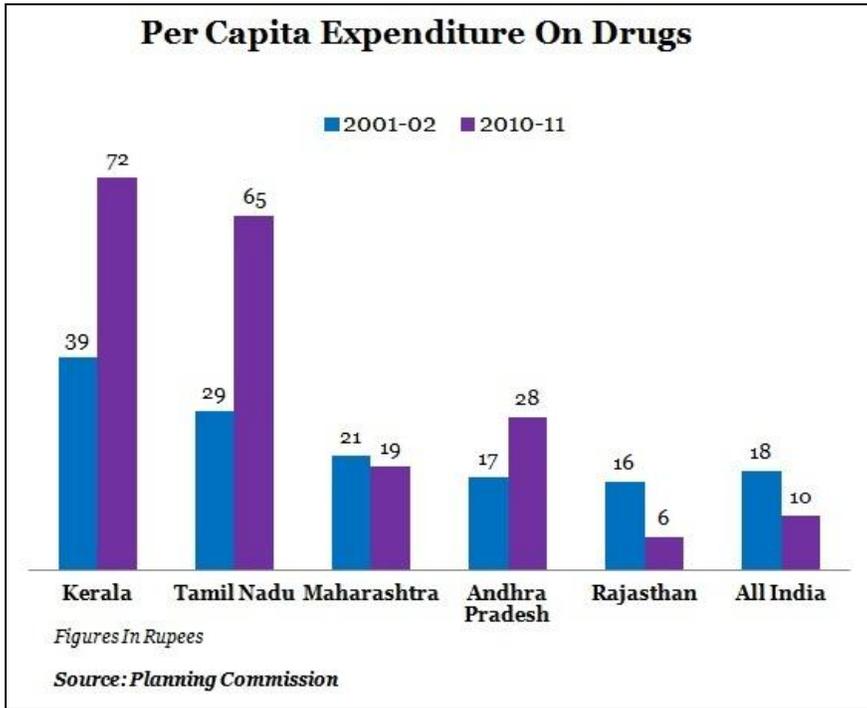
(India Spends, November 23, 2012)

According to “**Planning Commission’s High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Universal Health Coverage**,” Tamil Nadu has the “best drug expenditure as a per cent of its total health expenditure among all the states in India.” Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TMSC) has ensured that around 40 per cent of the hospitalised patients have access to free medicines in the state- the best record in the country.

The article also highlights that drug procurement in India’s public healthcare system is severely underfunded. World Health Statistics Report 2012 states that around 39 million Indians are driven to poverty every year because of ill-health. Some 30 per cent of rural India opts out of treatment because of financial constraints. The report also highlights that “Kerala and Tamil Nadu are the

top two states with higher per capita expenditure on its citizens and high expenditure on drugs.”

The table below gives more details of states' expenditure on medicines:



The Planning Commission document states that TNMC has overcome impediments like inefficient financing mechanisms, high drug prices, unreliable procurement and distribution systems and widespread use of irrational medicines. TNMSC has a well-thought out mechanism of procurement and distribution and quality certificate before releasing medicines, along with blacklisting manufacturers/products that fail the quality checks. TNMSC has around 25 storage houses across the state.

The free medicine model of Tamil Nadu has been attracting the attention of other states. Rajasthan has begun implementing it and Andhra Pradesh is testing it at some outlets in a few hospitals.

<http://www.indiaspend.com/sectors/free-medicine-for-the-poor-a-southern-state-shows-the-way>

Date Accessed: 27.11.2013
(Mahima Malik)

while the national average of PLF was 69.93 per cent.”

The company has also said that it will issue bonds to raise up to Rs 1,750 crore. “This is the state-run company's first bond issue after a gap of over 20 years...Under the scheme, the company will issue tax-free secured redeemable non-convertible bonds.”

As the country's largest power producer NTPC commands a “dominant share in the power production with 27.37 per cent of total power produced. The installed capacity of the company is 18.44 per cent of the total in the country.”

“The chairman said that currently 19,500 MW of projects are under execution and the state run company will soon place orders to procure power equipment for 5000 MW. The new projects that the company plans include are Tanda (1320 MW), Daripalli (1600 MW) and North Karanpura (1980 MW).”

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=100967>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

ENERGY

NTPC will add 14,000 MW to its total capacity by 2016-17

(Press Information Bureau, December 02, 2013)

National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) will add another 14,000 MW to its total capacity – currently 42,500 MW – by the end of 2016-17, said the chairman and managing director of the company, Dr Arup Roychowdhury, also noting that the “company aims to become 1,28,000 MW utility in coming years.”

“The power company has registered a growth of 4.49 per cent of power in this fiscal...[t]he coal stations of the company also registered a growth of 6.67 per cent...On the front of plant load factor, NTPC has scored over other power producers. The plant load factor at the coal station run by NTPC on an average was 87.63 per cent

TECHNOLOGY

Company makes CO2 into liquid fuel, with help from a volcano

(Kevin Bullis, *Technology Review*, November 28, 2013)

Carbon Recycling International (CRI) has built a plant that converts the carbon dioxide into methanol, a fuel and feedstock for making plywood, paints, and other products. It may be the first company anywhere to demonstrate a commercially viable way of making liquid fuel directly from carbon dioxide, which could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, it is working to improve the economic viability of the plant to get cheap power, CO₂ and efficient catalysts. A tax on emissions of carbon dioxide will provide an incentive to capture and use it. The CO₂ emitted by the geothermal plant is also cheaper to capture than the CO₂ from fossil-fuel power plants. In coal-fired plants, where coal is burned in air, it is expensive to separate CO₂ from the product (flue gas) as it has high proportion of nitrogen.

Geothermal plants are often associated with volcanoes and CO₂ is formed by the decomposition of underground carbonate rocks. The amount of CO₂ is relatively small roughly one-20th as much as for coal-fired power plants per kilowatt-hour of electricity. But the geothermal plant emits highly concentrated streams of CO₂ that require less energy and equipment to separate and capture.

<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/521031/company-makes-co2-into-liquid-fuel-with-help-from-a-volcano/>

Date Accessed: 02.12.2013

(Neha Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

Kulik sanctuary bird count soars

(The Telegraph, December 02, 2013)

Encouraged by the rising number of birds post-2010 dip, the forest department has decided to take steps for improving the safety and environment to draw more birds at the Kulik Bird Sanctuary in Raiganj.

Among the migrating birds include Asian open bill storks, night herons and cormorants flock.

Forest officials took measures such as reducing noise pollution and digging ponds to improve the bird count. The number has gone up by 4,000 this year, according to officials.

The sanctuary is of international importance. It is estimated to support 32 per cent to 40 per cent of the

existing population of Asian open-bills.

Additional steps like keeping a vigilance committee that keeps a track of stealing of branches and use of loudspeakers by people in the forest area.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131202/jsp/siliguri/story_17632582.jsp#.UpxuZsQW3Yp

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Three clusters in Tamil Nadu 'Critically Polluted' again

(The New Indian Express, November 30, 2013)

The latest round of the Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI), a parameter used by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to decide on moratoriums for activity expansion in industrial clusters across the country, has put three of the four such major clusters in Tamil Nadu in the 'critically polluted' category yet again. The four clusters studied in the State are Coimbatore, Cuddalore, Manali and Vellore. The MoEF had lifted the moratorium on Coimbatore in 2010.

"The same happened to Cuddalore in February 2011, after the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) certified that the pollution index for the cluster has dropped to 54 from 77.5 in 2011. The moratoriums on the other two critically polluted clusters - Vellore and Manali - continued. But now, based on the latest CEPI scores, the MoEF, in an Office Memorandum on September 17, has lifted the moratorium in place on Manali since it has shown a decreasing trend in the CEPI index compared to 2011."

On the other hand, the freeze on environment clearances in Vellore has been extended as no considerable change in the figures is visible over the last two years. Activists, however,

point out that there is complete lack of transparency in both the drawing of the CEPI as well as the issuance of the moratoriums.

http://newindianexpress.com/states/tamil_nadu/3-TN-Clusters-Critically-Polluted-

[Again/2013/11/29/article1917488.ece](http://newindianexpress.com/states/tamil_nadu/3-TN-Clusters-Critically-Polluted-Again/2013/11/29/article1917488.ece)

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Anjana John)

LAW AND JUSTICE

SC frames guidelines for determining live-in relationships

(PTI, December 01, 2013)

The Supreme Court has framed guidelines for bringing live-in relationship within the expression 'relationship in the nature of marriage' for protection of women under Domestic Violence (DV) Act.

A bench of Justice K S Radhakrishnan and Pinaki Chandra Ghose have held that duration of relation, shared household, pooling of financial and domestic arrangements, entrusting the responsibility, sexual relationship, bearing children, socialisation in public and intention and conduct of the parties are some of the criteria to be considered for determining nature of relation between parties. The court further held that the above guidelines are not exhaustive but will definitely give some insight into such relationships.

Expanding further, the court held that for duration of period of relationship, the bench said section 2(f) of the DV Act has used the expression "at any point of time", which means a "reasonable period of time to maintain and continue a relationship which may vary from case to case, depending upon the fact situation."

The Court explained the guideline of pooling of resources and financial arrangements as "supporting each other, or any one of them, financially, sharing bank accounts, acquiring immovable properties in joint names or in the name of the woman, long term investments in business, shares in separate and joint names, so as to have a long standing relationship, may be a guiding factor".

The bench said domestic arrangements, where there is entrustment of responsibility, especially on the woman to run the home, do the household activities like cleaning, cooking, maintaining or up-keeping the house are indication of a relationship in the nature of marriage.

The guidelines include presence of sexual relationship and children which mean, "Marriage like relationship refers to sexual relationship, not just for pleasure, but for emotional and intimate relationship, for procreation of children, so as to give emotional support, companionship and also material affection, caring etc. Having children is a strong indication of a relationship in the nature of marriage. Parties, therefore, intend to have a long standing relationship. Sharing the responsibility for bringing up and supporting them is also a strong indication."

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-12-01/news/44619595_1_sexual-relationship-live-in-relationship-guidelines

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Deepti Somani)

SC: Trial courts can't reject suit for non-payment of court fee alone

(The Hindu, December 02, 2013)

The Supreme Court has held that trial courts cannot reject a civil suit relating to property dispute for non-payment of court fees alone.

A Bench of Justices S.J. Mukhopadhaya and V. Gopala Gowda, while giving the ruling held, "Article 39A of the Constitution [Directive Principles] is equally applicable to the district judiciary. It is the duty of the courts to see that justice is meted out to people irrespective of their socio-economic condition, cultural rights or gender identity. Further, Article 39A of the Constitution provides for a holistic approach in imparting justice. It not only provides for free legal aid via appointment of counsel for the litigants, but also ensures that justice is not denied to litigating parties due to financial difficulties."

Writing the judgment, Justice Gowda said: "Further, Section 12(h) of the Legal Services Authorities Act, provides that every person who has to file or defend a case shall be entitled to legal services under this Act." The Bench further upheld, "If for any reason, it is not possible for the appellant to pay the court fee, he is at liberty to approach the jurisdictional district legal service authority and Taluk Legal Services Committee seeking legal aid for sanction of court fee."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/trial-courts-cant-reject-suit-for-nonpayment-of-court-fee-alone/article5411386.ece>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Deepti Somani)

RTI applicant if denied information is entitled compensation under Consumer Protection Act

(LiveLaws, December 02, 2013)

The Ernakulam Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum (CDRF) has passed a landmark order holding that if an Right To Information (RTI) applicant is denied information, it will be considered as deficiency in service and the applicant will be entitled to compensation under the Consumer Protection Act.

Seeking to know the names of the councilors who failed to convene ward *sabhas* once in three months, the applicant had filed an RTI application at the Kochi Corporation, but the Public Information Officer (PIOs) of the Corporation failed to give him the information. After which, the General Secretary of the Human Rights Defence (HRD) Forum approached the forum seeking a directive on the issue and compensation, saying the rejection of his application without any credible reason amounted to deficiency in service on the part of the corporation.

The forum quoted a verdict of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), and said that the RTI Act does not provide remedy to an applicant who is seeking information if information sought is not provided resulting in deficiency in service on that count, as remedy under the RTI Act would only take care of disciplinary action and penalty against the competent authority in not providing the information. Stating that if the complainant was not satisfied with its reply, he should have approached the appellate authority under the RTI Act, the corporation informed that under the Act there was no provision to claim compensation for deficiency in service and the information sought was with the

coordinators of the *sabhas* in 74 wards in the Kochi Corporation.

The forum however held the contention to be unsustainable as the coordinators were supposed to send a copy of the proceedings of the *sabhas* to councilors within five days. The case of the complainant would fall within the scope and ambit of Section 2(i) (o) of the Consumer Protection Act, which stipulates that service means service of any description which is made available to potential users that include purveying of news or supplying of other information. The forum said it amounts to deficiency in service as the Information Officer failed in his duties, and directed the officer to pay the complainant Rs.5, 000 as compensation and Rs.1, 000 towards the cost in 30 days.

<http://www.livelaw.in/rti-applicant-if-denied-information-is-entitled-compensation-under-consumer-protection-act/>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013

(Deepti Somani)

GENDER

Include witch hunting under laws on domestic violence and sexual harassment: study

(Aarti Dhar, *The Hindu*, December 01, 2013)

A study titled “Contemporary Practices of Witch Hunting: A Report on Social Trends and the Interface with Law” indicates the need to think about witch-hunting as a form of violence against women which needs to be brought under the purview of Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013.

Witch-hunting appeared to be a prevalent form of violence not just against single-women and widows but is also used to target middle aged women fully ensconced in their marital homes.

Partners for Law in Development (PLD) conducted the study in three States - Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh - with support from the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Findings:

- In 46 out of 48 case studies, the primary victims were women
- Victims cut across castes and communities
- Victims largely belong to weaker socio economic strata
- Witch hunting is embedded in disputes, jealousies and tensions that fester between intimates
- It arises in contexts where affordable, accessible quality health care and education are largely absent

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/include-witch-hunting-under-laws-on-domestic-violence-and-sexual-harassment-study/article5409558.ece>

Date Accessed: 2.12.2013
(Divashri Mathur)

40 per cent of Indian men are ‘Rigidly Masculine’: A study

(Lubna Kably, *The Times Of India*, December 04, 2013)

Preliminary findings of International Centre for Research on Women’s (ICRW) research paper, covering seven Indian states, finds that **“around two in five men in India — nearly 40.7 per cent — were found to hold “rigid and discriminatory gender views.”** The study relates “traits of masculinity” in men with son preference and violence against women partners. It also suggests that inclusive programs that motivate men to change their ‘rigidly masculine outlook’ are important to empower women.

ICRW has classified men into various categories — **“equitable men, flexible behaviour men, flexible attitude men and the rigidly masculine.”**

Men falling under “rigidly masculine” category are controlling and consider “women to be inferior” than men. The research finds that men in this category **“are three times more likely to physically abuse their partner and nearly four times likelier to want their wives to bear a son over a daughter.”** At the aggregate level, 72 per cent of them have a high son preference versus 19 per cent of equitable men. The findings also show that “men with a secondary or higher education and urban men are more likely to be equitable. Economic stress also increases likelihood of rigid notions.”

ICRW researchers interviewed 9,205 men and 3,158 women aged 18-49 from Haryana, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and UP. **States where traces of “rigid masculinity” in men was found to be the highest are Uttar Pradesh (64 per cent) and Odisha and**

comparatively lower in Rajasthan (22 per cent) and Maharashtra (25 per cent).

Nearly 27 per cent women, in aggregate across the states surveyed, reported violence in the past year. In UP, 44.6 per cent women reported being subjected to violence.

In terms of women's admitting to having suffered violence, the aggregate prevalence was 31 per cent and the highest at 59 per cent was reported in Odisha.

The research recommends that **'men must be part of the solution'**. Empowerment of women cannot take place in an exclusive space. The research cites the example of “Men Against Violence & Abuse (MAVA)”, an organisation which has been engaging men to change their traditional male-dominated outlook and be ‘part of the solution’.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/40-of-Indian-men-are-hardcore-sexists-Study/articleshow/26813310.cms>

Date Accessed: 29.11.2013
(Mahima Malik)

Cradle baby scheme hopes to end female infanticide in Tamil Nadu

(Nita Bhalla, *Live Mint*, December 03, 2013)

The article talks about the contribution of Tamil Nadu’s “Cradle Babies” scheme in reducing female infanticide in a country where financial pressures associated with dowries force parents to abort female foetuses though the practice is illegal. A 2011 study in *The Lancet* medical journal found up to 12 million Indian girls had been aborted in the past three decades.

“Cradle Babies” is a government project that permits parents to give unwanted baby girls anonymously to the state, saving them from possible

death in a region where daughters are seen as a burden and where their murder is a common reality. Started in 1992, the project runs in dusty towns and mud-and-brick villages across Tamil Nadu. It allows parents to leave unwanted baby girls in dozens of empty cradles in hospitals, welfare centres and government offices. The children are then sent to registered orphanages like the Life Line Trust where they are put up for adoption. “Since the Cradle Baby programme began, poverty-stricken parents and single mothers have handed-in over 3,700 children, mostly girls. More than 3,600 of them have been adopted by childless, middle-class couples in Tamil Nadu.”

While the project has been praised for potentially saving the lives of thousands of Indian girls, on the other hand human rights activists have criticised it, accusing authorities of encouraging abandonment of girls and promoting low status of women in this largely patriarchal society.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/dFanHp3DvymnBM1sKN97RcJ/Cradle-Baby-scheme-hopes-to-end-female-infanticide.html>

Date Accessed: 04.12.2013
(Anjana John)

REGIONALISM

Ranchi hamlet is India's model for wasteland conversion

(Basant Kumar Mohanty, *The Telegraph*, December 2, 2013)

The Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) under the MNGREGS has been beneficial, yet another time, for 50 tribal families of Sonubeda village in Ranchi district. A check dam on a stream has increased the area of cultivable farmland from 10 to 110 acres.

The region being hilly had little irrigation facilities and was deemed to be a wasteland. Thus, the people were entirely dependent on collecting and selling minor forest produce.

This has now raised the aspirations of the forest dwellers, who can now think of earning Rs1.5-2 lakhs annually from agriculture. Villagers are now farming at least three crops a year.

The Union Rural Development Ministry (MoRD) is likely to ask other states to identify potential projects to replicate Sonubeda's success story. The ministry will also undertake a survey that will find the number of durable assets created under the MGNREGS.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131202/jsp/frontpage/story_17633485.jsp#.UpxuYMQW3Yp

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Pallavi Ghosh)

ELDERLY

Give universal pension for a dignified life (*Im4change*)

The Pension Parishad has demanded that a “Universal and Non Contributory Old Age Pension System should be established with a minimum dignified amount of monthly pension not less than 50 per cent of minimum wage or Rs 2000/- per month, whichever is higher.” The Parishad is pressing for “universalisation of pension during the Winter Session of Parliament” because despite several rounds of talk with the government the timeline for implementation still remains uncertain.

“The percentage share of elderly population (60 years and above) in India's total population has risen from 6.8 per cent in 1991 to 7.4 per cent in 2001 and further to 8.6 per cent in 2011.” “However, just one-fifth of entire elderly population is covered

under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). The IGNOAPS, which is meant only for those who live Below the Poverty Line (BPL), is laden with corruption and leakages.”

Also, the amount of Rs. 200 per month, which people receive under the IGNOAPS, “is meagre in the backdrop of soaring inflation of 7.0 per cent (in Wholesale Price Index).” Therefore, campaign leaders want monthly pensions under the Universal Pension Scheme to be linked with inflation. “The economic growth which India has experienced in the past has failed to provide social security to the majority in the form of pension.”

<http://www.im4change.org/news-alerts/give-universal-pension-for-a-dignified-life-23512.html>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Ashwin Varghese)

INDIA AND THE WORLD

Centre scraps special India- Bangladesh passport

(Shahkar Abidi, *DNA*,
December 03, 2013)

“More than 41 years after the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war after India introduced specially designated India-Bangladesh Passport (IBP) for facilitating travel between the two countries; the service became extinct on November 30. According to the officials, IBP was started soon after the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war to ease out the movement of people between the two regions as thousands of Bengalis had migrated from the then East Pakistan following partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

The development follows repeated intelligence inputs that illegal Bangladeshi immigrants could act as terror conduits or pose security threat to the nation. There have been cases wherein these immigrants were caught with fake IBP passports. According to records available with the Mumbai Police, 7,698 Bangladeshi nationals have been arrested and 3,009 deported between 2009 and February 2013.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-dna-special-centre-scraps-special-india-bangladesh-passport-1928648>

Date Accessed: 3.12.2013
(Karishma Mutreja)

Mexico: A new frontier for India

(Ambassador R.
Viswanathan, *Gateway House*,
November 22, 2013)

Mexico has developed strategic partnerships and alliances with

countries around the world that India must find a way to become a part of and benefit from.

A member of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Pacific Alliance, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Mexico has signed Free Trade Area (FTA) agreements with 44 countries who account for 70 per cent of global GDP. It has joined the influential Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which is negotiating a new generation economic partnership among 12 countries, going beyond conventional FTAs.

Mexico is already India's second largest economic partner in Latin America after Brazil, over which it has a competitive edge. While Brazil and Argentina have erected a number of barriers for imports and bureaucratic policies can be uncertain, Mexican market is open, with low tariffs and government policies are stable, transparent, and predictable. A slew of reforms in key sectors have led to Mexico's trade of \$740 billion become larger than the combined total of Brazil and Argentina at \$665 billion in 2012.

This makes Mexico an attractive base for Indian companies with global strategies. Indian IT companies like TCS are already leveraging its unique position (linguistic and geographical) for their global delivery services. At least a dozen Indian companies use Mexico as a base for the manufacture of tyres, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and auto parts – mainly for exports to the United States.

Emerging Indian multinationals must find a way to leverage Mexico's access to NAFTA and EU markets and its competitive manufacturing.

The Indian Government must take the initiative and finally sign a FTA with Mexico at the earliest, to eliminate the large tariff disadvantage faced by Indian

exporters vis-a-vis those of the 44 countries which have FTAs with Mexico.

<http://www.gatewayhouse.in/mexico-a-new-frontier-for-india/>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Gayatri Verma)

Meghalaya proposes to setup 22 border haats along Bangladesh border

(*Meghalaya Times*, December
05, 2013)

Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma during the conclusion of the policy meeting on “Economic and Transport development in the border areas in Eastern and South Asia,” informed that the State Government has revised its proposal and has requested the central Government to set up 22 border haats instead of 12 haats along the state's 443-km long International border with Bangladesh.

Speaking about the success of the two existing border haats (markets) in Kalaichar and Balat, the Chief Minister informed that “presently, Meghalaya is the only State in India to have border haats with Bangladesh although there are proposals to open similar haats in Assam, Tripura and other States with their respective border with Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, the policy meet recommended that the north-eastern region needs to develop its poor transportation system, especially along the border areas. It also stressed on the need to revive old border haats and open new ones and further suggested that Special Economic Zones be created along the border so that locally produced items could be value added in these zones for export to countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and further beyond.

<http://meghalayetimes.info/index.php/front-page/23108-meghalaya-proposes-to-setup-22-border-haats-along-bangladesh-border>

Date Accessed: 06.12.2013
(Junty Sharma Pathak)

India-Japan: The new Indo-Pacific core

(M.D. Nalapat, *Gateway House*, November 06, 2013)

Emperor Akihito's visit to India after 40 years is of great significance. The addition of Japan as a genuine ally of India will be helpful in giving our country greater leverage in the emerging new international order. The India-Japan alliance needs to be viewed through a prism broader than that of "containing" China, and by treating the Indian and Pacific oceans as a single entity. Such an alliance has the potential to strengthen the geopolitical security of India and Japan, along with that of all their allies and associates

Delhi has an opportunity to play the keystone role, together with Japan, in crafting the architecture of a partnership in a natural triangle of prosperity within the Indian Ocean.

The three sides of this new Indian Ocean construct will be the west coast of India, the east coast of Africa and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC has the capital, east Africa the resources and west India the technology to ensure a Triangle of Prosperity which could lead to a breakout from poverty within a single generation of partnership.

For Japan, the Indian Ocean states provide a market and an arena for cooperation in security and finance – the beginning, perhaps, of new financial architectures outside of the dominant Western systems.

India can facilitate Japan's participation in this new strategic

space, Japan can reciprocate the favour to India in the Pacific. In this way Tokyo-Delhi will become the centre of gravity in the Indo-Pacific.

This will allow India to look deeper both East and West, and favour Japan's comprehensive integration into the West Asian and east African economies – a position now dominated by the West and China. The gravitational pull of an India-Japan alliance will provide the Indo-Pacific countries a third strategic choice that offers a more balanced security and economic global architecture.

<http://www.gatewayhouse.in/the-new-indo-pacific-core/>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Gayatri Verma)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS **World Bank** **poorly prepared** **for conflict** **countries – study**

(*World Bank*, December 03, 2013)

An in-house Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) study highlights that "World Bank's anti-poverty programmes are not well-structured to help countries that are facing conflicts, and do too little for women suffering from violence."

The Group has found that the World Bank needs better preparedness strategies for "conflict and fragile areas." The World Bank has prioritised 370 million people living in 33 "low-income fragile and conflict-affected states" for extending help. Anis Danim, the lead analyst for the IEG, said that "the World Bank programmes in poor conflict countries have registered progress in areas like community-driven development and building citizen

capacity, for instance providing access to education and health care."

Fragile and conflict-affected states need more tailored strategies for assistance they are poorer, have poor growth rates and have higher population growth rates. Hence, it needs to focus on better preparation of programmes in these "conflict areas."

The Bank also "paid insufficient attention to conflict-related violence against women and economic empowerment of women in low-income fragile and conflict-affected states."

Additionally, The Group notes that it "lacks a realistic framework for inclusive growth and jobs that is based on economic opportunities and constraints in fragile and conflict-affected states."

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/539393/world-bank-poorly-prepared-for-conflict-countries-study>

Date Accessed: 29.11.2013
(Mahima Malik)

WTO rules must **address food** **security needs of** **developing** **countries – UN** **expert**

(*UN News Centre*, December 02, 2013)

Olivier De Schutter, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food has called, on December 02, 2013, for policy changes that will allow developing countries the freedom to use their reserves to help secure the right to food without the threat of sanctions under current World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

His call came on the eve of a high-level WTO summit in Bali, Indonesia, from December 03 to December 06, which will try to

reach agreement on proposals on developing countries' food stockholding for food security, as part of the Doha Round trade negotiations.

"The Bali package should now enshrine the rights of developing countries to use public food reserves for food security without facing sanctions," he underlined. He also said that supporting local food production is the first building block and "trade must complement local production, not justify its abandonment", warning that food security is at high risk when countries become overly dependent on global markets, as shown during the global food crisis of 2007-08.

India's 2013 Food Security Bill mandates public procurement of foodstuffs in order to distribute subsidised grains to much of the population, combined with a minimum support price to ensure adequate incomes for farmers. This has raised concerns that India could breach the tight limits on 'trade-distorting support' applied to developing countries under current WTO rules.

Mr. De Schutter insisted that any agreement in Bali must give developing countries sufficient guarantees to be able to push ahead with ambitious food security policies. He noted that the Indian Food Security Bill is aimed at stocks for domestic distribution rather than export onto world markets. The UN expert also outlined a series of additional flexibilities that developing countries need in order to reconcile food security and free trade.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46637&Cr=food+security&Cr1=#.Up4lTie5ztA>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

Nobel Prize economist warns of U.S. stock market bubble

(Madeline Chambers, Mark Potter, *Reuters*, December 01, 2013)

Robert Shiller, Nobel Prize winner for research into market prices and asset bubbles, believes that sharp rises in equity and property prices could lead to a dangerous financial bubble and the U.S. stock market and Brazilian property market as areas of concern. The prices of the property have increased recently. He also studied the drastically higher house prices in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil in the last five years and he concluded that the situation is a very similar to United States of 2004

Bubbles are created when investors do not recognise when rising asset prices get detached from underlying fundamentals. The collapse of the U.S. housing market helped trigger the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/12/01/economy-shiller-idINDEE9B005X20131201>

Date Accessed: 2.12.2013
(Neha Singh)

EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

China ready for space cooperation with India

(*The Echo of India*, December 02, 2013)

China, which successfully launched its first ever mission to land an unmanned spacecraft on the Moon, has expressed interest in space cooperation with India which has sent its first interplanetary mission to Mars. "The probe Chang'e-3 was launched into orbit last night aboard an enhanced 56.4 metre high Long March-3B carrier rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre." The launch came a day after India's Mars orbiter Mangalyaan left the Earth for a 300-day journey to the Red Planet. Chinese space scientists are looking forward to cooperation with other countries, including the country's close neighbour India.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/beijing-china-ready-space-cooperation-india-42721>

Date Accessed: 03.12.2013
(Anjana John)