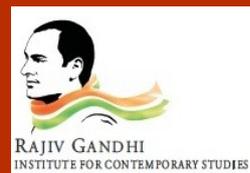


Issue  
2.30

# RGICS POLICY WATCH



VOL. II ISSUE - 30

18 MARCH 2014

## NEW FROM RGICS

### Upcoming Seminars

Cutting Edge Series: New  
Economic Thinking

### Research project

- Case Studies on Public Policy Decision Making
- Region and Regionalism in India: Issues and Consequences
- Left Wing Extremism
- Consequences of declining Sex Ratio

### Other Products

- Legislative brief on National Identification authority India Act, 2010
- Background Paper on Protection of Street Vendors

## INSIDE THE ISSUE

- Increase in representation of women in Parliaments globally; Indian situation still grim
- Cheap diesel is making Indian cities' air quality worse than China
- Polio vaccination mandatory to enter India after 15th March
- India may become third largest aviation market 2020- Ficci-KPMG report
- Tamil Nadu topped agitation chart in 2012
- Growth of 1.7% in tourists availing of "Tourist Visa on Arrival" (VoA) Scheme

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.

## Transforming India's Energy Future: The Role of Solar Power



*Compiled by RGICS  
Jawahar Bhawan, New Delhi  
Issue Coordinator : Ms. Junty Sharma Pathak*

**For private circulation and use only for RGICS's educational and training purposes.  
Not for sale.**

**COVER STORY**

- Transforming India's Energy Future: The Role of Solar Power

**HEADLINES**

- Increase in representation of women in Parliaments globally; Indian situation still grim
- Cheap diesel is making Indian cities' air quality worse than China
- Polio vaccination mandatory to enter India after 15th March
- India may become third largest aviation market 2020- Ficci-KPMG report
- Tamil Nadu topped agitation chart in 2012
- Growth of 1.7% in tourists availing of "Tourist Visa on Arrival" (VoA) Scheme

**SECTION 1: THE ECONOMY**

- Sebi revises anti-money laundering norms
- El Nino may pose obstacle to RBI's retail inflation target
- Output Gaps in Developing Countries

**SECTION 2: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- **Politics and Governance:** 56% women faced corruption in public services in a year: Study
- **Development:** Three new projects receive funding to improve safe sanitation; Meghalaya to amend Industrial Policy to include CSR
- **Government:** Telangana may get 4,000 MW mega power plant
- **Education:** India among 30 countries where 'education' attacked most often: Study; UK witnesses 21% drop in study visas to Indians in 2013
- **Health:** Campaign to raise awareness about dengue launched; Dr. Reddy's recalls over 50,000 bottles of heartburn drug in US post contamination;
- **Agriculture:** Organic cotton production declines in India as brands shift to Better Cotton Initiative
- **Legal Developments:** Religion no bar for adoption: SC; SC asks Law Commission to frame guidelines to curb hate speeches; Finish trial of lawmakers within one year: Supreme Court

**SECTION 3: SOCIETY**

- **Gender:** Millions of Indian female entrepreneurs and the need for easier access to money; India will take around 56 years to achieve female youth literacy: Report
- **Children:** UN launches 'Children, not soldiers' campaign; India's child mortality rate may worsen despite govt. efforts: Report
- **Regional:** Nagaland among six poll expenditure sensitive states: Election Commission; New Special Courts for Women in Kerala; Home Ministry concerned over increase in extortion, violence in Manipur; Deadlock halts de-silting process in Cuttack; leads to water logging threat

**SECTION 4: INDIA AND THE WORLD**

- India in the World: Indian degrees to get Global recognition soon; Flawed Policy on India Blamed for Internal Threats in Pakistan
- International Affairs: UN Commission on Women opens Annual Session
- South Asia: US questions Maldives' commitment to democracy; India pledges to provide Rs 8.5 billion to Bhutan
- Middle East: Over five million kids affected by Syria conflict: UNICEF
- Americas: Six focus areas for policy makers in the U.S.

**SECTION 5: BOOKS AND OPINION**

- Opinions: Efficient use of forest to build inclusive economies

## 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**

## Transforming India's Energy Future: The Role of Solar Power

More than 300 million of India's people do not have access to electricity and energy shortages are crippling the growth of industries. However the situation is not that grim, says a new World Bank report which highlights the potential of solar power to transform India's energy future. India has already taken a huge leap in ensuring green growth with its *Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission Phase 1* and is poised to be a global leader in the development of solar power, says the World Bank report titled "Paving the Way for a Transformational Future: Lessons from JNNSM Phase 1".

RGICS presents here an overview of the report, bringing into focus India's current energy scenario, development of solar power in India, the need to strengthen solar power, the challenges ahead and the way forward.

### India's current energy scenario

According to 2013 energy statistics provided by Central Statistics Office, 54 % of the total installed electricity generation capacity is coal based. Furthermore, over 70 % of the electricity generated is from coal based power plants. Renewables such as wind, geothermal, solar, and hydroelectricity represent a 2 percent share of the Indian fuel mix. Nuclear holds a one percent share.

The country faces a significant challenge in providing access to adequate, affordable and clean sources of energy, especially cooking fuel to a large section of the population, most of who live in rural areas. As per the 2011 Census, **almost 85% of rural households were dependent on traditional biomass fuels for their cooking energy requirements.**

As per the 2011 Census, 55.3% rural households had access to electricity. However, NSS results shows that in the year 1993-94, 62% households in rural India were using kerosene as primary source of energy for lighting. On the other hand, **as of 2009-10, 66% households were using electricity for lighting.** Thus electricity has, during the intervening years, evidently replaced kerosene as the most common fuel used for lighting by rural households.

With increased demand for electricity, both for household and commercial purposes, India is facing a huge deficit. During the Eleventh Five Year Plan, nearly 55,000 MW of new generation capacity was created, yet there continued to be an overall energy deficit of 8.7 per cent and peak shortage of 9.0 per cent.

According to a white paper by global consulting firm Mc Kinsey, shortage of fuel has stranded more than 33,000 megawatts (MW) of power generation in India, and if the situation does not improve fast, Indian banks could be staring at a bad debt of more than Rs.1 trillion.

### Why solar power?

#### 1. **To address power shortage**

With energy shortages in excess of 10 percent and with more than 300 million people without access to energy, solar power can potentially address the shortage by both adding to the grid-connected electricity supply and providing a viable energy solution for off-grid areas

#### 2. **To reduce fuel import**

Solar power can reduce dependence on imported fuel and thus help in reducing the current account deficit for the country

#### 3. **For cleaner energy**

India is currently the world's seventh largest emitter of global warming pollution and fifth largest for emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Cleaner energy production through solar power will contribute to India's international commitment in Copenhagen in 2009 to reduce the emissions per unit of its GDP by 20-25 percent by 2020 over 2005 levels.

#### 4. For cheap power

In comparison to many countries, solar power can be cheaply generated in India due to a combination of factors. First, ours is a tropical country, where sunshine is available for longer hours per day and in great intensity. Secondly, India has already demonstrated that it is an industrial low cost destination worldwide. It has the potential to capture cost reduction leadership for solar power as well. Domestic manufacturing and scale of implementation in India can cause a drastic fall in costs to bring solar power costs to grid parity sooner than other parts of the world.

### **Development of Solar Power in India through JNNSM**

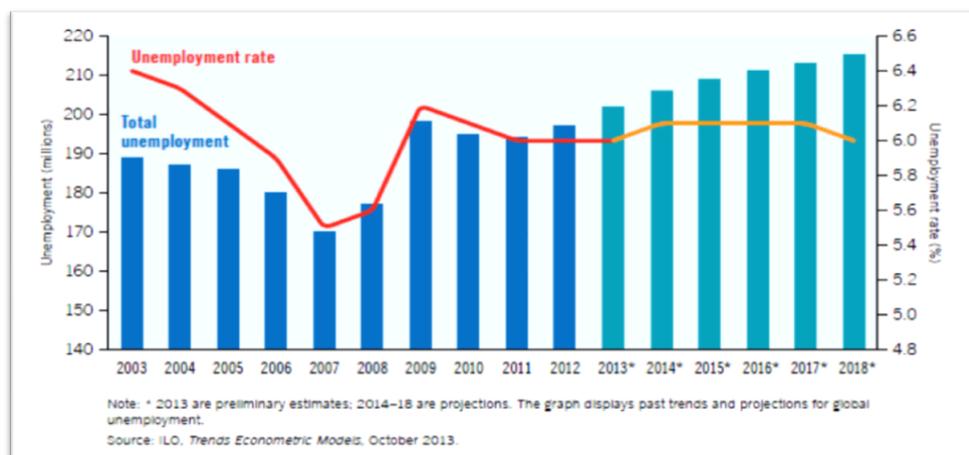
Despite vast solar potential, India's solar power capacity was almost non-existent until recently. India's concerted efforts to develop solar power began in January 2010, when the country launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) as one of the eight missions under the country's National Action Plan for Climate Change. Before announcement of JNNSM, India's solar power capacity was mere 17.8MW in early 2010. **The aim of National Solar Mission is to achieve a wide range of ambitious objectives, with the overall stated goal of establishing India as a global leader in solar energy, by creating the policy conditions for its diffusion across the country as quickly as possible.**

The first phase of JNNSM (2010-13) witnessed enthusiastic participation from Indian and international investors in the grid-connected segment. In the short span of three years, India has made impressive strides in developing its abundant solar power potential. It has added capacity at a commendable pace, and successfully reduced the costs of solar energy to around \$0.12 per kWh for solar photo voltaic (PV) and \$0.21 per kWh for Concentrated Solar Power (CSP), making India amongst the lowest cost destinations for grid-connected solar power in the world. The highly positive results of Phase-I implementation have laid a strong foundation for even better performance in the crucial Phase-II, wherein the JNNSM envisages cumulative installation of 10,000 MW utility scale and 1,000 MW off-grid solar power projects.

### **Overcoming Current Challenges to Move Forward:**

#### 1. Increase access to funds from commercial banks and attract private financing

JNNSM-I witnessed low participation of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) as they perceived several risks in lending to solar projects, particularly in the absence of any risk-reducing mechanisms. Emerging nature of solar technologies and lack of SCBs' familiarity with the range of technologies deployed by developers led to a high perception of risk. Furthermore, concessional sources of financing in the form of suppliers' credit and direct lending by development banks effectively crowded out commercial financing from SCBs, especially since no concessional lines of credit was made available for SCBs in Phase I. However, given that most infrastructure lending in India has been led by commercial banks, the solar program too will need their active participation to scale up to the levels envisaged.



## 2. Develop shared infrastructure facilities such as solar parks

The provision of publicly developed infrastructure frees private providers to focus on solar power development, increases efficiency, and lowers costs. Gujarat, for example, was the first state to declare a solar policy (2009) and today, is at the forefront of solar power generation in India. Its first solar park, developed on waste land in Charanka provides developers with already developed land along with critical infrastructure, including facilities for power evacuation and transmission, roads and water, thereby ensuring the rapid development of solar projects.

## 3. Use India's comparative advantage to develop a niche in the manufacturing value chain

India's solar PV manufacturing capacity is limited because India's manufacturers lack the raw materials, do not have access to low-cost financing, and face underdeveloped supply chains. In Concentrated Solar Power (CSP), where local manufacturing is more complex, India has not been able to manufacture some critical components. India should seek to define and develop its manufacturing capabilities in specific parts of the value chain where it enjoys a comparative advantage and can emerge as a globally competitive producer. An earlier ESMAP-World Bank study, Development of Local Supply Chain: A Critical Link for Concentrated Solar Power in India has identified the potential for reducing the costs of CSP components in India through local domestic manufacturing.

## Conclusion

“The Indian solar sector has made commendable progress since the launch of the JNNSM in 2010. In the international arena, India has substantial learnings and experiences to share on institutional mechanisms, financing, technology, and manufacturing with the rest of the world. The steps taken by GoI in implementing institutional and financing measures to successfully meet the Phase II targets of installing 10 GW of solar power and letting the private sector roll independently in Phase III will be closely observed by the international community. Thus, it is imperative that the government act on measures to scale up the success already achieved in JNNSM Phase I while simultaneously addressing the structural issues which stand to impede the envisioned growth.”

Read more at:

<http://www.esmap.org/sites/esmap.org/files/ESMAP-World%20Bank%20Publication%20-%20Paving%20the%20Way%20for%20a%20Transformational%20Future%20-%20Lessons%20from%20JNNSM%20Phase%20I.pdf>  
[http://mospi.nic.in/mospi\\_new/upload/Energy\\_Statistics\\_2013.pdf?status=1&menu\\_id=216](http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/Energy_Statistics_2013.pdf?status=1&menu_id=216)

*Prepared by*  
Amrutha Jose Pampackal

## Increase in representation of women in Parliaments globally; Indian situation still grim

(United Nations, March 07, 2014)

There has been a 1.5 per cent global increase in number of women in parliaments, says the latest annual review of Women in Parliament released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of parliamentarians, which works closely with the United Nations. This increase implies that now almost 22 per cent of women are in parliaments and that if the trend continues, we would achieve gender parity in parliament in 20 years.

**Out of the 189 countries surveyed, Rwanda leads the list, with its Chamber of Deputies recording more than 60 percent women.**

As a region, Latin America recorded the highest electoral gain in 2013, with one out of every 4 MPs being a woman. Of the top 10 performing countries globally, four are on the African continent, which recorded a healthy increase. Globally, Thirty-nine countries have reached the “above-30 percent” club.

However, the United States and Canada are not doing as well. The United States ranked 83rd out of the 189 countries surveyed as of January 1, 2014 and Canada was 54<sup>th</sup>.

In Asia and Pacific, virtually no progress was reported. Three countries in the region were keeping percentages up – Australia, New Zealand and Timor Leste. China recorded a 2 percentage point increase. Nepal, with the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in South Asia came in at just under 30 per cent. **India has just 11% women in its Parliament.**

Several factors influence the degree of women’s access to parliament, says the report. Quotas have been one of the main tools used to facilitate women’s access.

“A number of sub-Saharan African countries have recently enacted electoral laws that afford women greater access to political party backing and candidate lists, and thus greater representation and political leverage.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/www.fao.org/story.asp?NewsID=47307&Cr=women&Cr1=#.Ux1jVPmSy2U>

Date Accessed: 11.03.2014

(Amrutha Jose Pampackal)

## Cheap diesel is making Indian cities’ air quality worse than China

(Natalie Obiko Pearson and Rakteem Katakey, *Bloomsberg*, March 06, 2014)

Diesel-run vehicles, which accounted for 49 per cent of the car sales in India last year, are the primary reasons of poor air quality in cities. According to the article, India’s diesel powered vehicles release ten times the carcinogenic particles found in gasoline exhaust. Locally refined diesel has high sulphur content that ruins the equipment exhaust systems.

Other than vehicles running on diesel, air pollution is caused by coal-fired power plants and cooking fuel. However, vehicular pollution is the primary source of pollution in cities, which is even more dangerous as unlike through chimneys the pollution takes place at the breathing level. Considering the degraded air quality in India, subsidisation of diesel rates is worsening the condition. While government owned oil refineries are not interested in investing in producing low-sulphur content diesel since they sell finished product at losses, lack of a uniform regime for fuel and emissions norms is also leading to unprecedented use of poor quality diesel.

According to Muthukumara Mani- senior environmental economist at the World Bank- airborne particulate pollution causes more than 116,000 deaths in India annually. Moreover, a World Health Organization report revealed that

there were 620,000 premature deaths in India in 2010 due to air pollution.

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-03-06/indias-diesel-fuel-subsidy-breeds-toxic-air-pollution>

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

## **Polio vaccination mandatory to enter India after 15<sup>th</sup> March** **(DD NEWS, March 11, 2014)**

Indian High commission in Islamabad has announced that proof of vaccination against polio would be mandatory after 15th March for everyone adult or children entering India from Pakistan to safeguard the country's polio-free status.

"The step is being taken to safeguard India's polio-free status attained after sustained efforts and investment. Pakistani nationals resident in Pakistan and planning to travel to India after March 15, 2014 will be required to submit along with their visa applications a certificate of vaccination for one dose of Oral Polio Vaccination received at least four weeks prior to departure to India," a statement released by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad said.

Travelers from Pakistan will have to carry vaccination certificate, which would be later returned to them along with their visa. Though the requirement was supposed to come into effect from January, India extended the deadline to allow Pakistan to set up necessary infrastructure.

The measure is applicable to all travelers from all countries where polio disease is endemic or where cases of polio are reported. The number of polio cases in Pakistan, one of the only three countries where the disease is endemic, crossed over 90 last year.

<http://www.ddinews.gov.in/Social/Social%20-%20Headlines/Pages/polio.aspx>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

## **India may become third largest aviation market 2020- Ficci-KPMG report** **(Firstbiz, March 14, 2014)**

According to a Ficci-KPMG report manpower requirement of the aviation sector in India is expected to grow nearly two-fold to 1.17 lakh by 2017 as carriers induct new aircrafts in the fleet.

### **Findings of the report**

- The total manpower requirement of airlines is estimated to rise from 62,000 in FY11 to 1,17,000 by FY17. This includes pilots, cabin crew, aircraft engineers and technicians (MRO), ground handling staff, cargo handling staff, administrative and sales staff.
- Besides, the aviation industry is believed to generate indirect and induced employment of nearly six times the direct employment.
- With direct employment across airports and airlines to be around 1,50,000 by FY17, the domestic aviation sector is expected to provide an indirect and induced employment to around 1 million people by FY17.
- **With passengers and aircraft fleet likely to double by 2020, the need to strengthen the human resource development infrastructure is immediate. India, which is currently the ninth largest aviation market in the world with a fleet of over 400 aircrafts, is expected to acquire third position by 2020 with the fleet size likely to stand over 1,000 planes.**
- The report predicts investments worth \$50 billion over the next five years. By 2020, Indian carriers plan to increase fleet size to 800 aircrafts. In the next five years, 300 business jets, 300 small aircrafts and 250 helicopters are expected to be added to the current fleet.

- The growth however has not been uniform, with certain northern and north eastern states lagging behind the southern and western states that house many of the country's economic centers. However, the report expects this pattern to change as new centers of commercial activity emerge across the country.

<http://www.firstbiz.com/corporate/india-to-become-3rd-biggest-global-aviation-market-by-2020-kpmg-report-79103.html>

Date Accessed: 14.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

## Tamil Nadu topped agitation chart in 2012

(Devesh K. Pandey, *The Hindu*, March 9, 2014)

Data released by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) reveals that the number of agitations in India recorded an increase of nearly 7 per cent in 2012 compared to 2011. At the State level, Tamil Nadu accounted for maximum number of agitations. A substantial increase in agitations compared to 2011 was also registered in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal. States like Sikkim, Tripura, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep saw no agitation in 2012.

The following table shows the revelations of the BPR&D report:

State	Number of agitations in 2011	Number of agitations in 2012
Chhattisgarh	2,367	3,303
Madhya Pradesh	4,628	9,397
West Bengal	1,352	1,901
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	<b>21,232</b>	<b>15,746</b>
Chandigarh	2,009	1,102
Uttarakhand	8,610	6,038
Punjab	7,554	4,246
Maharashtra	8,289	5,178
Karnataka	5,013	3,380
Gujarat	3,411	2,477

A total of 78,444 protests and demonstrations reported all over the country. In 298 of the 78,444 agitations, the police had to use tear gas and baton charge. Police firing was reported in 16 of the 1,901 agitations in West Bengal, whereas two civilians and three policemen were killed and eight civilians and 469 policemen suffered injuries in the protests. In all, 13 civilians and 6 policemen were killed, whereas 354 civilians and 863 policemen were injured in the agitations.

The following were highlighted as varying reasons for the agitations in different states:

**The maximum number of agitations was political in nature** (around 37.13 per cent), followed by protests on issues other than communal, student, government employees or labour-related (25 per cent). Communal agitations accounted for 4.95 per cent and student protests, about 9.41 per cent of the total number.

**Some states also saw a rising number of communal agitations.** Tamil Nadu recorded the maximum number of communal agitations (1,281), Maharashtra stood second with 1,261. It was followed by Karnataka (445) and Delhi (425). The report states no communal agitation was reported from Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, the A&N Islands, D &N Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

**The maximum number of student agitations** was reported in Rajasthan (939), followed by 862 in Uttarakhand, 850 in Madhya Pradesh and 811 in Assam.

**The record of labour agitations** recorded are 1,392 labour agitations in Tamil Nadu, 879 in Punjab, 668 in Uttarakhand and 528 in Odisha.

**Government employees protested** 2,720 times in Tamil Nadu, 2,023 in Punjab and 1,651 times in Madhya Pradesh during 2012, such protests in the country forming an overall 15.63 per cent.

Tamil Nadu recorded maximum number of agitations. Of the total 21,232 agitations in the state, over 10,000 protests by political parties, 2,720 by government employees, 1,392 by labour and 1,281 agitations on communal. Only 574 agitations in the state involved students.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tn-topped-agitation-chart-in-2012/article5767291.ece>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

## **Growth of 1.7% in tourists availing of “Tourist Visa on Arrival” (VoA) Scheme**

***(Press Bureau of India, March 12, 2014)***

As a facilitative measure to attract more foreign tourists to India, Government launched the “Visa on Arrival” (VoA) Scheme in January 2010 for citizens of five countries, viz. Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore, visiting India for tourism purposes. The Scheme was extended to the citizens of six more countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar in January 2011.

A growth of 6.8% percent has been recorded in the number of tourists availing of the tourist Visa on Arrival (VoA) Scheme during the period January-February, 2014. A total number of 3,883 VoAs have been issued in this period as compared to 3,637 VoAs during the corresponding period of 2013.

### **The following are the other important highlights of VoAs issued during February, 2014:**

(i) During the period January –February, 2014, a total number of 3,883 VoAs were issued as compared to 3,637 VoAs during the corresponding period of 2013 registering a growth of 6.8%.

(ii) The number of VoAs issued under the Scheme during January –February 2014 was Japan(966), New Zealand (854), the Philippines(573), Indonesia(556), Singapore(531), Finland(251), Myanmar(50), Vietnam(39), Cambodia (30), Luxembourg(30) and Laos (3).

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=104580>

Date Accessed: 14.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

## **SEBI revises anti-money laundering norms**

*(Business Standard, March 12, 2014)*

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has issued a circular on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, on anti-money laundering, countering the financing of terrorism norms, reducing the time intermediaries have to maintain client records and allowing them to depend on third parties for carrying out due diligence of its clients.

The circular was issued, following amendments made to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Rules.

The circular focuses on the following:

- Stock exchanges have been asked to monitor compliance of the new norms through half-yearly audits and inspections, and inform Sebi.
- The regulator has also eased the period for which intermediaries have to maintain client records, reducing it from ten years to five.
- The regulator has also asked the companies to designate an additional official in the form of a 'designated director' in addition to the requirement for a principal officer, which is already in place. This director will be given the responsibility to ensure overall compliance.

The compliance of the circular is to be monitored by board of directors in all intermediaries except mutual funds, whereas, the boards of asset management companies and trustees are to monitor compliance in the case of mutual funds.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/sebi-revises-anti-money-laundering-norms-114031200893\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/sebi-revises-anti-money-laundering-norms-114031200893_1.html)

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Shruti Issar)

## **El Nino may pose obstacle to RBI's retail inflation target**

*(NDTV, March 13, 2014)*

“Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML) on Thursday warned of a rising risk of El Nino and said in case it kicks in, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be unable to achieve its glided path for the consumer price index-based inflation.

An RBI committee, led by Deputy Governor Urjit Patel, has set CPI inflation target at 8 per cent by January 2015.

If the rains are normal, CPI inflation will likely stay below the RBI's 8 per cent-in-a-year-ahead target. In case of an El Nino, this will be very difficult to achieve, as a 5 per cent swing in food prices impacts CPI inflation 250 basis points.

El Nino, which occurs at irregular intervals of 2-7 years, weakens the Asian monsoon, often causing drought in North-West and Central India.

The report said the Australian weather bureau sees an increasing chance of El Nino in the coming months. The US Climate Prediction Centre also sees about a 50 per cent chance of El Nino developing during the summer or fall.

BofAML said CPI inflation will likely climb back to 8.4 per cent in March with vegetable prices going up again in the wake of hailstorms.

CPI inflation eased to 8.1 per cent in February from 8.8 per cent in January and 9.9 per cent in December

The RBI may not raise policy rates in its policy review scheduled for April 1, according to the BofA-ML report.”

<http://profit.ndtv.com/news/economy/article-el-nino-may-pose-obstacle-to-rbis-retail-inflation-target-bofa-ml-382894>

Date Accessed: 11.03.2014  
(Karishma Mutreja)

## **Output Gaps in Developing Countries**

*(The Economist, 18 January, 2014)*

The GDP of developing countries rose by an estimated 4.8% in 2013, almost 1% below potential GDP (the output consistent with full employment and stable inflation). The difference between actual and potential growth, expressed as a percentage of potential GDP, is known as the Output Gap. Overall, it has narrowed and is only slightly negative, compared with the large positive output gaps of boom years before the great recession. The recent slowdown has eased excess demand pressures in some countries, notably Brazil. The forecast for India on the other hand is that faced with a stubbornly high inflation its negative output gap will widen.

<http://www.economist.com/news/economic-and-financial-indicators/21594309-output-gaps-developing-countries>

Date Accessed: 28.02.2014  
(Gayatri Verma)

## POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

### 56% women faced corruption in public services in a year: Study

(Vanita Srivastava, *Hindustan Times*, March 07, 2014)

A study on access of women to certain basic and essential public services noted that that over half of the women respondents (56%) or any member of the household experienced corruption at least once during the last 12 months.

The CMS-India Corruption Study (CMS-ICS 2013) focused on eight public services - drinking water, electricity, public distribution system (PDS), public health/hospital care, housing, municipal, police and judiciary. "The data collection for CMS-ICS 2013 was carried out between April and September 2013. The states covered were Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan. From each state, a sample of around 300 households was covered. From each selected household, an adult female member was interviewed."

"Maintaining that majority of women during the last one year had interacted with at least half of the eight public services, the study found that 8 out of every 10 households, who were asked to pay bribe, had no option and paid bribe to avail the desired public service."

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/study-on-women-shows-high-level-corruption-in-public-services/article1-1192217.aspx>

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

## DEVELOPMENT

### Three new projects receive funding to improve safe sanitation

(*Business Line*, March 12, 2014)

Three projects have received funding support from the Sanitation Financing Partnership Trust Fund, created last year by the Asian Development Bank, in recognition that complex urban and coastal environments require new approaches to septage management.

The Fund had been created to provide safe sanitation to families in Asia's cities and rural communities who still lack access to basic sanitation facilities and services. ADB is leveraging the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's \$15 million contribution to finance more than \$28 million in non-sewered sanitation and septage management projects across the region in the next five years, a note said.

"In Asia and the Pacific, around 1.7 billion people still lack access to safe toilets or latrines, 780 million people still practice open defecation, and around 80 per cent of wastewater is discharged into the environment without treatment."

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/three-new-projects-receive-funding-to-improve-safe-sanitation/article5777539.ece>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Anjana John)

## **Meghalaya to amend Industrial Policy to include CSR**

*(The Sentinel, 11 March, 2013)*

Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma stated that “companies operating in the Meghalaya will be mandatorily guided by the new law that stipulates the portion of profits that companies must spend on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) every year.”

“Under the new Companies Act, 2013, passed by Parliament in August 2013, profitable companies must spend every year at least 2 per cent of their average net profit over the preceding three years on CSR works. This mandatory CSR-spend rule will apply from fiscal 2014–15 onwards.” “Those companies that have a turnover of Rs. 1,000 crore or more or net worth of Rs. 500 crore or more or net profit of Rs. 5 crore or more will have to comply.”

The government so far has a list of 73 companies’ which are mostly large industries; however there is no information about the turnover of these industries to determine their actual net profit. The Chief Minister also said “that the Meghalaya Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2012 will be suitably amended to include CSR.”

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/meghalaya/story.php?sec=2&subsec=8&id=185635&dtP=2014-03-12&ppr=1#185635>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Junty Sharma Pathak)

## **GOVERNMENT**

## **Telangana may get 4,000 MW mega power plant**

*(Exim News Service, March 10, 2014)*

In order to address power shortages in the newly carved out Telangana region, the Union government has proposed the setting up of a 4,000-MW mega power project by NTPC in a bid.

Post bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana and Seemandhra, the former is likely to fall short of power by about 2,000 MW.

Setting up of a mega power plant would provide a long-term solution for the shortage, though efforts would be made to bridge the gap through Central power stations and purchases.

The development of the plant will begin once coal linkages are secured with the state-owned Singareni Collieries and other sources.

NTPC has a super thermal power project in Ramagundam and is exploring the possibility of expansion at the site.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=75098>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Shruti Issar)

## **UK witnesses 21% drop in study visas to Indians in 2013**

## EDUCATION

### India among 30 countries where 'education' attacked most often: Study

(Shreya Roy Choudhary, *Times of India*, March 12, 2014)

As per a report titled, Education under Attack 2014, India is among the top 30 countries where education - teachers, institutions, students - have been the target of violence with about 140 schools in the country attacked by militants between the period 2009-2012.

The 30 countries have been divided into three categories: countries with a 1,000 or more attacks are "very heavily affected", the ones that have seen between 500 and 999 attacks from 2009 to early 2013 are "heavily affected" and those with less than 500 attacks are "other affected." India belongs to the third category along with several south Asian countries - Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia and Philippines.

As per the report, most attacks occurred in states affected by a long-running insurgency led by Maoist and other left-wing armed groups - also referred to as 'Naxalites' with Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa being most affected by the conflict in 2008. The report adds that the number of attacks "peaked" in 2009 and has "declined steeply" since.

It refers to a Home Ministry report from 2011 which stated there were 71 schools attacks in 2009, 39 in 2010 and 27 in 2011 across Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Only 12 incidents were reported in 2012. A 2013 Save the Children commissioned study - Caught In Crossfire: Children and education in regions affected by civil strife - covering Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, had reported in detail on the state of schools in districts with high Maoist activity. However, Maoists weren't the only agents of violence - the report also mentions attacks on Christian institutions by Hindu and Muslim extremists. In the final count - covering incidents reported by human rights groups and the media - "at least 13 teachers, one catering staff member and four students were killed from 2009 to 2012. At least 73 teachers and 11 students were injured. Seven teachers were abducted, five of whom were subsequently found dead, and at least two students were kidnapped."

With reference to India, the study states that "there was widespread use of schools as barracks or bases by government forces, mostly in the east of the country."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/India-among-30-countries-where-education-attacked-most-often-Study/articleshow/31892733.cms>

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014

(Deepti Somani)

### UK witnesses 21% drop in study visas to Indians in 2013

(*The Times of India*, March 12, 2014)

After murder of an Indian pupil and issues like stringent policies and depreciating currency, the United Kingdom witnessed a 21 per cent drop in study visas issued to Indians in 2013. The European country issued only 13,608 study visas to Indian nationals in 2013, which is 21 per cent lower than the earlier year.

British High Commissioner to India James Bevan, suggests that there are following myths which have contributed to the problem:-

#### **Students think that**

There is a limit on the number of Indians who can come to Britain to study

They think it is difficult to get a student visa

They think that they cannot work after study

In 2013, Britain received 14,762 applications across all education sectors, which was 27 per cent lower than the same received in 2012, with the university sponsored applications which constitute a bulk of the category, falling by 7 per cent to 12,832. Notably, the dip in numbers came after Anuj Bidve, a native of Maharashtra's Pune, was shot dead by a local factory worker near Manchester on December 26, 2011.

“Beven said, in 2013, Britain issued a total of 400,000 visas to Indians, which is 5 per cent higher than previous year which expected to grow. Over 90 per cent of the applications received get the visas, he said, clarifying that Britain does not look at India as a high risk country as some reports had stated.”

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/UK-witnesses-21-drop-in-study-visas-to-Indians-in-2013/articleshow/31894425.cms>

Date Accessed: 14.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

## HEALTH

### Campaign to raise awareness about dengue launched

*(Firstpost, March 12, 2014)*

To eradicate dengue, a multi-pronged campaign was on Tuesday launched across six Indian cities with public-private partnership. The two-month campaign, "U & Me Against Dengue", intends to reach out to more than 65,000 school children in more than 130 schools, and 85,000 households across approximately 170 resident welfare associations to conduct fumigation, street plays, plantation and cleanliness drives. As part of the campaign, a 24x7 toll free dengue helpline 1800-200-0801, along with a website, [www.uandmeagainstdengue.com](http://www.uandmeagainstdengue.com), was launched.

The campaign will be rolled out in phases across Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Pune and Ahmedabad. "We all have read that prevention is better than cure and in the case of dengue, where there are no vaccines to cure this disease yet, prevention becomes all the more important," said Chandrakant S. Pandav, professor and head, centre for community medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). "We welcome this step to empower the community by creating awareness about dengue and educating people about preventive measures to make their community dengue free," added Pandav.

The website also allows willing consumers to volunteer for blood donation to fill in their details, following which the Rotary Blood Bank will reach out to registered users. The campaign is an initiative by Mortein in collaboration with the North Delhi Municipality Corporation, AIIMS, Rotary Blood Bank, Indian Medical Association and NGO Sahayog.

<http://www.firstpost.com/fwire/campaign-to-raise-awareness-about-dengue-launched-1429945.html>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

### Dr. Reddy's recalls over 50,000 bottles of heartburn drug in US post contamination

*(Firstbiz, March 14, 2014)*

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Generic drugmaker Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd is recalling about 58,656 bottles of the heartburn drug lansoprazole in the United States due to a microbial contamination. It was classified as a "Class II" recall which indicates a remote chance of severe adverse consequences or death due to the product flaw.

“While product recalls are not uncommon, the FDA announcement comes amid a string of quality problems for Indian drug makers. In a weekly report, the U.S. regulator also announced it was banning imports from Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Karkhadi manufacturing plant in the western state of Gujarat.

“Dr. Reddy's voluntary recall of lansoprazole delayed release capsules, a generic version of Swiss drugmaker Novartis' drug Prevacid 24 HR, began on January 3, 2014, the FDA said on its website.”

<http://www.firstbiz.com/corporate/dr-reddys-recalls-over-50000-bottles-of-heartburn-drug-in-us-post-contamination-79101.html>

Date Accessed: 14.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

## AGRICULTURE

### Organic cotton production declines in India as brands shift to Better Cotton Initiative

(Jayashree Bhosale, *The Economic Times*, Mar 11, 2014)

The article highlights that rising applicability of Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) has led to a shrinkage in crop production in India. Organic cotton production in India faced an alarming drop of 47 percent from the year 2009-10 to 2011-12. BCI considers social as well as environmental impact of cotton production, and is presented as a viable alternative to organic cotton production in India which was highly polluting.

According to a report of the Central Institute of Cotton Research, cotton is the second largest polluter in agriculture, accounting for 25% of the pollution from the pesticides used on the crop. Reaching its peak in 2009-10, organic cotton accounted for 1,95,797 metric tonne, which fell drastically by 2011-12 to 1,03,004 metric tonne. In light of environmental concerns, BCI was developed in 2001. BCI is an unconventional model of cotton production, applied in India, Brazil and Mali, where producers have to use micro irrigation to save water, adopt integrated pest management practices. BCI is a not for profit organisation and the practice defined under the model takes into account social as well as environmental aspects of cotton production.

Globally, there has been a fall in global organic cotton production from 2011 onward. The failure of organic cotton to give the expected 10% more price than conventional cotton led to reduction in the area under organic cotton in India.

The following are the reasons for the increasing viability of BCI cotton:

Currently, BCI cotton is being sold at a higher price than organic cotton due to high demand.

Standards for organic cotton are very tough to follow. BCI in contrast begins with less expensive and easier minimum standards related to water conservation, chemical use etc.

Organic cotton production has also faced a downfall because of high cost of certification which also increases the cost of organic cotton for the end consumer. Certification is required every step- from growing and ginning to spinning, till the product reaches end user. In case of BCI, there is no spinning certification required and only bale-level traceability is important.

Corporates involved in BCI model also claim that “cotton producers end up getting 15% to 25% higher price than the market rate because the fibre crop is procured at the farm gate, which saves on the transportation and mundi costs of the farmer.” Ginners get a premium for BCI cotton as compared to organic.

"There has been a decline of about 30% due to non-availability of non-GMO seeds and the pricing issues," said Mrunal Lahankar, certification manager at Chetna Organic Agricultural Producer Company. There are various alternative cotton growing models to the conventional cotton growing including organic, fairtrade, BCI, cleaner cotton etc. which need to be identified and applied effectively.

[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-11/news/48118258\\_1\\_cotton-production-ginners-organic-cotton](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-11/news/48118258_1_cotton-production-ginners-organic-cotton)

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014  
(Mahima Malik)

## LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

### Religion no bar for adoption: SC

(*The Telegraph*, February 20, 2014)

The Supreme Court has recently ruled that Muslim personal law or any other religious code could not prohibit adoption by childless couples as such a right is vested in every Indian under the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act.

A three-judge bench of Chief Justice P. Sathasivam and Justices Ranjan Gogoi and Shiv Kirti Singh stated that the provisions of the JJ Act on adoptions would prevail over all personal laws because adoption was a matter of personal choice and there was no compulsion to adopt a child. The Bench also said that till a uniform civil code, enunciated by Article 44 of the Constitution, was enacted, the JJ Act would apply to all in the country irrespective of religious denominations.

“The (JJ) Act is a small step in reaching the goal enshrined by Article 44 of the Constitution. Personal beliefs and faiths, though (they) must be honoured, cannot dictate the operation of the provisions of an enabling statute,” Justice Gogoi, writing the judgment, said.

The Juvenile Justice (Care And Protection of Children) Act, 2000, was amended in 2006 by inserting a section on adoptions. Before that, the process was governed by the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act or the Guardianship Act which allowed adoption only for Hindu couples and single women. Muslims, Christians, Parsis and other religious minorities could not adopt children and could only become guardians of orphans.

The court, however, rejected a plea for adoption to be declared a fundamental right.

[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140220/jsp/nation/story\\_18001646.jsp#.UyJiXfmSz4Y](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140220/jsp/nation/story_18001646.jsp#.UyJiXfmSz4Y)

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014  
(Deepti Somani)

### SC asks Law Commission to frame guidelines to curb hate speeches

(*Deepak Nagpal, Zee News*, March 12, 2014)

The Supreme Court has asked the Law Commission to look into the issue of hate speeches being made by leaders of political, social and religious outfits and consider framing guidelines to regulate such provocative statements. A bench headed by Justice B.S. Chauhan, while refusing to frame guidelines itself, asked the commission to look into it and give its recommendation to the Centre.

The court passed the order on a PIL by NGO Pravasi Bhalai Sanghatan alleging that there was a need for guidelines as hate speeches destroy the fabric of democracy and violate the provisions of the Constitution.

[http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/sc-asks-law-commission-to-frame-guidelines-on-hate-speeches\\_917425.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/sc-asks-law-commission-to-frame-guidelines-on-hate-speeches_917425.html)

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014  
(Deepti Somani)

## **Finish trial of lawmakers within one year: Supreme Court**

(*NDTV*, March 10, 2014)

In an attempt to decriminalise politics, the Supreme Court has ordered that trial in criminal cases against lawmakers must be concluded within a year of charges being framed.

The order came in hearing a Public Interest Litigation by an NGO that sought quick trial in criminal cases involving MPs and MLAs. “It pleaded that they continue to enjoy the membership of legislative bodies for many years despite being charged with serious offences, as trial drags on.”

In a landmark step last year, the Supreme Court ruled that lawmakers convicted of a crime will stand disqualified immediately.

The court further noted that “if a lower court is unable to complete trial within a year, it will have to submit an explanation and seek extension of trial from the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court. The Supreme Court also directed that trials must be conducted on a day-to-day basis.”

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/finish-trial-of-lawmakers-within-one-year-supreme-court-493704?curl=1394703869>

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

## CHILDREN

### UN launches 'Children, not soldiers' campaign

(*The Day After*, March 07, 2014)

The United Nations has launched its global campaign "Children, not soldiers" in order to prevent children from being recruited or used as soldiers in conflict areas. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message that although thousands of children have been released from armed groups, thousands more were still part of such groups, reported Xinhua.

"More than 250,000 children under 18 are fighting in both government armies and armed opposition groups. Some children are kidnapped or forced to serve; others join hoping to find food and shelter, help their families, or improve their lives." More than 6,000 child soldiers may now be involved in the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR), UN said.

The use of children to fight adults' wars is not limited to a single country or continent, but has become a worldwide problem. The problem is most critical in Africa and Asia, though children are also used as soldiers by governments and armed groups in many countries in the Americas, Europe and the Middle East.

<http://www.dayafterindia.com/detail.php?headline=content&catid=6140>

Date Accessed: 09.03.2014

(Anjana John)

### India's child mortality rate may worsen despite govt. efforts: Report

(*Deepti Choudhary, LiveMint*, March 07, 2014)

According to the India Philanthropy Report 2014 by business consulting company Bain & Co., India's child mortality rate may worsen despite the government's efforts to lower it because of a dearth of funding with other hurdles being the lack of a comprehensive ecosystem of public, private and philanthropic stakeholders to help close the gaps in reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescent (RMNCH+A) health.

India has recorded a significant improvement in women and children's health over the last 15-20 years. Maternal and infant mortality rates, the number of underweight children, child marriages and the total fertility rate has all declined. However, a high rate of anaemia among mothers and children is still an area of concern.

The report highlights the crucial need for non-state actors to work with the public and private sector to help bridge the gap to reach transformational outcomes and recommends the expanding role of philanthropists and mandated CSR.

The report said that in addition to strengthening health systems and scaling up healthcare programmes and services, private global philanthropy will be critical in catalysing the development of a vibrant healthcare ecosystem and enhancing India's health delivery and support systems. Further, the country needs a larger set of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the scale and managerial expertise to facilitate the use of capital at the ground level.

The report also suggests 'enhancing government training programmes to improve the efficiency of large-scale networks and intensifying focus and attention on vertical health issues to achieve long-term results such as anaemia, typhoid and HIV will make the lasting impact on women and children's healthcare.'

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/Xc18O90sLtTAc9gBmHoEMO/India-may-need-incremental-12-bn-fund-for-women-and-children.html>

Date Accessed: 07.03.2014

(Deepti Somani)

## GENDER

### Millions of Indian female entrepreneurs and the need for easier access to money

(*Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 2014)

A report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector arm of the World Bank, highlights the rising demand for finance amongst women entrepreneurs in India and the need for institutional support, by the government as well as intermediaries, to increase their accessibility to formal credit mechanisms. It reveals that only 27% of the total finance needs of women entrepreneurs are met through formal lending institutions. On the other hand, male entrepreneurs get around 70% of their financing from formal lending channels.

According to the report, more than 90% of India's total microfinance clients are women. The number of enterprises owned partially or fully by women in India is estimated to be around three million. However, the report estimates that in 2012, the total financial requirement for women entrepreneurs was \$158 billion but only \$42 billion was accessed from formal lenders (a dismal 27 percent).

"Financial institutions need to adapt to accommodate women, the IFC said." Around 80% of women-owned enterprises are in the service sector but most bank lending is only for manufacturing. Conservative stand on social, legal and cultural right of women for inheritance and land ownership also deprives women of adequate collateral against which they can raise loans from banks.

While institutional effort to address the issue has begun, for example, state-owned bank for women with 25 branches across the country, but financial institutions must develop new products and services exclusively for women. Apart from financial services, training must also be provided to encourage entrepreneurship for women in India.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2014/03/13/india-has-millions-of-female-entrepreneurs-and-they-need-easier-access-to-money/?mod=WSJBlog&mod=irt>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

### India will take around 56 years to achieve female youth literacy: Report

(Manash Pratim Gohain, *The Times of India*, March 10, 2014)

At the present pace of development, it is estimated that India will take another 56 years to achieve female youth literacy.

The gender summary of the data from the Unesco Education for All Global Monitoring Report notes a that over 100 million young women in low and lower middle income countries are unable to read and the gender imbalance in global education will prevent half of the 31 million girls out of school from ever enrolling.

The report highlighting India noted that after completing up to four years of school, 90% emerge illiterate and after five to six years in school, around 30% still emerge illiterate.

"Poor women are the most vulnerable, with two out of three of them in South and West Asia who cannot read are from this category. While poorest young females in Bhutan are not projected to achieve universal literacy until 2083, Pakistan will not reach the target until the 22nd Century. India is no better, projected to meet the target between 2070 and 2080."

The summary, launched in partnership with the United Nations Girls Education Initiative, “calls for equity to be at the forefront of new global development goals after 2015, so that every child has an equal chance of learning through quality education.”

It is estimated that only “70% of countries will have achieved parity in primary education by 2015, and 56% will have achieved parity in lower secondary education. Unless improvements are made, the poorest girls will achieve universal primary completion 60 years later than the richest boys.”

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-will-take-around-56-years-to-achieve-female-youth-literacy-Report/articleshow/31758534.cms>

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

## REGIONAL

### Nagaland among six poll expenditure sensitive states: Election Commission

(Zee News, March 13, 2014)

Based on figures from previous elections, Nagaland is recognised as one of the six 'Election Expenditure Sensitive' states. Deputy Election Commissioner Sudhir Tripathi announced that apart from Nagaland, “Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab and Arunachal Pradesh have been categorized as Election Expenditure-Sensitive state”.

The categorisation will mean special assistance on the listed states during the coming Lok Sabha elections. The Commission will deploy Expenditure Monitoring Team from the day of filing of nominations till the polling is over. Flying squads, video surveillance team as well as parallel election expenditure accounts would be put in place throughout the state so that the elections are held peacefully and honestly.

Tripathi also mentioned that political parties had requested Election Commission to ensure that the voters received their Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC). Nagaland is the last state to have started distribution of EPIC, but Nagaland and Assam will be the first states in the country to use plastic EPIC.

[http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/nagaland-among-six-poll-expenditure-sensitive-states-ec\\_917638.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/nagaland-among-six-poll-expenditure-sensitive-states-ec_917638.html)

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

### New Special Courts for Women in Kerala

(Toby Antony, *The New Indian Express*, March 09, 2014)

The Kerala government is going to sanction two more special courts, in Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram -- for the trial of cases related to atrocities on women and children. “Officials in the Law Department have said that the proposal for two special courts has been approved and the department has started steps to complete remaining procedures.” These special Additional Sessions Courts, would be established by end of April or beginning of May.

The department is looking forward to bring out notification for the court as soon as judges and staffs are appointed. The Special Court for trial of cases on atrocities against women and children in Kochi was non-operational for about six months in 2013 after delay from the government in issuing notification. The officials said such issues would not take place with new courts. Ever since the special court was set up in Kochi in 2013, several cases were disposed of in a speedy manner. In 2013, around 200 cases were disposed of, even though the court did not function for around six months.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/New-Special-Courts-for-Women-Soon/2014/03/09/article2098679.ece#.UyFHJPmSyx9>

Date Accessed: 09.03.2014

(Anjana John)

## **Home Ministry concerned over increase in extortion, violence in Manipur**

(Iboyaima Laithangbam, *The Hindu*, March 10, 2014)

Concerned over the increasing cases of extortion and violence by fake insurgents in Manipur, The Home Ministry has intervened and asked the persons who get such extortion threats and victims of violence to lodge complaints within one hour. "Those who fail to inform the MHA [Ministry of Home Affairs] or police about these extortion will be held accountable for all consequences."

The Ministry has demanded that the "names of the underground organisations, amount demanded, their telephone numbers and other particulars should be notified to the police stations and the MHA."

"The MHA notification said that there have been increasing instances of violence. It is believed that fake insurgents and some groups which are signatories to the suspension of operations are behind these extortion threats. As per ground rules of the suspension of operations, the former insurgents cannot indulge in extortion and other insurgency related crimes."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/home-ministry-concerned-over-increase-in-extortion-violence-in-manipur/article5769269.ece>

Date Accessed: 13.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

## **Deadlock halts de-silting process in Cuttack; leads to water logging threat**

(Vikash Sharma, *The Telegraph*, March 10, 2014)

In an impasse between the Cuttack Municipal Corporation and contractor's association relating to participation in tenders released by the civic body to carry out de-silting operations in the city. As a result of this deadlock, people living in several low-lying areas are worried as silt collection might lead to acute water logging in the city.

According to sources, the corporation has not cleared bills amounting to Rs. 5 crores for various projects undertaken by contractors. The contractors who engaged in the de-silting process in the previous year are yet to get nearly Rs 1 crore for their work. Moreover, the reputation of civic body officials had suffered a hit in the wake of allegations of embezzlement of Phailin relief materials last year.

Around Rs 1.5 crore is spent annually by the corporation to remove silt from the drains consisting of two main storm water channels stretching up to 25kms. In addition to this, de-silting also takes place from a network of 29kms of branch drains and 72kms of tertiary drains and other surface water channels measuring up to 660kms.

According to a corporation official, de-silting of smaller drains is already taking place in various localities and while steps were being taken to resolve the stalemate.

[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140310/jsp/odisha/story\\_18051785.jsp#.Ux4GWvmSyBR](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140310/jsp/odisha/story_18051785.jsp#.Ux4GWvmSyBR)

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

## INDIA IN THE WORLD

### Indian degrees to get Global recognition soon

(*Times of India*, March 10, 2014)

India's efforts to become a full-fledged member of the Washington Accord in the upcoming meeting of the body in June is going to earn Indian degrees greater recognition thereby improving the mobility in the global platform for students pursuing technical educations like engineers.

The Accord was signed in 1989 as a part of an international agreement amongst the accrediting bodies of various engineering degree programmes. There are 16 signatories to the accord including India, which became a provisional member in 2007.

As part of India's efforts to align its accreditation norms with best international practices, there are plans to set up the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority (NARA) - an autonomous body to identify agencies for accrediting institutes. The Undergraduate Grants Commission (UGC) will initiate steps to ensure the formation of this body.

Currently the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA) provide accreditation to educational institutes. The government has made accreditation mandatory for all educational institutes and UGC has come up with a set of guidelines in this respect. However the IITs follow an internal accreditation system and are not accredited by the NAAC and NBA.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/Global-recognition-of-Indian-degrees-soon/articleshow/31801175.cms>

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

### Flawed Policy on India Blamed for Internal Threats in Pakistan

(PTI, *The Economic Times*, 23 February, 2014)

An official Pakistani document has blamed "flawed and myopic foreign policy choices" related to India, Afghanistan and Kashmir, prolonged military rule and poor governance for internal security threats currently faced by the country, according to a media report today.

According to *Dawn*, the draft of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2013-2018, being fine-tuned by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan before presentation to the cabinet, describes the scenario as dangerous, posing an existential threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the state.

The government has done a comprehensive analysis of counter-terrorism models in many countries including India, the US, UK, Canada, Germany, Turkey and Singapore, in order to prepare its own strategy to tackle a deadly insurgency that has claimed some 40,000 lives in over a decade. The whole operation is expected to cost Rs 21 billion, according to the document.

Pakistan is the country most affected by terrorism after Iraq but if the severity of incidents is considered, it surpasses the Middle Eastern nation, according to the policy document.

As part of the counter-terrorism policy, the Interior Minister has indicated he intends to revamp the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to prepare a comprehensive response plan, rapid reaction force and integral air wing.

But central to the revamped NACTA, according to the report, would be establishing a "directorate of internal security" to collate intelligence from six intelligence agencies and coordinate efforts between 20 law enforcement agencies.

[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-02-23/news/47603716\\_1\\_counter-terrorism-india-and-afghanistan-existential-threat](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-02-23/news/47603716_1_counter-terrorism-india-and-afghanistan-existential-threat)

Date Accessed: 28.02.2014

(Gayatri Verma)

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### UN Commission on Women opens Annual Session

(UN News Centre, March 10, 2014)

The 2014 session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) opened on March 10, 2014. This year the CSW will focus on development, particularly education and reproductive rights and more than 135 events organized by UN agencies will be held at the Headquarters, alongside the official meetings of the Commission. According to UN Women, an additional 300 parallel events will be hosted by the NGO community close to the UN premises until its conclusion on 21 March.

More than 6,000 registered representatives of the 193 Member States, UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will discuss the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the eight anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ahead of the 2015 deadline. The final discussion document will contribute to shaping a future development agenda, with some participants pushing for a standalone goal on women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda. This year's meeting of the Commission also comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

For the next two weeks, CSW participants will also discuss women and girls' access to education, training, science and technology, as well as women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

"More girls are in school, but we are far from ending gender disparity at all levels of education," said Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, highlighting that gender gaps are particularly stark among rural populations and for persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups. He further said that the UN is also committed to helping Governments provide the education and quality sexual and reproductive health services that are lacking.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47316&Cr=gender+equality&Cr1#.UyFH7fmSyVI>

Date Accessed: 10.3.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

## SOUTH ASIA

### US questions Maldives' commitment to democracy

(Associated Press, *Washington Post*, March 11, 2014)

This article points to the censure of the Maldives Supreme Court by the United States government. The US criticized the Court after it suspended the country's elections commissioner and gave him a suspended six-month jail term for contempt of court, throwing into doubt a parliamentary election set for this month. The court also sacked the deputy commissioner but without a jail term.

US State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki in a statement Monday called the trial of commissioners Fuwad Thowfeek and Ahmed Fayaz an “unprecedented expansion of judicial powers.” His statement said the Supreme Court’s insistence on holding the election as scheduled March 22, after having sacked the official responsible for holding it, calls “into serious question the government’s commitment to democracy.” As of now only two members remain on the five-member Elections Commission as a third member resigned earlier.

Tension between the judiciary and the Elections Commission arose after Thowfeek spoke out against some controversial judgments by the Supreme Court pertaining to last November’s presidential election runoff in which President Yameen Abdul Gayoom, a brother of the Indian Ocean archipelago’s former autocratic ruler, was elected against former President Mohamed Nasheed.

The results of a Sept. 7 first-round presidential election were annulled by the Supreme Court after another candidate complained that the voters’ register contained made up names and those of dead people. A widespread outcry erupted because local and international monitors had found the election to be free and fair. Nasheed led that vote but fell short of the 50 percent needed for an outright win. Police acting under a court order stopped a subsequent revote, and the delay gave Nasheed’s opponents enough time to form a coalition and defeat him narrowly in a third attempt to hold the election.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/us-questions-maldives-commitment-to-democracy/2014/03/11/b55e7310-a8d5-11e3-8a7b-c1c684e2671f\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-questions-maldives-commitment-to-democracy/2014/03/11/b55e7310-a8d5-11e3-8a7b-c1c684e2671f_story.html)

Date Accessed: 10.3.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

## **India pledges to provide Rs 8.5 billion to Bhutan**

*(The Economic Times, March 10, 2014)*

With an attempt to help Bhutan in implementing its major projects, India has pledged to provide Rs 8.5 billion to the land-locked country for its 11th Five Year Plan. The decision was taken at the first meeting of the Small Development Project Committee (SDP), which after reviewing SDP activities of the 10th Five Year Plan had expressed satisfaction with the impact of the projects on the livelihoods of people in rural Bhutan.

The Committee approved 59 projects and also decided the formats to be adopted for the formulation, implementation, reporting and assessment of the projects. The meeting that took place at the capital of Bhutan-Thimphu- comprised representatives the Royal Government of Bhutan and two member of the Indian Embassy.

[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-10/news/48083653\\_1\\_india-pledges-thimphu-bhutan](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-10/news/48083653_1_india-pledges-thimphu-bhutan)

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

## **MIDDLE-EAST**

## **Over five million kids affected by Syria conflict: UNICEF**

*(The New Indian Express, March 12, 2014)*

Over 5.5 million Syrian children have fallen victims to the three-year-old crisis in the war-torn Syria, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said while releasing a new report on the prevailing situation in the country. UNICEF also appealed for an immediate end to the violence and enhanced support for the affected.

In the report, the UN agency stressed the immense damage caused to children by the ongoing armed conflicts.

It warned that the future of 5.5 million Syria children, with some 4.3 million children inside Syria and around 1.2 million having fled to neighbouring countries as refugees, was threatened. “It was due to violence, the collapse of health and education services, severe psychological distress and the worsening economic impact on families combined to devastate a generation.”

The UN agency called for international community to halt the violence in Syria, and granting of immediate access to under-reached children living in the country. It also urged for boosting the education and healthcare system, providing support to host communities and governments to improve the conditions for Syria refugee children and families.

[http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/Over-Five-Million-Kids-Affected-by-Syria-Conflict-Unicef/2014/03/12/article2103712.ece#.UyFZN\\_mSyx8](http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/Over-Five-Million-Kids-Affected-by-Syria-Conflict-Unicef/2014/03/12/article2103712.ece#.UyFZN_mSyx8)

Date Accessed: 12.03.2014

(Anjana John)

## AMERICAS

### Six focus areas for policy makers in the U.S.

(Sean McElwee, *The Rolling Stones*, March 5, 2014)

The article brings to light the dismal record of some human development indicators in the US. The writer focuses on six parameters in the US and puts forth the point that the nation lags behind other developed and even some developing nations in various aspects of social welfare. The identified six parameters in detail are as follows:

#### **1. Criminal Justice**

Despite a fall in crime rate in the US, the International Center for Prison Studies estimates that America imprisons 716 people per 100,000 citizens. This figure is significantly worse than Russia (484 prisoners per 100,000 citizens), China (121) and Iran (284). North Korea is the only country that imprisons a higher percentage of its population than the US. The U.S. is also the only developed country that executes prisoners. Additionally, data shows a higher execution rate- 42 percent of those on death row are black, compared to less than 15 percent of the overall population. The victimization of juveniles in detention homes is also alarming. In 2010, a report by the Department of Justice found that 12.1 percent of all youth held in juvenile detention reported sexual violence.

#### **2. Gun Violence**

According to United Nations data, the U.S. has *20 times* more murders than the developed world average. The U.S. also leads the developed world in firearm-related murders. More than half of the most deadly mass shootings in the past 50 years around the world occurred in the United States, and 73 percent of the killers in the U.S. obtained their weapons legally. Some cities like New Orleans and Detroit in the US record very high rates of gun violence.

#### **3. Healthcare**

Despite the fact that U.S. accounts for health expenditure twice it's the average expenditure for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the health record of the U.S. does not read well. A study last year found that in many South American countries, life expectancy is lower than in Algeria, Nicaragua or Bangladesh. Citing cost concerns, millions of poor Americans are expected to suffer with the decision of governors in many U.S. states to restrict Medicaid- which is program to provide health insurance for low-income Americans. The U.S. also has a high infant mortality rate as well as teenage-pregnancy rate when compared to other developed nations.

#### **4. Education**

The U.S. is among only three nations in the world that does not guarantee paid maternal leave (the other two are Papua New Guinea and Swaziland). This implies no support for working American mothers in raising their children. The funding of U.S. schools, which takes place at the local and not national level, is also being debated. The Department of Education reported that schools with high concentrations of poor students have lower levels of funding. "America also has one of the highest achievement gaps between high income and low income students, as measured by the OECD." Additionally, only about 40 percent of the cost of education is publicly-funded in the U.S. when compared to other OECD countries (viz. 70 percent on an average).

**5. Inequality**

The U.S. tops out OECD countries in terms of income inequality. Many countries in the U.S. have very poor social mobility, with political and economic power concentrated in hands of few.

**6. Infrastructure**

“A study estimates that U.S. infrastructure system needs a \$3.6 trillion investment over the next six years.” Large portions of U.S. wastewater capacity are more than half a century old, for instance, in South Dakota, Alaska and Pennsylvania. Around 45 percent of Americans also lack access to public transit. According to the National Bridge Inventory, one in nine U.S. bridges (or a total of 66,405 bridges) are considered "structurally deficient."

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/six-ways-america-is-like-a-third-world-country-20140305>

Date accessed: 08.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

## OPINIONS

### Efficient use of forest to build inclusive economies

(Sunita Narain, *Down to Earth*, March 15, 2014)

The writer argues that forests should be repositioned as integral to the economic growth of states. This entails learning methods of planting, replanting and cutting to make effective use of forest produce. The article points to the fact that despite having a stable forest cover there has been a decline in the growing stock of forests between 2005 and 2009. A major proportion of forest produce is imported including pulp and timber. According to the writer as a result of this revenues from forests are declining in state budgets.

The emphasis on extraction in the pre-1980 period, she elaborates, led to the loss of large areas of forests to commercial interests. Timber logging became rampant as forests were given away to the pulp and paper industry at throwaway rates. Moreover, local needs people for firewood and grazing cattle put added pressure on forests. Consequently, it was found that large forests had been lost to development and subsistence pressure which in turn brought the issues of conservation and protection to the fore. The Forest Conservation Act was enacted thus to centralise decisions on forest diversion for non-forestry projects like dams and mining.

While deforestation rates have been checked effectively, forest in India continue to remain in still under huge pressure and shrinking over time. The rate of diversion of forest land for development projects have also increased in an unprecedented manner. Secondly, management of forest produce meeting local needs without exerting too much pressure on forests is also the need of the hour.

Consequently, the writer proposes feels that a robust methodology is required to bring the tangible and intangible (that cannot be measured) together. Also, the states need to transfer payment for standing forests—protected for biodiversity or watershed or other purposes—to local custodians. This will build local economies and local support for forest protection.

Additionally, a robust accounting methodology is also needed to increase the productivity of the remaining forest-land. Efficient use of forests thus provides a way to build inclusive economies using green wealth.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/when-planting-trees-curse>

Date Accessed: 10.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

