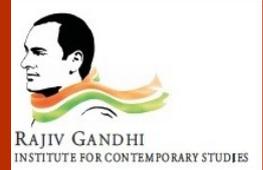


Issue
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RGICS POLICY WATCH



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Upcoming Seminars

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- Passport Seva goes rural through Common Services Centers
- New policy to revive agroforestry

Disclaimer: The articles are summaries of the original article and the headlines have been changed in certain cases. For the original articles please click on the link given below the article.

THE RISK OF JOBLESS RECOVERY: INDIA'S UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE



Source: Livemint

*Compiled by RGICS
Jawahar Bhawan, New Delhi
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Key Message

Policy Watch is a key instrument of RGICS's vision and strategy.

RGICS's core vision is opening up the Indian state to peoples' voice -- in its legislative, executive and judicial functions.

Elected representatives and political parties have a central responsibility in channeling peoples' voice into the functioning of the State. In turn, this requires enhancing the knowledge and capacity of elected representatives and political parties on State policy.

Policy Watch informs elected representatives and other political leaders about key policy developments nationally and globally. This will enable them to intervene in policy decision making and reflect people's voice.

Produced by a dedicated and talented team of scholars at RGICS, led by our young RG-RALs, Policy Watch is a unique product that presents information and analysis about policy for a political audience. Policy Watch has by now covered over a thousand policy issues.

Team RGICS

THE RISK OF JOBLESS RECOVERY: INDIA'S UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

Growth rate data released by various international organizations have revealed that the world economy is expected to see a modest recovery. There are encouraging signs of recovery especially in those advanced economies most affected by the global financial crisis which erupted in 2008. Also, a number of emerging and developing countries – including recently in Sub-Saharan Africa – are enjoying relatively robust economic growth. The world economy may thus be growing somewhat faster than over the past three years.

Despite this good news, the report titled *The Risk of Jobless Recovery: Global Employment Trends 2014* by International Labour Organization has painted a grim picture of the global employment scenario. According to the report the gradual increase in the growth rate and economic improvements may not be sufficient to absorb the major labour market imbalances that built up in recent years.

Raymond Torres, Director of the ILO Research Department explains, “First, over the fore-seeable future, the world economy will probably grow less than was the case before the global crisis. This complicates the task of generating the more than 42 million jobs that are needed every year in order to meet the growing number of new entrants in the labour market.

Second, and more fundamentally, the root causes of the global crisis have not been properly tackled. The financial system remains the Achilles heel of the world economy. The state of many banks is such that many sustainable enterprises, notably small ones, have limited access to credit, thereby affecting productive investment and job creation. Significant financial bubbles have reappeared in a number of advanced and emerging economies, adding new uncertainties and affecting hiring decisions. Also, global labour incomes continue to increase at a slower pace than justified by observed productivity gains, thus affecting aggregate demand.

Third – and this is an important new finding in view of the post-2015 development debate – little progress is being made in reducing working poverty and vulnerable forms of employment such as informal jobs and undeclared work. If confirmed, this trend would unambiguously delay the achievement of development goals.”

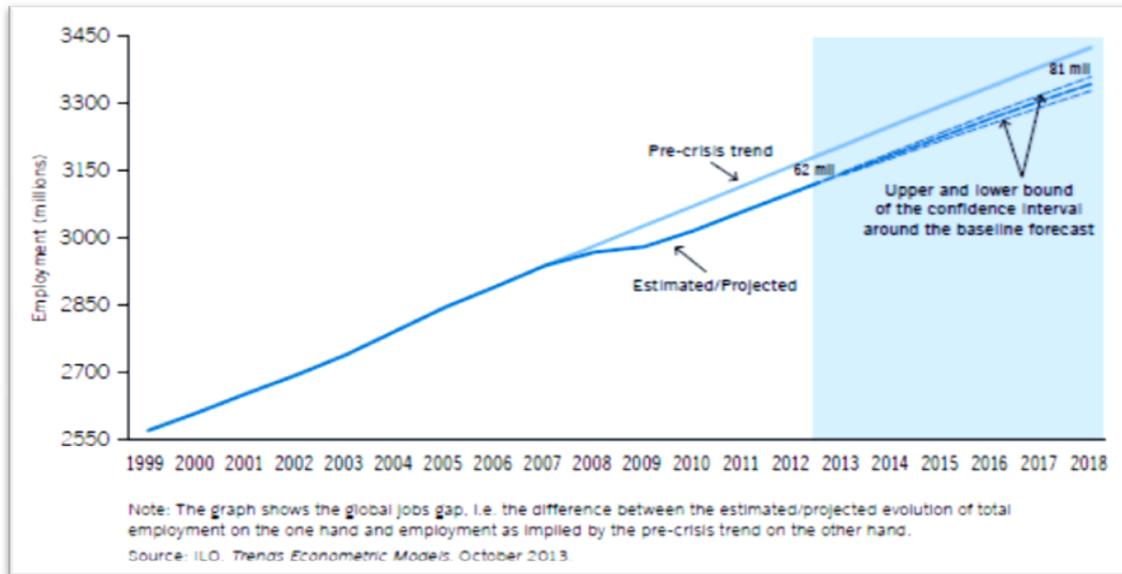
CURRENT GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

According to the ILO, almost 202 million people were unemployed in 2013 around the world, an increase of almost 5 million compared with the year before. This reflects the fact that employment is not expanding sufficiently fast to keep up with the growing labour force.

The bulk of the increase in global unemployment is in the East Asia and South Asia regions, which together represent more than 45 per cent of additional jobseekers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. By contrast, Latin America added fewer than 50,000 additional unemployed to the global number – or around 1 per cent of the total increase in un-employment in 2013.

Overall, the crisis-related global jobs gap that has opened up since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008, over and above an already large number of jobseekers, continues to widen. In 2013, this gap reached 62 million jobs, including 32 million additional jobseekers, 23 million people that became discouraged and no longer look for jobs and 7 million economically inactive people that prefer not to participate in the labour market.

Figure 1: The crisis-related global jobs gap

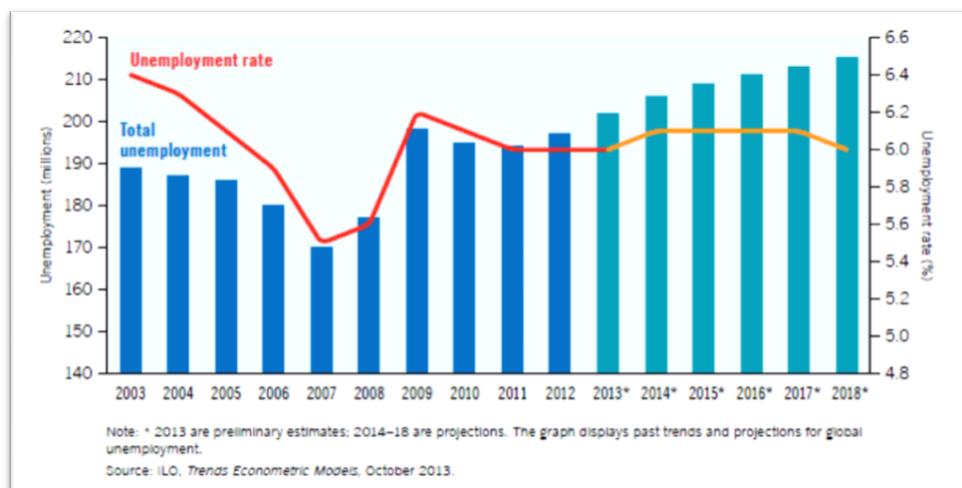


By sector, services accounted for more than half of total global employment growth in 2013, while agricultural employment accounted for around one quarter. Overall, just below 32 per cent of the world’s workforce was employed in the agricultural sector in 2013, a decline of 11.7 percentage points over the previous two decades. The services sector employed 45.1 per cent of the world’s workers in 2013 and the share of services workers rose by 10.1 percentage points over the same period. Industrial employment now accounts for around 23 per cent of all global employment, an increase of only 1.6 percentage points over the past two decades. In 2013, employment in industry grew by 9.7 million, compared with an average of more than 21 million new industrial jobs annually between 2010 and 2012.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

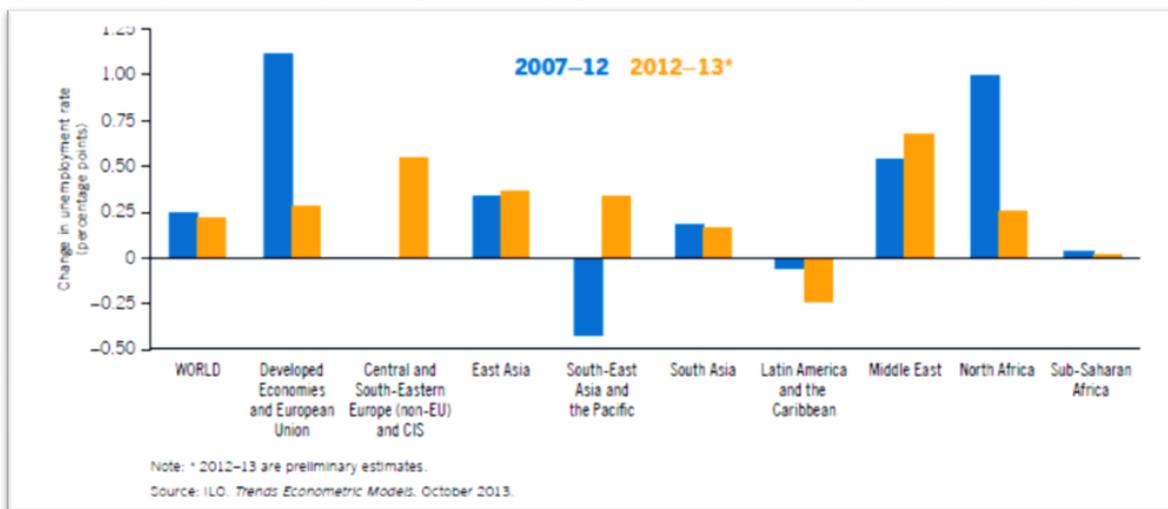
If current trends continue, global unemployment is set to worsen further, gradually reaching more than 215 million jobseekers by 2018. During this period, around 40 million net new jobs would be created every year, which is less than the 42.6 million people that are expected to enter the labour market every year. The global unemployment rate would remain broadly constant during the next five years, at half a percentage point higher than before the crisis.

Figure 2: Global unemployment trends and projections 2003-18



The young population has been the worst hit by the increase in unemployment. This is alarming when one considers that the world has never been younger. The population in the age group of 15 to 24 is the largest ever at about 1.2 billion. “It is estimated that some 74.5 million young people—aged 15-24—were unemployed in 2013, which is 1 million more than in the year before,” states the report. The global unemployment rate for youngsters was 13.1 per cent, which was three times that for adults (above 24 years of age). As a result, the average age of young people entering the market has gone up in developing countries, where youngsters are turning to higher education because they are not getting jobs. In developed countries, they are waiting for the job scenario to improve.

Figure 3: Average annual change in the youth unemployment rate, selected time periods (percentage points)



As the recovery remains weak, the average length of unemployment spells has increased considerably, a further sign of feeble job creation. In many advanced economies, the duration of unemployment has doubled in comparison with the pre-crisis situation. Such long unemployment spells are detrimental to the speed of labour market recovery even when economic activity is set to accelerate. First, they constitute a considerable burden for the public purse, requiring governments to raise taxes or cut spending elsewhere if they do not want to or cannot increase the fiscal deficit. More importantly, jobseekers who have been out of employment for long periods lose their skills at an accelerating pace, making it more difficult for them to find alternative employment at a similar occupation or skill level.

Joblessness has also pushed informal employment that accounted for 90 per cent of the employment opportunities in South Asia in 2013. It was around 70 per cent in 2011. “Even though progress in reducing poverty has been the strongest in these regions (South Asia), the lack of formal employment opportunities is likely to constitute a barrier to a sustainable further reduction in poverty,” states the report. Informal employment accounted for more than 20 per cent of the total employment in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (countries formed out of former Soviet Union). In Latin America, it was below 20 per cent.

Consequently, there is increase in vulnerable employment – that is, either self-employment or work by contributing family workers – which accounts for almost 48 per cent of total employment. Also, the number of working poor continues to decline globally, but at a slower rate than during previous decades. Working poor are those whose incomes fall below a given poverty line. Close to 11.8 per cent of the world’s employed workers lived on less than US\$1.25 per day, whereas 26.7 per cent employed workers had to cope with US\$2 a day or less in 2013.

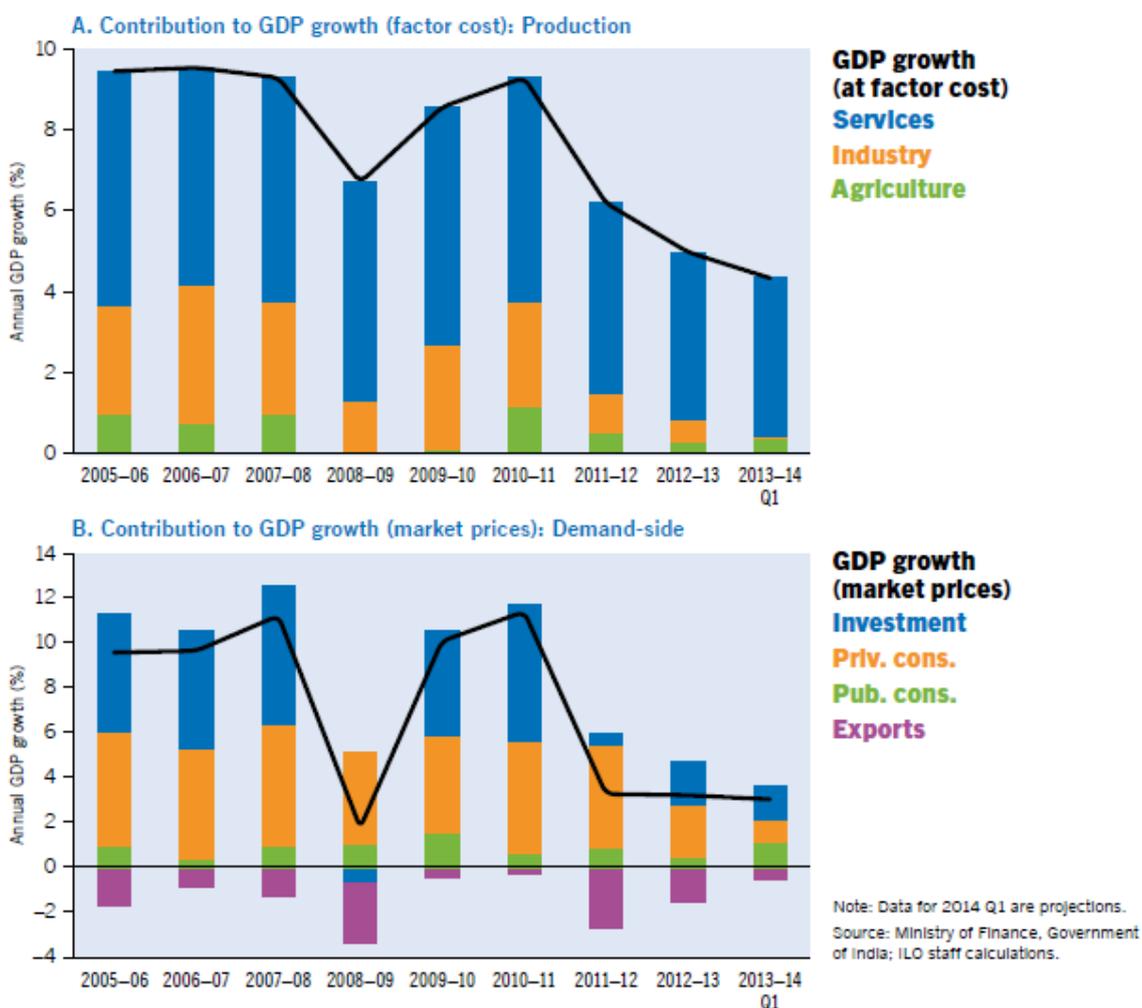
INDIA: PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE

Between 2011 and 2013, growth in emerging economies slowed markedly, another major trend shaping global labour markets. In the previous decade, China grew at 10.5 per cent annually, but growth decelerated to 7.6 per cent in 2013 and is expected to slow further to an average of 7.0 per cent in the period from 2014 to 2018. India grew at a rate of only 3.2 per cent in 2012. Even though growth re-accelerated to 3.8 per cent in 2013, this figure is still far below the 7.6 per cent observed on average between 2001 and 2010. Brazil has also seen more growth in 2013

compared with 2012, but growth fell short by more than 1 percentage point of the figures achieved over the period from 2001 to 2010. In the Russian Federation and South Africa, economic growth slowed by 1.9 and 0.5 percentage points respectively in 2013 compared to the previous year; current growth is also slower than in the years from 2001 to 2010. Aside from the BRICS countries, other emerging and developing economies have also seen growth slowdowns in the past 3 years, such as Argentina, Mexico, Thailand and Viet Nam.

India's growth slowed down because of over-dependency on services industry, which reduced manufacturing and agricultural output. The region also faced a number of macroeconomic challenges such as high inflation and bloated current account deficit. As a result, while India added a healthy 13.9 million jobs between 2009-10 and 2012-13, most were created in the informal sector. Also, the practice of contractual work increased in multinational companies in India and in South Asia during this period. This led to a substantial increase in working poor and vulnerable employment (59 per cent in 2013). The region also reported the lowest percentage of salaried class (22.5 per cent) compared to other regions.

Figure 4: Two views of the drivers of growth in India: Services and consumption



The report predicts that the employment situation in the region will not improve in the near future despite the area having a growing young population and infrastructure. The biggest challenge for many countries in the region is the fact that they face considerable political uncertainty and security threats (Afghanistan, the Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan), which makes it imperative need to enhance efforts to ensure that growth translates into more decent employment, especially for the young men and women entering the labour market in the coming years.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Despite continuing risks, a modest recovery has occurred in recent months in the developed world, which may strengthen global economic growth in 2014. However, at current levels, growth is too weak to significantly improve the situation of workers worldwide. In many economies, particularly in the euro area, GDP levels are still far below the levels observed before the crisis, which is reflected in high unemployment figures. Some developing and emerging economies are lagging behind the economic growth rates observed in the past decade, resulting in slower poverty alleviation. Decent job creation slowed almost everywhere in the world, with a significant deceleration in both wage employment and industrial employment growth. In addition, the average unemployment duration increased in many countries. Significant policy action is urgently required to tackle the key factors that prevent labour markets worldwide from recovering.

Persistent weakness in labour markets and economic growth necessitates a policy re-think. On the current economic and policy trajectory, unemployment is likely to continue to rise further, as a steady wave of new jobseekers – more than 220 million – enter the global labour market over the next five years without sufficient decent work opportunities to absorb them. A lack of policy coordination has led to heightened uncertainty, resulting in sub-optimal hiring and investment rates by firms and weaker spending by households. To ensure lasting job recovery, the report highlights the role of a strategy that combines short-term measures (job-friendly macroeconomic and labour market policies) with further action to tackle long-standing imbalances. Such a strategy would strengthen the economic recovery and pave the way for more and better jobs. The report makes a few policy suggestions to combat the labour crisis:

- Address weak aggregate demand through improved labour incomes and less fiscal consolidation
- Address high hiring uncertainty through better policy coordination
- Address inactivity and skills mismatch through active labour market policies

Most notably, stronger efforts are needed to accelerate employment creation and to support the enterprises that create jobs. Active labour market policies and skills development initiatives, along with investments in public infrastructure and in strong social protection systems should be prioritized as appropriate, given national circumstances and specificities.

Across all countries, future policy development must respect international labour standards, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. These must be under-pinned by effective social dialogue, with workers, employers and governments collaborating to design and enact effective policies to promote a strong and sustainable recovery in the real economy and in the labour market.

Source:

ILO Report, http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233953/lang--en/index.htm

(Simi Sunny)

Centre launches health scheme for minority students

(The Echo of India, March 04, 2014)

The central government has launched the 'Maulana Azad Sehat Scheme' which would see a 'Sehat Card' being issued to each minority student enrolled in institutions aided by the Maulana Azad Education Foundation.

“Under this scheme, which was launched by minority affairs minister K Rahman Khan, students in the age group of five-fourteen years will be provided with a health card which will entitle them to free check-ups twice a year at the place where they are studying.” Union finance minister P Chidambaram had in his budget speech announced that medical facilities for students would be provided through institutions financed by the Maulana Azad Education Foundation. He had earmarked Rs 100 crore for the same.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/new-delhi-govt-launches-health-scheme-minority-students-50595>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Anjana John)

Passport Seva goes rural through Common Services Centers

(Ministry of External Affairs, February 28, 2014)

The Ministry of External Affairs, along with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited (which is promoted by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology), is all set to launch Passport related services through the vast network of over one lakh Common Services Centers (CSCs) across rural hinterland. The initiative would largely bridge the digital divide in the country.

The CSC Scheme was approved by the Government of India in September 2006 for setting up of Internet enabled centers in rural areas under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). The CSCs are the delivery points for Government, Private and Social Sector services in the areas of agriculture, health, education, banking, insurance, pension, utility bill payments, entertainment, etc. to rural citizens of India at their doorstep. The passport related services are being added as part of their bouquet of services.

The CSCs would facilitate filling and uploading of Passport application form, payment of applicable fee (through debit/credit card or through SBI internet banking/challan mode) and scheduling of appointment for the visit to the Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) at nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100/-. The services through CSCs would be available throughout the week, including during the weekend. The services would be shortly launched in pilot mode at 15 select CSC locations in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand in the second week of March 2014. The full roll out across the country is expected to conclude by end of March 2014.

<http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23015/>

[Passport+Seva+goes+rural+through+Common+Services+Centers](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23015/Passport+Seva+goes+rural+through+Common+Services+Centers)

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

New policy to revive agroforestry

(Jitendra, Down to Earth, March 15, 2014)

The Government of India has allocated Rs 444 crore to promote agroforestry in the country. The National Agroforestry Policy 2014 is envisaged to have the potential to substantially reduce poverty in rural India and revive agroforestry industry.

“Agroforestry is a farming practice in which trees, crops and fodder are grown together on a farmland. Over 80 per cent farmers in India are small land-holders (owning less than two hectares). “Agroforestry will increase biodiversity in small farmlands, which will help mitigate climate change and improve the quality of soil. Also, as land-holding size is shrinking, combining tree farming with agriculture is the only way to optimise farm productivity,” says Ashish Mondol, a national advisory council member who steered the committee for drafting the agroforestry

policy.”

While the domestic industries have been underperforming India has been meeting its growing demand for agroforestry products such as plywood, timber, pulp and paper through imports, the country imported six million cubic metres of timber and round logs and spent Rs 18,000 crore last year (National Research Centre for Agroforestry [NCRA])

S K Dhyani, director, NCRA, Jhansi notes that small farmers are not practising agroforestry primarily because of unfavourable regulation of felling and transporting of farm grown trees. The new policy talks of uniform laws for harvesting and transportation of farm grown trees across states.

This sector also lacks institutional insurance facility. “The policy for the first time promises risk coverage to farmers practicing agroforestry against theft and natural calamities such as cyclone, storm, floods and drought.”

“Agroforestry can also help reduce unemployment by creating job opportunities for chopping and transporting of trees. “As per estimates, 64 per cent of our timber requirement is met through trees grown on farms which generate employment for 450 people per day (450 employment-days) per hectare per year,” says Mondol.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/new-policy-revive-agroforestry>

Date Accessed: 05.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

Prescription drug abuse growing in India: UN report

(The Indian Express, March 05, 2014)

According to a UN report, prescription drug abuse is growing in India and the problem is serious in South Asia. The annual report of The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), an independent UN body tasked with monitoring the production and consumption of narcotics, says that the drugs enter the region’s illicit markets through various channels, being diverted from India’s pharmaceutical industry, illicit cultivation within the region and smuggling from other countries, including Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Despite efforts by India to tackle the problem, diversion from illicit channels in the country remains a major source of pharmaceutical preparations trafficked in the region. “Globally also prescription drug abuse – often legally obtained medication by a friend or a family member who no longer needs it or is not using it for medical purposes - is outpacing the rates for illegal drugs in some countries.”

Further, the report found that heroin smuggled into Bangladesh is mostly sourced from India. Cannabis is also smuggled into Bangladesh mostly from India and Nepal. “India remained one of the five main source countries for illicit cannabis resin mentioned by governments worldwide in seizure reports in 2011,” it added. Increased rates of heroin, opium and cocaine were seized in India in 2012.

“Investment in prevention and treatment of drug abuse can lead to significant savings in health-care and crime-related costs, and alleviate the suffering of drug-dependent users and their families, the report said.”

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/prescription-drug-abuse-growing-in-india-un-report/>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Simi Sunny)

India emerges largest shrimp exporter to US

(Exim News Service, March 2, 2014)

India, for the first time, emerged as the largest exporter of shrimps to the US last year. Shrimp exports to the US hit 94,000 tonnes (about half of India's overall shrimp exports) last year valued at \$1 billion.

India now stands at eighth spot among exporters of food items to the US.

"Thailand, the previous largest shrimp exporter to the US, had recorded low production last year owing to the outbreak of a disease called the Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS)," said Mr A. J. Tharakan, President of the Seafood Exporters' Association of India (SEAI). EMS caused aquaculture production in Thailand to drop by about 50%.

According to Mr Thakaran, shrimp prices have increased substantially in global markets, but a further increase is unlikely. In India, the raw material costs for shrimp exports have surged to Rs 600 a kg.

"A further rise in export prices might affect our business with the US. Consumer resistance is already strong in markets such as the US and Europe," said Mr Tharakan.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=75009>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Shruti Issar)

Question over the formula on state funding

(Haseeb A. Drabu, Live Mint, September 29, 2013)

The Raghuram Rajan committee report, which was released in 2013, proposing a new Composite Development Index of states is more than a mere index. As a development index, it is yet another addition to the plethora of existing ones.

The Gadgil formula introduced in 1969, by economic historian D.R. Gadgil, devised a formula for providing plan assistance to states. In 2013, the Committee for Evolving a Composite Development Index Of States "proposed a general method for allocating funds from the Centre to the states based both on a state's development needs as well as its development performance."

The article highlights some major flaws in the index developed by the committee. It suggests that the index "needs to have a deeper connection with the history and politics of the fiscal federal system". The following five observations are made regarding the proposed index:

1. The Committee's recommendations do not address the basic issue of the aggregate pool of plan transfers available for distribution among the states. The real problem of plan transfers is not the "formula" of distribution but how and to what this formula will be applied.
2. Under the existing Gadgil formula, the loan-to-grant ratio is 70:30. The 30 percent grant was supposed to finance the revenue component of capital expenditure without creating debt. However, over the past thirty years, the revenue component (55 percent) has become higher than capital expenditure (45 percent) in states' budget. In this scenario, the report does not answer the crucial question: Is it possible to make the composition flexible depending on the composition of the state plan?
3. Devolution of grant on the basis of monthly per capita consumption expenditure MPCE and not the presently used Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) may also cause problems. This is because of the "infirmity of the MPCE numbers."
4. Most of the key weightages applied in the index seem arbitrary and qualitative. For instance, on what basis has 80% weightage been given to the population and 20% to area? The report must have indicated the sensitivity of the ranking to a change in the weights or multiples.
5. There has to be a clearly stated fiscal result and/or principle associated to these transfers. The report treats

plan transfers in isolation and independent of the other transfers.

A lot of the fiscal imbalance in states, especially in less and least developed ones, is due to fiscal mismanagement of the Union government. The Centre fails to meet its budgeted revenues (out of the total tax revenue to be shared amongst states). In such a scenario, the article puts forth the question: should the fixed part be linked to a minimum guaranteed devolution by the Union government, so that the states are assured of a certain development spending?

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/T6bvO7SgDv4V71GDUnmWO/Goodbye-to-Gadgils-formula.html>

Date Accessed: 01.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

Fully committed to reforms in OTC derivatives: RBI

(The Hindu, March 6, 2014)

The Reserve Bank in a report on 'OTC Derivatives Market Reforms' said that India is fully committed to bring reforms in the over the counter (OTC) derivatives markets, but its pace and nature will depend on the domestic market conditions.

In response to the financial crisis that began in 2008, G20 had initiated a series of reforms designed to strengthen regulation and oversight of the financial system and tasked the Financial Stability Board (FSB) with coordinating the reforms and assessing their implementation. In India, the OTC derivative products were introduced by RBI in a phased manner, keeping in view the hedging needs of the real sector.

Reasonable progress has been made in enforcing the OTC derivative reform measures since RBI initiated steps for adoption of the G20/FSB reforms, said the report. The important aspect of reforms is a commitment to enhance the regulation of OTC derivatives market so as to improve transparency, mitigate systemic risk and protect against market abuse.

The reform agenda consists of standardisation, central clearing, exchange or electronic platform trading, margining and reporting of OTC derivatives transactions to trade repositories. The group recommended the proportion of the market that is standardised should be substantially increased in order to further G—20's goals of increased central clearing and trading on organised platforms.

<http://m.thehindu.com/business/Economy/fully-committed-to-reforms-in-otc-derivatives-rbi/article5757444.ece/?secid=2784>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

GOVERNMENT

Law in the works to regulate lobbying

(Surajeet Das Gupta, Sushmi Dey & Nayanima Basu, *Business Standard*, March 3, 2014)

This article highlights the decision of the government to regulate lobbying by individuals and companies. Under the new law, lobbying firms will have to mandatorily register with an authorised department.

The issue of lobbying had come under scanner when the government last year set up an inquiry committee to examine whether American retail major Walmart lobbied to get access to the Indian market. The committee was set up after an uproar over Walmart's disclosure to the US Senate that it had spent \$25 million on lobbying, including for enhanced market access in India.

"According to senior officials involved in the process, the government will take cues from the US' Lobbying and Disclosure Act, 1995, under which lobbyists in that country are required to register with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate. The law requires firms to file their financial activity reports, detailing their list of clients, and ensures transparency in lobbying activities".

Top government departments, including the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) and the corporate affairs ministry, are involved in the process of framing the law and are said to have already held preliminary meetings on the issue. According to a top official in the ministry said, "Yes, our opinion has been sought on this. We are of the view that lobbying firms should be mandatorily registered with the Registrar of Companies and come under the preview of the Companies Act."

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/law-in-the-works-to-regulate-lobbying-114030200123_1.html

Date Accessed: 3.3.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

Duty imposed on import of input of pharma industry

(*Business Standard*, March 02, 2014)

In order to protect domestic producers, India has imposed a safeguard duty on the import of a chemical used by pharmaceutical and dye industries for 15 months.

The Finance Ministry imposed the safeguard duty on sodium nitrite (the chemical) following recommendation for the same by the Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS).

Sodium Nitrite is a white crystalline powder mostly used in pharmaceutical and dye. It is also used by lubricants, construction chemicals and rubber blowing industries.

The duty will be as follows:

30% ad valorem minus anti-dumping duty payable, if any, when imported during the period from February 26, 2014 to February 25, 2015.

28% ad valorem, minus anti-dumping duty payable, if any, during February 26, 2015 to May 25, 2015 period.

India's major source of imports is China and European nations. Imports of the chemical from developing countries, except China, will not attract the duty. The imports have increased from 14,290 tonne in 2009-10 to 22,162 tonne in 2012-13, an increase of 55%. The imports with respect to total domestic production increased significantly from 43% in 2009-10 to 64% in 2012-13.

As per the DGS, the domestic industry had a market share of 55% in 2010-11. This fell to 51% in the following financial year. It further dipped to 41 per cent in 2012-13. Whereas, the market share of import increased from 35%

in 2010-11 to 45% in 2012-13. Capacity utilisation of the domestic industry too declined significantly in the most recent period, from 98 % in 2010-11 to 72% in 2012-13.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/duty-imposed-on-import-of-input-of-pharma-industry-114030200673_1.html

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014
(Shruti Issar)

Fresh guidelines outlined on medical care to rape victims

(The New Indian Express, March 04, 2014)

The Department of Health Research (DHR) along with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), with the help of experts, formulated a new set of national guidelines for dealing with criminal assault cases, which will hopefully put an end to the "horrendous" medical process, which the victims are subjected to after sexual abuse. The DHR has also drafted a new manual to address the psycho-social impact of sexual violence including counselling that the victims should receive to alleviate their woes. These guidelines have been made available to healthcare providers who work with victims of sexual violence.

"It has been observed that the rape victims are usually put under a horribly judgemental microscope from the moment they call up the cops. They are often subjected to judgmental attitudes by both doctors and other medical staff in the hospital. The new guidelines include that every hospital must have a designated room to deal with Medico Legal Cases (MLC) of sexual assault to provide privacy to the victim and must have essential equipments listed in the guidelines." As per the guidelines, while carrying out medical tests no third person must be present in the room other than the doctor. If the doctor is male, a female attendant must be there.

The new set of rules also provide comprehensive care which must address issues like physical injuries, STDs, HIV, Hepatitis B, etc. Also the psychological effects must be recognised and the patient shall be provided counselling, social support and appropriate referrals. A provision for DNA analysis and a separate checklist for medical management too have been provided. "These guidelines, if properly implemented, will definitely plug the various loopholes present and thereby will help avoid miscarriage of justice and human rights violation."

http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Fresh-Guidelines-Outlined-on-Medical-Care-to-Rape-Victims/2014/03/04/article2089941.ece#UxgHh_mSyx9

Date Accessed: 04.03.2013
(Anjana John)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

The New Inequality Debate

(Ambassador Neelam Deo, Gateway House, 6 February, 2014)

The gap between the rich and the poor in both developed and developing countries is growing rapidly within the ambit of the economic recovery after the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. So much so that the wealth of the 85 richest people on earth is now equal to that of a bottom half of the world's population. Put another way, it means that each of these 85 individuals is worth almost \$19 billion – an amount greater than the GDP of 83 countries.

The causes of this stunning fact are many, including the job redundancies created by technology, the global degrading of educational institutions, especially those accessed by the poor, and the rising cost of healthcare. But most invidious would be the gaming of the system through increasingly regressive tax systems in both developed and developing countries. Despite historically low taxes, the wealthy conceal an estimated \$21 trillion in tax havens, mostly in the developed world.

Does the need to address the worsening plight of the poor exercise the minds of politicians globally, and ours, in

India? It does not appear to.

Although the Gini coefficient for India was still a relatively decent 36.8% compared to 41.5% for China and 53% for Brazil in 2010-11, inequality in India has, according to Oxfam, skyrocketed in the last decade. The number of dollar billionaires has gone from six to 61, and the share of the country's wealth that they hold has gone from less than 2% to an astonishing 26%. Simultaneously, data of the National Sample Survey Organisation shows falling consumption levels of even food grains among the poor in India

In India the approach of poorly-designed and badly-implemented handouts neither improves the conditions of poverty nor does it promote democracy. On the contrary, it has elevated corruption and the divisive politics. It is therefore essential that India's prime ministerial aspirants focus on how to stop growing gap between the rich and the poor in a serious and substantive manner. Neither handouts and subsidies nor trickle down economic policies will be able to solve this problem.

<http://www.gatewayhouse.in/the-new-inequality-debate/>

Date Accessed: 20.02.2014

(Gayatri Verma)

Emerging From the Shadows

(Harsh Mander, *The Hindu*, 8 February, 2014)

Sex workers are beginning to fight the stigma, violence, criminalisation and citizenship denials that routinely make up their difficult lives.

“We are women first, and sex workers only after that. We want you to recognise sex work as work. Instead of viewing us through the lens of social morality, we wish you would see us for what we are. Many of us are single women, supporting our children and old parents. We are informal, unprotected workers. Why should you and the police treat us as criminals?”

Collectives of sex workers, speaking for an estimated three million workforce, are emerging slowly from the shadows across India. Their biggest complaint is against the law which regulates sex work in India today: the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956. This does not criminalise sex work per se, but, as the Lawyers' Collective that works for sex workers' rights points out, it results in 'de facto criminalisation through prohibition of soliciting, brothel and street work', and this 'has effectively undermined sex workers' ability to claim protection of law'.

The law is defended as being necessary to prevent trafficking and child prostitution. But there should be specific robust laws to curb these evils, and not the deployment of a statute that is widely misused to harass adult women who voluntarily pursue this profession.

Sex workers do not just want the repeal of this law that unjustly criminalises their work and exposes them to violence from police and sometimes vigilante groups, they also seek the basic rights of citizens and workers.

A long overdue reform is that school forms across the country should require only the child's mother's name. What brothel-based sex workers want most for their children are special night-care child centres where children can sleep protected during the work hours of their mothers.

http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Harsh_Mander/emerging-from-the-shadows/article5664286.ece?ref=sliderNews

Date Accessed: 20.02.2014

(Gayatri Verma)

EDUCATION

Cuddalore school replaces science stream with a course in “entrepreneurship”

(The Hindu, March 3, 2014)

A school affiliated to the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) in Cuddalore, Kerala, has decided to shut down its science group and introduce an entrepreneurship stream, with a focus on empowering girl students. The entrepreneurship programme for classes 11 and 12 based on the CBSE curriculum will be open to both boys and girls.

Founded by C K Vijayalakshmi and Radhika Mohan in 1993, the school has decided to nurture entrepreneurial spirit in students. The move comes in the wake of soaring demand by parents to enrol their children in science stream only to ensure stable income in future. The school will offer five options in entrepreneurship:

- The aspiring Fashion/ Art entrepreneur: English, Entrepreneurship, Fashion Studies, Painting, Economics
- The aspiring Agro Entrepreneur and Organic Farmers: English, Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Business Studies, Accountancy
- The aspiring IT Entrepreneurs: English, Entrepreneurship, Multimedia & Web technology, Graphic design, Business studies
- The aspiring Heritage Craft Entrepreneur: English, Entrepreneurship, Heritage craft, Business studies and Painting
- The General Entrepreneur: English, Entrepreneurship, Business studies, Accountancy and Economics
- English and Entrepreneurship are compulsory subjects.

The subject based on the belief that “age 15-18 is ideal time to learn — to take risks, to try new things, and to put forth new ideas.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/education/school/science-is-out-entrepreneurship-in/article5743090.ece>

Date Accessed: 01.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

HEALTH

The Nuclear graveyard: To 'light up' our homes, some lives are falling into 'darkness'

(Poulomi Banerjee, Hindustan Times, February 22, 2014)

The article reveals the health hazards posed by harmful radiations emanating from nuclear plants to workers and people residing nearby. People in Jadugoda, a small township in Jharkhand, where the Uranium Corporation of India Ltd (UCIL) is mining uranium, have witnessed major deformities and a high death toll since the plant was set up. The article highlights the immediate need for the government to identify the threat and take necessary action.

Photojournalist Chinky Shukla travelled to Jadugoda to capture the effects of uranium mining on the town's population. JOAR, an NGO that has been working to build awareness about the plight of the people in Jadugoda, highlights that despite health hazards posed by the UCIL plant, high wages and lack of alternative source of livelihood ensure employment of workers.

The government has been denying such reports and has attributed poverty and malnutrition as reasons for the tribals' health issues. The main problems highlighted are careless transportation and disposal of the radioactive waste. It is also noted that “the houses are equipped with dosimeters to measure the level of radioactivity in the area. But the readings are never shared with the residents.”

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/the-nuclear-graveyard-to-light-up-our-homes-some-lives-are-falling-into-darkness/article1-1187238.aspx>

Date Accessed: 14.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

Private hospitals to stop CGHS cashless scheme

(Giridhar K Gyani, *Gconnect*, March 5, 2014)

The Central Government Health Service has announced withdrawal of cashless medical service in private hospitals empanelled with the CGHS scheme from March 7. Patients will henceforth have to pay hospital charges and later claim the amount from the government, according to the new rule.

The move will affect 50 lakh serving employees and over 30 lakh pensioners, as well as their family members. At a conservative estimate, the total number of persons affected could well be over two crore.

“According to Association of Healthcare Providers India (or AHPI, the nodal body of private empanelled hospitals) the move was necessary as CGHS owes these hospitals around Rs 200 crore in unpaid services as well as “unreasonably low” CGHS tariffs that haven’t been revised for the last four years. A doctor’s consultation fee, for example, remains Rs 58. Also, AHPI says CGHS makes “illegal” deductions of 10% on all payments leading to losses for member hospitals. AHPI claims the amount runs up to Rs 180 crore.”

In Karnataka, 20 hospitals, all in Bangalore, are empanelled with AHPI. HCG, Apollo hospitals, MS Ramaiah Memorial Hospital and Bangalore Baptist Hospital, among others, will not provide the cashless health scheme from March 7.

“Naresh Shetty of AHPI argued that the empanelled hospitals have been providing services under most difficult circumstances. They had to deal with steep hikes in electricity and water tariff, consumables, wages, taxes. We’ve been requesting a revision since June 2013 but there’s been no response.”

<http://www.gconnect.in/orders-in-brief/cghs/private-hospitals-stop-cghs-cashless-scheme.html>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

India urges for review of US pharma whistleblower policy

(*FirstBiz*, March 7, 2014)

India has asked for review of America's whistleblower policy and lowering of registration charges to help Indian firms seek greater market access. The concerns were raised in a 'non-paper' (a discussion document) presented to the US authorities by India. The paper is an outcome of a meeting in February, between US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) Commissioner Margaret A Hamburg and Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma.

Major concerns are as follows:-

1. The reward under the policy is very high and employees fudge records to take such rewards.
2. The fees for registration is very high which acts as an additional burden for Indian pharma companies.
3. Mr. Sharma has raised concerns over the USFDA's audit inspections of Indian pharma companies and 'disproportionate penalties' in some instances. Further, the registration process in the US is also very long and cumbersome.
4. The fourth matter is about Form 483, issued when the US regulator has queries regarding some Indian firm. Indian firms have sought early resolution on these issues.

The USFDA has taken a series of actions against Indian pharmaceutical firms, restricting their shipments to the US, their largest export market. The US health regulator on January 23 banned the import of products manufactured by

Ranbaxy Laboratories at its plant at Toansa. This was the company's fourth plant to face regulatory action from the USFDA, after Mohali, Paonta Sahib and Dewas plants.

In 2013, Ranbaxy had agreed to pay a fine of \$500 million to US authorities after pleading guilty to 'felony charges' relating to manufacture and distribution of certain adulterated drugs made at the Paonta Sahib and Dewas units. Another Indian firm, Wockhardt, had its two plants put under import alert by the USFDA.

According to sources, such steps by the USFDA would affect India's pharma exports to the US. India's pharma exports increased 10 percent to \$14.6 billion during 2012-13, with shipments to the US accounting for about 26 percent of the total. India is the largest exporter of generics to the US by volume, with supplies from 35 companies in the country. The nation has around 320 USFDA-approved pharma facilities, the largest number outside the US.

<http://m.firstbiz.com/economy/india-urges-for-review-of-us-pharma-whistle-blower-policy-78545.html>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

URBAN

'We need to rethink urbanization in the 21st century' – UN official

(United Nations, March 04, 2014)

How countries plan, build and manage their cities today will determine the outcome of global efforts to achieve a sustainable future, a panel of United Nations and civil society experts said launching "The City We Need". It is a document outlining the vision of a city for the 21st century was launched at UN Headquarters in New York on Tuesday. "The City We Need" is prepared by the World Urban Campaign, a global coalition of public and private sector partners and members of civil society.

Its work focuses on promoting positive aspects of city life and encourages policies, strategies and practices for viable and sustainable urban growth.

Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, the UN agency dealing with human settlements, identified two major challenges facing cities: "One is climate change. If we want to keep the climate in a range of 2 degrees Centigrade as a maximum level of heating, we need to change our form of doing things. And the second big challenge is development or, saying it in other words, the poverty existing in the world, the inequalities, the lack of dignity for slum dwellers which is also a very pressing problem of the world."

The launch of "The City We Need" is in preparation for the 7th session of the World Urban Forum to be held in Colombia in April this year.

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2014/03/the-city-we-need-campaign-launched-in-new-york/#.Uxhi3vmSy2U>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47274&Cr=climate+change&Cr1=#.UxhihPmSy2U>

Date Accessed: 06.03.2014

(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

ENERGY

India's coal crunch gives impetus for solar shift, welcomed by green lobby as happy accident

(Katy Daigle, February 28, 2014)

The article highlights the major shift away from coal energy towards solar energy and the potential of solar energy to meet rising demand for power. Over a period of three years, India's solar capacity increased impressively- from almost zero to an added 2.2 gigawatts of solar to its electricity grid, enough to power 20 million Indian homes.

The country's increasing capacity to produce solar power is reflected in a first ever fall in solar power prices. "Meanwhile, more than 300 million people still have no electricity, while hundreds of millions more are lucky to have a few hours a day." Analysts say India is set to surpass its target of having 15 percent of its energy produced by the sun and other minimally polluting sources by 2022.

Coal has formed an important source for India to meet its power demands. Coal-fired thermal power accounts for 59 percent of the nation's total generation capacity. India declared to have the world's fifth-largest coal reserves and invested heavily in coal. However, Coal India, the coal monopoly in India, missed its production targets, leading to chronic electricity shortages (importing another 152 million tonnes to meet demand) over the past six years. Excessive use of coal has caused water shortages and toxic runoff from a host of coal industries. Emissions of sulfur dioxide, which leads to acid rain and lung ailments, increased more than 60 percent in India between 2005 and 2012, surpassing the United States.

India aims for a total 15 GW addition by 2017 in its solar capacity. The article cites the following reasons that have stimulated shift away from coal and towards solar power in India:

- The country's easy-to-access surface coal has been extracted, with the remaining reserves harder to reach: underground, beneath cities or within national parks and tiger reserves.
- Solar projects also need fewer clearances and take just six to 12 months to develop, versus about eight years for a coal plant. New coal projects can take almost a decade to get going due to village protests, bureaucratic entanglements and trouble securing fuel.
- A significant factor that has made solar energy a viable alternative is the fall in solar electricity prices to near parity with India's coal-generated power prices (solar electricity's 7 rupees per kilowatt/hour, versus coal's 5-6 rupees per kilowatt/hour).

<http://www.newser.com/article/c3fa5dce6fc74fd182093bb0da64d82f/indias-coal-crunch-gives-impetus-for-solar-shift-welcomed-by-green-lobby-as-happy-accident.html>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

ENVIRONMENT

764 industries, 5 states behind Ganga pollution, National Green Tribunal informed

(Ayaskant Das, *The Times of India*, March 1, 2014)

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) was informed on recently that the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has identified 764 grossly polluting industries in five states on the main stem of the river Ganga and its tributaries.

The information was provided to the tribunal through a joint affidavit filed by the Union Environment Ministry and

the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA). As per the affidavit, the CPCB has issued notices to units which are not complying with pollution control norms while discharging their effluents into the river. CPCB had conducted an inspection of grossly polluting industries along the Ganga River in the period between August 2011 and August 2013. It has been mentioned in the affidavit that the 764 industries identified as grossly polluting by CPCB are located in Uttarakhand, UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

MoEF and the NGRBA have furnished this information in a case in which environmental activists had alleged that untreated effluents drained by a couple of industries into the Simbhaoli drain in Ghaziabad, which ultimately empties into the Ganga, is polluting river waters. The sugar industry and the dairy products' manufacturing unit, alleged to be releasing untreated and toxic effluents into the Ganga via the Simbhaoli drain, figure among the 764 grossly polluting industries identified by the CPCB.

The UP Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) has imposed a stay upon operations of the distillery unit of the sugar industry. Operations of the distillery unit have been retrained till it is granted consent by the UPPCB.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/pollution/764-industries-5-states-behind-Ganga-pollution-National-Green-Tribunal-informed/articleshow/31187889.cms>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

AGRICULTURE

Farmers in Ahmedabad seek livelihood security

(The Indian Express, March 03, 2014)

In view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections farmers in Ahmedabad, along with members of other groups from across the country, came together to demand that income and livelihood security be made key promises by all political parties. The demand surfaced in a meeting held at Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad during a seminar on Genetically Modified (GM) crop trials by Environment Minister and Kisan Swaraj Niti.

“Key demands included land, forests and seed to remain in the control of rural communities and not be allowed to be monopolised by corporates for their profiteering. Farm unions and civil society groups also demanded open-air releases of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in the garb of field trials be stopped.”

“It is a shame for the entire nation that on an average, one farmer in this country is committing suicide every half an hour; every day, around 2,300 farmers are quitting agriculture. Despite so many years of so called agricultural development and Green Revolution,

Devinder Sharma, a food policy analyst noted that the average monthly income of a majority of Indian farmers is far less than their average monthly expenditure, which is making most farm households unsustainable

Kapil Shah of Jatan Trust noted that around 25 per cent of our land is degraded because of the chemical and water intensive technologies that we have adopted; “it is being predicted that in another 20 years, 60 per cent of our groundwater resources will reach a critical state. In places like Punjab, most of the area is already under Dark and Grey zones. Our seed diversity has been badly eroded. A variety of measures have to be adopted to take this up, and we want political parties to promise that ecological farming will get a huge thrust.”

<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/farmers-seek-livelihood-security/>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

Fight malnutrition by growing millets

(im4change)

A new report by National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) reveals that despite the nutritional value of millets (coarse cereals), there has been a drastic reduction in the area under its cultivation from 36.34 million hectares in 1955-56 to 18.6 million hectares in 2011-12 owing to agricultural and price policies adopted by the Government. Based National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) surveys, “the report entitled 'Role of Millets in Nutritional Security of India' guesstimates that sharp reduction in the intake of iron and calcium since mid-1990s is due to the declining trends in the production and consumption of millets.”

The NAAS report notes that reasons “such as low remuneration as compared to other food crops, lack of input subsidies and price incentives, subsidized supply of fine cereals through Public Distribution System (PDS), and change in consumer preference (difficulty in processing, low shelf-life of flour and low social status attached to millets)” are responsible for decline in the area under cultivation of millets. “Nearly 50 percent area under millets has been diverted largely to soybean, maize, cotton, sugarcane and sunflower, informs the report.”

The article notes that the proportion of people who suffer from hunger have been unable to reap the benefits of millets, which are otherwise known as nutri-grains since they are rich in micronutrients like minerals and B-complex vitamins as well as health promoting phyto-chemicals.

Apart from nutrition, other advantages of cultivating millets include: “drought tolerance, crop sturdiness, short to

medium duration, low labour requirement, minimal purchased inputs, resistance to pests and diseases...Millet cultivation is the mainstay of rain-fed farming on which 60 percent of Indian farmers depend. Millets sequester carbon and thereby reduce the burden of green house gas.”

“The NAAS report recommends that the demand for millets can be increased by: (i) Creating awareness regarding their environmental sustainability, nutritional and other health benefits, (ii) Making them available through PDS, (iii) Value addition, and (iv) Inclusion under feeding programmes like mid-day meal, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) feeding, and adolescent girls nutrition scheme (now under consideration of Ministry of Women and Child Welfare).”

<http://www.im4change.org/news-alerts/fight-malnutrition-by-growing-millets-24132.html>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

LAW AND JUSTICE

SC issues notice to centre, states on rights of HIV+ students

(Thehka.com, March 03, 2014)

Supreme Court has issued notice to Centre and all states on a Public Interest Litigation to declare HIV affected children as a disadvantaged group under the Right of Education Act to ensure they got education without discrimination. It also sought response from the governments on the plea of an NGO seeking framing of guidelines to prevent any kind of discrimination towards students due to their own HIV status or that of their parents or guardians.

Alleging that children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS are denied admission, suspended and even expelled from schools, the NGO – Naaz Foundation – submitted that such students are also being publicly ridiculed by school authorities, humiliated and treated unfairly. “Moreover, the confidentiality of the HIV-positive status of the children has been routinely breached leading to violation of their right to privacy and the rampant acts of stigmatisation and discrimination that have followed have undermined their human dignity,” the petition said.

According to the NACO report the total number of people living with HIV in India is estimated at around 20.9 lakh in 2011 and children less than 15 years of age account for 1.45 lakh.

<http://www.tehelka.com/sc-issues-notice-to-centre-states-on-rights-of-hiv-students/>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Anjana John)

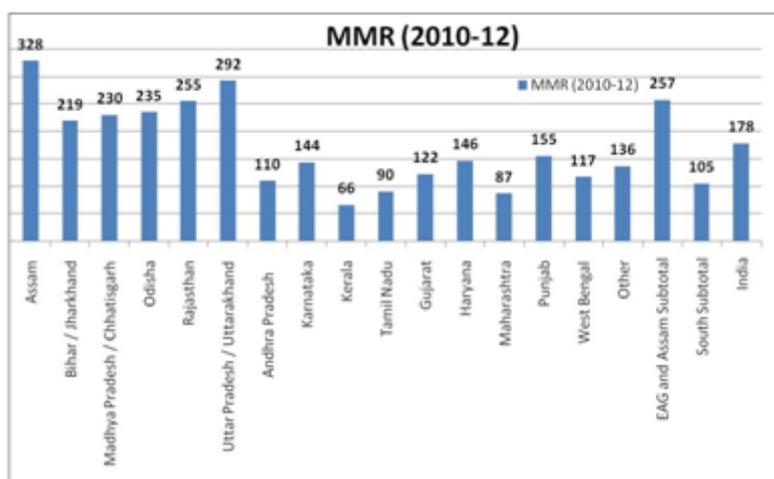
GENDER

Maternal mortality down but nowhere close to MDG target (im4change)

According to figures released by the Office of Registrar General (India) the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has declined by 16 percent from 212 during 2007-09 to 178 during 2010-12. However, according to 'MDG India Country Report 2014' of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) India's MMR is likely to reach 140 per 100,000 live births by 2015, missing the MDG-5 (Millennium Development Goal) target of 109 per 100,000 live births by 31 points, given the countries historical trend.

The article notes that "maternal mortality is determined by low literacy, lack of spacing between births, early age at marriage & child bearing, high parity (i.e. number of liveborn children a woman has delivered), cultural misconceptions, economic dependency of women etc. Although safe motherhood depends chiefly on delivery by trained /professional personnel, particularly through institutional facilities, India is a laggard on this front. Delivery attended by skilled personnel is likely to be 77.29 percent by 2015, which is far short of the targeted universal coverage."

The following graph shows the MMR of different states in the country



Source: Office of Registrar General, Sample Registration System (2010-12)

"MMR is lowest in Kerala (66) and highest in Assam (328). During 2010-12, MMR is higher than the national level estimate in Bihar / Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh / Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh / Uttarakhand and Assam."

<http://www.im4change.org/news-alerts/maternal-mortality-down-but-nowhere-close-to-mdg-target-24332.html>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

REGIONAL

MGNREGA helped increase food-grain production

(DD News, March 03, 2013)

Various schemes initiated under the MGNREGA programme has led to a significant rise in food-grain production in Burdwan District of West Bengal. "The district is now regarded as rice bowl of Bengal", said district magistrate, Saumitra Mohan. This financial year, there has been a jump of 2 lakh tonne of rice in the district from 12 lakh to 14 lakh tonnes. "Of this, 80,000 tonnes is because of our MGNREGA efforts," Mohan said

The initiatives included conversion of mono-crop land into multi-crop one through increased irrigation potential, flood protection schemes, land development and soil treatment. The schemes have also improved the ecology in coal mine areas and made them safer for people by covering abandoned pits in the district which has a huge coal deposit, he said. Through 11 such schemes around 21.51 acres have been developed in coal mines of the district, he said adding that around 22 schemes have been used for re-excavation of water bodies and water harvesting.

For improvement of social forestry, four schemes have been undertaken covering 6.25 acres. Five schemes have been taken under the MGNREGA here to improve rural connectivity covering 6.25 acres. District administration has spent Rs 1.49 crore under 42 schemes in this financial year till February, generating 79,675 man-days, Mohan said.

<http://www.ddinews.gov.in/Social/Social%20-%20Top%20Story/Pages/INTERNET.aspx>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

Manipur moots highway protection force

(Khelen Thokchom, *The Telegraph*, March 3, 2014)

In the wake of frequent disruption of supply of essential commodities due to bandhs and blockades, Manipur is pursuing the issue of highway protection with the Centre. The north eastern state wants the Centre to raise two more India Reserve Battalions (IRB) along the Imphal-Dimapur and Imphal-Jiribam highways.

Hill-based organisations often call economic blockades along the two supply lines to press for their demands. Restricted supplies takes a toll on the local people as prices of commodities shoot up and black marketing becomes rampant.

Manipur currently has eight IRBs engaged in the security of VVIPs and dealing with law and order. Apart from these eight IRBs, the state government is providing security escorts for supply trucks during the blockades. However, transporters continue to be reluctant about services during the blockades as bandh supporters attack them despite security escorts.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140304/jsp/northeast/story_18042936.jsp#.UxcGRpSyBR

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Hyderabad Municipal Corpoartion launches Rs. 5 meal scheme

(*The Hindu*, March 02, 2014)

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has launched "a pilot project offering hot and hygienic meals for the poor at Rs. 5 at Nampally Sarai close to the railway station...A total of 50 such centres offering subsidised meals between 12 noon and 1 p.m. for 300 persons at each location were being set up in different parts of the city."

GHMC Commissioner Somesh Kumar noted that the scheme has been taken up with “Hare Krishna Movement-Hyderabad, offering 450 gm rice, 100 gm dal, 150 gm curry and a spoon of pickle. Locations were being identified for setting up the rest of the meal centres at labour addas and other such pockets.”

“The cost of each meal prepared at the centralised kitchen of the Hare Krishna Movement at Patancheru worked out to Rs. 20 and the GHMC was providing a subsidy of Rs.15.” Mayor Mohd. Majid Hussain noted that the civic body has earmarked a budget of Rs. 11 crore for the year 2014-15, for this scheme and additional budget would be provided if required.

Sri Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa, president, Hare Krishna Movement, said the Hyderabad chapter was already providing mid-day meals under ‘Akshaya Patra’ scheme to around 1 lakh children and under ‘Bhojana Mitra’, free lunch was provided at some hospitals.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/ghmc-launches-rs-5-meal-scheme/article5743713.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

SPORTS

Sports Minister inaugurated National Cycling Academy in New Delhi

(Jagran Josh, March 06, 2014)

Jitendra Singh, the Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports inaugurated the Sports Authority of India National Cycling Academy (SAI NCA) at Indira Gandhi Sports Complex. .” **The purpose of setting the Academy** is “identification and nurturing of young talent at both sub-junior and junior levels.” The finances of the academy will be maintained by Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports through Sports Authority of India.

The 42nd meeting of SAI passed the order of setting up the Academy. It has been launched with a long-term perspective of “making an Academy which will be financially independent and a self-sustaining venture. It will also train the elite athletes on a run up to their preparations for international/national competitions. The Minister also launched a Community Connect Scheme to include sports and recreational facilities in JNS, IGSC, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Swimming Complex.

Apart from the National Cycling Academy, the Minister also launched a project to create swimming pools at three stadiums in the capital, namely: -

- Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (JNS)
- Indira Gandhi Sports Complex (IGSC)
- Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range

<http://www.jagranjosh.com/current-affairs/sports-minister-inaugurated-national-cycling-academy-in-new-delhi-1394085557-1>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

Indian newspaper industry faces existential crises

(Ravindra Kumar, *The Economic Times*, March 3, 2014)

The author argues that entering into the 75th year of the newspaper industry in India, the existential crisis that the industry faces needs to be acknowledged and addressed by its stakeholders- the government as well as the newspaper employees.

According to a Supreme Court order on February 7 this year, newspapers and news agencies will have to implement the recommendation of the Majithia Wage Board. This means that the pay scale of the newspaper employees will be revised with arrears.

Newspaper agencies and companies argue that smaller companies will not be able to sustain their existence in the wake of increased expenditure on employees. Consequently, a lot of the smaller companies are likely to shut down, which in turn will severely damage freedom of speech and expression of media. The article notes that the health of newspapers is constantly being undermined because of media channels like TV, radio and web. The fall in the value of rupee has adversely affected the industry as a large quantity of newsprint is imported.

However, the author also argues that media health is negatively affected by malpractices like paid news. Moreover, unhealthy competition that is predicated on the desire to consolidate media power, assails the democratic commandment to present a plurality of views.

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/31326816.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Coast Guards of India, Singapore to hold joint drill

(*The Echo of India*, March 04, 2014)

Indian Coast Guard ship *Sagar* will take part in a joint exercise with Singapore's Police Coast Guard to develop common standard operating procedures. "The ship provides an opportunity to reiterate India's commitment to bilateral relations with Singapore." The Indian High Commissioner noted the importance of *Sagar*'s visit coinciding with the annual Governing Council meeting of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery (ReCAAP).

The ship's presence underlines India's commitment to the ReCAAP, and it assures India's continuing support and cooperation with the regional grouping. The anti-piracy meeting that started on 3rd of March will continue till March 7.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/singapore-coast-guards-india-singapore-hold-joint-drill-50601>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Anjana John)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Security Council holds 'urgent' meeting on situation in Ukraine

(UN News Centre, February 28, 2014)

This article highlights the action being taken by the United Nations Security Council over the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The meeting held on Friday, February 28th was described by the council's President as "urgent", with the body's members noting that it is important for all political actors in the strife-torn country to exercise maximum restraint and pursue inclusive dialogue.

"The Security Council...reviewed with concern the recent developments in Ukraine," said Raimonda Murmokaitė, Permanent Representative of Lithuania, which holds the rotating presidency of the 15-nation body for February.

The Council held closed-door consultations at the request of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the UN, which appealed in a letter earlier today to the Council President for an urgent meeting "due to the deterioration of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea, Ukraine, which threatens the territorial integrity of Ukraine."

On Saturday, 22 February, Members of the Parliament of Ukraine – which had been witnessing mass protests since last November – voted to remove President Viktor Yanukovich, and an arrest warrant has reportedly been issued for his arrest. The move came after more than 100 people were killed last week in the latest wave of deadly clashes in the capital, Kiev.

Amid the rapidly unfolding events in Ukraine, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for an inclusive political process to enable the country to emerge from the crisis, one which reflects the aspirations of its people and preserves its unity and territorial integrity.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47253&Cr=ukraine&Cr1=#.UxbyfmSyVI>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

SOUTH ASIA

South Asia accounts for over one-fourth of the world's hearing impaired: WHO

(Kundan Pandey, *Down to Earth*, March 3, 2014)

A recent report published by the World Health Organisation has revealed that out of the total 360 million in the world, South Asia has the highest percentage (27 percent) of people suffering from disabling hearing loss.

The report that charts out the prevalence of hearing loss with gender and age specific information notes that the hearing loss problem is higher in the adult group as well as in children as far as South Asia is concerned.

According to the report, 328 million adults and 32 million children are suffering from hearing loss problem. The report further reveals that approximately one-third of people over 65 years of age worldwide are affected by disabling hearing loss.

Hearing loss can be triggered due to hereditary and non-hereditary genetic factors, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, low birth weight, birth asphyxia, inappropriate use of ototoxic drugs during pregnancy and severe

jaundice in the neonatal period.

Other acquired causes of impaired hearing capacity include chronic ear infection, excessive exposure to noise or loud music and other infectious diseases like meningitis, measles and mumps.

The report also points out that only 32 out of the 76 countries covered in the report have developed any plan or programme to prevent and control ear diseases and hearing loss.

Many countries lack trained health personnel, educational facilities, data and national plans to address the needs of those living with ear and hearing problems. Therefore, according to the director of WHO Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, the survey clearly spells out the need for governments and partners to invest in hearing care at a community and primary level.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/south-asia-accounts-over-one-fourth-worlds-hearing-impaired-who>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

BSF gives list of insurgents camps to B'desh

(The Nagaland Post, March 09, 2014)

Official source reported that Bangladesh's border guards have assured firm action against insurgents from India's northeastern states taking shelter in that country. Inspector General of BSF in-charge Guwahati Frontier, Sudhir Kumar Srivastava informed that a list of 66 Indian insurgents camps operating from Bangladesh have been handed over to the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

According to BSF officials "Most of these insurgent camps are located at several areas in Bangladesh's Mymensing, Moulvibazar, Netrakona, Khagrachari, Rangamati, and the Kasalong Reserve Forest." "The camps included those of the ULFA, NSCN (I-M), NDFB, PLA, ANVC-B, HNLC and other rebel groups active in the India's northeastern states with demands ranging from secession to greater autonomy and the right to self-determination." "However, Srivastava said the numbers of the Indian insurgent camps in that neighbouring country have declined due to the action initiated by the Bangladesh forces and also because of the insurgents shifting their base to Myanmar." He further reported that "BGB has submitted names of 16 Bangladeshi smugglers whom they alleged operating from India for smuggling of narcotics to Bangladesh."

"Apart from the insurgent camps, the BSF expressed concern on the frequent crimes committed by Bangladeshi nationals inside Indian Territory - poaching, illegal migration and smuggling of fake Indian currency notes and cattle." Therefore, asked BGB to "adopt stringent steps by initiating simultaneous border patrolling to prevent the smuggling of fake Indian currency notes and narcotics items in both sides of the border."

<http://www.nagalandpost.com/ChannelNews/Regional/RegionalNews.aspx?news=TkVXUzEwMDA1NTgxMw%3d%3d>

Date Accessed: 09.03.2014

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

OPINIONS

Clean cooking methods can provide environment and health benefits

(Sunita Narain, *Down to Earth*, February 28, 2014)

The article argues that environment friendly cooking methods entails switching to methods that checks heat released from combustion by fuels. The authoress point out that there are two kinds of aerosols- one that reflect light leading to cooling effect and the other that absorbs light leading to heating effect.

The 2010 Global Burden of Disease had already identified indoor air pollution from stoves as the primary cause of death in South Asia. Despite this, the use of inefficient and unhealthy chulhas is still prevalent in rural India.

The article argues that the switch to LPG is not a perfect solution as it will lead to more greenhouse gas emissions much like other fossil fuels that have a higher proportion of black carbon. On the other hand open burning or biomass burnt in cookstoves contains higher proportions of organic carbon that scatters sunlight. Secondly, in order to make any environment-friendly programme reach the poor subsidies are necessary.

Further, there are new cookstove models that involve efficient cooking contraptions, which use briquettes and other processed, hence monetised, biomass. This is not bad as such since such contraptions helps reduce exposure to toxic particles.

Lastly, the article states that the issue of air pollution because of cookstoves is currently aligned with the global climate change agenda and is not with health concerns. Consequently the solutions offered are at times counter-productive.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/chulha-politics>

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(Pallavi Ghosh)

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