

## Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana- The Road To Nowhere?



(Source: <http://www.nelive.in/arunachal-pradesh/news/centre-relax-pmgsy-norms-arunachal> )

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## Lead Essay

### Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana- The Road To Nowhere?

Roads are the ‘arteries of the nation’ and provide an infrastructural push for ‘social and economic growth’. Nearly 69% of the Indian population lives in the rural areas, therefore, rural road connectivity provides for the strengthening of ‘rural livelihoods’ and holistic development of the nation.

Recognising the importance of rural road connectivity, the then Government of India had launched the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2000. In the year 2000, nearly 40% of the habitations were not connected by ‘all weather roads’. Under the PMGSY, a systematic preparation of ‘**District Rural Roads Plan (DRRP)**’ and the identification of the Core network was to be carried out. The **National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA)** was established on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2002, to support the programme implementation through ‘advice on technical specifications, project appraisal, quality monitoring and management of monitoring systems’.<sup>i</sup>

The programme envisages connecting all habitations with a population of 500 persons and above in the plain areas and 250 persons and above in the hill States, the tribal and the desert areas. Under this criterion, 1,68,268 habitations were eligible, out of which 31,804 habitations had been reported either connected under other schemes or were not feasible. Therefore, 1,36,464 habitations were targeted for providing road connectivity.<sup>ii</sup> This involved the construction of about 3.71 lakh km of new roads and about 3.68 lakh km under the ‘Up-gradation programme’.<sup>iii</sup>

One of the major focuses of the programme has been on constructing ‘all weather roads’, which has been defined as ‘one having a metalled water bound macadam (WBM) surface with cross drainage works and minor bridges, which is operable throughout the year’ under the Minimum Needs Programme. It had been noted that WBM roads were not meant to carry heavy traffic, therefore, it was suggested that the Government should provide ‘at least a thin asphaltic wearing coat on sufficiently thick metal crust’, which could vary depending on several local factors, such as, ‘soil, rainfall, terrain and the availability of good metal as well as the density of expected traffic’.<sup>iv</sup>

In February, 2005, the President of India in his address to the Parliament had announced a four year business plan for rebuilding rural India under the programme called ‘**Bharat Nirman**’. Rural roads had been identified as one of the six components under this programme, with a target to connect 66,802 habitations with all weather roads which required the construction of 1,46,185 km of new roads. In addition, 1,94,132 km of the existing rural roads network was considered for up-gradation. The total investment for the rural roads under the Bharat Nirman was estimated at Rs. 48,000 crore.<sup>v</sup>

According to the NRRDA annual report of 2014-15, the data for cumulative connectivity trends under the PMGSY indicates- in 2014-2015, 1,08,637 habitations (4,36,316 km) had been covered in comparison to 13,687 (51,511 km) in 2000-2004.<sup>vi</sup> As per the latest available data at **Online Management, Monitoring and Accounting System (OMMAS)**, 1,18,846 of the eligible habitations have been connected, covering over 4,83,214 km.<sup>vii</sup>

The impact of the PMGSY can be accessed through the number of habitations connected in some States, which were the least connected at the turn of the century- ‘Bihar (15,048 out of 34,637) habitations originally eligible under PMGSY, Madhya Pradesh (14,085 out of 18,404), Rajasthan (13,587 out of 16,694), UP (11,228 out of 13,984), Chhattisgarh (8,592 out of 10,191) and West Bengal (12,141 out of 18,641) now have road connectivity.’<sup>viii</sup>

#### Glaring Inefficiencies

In 2005, a performance audit of the PMGSY was conducted for the years 2000-01 to 2004-05. The findings of the report were presented before the Parliament in 2006. The report had observed- ‘deficiencies in planning, fund utilisation, contract management, quality assurance, maintenance of roads and monitoring’. Thereafter, the Public Accounts Committee 2007-08 (14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) had made some recommendations based on the audit report of 2006. It is in this

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regard, in August 2016, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) tabled the audit report in the Parliament, with the objective to audit the performance and implementation of the previous recommendations for the PMGSY. The audit was performed for the years- April 2010 to March 2015, during which time Rs. 63,877.78 crore had been utilised by States for the implementation of the programme. In specific, the audit report has covered 4,417 packages involving an expenditure of Rs. 7,734.93 crore in 176 districts of 29 states.<sup>ix</sup> The report has highlighted- ‘several irregularities, ranging from flouting of planning procedures, poor quality control, diversion of funds, extension of undue benefits to contractors, showing road connectivity where there is none, not providing roads to eligible habitations, and pathetic maintenance of roads.’<sup>x</sup>

Recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee (2007-08)	Status as per current audit report (2016)
Incorporation of <b>Social Audit</b> based on the guidelines of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA).	Has not been included.
Appropriate action against persons for acts of omission and commission of <b>Financial Irregularities</b> .	Instances of <b>diversion of programme funds</b> for inadmissible items and works <b>persisted</b> .
Creation of a comprehensive <b>GIS database of Rural Roads Information System</b> for each state. Further, a <b>Road Maintenance Management System</b> may also be developed using GIS database.	There was <b>no development</b> in creation of web based GIS database for Rural Roads Information System.
Action against inordinate <b>delay in finalisation of tenders</b> .	In 14 states, <b>2,961 tenders</b> were finalised with delays up to <b>974 days</b> .
Acceptance of only those project proposals which have all the <b>necessary clearances</b> from the forest department and other concerned authorities.	In 16 states, <b>910 works were dropped</b> or abandoned midway due to <b>land disputes</b> .
Constant monitoring and the review of the works undertaken by states to ensure the <b>timely completion of the projects</b> .	In 26 states, <b>4,496 works</b> were found to have been completed with <b>delays</b> ranging from <b>one month to 129 months</b> .
Setting up and maintenance of <b>Quality Control Laboratories in all states</b> for the periodical test of raw materials used at different stages of roads constructed.	In <b>12 states</b> , instances of <b>non establishment of field laboratories, non-availability of equipment, non-deployment of trained manpower and non-conducting of required tests</b> were observed.
Review the <b>functioning of OMMAS</b> , urgent implementation of the <b>accounting module</b> of OMMAS, updating the <b>online information</b> of the projects to be compulsory by all states.	Monitoring of programme through OMMAS was still <b>ineffective</b> as data fed into the system was <b>not updated or reliable</b> .

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The report has also highlighted some instances of malpractices, such as, ‘in 5 states (Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh), Rs 132.20 crore were spent on 68 works which remained unfruitful because the targeted habitations were not provided with all weather road connectivity due to land disputes, non-clearance from forest department, damage by flood, contractors’ defaults, etc.’<sup>xi</sup> Further, in 13 states 1,550 works were dropped for various reasons such as deficient planning, remote location to carry the material, Maoist problem and no response to tenders, etc.<sup>xii</sup>

According to the Ministry of Rural Development, as of March 2015, out of 1.78 lakh eligible habitations, 1.09 lakh habitations have been provided with all-weather road connectivity.<sup>xiii</sup> In addition, an average of 91 kilometres of rural roads has been built daily in the Financial Year 2015-16, resulting in addition of a total 30,500 km of rural road length and connection of around 6500 habitations.<sup>xiv</sup>

In July 2016, Minister of State for Rural Development Ram Kirpal Yadav had informed the Rajya Sabha- “Government is committed to complete road projects identified under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana by 2019.”<sup>xv</sup>

The Minister also said in his reply that there has been a substantial increase in allocation of funds for PMGSY. ‘During 2015-16, the total annual allocation of States was Rs 23,806 crore (Rs 15,175.71 crore central share and Rs 8,631 crore states’ share). The Budget Estimate for 2016-17 is Rs 19,000 crore and together with states’ share, about Rs 27,000 crore will be spent on PMGSY in 2016-17.’<sup>xvi</sup>

On the other hand, the top five recipients of funds under this program are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, U.P. and Rajasthan, which together accounted for 50.26% of all expenditure across India up to March 2015.<sup>xvii</sup> However, despite receiving large amounts of fund, some of these States have failed to complete the projects on time. In his reply to a supplementary question during the Monsoon Parliament Session this year, Mr. Yadav referred to Bihar and said, “it had made comparatively less progress under PMGSY” and added that “the pace at which work should have been carried out by the State government was not maintained.” In Bihar, 6,301 road works were sanctioned for the State by the Ministry, in the last four years. Of these, 2,942 road works have been completed and 3,359 road works measuring 6917.517 kms are under consideration.<sup>xviii</sup>

In March, 2016, after reviewing the progress of rural development schemes, Prime Minister Modi had said, “quality checks for the roads being constructed should be made at the material procurement stage, the construction stage, as well as the maintenance stage of the scheme.” However, according to the audit report, in 12 states, the Quality Control Laboratories are either absent or do not have the required equipment and trained manpower to perform the quality checks. In addition, several methods for effective implementation of the schemes had been proposed, such as, the use of Geographic Information System and Space Imagery for planning and monitoring, efficient fund flow by minimising the number of layers, and citizen grievance to be redressed through the mobile app - “Meri Sadak.”<sup>xix</sup> The creation of the GIS database for the rural roads for every State had been recommended in the past, but so far the Ministry has failed to create the database.

**An ‘app’ with virtually no application-** The ‘Meri Sadak’ mobile app is offered by the National Rural Roads Development Agency. The app is available in English language only and has no provision for any regional language. Through the app, people belonging to the targeted regions, are supposed to provide a feedback or complaints by clicking the photographs of the roads and upload it on the mobile app. However, the app requires that users have a Smartphone, with data connectivity and GPS functionality,<sup>xx</sup> which might not be accessible by citizens in most rural locations. It is a matter of great concern that government funds are being spent on creating and promoting the use of an app that cannot be used by most citizens who are the intended beneficiaries of the program.

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### Conclusion

The extent of malpractices and inefficiencies highlighted in the various reports and the delay in providing a well connected rural network throughout the country will have huge ramifications in a country which is in a hurry to grow economically. The delay and the malpractices are further escalating the government expenditure on the entire scheme. Moreover, unnecessary expenditures are being incurred on unfruitful projects, and due to the lack of proper inspection mechanisms, projects are either being constructed in areas which are not eligible under the programme or in some cases, the roads fail to serve their purpose. And as it has been noted by the recent audit report, the Ministry of Rural Development has failed to enforce most of the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee in 2007-08. Moreover, the Ministry has incorporated technology to address citizen complaints but, the mobile 'app' is virtually redundant since the targeted population is unable to make use of it. Hence, government funds are actually being wasted on creating and promoting inappropriate technology solutions.

To ensure the efficient implementation and management of the programmes, the Ministry should immediately pay attention to the recommendation for the creation of the Geographic Information System database in every State. The Ministry also must ensure that works are completed in all respects with required bridges and cross drainage structures so as to provide desired all-weather connectivity to the targeted habitations. Moreover, State governments have to ensure that the funds are not diverted to inadmissible works. Furthermore, a regular social audit as recommended by the CAG should not only be incorporated in the guidelines of the PMGSY, but also implemented effectively.

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## Headlines

### **Triple Talaq should be Abolished, no Such Practice is Followed in any Civilised Society: Shabnam Hashmi**

*(The Indian Express, October 16, 2016)*

The AIMPLB, in its counter affidavit filed in the apex court, had said that personal laws of a community cannot be “re-written” in the name of social reforms. The board had said that the issue relating to Muslim practices of polygamy, triple talaq (talaq-e-bidat) and nikah halala are matters of “legislative policy” and cannot be interfered with. The Law Commission’s decision to invite views on the contentious Uniform Civil Code has drawn criticism from the AIMPLB and other Muslim organisations which said they will boycott it and accused the Modi government of waging a “war” against the community.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/triple-talaq-should-be-abolished-no-such-practice-is-followed-in-any-civilised-society-social-activist-shabnam-hashmi-3085505/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## Economy

### **Digital India, start-ups to fuel public cloud consumption, says Microsoft Chairman Pramanik**

(Sudhir Chaudhary, *The Financial Express*, October 17, 2016)

Empowering every organisation and every individual to achieve more is Microsoft's mission. Over the last three to four years, we have seen a dramatic confluence of four new technologies that have brought an incremental change in the way we look at our business: Use of technology from a social perspective, mobility of experience, power of data analytics, and all of these powered by the cloud. This is being hailed as the fourth industrial revolution.

Read More: <http://www.financialexpress.com/industry/companies/disinvestment-no-strategic-sales-this-year-but-heres-how-narendra-modi-govt-will-meet-fiscal-deficit-target/420598/>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **India one of the most open economies today: PM Modi at BRICS summit**

(PTI, *The Indian Express*, October 16, 2016)

Asserting that results of the reforms undertaken by his government were visible, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country has transformed into "one of the most open economies" in the world with a strong growth rate. "We have undertaken substantial reforms in the past two years to streamline and simplify governance, especially in doing business. The results are clearly visible," Modi told the Brics Business Council as part of the eighth summit of the five-nation grouping here.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-one-of-the-most-open-economies-today-pm-modi-at-brics-summit-3086000/>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **India's economy loses \$968 million due to Internet ban: Study**

(ET Bureau, *The Economic Times*, October 15, 2016)

The findings broadly attributed internet shutdowns to regional or territorial responses to public security concerns, in addition to precautionary measures to prevent the misuse of internet-based social media services via mobile devices during competitive examinations. "India this year joined the ranks of countries, including Uganda, Algeria and Iraq, that have disrupted internet services in response to concerns over students cheating on exams," the paper said.

Read more:

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/54859127.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=n=cpps](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/54859127.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=n=cpps)

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **As Bayer and Monsanto Merge, Watch Out for What Happens to Our Food and Farmers**

(Bharat Dogra, *The wire*, October 16, 2016)

The \$66 billion purchase of the world's biggest seed company, Monsanto, by the German chemicals conglomerate Bayer still has to pass the gauntlet of regulatory agencies in the United States and the European Union but the merger is already being seen as part of a trend in these increasingly related industries.

## Economy

Read More: <http://thewire.in/73281/bayer-monsato-deal-impact-concentration-seeds-agri-chemicals-industries-farmers/>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **Importing Pulses is a Bad Idea, Even if from India's BRICS Partners**

(Devinder Sharma, *The wire*, October 16, 2016)

At a time when India is faced with a massive unemployment crisis, the decision to invite BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa – to cultivate pulses and oilseeds for export here will only end up pushing more and more Indian farmers out of agriculture.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/73335/importing-pulses-bad-idea-even-indias-brics-partners/>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **The Maruti Way**

(Devinder Sharma, *Fountainink*, September, 05, 2016)

My name is... let that be. Maruti Suzuki is out to get me, not because I did anything but because they want to put virtually every worker in jail, even those who belonged to the third shift and were not even present when violence took place in the Manesar factory on 18 July. I was present there and will tell you what happened, but to understand it you will have to let me begin from the beginning.

Read More: <http://fountainink.in/?p=2660&all=1>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### **Start-ups: Indian entrepreneurs' focus on short-term gains turns them into laggards**

(Rajeev Banduni, *The Financial Express*, 17th October, 2016)

Only 26,164 patents were granted in India between 2010 and 2014, compared to a staggering 1,275,787 patents in the US, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). In 2012, 15.5% start-ups in the Silicon Valley had an Indian founder and this number is growing. This highlights a substantial loss of intellectual human resource to India resulting from the celebrated ideology of finding careers and building businesses in the US. Has the lauded career path of getting accepted into one of the IITs and consequently joining an Ivy League institute in the US lost India the incredible opportunity to create Indian innovation at a global scale?

Read More: <http://www.financialexpress.com/industry/jobs/start-ups-indian-entrepreneurs-focus-on-short-term-gains-turns-them-into-laggards/420483/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## Governance & Development

### DEVELOPMENT

#### India has programmes to alleviate hunger but not the will to enforce them

(Priyanka Vora *scroll*, October 15, 2016)

The many government schemes to feed India's poor and hungry do not seem to be doing much. The International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington has ranked India 97 among 118 countries on the Global Hunger Index. India fared worse than all its neighbours – China, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh – except Pakistan, which is ranked 107.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/pulse/819067/india-has-programmes-to-alleviate-hunger-but-not-the-will-to-enforce-them>

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### GOVERNMENT

#### National Skill Plan to Ready by March 2017

(*The Indian Express*, October 16, 2016)

Having accorded top priority to skill development, the government now aims to impart skills to around 40 crore people by 2022 for which it will formulate a national plan by March 2017. According to government sources, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship plans to activate and strengthen state Skill Development Missions and forge industry linkages with special focus on promoting apprenticeship and leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/national-skill-plan-to-be-ready-by-march-next-year-3085647/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

### SECURITY

#### India slams Pakistan over BRICS wall

(Shubhajit Roy, *The Indian Express*, October 17, 2016)

MEA's Secretary (economic relations) Amar Sinha, one of the leading negotiators from India, said that Pakistan-based terror outfits were not mentioned specifically since they affected only India, not the other BRICS countries. "I guess it doesn't concern them...since these groups don't attack them, we are affected by these Pakistan-based groups...PM made those statements as an injured party, others worded them differently," he said.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/brics-summit-2016-pm-narendra-modi-pakistan-terrorism-2016-3086323/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

### ENVIRONMENT

#### India's roadmap to cut global warming gases costs the country less, but the environment more

(Shrey Shah, *Scroll*, 16th October, 2016)

In a 54-acre manufacturing facility in Maharashtra's Shirwal town, about 190 km south of India's financial capital, Mumbai, a man with protective eyewear used a gun-like device to pump Isobutane, a refrigerant, into the back panel of a refrigerator. The factory, owned by Godrej and Boyce Mfg Co Ltd, churns out an average of 10,000 air conditioners and 60,000 refrigerators in a month. All appliances manufactured here are some of the most environmentally safe of their kind globally – and use no hydrofluorocarbons, gases that can have global warming potential over 12,000 times more than carbon dioxide.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/819023/indias-roadmap-to-cut-global-warming-gases-costs-the-country-less-but-the-environment-more>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## Governance & Development

### Beyond the Spin, Here Are India's Gains and Losses at the Montreal Protocol Negotiations

(Nitin Sethi, *The Wire*, October 16, 2016)

The compromise was arrived at after seven years of negotiations. Under the compromise stitched up, developed countries will start to phase down the climate impacting family of refrigerant gases called HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons) by 2019. Most developing countries, including China, will subsequently follow with a freeze of HFCs consumption levels in 2024 and subsequently reduce the usage. Some countries, including India, bargained to get the peak consumption year pegged to 2028, gaining a four extra years.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/73341/beyond-spin-heres-indias-gains-losses-montreal-protocol-negotiations/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

### Addressing climate change and food insecurity should go hand in hand

(Deepanwita Niyogi, *Down to Earth*, October 05, 2016)

Some studies have reported that without additional productivity improvements, climate change would reduce crop yields. A higher concentration of carbon dioxide lowers the amount of zinc, iron and protein and raises the starch and sugar content in wheat and rice. The nutrition and health implications of this can be great. In India, where up to a third of the rural population is at risk of not meeting protein requirements, the higher protein deficit from non-legume food crops can have serious health consequences. Negative crop productivity impacts are likely to be expected in low latitude and tropical regions.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/world-food-day-our-agriculture-must-keep-pace-with-changing-climate-55900>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## AGRICULTURE

### From plate to plough: Rural change challenge

(Ashok Gulati, *Indian Express*, 10th October, 2016)

Eradicating poverty from the planet was the top-most target in a set of 17 goals adopted by the UN last September as a part of its sustainable development agenda. Nations across the globe, including India, endorsed it. The strategies to achieve this goal have been left open to countries. In this context, the Rural Development Report (RDR) 2016 of the International Fund for Agricultural Development is timely.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/poverty-eradication-rural-india-changes-agriculture-3074245/>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## LAW AND JUSTICE

### Under trial Prisoners in India- Population of Barbados

(*IndiaSpend*, October 13, 2016)

An **IndiaSpend** analysis of available data reveals the extent of the problem: Between 2010 and 2014, 25% undertrials had been jailed for more than one year. The percentage of undertrials to total prisoners has remained over 65% during this period. In 2014, seven in 10 prisoners were undertrials, and two in 10 had been detained for more than one year without being convicted. Undertrials—those detained in prisons during trial, investigation or inquiry—are presumed innocent till proven guilty. But they are often [subjected](#) to psychological and physical torture during detention and exposed to prison [violence](#) and poor living conditions. Many lose their family ties and, often, their livelihoods.

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/undertrial-prisoners-in-india-population-of-barbados-93257>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## Society

### GENDER

#### Centre's stand on triple talaq based on gender justice: Ravi Shankar Prasad

(Nistula Hebbar & Krishnadas Rajagopal, *The Hindu*, October 17, 2016)

"We don't see it (UCC) just as part of the manifesto. Article 44 is part of our Constitution enjoining UCC. The framers of our Constitution were big leaders like Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Dr Ambedkar; 99 per cent of the founding fathers were of the Congress school of thought and they were clear that we must steadily progress towards a UCC," the Law Minister said. "Any need for an observation on the UCC from our side will emerge only when there is a report from the Law Commission, based on the widest public consultation. It is not fair for some groups to say they will not give their views. It is for groups that boycott to reflect on the kind of language they are using with regard to women's rights in the 21st Century."

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/law-minister-ravi-shankar-prasad-interview-on-triple-talaq-uniform-civil-code/article9227035.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

#### Muslim Women: Historic Demand for Change

(Jyoti Punyani, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, October 15, 2016)

A number of Muslim women and their organisations are part of the national debate on ending the system of triple talaq. Triggered by the public interest litigation currently being heard in the Supreme Court, this represents a major change from the past when individuals like Shah Bano went to court raising issues around marriage and divorce procedures for Muslim women. What remains unchanged is the position of the ulema and the All Indian Muslim Personal Law Board.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/42/commentary/muslim-women.html>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

#### Women in Villages Pay a Big Price for Working Away from Home

(*The Huffington Post*, October 13, 2016)

Despite their role of fulfilling family financial responsibilities, women who migrate for work face stigmatization at home and in their communities. After they return from urban destinations such as the National Capital Region, they are often stereotyped as "Delhi-returned", a label that is loaded with such a negative connotation that it makes it difficult for them to find good husbands.

Read More: [http://www.huffingtonpost.in/village-square/women-in-villages-pay-a-big-price-for-working-away-from-home/?utm\\_hp\\_ref=in-homepage](http://www.huffingtonpost.in/village-square/women-in-villages-pay-a-big-price-for-working-away-from-home/?utm_hp_ref=in-homepage)

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### Govt plans full social security for workers

(Arindam Majumdar, *Business Standard*, October, 16, 2016)

The Union government plans a massive social security coverage scheme for workers, including those in the unorganised sector. The benefits are to include all the branches under the International Labour Organization's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No 102). These cover preventive and general practitioner care, benefits for sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, maternity, invalidity and some others.

The idea is that about a dozen laws would be merged into a single law or code.

Officials in the labour and employment ministry told Business Standard the guidelines were being framed. The government will identify a threshold income, beyond which citizens have to pay for the benefits. The workforce will be divided into three parts -- a section which will pay, a second one which can partially pay and a third layer for which the government will pay.

## Society

Read More: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/modi-government-plans-universal-social-security-for-workers-116101600210\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/modi-government-plans-universal-social-security-for-workers-116101600210_1.html)

Date Accessed: 17/10/2016

### ***ELDERLY***

#### **While targeting poverty in all forms, don't forget the elderly**

(Mala Kapur Shankardass, *The Asian Age*, October 17, 2016)

Persistent poverty of older people, like that of other groups including women, is a denial of human rights and its eradication takes more than just improving the material well-being, which no doubt should be our foundation to end poverty everywhere.

However, there is now realisation that poverty is invariably closely intertwined with humiliation and exclusion and this, we increasingly see in growing elder abuse and domestic violence incidents as well in other shades of violence against the disadvantaged around us. So long as people, old and young, living in poverty continue to suffer discrimination, humiliation and exclusion, their fundamental human rights will continue to be abused and their access to basic needs will be limited.

Read More: <http://www.asianage.com/india/while-targeting-poverty-all-forms-don-t-forget-elderly-846>

Date Accessed: 17.10.2016

## India and World

### AMERICAS

#### US's Inconsistent Policies on Pharma Could Compromise Global Access to Medication (Priti Pattnaik, *The Wire*, 11th October, 2016)

The report, released last month, was met with disappointment and rancour – mostly from the US and some sections of the pharmaceutical industry. While civil society groups have largely been welcoming of the report, some groups thought the panel could have been more ambitious in its recommendations. In particular they felt the panel could have laid stronger emphasis on bolstering countries' commitments to rectifying the issue of compulsory licensing of drugs. Additionally, the panel could have further strengthened its language on human rights issues discussed in the report.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/72141/uss-inconsistent-policies-on-pharma-could-compromise-global-access-to-medication/>

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