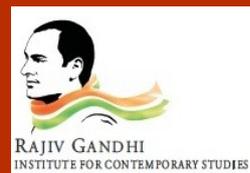


Issue
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RGICS POLICY WATCH



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Upcoming Seminars

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- 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

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- Thousands of Tibetans can Vote in Karnataka Now
- 800 creamy IAS officers will monitor candidates' expenses

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.

State of Indian Farmers: A Report



*Compiled by RGICS
Jawahar Bhawan, New Delhi
Issue Coordinator : Ms. Karishma Mutreja*

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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

State of Indian Farmers: A Report

Presently the Agrarian sector in our country employs around half the workforce and contributes about 14 per cent to overall GDP of the country. However, the relative contribution of agriculture to the GDP has been declining over time steadily. The growing perception is that agriculture is no more a profitable enterprise which partly explains the increasing shift of farmers towards non farm sector. The consistent poor record of major indicators related to the Indian agriculture raise a crucial question: **Is India facing a lasting crisis in agriculture?**

A report by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), titled “State of Indian Farmers”, reveals that Indian agriculture has been going through a period of deep crisis- marked by poor income, skewed benefits favouring richer farmers and lack of access to power and irrigation facilities. The study, commissioned by a non-political association of farmers Bharat Krishak Samaj, is based on a socio economic survey spread across 18 states in India.

Socio Economic Profile of farmers:

14 per cent of the farmers who took part in the survey were found to be landless.

- 66 per cent of the women belonging to farmer households are involved in farming. 67 per cent women say that the income from agriculture is not sufficient to fulfil the livelihood needs of their family.
- In past one year approximately one in every ten farmers said that their family had to remain without food on few occasions.
- 36 per cent farmers live either in a hut or a kuchha house. Only 18 per cent of them have a pucca independent house.
- 28 per cent of the farmers were found to be non-literate.
- Only 10 per cent of the farmers are members of a farmer organization.



Most of the farmers said that not corruption, but price rise will be the most important issue for them when they go out to vote in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, followed by unemployment and irrigation

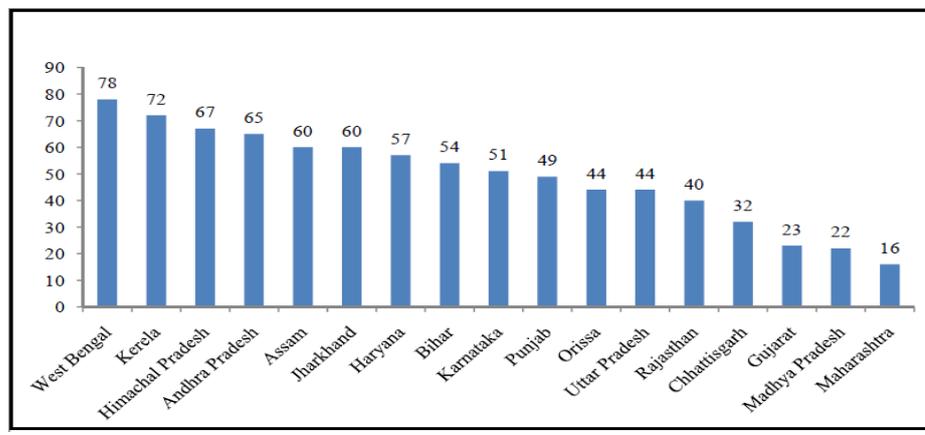
Party that cares about farmers' interest		Voter preference in 2014 Lok Sabha Election	
Party Name	%	Party Name	%
Congress	13	Congress	17
BJP	16	BJP	30
Left	1	Left	02
Others	13	Others	20
Can't say	57	Can't say	31

REGIONS	CONG	BJP	LEFT	OTHERS
North	13	32	0	27
East	16	23	5	26
Central	19	46	0	25
South	21	9	4	6
West	16	42	0	31

IT'S A HARD LIFE

- 76 % would prefer to do some other work rather than farming.
- As many as 60 % said they want their children to migrate to settle in the city.
- 58 % think both State and the Central government are responsible for their problems.

The Overall Condition of Farmers is perceived to be bad in Most States.



The assessment of the general condition of farmers shows that –

Most farmers from eastern and southern parts of the country rate the condition of farmers more negatively than their counterparts in other regions.

- Condition of farmers is most negative in West Bengal followed by southern state of Kerala.
- Overall farmers from Western and Central India were found to be least unhappy.
Interestingly, overall farmers from Western and Central India are least unhappy with the farmers' condition.

Prevailing Farming Practices

The current farming practices and conditions in India are as follows –

Cropping pattern and Seeds used: Data suggests that more than 60 per cent of the farmers practice this rice-wheat pattern.

In addition to this the survey found that a large proportion of farmers use local or traditional seeds. Also, **a very small proportion of farmers used GM seeds. 42 per cent of the farmers interviewed were of the opinion that GM seeds should not be used in farming for higher profitability.**

Irrigation statistics present a depressing situation in terms of farmers' access to effective facilities for farming. **Only 18 per cent of farmers said that they have the facility of Govt. tube wells for irrigation.** Traditional sources of irrigation like pond and well continue to be important.

Electricity- The following table reads a poor record of farmers' access to electricity, which was the lowest in East India. 87 per cent of the farmers in East India complained about not getting electricity.

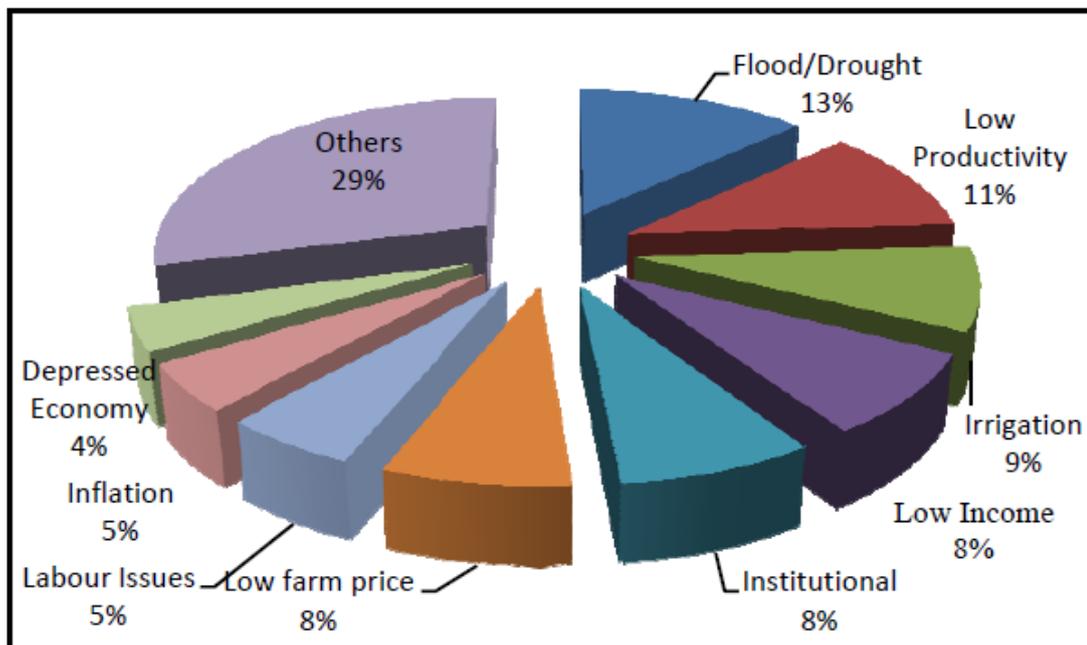
Region wise access to electricity for farming (in %)

Region	No electricity for farming
North	46
East	87
Central	42
South	39
West	40

Fertilizers - Most farmers use both organic and chemical fertilizers. Eastern India accounted for maximum usage of chemical fertilizers. Farmers in South India recorded maximum usage of organic fertilizer more than the rest of India.

The report highlights major challenges and problems faced by Indian Farmers.

As per the survey farmers in India consider natural calamities as one of the biggest problem followed by low productivity.



Question: In your opinion, which are the biggest challenges faced by Indian farmers today?

Other challenges faced by farmers include crop destruction. The main reasons reported for crop destruction are uncertain rainfall, drought, and flood, destruction of crop by diseases and birds/animal, and lack of irrigation. The study shows that approximately 70 per cent farmers in the country witnessed crop destruction in the last three years.

Indian Farmers: Their Economic Hardships

The survey found that landless farmers are least satisfied with their present economic condition and are the most distressed. 40 per cent of the farmers interviewed said that compared to past five years their present economic condition has improved and 15 per cent said that their condition has worsened in comparison to past five years. **Only two out of ten farmers said that in last five years they had take loan for farming related activity.**

The uncertainty of a stable livelihood through farming, lack of access to crucial resources has rendered farming to be a non viable option for many in rural areas. As a result, migration away from farm to non-farm sectors, in essence - away from rural areas and to cities- has been surging.

Among other worries basic minimum requirements like education, health and employment also emerged as major responsibilities concerning Indian farmers. Housing and marriage in the household also emerged as issues distressing farmers.

Regional variations in problem faced by farmers:

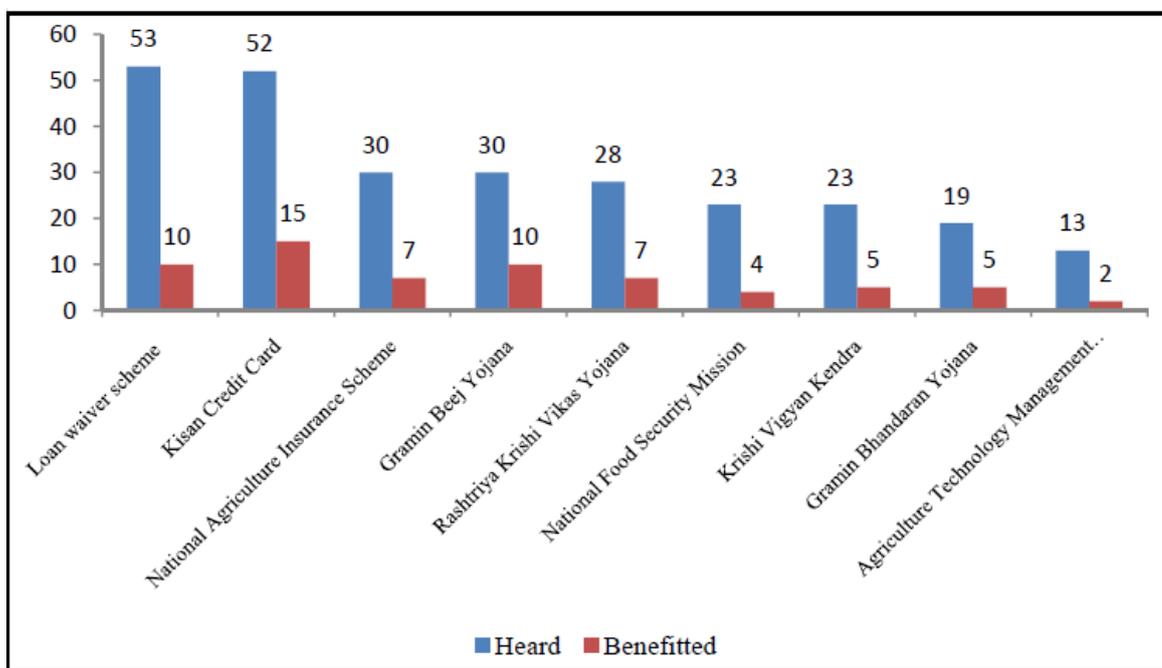
Region	First Major Problem	Second Major Problem	Third Major Problem
North	Labour Issues	Low Productivity	Low Income
East	Irrigation	Flood/Drought	Low Productivity
Central	Irrigation	Labour Issues	Inflation
South	Low Productivity	Depressed Economy	Irrigation
West	Low Productivity	Low Income	Flood/Drought

Awareness and Opinion on Issues Related to Politics and Government

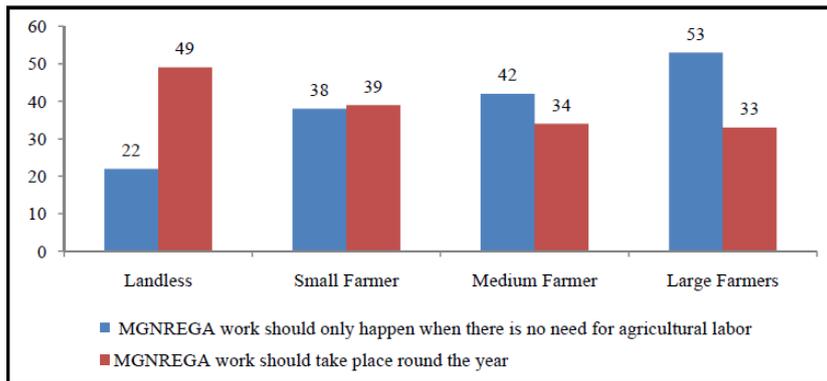
Despite Government of India introducing several schemes and policies to help the farmers, the farmers were found to be not happy with their overall condition in the country. Lack of awareness **about Agricultural Schemes was found to be deterring the** farmers from extracting benefits from most of these schemes.

Around 50 per cent of the respondents considered that most benefits of the government schemes and policies related to farming benefited the rich farmers. Only 10 per cent believe that poor and small farmers have benefited from farming related schemes and another 8 per cent saw no benefit whatsoever either to large farmers or marginal farmers.

The report notes a high degree of information gap between government policies and the farmers.

Lack of awareness about farmer related government schemes

Who favours year round work under MGNREGA?



- The farmers from Central and South India were found to be more aware about MGNREGA and farmers from the Western states of India are comparatively less aware about it.
- Most farmers nearly 70 per cent were not aware about Direct Cash Transfer scheme. Amongst them landless farmers were least aware about the scheme on the other hand large farmers were found to be most aware of it.
- As per the survey only 27 per cent of the farmers have heard about the Land Acquisition law.
- The survey also finds that 83 per cent of the farmers were not aware of about Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In terms of support for the policy interestingly, the landless farmers more in support of FDI in agriculture because they believed that it will allow them to sell their agricultural produce directly to the big companies. In contrast, the large farmers with big landholdings did not support FDI in the agriculture sector because they felt that it would harm their bargaining capacity.

Similarly, awareness about Minimum Support Price (MSP), under which purchases are made from the farmers at the rates declared by the Government of India, were found to be also low.

There is also a regional variation in awareness about these schemes.

A majority of farmers (58 per cent) held both State and the Central government responsible for their problems. The survey revealed that the farmers surveyed considered issues of price rise, unemployment, irrigation, and corruption as crucial issues for the upcoming 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

The number of farmers has continuously seen a fall over the years. On an average, about 2,035 farmers have lost 'Main Cultivator' status every single day for the last 20 years. Taking note of the grim scenario, the 11th Five year plan tried to inject efficiency in the sector via food park schemes and processing industries projects, however as the report highlights, synergised efforts based on the needs of the farmers need to be drastically scaled up.

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Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), titled **"State of Indian Farmers" Report, 2014**

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-s-deepening-farm-crisis-76-farmers-want-give-farming-shows-study>

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/feb/16/india-rice-farmers-revolution>

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/blaming-poor-returns-61-farmers-ready-to-quit-and-take-up-city-jobs-survey/article5774306.ece>

Compiled by:

Junty Sharma Pathak

Mahima Malik

Thousands of Tibetans can Vote in Karnataka Now

(The Pioneer, March 19, 2014)

Thousands of Tibetans born in India between 1950 and 1987, are going to cast their votes in the general elections. According to an official of the Tibetan Government, over 25,000 Tibetans — in exile — in Karnataka have the voting rights and would vote in the April 17 general elections. The Election Commission on February 7 directed the electoral officers in States to include the children of Tibetan refugees — aged above 18 years — in the electoral list “because they are citizens of the country.

Karnataka, which has five Tibetan settlements with the highest number of Tibetans living here, has helped the second generation of Tibetans who get natural citizenship and the Right to Vote. However, a Tibetan official feels that because of a technical glitch many in the Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlement in Karnataka can't vote as they have been denied registration of their names.

According to Gelek J, coordinator for the Tibetan Settlement Office, Bylakuppe, though a few refugees in Bangalore could get the voter cards following the EC's direction, those settled in Bylakuppe were denied registration as the DC of Mysore did not get any clarification till Sunday on the citizenship criteria.

Even though Tibetans are divided over the issue of accepting citizenship which has come naturally, many feel if they accept the citizenship their life would be comfortable. They also feel it will open doors for better way of life for them. A Tibetan youth who is studying in a university college in Bangalore feels he can't dream of going back to Tibet. He feels he has accepted the Indian citizenship which has come to him by birth and wants to be part of this society.

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/nation/thousands-of-tibetans-can-vote-in-ktaka-now.html>

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

800 creamy IAS officers will monitor candidates' expenses

(DNA, March 24, 2014)

“The Election Commission has put 800 experienced IAS officers as expenditure observers to scuttle the use of money power — in cash or kind — and enforce a level playing field during the nine phased Lok Sabha election starting from April 7. This is the first time in the history of Lok Sabha elections that the Commission is using expenditure observers. The Commission's officials, and even politicians, concede in private that Lok Sabha candidates spend crores to influence and bribe voters ahead of polls. At times, the money spent by a candidate can go up to Rs 20 crore. The revised limit for candidates for election expenditure has been capped by the Commission at Rs 70 lakh.

The 800 expenditure observers have been drawn from director and joint secretary level (1984 batch and onwards) IAS and IRS officers, who will fan out in critical constituencies to ensure fair polling by curbing the use of money power. Each expenditure observer will be accompanied by 2-3 assistant expenditure observers, 7-8 micro observers and about 8-10 paramilitary personnel to make the drive against use of money power effective.

The task cut out by the Commission for expenditure observers includes taking feedback from state income tax departments about the candidates' net worth to know which candidate has the capacity to spend how much money.

The observers will also have the power to check the movement of money and bribes (liquor, freebies, etc), to confiscate and book offenders under the Representation of People's Act, 1951. They will also keep a tab on money spent by candidates in all forms of media — print, electronic and social — and also check campaigning material expenses.

However, will they prove effective in a democracy wherein candidates find novel ways to use money power?

"Yes. After using expenditure observers in the recent assembly elections, we are pretty confident of the effectiveness in at least curbing the lavish spends by candidates. To start with, in Andhra Pradesh, expenditure observers

have already seized over Rs 76 lakh in cash," said a senior commission official.”

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-dna-special-800-creamy-ias-officers-will-monitor-candidates-expenses-1971701>

Date Accessed: 24.03.2014

(Karishma Mutreja)

RBI looking at improving regulatory architecture

(The Hindu Business line, March 20, 2014)

According to RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan there was considerable introspection going on within the central bank on the **new regulatory architecture required for the country**. A number of internal committees have been setup to look on the issues of how seamless the regulation should be and level of regulation.

In a conference on banking structure for India conducted by the Centre for Advanced Financial Research and Learning (CAFRAL), Raghuram rajan raised the following points:-

1. There is a need to upgrade human resources through the training institutions and even tests for regulators and officials at higher levels in banks needs to given serious thought by the RBI.
2. He mentioned that the 'fit and proper' criteria for directors includes their grasp over the basics of the business, annual reports, balance sheets and risk management.
3. The existing regulators should be used well rather than fragment them. There should not be any attempt to cut regulators' powers or destroy institutions.
4. Bankers should be on the warpath to bring inflation down. It was also important to bring down the inflation premium and the credit risk premium.
5. He also mentioned that bankers need to change their image of being poor at structuring debt with very little power over borrowers. The new bankruptcy law and distress resolution mechanisms would help address the issue, he added. He cautioned against letting borrowers play bankers against each other.

<http://m.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/rbi-looking-at-improving-regulatory-architecture/article5811038.ece/?secid=11686>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

India to adopt global financial standards from April 2015

(Shubham Batra, The Economic Times, February 24, 2014)

The corporate affairs ministry and the Institute for Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has been pushing for speedy convergence of Indian accounting standards with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), an accounting standard followed by one hundred and thirty countries around the world. The move towards IFRS seeks to maintain one accounting standard world over, making accounting convenient and effective.

India presently follows the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. The need for the shift towards global accounting standards was raised by companies who have businesses abroad and thus, maintain accounts on IFRS. The IFRS, which mandates extensive disclosures, is considered a more credible tool for accounting. For instance, a realtor can currently account for his revenues as and when a unit of a real estate project is sold to a buyer. After the adoption of IFRS, however, revenues will be recognised only after the buyer gets the possession.

The Ministry decided that the IFRS should be introduced in India in two phases. The first phase, expected to be achieved by April 2015, will be implemented at companies that have a net worth of over Rs 1,000 crore. The second phase will begin from April 1, 2016 and involve both listed and unlisted companies with a net worth of over Rs 500 crore but less than Rs 1,000 crore. Indian companies listed overseas including the ones doing business abroad currently prepare financial statements as per international standards.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-to-adopt-global-financial-standards-from-april-2015/articleshow/30919360.cms>

Date Accessed: 20.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

EC to keep tabs on poll ads in social media, issues guidelines

(The Echo of India, March 19, 2014)

With political parties using social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook in a big way for campaigning in Lok Sabha polls, Election Commission (EC) has issued detailed guidelines for political advertisements on such platforms that include obtaining certification for contents before putting them in public domain.

The EC has also asked the social networking sites to maintain expenditure incurred by the political parties and individual candidates on advertisements so that they can be produced to the Commission when requested for. All major political parties have been using the social networking sites as part of their campaign strategy, particularly to woo the young voters. Director in Election Commission said the directive of the Commission will be applicable to a range of internet-based social media which include Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia. The commission has already issued directions for providing details of social media accounts by the candidates while filing their nominations. The director in EC said it was mandatory for political parties and individual candidates to keep details of expenditure incurred on advertisement in social media.

<http://www.echoofindia.com/new-delhi-ec-keep-tabs-poll-ads-social-media-issues-guidelines-51887>

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014

(Anjana John)

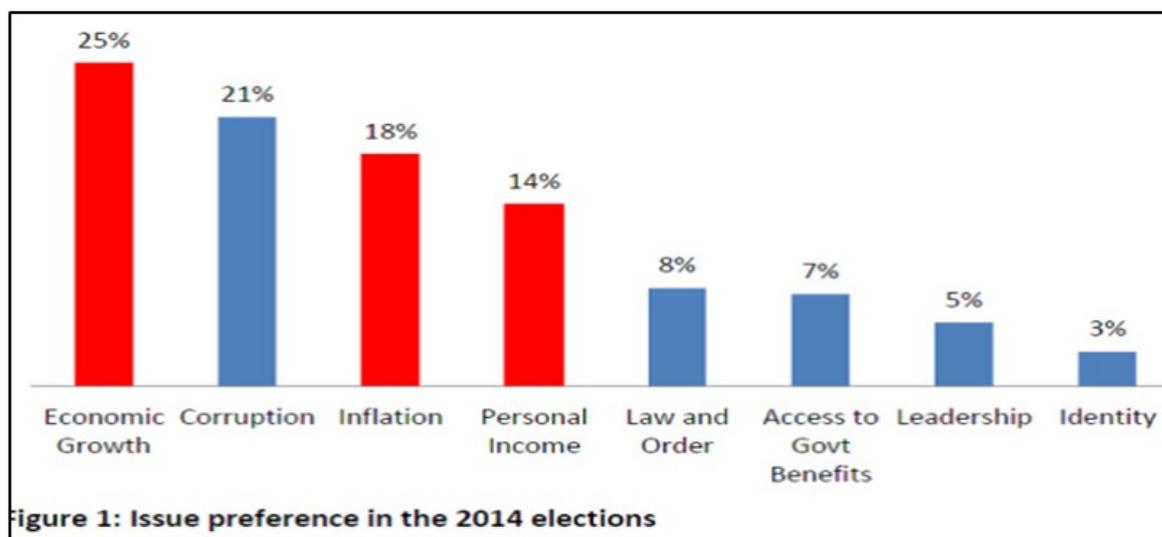
Growth is No. 1 Poll Issue, Survey Shows

(Milan Vaishnav, Devesh Kapur, Neelanjan Sircar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 March, 2014)

A survey conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace sponsored by the Lok Foundation, suggests that the first and foremost pre-occupation of the Indian voter is with the state of the economy.

Across India, 25% of respondents stated economic growth would be their number one issue in deciding for whom to vote, four percentage points above corruption. Growth is the number one issue for urban (27%) as well as rural (23%) voters followed by corruption and then inflation.

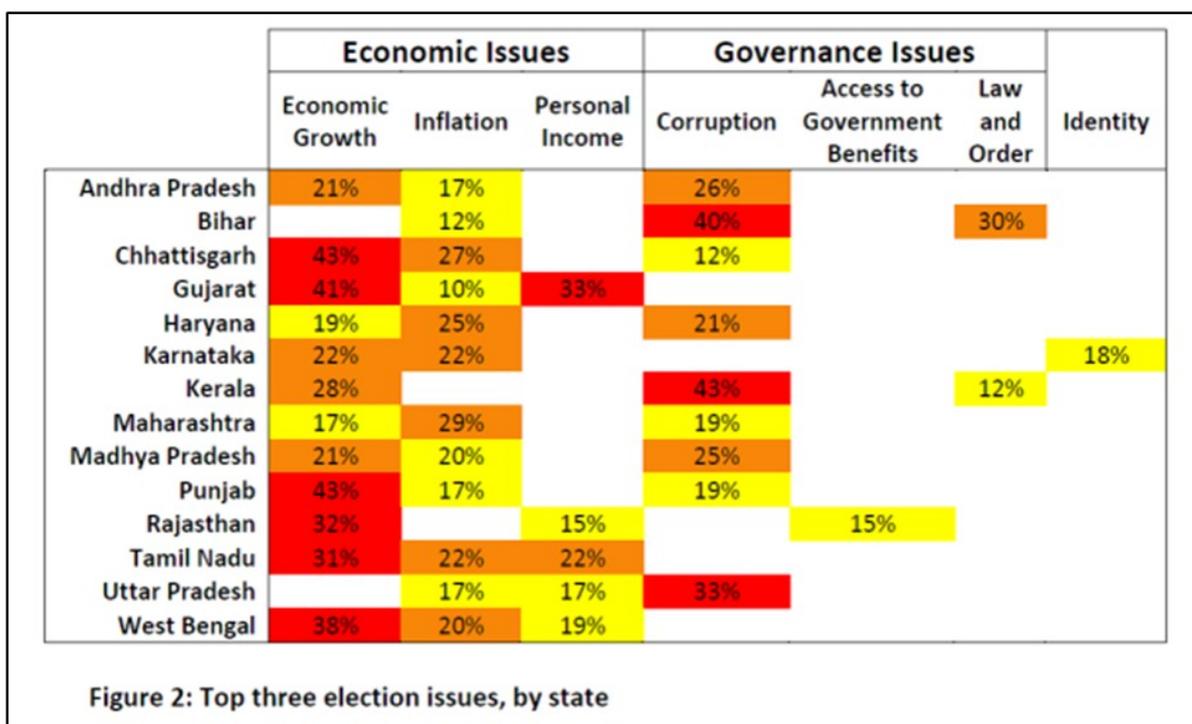
Other important governance-related issues such as law and order and access to government services and programs was each the primary concern of a modest 7-8% of voters. And just 5% of voters care enough about "strong leadership" to make it the prime determinant of their vote choice.



Voters' priorities in urban and rural areas broadly align — with small exceptions: rural voters understandably place greater weight on access to government services and programs and changes in their personal income, although these pocketbook concerns still rank well below larger macro-economic factors.

There is interesting variation in the intensity of preferences across states. Economic growth occupies the pole position in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. In the critical battlegrounds of Bihar and UP, economic growth is far down the priority list. Just 7% of voters in Bihar and 13% in UP prioritize growth.

In these two large Hindi heartland states — in addition to Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh — corruption is the predominant concern of voters. Interestingly, voters in Kerala and Bihar — polar opposites on many socioeconomic dimensions — are almost identically frustrated with corruption.



Their data also suggests that the UPA government's focus on delivering greater benefits to the poor, especially the rural poor, may have been compromised by broader economic developments. The lack of bargaining power on the part of the poor means that they face the brunt of erosion of real wages with high inflation and their powerlessness make them easier prey for corruption.

http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/16/growth-is-no.-1-poll-issue-for-voters-survey-shows/h4gh?utm_content=buffer32d6f&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014

(Gayatri Verma)

UPA's flagship schemes low on delivery: Panel

(Chetan Chauhan, *Hindustan Times*, March 18, 2014)

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), a body under the Planning Commission, is taking up a detailed study on the UPA's key schemes --- Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MG-NREGA), has noted that the programmes have failed to deliver desired outcomes.

"The IEO in its preliminary evaluation has found that the scheme has not been to create rural infrastructure to boost local economy even though the government has spent over Rs. 2,00,000 crore under this flagship scheme."

"MG-NREGA had mixed results due to poor implementation, corruption and leakages of the fund. There is also a question over the quality of assets constructed under MG-NREGA projects," noted Ajay Chhibber, director general IEO.

He further noted that JNNURM, aimed to help upcoming cities to cope with growing urbanisation, "has basic design flaw. There was no relation between the urban reform being sought and the projects being approved if the reforms were implemented." "As a result, just one percent of the housing projects and 18% of urban infrastructure projects were completed till 2012. Bihar was worst in initiating reforms and implementing projects and a probable reason was that the projects were not in line with Bihar's urban needs."

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/upa-scheme-named-after-icons-has-failed-to-deliver-says-a-government-body/article1-1196771.aspx>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

GOVERNMENT

Government approves setting up company for road projects

(*Exim News Service*, March 19, 2014)

For the purpose of improving connectivity to the border states, the union government has given conditional approval to the Highways Ministry's proposal for setting up a company to build roads in border states.

But being a conditional approval, the Cabinet said the proposal is likely to be approved, depending on the clearance of the Election Commission.

The idea of setting up of a company that would primarily oversee the development of roads was mooted in the past by the ministry. But the idea was specific to the development of roads in the North-East and other states like J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=75191>

Date Accessed: 20.3.2014

(Shruti Issar)

84.6 percent contestants lost their security deposits in 2009

General Elections

(*Press Bureau of India*, March 15, 2014)

In 2009 General Elections 84.6 percent contestants failed to get a minimum of one-sixth of the total valid votes polled, hence lost their security deposits. Out of 8070 contestants in the fray 6829 could not save their

deposits.

According to the Election Commission of India rules, a candidate for Lok Sabha election has to make a deposit of Rs 25,000/- at the time of filing the nomination. Candidates from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes need to pay half of this amount. If the candidate fails to get a minimum of one-sixth of the total valid votes polled, the deposit goes to the treasury.

Parties	Contestant	Contestant who lost the security deposit
National Parties	1623,	779
State Parties	394	80
Unrecognized parties	2222	2164
Independents	3831	3806
Total contestant for 543 Lok Sabha seats	8070	

“This meant that roughly, every second aspirant from national parties and every fifth aspirant from state parties could not save their deposits. Also, only 25 independents out of 3831 could secure the requisite number of votes to save their deposits. Overall, a whopping 84.6 percent of the candidates lost their security deposits.”

Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 1155 candidates loosing their deposits during 2009 General Elections. In the state 1368 candidates were in race for 80 seats of which 242 were from seven national parties, 75 from state parties, 488 from unrecognized registered parties and 563 remaining were independents. Out of these, 95 from the national parties, 19 from the state parties and 479 from unrecognized registered parties lost their deposits. And interestingly, all but one of the 563 independent aspirants forfeited their security money.

Following Uttar Pradesh was the southern state of Tamil Nadu, where out of 823 candidates, who contested for 39 Lok Sabha seats, 745 lost their security deposits. In Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, the security amounts were forfeited of 583 and 468 candidates respectively. In Madhya Pradesh, out of 429 candidates, contested for 29 seats, deposits of 368 candidates were forfeited. In Karnataka, where 427 candidates contested for the 28 Lok Sabha seats, 362 lost their deposits.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=0>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

PANCHAYATI RAJ

Panchayats to now manage village forests in Maharashtra

(Vijay Pinjarkar, *Times of India*, March 19, 2014)

“In bid to institutionalize an effective management regime for conservation and long-term sustainability of forests, the Maharashtra government has now empowered village panchayats to manage reserve and protected forests and natural resources. This would be done with the help of micro plan or Gram Van Yojana to be implemented by Van Vyavasthapan Samiti (forest management committee).”

The government has issued the Maharashtra Village Forest Rules, 2014 which shall apply to part of such reserved forests (RF) or protected forests (PF) in the village as assigned under the Indian Forest Act (IFA) 1927. These rules will not be applicable to forests acquired under community forest rights (CFRs) and Forests Rights Act 2006.

Till now, forests are being managed by joint forest management committees (JFMCs) in territorial forest areas and eco-development committees (EDCs) in wildlife areas.

Government/officers may assign RF or PF to a village panchayat effectively managed by joint forest management committee and where effective participation of people has been witnessed in prevention of encroachment, fires, illicit grazing, felling consequently ensuring positive rate of regeneration during last decade.

However, extraction of bamboo, tendu and minor forest produce in such forests assigned to Van Vyavsthapan Samiti shall be strictly in accordance with micro plan. To ensure conservation as well as protection of wildlife and also sustainability of regeneration of bamboo, the assigned forest area shall be divided into three parts and each part shall be revisited for extraction after a gap of three years.

The samiti will prepare a ten-year micro plan and an 'annual implementation plan' each year for managing the forests and place the plan before the gram sabha for ratification and its approval by the competent authority as per instructions of the government and Central government from time to time.

GIVING FORESTS BACK TO PEOPLE

- The samiti will manage village forests on behalf of village panchayats.
- Extraction of forest produce like bamboo, tendu, apta etc will be accordance to micro plan approved by the department.
- The powers, jurisdiction and functions for transaction of business shall be according to provisions of Village Panchayat Act.
- The panchayats will prohibit damage to forests, wildlife, poaching, stop grazing etc.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/Now-panchayats-to-manage-village-forests/articleshow/32271630.cms>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Deepti Somani)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Mapping human rights intolerance

(Sudeep Chakravarti, *Live Mint*, March 21, 2014)

A newly launched website ejatlas.org gives a global scan of a range of environmental conflicts in the categories of nuclear power, minerals, fossil fuels and extractive industries, “biomass and land conflicts”, waste management, “industrial and utilities conflicts”, and water management dams among others for different countries in the world.

India tops the list with 112 such long-standing and relatively new cases, ahead of Colombia, Nigeria, Brazil, Ecuador and Turkey, for long the usual suspects. A list of dubious practices and business-related human rights violations by both state- and privately-run entities alike, ejatlas.org (‘ej’ stands for environmental justice) is a project of ejolt.org, or Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade, a global compact of major business and human rights organizations, pro-environment groups and academic institutions from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia.

“It reports that the situation ranges from a Vedanta Resources Plc venture in Odisha and power projects in Gujarat to aggressive initiation of nuclear projects and a couple of Coca-Cola India’s lamentable community interactions.”

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/pdV0BTe4GLJH21iKojD0gl/Mapping-human-rights-intolerance.html>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

CONNECTIVITY

Government planning more telecom towers in Naxal-hit areas

(*The Statesman*, March 16, 2014)

The government is planning to further strengthen the telecom network in naxal affected areas. An inter-ministerial panel is already looking into the matter is going to take up the issue with the Telecom Commission by the month-end and discuss the issue of installing mobile towers in naxal affected areas.

Meanwhile, a department of telecom (DoT) committee, which was studying the issue, would also submit its report. The Union Government had approved setting up of mobile towers at a cost of around Rs 3,046 crore in nine naxal affected states to strengthen communication network in these areas.

The decision to strengthen communication network was taken last year after left wing extremists attacked a team of Congress leaders, killing 27 people including senior party leaders at Bastar in Chhattisgarh area. Paramilitary forces and state police have been stressing on an effective communication network to fight the Maoists. The State-owned telecom service provider, BSNL, was asked to set up towers at 2,199 locations in the nine states in 12 months from the date the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the project.

<http://www.thestatesman.net/news/44881-govt-planning-more-telecom-towers-in-naxal-hit-areas.html>

Date Accessed: 18.03.2014

(Jeet Singh)

EDUCATION

India lacks national strategy on medical education: Report

(*Governance Now*, March 15, 2014)

A report by Public Health Foundation of India on 'Health professional education' suggests that there is no separate national strategy for public health professional education in the country. It points out the absence of an official and regular national forum for effective coordination between ministries of education and health with regard to masters' level education in public health.

The report also points out the absence of competency framework of health professionals in the country. Another factor which the report notes is on huge imbalance in distribution of medical and nursing schools with majority of both of them being located in urban areas and around half of them in the capital city of the state. The report also highlights the absence of single national council governing human resources for health and reforms in admission policy.

<http://governancenow.com/views/think-tanks/india-lacks-national-strategy-medical-education-says-report>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Deepti Somani)

Redefining "accountability" on education institutions in India

(Anurag Behar, *Livemint*, March 19, 2014)

The article puts forth an unconventional take on "accountability" which is fixed on educational institutions and teachers for the state of education in India. It highlights that the definition of "accountability" in the context of education needs to be revisited. Applying a "mechanistic notion of accountability" - one which explains accountability on a business or an enterprise- on social institutions is a basic contradiction. It suggests that "accountability" ought

to be rethought and fixed for all agents (educational experts and the government to teachers) who form the education system in the country.

The article defines “education to be a complex process based on human relationships, with broad humanistic, social and democratic aims.” Generally, the usage of the term “accountability” is interpreted in a business terms and such a notion of accountability should not be applied to schools. Schools form an integral part of social institutions and must not be looked as merely service delivery mechanisms.

The article gives an alternate look on accountability on schools where school systems and all associated to it have a “web of accountability.” For instance, “schools as organizations have accountability to the regulations that govern them. Teachers have accountability for certain hygiene factors and to a code of professional conduct. The community around the school is accountable for nurturing the school. Parents are accountable for getting their children in school and form the complex interplay of the home environment with the school. Most importantly, experts are accountable for developing a curricular framework, which is responsive to the ideals of the society. The government is accountable for the level of public financing and regulatory structure for the school system.” This “web of accountability” is a cumulative process which evolves over time. Hence, the debate on enforcing accountability standards must go beyond teachers and must focus on fixing accountability on this “web” that forms the whole of education system in India.

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/7IYRHZ3WTIRwa8PRUtmsyL/Education-Who-is-acco%20untable.html>

Date Accessed: 20.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

HEALTH

SC issues notice to Ranbaxy on allegation of selling poor quality drugs

(Down To Earth, March 14, 2014)

In the wake of a public interest litigation alleging Ranbaxy Laboratories Limited of manufacturing and supplying adulterated and sub standard drugs, the Supreme Court of India has issued a notice to the pharmaceutical company seeking investigation against the company.

The petition, that was filed in July in 2013 sought directions to cancel the license of the company. However, the SC has decided to examine the allegations first. Further, no restriction orders have been passed against the company to stop manufacturing of drugs.

A fresh petition was filed stating that despite being fined by the US for supplying medicines that did not meet international standards and similar concerns being raised with regard to the manufacturing units, the company is selling the same drugs in India. The petition has also demanded action against the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), which has permitted the company to produce and sell the drugs in the country.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/sc-issues-notice-ranbaxy-allegation-selling-poor-quality-drugs>

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Cervical cancer poses great threat to Indian women

(Bio Spectrum, March 18, 2014)

In India, cervical cancer is amongst the top two causes of cancer mortality in women. 122,844 new cervical cancer cases are diagnosed annually in India and the country contributes 23% to the world incidence of cervical cancer. “Annual number of new cervical cancer cases and death is maximum in the age group 45-59 years. Age-standardized incidence & mortality rates of cervical cancer are maximum in India as compared to other countries of

Southern Asia. Moreover, over 80% of women newly diagnosed with cervical cancer live in developing countries; most are diagnosed when the disease is in the advance stage.” There is a significant mortality rate that has been detected in the Indian women and that can be prevented provided there are regular checkups. The vaccination can also reduce the mortality rate by 95% and early stage chemotherapy can also lower the chances.

<http://www.biospectrumindia.com/biospecindia/features/211010/cervical-cancer-poses-threat-indian-women>

Date Accessed: 18.03.2014

(Anjana John)

Growing prescription drug abuse in India says UN report

(PTI, March 5, 2014)

A report by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), an independent UN body tasked with monitoring the production and consumption of narcotics worldwide has revealed that prescription drug abuse is growing in India and is a serious problem in South Asia.

Drugs enter South Asia's illicit drug markets through a number of different channels, including diversion from India's pharmaceutical industry, illicit cultivation and/or manufacture within the region, and smuggling from other countries, including Afghanistan (through Pakistan) 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. Pharmaceutical preparations containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances continue to be diverted from India's pharmaceutical industry and are trafficked domestically or at the international level, including through illegal internet pharmacies.

According to the report 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.

http://www.firstpost.com/india/growing-prescription-drug-abuse-in-india-says-un-report-1420093.html?utm_source=ref_article

Date Accessed: 24.03.2014

(Simi Sunny)

TECHNOLOGY

Companies to spend \$500billion dollars on internet security

(Tech First Post, March 19, 2014)

According to the joint study conducted by IDC and the National University of Singapore (NUS), enterprises may have to spend \$127 billion on security issues and \$364 billion dealing with data breaches. Global consumers, on the other hand, are expected to spend \$25 billion and waste 1.2 billion hours this year because of security threats and costly computer fixes stemming from malware on pirated software.

Findings of the the study, titled ‘**The Link Between Pirated Software and Cybersecurity Breaches**’ are the following:-

1. 60% respondents (consumers) saying their greatest fear from infected software is loss of data, files or personal information.
2. This is followed by unauthorised Internet transactions (51%) and hijacking of email, social networking and bank accounts (50 percent). According to ,” Microsoft Cybercrime Center Executive Director and Associate General **“Cybercriminals are profiting from any security lapse they can find, with financially devastating results for everyone”**.
3. The study was released as part of Microsoft’s ‘Play It Safe’ campaign, a global initiative to create greater awareness of the connection between malware and piracy.
4. The study stated that nearly two-thirds of enterprises surveyed said they could lose \$315 billion at the hands of organised criminals.
5. Nearly 20% of the pirated software in enterprises is installed by employees.

6. About 28% of enterprise respondents reported security breaches causing network, computer or website outages occurring every few months or more with 65% of those outages involved malware on end-user computers.

Also buying legitimate software is less expensive in the long run. The global study surveyed 1,700 consumers, IT workers, CIOs and government officials in India, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Ukraine, the UK, and the US.

The NUS forensics analysed 203 new PCs loaded with pirated software and found that a staggering 61 per cent of these PCs were pre-infected with unsafe malware, including Trojans, worms, viruses, hacktools, rootkits and adware. These computers were acquired in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, and the US.

<http://tech.firstpost.com/news-analysis/companies-spend-500-bn-deal-malware-data-breach-220098.html>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change set to displace hundreds of millions of people by 2020

(*Times Of India*, March 18, 2014)

Climate change is likely to increase violent conflicts due to forced mass migration displacing hundreds of millions by the end of this century according to the draft version of a UN report, which will be made public by the end of March this year. The report predicts that coastal flooding is likely to affect East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia most leading to submerged land and large scale displacement of people.

Scientists, who have compiled the report, have predicted that the climate change is likely put an enormous strain on the world. According to estimates, median crop yield are likely to reduce by 2 per cent per decade because of climate change. This will not only increase pressure on the supply chain that will try to meet the ever increasing demand with shrinking yield, but also lead to increased cases of malnutrition worldwide as a result of the deficit in the supply chain.

Risk from food and waterborne diseases are also likely to shoot up due to increased number of intense heatwaves and fires. Warmer weather will also lead to increased incidences of asthma and hay fever.

The majority affected will be in East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Rising sea levels mean coastal systems and low-lying areas will increasingly experience submergence, coastal flooding and coastal erosion.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/Climate-change-set-to-displace-hundreds-of-millions-of-people-by-end-of-century/articleshow/32241027.cms>

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Four districts in Kerala categorised as climate change hot-spots

(T. Nandakumar, *The Hindu*, March 20, 2014)

The State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) has found that Kerala is severely threatened by climate change and has identified four districts that are “climate change hotbeds”. It is estimated that the atmospheric temperature across Kerala will rise by 2 degrees Celsius by the year 2050. The four districts are Alappuzha, Palakkad, Wayanad and Idukki districts which face high degree of vulnerability to natural hazards like flood and drought and impact on

biodiversity and human life. The report gives a roadmap to overcome the projected crisis in Kerala through strategies like climate-tailored agricultural management and improved land use.

In order to identify the hotspots, SAPCC considered the degree of vulnerability of climate sensitive sectors like agriculture, fisheries and forests, tribal population and low ranking in the human development index.

The report makes the following glaring projections about the possible damage that will be caused by climate change:

Alappuzha and Palakkad are classified as the most vulnerable districts. Palakkad is listed as very highly vulnerable because of the higher percentage of population relying on agriculture, a lower ranking in the human development index and higher social deprivation. Alappuzha has been included because of the network of environmentally sensitive wetlands, lagoons and sandy beaches. Idukki, Wayanad, Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur have been listed as highly vulnerable.” Kannur has been included in the high vulnerability list because of the extensive mangrove forests while Thiruvananthapuram has been included because it has registered medium values in terms of all the indicators.

The report estimated that the minimum surface temperature in the Western Ghats region may rise by 2 to 4.5 degrees Celsius. The number of rainy days is likely to decrease along the entire western coast including the Western Ghats. Also, it is projected that if the sea level rises by one metre, 169 sq km of the coastal region surrounding Kochi would be inundated.

It estimated that paddy production in Kerala would drop by six per cent with each degree rise in temperature. The climate change would also be detrimental to crops like cardamom, coffee, tea and black pepper cultivated in the high ranges.

In the animal husbandry sector, the report warns that higher temperature and changing rainfall pattern could enhance the spread of vector borne diseases and macro parasites. The document also says that viral diseases such as goat plague may also reappear while the frequency of incidence of mastitis and foot diseases among crossbred cows may increase.

The action plan recommends strategies focussing on climate-tailored agricultural management, integrated pest management, improved land use, organic farming, farm mechanisation, water use efficiency, weather forecasting, crop insurance and diversification of agriculture. According to P. Sreekantan, corrective programmes would be prioritised and implemented in a phased manner. Additionally, discussions are being carried out with NABARD for finance. A monitoring committee would be set up to oversee the implementation of the action plan.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/four-districts-categorised-as-climate-change-hotspots/article5801125.ece>

Date Accessed: 20.03.2014

(Mahima Malik)

Ludhiana, Kanpur among world's top 10 most polluted cities

(ANI, March 18, 2014)

According to World Health Organisation, Ludhiana and Kanpur are among the 10 most polluted cities in the world. While Ludhiana is ranked fourth with 251 mcg/m³, Kanpur occupies the ninth position along with Quetta in Pakistan with 209mcg/m³.

As per the UN health body estimates, more than two million people die annually from breathing outdoor and indoor particle pollution. The report was based on WHO's health guidelines and pollution is measured as the microgramme (mcg) concentration per cubic metre of air of particulate matter smaller than 10 micrometres (PM10).

Iran has the maximum number of cities featuring in the list of most polluted cities with Ahvaz, Ulan, Kemanshah and Yasuj being ranked 1st, 3rd, 5th and 8th respectively. Other cities that included in the 10 most polluted cities include Ulan Bator (Mongolia), Peshawar (Pakistan), Gbore and (Botswana).

<http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail4/story159938/ludhiana-kanpur-among-world-039-s-top-10-most-polluted-cities.html>

Date Accessed: 19.03.2014
(Pallavi Ghosh)

Ignoring water related risks in India will imperil business: Study

(Natalie Obiko Pearson, *LiveMint*, March 18, 2014)

According to a recent study, corporate houses in India are underestimating water-related risks as depletion and pollution threaten to deprive millions of safe drinking water and stifle economic growth. The study by CDP, a non-profit group states that most companies are increasingly aware that the lack of water could disrupt businesses yet aren't equipped to assess the risks or remedy the problems.

India has just 4% of world's water but has to cater to 16% of the global population and this has meant a steady decrease in per capita water availability. By the year, 2020 India is expected to become a water scarce nation and by 2030, demand for water in India will outstrip supply by as much as 50 %. Under these circumstances, businesses in India are actually underestimating water related risks.

The CDP compiles environmental performance data for investors. For its first India water report, it surveyed 29 companies of which more than half consider themselves exposed to water risks and none reported paying any penalties for breaching discharge regulations.

The report says that water has dramatically risen in the political agenda in India with the country's 12th Five Year Plan seeking a paradigm shift in the management of water resources. The government has proposed to set up a 'bureau of water use efficiency' to oversee a 20 per cent reduction in water use by industry as an initial target. Industry, the report says, has a significant role to play in reducing water consumption and initiating greater recourse to water recycling and re-use.

This, the report says, will not be possible unless Indian companies improve their measurement of water use. Lack of a robust, standardised and centralised system for corporate water disclosure in India, has created serious gaps and inadequacies in the availability, scope, coverage and quality of water data collected.

The report also says that pressure is growing on companies to build long-term resilience to water challenges into their business. "Companies with robust water stewardship strategies are characterised by having comprehensive knowledge of water use across their value chain and the impact (current and projected) that water related issues have on their business and vice versa" it says. The need of the hour is better understanding of water measurement techniques, risk identification and greater transparency in reporting by companies.

<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/india-inc-underestimating-water-related-risks-coca-cola/1/204396.html>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014
(Deepti Somani)

AGRICULTURE

India's deepening farm crisis: 76% farmers want to give up farming

(Jyotika Sood, *Down to Earth*, March 11, 2014)

A report by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), titled "State of Indian Farmers", reveals that Indian agriculture has been going through a period of deep crisis- marked by poor income, skewed benefits favouring richer farmers and lack of access to power and irrigation facilities. The report highlights the declining viability of farming as an occupation in India, and reveals that around 76 percent of the farmers surveyed preferred moving out of farming.

The study, commissioned by Bharat Krishak Samaj, is based on a socio economic survey spread across 18 states in India. The report reveals that benefits of government schemes and policies are being mostly given to big farmers (having landholding of 10 acres and above). Alarming, a very small proportion of poor and small farmers (with

average land holding of 1-4 acres) have benefited from government schemes and subsidies. Sixty-one per cent of farmers surveyed were willing to migrate to cities for “better education, health and employment avenues.” The report also noted a high degree of information gap between government policies and the farmers. Around 62 per cent of interviewed farmers were not aware about the minimum support price. The report also takes note of the high proportion of crops damaged due to unseasonal rains, drought, floods and pest attack.

According to BKS chief, Ajay Jakhar, mechanisms to increase political representation of farmers could go a long way to address the various issues faced by Indian agriculture.

Survey findings

- 70 per cent of farmers never heard about direct cash transfer
- Only 19 want subsidies to continue as it is
- Only 27 per cent have heard about the land acquisition law
- 83 per cent farmers clueless about foreign direct investment (FDI)
- 70 per cent farmers never contacted any Kisan call centres
- 47 per cent farmers say that overall condition of farmers in the country is bad

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-s-deepening-farm-crisis-76-farmers-want-give-farming-shows-study>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

DEFENCE

Lessons from INS Sindhuratna

(Sameer Patil, *Gateway House*, 28 February, 2014)

A string of tragic accidents, an ageing fleet of sub-marines and a lack of vision are hampering the Indian Navy's growth as a regional force. The new government will have to rethink the system of defence purchases and invest in indigenisation to optimise the strength of the Indian armed forces

First, given the long gestation periods associated with any big-ticket defence acquisition, our decision makers need to expedite the pending proposals for the purchase of naval multi-role helicopters, amphibious aircrafts, and warships for augmenting our naval capabilities to deal with the challenges of the growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean region, piracy, protecting our expanding economic interests and carrying out humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Second, the corruption in our defence purchases over the last 10 years and the blacklisting of large corporations means that there are almost no global defence firms India can do business with. For immediate impact, existing deals must be pursued to their logical conclusion to maintain India's international credibility. We must reduce our over-reliance on Russian and other external military hardware. This is an opportune moment for the government to bring out a clearly-defined policy on stepping up R&D for indigenous defence production and the role of the private sector therein.

Third, India must revisit the practice of refitting and upgrading the naval fleet, which unfortunately has become the norm because the purchase of many key defence platforms has seen prolonged delays for a variety of technological, financial and political reasons.

Fourth, equally critical is the loss of trained, expert naval officers and engineers. This has a bearing on our operational preparedness, and upgrading the training programmes with a particular focus on safety protocols should be the priority for the navy.

<http://www.gatewayhouse.in/lessons-from-ins-sindhuratna/>

Date Accessed: 15.03.2014

(Gayatri Verma)

GENDER

Despite increased awareness Gender-based violence remains a persistent challenge in India: report

(The Hindu, March 11, 2014)

Despite increasing awareness and improving situations, women across India have identified gender-based violence as a widespread and persistent challenge according to the findings of a UN report-“Hearts and Minds: Women of India Speak.” The survey was conducted over a year in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

While women acknowledged that awareness levels amongst women have increased and more women were reporting violence to the police, child marriages and female foeticide continue to be practiced although in a reduced level; sex-determination being illegal in India.

Violence at work place was marked out as a “blind spot,” especially for informal women workers such as those working in garment industry or as domestic helps. The report identified women in rural India falling under a high risk category in terms of sexually transmitted diseases with poor awareness levels and suffering from stigma associated with the same.

Despite witnessing significant changes in terms of women empowerment over the years, women felt that issues relating to access to water and sanitation, housing, roads, electricity, lack of employment options and skills training remained unaddressed.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/genderbased-violence-a-persistent-challenge-in-india-report/article5771053.ece>

Date Accessed: 20.03.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Bring law like SC-ST Act to protect Muslims, says panel on Sachar

(Zeesham Shaikh, Indian Express, March 18, 2014)

A committee appointed by the central government to review the implementation of Sachar panel recommendations has “recommended the need for the creation of a special Act on the lines of the SC/ST [Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities)] Act for Muslims in the country... the members of the Muslim community face similar challenges to that of the SC community, and in certain cases, they are more violent challenges.”

The committee also suggested that the new law could supplement the controversial Communal Violence Bill.

Major findings of the committee include:

- Due to political compulsions, focus of development not on Muslims, but on other minorities.
- Institution-building process successful, but no coordination at central and state levels for effective implementation of recommendations.
- Need to create special sub-quota within OBC for OBC Muslims; open SC category for SC Muslims who have been given OBC status.

The primary task of the panel, headed by Professor Amitabh Kundu – Jawaharlal Nehru University –, was to evaluate the process of the implementation of the decisions on Sachar committee recommendations, to assess the programmes initiated by the ministry and schemes covered by the Prime Minister’s 15-point programme.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/bring-law-like-sc-st-act-to-protect-muslims-says-panel-on-sachar/99/>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

REGIONAL

Traffic enforcement in Kerala to go online

(The Hindu, March 20, 2014)

The State Motor Vehicles Department will soon start notifying errant motorists of their violations through text messages. The new system, which is expected to be operational by the end of May this year, will replace the long-drawn process involved in tracing the violators, issuing notice and waiting for their response.

“On committing violations, the vehicle owner will immediately receive an SMS alert on his/her cell phone, which will be also followed up with e-mails at regular intervals. The system will provide offenders with details of their violations, like the time, date, place, car plate number, the type of violation, and the penalty amount.” To enable the step, the department is currently in the process of preparing the data base of the nearly 75 lakh vehicle owners in the State, including their mobile numbers and e-mail ids. The data thus collected are being converted into the digital format in a phased manner. The department also intends to make the SMS facility to be used later to inform the public of the dates for renewing their vehicle registration and driving licences. Meanwhile, the department has incorporated a payment service module in its official website.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/traffic-enforcement-in-kerala-to-go-online/article5808764.ece>

Date Accessed: 20.03.2014

(Anjana John)

Proper implementation of ICDS programme demanded in Odisha

(Abhisek Mohanty, Odisha Samachar, March 18, 2014)

State Convener of Right to Food Campaign, Odisha Pradip Pradhan, based on RTI applications and number of social audits conducted in different parts of the state, has said that “huge corruption, delay in release of fund, low quality of food, poor monitoring and callous attitude of officials has made the ICDS programme standstill in remote pockets of tribal areas of the state where malnutrition is high.”

He pointed out that “approximately 75 percent Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) have no buildings and other requires infrastructures of their own. Odisha is in need of 71,306 numbers of AW centre buildings, but we have only 18, 958 number of own buildings, that to not in proper condition and appropriate standards. During last 4 years though it was planned budget of Rs. 578.11 crore, the district collectors have not produced the UCs yet. Most of the centers are running under trees, other’s verandah/house or in the open field in very unhealthy surroundings. Funds are being disbursed to AWCs at an interval of 4-6 months freezing operation at the cost of the workers.”

Tapan Padhi of Right to Food Campaign, looking at the situation in Odisha noted that “there is a need to disburse funds ahead of every calendar month to the AWCs, enforce and activate Mother’s Committee and Monitoring Committee at each AW level according to government circular (of 28/3/2012), conduct Review meeting at Panchayat level every month in the presence of AW Worker and Helper, improve quality and ensure quantity of Take Home Ration packets (supplementary Nutrition Packets) and its hygienic production process, ensure emergency feeding program for all the 200,000 senior citizens in 8 districts including backward districts like Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Obey Supreme Court order to conduct Social Audits in every AWCs regularly, engage civil society in monitoring, committee formation at district and block level and monitoring... State Government must take steps to train the PRI representatives and reduce the workload of AWWs and train them properly to run the centres within their job description.”

<http://eodishasamachar.com/en/proper-implementation-of-icds-programme-demanded/>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

US-based consortium head likely for Turkmen-India gas pipeline

(Kalpana Pathak & Shine Jacob, *Business Standard*, March 17, 2014)

This article highlights how the \$9-billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (Tapi) gas pipeline project is likely to see an America-based consortium leader. The 1,680-km pipeline will start from the South Yolotan-Osman field in Turkmenistan, passing through the troubled Herat, Helmand and Kandahar regions in Afghanistan and then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan, ending at Fazilka (Punjab) in India.

"Considering the terrorism-torn terrain of the project, we are looking for a US-based company with experience in building and operating the cross-country pipeline," said an official source.

Developments in the TAPI project:

- Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan & India are in talks with a US-based company to lead the New Jersey-based consortium
- By the initial agreement, of the 90 mscmd to be handled by the pipeline, India and Pakistan would get 38 mscmd each while Afghanistan would receive 14 mscmd.
- The consortium leader would build and operate the project, arrange the funds, ensure the delivery of gas as well as security issues
- Once the consortium was chosen, the pipeline is likely to be operational by 2017-18
- India likely to have Tapi gas by 2020

Despite several roadshows in Singapore, New York and London, global majors were not keen to participate as a consortium leader, due to the Turkmen government's decision not to give participating stakes for the companies in hydrocarbon fields. Meanwhile, there are disagreements between the Afghanistan and Pakistan governments over branches of the pipeline. According to reports, while Afghanistan wants a connection towards Peshawar, the preference of Pakistan is towards Lahore.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/us-based-consortium-head-likely-for-turkmen-india-gas-pipeline-114031700065_1.html

Date Accessed: 18.3.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Asia-Pacific countries adopt roadmap to push toward goal of zero hunger

(FAO, March 14, 2014)

Governments from 41 countries across Asia and the Pacific today concluded a five-day regional conference on improving their responses to future food security challenges and efforts to end hunger.

At its conclusion, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the 32nd FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC), with some 164 delegates, endorsed four FAO regional initiatives.

"In their final announcement, the Government Ministers and Heads of Delegations said they were conscious of the magnitude of the challenges to achieve a food-secure Asia-Pacific region by raising agricultural productivity, in particular, the productivity of smallholder farmers, and alleviating poverty while protecting the region's natural resources base."

The conference acknowledged that good progress had been made towards achieving Millennium Development Goal Number 1, to reduce hunger by half in the region, which could be attained by 2015 if countries redoubled their efforts and worked together in close partnership.

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/216733/icode/>

Date Accessed: 18.03.2014

(Anjana John)

UN agency launches first-ever database on global land use

(UN News Centre, March 17, 2014)

This article describes a new database launched by the UN FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) which gathers under one roof previously scattered information about land cover.

The Global Land Cover SHARE database (GLC-SHARE) initiative represents a major and historic improvement over earlier databases as up until now, such data was collected by different countries and organizations which identified, measured and recorded information in diverse, uneven ways.

GLC-SHARE features:

- Data on how much land is covered by croplands, trees, forests, or bare soils
- Compiles all the data and submits it to a thorough quality-control, harmonizing process, using internationally accepted definitions and standards
- Brings country-level information into one consolidated dataset spanning the entire planet
- Will be helpful in monitoring of global land cover trends, evaluating the suitability of land for various uses, assessing the impact of climate change on food production, and land-use planning.
- Help us understand how climate change and climate variability are impacting key natural resources, as well as food production

"A strong understanding of our planet's land cover is essential to promoting sustainable land resources management - including agricultural production to feed a growing population - that makes efficient use of increasingly scarce natural resources yet safeguards the environment," said John Latham of the UN (FAO), which spearheaded the project.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47369&Cr=farming&Cr1=#.UygXxfmSyVI>

Date Accessed: 18.3.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

SOUTH ASIA

China to Spend More Than \$162 Billion on Shantytowns

(Bloomberg, March 16, 2014)

China will soon invest more than 1 trillion yuan (\$162 billion) redeveloping shantytowns involving more than 4.75 million household this year as the government detailed how it will boost its urban population to support growth. China will build more transportation links, ease some residence-registration rules and let local governments directly issue bonds, according to the urbanization plan for 2014 to 2020, issued by the ruling Communist Party and State Council.

The plans add details on how China will seek to achieve a 7.5 percent target this year for expansion while sustaining growth through the rest of the decade. Leaders have pledged to speed up urbanization as they try to rely more on domestic consumption for growth and give markets a bigger role in the world's second-largest economy.

China has completed 1.12 trillion yuan of investments in subsidized housing last year, according to housing ministry data. According to the National Development and Reform Commission's annual work report the government

basically completed work on 5.44 million subsidized housing units in urban areas and started construction on another 6.66 million.

Urban Population

The nation is targeting having 60 percent of the population in urban areas by 2020, according to the plan. That compares with 53.7 percent in 2013 and about 50 percent in 2010. The U.S. proportion was 82 percent in 2011 and Japan's was 91 percent, according to a joint report in 2012 by the World Bank and Development Research Center of the State Council.

The government will remove restrictions on obtaining household registration permits in small cities and towns, while it will strictly control the populations of cities with more than 5 million urban residents, according to the plan. China will help 100 million people, including migrant workers, get status as urban residents by 2020.

Municipal Bonds

China plans to set up a transparent financing mechanism for urban construction, allowing local governments to issue municipal bonds, according to the plan. The central government will also establish a management and rating system to increase the use of direct financing and consider establishing policy-financial institutions for both infrastructure and home construction.

In a meeting, the top leaders assured that "Diverse and sustainable" funding mechanisms will be developed to finance policies and attention must also be paid to the environmental impact of such development.

<http://mobile.bloomberg.com/news/2014-03-16/china-plans-over-163-billion-shantytown-investment-cctv-says.html>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Neha Singh)

EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

New chamber to connect Kerala SMEs with Japan

(Business Standard, March 14, 2014)

Indo-Japan Chamber of Commerce Kerala (Injack), an organisation to connect small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kerala with Japan was inaugurated by Japanese Ambassador to India, Takeshi Yagi on March 14, 2014.

The organisation will have both corporate and individuals as members and is expected to groom SMEs in the state. It will focus on strengthening opportunities for businesses in Kerala to form strategic partnerships and joint ventures with business entities in Japan.

T Balakrishnan, president of the chamber, said the organisation would act as a catalyst for strengthening trade relations, promote bi-lateral trade, facilitate investment and technology transfer, joint ventures, business collaborations and strategic tie-ups.

The Japanese Ambassador, while addressing a conference said, economic relation between Japan and India had been expanding. The number of Japanese companies in India has reached 1,072 in 2013. Though there are 15 Japanese companies operating in Kerala, the number of branches set up by them had doubled from 53 to 105 in the past one year. However, he said the Indo-Japanese bilateral trade was a paltry \$20 billion or 2 per cent of India's total trade.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/new-chamber-to-connect-kerala-smes-with-japan-114031400733_1.html

Date Accessed: 19.3.2014

(Shruti Issar)

WHO to certify South East Asia as polio free

(C H Unnikrishnan, *Live Mint*, March 18, 2014)

The World Health Organization (WHO) will certify the South-East Asia region that comprises of 11 countries including India as polio free on 27 March.

The certification is based on independent review and assessment of the national documentations from all the 11 national certification committees of member states for several years. South-East Asia will be the fourth geographical zone to join the polio free region of WHO after the Americas (1994), the Western Pacific (2000) and European region (2002).

According to officials, no single country can be certified as polio-free alone. WHO certification of a region as polio-free can happen after all the countries there report three years without a single new case of polio due to wild polio virus.

Polio eradication will help reduce poverty and give children and their families a greater chance of leading healthy and productive lives.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/XcpQN0BVIoacI6WPmMUIP/WHO-to-certify-SouthEast-Asia-as-polio-free-next-week.html>

Date Accessed: 21.03.2014

(Deepti Somani)

Biggest sanctuary for manta rays in Indonesia

(*The Economist*, February 25, 2014)

Indonesia has designated its massive aquatic territory as a sanctuary for manta rays, making it the largest sanctuary in the world. This is considered to be a significant step towards preserving manta rays which have been fished almost to extinction in some parts of the world. The concerned ministry claims that rays will be fully protected within the archipelago's territorial waters.

In 2011, the International Union for Conservation of Nature added manta rays to its "red list" of endangered species. It estimated that the global population has fallen by about 30% during the past 75 years. Manta rays have high demand in China for their gill-rakers. The responsibility for policing a ban on fishing of manta rays falls majorly on the Indonesian district governments who lack the capacity to enforce such laws.

This conservation move by Indonesia is considered to bring economic benefits to the country as well. According to a study published in 2013, manta rays bring in about \$140m a year in economic benefits globally. Indonesia is estimated to earn \$15m annually from tourism based on manta rays. According to Agus Dermawan, the head of conservation at the fisheries ministry, said that Indonesia could become the world's leading destination for manta-ray tourism.

Tiene Gunawan of Conservation International, an NGO that worked with Indonesia's fisheries ministry to establish the sanctuary, expects to "start small" by working with the authorities, fishermen and park rangers where there are large populations of manta rays.

However, the protection of the endangered species will be made possible only if demand can be curbed in consuming countries.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2014/02/manta-rays>

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(Mahima Malik)

