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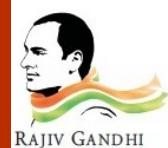
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- India becomes the first country to ratify Marrakesh Treaty for visually impaired
- India to connect 2.5 lakh panchayats through broadband

RGICS POLICY WATCH



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The need to replace half-a-century-old Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957



Source: [http://www.bing.com/images/search?
q=Mining+in+India+problems&go=Submit&qs=bs&form=QBIR#view=detail&id=43FF416395608B60BECCE27723A1255E39162A8B&selectedIndex=4](http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=Mining+in+India+problems&go=Submit&qs=bs&form=QBIR#view=detail&id=43FF416395608B60BECCE27723A1255E39162A8B&selectedIndex=4)

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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 channelling peoples' voice into the functioning of the State. In turn, this requires enhancing the knowledge and capacity of elected representatives and political parties on State policy.

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

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

Team RGICS

The need to replace half-a-century-old Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957

The mining sector in India contributes around 2.2 percent to 2.5 percent to the country's gross domestic product and employs around seven lakh workers. India's metal and mining industry was estimated to be 106.4 billion dollars in 2010. In India, 80% of mining is in coal and the balance 20% is in various metals and other raw materials such as gold, copper, iron, lead, bauxite, zinc and uranium. Based on estimates, the consumption of coal is projected to rise by nearly 40 percent over the next five years and almost to double by 2020. Given the significant contribution of the sector in country's industrial growth, attempts have been made from time to time, at various levels to ensure that the sector derives its maximum potential along with the focus on sustainable development and protection of displaced and affected communities.

Coal Mining in India: States wise view

Hard coal deposits spread over 27 major coal fields are mainly confined to eastern and south central parts of India. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh collectively account for 9.6% of India's GDP, 14% of its population and 30% of the total forest cover.

Table 1: Profile of the four selected states rich in coal deposits

	Odisha	Chhattisgarh	Jharkhand	Madhya Pradesh
Share in India's GDP %) ¹	2.5	1.6	1.7	3.8
Share in India's population (%) ²	3.5	2.1	2.7	6
Share in India's forest cover -2011 (In %) ³	7	8	3.3	11.2
Contribution of coal to states GDP (In %) ⁴	3.8	4.9	16.1	3.6
Royalty from coal -2010 (Rs. in Crore) ⁵	881	939.5	1152.4	1022.7

Source: Report 2013. "Equitable sharing of benefits arising from coal mining and power generation among resource rich states", TERI and Planning Commission; at http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_mining_power_generation.pdf

However, data shows that coal rich states, despite their contribution to the country's GDP and energy security, lag behind the national average on key indicators related to income, life expectancy, literacy and access to basic services like health and drinking water.

Table 2: Key socio-economic indicators of selected states rich in coal deposits

Dependent on traditional biomass for cooking (firewood+crop residue+cowdung cake) (% HH)	Access to drinking water (within and/or near the premises)	BPL % (2009-Tendulkar Methodology) (%HH)
Chhattisgarh	85.4	73.5
Jharkhand	68.8	68.1
Madhya Pradesh	79.7	69.5
Odisha	84.6	64.6
India	65.9	82.4
		29.8

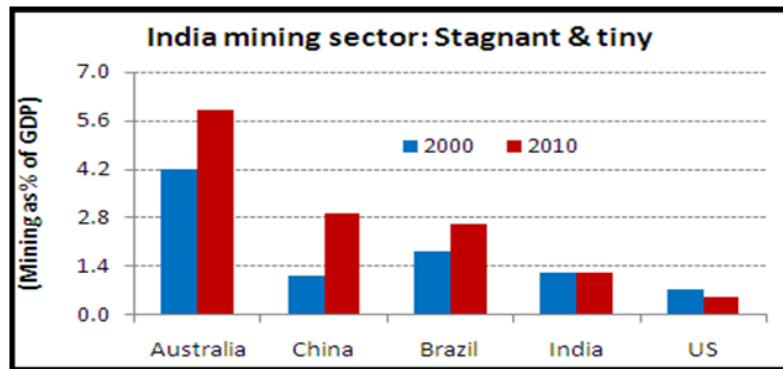
Source: Report 2013. "Equitable sharing of benefits arising from coal mining and power generation among resource rich states", TERI and Planning Commission; at http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_mining_power_generation.pdf

Coal produced in these states serves as an important input in meeting the energy demands of other States. However, the States feel that the benefits and burden that accrue out of coal mining are not distributed equitably. Several states, such as Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, have their own policies to address social externalities such as resettlement and rehabilitation.

Challenges faced by the Mining Sector

But today the sector faces several issues and challenges, robbing it of its potentials. Therefore, the Ministry of Mines came under great pressure from various sections of the society to revive India's mining sector. The industry is worst hit by crises due to illegal mining activities in several states, including Karnataka, Goa and Odisha. The sector also faces regulatory, infrastructure and sustainability issues. These challenges have limited the overall investment in mining and exploration activities in India, as evident from very low inflow of FDI in the mining sector.

Figure: Diminishing share of the mining sector in India's GDP in comparison with other countries



Source: Ministry of mines; at <http://www.equitymaster.com/5MinWrapUp/detail.asp?date=12/15/2011&story=3&title=The-magic-formula-for-finding-good-stocks>

Apart from the declining share of the mining sector in India's GDP, the sector faces several regulatory concerns. Some of the biggest consequences of the delayed reforms in the sector include the increasing count of instances related to illegal mining in many states, delay in granting clearances and lagged innovation in the sector.



Source:<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=Mining+in+India+problems&go=Submit&qs=bs&form=QBIR#view=detail&id=43FF416395608B60BECCE27723A1255E39162A8B&selectedIndex=4>

A *Business Standard* article (July 3, 2014) “5 challenges Modi govt will face to reform Coal India” pointed out that apart from governance challenges, inefficiency, allegations of corruption and lack of pricing power have also impacted the performance of the sector. The article suggests that there are five other issues that need to be corrected in order to improve overall health of the sector and improve its availability in the country.

The 5 challenges for the Mining Sector in India

1. Administrative challenges

One of the biggest issues in increasing coal production is delays in getting all the licences. In the present legislative and regulatory framework, the allottee of a captive coal block has to obtain multitude of clearance and approvals with the environment ministry taking the maximum time (around 3-4 years). Land acquisition is the other big reason for delays, mainly on account of local issues.

2. Transparency

A transparent mechanism of monitoring allotted mines is the need of the hour.

3. Pricing

Coal India has almost no control on the price at which it sells its product. Those importing coal are doing so at these higher prices, while Coal India is made to sell at lower prices to power companies.

4. Transportation and Infrastructure

Coal India management have always been saying that the issue of lower output is not related to production but to logistics. Coal stocks are lying at the mines waiting to be evacuated but are not been done on account of lack of proper transportation mode. Even though there are railways tracks there are not enough rakes available to clear the inventory. Road connectivity between consumers and mineral zones is either missing or is in a poor state.

5. Power sector reforms

The only reason Coal India is unable to increase prices of its product is the belief that its consumer -- power producer and power distribution companies cannot afford it.

Source: “5 challenges Modi govt will face to reform Coal India”, *Business Standard* article (July 3, 2014)
http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/5-challenges-modi-govt-will-face-to-reform-coal-india-114052201153_1.html

In addition to the challenges mentioned, the Ministry of Mines report, “Unlocking the Potential of the Indian Minerals Sector”, 2011, recognised that India must take multiple steps to bridge the impending shortage of human capital in mining, especially for mining engineers, diploma holders and skilled/semi-skilled labour. It states that supply of mining engineers needs to increase by 300% while supply of geologists will closely meet the demand by 2025. This reveals that skill development should be an important focus for policy action related to the sector.

In order to promote sustainable and equitable growth, the new government faces the responsibility to improve the condition of the country's sagging mining sector along with protecting the rights of people affected by mining projects.

According to Anup Pujari, the newly appointed secretary of the Ministry of Mines, the new government would like the mining sector to increase its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. The Ministry of Mines has assured that the mining sector will become the most thriving sector for business in India. **Towards this, one of the many important steps includes taking a call on the lapsed Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Bill, 2011, introduced by the UPA government.** The Mines Ministry is likely to review the lapsed Mines and Mineral (Development and Regulation) Bill, 2011 that provided for sharing of 26 per cent of profits with the project-affected people. As per newspaper reports the Mines Ministry will pitch for legislating the Act in the Budget session itself and seek Prime Minister's views on various issues like profit-sharing with the project-affected people.

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Bill, 2011

Presently, the 54-year old Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 governs the mining sector. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 provides the broad legal framework for the regulation of mines and the grant of different permits and licenses for exploration and exploitation of minerals (except petroleum and natural gas). **The Act has been amended eight times, last amended in 2010, in light of changing nature and increasing challenges faced by the mining sector.**

In 1993, the first National Mineral Policy was initiated by the Central Government for liberalization of the mining sector. With the passage of time and economic development, the nature and requirements of the mineral sector has changed. In 1993, a High Level Committee was set up in the Planning Commission to consult with the State Governments and suggest necessary reforms in the mining sector. On 13 March, 2008, National Mineral Policy replaced the previous one.

National Mineral Policy, 2008 provided for a change in the role of the Central Government and the State Governments, particularly in relation to incentivizing private sector investment and ensuring overall transparency. The agenda of the policy was to move towards a sustainable development framework so as to protect the interest of local population in mining areas.

Given the reality that a large proportion of the mineral wealth is situated in areas under forest cover inhabited by tribal or under-privileged communities, socio-economic concerns of tribal and remote communities have been highlighted by various organizations and agencies. Thus, it was felt that provisions in the mining legislation needed to be included which enable creation, activation and empowerment of institutional mechanisms for involvement of the local people, especially the tribal and under privileged communities, in the development of mineral resources and creation of stakeholders' rights.

Subsequently, seeking to replace a more than half-a-century-old law, the UPA-II government tabled the MMDR Bill, 2011, in the Lok Sabha in December 2011. In the 66th Independence Day speech, former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, had reiterated the commitment of the UPA government to translate MMDR 2011 Bill into legislation for the welfare of displaced people.

"Our Government has paid special attention to the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, women and other weaker sections. . . The Government wants to speedily convert the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Bill into legislation. Through this law we want to provide funds for the benefit of our tribal brothers and sisters in the mining areas."

*: Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh,
66th Independence Day Speech*

Key differences between the 1957Act and the MMD Bill, 2011:

Parameter	1957 Act	MMDR Bill, 2011
High technology licence	Does not include any provision for high technology licence	Defines high technology and lays down provisions for the procedures regarding High technology licence.
Competitive bidding and first-come-first-serve basis	Competitive bidding shall be applied for captive coal mines.	The Bill 2011 states that in cases of known mineralisation, competitive bidding shall be applicable. First come first serve shall be applied for other cases.
Compensation of affected people	Does not mention any special provisions for the relief of persons affected by mining or related activities.	States various special provisions for fair and adequate compensation of affected people. Mining lease holders are required to pay fixed amount, as a percentage of profit or equivalent of royalty under the Bill.
Participation of Cooperatives	Cooperatives were not eligible for mining	The Bill makes sure that cooperatives' participation is assured for small deposits.
Area under Mining lease	Specifies 10 km ² under mining lease	2011 Bill specifies that 100km ² under mining lease.
Renewal/ extension of licenses	Licenses and leases were specified to be renewed	Specifies that leases and licenses will be extended.
Authority for Regulation	No mention of any regulatory authority.	Mandates the formation of National and State Mining Regulatory Authority

The Bill seeks to specify greater role of gram sabha sand panchayats in mining plans, assures appropriate monetary as well as non monetary compensations to people affected by such projects, amend laws relating to the scientific development and regulation of mines and minerals to make the mining sector more transparent.

Salient features of the MMDR (2011) Bill

Consultations, Profit Sharing and Fair Compensation of Affected People

- The Bill ensures that areas are notified for applications for mining projects only after due consultations with Gram Sabhas, District Councils or District Panchayats. In areas covered by Fifth Schedule or Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, notification for inviting applications shall be issued only after consultation with the Gram Sabhas or District Councils, and in respect of non scheduled areas, after consultation with the District Panchayats.
- The Bill clearly specifies compensation and other measures which will ensure that monetary benefits are divided amongst firms and the affected people.
- State governments may also constitute Special Courts for providing speedy trials of offences as defined in the Bill. At the local level, the District Mineral Foundations will be formed to ensure the participation of the locals.

Competitive Bidding by central and state governments

- The Bill states that the central government may invite competitive offers for grant of mineral concession in case of coal minerals, while state governments may invite competitive offers in case of other minerals, before the expiry of the period notified by the State Government. Additionally, state governments may give preference to registered cooperative societies of Scheduled Tribes.

Transparency in application procedures

- In order to make the entire machinery transparent, the State Government, and every holder of a mineral concession are required to make available data relating to grant, extension, relinquishment, termination and plan of operations in a format as prescribed by the Central government.

License/ Lease requirements, Planning and Extension of licenses

- The Bill specifies that “no person shall undertake any reconnaissance, prospecting, general exploration, detailed exploration or mining” in case of either major or minor minerals without the requisite licenses or permits.” Firms are also required prepare a mining plan/ exploration plan in order to be allowed to carry out mining operations.

High Technology License

- The Bill provides for “high-technology reconnaissance-cum-exploration license” which are a new form of concession instrument for technology and investment intensive exploration for deep deposits.

Mineral Fund, Mining Regulatory Authority and National Sustainable Development Framework

- The Bill mandates that the central government develops a “National Sustainable Development Framework” which would contain guidelines for the formulation of project-level practices for scientifically, environmentally and socially sustainable mining.
- The central government shall establish a National Mining Regulatory Authority and a National Mining Tribunal. States can establish State Mining Regulatory Authorities and State Mining Tribunals.
- A National Mineral Fund formed by the central government is also stated in the Bill.

Penalty in case of a void license

- The Bill also specifies that Mineral concession will be considered void if in contravention of Act.

Varied Voices: Differences amongst various ministries on the MMDR Bill, 2011

However, the MMDR bill could not be translated into legislation after facing strong opposition from other parties in the Lok Sabha.

Also, major opposition against the bill came from the business associations who termed the bill to be “anti-mining” and strongly opposed the ‘profit-sharing with the project-affected’ clause in the Bill.

Source: “Differences on important provisions delay mining Bill,” Business Standard, New Delhi, August 24, 2012; at http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/differences-on-important-provisions-delay-mining-bill-112082402020_1.html

Industry against the move, as the proposal would hit the miners' bottom line by Rs 15,000 crores annually

Coal ministry has been demanding modifications in the Bill to bring captive miners under the ambit of benefit-sharing

Mines ministry is agreeable, but intends to fix compensation for coal miners at 100% of royalty paid, same as non-coal miners

Steel ministry, too, has raised serious objections over key reform measures proposed in the Bill

Corporate affairs ministry has also asked for a provision under the Companies Act for transfer of shares in mining companies for protecting the rights of affected families

Environment ministry has sought a provision for securing forest clearances before granting prospecting licences in forest areas

There is little doubt that there is an urgent need to revive the Mines and Minerals sector in our country to pave the way for high-tech exploration in new blocks, foster competition and ensure adequate compensation for the displaced. **A new mining Bill to replace the existing archaic MMDR Act, 1957 has become necessary to make the concession regime more investor-friendly by simplifying and speeding up the procedures for granting concessions and providing security of tenure.**

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Mahima Malik

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- http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_mining_power_generation.pdf

3 out of 10 in India are poor: Rangarajan panel

(*The Hindu*, 6 July, 2014)

A panel headed by former PMEAC Chairman C. Rangarajan has dismissed the Tendulkar Committee report on estimating poverty and said that the number of poor in India was much higher in 2011-12 at 29.5 per cent of the population, which means that three out of 10 persons are poor. The Rangarajan Committee was set up last year to review the Tendulkar Committee methodology for estimating poverty and clear the ambiguity over the number of poor in the country.

As per the report submitted by Mr. Rangarajan to Planning Minister Rao Inderjit Singh earlier, persons spending below Rs. 47 a day in cities would be considered poor, much above the Rs. 33-per-day mark suggested by the Suresh Tendulkar Committee. As per the Rangarajan panel estimates, poverty stood at 38.2 per cent in 2009-10 and slid to 29.5 per cent in 2011-12. This is at variance with the Tendulkar methodology under which poverty was estimated at 29.8 per cent in 2009-10 and declined to 21.9 per cent in 2011-12.

The Planning Commission's estimates based on Tendulkar Committee had drawn flak in September 2011, when in an affidavit to the Supreme Court it was stated that households with per capita consumption of more than Rs. 33 in urban areas and Rs. 27 in rural areas would not be treated as poor.

As per Rangarajan panel estimates, a person spending less than Rs. 1,407 a month (Rs. 47/day) would be considered poor in cities, as against the Tendulkar Committee's suggestion of Rs. 1,000 a month (Rs. 33/day). In villages, those spending less than Rs. 972 a month (Rs. 32/day) would be considered poor. This is much higher than Rs. 816 a month (Rs. 27/day) recommended by the Tendulkar Committee.

In absolute terms, the number of poor in India stood at 36.3 crore in 2011-12, down from 45.4 crore in 2009-10, according to the panel. The Tendulkar Committee, however, had suggested that the number of poor was 35.4 crore in 2009-10 and 26.9 crore in 2011-12.

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/3-out-of-10-in-india-are-poor-rangarajan-panel/article6183007.ece>

Date Accessed: 06.07.2014

(Neha Singh)

Over 20% of young Indians are jobless: Census 2011

(*Times of India*, June 24, 2014)

According to the recently released Census 2011 data on unemployment, more than 20 % of Indians in the 15-24 age group were jobless, which amounts to around 4.7 crore of which 2.6 crore were men and 2.1 crore women. The figures reflect the entirely unemployed and marginal workers who get work only for up to six months in a year.

Overall, the unemployment age group of 15-59 amounts to 14.5 %, including marginal workers seeking work. Of which 18 % belong to the 25-29 age group and 6% in the 30-34 age group.

Among dalits, the unemployment rate in the 15-59 age groups was recorded at 18%, which is much higher than the general population. Among adivasis, it was even higher at over 19 per cent.

The data strongly counters the myth that young women do not want to work because of family responsibilities or social disapproval. The article reports that while the bulk of non-workers indeed women, in the age group of 20 to 29 the share of those seeking work is the same as for men in the same age group. "This is the new generation that is relatively better educated and wants to build a better life, but the opportunities are not there."

"In urban areas, nearly 18 per cent of the 15-24 age group is seeking work while in rural areas the share rises to over 21 per cent. In both rural and urban areas, the share of young women seeking work is high at 17 per cent and 20 per cent respectively."

Moreover, the lack of social security for senior citizens and low economic status is forcing them to continue to work. Nearly 3.3 crore persons of 60 years and above are employed under full-time regular employment, another 1

crore work as marginal workers.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Over-20-of-young-Indians-are-jobless/articleshow/37598409.cms>

Date Accessed: 02.06.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

India becomes the first country to ratify Marrakesh Treaty for visually impaired

(PIB, July 2, 2014)

In order to facilitate equal rights and employment opportunities for blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled people, India became the first country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty on 30th June, 2014. The main goal of Marrakesh Treaty is to create a set of mandatory limitations and exceptions for the benefit of the blind, visually impaired and otherwise print disabled (VIPs). So far, 79 WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) member states have signed this Treaty, while India has become the first nation to officially ratify it. The Marrakesh treaty will come into force once twenty countries ratify this treaty.

In 2012, under the UPA government, Indian Copyright, 1957 was amended, which made the provisions of the law in conformity with relevant international treaties. Shri Dilip Sinha, the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, at a ceremony organized held during the 28th Session in WIPO Headquarters announced the ratification of the Treaty. The Treaty requires the contracting parties to adopt national law provisions that permit the reproduction, distribution and making available of published works in accessible formats - such as Braille - to VIPs and to permit exchange of these works across borders by organizations that serve those beneficiaries. The ratification of the treaty will facilitate import of accessible format copies from the member states by the Indian authorized entities such as educational institutions, libraries and other such institutions working for the benefit of visually impaired persons. Additionally, it will boost translation of imported accessible format copies and export of accessible format copies in Indian languages.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=106012>

Date Accessed: 04.07.2014

(Mahima Malik)

India to connect 2.5 lakh panchayats through broadband

(Bihar Times, July 01, 2014)

India is going to build a broadband highway linking 2.5 lakh panchayats (spread over six lakh villages) across the country in the next three years to provide a host of public services. The government has come up with the plan in order to change India through the instrument of information technology (IT). The broadband connectivity in India is less than even in Sri Lanka and Malaysia currently.

The government also wants to extend the knowledge in information technology to create a dedicated portal for lost and found children that can be used nationwide by the agencies to trace them when their details are uploaded as hundreds of them (children) go missing, are kidnapped or separated from their families. Also the government is planning to use IT to improve the country's e-governance system.

"The cost of providing broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh local bodies is estimated to be a whopping Rs.20,000 crore and the potential for business by using the facility would be two-fold, with a multiplier effect on the economy at large."

<http://www.bihartimes.in/Newsbihar/2014/July/newsbihar02July3.html>

Date Accessed: 04.07.2014

(Anjana John)

RBI relaxes loan recast norms for delayed projects

(Exim News Service, June 29, 2014)

Banks are now permitted to restructure loans multiple times within the stipulated period (which varies from 2 to 4 years) of commissioning of projects as per Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) notification. Loans where delay in commissioning happened due to litigation problems or other obstacles can be treated as standard ones. RBI even confirmed that banks can "retain the 'standard' asset classification, if the fresh DCCO is fixed" if the account is serviced as per "restructured terms".

"Banks may restructure such loans, subject to the extant prudential norms on restructuring of advances, by way of revision of DCCO or date of commencement of commercial operations beyond the time limits," RBI said in a notification. In addition RBI also said that earlier, banks could classify any loan restructured for the second time as bad loan. With the recent development, a loan can now be restructured many times within four years of commission date.

Disputes over acquisition of land and the lack of fuel have resulted in a number of road projects being left incomplete and further lead to defaults. Thus in many cases the loans had to be restructured in order to avoid bankruptcy.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=76223>

Date Accessed: 2.7.2014

(Shruti Issar)

RBI norms on differentiated banking this fiscal year

(Dinesh Unnikrishnan, *The Live Mint*, July 6, 2014)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is planning to issue guidelines on the entry of differentiated banking regime in India, or banks that would undertake specific banking activities in the current fiscal.

The Idea of differentiated banks was first mooted in a discussion paper on banking structure reforms early last year. Differentiated banks exist in developed markets, wherein they undertake specific banking activities such as retail, infrastructure financing and rural banking etc, depending on the core expertise of the organization.

The firms that failed to get licences from the central bank in April can apply for differentiated, on-tap licences. A total of 25 companies were in the race for new banking licences. Recently, RBI had also announced its plans to permit payments banks or banks that deal with small deposits and offer transaction services but not credit. Payments banks, which will bring financial services to unbanked areas of the country, can start operations with a capital of just Rs.50 crore, since all their money will be invested in safe government securities. In contrast, a full-service bank requires an entry capital of Rs.500 crore.

They will be required to comply with all RBI guidelines for commercial banks. The concept of payments banks was first proposed by a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) committee led by board member Nachiket Mor.

http://www.livemint.com/Politics/FRU82bOeVp8yHFo3jEwKUM/RBI-to-issue-bank-licence-guidelines-this-year.html?utm_source=copy

Date Accessed: 06.07.2014

(Neha Singh)

Only a quarter of young girls contribute to economy

(Somesh Jha, *Business Standard*, July 4, 2014)

Latest Census 2011 data on workers in India reveals that only a quarter of India's young girls and women (15-24 years old) contribute to any form economic activity. Data reveals that 75% of the girls in 2011 fell under the category of non-workers, as against 70% recorded in 2001 census as non workers. These could include students, those in-

volved in household chores, beggars, or those not helping in even unpaid work in the family, etc. In comparison, half the young boys (52%) in 2011 were non-workers against 46.4 per cent a decade ago.

As per experts, this is a sign of prosperity. Former member of Planning Commission, S R Hashim said, "this is more because of education. Usually, when a middle-class family becomes prosperous, they tend to withdraw female members from working. Over here, as the age group is 15-24, the reason could be education."

In addition, talking about the variation between young boys and girls in terms of their contribution to the Indian economy in 2011, Hashim said, "In India, it is seen that women are involved in household chores, which do not form part of any economic activity. Compared to this, boys are doing paid jobs, and, hence, there is a variation in that aspect."

College enrollment among girls has seen a substantial increase said, Pronab Sen, chairman of National Statistical Commission. In addition he also said, "in 2004-05, it was 11-12%, which has gone up to 19-20% now. More children are going to college after passing out from school, rather than choosing to work. The enrollment, particularly among girls, went up at a better pace than boys in this phase."

However, even as more girls pursued education, a marginal proportion also went towards performing household duties. Among girls, those involved in household activities constituted 36.5% in 2011, as against 35.7% in 2001.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/only-a-quarter-of-young-girls-contribute-to-economy-114070301024_1.html

Date Accessed: 4.7.2014
(Shruti Issar)

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Rajasthan accelerates labour reforms

(Prasahant K Nanda, *LiveMint*, July 1, 2014)

Continuing with its pro-business legal reforms, the Rajasthan state assembly is likely to take up the Apprentices Act for amendments in favour of improving business environment in the state by making it easier for industries to recruit apprentices. Chief Minsiter, Vasudhara Raje, stated on her official Twitter handle that amendments will be made in the Apprentices Act 1961 to create larger opportunities of employment for youth.

The state government is pushing for single window clearance mechanism that will be facilitated by the state apprenticeship council. It has also proposed to share the cost of apprenticeship with companies based on their strength of workers. For those operating with less than 250 workers, the state has will bear 50 percent of the total cost required for hired apprenticeship; for those operatinf with more than 250 workers and a similar requirement for hired apprenticeship, that state will bear 25 percent of the cost. The proposed amendments will also enable the inclusion of 10-12 million young people in the programme. According to Manish Sabharwal-chairman of TeamLease Services Pvt. Ltd, a staffing and training company- the Act is an innovation and stands in the intersection of education and employability.

Earlier the state cabinet had cleared amendments to three key national labour laws comprising the Industrial Disputes Act, the Factories Act and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act.

However, many of the amendments in these Acts have been criticised for being disadvantageous for workers. For example, under the amended Industrial Dispute Act has increased the number of employees that companies are entitled to retrench from 100 to 300. Secondly, the amendments also make registration of labour unions more difficult.

http://www.livemint.com/Politics/ryHoDW436i9oaD0m2oNXgJ/Rajasthan-accelerates-labour-reforms.html?utm_source=copy

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

DEVELOPMENT

Socio-economic backwardness increases vulnerability to climate change: Institute of Economic Growth

(im4change)

A newly released study from the Institute of Economic Growth, entitled “Socio-Economic Backwardness Increases Vulnerability to Climate Change: Evidence from Uttar Pradesh” found that infra-structurally and economically developed districts are less vulnerable to climate change. It states that social and economic development is linked to vulnerability to climate change and variability.

The study focused on Uttar Pradesh for its importance in India's food and nutrition security programme and its high sensitivity to climate change. “It uses 17 environmental and socio-economic factors to see which districts of UP are the most vulnerable to climate change, and attempts to identify the factors on a set of explanatory variables. This observation is corroborated by the findings of relational analysis. In relational analysis, livestock, forestry, consumption of fertilizer, per capita income, and infant mortality rate are observed to be important correlates of farmers' vulnerability to climate change; these should be focused on to reduce farmers' climate change vulnerability.”

The report suggested that “farmers' awareness and adaptive capacity to climate change needs to be strengthened, for which policy options such as crop insurance and early warning systems would help.”

<http://www.im4change.org/latest-news-updates/socio-economic-backwardness-increases-vulnerability-to-climate-change-evidence-from-uttar-pradesh-amarnath-tripathi-4673259.html>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Upper caste villagers grab dalits' farmland by proxy

(Amaninder Pal Sharma, *The Times of India*, June 27, 2014)

Punjab State Scheduled Caste Commission in its report on the boycott of Dalits in Baupur village have revealed that Dalits in Punjab are being used as proxy bidders by upper caste peasants to acquire agricultural village land that is meant to be rented out only to scheduled caste members.

"The state government gives out agricultural land on rent to farmers after an annual auction. A third of the land is reserved for dalits but they often don't have the financial resources to bid and are then used as proxy by upper caste farmers."

The State SC commission has recommended that land reserved for dalits should be auctioned at nominal rates. The issue however is that the Punjab Village Common Land Act, 1961, dictates that land should be auctioned at price higher than the previous year. As a result the rent demands from the government keep increasing each year, which the dalits are not in a position to pay.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Chandigarh/Upper-caste-villagers-grab-dalits-farmland-by-proxy/articleshow/37309561.cms>

Date Accessed: 01.07.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

13th National Meeting to Review Implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995

(Press Bureau of India, July 6, 2014)

In the 13th National Meeting of the State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities to review implementation of PWD Act, the Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot interacted with the State Commissioners from 32 States/UTs.

In the meeting, it was stated that the proportion of persons with disabilities belonging to Scheduled Castes at 2.45% was higher than the overall proportion of 2.1% of the total population.

Other issues raised in the meeting were the following:-

- It was felt that there is a need for paying particular attention on the people with disabilities living in the rural and remote areas and the vulnerable disadvantaged group.
- A huge proportion (43.15%) of persons with disabilities is yet to be issued disability certificates.
- A target of covering 70% eligible persons to be given disability certificate within six months and 100% within one year was proposed.
- Special Recruitment Drive should be conducted in all the States to fill up the backlog of reserved vacancies for persons with disabilities.
- It was highlighted that there is a need for implementation of the provisions in the Act to allot land on preferential basis at concessional rates to persons with disabilities for house, setting up of a business, factories etc
- It was also informed that Shri Gehlot has recommended to the Finance Ministry to double the existing exemption limit in Income Tax in respect of persons with disabilities.

It was observed that despite a range of positive legal provisions, appropriate arrangements for education of children with disabilities was not in place across the country. So, it was advised by the union minister that State Commissioners should particularly focus on ensuring the right of children with disabilities to education in an appropriate environment.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/ererelease.aspx>

Date Accessed: 06.07.2014

(Neha Singh)

EDUCATION

Private deemed varsity founders can now be chancellors: UGC

(Prakash Kumar, *Deccan Herald*, July 01, 2014)

According to the new University Grants Commission (UGC) regulation founding presidents of varsities can hold the post of chancellor, if the institutions has been operational for 25 years and has secured “A” rank from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

The higher education regulator approved the amendments to the UGC (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2010, and relaxed the provisions on the appointment of chancellors). Regulations had stipulated that a chancellor could be appointed by the sponsoring society or trust that had set up the deemed university on the condition that the person was an eminent educationist, or distinguished public figure, outside of the trust or president's family relations.

The regulations were formulated by a committee of experts that had marked 44 varsities as unworthy of deemed status on several grounds, including poor academic and research output. The basic objective of the newly-approved regulations was to put an end to the trend of institutional heads, besides their family members, exercising control over universities. However, it faced stiff opposition from many private deemed universities which demanded amendments in the provision.

Earlier this year, Former Human Resource Development minister M M Pallam Raju took a call on the issue and endorsed the amendment of the existing rules. Subsequently, Higher Education Secretary Ashok Thakur in February wrote a letter to the UGC seeking the amendments.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/417231/private-deemed-varsity-founders-can.html>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Jeet Singh)

AGRICULTURE

Help for farmers to tackle truant monsoon in Kerala

(T. Nandakumar, *The Hindu*, July 01, 2014)

In the looming threat of a deficit monsoon in Kerala, the state government is working on a disaster management plan to help farmers tide over the possibility of crop failure and the consequent loss.

The article reports that the “The Department of Agriculture is focussing its efforts on the paddy sector, likely to be the worst affected by a poor monsoon.” R. Ajithkumar, Director of Agriculture observes that “amid reports that the monsoon may pick up over the next two months, we have prepared a contingency plan to encourage farmers to shift to short-duration varieties of paddy. Sufficient seed stocks are available in Kerala for distribution to farmers.”

Comprehensive crop insurance scheme for farmers, likely to come into effect by September is also a part of the disaster management package.

Around 25 crops ranging from paddy, to vegetables are covered under the scheme which aims to provide relief for crop loss due to natural calamities (drought, flood, landslip, earthquake, coastal erosion, cyclone, storm, lightning, forest fire, and rampaging wild elephants).

The state government is also working towards installation of micro-irrigation systems to ensure maximum utilisation of available water forms. The department of Agriculture is also working on a proposal to promote plasticulture (the use of thin plastic films to avoid evaporation loss from the soil and prevent weed growth) to address the shortage of water in the event of an extended break in the monsoon.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/help-for-farmers-to-tackle-truant-monsoon/article6165077.ece>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

Prasar Bharati mulling 'krishi' channel for farmers

(DD News, June 30, 2014)

Doordarshan is planning a channel devoted exclusively to farmers and agriculture with public broadcaster Prasar Bharti. Consultations on this proposal are already underway for the launch of 24-hour agriculture-based channel which could leverage the expertise Doordarshan has in creating programmes for farmers and rural audiences and telecast them to a wider audience.

While different Doordarshan channels regularly beam programmes meant for farmers, there is a view that the public broadcaster would be able to create more awareness and educate farmers if there is a channel specially dedicated to agriculture. Agriculture is one of the fields to which Prasar Bharati is required to pay special attention according to the Prasar Bharati Act.

Since crop patterns and requirement of farmers differ from region to region, it is being considered whether one channel with different time slots for regional content would be more suited or whether more than one channel is required to reach out to the diverse agro-regions of the country.

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

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Jeet Singh)

Power-hit farmers in AP to get solar pump-sets

(The Hindu, June 29, 2014)

In order to overcome the power crisis faced by the farmers in Andhra Pradesh, state government has decided to supply solar pump-sets on subsidised prices. The Union government has allocated 1,000 pump-sets to both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

The farmers would get up to 70 % subsidy based on their reservation category. "The pump-sets will be supplied to farmers of Scheduled Castes in the areas where Indira Jalaprabha scheme was being implemented."

Eastern Power Distribution Company of A.P. Ltd (APEPDCL) Superintending Engineer P.V.V. Satyanarayana noted that "Agriculture Department, District Water Management Agency and other departments were also promoting solar pump-sets for agriculture purpose."

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/powerhit-farmers-to-get-solar-pumpsets/article6158260.ece>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Ashwin Varghese)

TECHNOLOGY

NASA carbon dioxide-hunting telescope reaches orbit

(Irene Klotz, The Reuters, July 3, 2014)

An unmanned Delta 2 rocket blasted off from California on 2 July carrying a NASA science satellite to survey where carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas tied to climate change, is moving into and out of Earth's atmosphere, a NASA.

Orbiting Carbon Observatory (OCO) 2 is NASA's first mission dedicated to studying carbon dioxide and this makes it of critical importance to the scientists who are trying to understand the impact of humans on global change. Every year about 40 billion tons of carbon end up in Earth's atmosphere, an amount that is increasing as the developing world modernizes. "Roughly half of the carbon is re-absorbed by forests and the ocean, a process that is not well understood. Understanding the details of those processes will give some insight into the future and what is likely to happen over the next decades, even if consumption of more and more fossil fuels continues, emitting more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere."

From its orbital perch 438 miles (705 km) above Earth, the spacecraft will collect hundreds of thousands of measurements daily. Its path around the planet will take it over the same spot at the same time every 16 days, allowing scientists to detect patterns in carbon dioxide levels over weeks, months and years. The \$468 million mission is designed to last at least two years.

[http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/02/us-space-launch-climatechange-idINKBN0F715Y20140702?mlt_click=Master+Sponsor+Logo\(Active\)_25_More+News_sec-coll-m1_News](http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/02/us-space-launch-climatechange-idINKBN0F715Y20140702?mlt_click=Master+Sponsor+Logo(Active)_25_More+News_sec-coll-m1_News)

Date Accessed: 06.07.2014

(Neha Singh)

ENVIRONMENT

Odisha charts out plan to tackle water crisis

(The Telegraph, July 1, 2014)

As rainfall deficiency hits 27 out of 30 districts in Odisha, the state government has directed its district collectors to take measures to ensure that there is no shortage of drinking water. According to official estimates, the state has reported 56 per cent less than normal rainfall during June. Only three districts — Nabarangpur, Balasore and Koraput — have received normal rainfall.

Officials have been instructed by the chief Minister- Naveen Patnaik- to take special care to meet the demand of drinking; the time limit for providing drinking water through tankers to scarce areas has also been extended up to July 15 apart from laying emphasis on water conservation methods to meet drinking and irrigation purposes. Moreover, a plan of action is to be prepared by the panchayati raj department that will seek to intensify labour intensive projects under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, especially in the drought-prone zones.

Other suggested measures taken to address the water crisis include popularisation of long-duration crops, disbursement of crop loan amounting to Rs. 8000 crore to farmers by the end of July, restricting hydropower generation to 450 megaWatt (MW) per day taking into consideration the low water level in six major reservoirs in the state and keeping seeds and other inputs for short-term alternative crops ready for distribution if the need arises.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140702/jsp/odisha/story_18570786.jsp#.U7PNJPmSw2M

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

Whales are engineers of ocean ecosystems

(Deccan Herald, July 7, 2014)

A new study suggested that whales have a powerful and positive influence on the function of oceans, global carbon storage, and the health of commercial fisheries.

According to the biologist who conducted the study, the decline in great whale numbers, estimated to be at least 66 per cent and perhaps as high as 90 per cent, has likely altered the structure and function of the oceans. But continued recovery of great whales may help to buffer marine ecosystems from destabilising stresses.

With huge metabolic demands - and large populations before humans started hunting them - great whales helped in balancing the ecosystem, they eat many fish and invertebrates, are themselves prey to other predators like killer whales, and distribute nutrients through the water. Even their carcasses, dropping to the seafloor, provide habitat for many species that only exist on these whale falls. Commercial whaling dramatically reduced the biomass and abundance of great whales."

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/417831/whales-engineers-ocean-ecosystems.html>

Date Accessed: 07.07.2014

(Neha Singh)

Greater access to water-saving technology interventions is needed

(Jyotika Sood, Down To Earth, July 1, 2014)

Although there have been key technological interventions in Punjab and Haryana with the aim of reducing water wastage through the adoption of efficient irrigation practices, there is an urgent need to make these accessible to marginal farmers with poor resources.

Policy efforts like the Sub-soil Water Preservation Act, which is a law prohibiting nursery sowing and paddy transplantation before a stipulated time in the two north-Indian states, can work in tandem with technological interventions in order to achieve the common purpose of arresting water decline in both the states. Studies have shown that if 105 million cubic metre of water is saved on 4,000 hectares every year, it would save 12.5 million units of electricity valued at Rs 5 crore.

Some of the technological solutions geared towards saving water are laser levellers, under-ground pipelines, sprinklers, drip irrigation and direct seed sowing. The government has subsequently encouraged the use of the technological solutions by giving subsidy and renting out the machines and equipment.

However, the benefits of the state governments' efforts to popularise technology usage has not trickled to smaller farmers who lack cannot even afford renting machines. For example, Jaspal Ram of Lehra Turkot in district Bathinda of Punjab still relies on traditional methods of levelling through gunny bags instead of laser levellers that can be hired on a Rs. 425 per hour (leveller+tractor) or a Rs. 150 per hour (leveller) basis. Similarly, equipments like scrappers, chisellers and trolleys with tractor are available for Rs 350 and trencher for Rs 600. This in turn means that agriculture for smaller farmers becomes more labour intensive and time consuming.

Consequently, access to these equipments remains a challenge for marginal farmers who either cannot afford them or are victims of corrupt practices like undue favours by government agri-machinery centres to farmers associated with politicians.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/technology-interventions-save-water>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

SOCIAL JUSTICE

44 lakh children still suffering from child labour in India

(B Sivakumar, *Times Of India*, July 2, 2014)

Despite managing drop of 65 per cent in the total number of child labourers in India, the presence of 43.5 lakh labourers in the age group of 5 to 14 years as per 2011 census poses a challenge for the nation. Legislative measures, judicial intervention as well increased civil society activism have jointly contributed to this decline.

While acknowledging the positive developments in the country, R Vidyasagar- UNICEF child protection specialist- opines that states like UP, Bihar should follow the example of Tamil Nadu, where the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has improved the enrolment due to provision of mid-day meals, in turn decreasing child labour. Other states should also implement similar schemes that encourage the shift to school education amongst the poor and vulnerable. Secondly, adequate compensation to the parents, whose children are enrolled in schools, would not make the switch disadvantageous economically because of reduced income sources.

Existing efforts focusing primarily on weaning away children from employment has reduced the practice. For example, the Peoples' Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR) has been weaning children from being employed as labours in the textile and carpet industries in Uttar Pradesh.

Some experts feel that there is a lack of will in northern India to implement various laws to prevent employment of children in hazardous industries as many bureaucrats and affluent people continue to employ children from Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal as domestic helps.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/65-fall-in-child-labourers-but-we-still-have-44-lakh/articleshow/37604466.cms>

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Politics over Hindi as India's 'national language'

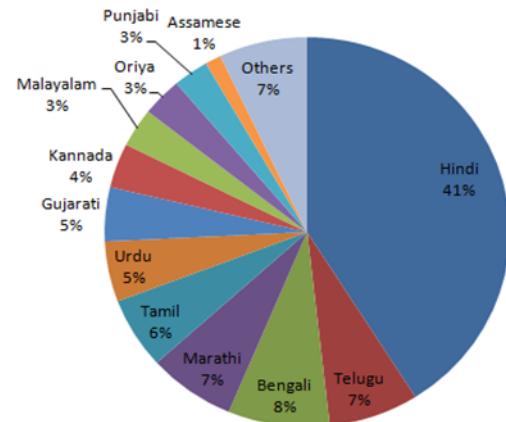
(Sandeep Bhardwaj, *Revisiting India Blog*, January 27, 2014)

Today 422 million people in India speak Hindi, making it one of the most spoken languages in the world. The new government has been trying to promote the use of Hindi as the preferable language for government works and social media in the country. Despite a string of clarifications by the centre, non-Hindi speaking states, especially Tamil Nadu, have been vocal about their stiff resistance on the issue. The fight over language is not just a matter of pride, but also of economic, social and political consequence. In view of this, any policy action, on the matter of language, requires a detailed understanding of the evolution and acceptance of Hindi. This blog highlights the history of Hindi language and how its usage got politicised over the years.

"Hindi vs Urdu": Hindi as a medium to counter the influence of Muslims

The first political patrons for Hindi emerged from the Hindu-Muslim conflict that was building up in the country in late 1800s. Prior to this, the language was essentially a "collection of dialects" spoken primarily in North India.

Language Distribution in India (2001 Census)



However, it held no formal recognition. The Mughals used Persian as the official language, while the native courts used Sanskrit. Sanskrit was an exclusive domain of the Brahmins, incomprehensible to both British and common Indians.

The promoters of Hindi language saw Hindi as a tool to counteract the influence of Muslims who spoke and read Urdu. It is stated in the blog that “Hindi was a vague, ill-defined group of dialects” of north India. Infact, many linguist experts maintain that Rajasthani, Bihari and Pahari should be a different language group. Subsequently, efforts were made to promote Hindi. In 1881, the Bihar Government adopted Hindi as the sole official language of the state, ignoring, not only Urdu but also Maithili, Bhojpuri etc. A lot of government work and education programmes were transferred to Hindi medium. Over the decades, this situation ensured that most Biharis, regardless of their mother tongue, end up becoming Hindi speakers. Such efforts continued across North India, except in Punjab, where Sikhs were able to consolidate a counteracting force.

The next major step came in 1901, when the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon, recommended that Hindi should be accepted as official language in all provinces of India. This was part of his larger scheme to expand the education system in India, which was being bottlenecked by English. By end of the decade, Hindi had become one of the two accepted languages at national level, along with Urdu.

The transition: From “Hindi vs Urdu” to “Hindi vs English and Hindi vs regional languages”

Additionally, leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru supported the idea of Hindustani as the national language to counter the growing Hindu-Muslim divide. Since Hindi and Urdu were not that different when spoken, they could be easily amalgamated into a hybrid national language: “Hindi + Urdu=Hindustani”. However, after the partition, the debate shifted from being that of “Hindi-Urdu” conflict to “Hindi vs English and Hindi vs regional languages.”

In 1946, the debate began over which language the Constitution would be written in; and which language will be the India’s national language. The blog also mentions an instance where “in one of the first Constituent Assembly debates, a representative from UP, RV Dhulekar began to speak in Hindi when the Assembly Speaker cut him off and asked him to speak in English for the benefit of non-Hindi speakers. Dhulekar refused and began ranting off in Hindi, creating quite a commotion until Nehru requested him to be quiet.” The fight over language was not just a matter of pride, but of economic consequence. Recognition of Hindi as the official language would have automatically disenfranchised most of non-Hindi speakers from government jobs, higher education and even justice. On the other hand, the right-wingers argued that a national language was critical for unity. Even the moderates agreed that there was need for at least some “link language” to allow the government to function.

Nehru suggested a compromise- where Hindi would be the Official Language but English would continue to be used by the government. Meanwhile, other languages were bursting with agendas of their own, foremost being creation of language-based states.

The call of regional languages

- Agitations for regional languages Punjab, where Singh Sabhas and Arya Samaj were fighting over the issue of Hindi vs Punjabi. The whole conflict took on a religious colour. However, Nehru refused to divide the state over language.
- The demand for Andhra Pradesh started building up in 1951 and went on until 1952. The protests took a major turn when a Telugu leader, Potti Sriramulu, died after 58 days of hunger strike. Eventually, the Central Government gave way to creation of Andhra Pradesh.
- Once the government gave way, every other region in the country began their agitation as well. Eventually in 1956, Indian states were reorganized, creating Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Gujarat.

“Creation of the new states ended up inadvertently changing the face of Central Government and Congress. Backed by consolidated support of one language group, non-Hindi-speaking politicians became a major force in Congress

politics; called ‘Syndicate’.” In 1963, Nehru gave his personal reassurance that there will be no effort to impose Hindi on non-Hindi states. However, the issue flared up again after his death in 1964.

During the term of the next Prime Minister, G.L. Nanda, a vehement Hindi support began and this led to strong agitations in Tamil Nadu. Faced with this outcry, next Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, finally agreed on the stand that Hindi will never be forced on non-Hindi states. The compromise was formally accepted through an Act in 1967. Since then, all through twentieth century, new innovations and ideas entered into Hindi, to make it more “Sanskritised” and has become an instrument for right wing resurgent.

In South Asia, there are two examples (of West Pakistan imposing Urdu on East Pakistan and Sri Lankan Government imposing Sinhalese on the Tamils) where language conflict led to civil wars. With the new government hinting at the promotion of Hindi, the blog warns of a possible conflict that could arise in India on the complex issue of languages all over again.

<http://revisitingindia.com/2014/01/27/hindi-english-or-nothing-politics-of-indias-national-languages/>

Date Accessed: 05.07.2014

(Mahima Malik)

GENDER

93 women are being raped in India every day: NCRB data

(Christin Mathew Philip, *The Times of India*, July 01, 2014)

According to the latest statistics of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 93 women are being raped in the country every day. The NCRB data says that there is an increase in the number of rapes reported in India from 24,923 in 2012 to 33,707 in 2013. Even after the Nirbhaya incident and the followed protests, Delhi continues to be the unsafe city in the country. “The number of rapes in Delhi has almost doubled from 585 in 2012 to 1,441 in 2013.” Mumbai (391) comes after Delhi followed by Jaipur (192) and Pune (171) as the top unsafe cities in the country.

NCRB data also reveals that Madhya Pradesh has recorded 4,335 rape cases which is the maximum recorded s in 2013 out of all the other states. “It is followed by Rajasthan (3285), Maharashtra (3063) and Uttar Pradesh (3050). A total 923 rape cases were reported in Tamil Nadu, which means 3 per day.”

The most appalling fact is that in 94% cases (31,807) the victims were familiar to the accused, which includes neighbours (10782), other known persons (18171), relatives (2315) and parents (539) according to the statistics. Mostly the Victims are in the age between 18 and 30 years (15,556) and 14 and 18 years (8,877). Social activists argue that legal system is very slow to take action on rape cases, but on the other hand officials say the number of rape cases have increased because of the awareness on the part of the victims, who come forward to lodge complaints.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/93-women-are-being-raped-in-India-every-day-NCRB-data-show/articleshow/37566815.cms>

Date Accessed: 01.07.2014

(Anjana John)

INDIA IN THE WORLD

Poor education holding back India: World Bank

(Prasahant K Nanda, *LiveMint*, June 30, 2014)

Despite gaining inroads in increasing access to primary education, South Asia continues to struggle to ensure quality education to all. The World Bank has raised concerns about the low learning levels in this region by stating that it leads to the entrapment of many young people in poverty apart from impedes faster economic growth and shared prosperity.

According to the World Bank, ensuring that children spend enough time in school is not the solution. Rather, the quality of education needs to be improved, making sure that there is a significant gain in skills. The World Bank vice-president for South Asia, Philippe Le Houérou, said that improved quality in education will in turn help South Asian countries to reap the full expected returns on their investments and generate gains in productivity and economic growth.

According to a World Bank report—Student Learning in South Asia: Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Priorities—large investments in education led to an increase in the net enrolment rates in South Asian primary schools from 75% to 89% from 2000 to 2010. According to official data, nearly 98% of children in India are registered in schools currently. Other India-centric reports also highlight a similar declining trend in the learning levels. For example, the Annual Status of Education (ASER) 2013 report by Pratham- a non-profit education agency- revealed the while three out of five students in the Vth standard were able to read the prescribed texts for Class II in 2005, only one out of two is up to the task now.

Among the factors contributing to the poor student learning levels include inability to cope with a large influx of children who were first-generation school-goers; a “procedural” or rote-based approach to teaching; and poor preparedness in practical competencies such as measurement, problem-solving and writing of meaningful and grammatically-correct sentences. It also focused on the fact that around one-quarter to one-third of those graduating from primary school lack basic numeracy and literacy skills that would enable them to further their education.

The report recommends a multi-pronged strategy involving initiatives within as well as outside the education sector like investing in early life nutrition, raising the quality of teachers and bringing more private investment to the sector and improved measurement of education outcome.

http://www.livemint.com/Politics/PeGjQGgniLr5GAb9NJ4paN/Poor-education-holding-back-India-World-Bank.html?utm_source=copy

Date Accessed: 02.07.2014

(Pallavi Ghosh)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

UN expert panel urges collective action to reduce global food losses, waste

(UN News Centre, July 2, 2014)

This article highlights the findings of a newly issued United Nations-backed expert panel report “Food Losses and waste in the context of sustainable food system.” The report looks at where and how food waste occurs and recommends a number of actions that could help reduce the 1.3 billion tonnes of food that are squandered worldwide each year.

“FLW [food loss and waste] are consequences of the way food systems function, technically, culturally and economically,” explains the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in its report.

Recently, global food losses and waste has become a high visibility issue and according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), “globally around one-third of food produced is lost or wasted along the food chain, from production to consumption.”

According to the new report FLW not only impacts food security and nutrition but also the sustainability of food systems – that ensure sufficient, quality food for this and future generations.

The report urges that, “all stakeholders should improve communication, coordination and recognition of efforts needed/made at one stage to reduce FLW at another (downstream or upstream).”

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48186#.U7UuQvmSyVI>

Date Accessed: 3.7.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

SOUTH ASIA

Afghan president signs terror law needed to avoid blacklist

(Jessica Donati, Reuters, July 3, 2014)

This article highlights the signing of a law by Afghan President Hamid Karzai aimed at curbing the financing of terrorist groups.

This legislation along with the anti-money laundering law that was signed a week ago will help save Afghanistan banks from being put on an international blacklist and persuade the international financial watchdog that the Afghan government is serious about combating financial crimes.

The international watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), warned Afghanistan in February 2014 that its banks would be blacklisted at its next meeting in June unless it showed a more serious commitment to clamping down on financial crime.

Despite a last-ditch effort by the central bank and others to push the laws through, only the money law was signed by the deadline, but that turned out to be enough to avoid the blacklist at least until FATF meets in October. Although both laws have now passed, Afghanistan will still have to prove that they are being adequately enforced to remove the threat of the blacklist.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/03/afghanistan-banks-idINKBN0F80OF20140703>

Date Accessed: 4.7.2014

(Divashri Mathur)

India grants financial aid to Bangladesh for implementation of development projects

(Yahoo News, June 27, 2014)

India has declared a grant of \$10 million to Bangladesh for the functioning of various small development projects and also guaranteed to address its trade imbalance issue. The grant was announced by Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, who had visited Bangladesh to boost the bilateral ties and also to discuss important subjects like Teesta water sharing, Land Boundary Agreement and the issue of illegal immigration of Bangladeshis to India.

Swaraj also had dialogues with her Bangladesh counterpart Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, to reinforce strategic partnership between both the countries. Swaraj stated that “India valued Dhaka’s friendship, adding that the country was committed to move beyond quota-free and duty-free regime to strengthen trade ties.”

<https://in.news.yahoo.com/video/india-grants-financial-aid-bangladesh-062400229.html>

Date Accessed: 30.06.2014
 (Anjana John)

India, China release first encyclopaedia of cultural contacts

(*The Indian Express*, June 30, 2014)

India and China have come up with the first encyclopaedia on their age-old cultural contacts, tracing back their history to over 2,000 years, which starts from the visit of Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang to India in the 7th century to bring Buddhist scriptures to China.

The two volumes of the encyclopedia were mutually compiled by scholars of India and China, and were released during their bilateral meeting in Beijing. The encyclopaedia was released in both English and Chinese versions. It contains over 700 entries, summarizes the rich history of contacts and exchanges between the two countries in the trade, economic, literary, cultural and philosophical spheres.

The idea of encyclopaedia of India-China Cultural Contacts emerged during the visit of former Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao to India in December 2010. It also does cover the trade and diplomatic ties between the two countries. “The book traces back the centuries old civilisation links that started with the visit of Huen Tsang to India in the 7th century to bring Buddhist scriptures to China.”

Over the past decade, the relationship between India and China has expanded significantly in both scope and intensity. “Both sides have attached great importance to cooperation on a wide range of issues with people-to-people exchanges forming an important aspect of our bilateral relations. The two sides recognise the importance of expanding such contacts, thereby contributing towards enhanced mutual understanding.”

<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/neighbours/india-china-release-first-encyclopedia-of-cultural-contacts/>

Date Accessed: 30.06.2014
 (Anjana John)

AMERICAS

Americans less satisfied with freedom

(Jon Clifton, *Quartz*, July 1, 2014)

A new people's survey, conducted by Gallup, revealed that 79% of the Americans were satisfied with the level of “personal freedom”, which is a 12% decline from the figure of 2006. In 2006, the U.S. was one of the top nations in the world on the survey ranking. In the latest survey, Egypt recorded for the highest decline in the mentioned freedom index; while New Zealand topped the rankings, with its people being highly satisfied with the degree of freedom they enjoy.

The Gallup conducts an annual survey covering more than 120 countries. The excerpts are based on face-to-face interviews with approximately 1,000 adults in each country, aged 15 and older. The survey tests whether people are satisfied or dissatisfied with the freedom to choose what they do with their lives. In 2006, the U.S. ranked among the highest in the world for people reporting satisfaction with their level of freedom. After seven years and a 12-point decline, the U.S. no longer figures even in the top quartile countries.

The survey reported that Americans increasingly lack confidence in the economy. The major reason for the declining satisfaction is stated to be the widespread in the U.S. government. The survey also finds that confidence in the U.S. economy is reviving post 2008 global recession.

Figure: Country rankings for the highest personal freedom and the highest decline in the personal freedom:

Countries With Highest Levels of Satisfaction With Freedom, 2013

In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?

Rank	Country	Satisfied
1	New Zealand	94%
2	Australia	93%
2	Cambodia	93%
2	Sweden	93%
5	United Arab Emirates	92%
5	Austria	92%
5	Netherlands	92%
5	Uzbekistan	92%
9	Canada	91%
9	Iceland	91%
9	Finland	91%
9	Denmark	91%
36	United States	79%

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Countries With Greatest Levels of Decline in Satisfaction With Freedom, 2013

In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?

Country	Decline (pct. pts.)
Egypt	-34
Greece	-30
Italy	-24
Venezuela	-20
Cyprus	-17
Czech Republic	-17
Romania	-16
Yemen	-15
Pakistan	-13
Spain	-12
United States	-12

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<http://www.gallup.com/poll/172019/americans-less-satisfied-freedom.aspx?version=print>

Date Accessed: 05.07.2014

(Mahima Malik)

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