

Dismantling of Environmental Impact Assessment: The fallouts of the latest notification



Source : - [UZ Report Information Agency](#)

In This Issue

LEAD ESSAY:

- Dismantling of Environmental Impact Assessment: The fallouts of the latest notification

HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:

- India's New Education Policy: What are the Priorities?

SECTION 1: ECONOMY

- Nationwide Bank Strike Success, Claims AIBEA; Lok Sabha passes Bill to fast track Debt Recovery.

SECTION 2: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Politics and Governance:** Nitish's new prohibition law: Not just offender, his family, village too will be punished.
- **Development:** Factory output growth at four-month high in July; Why Tamil Nadu's fisherfolk can no longer find fish; Flood-control methods deployed in Assam have actually worsened the problem.
- **Government:** India Short of 500,000 police; why it matters -- and does not; Rajya Sabha is a Safeguard, says Ansari; Why Andhra Politicians should stop fretting over Special Category Status; Government considering new policy on elderly.
- **Social and Economic Exclusion:** A tsunami of debt is building up in Tamil Nadu - and no one knows where it is headed.
- **Education:** India's New Education Policy: What are the Priorities?
- **Globalization:** 1QFY17 results helped by non-operating factors.
- **Agriculture:** Hunger in the times of Plenty: The Curious case of Indian Food-Security.

SECTION 3: SOCIETY

- **Casteism:** Caste and Public Service.
- **Gender:** In Kerala Women Surge into Politics.

SECTION 4: INDIA AND WORLD

- **International Affairs:** India's Nuclear Policy aimed at China, has lesser warheads than Pakistan: Report.
- **Americas:** New York to Bar Sex Offenders on Parole from Playing Pokemon Go; Turning the Tide on Voting Rights.

SECTION 5: OPINIONS/BOOKS

- **Opinions:** We Should Relegate Terrorists to the Obscurity of Their Own Infamy; In state after state, cow protection vigilantes pick on Dalits, Muslims.

Lead Essay

Dismantling of Environmental Impact Assessment: The fallouts of the latest notification

The government recently brought out a draft notification, in May 2016, proposing to bring amendments to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006. The draft notification seeks to bring a critical change to dilute the entire EIA process in India, by proposing that projects which were set-up without receiving prior environmental clearance would be penalized retrospectively. Ostensibly, the purpose is to recover the cost of damages caused to the environment and utilize it for rehabilitating the environment. The proposal follows in the wake of a series of environmentally-detrimental steps taken by this government and will weaken the existent loopholes in the EIA process, thereby adversely implicating the very people for whom it was originally conceived.

A conflict-ridden history

The EIA process seeks to assess and minimize the environmentally-adverse effects of certain industrial projects, making their approval conditional upon prior environmental assessment. The EIA notification was first conceived, under the Environment Protection Act (1986), in 1994, and has been amended 15 times since then.

The evolution of the EIA has, over the years, created ripe conditions for exploiting the gaps in the policy process, as a consequence of which, today, the government has been able to, effectively, make an environmental business model out of the current EIA notifications. The EIA process is critical to establishing a constitutional check on the executive which can benefit the environment, but has been weakened over the years due to a weak policy implementation. The people – the inhabitants of local community spaces whose livelihoods and the immediate environment are the ones most affected by the setting up of any project – are the ones who have received the least priority in the EIA operations. While, originally, the EIA was conceived as a qualitative process to protect the ecosystem, over the years, it has turned into a quantitative ‘inventory of items submitted for the receipt of a license’¹ to obtain clearance, focusing more on rates of rejection and time period for clearance and less on the issues affecting the public implicated by the project.

The role of the public has, in fact, progressively been relegated to the last and the least important rung of the EIA. In 2009,² another proposal to amend the EIA was put forth, albeit less devious than the current proposal, which –like the current proposal –sought to standardize the Terms of Reference (ToR) for all projects ignoring their sector-wise specificity, sought exclusions of certain projects from the EIA process, introduced ‘deemed’ clearance for projects that have exceeded the timeline, and, most significantly, sought to regulate the role of the local communities in the assessment process to a limited one by simply issuing a prior questionnaire, whose issues, if significant, would be selected for further debate and deliberations.

In the follow-up to the 2006 EIA notification, which divided the projects into two categories – Category A to be assessed by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the central government and Category B to be assessed by EAC of the state government – it was seen that there was a progressive reduction of rates of rejection³ and the time spent on assessing each project.

¹ Menon and Kohli 2009.

² Menon and Kohli 2009.

³ According to Menon and Kohli (2009), between 2006 and 2008, the rate of rejection was just 1.2%, while between 2008 and 2009, it further fell to 0.8%.

Lead Essay

As a result of this pro-corporate approach, the EIA process has faced several historical hurdles, including,⁴

- (a) Weak integration of EIA into decision making system,
- (b) Inadequate involvement of stakeholders in the EIA process and casual approach of consultants funded by the project proponent,
- (c) Inadequate converge of impacts,
- (d) Insufficient baseline data,
- (e) Poor quality of EIA reports and inadequate review, and,
- (f) Weak implementation of mitigation measures and monitoring of impacts.
- (g) Cooking up of data to grant clearances⁵.
- (h) Poor public hearings and reports of intimidation and violence to coerce people into agreeing to the project.⁶

As a result of this, the EIA process has been weakened over the years. An attempt at the ostensible revival of the process was made through the 2014 TSR Subramanian Committee Report, which recommended sector-specific ToRs, creation of a comprehensive database for the EIA consultants, a new institutional structure at central and state levels for project appraisals, and, doing away with public hearings in areas without habitation. None of these proposals addressed the core, substantive problems of the EIA such as political intervention, social exclusion and a flawed philosophy which privileges economy over the environment.

However, what is happening now is set to seal the EIA process for all practical purposes. In its latest notification, not only does the government go against its own stand in the Committee Report, of having sector-specific ToRs and of imposing strict penalties, but also dismantles the normative and institutional edifice of existing procedures.

The latest notification

The latest notification, issued by the government on 10th May 2016, seeks to bring a major amendment to the existing EIA process by seeking to retrospectively penalize green norm violators in requiring them to furnish an Environment Supplement Plan (ESP) to compensate for the violations by investing in a remedial environmentally-friendly project. Thus, at the heart of the notifications lies the ESP; for, the nature of the ESP will highlight the extent to which retrospective violations are being penalized.

The manner in which the normative rationale for the ESPs is constructed seeks to dismantle the norms of environmental integrity in India.

The ESP includes projects adhering to:

- *Environmental Justice*: Taking into account the adverse impact of the violating project on the impacted local communities. The notification is silent on specific mandatory guidelines on how this should be done. In fact, there is nothing mandatory in the process and no thresholds to be met which can tell us whether any substantive good has been done for the community. The entire edifice of Environmental Justice, as defined in this notification, is highly subjective.
- *Pollution Prevention*: In accordance with an environmental management hierarchy wherein the disposal of polluting substances into the atmosphere would be undertaken as a measure of last resort. The notification is silent on the fact that projects should adhere to sector-specific pollution targets, both qualitatively and quantitatively, instead of focusing on some vague goal of pollution abatement. The penalties are, as usual,

⁴ Panigrahi and Amirapu 2012.

⁵ EPW 2012.

⁶ Ibid.

Lead Essay

missing. It also encourages a discourse that focuses on co-benefits of pollution abatement in terms of technological leverage rather than on the absolute necessity of it, thereby making environmental protection a function of larger economic and technological growth.

- *Innovative technology*: Here the ESP is modeled as a plan that provides more opportunities for producing innovative technologies to benefit environment and public health, rather than the existing ones. Here, it would be relevant to question whether the exact purpose of the ESP is to provide a platform for innovation rather than the one that penalizes, or at its weakest, seeks compensation for environmental law violations.
- *Climate change*: How will the projects qualify as an ESP here? The definition is extremely vague, spanning ‘projects that address the causes of climate change’ to ones that ‘prevent emissions of climate change pollutants and greenhouse gases’ such as energy efficiency projects. This is problematic as it may include a host of clean energy projects that are themselves implicated in causing livelihood losses, human displacement and curbing of river flows, such as hydropower projects. With no specific differentiations, the ESP can be misappropriated by any party in the name of providing compensation for green law violations. It would also compromise India’s international commitments to combating climate change, since it would be compromising on the Polluter Pays Principle and the Precautionary Principle. It would also violate the Supreme Court observation in the MC Mehta Oleum Gas Leak case, where the Court held that the Principle cannot be a license to pay-and-pollute.⁷

Thus, the main normative parameters on which the current amendments are based is riddled with fundamental problems as highlighted above. When the balance between the rich and the poor is not counterbalanced by strict and specific laws and implementation –which is missing in the ESP framework –the natural scales are inevitably tilted towards the rich. This is especially so in the ESP, which is not only silent on specific methodology, but also where the cost of damages would be drawn in consultation with the violator.

The four main, immediate issues of contention that the amendments raise are:

First, projects seeking to bypass environmental laws would be able to do so in a legalized manner, since the ESP is not even visualized as a one-time process which would prosecute the retrospective violators, but will provide the space for seeking post facto environmental clearance. Instead, by making it permanent, the government would effectively be doing away with the need to resort to existing penal provisions under the Environmental Clearance (EC) framework – such as The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. The existing EC laws have the penalty of imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1 lakh, which would become ineffective with the current norms, thereby dismantling the whole existing institutional structure.

Second, retrospective clearance of projects that violate green norms –while seeking to punish the past aggressors – would do more harm by encouraging future projects to take recourse to routine violations of the law and later paying for that through the ESP route.

Third, the larger issue is that paying up does not benefit the environment, since the plan boils down to a typical pay-and-use service of the environment, where the violators can keep violating the green norms and paying for it, in the absence of strict prosecution under existing laws.

Fourth, even though the amendments seek legitimacy under a Jharkhand High Court judgment, the judgment makes a distinction between ‘alleged violations’ of green norms and the approval process of environmental clearances, while the current notification seeks to collapse both the issues into that of easier clearances.⁸

⁷ Dutta 2016.

⁸ Menon and Kohli 2009.

Lead Essay

The way forward

The current proposals for reform that have come up focus on incremental rather than integral changes. The major proposals include:

- Capacity-building of stakeholders.
- Accountability of EIA experts.
- Initiating assessment at early stages of project.
- Monitoring implementation.

None of these address the core issues, focusing on actors involved at the later stages of the process, rather than at the project proponents themselves along with the government. In order to make the EIA more effective there is a need to move away from the current decentralized and flexible regime – of self-certification and consultant funding by project proponent – to the one that imposes the costs of penalty on the decision-makers and the project proponents alike.

Currently, the EIA process relies heavily on the discretion of the project proponent and the government officials, while the say of those who have the most stakes in the process is the least viz. the people. Existing studies have revealed a significant fact which the policymakers need heed viz. “The challenges for EIA are political rather than technical. In order to make EIA more than a ritual, changes in attitudes and behaviors of political leaders and public officials will be necessary...it is noticed that, even if the technical and financial issues are dealt with in an appropriate manner to produce desired results, the quality of EIA cannot be achieved unless socio-political context in which the EIA system has to operate is favorable...EIA appears to be most effective where environmental values are integrated into a nation's culture and public law and policy.”⁹

In India, unfortunately, the role of the EIA has been highly corporatized and bureaucratized, focusing on capital accumulation, or lack thereof, rather than the ecosystem. The current system of EIA works like a model based on trade-offs which attributes relative, rather than, absolute value to the ecosystem. This has been strengthened by the latest notification of the government, with the upshot that violations will be legalized as long as there is compensation in the form of investment in environmental growth through the ESP. This resembles the outdated and much-criticized approach of the climate change regime, which was spearheaded by the US, premised on the argument that it is legitimate to meet the emission requirements by purchasing carbon credits or through an investment in an environmental project in a developing country. The upshot was that it is alright to go on producing emissions as long as a country is also compensating for it. The argument failed to notice that greenhouse gas emissions remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years and the irreversible damage caused cannot be compensated for in monetary or material terms.

In a similar way, we need to recognize that violations of the ecosystem in one area cannot be compensated for by simply initiating an environmental project elsewhere. Thus, the policy needs to de-recognize the convenient Western philosophy of trade-offs, if it is to truly preserve the environment. The same goes for the lives of the local communities which cannot be valued in terms of trade-offs.

⁹ Panigrahi and Amirapu 2012.

Lead Essay

Bibliography

Dutta, Ritwick. *Deccan Herald*. June 30, 2016. <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/555108/recall-notification-environment.html> (accessed July 27, 2016).

EPW. "Cooking up environmental assessments." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII, No. 8, 2012: 7-8.

Menon, Manju, and Kanchi Kohli. "From Impact Assessment to Clearance Manufacture." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. No. XLIV, No. 28, 2009: 20-23.

Panigrahi, Jitendra K., and Susruta Amirapu. "An assessment of EIA system in India." *Environment Impact Assessment Review*, Vol. 35, 2012: 23-36.

Prepared by:

Garima Sharma

Headlines

India's New Education Policy: What are the Priorities?

(The Diplomat, July 29, 2016)

According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD's) Input report, the draft of the New Education Policy will aim to address seven key areas of concern with respect to the Indian education sector – access and participation, quality, equity, system efficiency, governance and management, research and development and financial commitment to education development. These will be addressed through policy interventions broadly into preschool and adolescent education, curriculum development and examination reform, teacher and faculty training, lifelong literacy, higher education and long distance learning.

Read More: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/indias-new-education-policy-what-are-the-priorities/>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Economic

Nationwide Bank Strike Success, claims AIBEA

(Business Standard, July 29, 2016)

The all India strike called by the bank unions today against the banking reform policies of the central government has been a resounding success, claimed one of the employees' association.

The strike declared by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) consisting of nine trade unions of bank employees and officers, has seen around 10 lakh employees and workers protesting, said All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA), one of the member unions. Across the country, around Rs 20,000 crore worth of instruments including cheques would remain without clearance during the day, said senior leader of the Association.

Read more: http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/nationwide-bank-strike-success-claims-aibea-116072900379_1.html

Date accessed: 29.07.16

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Lok Sabha passes Bill to Fast Track Debt Recovery

(The Economic Times, August 02, 2016)

The Enforcement of Security Interest and Recovery of Debts Laws and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Bill, 2016, amends four Acts — the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act of 2002, the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act of 1993, the Indian Stamp Act of 1899 and the Depositories Act of 1996. "In order to facilitate expeditious disposal of recovery applications, it has been decided to amend the said Acts and also to make consequential amendments in the Indian Stamp Act, 1899, and the Depositories Act, 1996," Jaitley said in the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill.

Read More:

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/53495364.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Nitish's New Prohibition Law: Not Just Offender, His family, Village too Will be Punished

(The Indian Express, August 1, 2016)

Brushing aside objections from partner RJD and main opposition BJP, the Nitish Kumar government is bringing in several amendments to tighten the prohibition law in Bihar, including one that will make culpable all adults of a family if any member is found drinking, possessing or selling liquor from the premises they occupy.

ReadMore:<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bihar-liquor-ban-nitishs-new-prohibition-law-not-just-offender-his-family-village-too-will-be-punished-2947132/>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

DEVELOPMENT

Factory Output Growth at Four-month High in July

(livemint.com, August 02, 2016)

Indian factory activity grew at its fastest pace in four months in July as export orders jumped, but prices remained muted, giving room to the central bank to ease policy further if needed, a private survey showed on Monday.

The Nikkei/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 51.8 in July from June's 51.7, marking its seventh month above the 50 level that separates growth from contraction.

ReadMore:<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/Nv1lbLLnC3cs6nDveInfK/Factory-output-growth-at-fourmonth-high-in-July.html>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Why Tamil Nadu's Fisherfolk can No Longer Find Fish

(M. Rajashekar, scroll.in, July 08, 2016)

"What did you catch?" Alagairi Madhivanan shouts across to the fisherman in a small boat to our left. The young man stops scanning the net he has just pulled out of the lagoon, turns towards us and says, "Five fishes." His answer echoes what Madhivanan has been telling me over the past hour as his small fibre-bodied boat nosed through Tamil Nadu's Pichavaram mangroves – it's getting harder and harder to find fish.

As recently as a decade ago, fishermen like him in this part of the state, midway between Pondicherry and the fishing town of Nagapattinam, made one fishing trip every day. They would head out before dawn and come back with the day's catch by half-past eight.

Governance & Development

But now, Madhivanan does two trips each day – two hours in the morning and another two in the evening. His fellow fishermen – the ones with bigger boats – are staying out as long as three days looking for fish.

ReadMore:<http://scroll.in/article/808960/why-tamil-nadus-fisherfolk-can-no-longer-find-fish>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Flood-control Methods Deployed in Assam Have Actually Worsened the Problem

(*Scroll.In, August 2, 2016*)

In the last six decades, the Assam state has built a network of about 5,000 km of embankments along the Brahmaputra and its numerous tributaries. In Majuli alone, which is a landmass of only about 500 square km, close to 190 km of embankments have been constructed during this period. Despite this, 39.6% of the total land area in Assam remains “flood prone”, which is four times its national counterpart. Once every few years, an episodic flood devastates the entire state, while regular floods inundate a large part of the state every year.

ReadMore:<http://scroll.in/article/812992/assam-floods-are-a-reminder-that-embankments-are-no-solution-they-are-a-big-part-of-the-problem>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

GOVERNMENT

India Short of 500,000 police; Why It Matters -- And Does Not

(*Moneylife.in, July 28, 2016*)

India was short of more than half a million police officers on January 1, 2015, the last date for which nationwide data is available, the Lok Sabha was told on July 26, 2016. But our analysis of global police staffing patterns and murder rates in six countries suggests more police do not necessarily mean less crime.

Up to 90 per cent of Indian police officers currently work for more than eight hours a day, according to a 2014 report from the Bureau of Police Research and Development. It said 68 per cent of police report working 11 hours a day, and 28 percent report 14-hour work days. Nearly half report that they are called to duty between eight and 10 times a month during offs.

ReadMore:<http://www.moneylife.in/article/india-short-of-500-000-police-why-it-matters-and-does-not/47642.html>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Rajya Sabha is a Safeguard, says Ansari

(*The Hindu, July 31, 2016*)

Dr. Ansari was categorical in his espousal of the Rajya Sabha. “The Rajya Sabha is necessary to reflect the concerns of the States as India is a Union of States. The Rajya Sabha and its creation was a conscious decision of the Constituent Assembly,” he told the 30 first-term members. “Parliament is to legislate, debate and deliberate and hold the government of the day accountable,” he said.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rajya-sabha-is-a-safeguard-says-ansari/article8922293.ece?w=spa>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Why Andhra Politicians Should Stop Fretting Over Special Category Status

(*Prateek Sibal, The Huffington Post, August 01, 2016*)

In this context, even if the Finance Minister was to grant Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh, it would mean nothing in the absence of the funding mechanism that used to support Special Category States. The increased devolution of taxes from 32% to 42%, along with grants in aid for revenue deficit, has ensured that Andhra Pradesh will receive untied funds to the tune of ₹2,06,910.65 crores from the Central Government during 2015-20.

Read More: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/prateek-sibal/-why-andhra-politicians-should-stop-fretting-over-special-categor/?utm_hp_ref=in-blog

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Governance & Development

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

A Tsunami of Debt is Building up in Tamil Nadu - And No One knows Where It Is Headed

(M. Rajashekar, *scroll.in*, August 02, 2016)

G Venkatasubramanian trots out some astonishing numbers. Over the last 15 years, he and his fellow researchers at Pondicherry's French Institute have been studying debt bondage among families in 20 villages in Tamil Nadu. Half of these settlements are in the coastal district of Cuddalore, and the others are in the adjoining district of Villupuram.

Their study is throwing up some puzzling changes in how much these families borrow – and how.

In 2001, the average annual income of these families was Rs 16,000. Average debt was Rs 10,000. Come 2016, annual income has risen five-fold to Rs 80,000. Average debt, however, stands at Rs 250,000. This is a 25-fold increase.

ReadMore:<http://scroll.in/article/810138/a-tsunami-of-debt-is-building-up-in-tamil-nadu-and-no-one-knows-where-it-is-headed>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

GLOBALIZATION

1QFY17 Results Helped by Non-Operating Factors

(Moneylife Digital Team, *moneylife.in*, August 01, 2016)

The June quarter results of Indian companies have so far been good with net profits of the Nifty-50 Index (25 companies have reported so far) being 5.5% ahead of expectations. But in several cases, the results are helped at net level by non-operating factors, says a research report.

In a note, Kotak Institutional Equities Research, says, "India's macro continues to look good with the recent sharp decline in crude oil prices, fall in bond yields and decent monsoons. The chances of goods and services tax (GST) implementation are also looking better. Thus, the dilemma over our positive top-down view and dwindling number of good bottom-up ideas has become deeper."

ReadMore:<http://www.moneylife.in/article/1qfy17-results-helped-by-non-operating-factors/47683.html>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

AGRICULTURE

Hunger in The Times of Plenty: The Curious Case of Indian Food-Security

(Neeta Lal, *Thewire.in*, July 30, 2016)

In a fraught global economic environment, exacerbated by climate change and shrinking resources, ensuring food and nutrition security is a daunting challenge for many nations. India, Asia's third largest economy and the world's second most populous nation after China with 1.3 billion people, is no exception.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines food security as a situation when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. The lack of a balanced diet minus essential nutrients results in chronic malnutrition.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/54809/chronic-hunger-lingers-in-the-midst-of-plenty/>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Society

CASTEISM

Caste and Public Service

(*The Economic and Political Weekly*, July 30, 2016)

There are specific norms and guidelines for the delivery of public services, of which certain are made available specifically for the socially excluded groups; others under different flagship schemes are universal in nature. This paper looks at the issue of caste and access to these services in the context of the Integrated Child Development Services. It draws evidence from a sample of nearly 5,000 households and more than 200 institutional service delivery points in the mixed-caste villages spread across three states. The findings suggest that the implementation gap coupled with exclusionary biases not only affect the access of lower caste groups to public services but also often intensify their disadvantages.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/31/special-articles/caste-and-access-public-services.html>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

GENDER

In Kerala Women Surge into Politics

(Sreedevi R S. *IndiaSpend*, August 1, 2016)

Over 20 years and five assembly elections—as women became better educated, led a variety of popular movements, voted in and contested elections in ever greater numbers in Kerala—the number of directly elected female legislators has steadily declined. The percentage of female members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) fell from 10.23% in 1996 to 6.06% in 2016, even as the number of women candidates doubled over these five elections. In an overwhelmingly male-dominated country, this statistic from Kerala's 2016 assembly elections appeared remarkable: 105 women contested—a third as independents, as we reported, indicating a determination to go it alone—up from 83 in 2011.

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/in-kerala-women-surge-into-politics-and-fail-64992>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

India and World

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India's Nuclear Policy Aimed at China, Has Lesser Warheads than Pakistan: Report

(The Indian Express, August 02, 2016)

The report, written by Greg Thielmann and David Logan of the Princeton University, speaks about an interesting arms race vortex that is gripping the world. "While Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is designed to counter India's conventional and nuclear forces, New Delhi measures its own nuclear weapons program against that of China. Beijing, in turn, judges the adequacy of its nuclear arsenal against the threat it perceives from the United States' strategic offensive and defensive capabilities. And in its efforts to mitigate the ballistic missile threat from North Korea, the US and its allies in the region are expanding their strategic and theater missile defense capabilities," it says.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/indias-nuclear-policy-aimed-at-china-has-lesser-warheads-that-pakistan-report/>

Date Accessed: 02.01.2016

AMERICAS

New York to Bar Sex Offenders on Parole from Playing Pokemon Go

(The Daily News and Analysis, August 2, 2016)

Governor Andrew Cuomo has directed the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to restrict the state's 3,000 sex offenders on parole from using Pokemon Go and similar games, Cuomo's office said in a statement. To enforce the rule, the state is requesting Pokemon Go developer Niantic, Inc to cross-reference a list of sex offenders provided by the state with its list of players.

Read More: <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-new-york-to-bar-sex-offenders-on-parole-from-playing-pokemon-go-2240236>

Date Accessed: 2.7.2016

Turning the Tide on Voting Rights

(The New York Times, August 02, 2016)

Last Friday, a Fourth Circuit panel ruled that a North Carolina voting law, possibly the largest rollback of voting rights since the 1965 Voting Rights Act, was enacted with racially discriminatory intent. The court threw out not only the state's strict voter ID law, but also other voting restrictions that could make it especially hard for minorities to vote.

Read More: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/opinion/campaign-stops/turning-the-tide-on-voting-rights.html?ref=opinion>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

We Should Relegate Terrorists to the Obscurity of Their Own Infamy

(*The Guardian*, August 1, 2016)

There are at least three reasons why we should stop publicising the names of violent jihadists who commit acts of terror. The first is that by doing so they become globally recognised characters in the show business side of this terrorist war, thus fulfilling one of their keenest desires. The second reason is that by going into detail, by following the trail from a childhood that is invariably “unhappy” to a “sudden” radicalisation, by dwelling on the putative “mystery” of a monster who also happened to be a good father, a normal husband, a friendly neighbour always willing to lend a hand – we are taking the shortest route to the banalisation of evil. And the third fundamental reason that should convince the media not to focus on names whose hypnotic repetition has become the rhythm of our time (or perhaps to refer to them only by first names or initials, and so deny them the limelight) is that the present unstable mixture of trivialisation and glorification – in which we are told that these are ordinary people who happen to have hitched their fate to unforgettable acts – will have the worst possible consequence: a copycat effect.

Read More: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/01/relegate-terrorists-to-obscurity-of-their-infamy-publicity--jihadis-glory-banalising-evil>

Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

In State After State, Cow Protection Vigilantes Pick on Dalits, Muslims

(*Hindustan Times*, July 29, 2016)

Increasing cow vigilantism in India has a few common threads: rise in crimes against Dalits, fall in conviction rate, assaulters belong mostly to politically-linked influential Hindu upper castes and the victims are mostly Dalits or poor Muslims with no political voice.

Dalits and Muslims in the past year have faced the ire of emboldened cow vigilante groups under the aegis of right-wing Hindu groups: Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. Attack have been reported from Daltonganj in Jharkhand to Una in Gujarat to Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh to Sonapat on Delhi-Haryana border to Chittorgarh in Rajasthan.

Read more: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-state-after-state-cow-protection-vigilantes-pick-on-dalits-muslims/story-FICFAkyduCopAY5IYN4LL.html>

Date accessed: 29.07.16

Issue Coordinator: Ms. Garima Sharma

Connect with RGICS at: info@rgics.org; www.rgics.org



Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by the RGICS staff and has not been seen by the Trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Further, the views presented in this document in no way reflect the views of the RGF Trustees.

To unsubscribe, please write to us at info@rgics.org

Opinions/ Books