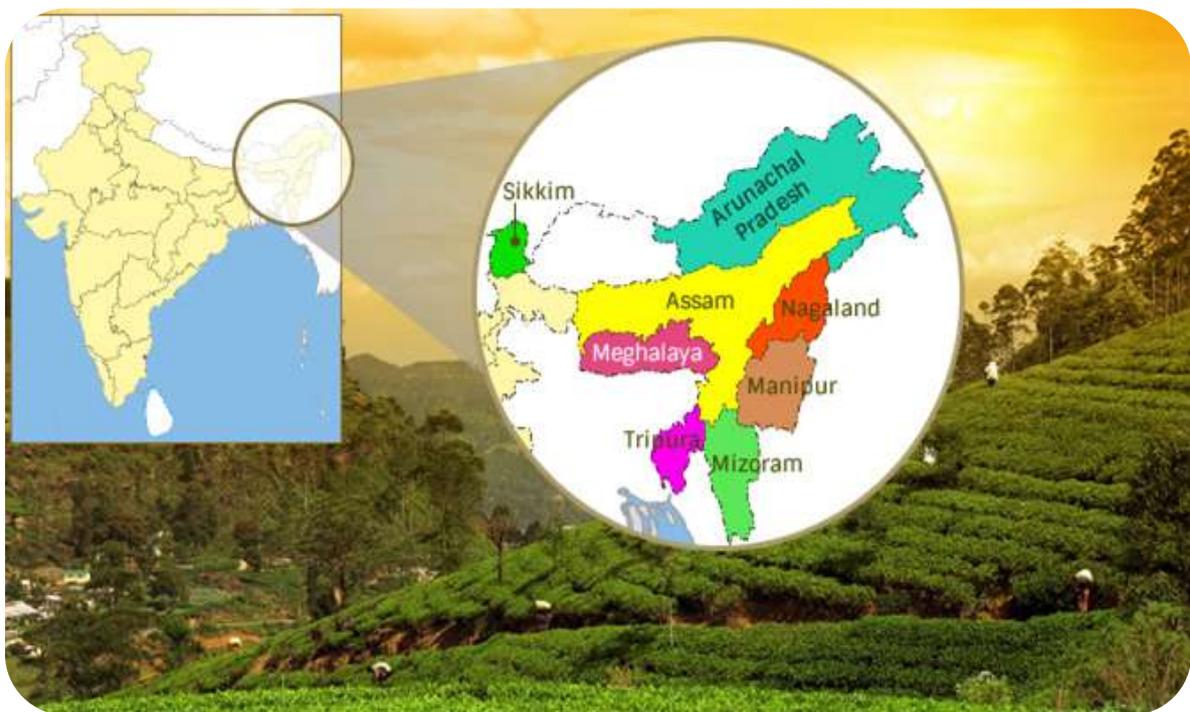


## Accepting the Identities: Bezbaruah Committee Report for the Racial Discrimination against People from Northeast India



(Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/travel/top-10-things-you-may-not-know-about-northeast-india> )

## In This Issue

### **LEAD STORY:**

- **Accepting the Identities: Bezbaruah Committee Report for the Racial Discrimination against People from Northeast India**

### **HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:**

- **Can India Put an End to Identity Politics?**

### **SECTION 1: ECONOMY**

- **In Four Areas in Delhi, Average Income Has Declined By 60% After Demonetization, Note ban delays National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme payments , Petrol pumps versus banks: The mess shows it is utopian to force a cashless life, FM Arun Jaitley defends note ban with jump in tax numbers , Since November 8, Rs 80,000 crore of loan repayment in old notes, says I-T department, Tax evasion suspected in Rs 3-4 lakh crore deposits post demonetization, Ex-RBI Governor Y.V. Reddy Says Central Bank Facing “Reputation Risk”, Banning Jallikattu Will Decimate India’s Indigenous Cattle Breeds, What is universal basic income – and does it make sense for India?**

### **SECTION 2: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- **POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE** :Is government manipulating agriculture data?, PMO Has No Information on Officials Consulted Before Demonetisation
- **SECURITY**: Is the Naga peace deal dead?, India’s Look East Policy and the Northeast: Bridging Spaces or Widening Schisms?
- **EDUCATION**:Uttar Pradesh has India’s largest population of children, but least teachers per student, MP: Reading Levels Declined from 80 to 32 in 4 Years
- **HEALTH**: Malnutrition among kids doubles in decade, Sanitation Workers Rally to Demand Payment of Arrears and a Minimum Wage
- **ENVIRONMENT**: India’s air pollution discourse needs to move beyond Delhi
- **LAW AND JUSTICE** : After NHRC notice, now Chhattisgarh HC will hear “sexual assault” of tribal women case, Religious Imagery on Court Premises Undermines India’s Secularism

### **SECTION 3: SOCIETY**

- **GENDER**: Maternity benefit scheme: What PM Modi said, where things stand now, Voices of Resistance Against Female Genital Mutilation in India Grow Louder

### **SECTION 4: OPINIONS/BOOK**

- **OPINIONS**: Can India Put an End to Identity Politics?, Sectarian Appeal Judgment, India’s Marie Antoniette Moment

## Lead Essay

### Accepting the Identities: Bezbaruah Committee Report for the Racial Discrimination against People from Northeast India

#### Introduction

Wide diversity is the strength of India. With more than two thousand ethnic groups, 1652 mother tongues, 22 official languages in 29 states and 7 union territories, Indian Constitution believes in the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity. However, 86 percent of the Northeastern people in metro cities of India face racial discrimination in different forms in 2009-2010 (Bezbaruah Committee Report, 2014). Due to the rising racial attacks against the people from Northeast in several metropolitan cities of India such as Delhi, Bangalore, Pune etc., in 2014, efforts led by Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), Manipur women gun Survivors Network, Northeast India women Initiatives for peace (NEIWIP) and others students and leaders led the government of India to form the Bezbaruah committee to look into racial discrimination faced by the people from Northeast region and a call emerged which was accepted by the government to look into the formation of an anti-racial law in India. The Bezbaruah Committee, headed by M.P. Bezbaruah, member, Northeastern Council, was set up in February 2014 after the death of Nido Tania, a 19-year-old student from Arunachal Pradesh, who died in Delhi on January 29, 2014. The Committee's mandate was to listen to the issues raised by people from Northeast India living in other areas of the country, especially metro cities.

#### Instances of Discrimination and Bezbaruah Committee

Comprising eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim and surrounded by five countries namely Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, Northeast is home to 45 million people. Northeast shares only 2 percent of its border with the mainland of the country and 98 percent with the international border, which the Bezbaruah Committee Report, 2014 mentioned as the "chicken neck corridor". According to a study conducted by the Centre for Northeastern Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia observes that the outflow of people from the region has increased from 0.4 million in 1981 to 0.6 million in 1991 and then to 1.1 million in 2001. The study also mentions that Delhi is one of the most preferred destinations, with over two lakh people from the Northeast. Another study by the V.V Giri Labour Institute titled Report on Migration from Northeast to urban centres mentions that the people coming from the Northeast come into a social atmosphere which is different from their lifestyles back home and face the challenge of adjusting to the totally changed situation, which make them feel insecure and often are vulnerable to the problems in a large city. The report says that even if they try to adjust to the new atmosphere, their Mongolian features and their pale often make them distinct in public places and even their easy going, friendly outlook is often misunderstood, which drive them to stick together with their friends and relatives. Bezbaruah Committee report 2014 also mentions about the cultural conflict that arises due to the wrong perception about lifestyle of the North-eastern people, discrimination in daily life in terms of over-charging of taxi/auto fares, passing lewd comments, teasing, molestation and being mistaken as foreigners at tourist places, museums etc. Apart from that, according to the report, the most vocal complaints from the Northeast people have been about the behaviour and attitude of the police, which make them not to trust police and were bitter about the attitude of discrimination and harassment faced when they go for registering cases.

The main recommendation made by the Bezbaruah Committee, 2014, on tackling discrimination against the people of the region is that either a new law should be promulgated as directed by the High Court of Delhi or the Indian Penal Code should be amended. Other measures recommended under the introduction of new law are that the offence should be cognizable and non-bailable; the investigation of the FIR should be completed in 60 days by a special squad and investigated by a police officer not below the rank of deputy SP or ACP; a special prosecutor should be appointed to handle all such cases of atrocities and the trial should be completed in 90 days.

## Lead Essay

The second major recommendation made by the committee is the strengthening of law enforcement agencies. It has suggested a process of comprehensive, computerized database for keeping track of the people from the Northeast by registering the people from the region migrating to other part of the country.

The third measure suggested by the committee is the creation of fast-track courts for the cases relating to Northeast people, particularly those which are racially motivated and involving heinous crimes against the Northeast women and children and the creation of a special squad supervised by the Northeast Special Police Unit.

The fourth major recommendation made by the committee is the interventions in education in terms of integrating each and every aspects of the Northeast into the consciousness of the people outside the region. The committee also suggests insight for planning of higher education institution in the Northeast region.

The fifth major recommendation made by the committee is that the legal awareness campaigns in neighbourhoods that have a significant presence of members from the Northeast community and on introducing lectures on legal rights for university students. It underlines the role of social media in improving connectivity and communication with the community.

The sixth measure recommended by the committee is the bonding power of sports, which suggests that there should be steps to hold regular national and international events in the Northeast as such events will create greater harmony and better understanding.

It has almost been three years of the introduction of the Bezbaruah Committee report 2014. But the violence against people of the Northeast region in the National Capital Region (NCR) has shown no sign of declining and 98 per cent of the recommendations made by the Committee remain unfulfilled. Till now a helpline number (1093) and 44 persons from Northeast have been recruited in Delhi Police in the name of implementation of the the Bezbaruah panel's recommendation<sup>1</sup>. Moreover according to a survey, 54 per cent of people from Northeast living and working in the capital felt that Delhi is the most "unsafe place" in terms of ethnic intolerance, while 67 per cent feel that they were victims of racial discrimination and the violence against the people of the region has gone up by 270 per cent during the last three years<sup>2</sup>. During 2016, at least eight cases of murder and two of attempted murder, 14 cases of rape and 16 cases of molestation and as many as 21 cases related to obscenity and stalking involving the people of Northeast have been recorded in Delhi<sup>3</sup>.

### The existing laws for the Racial Equality in India

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution states, 'The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India'. Article 15 of the Constitution states that, Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.—(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to— (a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or (b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public. Article 16: 'Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment: There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or any employment or office under the state'. Article 21 states that,

<sup>1</sup>Centre dragging feet on Bezbaruah Report. Accessed from <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov0916/oth050> on 8/01/2017

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> ibid

## Lead Essay

“No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.” In spite of the equality as guaranteed in constitution, there has been rising intolerant racial violence against people from Northeast India.

Moreover, India signed United Nation Convention on Racial Discrimination 1965, on second March 1967 and ratified it on third December 1968. The convention guarantees every person the right's on the basis of “race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin”.

Apart from these, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which seeks to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and section 153A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 which deals with the offence of promotion of enmity between classes on the grounds of religion, race place of birth, residence, language etc., section 153 B of the Indian Penal Code, which deals with the imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration and 505 (2) of Indian Penal Code is about the statement conducing public mischief in place of worship or in any assembly engaged in the performance of religious worship or religious ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall also be liable to fine.

According Bezbaruah Committee 2014, although there are many laws relating to the racial equality, there is no clear law that covers the type of incidents that the Northeast people are exposed to. Therefore, the committee recommends the amendment of the Indian Panel Code. Considering the most common demand of the people of the region to make the words like ‘Momos’, ‘Chinkis’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Chichi Chu Chu’ or any derogatory remarks relating to race, culture, identity or physical appearances to be made punishable as these words in themselves may not be violative of the law but hurts the sentiments due to the context and connotation of such expressions. Two suggestions were made, amending the Indian Panel Code by inserting section 153C, which deals with the imputations, assertions prejudicial to human dignity and section 509 A which deals with the word, gesture or act intended to insult a member of a particular racial group or of any race. These recommendations for ammandment of IPC are alternative to a new law. However, the Committee suggests that whatever be the legislation decided but it should include three provisions (as mention earlier), viz.(i) the offence should be cognizable and non-bailable; (ii) the investigation of the fir should be completed compulsorily in 60 days by a Special Squad, investigated by a police officer not below the rank of Deputy SP/ACP. A special prosecutor should be appointed to handle all such cases of atrocities. (iii) the trial should be completed in 90 days.

### Summary:

Racism has many times been confused with regionalism or economic underdevelopment. Regionalism and economic underdevelopment are narrower concept than racism. The UN Convention on Racial Discrimination 1965 defines “racial discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” Although different factors may lead to the racial violence but the most fundamental factor is the mindset of the people and idea or understanding of people about a particular race. Bezbaruah Committee suggests that the social mindset have to change to stop racial violence against people from Northeast region of the country. But the question comes “what will change the mindset of the people?” it is the law that must treat the crime against Northeast people seriously. In order to accept the concept of Northeast as a part of India, the awareness should be created among the people. Educational institution of different levels can play an important role in making people aware of the issues and history of the Northeast region.

## Lead Essay

After more than two years of accepting the recommendation of the Committee, the Supreme Court urged the Government to implement the report on racial violence against the Northeast people. But the real effect of the report on the violence against the region depends on the proper implementation of the report, which is delayed by almost two years. Therefore proper initiatives should be taken to fasten the implementation of the report.

### Prepared by:

Nijara Deka

### Reference

- “Centre Dragging feet on Bezbaruah Report”, (November, 9, 2016) Retrived from <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov0916/oth050> on January 7, 2017.
- “UN Convention on Racial Discrimination 1965 & The Call for India to Have a Diversity Policy & an Anti-racial Law” , (October, 2016) , Retrived from <http://cafi-online.org/iec/CAFI-briefing-Note-on-UN-Convention-on-RacialDiscrimination.pdf> on January 7, 2017-01-09
- “Supreme Court Gives Directions on Tackling Racial Violence Against People from the Northeast” (December, 16, 2016) Retrived from <https://thewire.in/87298/supreme-court-northeast-racial-violence/> on January 7, 2017.
- “Report of The Committee Under The Chairmanship of Shri M.P. Bezbaruah to look into the Concerns of the People of The North East Living in Other Parts of the Counrty” (July, 11, 2014). Retrived from <http://itanagar.nic.in/documents/Bezbaruah.PDF> on January 7, 2017.
- “Supreme Court pushes for implementation of Bezbaruah Panel report” (December, 15, 2016) Retrived from <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/5aki14x9pZTdKmwOs0Fe9N/Supreme-Court-pushes-for-implementation-of-Bezbaruah-panel.html> on January 7, 2017-01-09
- “ CAFI Brefing Paper on Bezbaruah Committee Report to look into Racial Discrimination of people from Northeast India” (October, 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.cafi-online.org/iec/CAFI-Briefing-paper.pdf> on January 6, 2017.

## Headlines

### **Can India Put an End to Identity Politics?**

*(The New York Times, January 9, 2017)*

Indian politics have long been driven and riven by appeals to caste, religion, ethnicity and gender. The prime minister leads a Hindu nationalist party and has been accused of stoking hatred and violence against Muslims. But last week, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that political appeals on the basis of religion, caste, community or language, violate the Indian Constitution's guarantee of fundamentally secular elections. Elections could be voided if the rule is violated. But will the ruling create greater equality or undermine Indian democracy?

Read more: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2017/01/09/can-india-put-an-end-to-identity-politics>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

## Economy

### **In Four Areas in Delhi, Average Income Has Declined By 60% After Demonetization**

(Vyom Anil, *The Wire*, 7 January, 2017)

A survey conducted in Munirka village, Vasant Vihar's Kusumpur Pahadi slum, Trilokpuri and Noor Nagar's Pahadi slum shows that casual labourers and small shop owners have been the hardest hit by demonetisation. With the start of a new calendar year, the window period for exchanging old currency notes came to an end. A saloon owner in Munirka village in Delhi had a Rs 1000 note in his hand, asking all his customers if they knew someone in the bank. Now he has to go to the RBI and provide an explanation as to why the note was not exchanged before the deadline. He was not sure whether he should explain that his wife had stashed it away for hard days and failed to remember it on time. Rs 1000 is the equivalent of a week's earnings after paying his shop's rent and other expenses. Yet he was happy, he said, about the 'sacrifice' he had made to help catch the black-money hoarders.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/97727/demonetisation-four-areas-delhi/>

Date of Access: 9.01.2017

### **Note ban delays National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme payments**

(Ruchika Chitravanshi, *The Economic Times*, December 28, 2016)

At least eight states have raised the issue with the Centre about a "terrible cash crunch" leading to delays in payment of wages to workers. NREGS workers are paid daily in smaller denomination notes, which are in short supply even after the government put more focus to make cash available in rural areas. On an average, an NREGS worker gets Rs 160 per day. States that have flagged off concerns include West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Odisha and Manipur. The Centre has so far released nearly 90 per cent of the total funds allotted to NREGS amounting to Rs 38,935 crore.

Read More: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/note-ban-delays-national-rural-employment-guarantee-scheme-payments/articleshow/56209691.cms>

Date Accessed: 29.12.2016

### **Petrol pumps versus banks: The mess shows it is utopian to force a cashless life**

(Dinnesh Unnikrishnan, *Firstpost*, 9th January, 2017)

While other retailers, can pass on the surcharges on card payments to the end-consumer, pump dealers cannot. This is because fuel prices and margins are fixed. If banks charge 1 percent surcharge per transactions, the petrol dealer is left with almost nothing.

Read More: <http://www.firstpost.com/business/petrol-pumps-vs-banks-the-mess-shows-it-is-utopian-to-force-a-cashless-life-3194900.html>

Date Accessed: 9.7.2017

### **FM Arun Jaitley defends note ban with jump in tax numbers**

(Deepshikha Sikarwar, *The Economic Times*, January 10, 2017)

The government's tax collections were up in December 2016 bucking any impact of demonetisation with excise duty, levied at factory gate on goods, showing a growth of 31% . Direct taxes grow by 12.01% and indirect taxes grow by 25% over the corresponding period last year April-December 2015, according to data released by the finance ministry on Monday. Giving out the data, finance minister Arun Jaitley said: "Big picture is direct taxes are up for first three quart ..

Read more at:

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56416908.cms?google\\_editors\\_picks=true&google\\_editors\\_picks=true&utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56416908.cms?google_editors_picks=true&google_editors_picks=true&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

Date Accessed: 10/01/2017

## Economy

### **Since November 8, Rs 80,000 crore of loan repayment in old notes, says I-T department** (TNN. The Times of India, January 10, 2017)

The income tax department said on Tuesday that more than 60 lakh bank accounts saw deposits of over Rs 2 lakhs each since the November scrapping of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes.

About Rs 80,000 crore of repayment of loans was done in cash since November 8. And Rs 3-4 lakh crore of evaded income was deposited in banks post that date, an I-T official said.

Read More : <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/since-november-8-rs-80000-crore-of-loan-repayment-in-old-notes-says-it-department/articleshow/56437532.cms>

Date Accessed: 10/01/2017

### **Tax evasion suspected in Rs 3-4 lakh crore deposits post demonetisation** (The Economic Times, January 10, 2017)

As it analyses bank deposits post- demonetisation, the government has found that an estimated Rs 3-4 lakh crore of tax-evaded income could have been deposited during 50-day window provided to get rid of junked Rs 500/1000 notes. A senior official said Income Tax Department has been asked to scrutinise details and send notices to depositors of Rs 3-4 lakh crore on which tax could have been evaded.

Read more at:

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56438348.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56438348.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

Date Accessed: 10/01/2017

### **Ex-RBI Governor Y.V. Reddy Says Central Bank Facing “Reputation Risk”** (PTI, January 01, 2017)

**New Delhi:** Former RBI governor Y.V. Reddy today said that the central bank is facing a reputational risk and its identity as an institution has been damaged.

Reddy also opined that the problem of black money cannot be eliminated only by destroying cash through demonetisation.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/98431/reserve-bank-of-india-reputational-risk-yv-reddy/>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

### **Banning Jallikattu Will Decimate India’s Indigenous Cattle Breeds** (Himakiran Angula, *the wire*, January 01, 2017)

Imagine this scene a few thousand years ago in the Indus Valley region. A group of herders out grazing a few hundred cattle, enjoying the warm sun on their backs with the occasional cry of a calf seeking its mother and the mother guiding it. The whole herd is on the move as the lazy day passes by.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/19157/banning-jallikattu-will-decimate-indias-indigenous-cattle-breeds/>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

### **What is universal basic income – and does it make sense for India?** (Sruthisagar, *the scroll*, January 01, 2017)

Over the last week, newspapers have reported that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government could lay the foundations for a universal basic income in India this year. As early as October 2016, Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian confirmed that

## Economy

the idea of offering a regular payment from the state to all citizens regardless of their employment status would make its way to the Economic Survey, which is tabled in Parliament ahead of the Budget.

“You are really on the ball here,” Subramanian said when asked about a basic income in September at a conference in Odisha. “In fact, am a bit unhappy with you for stealing the thunder of the next [economic] survey because it is going to be one of the big topics.”

Read More: <https://scroll.in/article/826227/what-is-universal-basic-income-and-does-it-make-sense-for-india>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

## Governance & Development

### *POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE*

#### **Is government manipulating agriculture data?**

(Jitendra, *Down to Earth*, December 27, 2016)

Till December 23, 2016, there has been two per cent rise in sowing of wheat than normal average. Coverage of about 27.86 million ha has been reported for wheat as compared to a normal of 27.46 million ha. This is seven per cent higher (about two million ha) than 2015-16. Interestingly, due to demonetisation, wheat sowing area in early December was reported 12 per cent below normal. Within two weeks, it surpassed the normal average by two per cent.

What also puts a question mark on government's claim that everything is going in 'right' direction is the sudden decision of importing wheat. Moreover, there's hardly any mention of paddy sowing dipping by about 30 per cent in comparison to both normal season and previous drought season in 2015-16.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/curious-case-of-agriculture-data-56651?platform=hootsuite>

Date Accessed: 29.12.2016

#### **PMO Has No Information on Officials Consulted Before Demonetisation**

(*The Wire*, January 9, 2017)

There is no information available about officials whose views were taken before the decision to demonetise high-value currency notes was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 8, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has said. The PMO also refused to answer a query on whether the chief economic advisor (CEA) and the finance minister were consulted before the sudden announcement was made, saying the query does not come under the definition of "information" under the RTI Act. Responding to an RTI query seeking to know the names of officials who were consulted before the decision, it said, "Information sought is not available in the record of this office."

Read More: <https://thewire.in/98372/pmo-no-information-officials-consulted-demonetisation/>

Date Accessed : 10/01/2017

### *SECURITY*

#### **Is the Naga peace deal dead?**

(Sudeep Chakravarti, *Live Mint*, December 29, 2016)

The United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of Naga tribes in Manipur, seen by many as an I-M proxy, has escalated its demand for an "alternative arrangement" to reverse the Manipur government's administrative and development discrimination against the tribes-dominated hills. From early November UNC triggered a blockading of highways through Naga-held hills in Manipur, to choke the largely Meitei-inhabited plains. Even ending the blockade, which has heightened ethnic tensions ahead of assembly elections in early 2017—and bought Manipur's controversial Congress chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh a profile of a saviour of Meiteis and Manipur—will not alter this reality, as it involves the mainstreaming of rebels in a post-conflict society.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/3qyDOXQxtCHMZS5Afz01pI/Is-the-Naga-peace-deal-dead.html>

Date Accessed: 29.12.2016

#### **India's Look East Policy and the Northeast: Bridging Spaces or Widening Schisms?**

(Snehashish Mitra and Ranbir Sammadar, *The Wire*, 7th January, 2017)

The Look East policy evolved into a tool for greater economic engagement with our eastern neighbours, and forging strategic partnerships and security cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia and Far East – such as Vietnam and Japan. Taking this idea forward, the Modi government decided to focus more on improving its relation with ASEAN and the East Asian countries. It was also aimed at eliminating the insurgency problem in the Northeast once and for all by way of opening up the region to Southeast Asia. In this way, the sea and land promised to become interlocked elements in India's eastward thrust. In short, the Look East and Act East policies have had military, political and economic components.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/97491/bridging-spaces-widening-schisms-look-east-policy-northeast/>

Date Accessed: 9.7.2017

## Governance & Development

### EDUCATION

#### **Uttar Pradesh has India's largest population of children, but least teachers per student** (Khushboo Balani, *Scroll*, 7th January, 2017)

A fourth of Uttar Pradesh's 200 million people are aged between five and 14 years – India's largest child population – but the state has the fewest teachers per student, the poorest transition rate from primary to upper primary school and amongst the lowest learning outcomes in the country.

Read More: <https://scroll.in/article/825966/uttar-pradesh-has-indias-largest-population-of-children-but-least-teachers-per-student>

Date Accessed: 9.1.2017

#### **MP: Reading Levels Declined from 80 to 32 in 4 Years**

(Khushboo Balani, *India Spend*, January 10, 2017)

Reading and some math skills of Madhya Pradesh (MP) students are among India's lowest, the transition rate to higher classes is lower than the national average, a majority of classrooms are shared by students of different grades, and government elementary schools are 17.6% short of school teachers, according an IndiaSpend analysis of various government data.

Read more: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/mp-reading-levels-declined-from-80-to-32-in-4-years-56577>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

### HEALTH

#### **Malnutrition among kids doubles in decade**

(Vishav Bharti, *The Tribune*, December 28, 2016)

The data for NFHS-4 —considered among top studies in the health sector —was compiled from a survey that covered 16,449 households. Punjab's report is to be released soon.

According to the survey, acute malnutrition among children below five years—considered an important growth indicator—has increased to 15.6 per cent from 9.2 per cent in NFHS-3 (conducted in 2005-06).

The World Health Organisation standards put low weight-for-height category children in 'acute starvation' or 'severe disease' category, or even both.

The situation has gone even worse in the 'severely malnourished' category, with an almost three-fold rise in the last 10 years: from 2.1 per cent in NFHS-3 to 5.6 per cent in the latest survey.

Read More: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/community/malnutrition-among-kids-doubles-in-decade/343155.html>

Date Accessed: 29.12.2016

#### **Sanitation Workers Rally to Demand Payment of Arrears and a Minimum Wage**

(Rahi Gaikwad, *The Wire*, 7th January, 2017)

Amid such tight security arrangements, thousands of *safai kamgaar* (sanitation workers) from all over Maharashtra, under the banner of New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) staged a rally, seeking a resolution to their long-pending demands of equal pay for equal work, payment of wage arrears, minimum wage and work security.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/97882/sanitation-workers-rally-demand-payment-arrears-minimum-wage/>

Date Accessed: 9.7.2017

## Governance & Development

### ENVIRONMENT

#### India's air pollution discourse needs to move beyond Delhi

(Ragini Bhuyan, *Live Mint*, December 29, 2016)

What explains this north-south divide in air pollution? Both man-made and natural factors are responsible for this, says Anubha Goel, an assistant professor at the department of civil engineering at IIT-Kanpur. "With higher population density, and much larger number of vehicles on road, the amount of pollutants emitted in northern India is much more than in the south. The stark temperature difference between winters and summers not only changes wind patterns, it also raises energy consumption, both fossil fuel and biomass, in North India. Biomass burning, a significant contributor of PM2.5 emissions, spikes in North India during winters because of the intense cold.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Home-Page/9z5ZqUvynqm60NPZ6uN1aJ/Indias-air-pollution-discourse-needs-to-move-beyond-Delhi.html>

Date Accessed: 29.12.2016

### LAW AND JUSTICE

#### After NHRC notice, now Chhattisgarh HC will hear "sexual assault" of tribal women case

(Ejaz Kaiser, *New Indian Express*, 8 January, 2017)

After the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) serving a notice to the Chhattisgarh government asking why it shouldn't recommend interim relief to the victims of rape and sexual violence in restive Bastar, the "sexual assault" case will come up for hearing before the state high court at Bilaspur on Monday.

The NHRC during its fact-finding visit and inquiry in February last year has prima-facie found 16 women sexually and physically assaulted by the security personnel in strife-torn Bijapur district.

Read More: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/jan/08/after-nhrc-notice-now-chhattisgarh-hc-will-hear-sexual-assault-of-tribal-women-case-1557439.html>

Date of Access: 9.01.2017

#### Religious Imagery on Court Premises Undermines India's Secularism

(Arya Raje, *The Wire*, 8 January, 2017)

As you enter the Children's Home in Dongri, Mumbai, you are greeted with a framed photo of Ganpati. Further ahead, a Ganpati temple occupies a significant area of the premises. This is where all the children who are accused of committing offences in Mumbai are brought, as well as where the Child Welfare Committee functions. Parents and children waiting for their case to be brought up at the Juvenile Justice Board sit on the fence surrounding the temple or the stairs because there is no seating provided for them. Should religious symbols – especially when these symbols are representative of a single religion, be present within a court?

Read More: <https://thewire.in/98087/religious-imagery-in-courtrooms-undermines-indias-secularism/>

Date of Access: 9.01.2017

## Society

### **GENDER**

#### **Maternity benefit scheme: What PM Modi said, where things stand now**

(Shalini Nair, Indian Express, 5 January 2017)

Did the Prime Minister announce a new scheme for pregnant women?

Not exactly. Such a scheme — the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, or IGMSY — was begun by the UPA 2 government in October 2010 on a pilot basis in 53 districts. The National Food Security Act, 2013, made it incumbent upon the incoming NDA government to ensure universal coverage under the scheme. In an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court in October 2015, in reply to a petition by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) under Maneka Gandhi said the scheme would be extended to all districts, beginning with 200 districts in 2016-17. That commitment has not been met.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/maternity-benefit-scheme-what-pm-modi-said-where-things-stand-now-4459269/>

Date of Access: 9.01.2017

#### **Voices of Resistance Against Female Genital Mutilation in India Grow Louder**

(Runa Mukherjee, The Wire, 24 December, 2016)

An Indian organisation dedicated to ending FGM has been capturing the rising dissent against an age-old practice among members of Dawood Bohra community that often leads to significant physical and psychological trauma. Members of the Dawoodi Bohra community are coming out to speak against one of its age-old customs that violates child rights and human rights – female genital mutilation (FGM). Khatna, as the practice is colloquially known, is a tradition that has been prevalent in this community for centuries but has come in the public attention only recently due to the concentrated efforts of a few. Most notable of these efforts is a statement issued by the community members for banning khatna in some states of the US, UK and Australia in 2016. The move followed the Australian judgment sentencing a Dawoodi Bohra community leader, a former midwife and a mother of two girls over the mutilation of two minor girls in the country.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/89071/resistance-against-female-genital-mutilation-in-india-grow-louder/>

Date of Access: 9.01.2017

## Opinions/ Books

### OPINIONS

#### Sectarian Appeal Judgment

(Alok Prasanna Kumar, *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 7, 2017)

Supreme Court's judgment on sectarian appeals during election campaigns interprets the Representation of the People Act, 1951 correctly and to its intended effect. The dissenting judgment conflated the substance of the appeal with the identity of the person who is making it, and did not address the scope of the case. The majority judgment's regulation of election speech is not only necessary to ensure free and fair elections and uphold the secular ethos of the Constitution, but also needed to fulfil the constitutional goal of fraternity.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/1/web-exclusives/sectarian-appeals-judgment%E2%80%9494interpreting-representation-peoples-act-its>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

#### India's Marie Antoniette Moment

(Anand Teltumbde, *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 7, 2017)

Narendra Modi's promotion of a "cashless society" shows the government's disconnect from ground realities, and harks back to Marie Antoinette's famous "let them eat cake" response to learning that peasants had no bread to eat. Clearly, a cashless or less-cash economy will not be achievable in the near future, and may also not be desirable.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/1/margin-speak/indias-marie-antoinette-moment.html>

Date Accessed: 10.01.2017

Issue Coordinator: Ms. Nijara Deka

Connect with RGICS at: [info@rgics.org](mailto:info@rgics.org); [www.rgics.org](http://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](mailto:info@rgics.org)