

Issue  
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# RGICS POLICY WATCH



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## NEW FROM RGICS

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- Region and Regionalism in India: Issues and Consequences
- Left Wing Extremism
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- Maharashtra to Shut 40,000 Schools with Less than 20,000 Students Health of Workers
- Telecom Industry Relieved over Gujarat High Court Ruling on Mobile Towers

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.

## Decline in Female Labour Force: A Worrying Situation



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*Compiled by RGICS  
Jawahar Bhawan, New Delhi*

*Issue Coordinator : Ms. Divashri Mathur*

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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**

## Decline in Female Labour Force: A Worrying Situation

### **Introduction:**

In last few decades, India has achieved remarkable progress in the empowerment of women and ensuring women participation in various spaces of governance and politics. Not only has the education level of women the enrolment of women in technical education and higher education has also increased tremendously in last few decades. The 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution assured that minimum one-third of the posts in the local governance would be reserved for women. Increased education, awareness and development of structural set-ups helped women to participate and progress in various sectors. Despite progress in creating an enabling environment for women's empowerment, the participation of women in economic activity is decreasing every year. The Indian labour market has witnessed a sharp decline in female labour force both in rural and urban areas.

The economic boom unleashed by liberalisation seems to have bypassed Indian women. Even worse: with rapid growth, it appears that women have been dropping out of the workforce in large numbers rather than joining up. (Subramany, 2013) Out of 131 countries, India is placed 11th from the bottom in female labour force participation (Mehrotra, 2013). The Global Gender Gap data on 135 countries shows that women's economic participation and opportunity is worse in India than in 95 per cent of all other countries studied. India is ranked below many sub-Saharan African countries in the UN Gender Inequality Index. Global Gender Gap Index ranks India 105 out of 135 countries. India ranks 123 in gender gaps in economic participation and opportunity, and labour force participation rates for males and females, 121 in gender gaps in educational attainment, and the worst, rank 135, in differences between women's and men's health (Mehrotra et al, 2013). The rapid decrease in female work participation is a step backward in women empowerment. This article attempts to assess the status of women participation in economic activities and major reasons behind the continuous decline in participation of women in the labour market.

### **Female Labour Participation:**

As per 2011 census, the total female population (all ages) is 58.6 crores which constitute 48.5 % of the country's total population. Female population of the country rose marginally from 48.3% of the total population in 2001 to 48.5% of the total population in 2011, an increase of 90.7 million (Samantroy, 2012). India's working population (both main and marginal workers) constitute around 48 crore. Women working population constitute only 15 crore of the total working population which is largely concentrated in rural areas. The gendered division of work in India further discriminate women in selecting jobs and enhancing their earning. In the rural area, more than 48% of women are employed as agricultural laborers, which is one of the least paid works. In contrast, rural men workforce dominates the areas where the earnings are high. More than 63% of men in rural areas are employed as a cultivators or other high paid employment. In the urban areas majority of working population is engaged in organized sector. The overall gender gap in the employment in India is very low but it is abysmally low in urban areas.

Percentage Distribution of Workers (Main + Marginal) According to Category of Worker by Sex and Residence in India: 2011									
Category of worker	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Cultivators	28.83	35.21	32.98	3.05	2.73	2.80	24.01	24.92	24.64
Agricultural Labourers	48.48	34.37	39.30	9.01	4.58	5.51	41.09	24.93	29.96
Household Industry workers	4.99	2.59	3.43	8.83	3.72	4.80	5.71	2.95	3.81
Other Workers	17.69	27.84	24.29	79.11	88.97	86.90	29.18	47.20	41.60
Total workers (Main+ Marginal) (In Millions)	121.83	226.76	348.60	28.04	105.10	133.15	149.88	331.87	481.74

Source: MOPSI

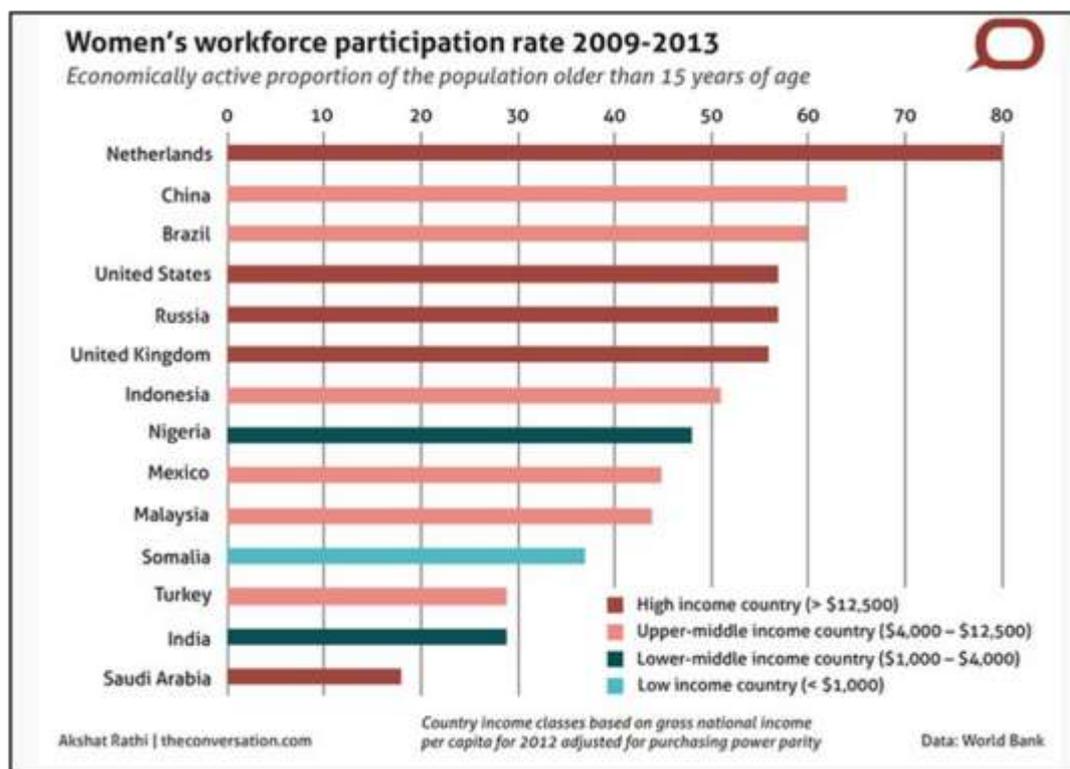
Labour force participation is one of the indicators to assess population’s contribution in economic activities and their economic freedom. It refers to the population, which supplies the labour and thus includes both employed and un-employed. The labour force participation rate of women in 1970s was more than 30% in rural and 17% in urban areas, since then it has decreased to 18% in rural and 13% in urban areas in 2012. The sharp decline in women participation in economic activities has increased their economic dependency on men and a loss of economic control.

**Labour Force Participation Rates by Age-Group, Sex and Residence**

Year	15-29		30-44		45-59	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Rural</b>						
1994-95	31.2	77.0	43.3	98.5	39.6	96.6
2004-05	30.9	75.1	46.6	98.7	44.7	96.0
July 2011-June 2012	18.3	63.1	33.4	98.9	34.0	96.6
<b>Urban</b>						
1993-94	16.5	67.4	23.6	98.4	23.2	93.4
2004-05	17.8	67.3	26.6	98.4	21.9	92.7
July 2011-June 2012	15.9	59.9	23.3	98.8	19.2	94.1

Source: MOPSI

According to the NSSO data, the female labour force participation rate has sharply decreased in various age groups both in rural and urban areas. The participation of female work force is higher in rural areas compared to the urban areas. In the age group of 30 to 59 more than ninety percent of men are economically active whereas, less than one fourth of women are economically active in same age group.



Among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) which are comparable emerging economies, India has the lowest female participation rate in employment. In economies largely based on agriculture, urban women often find less work than rural ones. Half the working population in India is employed by the agricultural sector. But agriculture's contribution to Indian economy has been steadily falling and is now less than half that of the services industry. This should have corresponded with rapid growth in number of working women in cities, but that hasn't happened (QZ, 2013).

### **Reasons behind Low Female Labour Participation:**

Last two decades was a boom time for investors both domestic and foreign. Indian economy managed to maintain high rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. The increased investment and high GDP growth created range of job opportunities to the people, but it did not help to pull women labour in manufacturing and service sector economy. In fact, the participation of female labour force has been decreased sharply in last few decades. Various studies explored decreasing female participation in workforce in the era of economic advancement in India and identified both pull and push factors for the continuous decrease of female participation in economic activities.

Analyzing the various secondary data sets on labour participation in India, Mehrotra et al, 2013, found that factors like women's participation in education, social norms, household responsibilities and family income deter female participation in labour market. On the other hand, non-availability of appropriate employment opportunities pushes female out of the labour market. The brief of their magnitude in keeping women out from economic activities is as follows:

#### **i. Social and Cultural Norms:**

A deeply patriarchal society has created strong social norms that discriminate men and women in every sphere of life. The patriarchal division of labour further restricts women's mobility and compels them to be at home handling domestic chores and child rearing. Some economist have argued that a larger proportion of female are opting out of labour force to attend to 'domestic duties only' - a reflection of the greater pressure on females for household and caring responsibilities (Mehrotra, et al, 2013). Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009 argued that domestic duties and care work, mobility and safety of women, govern their entry and withdrawal from the labour force. Various studies have revealed that the lifestyle of women tend to become more rigid as household move up in the caste hierarchy, which would be reinforced by the negative income effect of rising income of family members particularly of husbands (Mehrotra et al, 2013). The NSSO data of 2004-05 and 2009-10 reveals that the magnitude of social and cultural norm in deciding employability of women is very high. The data shows that 31% women withdrew from economic activities for attending domestic activities such as weaving, tailoring and gathering firewood free for the household in 2009-10.

#### **ii. Household Income:**

Low household income often alters social and cultural norms for the survival of the family. Mehrotra et al, 2013 argue that the participation of women in the labour force is more often led by poverty concerns rather than by choice. They put in their labour or pull back depending upon various other socio-economic dynamics like family income, migration etc. They move into the labour force during crisis or distress and withdraw when economic conditions of the household improve. Mukhopadhyay and Tendulkar, 2006, in an analysis of NSS data on employment and unemployment, found a lower probability of the wife entering the labour force (6% in rural and 4% in urban areas) if their husbands had a regular or salaried employment. The data shows that the economic prosperity in the family is re-enforcing social and cultural norm that restrict women mobility.

#### **iii. Access to Suitable Jobs:**

The manufacturing and service sector boom in Indian economy failed in pulling women labour force when there is a sharp rise in education levels and decline in fertility rates. Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2008, argue that despite these structural changes the growth of job is minimal and women faced increasing competition from men for scarce jobs.

On the other hand, the participation of women in labour market is driven by necessity rather than economic opportunities. Various factors behind decline in female labour force in India have actually pushed women back in agriculture and other non-paid jobs. These jobs are highly informal, seasonal and casual in nature.

#### **iv. Education:**

Rangarjan et al. 2011 using the NSS 66<sup>th</sup> round for 2009-10 estimate that about 707 million people did seek employment as against 625 million in the 61<sup>st</sup> round (2004-05). Of these, the largest share at 44 per cent was of people who opted out of the labour force to pursue education. In 2009-10, about 137 million women opted out of the labour force to educate themselves as against 176 million men (Mehrotra et al, 2013). The level of education among women has increased in last few decades, now the duration of young women in the school has increased because of increased enrolment and retention in various level of schooling including higher education. The greater engagement of women with education has also meant a decline in the number of women engaged in work – but this is good news. Education is one of the positive factors behind decline in female labour force participation. Recognizing the fact that education is a substitute for employment and may yield dividends in the labour market down the road, economist Surjit Bhalla and sociologist Ravinder Kaur have argued for including women who are in schools or universities in the labour force (BS, 2013).

#### **Conclusion:**

The poor participation of female in labour market during first two decades of economic liberalization reveals that the free market itself cannot bring gender inclusive growth. The economic growth has actually pushed women back to their home despite of tremendous success in various other women empowerment indicators. The higher economic participation of women will not only help economy to progress but will also challenge unequal social structures. Economic engagement of women in India is determined by complex social, cultural, traditional and religious structure. This complex structure hindering women to participate in labour market need be addressed in depth and at range.

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**Written By: Jeet Singh**

## Macro Economic Dimension of India: Inflation Rates for the Month of August, 2014

### General Inflation Rates in Indian States: August, 2014 (%)

States	Rural	Urban	General
All India	8.33	7.04	7.86
Northern Region			
Jammu & Kashmir	7.39	6.16	6.97
Himachal Pradesh	8.15	7.03	7.93
Punjab	8.66	6.25	7.48
Chandigarh	7.15	8.03	7.98
Uttarakhand	8.89	5.57	7.73
Haryana	7.11	6.88	7.01
Delhi	5.72	5.67	5.67
Uttar Pradesh	8.93	7.78	8.84
Western Region			
Rajasthan	9.61	7.27	8.76
Gujarat	7.53	5.96	4.29
Maharashtra	6.78	2.72	8.20
Goa	11.20	8.18	7.19
Lakshadweep	11.33	2.98	18.51
Daman & Diu	8.63	7.56	-0.23
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	7.37	2.75	15.01
Central Region			
Madhya Pradesh	6.87	6.78	6.66
Chattishgarh	10.16	6.60	7.29
Southern Region			
Andhra Pradesh	5.76	4.71	9.87
Karnataka	5.76	4.71	9.87
Kerala	5.97	18.0	3.25
Tamil Nadu	6.45	8.05	6.70
Puducherry	8.13	8.72	7.22
Andaman & Nicobar Island	8.82	3.59	6.40

States	Rural	Urban	General
Northeastern Region			
Arunachal Pradesh	6.44	-	-
Assam	8.69	9.73	8.89
Manipur	2.0	8.23	4.13
Meghalaya	16.77	9.10	15.03
Mizoram	13.81	5.99	9.56
Nagaland	14.55	8.91	12.32
Tripura	22.29	15.70	20.42
Sikkim	8.69	8.56	8.66
Eastern Region			
Bihar	10.38	8.16	10.06
Jharkhand	6.43	8.78	9.31
West Bengal	9.35	8.0	7.82
Odisha	11.75	10.09	9.71

**Source: State-wise monthly inflation rates are estimated from year on year Consumer Price Index (CPI) data of MOSPI. There is one month time lag in CPI data (New Series 2010=100) provided by MOSPI, Government of India.**

Inflation Rates across the states indicate the following

- 18 states have more than All-India inflation rate in their rural sectors
- 18 states have more than All-India inflation rate in their urban sector
- 18 states have more than All-India inflation rate in general
- Tripura has the highest inflation rate in India

## **National Action Plan Launched to Reduce Deaths Among Newborns**

(Jyotsna Singh, *Down to Earth*, September 19, 2014)

Union Health Minister has launched the “India Newborn Action Plan”(INAP). The plan aims at reducing preventable deaths in newborn babies, within 28 days of their birth. Out of the 2.8 million newborns who die worldwide every year, at least 700,000 die in India. In addition every year, 1.3 million children under 5 years of age, die in India. Nearly half of them, ie 756,000 die in the first month of their birth. Therefore there is a need to study the reasons for these deaths in depth and propose comprehensive solutions.

INAP will be implemented under the existing Reproductive, Maternal Child Health and Adolescents plus (RMNCHA plus) framework. INAP would focus on reducing newborn deaths which happen due to preventable reasons. INAP aims to bring down neonatal mortality rates to 24 per 1,000 by 2017, and 15 per 1,000 by 2025 and bringing it down to a single digit by 2030.

The Indian Academy of Paediatrics, a representative body of paediatricians, will partner with the Government on delivery of services under the INAP. However, it is not yet clear how the newly launched INAP is different from the services that are already being provided by the Government.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-launches-action-plan-reduce-deaths-among-newborns>

Date Accessed: 20.09.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

## **Maharashtra to Shut 14,000 Schools with Less than 20 Students**

*(Down to Earth, September 18, 2014)*

Maharashtra government has decided to close down 13,905 schools that have a student count of less than 20. This decision has been taken to cut costs of running schools with less number of students as implementing schemes like the midday-meal programme and maintaining a sustainable teacher-student ratio is not feasible.

The most vulnerable sections of the population in state- tribals and other poor people living in remote areas- will be impacted the most as their children depend on education from these single-teacher schools for primary education.

Right to Education Act (RTE) specifies that if one village or hamlet has less than 20 children, then the government must provide for primary school-going children to be admitted to a school that is located within 1 km in hilly areas and 3 km in the plains. However, Yogini Dolke of Srujan, a non-profit organisation that works on RTE issues among the highly vulnerable Kolam tribe in the Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, claims that while the number of primary schools in the interiors of the state has certainly gone up since 2010, the number of tribal hamlets which have a school within 1 km is not very high.

When schools close, parents initially make efforts to get their children admitted to other schools. But, if the distance proves too great, children are usually withdrawn from school, according to Dolke.

Ironically, the Maharashtra government's decision was followed closely by another decision to form a committee to examine why 63,748 children are out of school in the state. When such a large number of children are out of school, the decision to close more schools can only prove to be counterproductive. Civil Society groups argue that the problem lies in the government education policy that does not factor in the inevitable rise in per child cost of education in sparsely populated areas.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/maharashtra-shut-almost-14000-schools-less-20-students>

Date Accessed: 20.09.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## **Telecom Industry Relieved Over Gujarat HC Ruling on Mobile Towers**

*(Aparajita Gupta, Business Today, September 22, 2014)*

The latest verdict of the Gujarat High Court that- base stations for wireless data and mobile communications pose no threat to health if prescribed norms are followed will have far-reaching impact on erasing people's fears, say industry experts.

The 25-page order of a Gujarat High Court bench said authorities concerned must also educate people that they had no reason to fear for their health due to radio frequency emissions from these base stations in their vicinity.

The order came in the light of a civil appeal by some residents of an Ahmedabad neighbourhood wanting a direction to the authorities to disallow Reliance Jio Infocomm.

Reacting to the verdict, KS Parthasarathy, former secretary in the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, said the confusion has been created by some companies that are indulging in false propaganda "that mobile tower radiation is bad". In the majority of the cases, the radiation levels are within specified limits. It is so low it hardly has an impact. In India, the specified limit is one-tenth the global norms - 90 per cent of the countries follow the international limit," Parthasarathy explained.

The government said this was also the conclusion of the World Health Organisation (WHO), which was communicated through Fact Sheet No. 304 of May 2006 on electromagnetic fields and public health.

"We are gratified that the Gujarat High Court has recognised the safety measures of the Government of India" said Rajan S. Mathews, director general of the Cellular Operators' Association of India. "The court has also recognized the need for the authorities to do more to make the public aware of safety measures and help remove their fears." "We believe addressing these concerns will be the key to meeting the government's objective of broadband-on-demand for all citizens of India."

<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/telecom-industry-on-gujarat-court-ruling-on-mobile-towers/1/210593.html>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## **India's Forex Reserves Down By 1.61 Billion Dollars**

*(Deccan Herald, September 20, 2014)*

India's foreign exchange reserves have fallen for two successive weeks i.e. the week that ended on September 5, 2014 and the week that ended on September 12, 2014. According to Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly statistical supplement India's Foreign Exchange Reserves fell by US \$1.61 billion to US \$315.697 billion for the week that ended on September 12, 2014. Previously the foreign exchange reserves had fallen down by US \$1.32 billion to US \$3171.31 billion for the week that ended on September 5, 2014.

RBI said that India's Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), which are always expressed in US dollar terms, include the effect of appreciation/depreciation of the non-US currencies such as the euro, pound and yen held in reserves. The RBI has also indicated that the gold reserves remained unchanged at US \$20.933 billion in the reporting week (i.e. the week that ended on September 12, 2014).

India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) slipped downwards by US \$4.4 million to US \$1.66 billion.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/431794/india039s-forex-reserves-down-161.html>

Date Accessed: 20.09.2014

(Devyani bhushan)

## **Census 2011: Army of Job-Seekers Now 11.3 Crore**

*(SubodhVerma, Times of India, September 24, 2014)*

According to Census 2011 data released on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014, over 11.3 crore persons are "seeking or are available for work", that is, they were unemployed. This figure constitutes over 15% of the working age population (15-60 years of age) and the unemployed people are spread over 28% of the families in India. This figure is differentiated from the people who are not in the job market, like students or housewives.

This is alarming due to the fact that in the 2001 census, 23% of households had members that were unemployed. Within a decade, it has increased to 28%. According to 2011 Census data released earlier, over 20% of youth between 15-24 years of age were jobless and seeking work. Actually, the number of jobless people is expected to be higher than 11.3 crore, if a closer look is taken at the data. Since 2001, in most states and nationally, the problem of joblessness is more severe in rural than in urban areas. Nationally, 23% of urban households reported that at least one member was unemployed whereas this share was 30% for the rural areas. This divide has become greater than it was in 2001. This appears to be due to an agricultural crisis.

Although most states have unemployment values close to the national average, some states are performing strikingly poorer. These are Jammu and Kashmir with 48% households reporting unemployed members, Bihar (35%), Assam (38%), West Bengal (54%), Jharkhand (42%), Odisha (39%) and Kerala (42%). The need of the hour is policies that would catalyze job creation to provide a spurt in employment growth. Moreover, the vast difference between rural and urban estimates of employment also needs to be targeted in order to ensure inclusive growth.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Army-of-jobseekers-now-11cr-strong/articleshow/43266422.cms>

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **Government to Start Round Two of Stake Sales in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)**

(Dheeraj Tiwari, *Economic Times*, September 18, 2014)

The Finance Ministry is readying more public sector units for disinvestments. The companies on Finance Ministry's radar for disinvestment are Manganese Ore India Limited (MOIL), National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC), National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC), Rashtriya Chemical and Fertilizers (RCF), Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC), National Aluminium Company (NAC), Satluj Jal Vidut Nigam Limited (SJVN) etc .

The Central Government holds more than 80 percent stakes in these companies. The Centre must cut its stake within 3 years to meet a rule that makes at least 25 percent public holding compulsory for all listed PSUs as per Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) norms. As per Finance Ministry, there are 38 listed PSUs where the public stake is less than 25 percent. For example the Government currently holds 80 percent of MOIL and 89.97 percent of SJVN.

In the past couple of years, the Government could not meet disinvestment targets due to weak markets that also led to deferment of some planned stake sales in PSU. The market conditions presently look favourable, with the main stock indexes showing positive trends. The Finance Ministry is keen to secure cabinet approval in respect of these PSUs so that the stake sell off can be done quickly.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/government-gears-up-for-second-round-of-stake-sale-in-state-run-entities/articleshow/42747226.cms>

Date Accessed: 20.09.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

## **Centre to Discuss New Textile Policy with States**

(*The Hindu Business Line*, September 23, 2014)

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Textiles will meet with his state counterparts to discuss the provisions of the New Textile policy. The policy introduces flexible labor laws and aims at setting up new integrated textile parks in collaboration with the states. Schemes such as Technology Upgradation Fund Schemes and Integrated Processing Development Scheme would also be discussed.

An expert committee has submitted a report on the proposal, which has been circulated to the states. The ministers are to give their views on the proposals. This way states will get a say in the formulation of the new textile policy.

“The proposed reforms include removing restrictions on women working in night shifts, allowing fixed term employment and revising overtime work hours.” It has also proposed to keep units employing up to 500 people outside the ambit of the Industrial Disputes Act. This way they don't have the responsibility of providing employment to workers in case a unit winds up. Moreover, there are suggestions to giving a blanket exemption to export oriented units to allow contractual labor without any restriction.

State Ministers are to suggest ways to generate employment opportunities for youth in the textile sector. Emphasis is being laid on inclusive and participative growth, developing skill, scale and speed, targeting zero defect and promoting 'Make in India' brand. Currently, textiles make up 13 percent of India's export.

[http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/centre-to-discuss-new-textile-policy-with-states-on-wednesday/article6439203.ece?utm\\_source=RSS\\_Feed&utm\\_medium=RSS&utm\\_campaign=RSS\\_Syndication](http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/centre-to-discuss-new-textile-policy-with-states-on-wednesday/article6439203.ece?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=RSS_Syndication)

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## **Committee to Identify Railway Projects for FDI**

***(Rail News, September 22, 2014)***

The Indian Railways constituted a committee to “identify areas/ projects” that need investment, a move that signals fast-tracking of Foreign Direct Investment in this sector.

The union cabinet allowed 100 per cent FDI in infrastructure projects and has been desperately eyeing investments in bullet trains and high-speed freight corridors. It has signed Memorandums of Understanding with China and Japan for such investments.

According to a railway official, the Public Private Partnership model adopted earlier by the railways has not been encouraging as FDI in railways was not allowed. The order from the Railway Board directs the committee to interact with industry/Chamber of Commerce and potential investors, if required.

All India Railwaymen’s Federation opposed the move to introduce 100 per cent FDI in Railways terming it to be applicable in all sectors, calling the decision unilateral.

The committee consists of executive directors of traffic, civil/ infrastructure, finance, mechanical engineering, signaling and electrical engineering departments, for which the railways is likely to get investments. It would be headquartered in New Delhi.

<http://www.railnews.co.in/committee-to-identify-railway-projects-for-fdi/>

Date Accessed: 22.09.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## **POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

### **No We Won't Go: Airlines Unite to Oppose Governments Plan to Connect Remote Areas**

*(firstbiz, September 22, 2014)*

Airlines and private charter operators have opposed the government's draft policy on air connectivity to regional and remote areas, saying it will have a severe impact on their financial strength.

Almost all major airlines, including the proposed Tata-SIA carrier Vistara, and business jet operators have submitted their opinions to the Civil Aviation Ministry over the past few days opposing various provisions of the draft policy, and called for further deliberations.

The revised draft policy on air connectivity to regional and remote areas was made public last month by the Ministry, which proposed a major shift in the route dispersal guidelines and promised several incentives and exemption from various charges to airlines which fly to such unconnected places.

The policy asks State Governments to take financial measures like slashing VAT on jet fuel and underwriting of some seats to encourage aviation growth. It also suggests that the state governments should waive electricity and municipal charges like house and property taxes for five years for airport infrastructure.

The draft proposes increase in the number of trunk routes from present 12 to 30 and identifies 87 regional "incentive destinations". It makes it mandatory for scheduled airlines to mount capacity "which is at least equal to the capacity deployed on trunk routes" by October 2015.

The Business Aircraft Operators Association (BAOA), which represents private and charter operators, asked the government to consider capital subsidies, in terms of soft or low- interest loans by banks for purchasing aircraft. The demand was made as BAOA pointed out that interest on loans from Indian banks was higher than in the global market. BAOA suggested that since a new concept of Scheduled Commuter Airline (SCA) was proposed to be introduced for the first time through the policy, there should be flexibility in rules and regulations for the first three years.

<http://firstbiz.firstpost.com/corporate/wont-go-airlines-unite-oppose-govts-plan-connect-remote-areas-100863.html>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

### **National Policy Required to Decide on Media Freedom: TRAI Chairman**

*(The Financial Express, September 20, 2014)*

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) chairman Rahul Khullar said that the government must urgently formulate a national media policy, during a Confederation of Indian Industry event in New Delhi. Keeping media freedom in mind, he discussed that the Government, state governments and their organs must not intrude the broadcasting and distribution space and that India must adopt this as an integral policy.

He mentioned that, as per a Supreme Court ruling, airwaves are not a property of the state. Therefore, he added that Prasar Bharti must exist only as a public broadcaster independent of the government. He expressed the need for a clear interpretation that India needs a free media, unhampered and uninhibited by the government. However, he also mentioned the need for regulating the media. He spoke about the necessity of an independent regulator, in order for the media to have some duties, and not just rights. In his address, he also stressed on the need for the government to take decisions on infrastructure for broadcast sector and to end complications that hamper businesses.

TRAI had earlier given recommendation on barring entry of certain parties and entities in November 2008 but government did not implement it. Arguments have been made to do away with practices such as largely prevalent in media and practices such as Chief Minister's controlling media distribution platform as they may harm national interests. In this regard, a national policy is required to commit to support the plurality of views and diversity of opinions.

<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/decide-on-media-freedom-in-national-media-policy-trai-chairman/1291117>

Date Accessed: 21.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **New Initiatives/ Developments of Ministry of Food Processing Industries**

*(Press Information Bureau, September 22, 2014)*

According to a PIB bulletin on September 22, 2014, Food Processing plays a vital role in reduction of wastages of agri-horti produce, enhancing shelf life of food products, ensuring value addition to agricultural produce and diversification of agriculture. Understanding this, the Ministry of Food Processing has taken up various policies to promote the industry in the country. Some of the important initiatives include:

- Help desk “Investors Portal” has been set up to assist the prospective investors/ entrepreneurs to facilitate investments in the Food Processing sector.
- Ministry, in consultation with National Skill Development Council, has identified 7 sectors in which skill development is required. These include Bakery, Dairy, Grain Processing, Poultry, Refrigeration, Packaging and Quality Control. It hopes to train 10,000 persons in the next year with the help of reputed industry partners.
- E monitoring of National Mission on Food Processing (NMFP)
- A study to set up of Solar Driers in Leh and Kargil of Ladakh region of J&K State has been commissioned and nearing completion.
- 5 Mega Food Parks approved in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
- 83 proposals received in respect of Expression of Interest received for setting up of new mega food parks.
- 3 cold chain projects operational in Kolkata, Udamsingh Nagar, Uttarakhand and Mumbai, Maharashtra while 20 new cold chain projects been sanctioned.

The Ministry is also formulating plans for infrastructure and cluster development of perishables.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=109885>

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## **GOVERNMENT**

### **RBI Recommendations for Training and Development of Personnel**

*(Live Mint, September 23, 2014)*

A 10-member committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by former RBI executive director G. Gopalakrishna, recommended a common banking aptitude test for bank personnel at entry levels, setting up a centre of excellence for leadership development and a skills registry in the banking sector. The panel was tasked to review the training and development of personnel in the financial sector.

The report submitted by the panel stated that one of the major challenges faced by banks was finding suitable replacements of talent. The panel recommended various solutions to this problem such as “developing an expert pool

internally and allowing free movement of talent within the organization for creation of a larger workforce of trained personnel. Special recruitments based on job roles and competency could also be considered. Another suggestion was creating of a new position of “Chief Learning Officer” in banks, and coaching and mentoring programmes for top management personnel to ensure continuous training to employees.

The panel suggested that the banks should plan ahead at least five years for meeting their personnel requirement. Human Resources experts say that the recommendations are mainly aimed at public sector banks that have been hit by a talent crunch, with personnel moving to private sector.

RBI has sought public comments on the recommendations until 31 October.

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/XItFY4YCwruYbR4eGobN6O/Plan-long-term-for-leadership-pool-RBI-to-banks.html>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## **HEALTH**

### **16 Percent of Deaths at Atomic Energy Centres Due to Cancer**

*(Environmentcare.in, September 18, 2014)*

A team of epidemiologists from the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) Hospital, Parel, Mumbai analysed data from Department of Atomic Energy’s (DAE) centres between January 2010 and April 2014 and found that cancer was responsible for 16 percent deaths among DAE employees during this period. The team said that this figure was similar to cancer death rates in urban India.

The doctors found similar results in a study among 22,224 DAE workers and their families at three major Indian nuclear installations (Tarapur, Kaiga and Kakrapara) between 1981 and 2012. The TMC director pointed out “the study found 252 cancer cases, accounting for 0.29 percent prevalence of cancer. This is consistent with the national average of 0.23 percent.”

In another study, DAE looked at the cancer burden among the population residing around 8 nuclear installations in India. This study showed a crude incidence rate of cancer between 28.7 to 87.4 per 100,000 persons. This compares favourably with the national average rates of 78.8 per 100,000 as reported by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Director TMC pointed out that the TATA Team wanted to allay fierce concerns raised among DAE workers and the general public at large regarding high incidence of cancer related deaths in India’s nuclear research centres.

<http://environmentcare.in/content/16-deaths-atomic-energy-centres-due-cancer-says-dae>

Date Accessed: 20.09.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

### **NPPA can no Longer Cap Prices of Non-essential Drugs**

*(Business Standard, September 23, 2014)*

The government has withdrawn the power of the drug pricing (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) authority to fix prices of medicines that are not deemed essential. This decision comes after the pharmaceutical industry protested against the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority’s (NPPA) decision to impose a cap on prices of more than 100 drugs. The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, directly controls the NPPA.

DoP withdrew the guidelines issued by the NPAA on May 29, 2014 that enabled the authority to fix the prices of

non-essential drugs. The NPPA, in July, had issued a notice that imposed price-caps on 108 non-essential drugs, which were used to treat diseases ranging from diabetes to AIDS. The industry lobby groups challenged the move in courts.

However, the decision to withdraw the powers of the drug pricing authority will be prospective in nature, and will not affect the price-caps imposed on 108 drugs in July by the pricing authority.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-withdraws-regulator-s-power-to-cap-non-essential-drug-prices-114092300183\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-withdraws-regulator-s-power-to-cap-non-essential-drug-prices-114092300183_1.html)

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## **URBAN**

### **Delhi's First Sewerage Master Plan Warns of Ground Water Contamination & Water Borne Diseases**

(Darpan Singh, *Hindustan Times*, September 21, 2014)

Delhi may face a civic and health disaster if remedial measures are not taken immediately to manage its waste water, Delhi's first sewerage master plan has warned. This master plan has been uploaded on Delhi Jal Board's website for suggestions. The master plan states that groundwater contamination leading to water borne diseases such as typhoid, cholera and hepatitis, may take the form of an epidemic. The report also indicates that Delhi's failing waste water management system has polluted the Yamuna river. "The water quality in the Yamuna is to levels below even the normal bathing standards," says the draft master plan.

- Delhi's sewerage master plan makes the following important points:
- Delhi must get 100 percent sewerage cover. Presently 50 percent of Delhi is not connected to piped sewerage network.
- 154 out of 189 rural villages have no access to sewerage. 1535 regularised colonies have no sewer network.
- In 2011 Delhi's waste water generation was 680 million gallons per day (MGD), it is projected to increase to 863 MGD in 2021 and further increase to 1062 MGD in 2031.
- 34 treatment plants presently function with 594 MGD capacity and 57 percent utilisation. It is proposed to set up 75 additional treatment plants with 374 MGD capacity

Environmentalists point out that Delhi's population has grown by more than 300 percent since 1971 but the sewerage network augmentation has not kept pace. There is a need for integration of various ongoing sewerage projects. For this to actually happen, the city will need to provide Delhi Jal Board with powers and resources like those of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/newdelhi/only-a-sewerage-overhaul-can-save-delhi/article1-1266632.aspx>

Date Accessed: 21.09.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Government to Connect 12 Major Seaports with Railroads**

(*Samachar*, September 23, 2014)

Union Road Transport and Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari said that the government is planning to connect all twelve major seaports with railroads for which a proposal has been sent to the Railways. The shipping ministry also plans to start a roll-on-roll-off service to transport vehicles easily from factories.

Gadkari emphasized on the need to develop inland waterways as they are more economical when compared to rail and road transport. To develop inland waterways there is a need to connect major rivers in India.

While stating that it is important for the private sector to collaborate with the government to develop infrastructure, he admitted that the private sector is shying away from PPP projects primarily because of high interest rates and reluctance of banks to fund such projects. In such a scenario, foreign investment could prove to be the best source for funding at a low cost.

<http://www.samachar.com/All-12-sea-ports-to-be-connected-with-railroads-says-Gadkari-ojxwpFjgecd.html>

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Afreen Faridi)

## **By November, a Rajdhani Express to Arunachal Pradesh**

(Avishek G Dastidar, *Financial Express*, September 22, 2014)

The Indian Railways is set to kick off the Rajdhani Express between Arunachal Pradesh and New Delhi by November. Arunachal has agreed to relax the rigid norm of inner-line permit, which is otherwise mandatory for “outsiders” entering the state.

After a series of meetings at the Prime Minister’s Office between Railways and state officials, it was decided that passengers who have made a reservation will not require the permit. The Railways had reasoned that details of the identity of a passenger with a reserved ticket are entered into the railway system at the time of booking, and are verified when they board.

The Rajdhani Express to Naharlagun, 15 km from the state capital of Arunachal Pradesh, will run twice a week to and from Delhi. In both categories of trains, unreserved tickets are not issued. The problem of running trains with general class coaches, in which passengers can travel with unreserved tickets, is still being discussed. The two sides have discussed the possibility of creating a ‘holding area’, where credentials of passengers with unreserved tickets can be verified and state officials can issue inner-line permits to them.

Ever since the news came out some local groups have initiated protests against the move. “The permit system was introduced as per a law which still exists to protect locals from exploitation. What is the problem in procuring a permit before boarding the train? I don’t think the new arrangement will be acceptable,” said Ninong Ering, Congress MP from Arunachal. Ering was referring to The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 and the Chin Hill Regulations, 1896, which are meant to provide special protection and safeguard the “peaceful existence of the indigenous tribal people” in Arunachal.

<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/by-november-a-rajdhani-express-to-arunachal-pradesh/1291433>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Two Days to Mars: All You Need to Know About Mangalyaan's Critical Engine Test Today**

(*Firstpost*, September 22, 2014)

India's Mars Orbiter Mission Mangalyaan will undergo the first crucial test of its fourth and final maneuver ahead of entering the orbit of the red planet on Wednesday.

According to Isro (Indian Space Research Organization), the main liquid engine of the spacecraft, which has been dormant so far, is expected to fire for four seconds in preparation for it being placed into orbit at around 2.30 pm IST. If successful, it will be put in action along with eight thrusters to slow down the craft, so that it can be injected

into a safe orbit around Mars.

M Annadurai, programme director at Isro, told *Hindustan Times*: “The test firing is like a trial. The dormant engine has to be brought back to life. It is a challenge but if one is prepared well for the exam, the confidence for success is higher.”

The two Mars Transfer Trajectory (MTT) mid-course corrections that were done on December 11, 2013, and June 11, 2014, were done only with the small thrusters. “Small thrusters are working; there is no issue. What we are now looking at is the working of the main engine”.

Isro says that the radio link between Mangalyaan and the ground mission will be blocked by Mars, which means that the craft will have to execute commands autonomously. The commands were uploaded by Isro on 14 and 15 September.

If successful, India will be the first country to successfully launch a Mars mission on its first go. It will also be only the fourth country after US, Russia and Europe to reach the Red planet. Once in orbit, the craft’s five payloads will take pictures and collect data for the next six months.

<http://www.firstpost.com/india/two-days-to-mars-all-you-need-to-know-about-mangalyaans-critical-engine-test-today-1723809.html>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **India, China and U.S. Boost World Carbon Emissions**

(Matt McGrath, *BBC*, September 22, 2014)

The Global Carbon Project is an international team that provides objective details on the scale of annual emissions. They published their results for the year 2013 on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014 in three articles in the journals *Nature Geoscience* and *Nature Climate Change*. It is estimated that the world expelled far more carbon pollution into the air last year than ever before. The world released more than 39.8 billion tons of carbon dioxide last year by burning coal, oil and gas. That implies 2.3 percent more than the previous year. The biggest emitters were China, which produced 29% of the total, followed by the US at 15%, the EU at 10% and India at 7.1%

The spur in the global total is due to the massive increase in the emissions of India, China and the US. Indian emissions grew by 5.1 percent, Chinese emissions by 4.2 percent and the U.S. emissions by 2.9 percent, when the extra leap day in 2012 is accounted for. An interesting fact is that China's emissions per head of population have surpassed the EU for the first time. Researchers say that India is predicted to beat Europe's carbon-dioxide output in 2019. The U.S. had reduced its carbon emissions in four of the five previous years, however it rose last year.

It is forecasted that the emissions will keep increasing leading to a 2 degrees increase in the world temperature, in about thirty years. This level was termed dangerous by world leaders in 2009, and a pledge was made to not reach this level. 125 heads of state and government are set to meet in New York to discuss climate change at UN Climate Summit 2014. Considering that India's emissions jumped by 5.1 percent, which is the biggest expansion of any country, India needs to make effective legislation and provide incentives to curb this ever-increasing figure so that India’s economic growth does not have such massive negative spillovers.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-29239194>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **Ganga Clean Up to Take 18 Years, Says Centre**

*(The Indian Express, September 23, 2014)*

The Government has proposed measures spanning over 18 years to clean up River Ganga. The blueprint of the measures was presented to the Supreme Court. The affidavit came after the apex court expressed displeasure over the earlier plan to clean Ganga.

The action-plan envisions three-phased timeline to achieve its objective. These include the short term (3 years), middle term (5 years) and long term (10 years). This timeline has been prepared after consulting the five Ganga basin states.

In the first stage, 118 towns have been identified for intervention. The target is to achieve total sanitation and waste treatment. Moreover, the Ministry of Water Resources has identified seven riverfronts for ghat development. These include ghats at Kedarnath, Haridwar, Varanasi, Kanpur, Allahabad, Patna and Delhi.

As per the medium term goal, Ministry of Urban Development has tentatively identified 118 urban habitations on riverbanks for extending of sewage infrastructure. The project may cost up to 51,000 crores. Moreover, there are plans to make 1,649 village panchayats located along Ganga free from open defecation. The long-term plan would emerge from the Ganga River Basin Management Plan, being prepared by a consortium of seven IITs.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/ganga-clean-up-to-take-18-years-says-centre/>

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## **AGRICULTURE**

### **Andhra Bank Launches 'Kisaan Vaani'**

*(Business Standard, September 22, 2014)*

In order to provide latest technical information on agriculture and allied activities to farmers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Andhra Bank on Monday launched 'Andhra Bank Kisaan Vaani'. The facility will be provided through 'Green SIM'-based voice message, in association with Iffco Kisaan Sanchar Limited (IKSL). The bank is also providing green SIMs to all its rural development officers and rural branch managers to help the farming community.

Green SIM, developed for transfer of voice messages in different fields of farmers interest can used as normal SIM, but additionally provides value added services. SIM is issued with life-time validity at a cost for Rs. 86, where Rs. 82 is available as free talktime. For the issuance of the green SIM, farmers are required to produce a passport-sized colour photo along with a valid identity and address proof.

Farmers will be provided with the required information in local language for a minute duration at free of cost where the facility of OBD (Out Bound Dialogue/Voice Messages) will be provided by Airtel. Under the facility, farmers will be receiving following messages every day except for Sundays, when only two messages will be delivered where the core contents of the message will be provided by experts in related fields: -

- Two messages pertaining to all agricultural and allied categories
- One message on agriculture-related to agro climatic zone
- One on bank products (like banking operations, schemes, loan disbursement and crop insurance).

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/andhra-bank-launches-kisaan-vaani-114092200836\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/andhra-bank-launches-kisaan-vaani-114092200836_1.html)

Date Accessed: 23.9.2014

(Shruti Issar)

## GENDER

### Gender Inequality in Placement of Women in the Corporate Sector in India

(*Deccan Herald*, September 20, 2014)

Only 5 percent of working women in India make it to senior leadership positions in the corporate sector, compared to the global average of 20 percent. This is the finding of a gender based research study carried out by Lal Bhadur Shastri Institute of Management, New Delhi. According to this study, women's representation at the board level was even lesser at just 2 percent.

The study said that in India, women's strength in the labour force stands at 28 percent at the junior level, 14.91 percent at the middle level and 9.32 percent at the senior level. From being the lowest in the list of overall women's participation in the workforce, India ranks at the top in the dropout rate as well. Indian woman drop out of the workforce much early in their career compared to their counterparts in other Asian countries. 48 percent of women drop out between the junior and middle level, the study said.

The research study was carried out following the Companies Act 2013- that made it mandatory for public and private companies with a given yearly turnover to have at least one woman director. The enforcement of this provision is being monitored by Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

The study has concluded that the primary reason for the high dropout rate has been childcare and family responsibilities, including care for the elderly because of these factors women are forced to push their careers behind as "secondary."

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/431873/archives.php>

Date Accessed: 21.09.2014

(Devyani Bhushan)

### Indian Films High on Sexualization of Women, Perpetuates Discrimination against Women: UN Report

(*UN Women South Asia*, September 23, 2014)

A study on female characters in popular films, commissioned by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, with support from UN Women and The Rockefeller Foundation, reveals deep-seated discrimination and pervasive stereotyping of women and girls by the international film industry. The countries studied included some of the most profitable countries such as China, Brazil, France, US, UK, Russia, South Korea, Japan among others. While women represent half of the world's population, less than one third of all speaking characters in film are female. Less than a quarter of the fictional on-screen workforce is comprised of females (22.5%).

The study has shown that Indian films have significantly higher instances of sexualization of female characters; On women shown in sexually revealing clothing, India scores higher than the global average (34.1 percent vs. 24.8 percent), and on women shown with partial nudity, the country stands at 35 percent, compared to the global average of 24.2 percent. In India, the proportion of females with speaker roles is less than a quarter. The study found that, globally, women are less likely to be depicted in significant roles such as that of professors, doctors, lawyers or any prominent positions. Only 13.9% of executives and just 9.5% of high-level politicians were women. Globally, girls and women are twice as likely as boys and men to be shown in sexually revealing clothing, partially/fully naked, thin, and five times as likely to be referenced as attractive.

Twenty years ago, 189 governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, the international roadmap for gender equality. It called on media to avoid stereotypical and degrading depictions of women. However, this study comes as a blow and clearly shows that adequate efforts have not been made to improve the situation. The discriminatory

attitudes that are seen on screen creep into the off-screen lives of women as well. Women are being gravely under-represented on all platforms of the society and there is a greater need to look at its extent, especially in cinema, as media is a powerful source for creating and perpetuating our unconscious bias.

<http://www.unwomensouthasia.org/2014/global-film-industries-perpetuates-discrimination-against-women-2/>

Date accessed: 24.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **Open Defecation: More Men Among Toilet-Skeptics in India**

(Rukmini S, *The Hindu*, September 22, 2014)

This article highlights the fact that only providing toilets will not solve the problem of open defecation in India. This is because everyone who has access to toilets does not find it imperative to use them, especially men. Even though the absence of toilets remains to be the major problem in sanitation, the data from the new official 68<sup>th</sup> round of National Sample survey (NSS) has revealed that even among households with access to toilets, some open defecation exists. According to the data, two per cent of rural households with access to toilets do not use them. Researchers of the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE) found that 7 per cent of households with access to a toilet were not using them. If households where at least one family member was not using the toilet were looked at, then the corresponding number rose to 18 per cent. This number is being driven up by men, who in all three surveys, reported lower toilet use than women. "Personal preferences" seem to keep people from using the toilets despite having one.

The use of toilets also shows difference among Hindus and non-Hindus. NSS data shows that figure for households without toilets is 47 per cent for Hindu households as against 31 per cent for Muslims and 16 per cent for Christians and Sikh. Among Hindus, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and then OBCs have lower access to toilets. The use of toilets also projects a class divide. According to Dean Spears, health economist with Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE), nearly 80 per cent of all the households with toilets that were surveyed had constructed their toilets purely with private funds.

Keeping the differences in mind, the objective of sanitation can be fulfilled only by a two-pronged approach: building toilets, and creating the awareness about of using them. As research has shown that people widely believe that toilet pits will fill up quickly, and find the thought of cleaning this waste distasteful, drives providing them solutions for emptying pits are required to overcome this problem. Similarly, to overcome the financial problems, cheaper, more basic toilets of the type widely used in Bangladesh must be promoted in rural India.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/more-men-among-toiletsceptics-in-india/article6432867.ece>

Date Accessed: 22.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **INDIA IN THE WORLD**

### **G20 Deal on Sharing Bank Data to Help India Battle Black Money**

(*NDTV*, September 21, 2014)

In a major step that will aid India track and recover black money stashed abroad, G20 finance ministers on Sunday agreed on allowing automatic sharing of all bank information with tax authorities at the end of each year, starting 2017. "We endorse the finalised global Common Reporting Standard for automatic exchange of tax information on a reciprocal basis which will provide a step-change in our ability to tackle and deter cross-border tax evasion," a communiqué of the G20 finance ministers and central bankers' meeting said.

"We will begin exchanging information automatically between each other and with other countries by 2017 or end-2018," the statement added. The deal will not only allow countries to extract bank details for future, but they will also be able to avail account balance information of the past five to six years upon request, an official source said at the end of the two-day summit.

The agreement will help India, and other nations battling the black money scourge, secure information that several countries were earlier denying, citing local secrecy laws.

In May, the newly-elected NDA government set up a special investigative team to probe illicit wealth stowed abroad. The Supreme Court last month said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that was set up by it in 2011 to probe the unaccounted money stashed away in tax havens and foreign banks has made some progress in that direction.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/g20-deal-on-sharing-bank-data-to-help-india-battle-black-money-595628>

Date Accessed: 22.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

### **United Nations General Assembly – India to Focus on Security Council Reform, Terrorism & Peacekeeping**

(*The Indian Express*, September 23, 2014)

US President Barrack Obama is expected to lead the UN Security Council session that begins on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The U.N. Security Council is expected to adopt a binding resolution during the week that would require nations to bar their citizens from traveling abroad to join terrorism organizations, part of a U.S.-led effort to vitalize the international community against "unprecedented" threats from extremists going to Syria and Iraq. Obama administration officials have said that the move has been negotiated over time, as a significant step in their strategy against the Islamic State group and other militant organizations. The UN resolution is intended to push other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, to step up efforts to stop the flow of foreign fighters. It is also designed to facilitate more sharing of travel data and other intelligence designed to allow the tracking of foreign fighters.

For India, early reform of the UN Security Council, terrorism and peacekeeping will be among the main issues that will be pursued during the world body's General Assembly session, as revealed by the Indian Ambassador to the UN Asoke Mukerji. The reform of the Security Council has been unfinished since 2005, and the Prime Minister of India is poised to get it into focus now in order to gain a greater presence for India. According to the delegation, the last seven rounds of discussions have provided enough material for UN member states to now begin negotiating the early reform of the Security Council on the basis of a negotiation text. Negotiation text is required, as The Intergovernmental Negotiations on UNSC reform have continued to remain deadlocked because of the absence of text.

On terrorism, India will continue to strive for progress towards finalization of the draft Comprehensive Convention

on International Terrorism. Asoke Mukerji has also spoken about the presence of Indian soldiers in the “hot spots of global crisis” and the fact that India is the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping. Therefore, his delegation is of the view that the UN must strongly consider India’s views while forming the mandate on peacekeeping.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-to-focus-on-unsc-reform-terrorism-peacekeeping-at-unga/>  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/un-to-bind-nations-on-new-foreign-terrorist-rules/2014/09/22/3fb25f60-4271-11e4-8042-aaff1640082e\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/un-to-bind-nations-on-new-foreign-terrorist-rules/2014/09/22/3fb25f60-4271-11e4-8042-aaff1640082e_story.html)

Date Accessed: 24.09.2014

(Kasturi Mishra)

## **Indo-Sino Business Deals Worth \$3.43 Billion Signed**

*(Exim News Service, September 21, 2014)*

A delegation accompanied the Chinese President, Mr Xi Jinping, during their visit to India last week, in which the Chinese counterparts have signed deals worth \$3.43 billion with Indian businessmen. Following are the salient features of deals signed or expected to develop:

- IndiGo Airlines, struck an agreement worth \$2.6 billion with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) for leasing and financing 30 aircraft. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to that effect was signed, under the aegis of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci).
- Two MoUs, worth about \$150 million each, were signed between Reliance Communications and Chinese telecommunications firms ZTE and Huawei Technologies, respectively. The MoU pertains to sourcing of equipment and expansion of Reliance’s 2G and 3G networks.
- Several other MoUs were also signed in various sectors such as wind energy, seafood, chemicals, cotton and pharmaceuticals during this visit.
- China is also expected to develop and upgrade the 640-km railway line between Bengaluru and Mysore (through Chennai).
- On the financial services front, state-owned Bank of China plans to open a branch in Mumbai.

Some of these investment plans were finalised during the Commerce and Industry Minister, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman’s visit to Beijing in June. At the time, the Minister had held extensive discussions with her Chinese counterpart, Mr Gao Hucheng, in a bid to check the soaring bilateral trade deficit which stood at \$36.2 billion in FY14 in China’s favour. While India’s exports to the country were recorded at \$14.8 billion, its imports stood at \$51 billion.

<http://www.eximin.net/NewsDetails.aspx?name=26783>

Date Accessed: 23.9.2014

(Shruti Issar)

## **SCO Membership to Boost Access to Energy in Central Asia**

*(The Economic Times, September 21, 2014)*

India, one of the largest energy consumers in the world, will get a major boost in its quest for greater access to hydrocarbons in Central Asia as it is all set to get full membership of the Shanghai Corporation Organisation (SCO) which comprises of all major energy producing nations of the region. Three major energy suppliers- Russia, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan – play a crucial role in the SCO energy club and the Indian government is keen in securing membership of the bloc as it will give greater access to a number of key energy projects in the region and ensure India’s integration with the region.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India, Iran and Pakistan were admitted as observers at the 2005 Astana Summit. India's key ally Russia has been supporting India in its quest of permanent membership in the SCO. Chinese President Xi Jinping supported India's bid for SCO membership during his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to government sources SCO membership will help push the proposed pipeline project from Russia to India. It would also help in the speedy implementation of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project.

Besides energy concerns, India seeks to cooperate with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) in matters of security and defence.

[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-09-21/news/54161080\\_1\\_sco-membership-astana-summit-full-membership](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-09-21/news/54161080_1_sco-membership-astana-summit-full-membership)

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(Afreen Faridi)

## **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

### **United States launches first airstrikes in Syria**

*(The Asian Age, September 24, 2014)*

The United States and Arab allies bombed Syria for the first time on September 23, 2014. The air attacks fulfill President Barack Obama's pledge to strike in Syria against ISIS, a Sunni Muslim group that has seized swathes of Syria and Iraq, imposing a mediaeval interpretation of Islam, slaughtering prisoners and ordering Shias and non-Muslims to convert or die.

"I can confirm that U.S. Military and partner nation forces are undertaking military action against (ISIS) terrorists in Syria using a mix of fighter, bomber and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles," Rear Admiral John Kirby, Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war in Syria, said at least 20 ISIS fighters were killed in strikes that hit at least 50 targets in Raqqa and Deiral-Zor provinces in Syria's east. It said strikes targeting the Nusra Front in the northern provinces of Aleppo and Idlib had killed at least 50 fighters and eight civilians. The Nusra Front is Al Qaeda's official Syrian wing and ISIS' rival. The Observatory said most of the fighters killed there were not Syrians.

In response to the American attack, the ISIS has vowed revenge. "These attacks will be answered," an ISIS fighter told Reuters by Skype from Syria.

<http://www.asianage.com/international/united-states-launches-first-airstrikes-syria-525>

Date Accessed: 24.9.2014  
(Divashri Mathur)

### **Yemen: Peace Deal Signed But Rebels Continue Advance**

*(The Guardian, September 22, 2014)*

Yemeni government officials and Shia rebels signed a peace agreement recently after days of violence that left more than 140 people dead and sent thousands fleeing their homes, although major rebel advances earlier in the day deepened a sense of uncertainty.

The agreement calls for an immediate ceasefire and the formation of a technocratic government within a month after consultations with all political parties, Jamal Benomer, the UN envoy to Yemen said later at a joint news conference with President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi in the capital, Sana'a. "The head of the government may not belong

to any political group," said Mr Benomer, reading from the document, which, he added, also calls for security forces to be restructured based on consultations with the political parties.

State media reported that the country's prime minister had resigned, but the president's office denied it had received any such request. The conflicting information came as the Houthi rebels seized numerous strategically important installations in Sana'a, including the defence ministry, the central bank, a key military base and Iman University, military and security officials said. Their foes have traditionally been Sunni militias allied with the government or the fundamentalist Islah party. The Houthis have been pressing for a change of government and what they see as a fair share of power.

On Sunday afternoon, the official Saba news agency announced the resignation of Mohammed Salem Bassindwa but gave no details. He has been in office since February 2012 and has been sharply criticized for his inability

The US considers Yemen's local branch of al-Qaida to be the world's most dangerous, and has helped support Yemeni government offensives against it with drone strikes. On Saturday, Mr Benomar, had signaled that an agreement was reached to halt the violence, and that preparations were underway to sign the accord.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/22/yemen-peace-agreement-rebels-houthi-seize>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Rohit Chauhan)

## **100m Saved from Hunger over Last Decade: UN**

***(Dawn, September 17, 2014)***

A UN study found out that over 100 million have been saved from hunger in the last decade. However, over 805 million people are still undernourished. Asia is home to the majority of the underfed. The report was published by Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme

Millennium Development Goals aimed to half the number of undernourished by 2015. This is possible if the immediate and appropriate efforts are stepped up. Today, 63 countries have reached the target and six more are about to reach it. Agencies say that this can inspire countries to take action hunger with the international assistance. The report said that access to food had improved rapidly in countries that have seen overall economic progress, notably in East and Southeast Asia, but also South Asia and Latin America.

The biggest challenge to achieving 'zero hunger' is in conflict areas. Conflict such as those in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan and Central Africa turn into 'Food Crises' The Ebola crises in such as in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan and Central Africa adds to the problem. The sick are not harvesting which reduces food production affecting over 1.3 million people.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1132432/100m-saved-from-hunger-over-last-decade-un>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## **Success of Indigenous Peoples World Conference 'integral to humanity's progress'**

***(UN News Centre, September 22, 2014)***

The first-ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held at the Headquarters between 22 and 23 September, 2014. "The success of this Conference is integral to progress for all humanity," said Mr. Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary General on the opening of the World Conference.

Convened as a first high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly's 69th session, the two-day World Conference brings together over a thousand indigenous and non-indigenous delegates to discuss the realization of their

rights, including pursuing the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the Assembly in 2007.

Indigenous peoples represent remarkable diversity – more than 5,000 distinct groups in some 90 countries, making up more than 5 per cent of the world's population, some 370 million people. These peoples continue to self-identify as distinct peoples with strong links to traditional territories with their own social, economic and political systems as well as unique languages, cultures and beliefs.

“Indigenous peoples are concerned about issues that top the global agenda. They are deeply connected to Mother Earth- whose future is at the heart of the Climate Summit opening tomorrow,” said Mr. Ban.

An Outcome Document was adopted during the Conference's opening ceremony. This document is an action-oriented text on implementing the rights of indigenous peoples and seeks to bridge the gap between promises and results. General Assembly President Kutesa reiterated the sentiment by remarking that more could be done at the national level to improve the conditions of indigenous peoples as there continues to be a “deep chasm” on the ground between commitments and reality.

The UN indigenous Peoples' Declaration represents a global consensus and has galvanized international attention of the rights of indigenous peoples, but today's gathering takes it further.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48773#.VCJabvmSzKA>

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(Divashri Mathur)

## **EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA**

### **Students Demand Democracy in Hong Kong Strike**

*(CBS News, September 22, 2014)*

Over 13,000 students from Hong Kong universities boycotted classes to protest China's decision to restrict voting reforms. The protest is against Beijing's decision to rule out open nominations for candidates for the first-ever elections for Hong Kong's top leader, promised for 2017.

The protests were ignited when city's 60 tycoons and business leaders paid a rare group visit to meet with China's communist leaders in Beijing. It's only the second time such a big delegation has visited Beijing since the 1997 handover. This recent meeting shows that Beijing is only listening to business leaders, who the students blame for Hong Kong's rising inequality.

China insists that candidates must be vetted by a committee. Many of the tycoons visiting Beijing are part of a similar body that selects Hong Kong's leaders. Protesters fear that this kind of nomination will only represent vested interests, not the views of the general public. They believe that this may not allow Hong Kong to have a genuine democracy.

The rising tensions have led to division. Activists have threatened to occupy the central business districts by October 1. In July, 500 people were arrested in an overnight sitting that attracted over a 100,000 people. Student strikes will mark the turning point of the democratic movement and motivate other secondary school students to join the march.

The tycoons have urged protesters to stand down as Beijing won't change its decision. In 2003, a similar entourage made the trip after a huge protest against unpopular legislation.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hong-kong-students-on-strike-in-democracy-battle/>

Date Accessed: 23.09.2014

(Shriyam Gupta)

## MIDDLE-EAST

### 200,000 Flee in Biggest Displacement of Syrian Conflict

(Ben Brumfield, Josh Levs and Gul Tuysuz, CNN, September 23, 2014)

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) encroachment has created the largest number of Syrian refugees in the last three and a half years of conflict. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights notes that over 200,000 people have fled the cities of Kobani in four days of ISIS advancement in the region.

Most of these refugees are entering Turkey. Officials say as much as 130,000 people have entered Turkey border since last week. The influx has been slowed as Turkey closed off most of the crossings, allowing only a few to remain open. New arrivals are being searched for arms, receiving medical checks, being identified and receiving ID cards that they can use in Turkey.

Kurdish officials in Syria complain about difficulty in crossing the border. Meanwhile, Kurdish People's Protection Units, known as YPG, are trying to fight off the ISIS. This is difficult given that ISIS has superior weaponry. Eyewitnesses note that Kurdish persons from Turkey are crossing into Syria to fight the Islamic State and the YPG has made some progress. Kobani may be holding on but Syria has already lost 60 villages to ISIS.

Tensions in Syria are straining Turkey. Friction has heated up between the Kurdistan Workers Party and Turkish security forces that used tear gas and water cannons against them in several clashes. Turkey officials estimate that around 1.6 million refugees have entered Turkey since the beginning of the Syrian conflict.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/syria-civil-war/>

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(Shriyam Gupta)

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