

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act: The Hurdle Race



(Source - http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_QQ-oZHiF4A/TQpDb0_f-fI/AAAAAAAAABu8/abqXca-r-Kg/s1600/savethegirlchild.jpg)

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Lead Essay

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act: The Hurdle Race

The Census (2011) data showed a significant declining trend in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR). It is calculated as number of girls for every 1000 boys between age group of 0-6 years. The ratio in 1961 was 976.ⁱ Since then the ratio has been on a decline. It fell to 962 in 1981, 945 in 1991, then to 927 girls in 2001, and to 918 girls by the time of the 2011 Census.ⁱⁱ The declining ratio reflects both pre birth discrimination manifested through gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls. The decline is widespread across the country and has expanded to rural as well as tribal areas.

In response to the falling sex-ratio, the law first came into force in 1996 as the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994. This was to ban the practice of determining the sex of the unborn child through ultrasound technologies, which was then aborted in case of the girl foetus. Later, it was amended in 2003 to bring the technique of preconception sex selection within the ambit of the Act, banning practices where medical practitioners try to influence the sex of the child before conception by using techniques such as sperm sorting. Thereby, the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 2003, commonly called PC-PNDT Act, makes it illegal to determine the sex of the unborn child or even use sex-selection technologies.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to the Act, ultrasound clinics, genetic counselling centres and genetic laboratories cannot be used for conducting pre-natal diagnostic techniques except for detecting abnormalities such as chromosomal abnormalities, genetic metabolic diseases, sex-linked genetic diseases and congenital anomalies. The Act makes it mandatory for all ultrasound facilities to be registered and for medical practitioners to maintain records of every scan done on pregnant women.^{iv} However, it can be clearly inferred from the census data that the law has been unsuccessful in achieving its desired objectives.

The Public health activists are of the opinion that the Government didn't implement the law properly. On the other hand, radiologists and gynaecologists have claimed that the law has held the medical fraternity responsible for a problem that is manifestly societal as it is parents who abort (sex selectively), are committing the crime.^v However, the problem will find no solution in this blame game. Both, the medical practitioners as well as the parents are equally responsible.

An Alternative viewpoint

In February last year, while responding to questions about people employing different means to detect the gender of an unborn child despite the existence of the Act, the Minister of Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi in Jaipur had said that she had proposed "to all parties and ministers" that the gender of the child be compulsorily registered and the birth be tracked. However, later she clarified that it was only an "alternative view" and that no such formal proposal was being considered either by the ministry or the Cabinet.^{vi}

These views were severely opposed by the activists and experts. Dr. George, the campaigner for 'saving the girl child' had said that the option of monitoring 29 million pregnancies annually is not viable when the government has not been able to check 50,000 ultrasound clinics. The Experts are of the view that the idea of compulsory sex determination will only push women to unsafe abortions, as there could be greater pressure on the pregnant woman from her family. Moreover, the proposal will be an encroachment on a woman's reproductive rights and shifts the burden on the woman by criminalising her.^{vii} Therefore, along with prosecuting the illegal medical practitioners, it is significant to bring a change in the mindset of the people and the society.

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Anomalies in the implementation of the PCPNDT Act

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in its report, “Performance Audit on Empowerment of Women Government of Uttar Pradesh” for the period from 2010-11 to 2014-15 has indicated that similar situation is prevalent across the country. The funds allotted to various state governments were underutilised. In case of renewal of registration, the Act mandates the renewal by the authorities to be done within 90 days; failure to do so results in the automatic renewal of the licence of the clinic. The CAG had reported that pendency in renewal of registration of 138 centres ranged between 26 and 1490 days while registration of 32 centres had not been done in due time. Similarly, it reported that majority of the District Appropriate Authorities have failed to perform regular inspections of Ultra-sonography (USG) centres. Due to this reason they have failed to map and regulate USG equipment, absence of tracking system in USG machines, non-imposition of penalties, insufficient decoy operations.^{viii}

Additionally, it has been reported as of September 2014, 14 States/UTs i.e. Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Island, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry had not filed a single case under the PC&PNDT Act since 1994 despite all these States having districts targeted under the *Beti Bachao Beti Padoo*. Further, during the same period, no conviction has been secured in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and Union Territories of Chandigarh.^{ix} These facts clearly reflect upon the major policy gap that exists in the legislation. Despite the Act being in force for last 20 years, the concerned District Appropriate Authorities in several districts and states have failed to conscientiously perform their functions to conduct regular inspections and maintain records of the USG centres, registration, etc as mandated in the Act. Moreover, due to the higher risks involved of being caught by the authorities in certain states, touts have started alluring clients from these neighbouring states by offering them attractive discounts. Hence, these states become the safe havens for touts and doctors who conduct sex determination tests illegally.

According to the PCPNDT Act, it is mandatory for sonography centres to maintain complete record of the past two years of the ultrasound conducted. However, during inspections, Pre-conception Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique (PCPNDT) team found that some centres did not have the complete record of past two years of sonography. According to the reports, more than 9,000 inspections at sonography centres have been conducted so far and 137 people have been convicted for violation of PCPNDT Act.^x

Fact sheet on female foeticide and female infanticide in India

Number of missing girls due to sex selection during 1991-2011	25,49,3,480 i.e. 25.49 million
Number of missing girls due to sex selection per year	12,74,674 i.e. 12.74 million
Number of cases registered under the Preconception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act) from 1994-2014	2,021
Number of cases registered under the PC&PNDT Act per year	101
Number of conviction secured under the PC&PNDT Act from 1994-2014	206
Ratio of cases registered against missing girls	1 (one) case approximately per 12,614 missing girls due to sex selection
Number of conviction under the PC&PNDT Act	1 conviction per 1,23,755 missing girls due to sex selection or sex determination
Number of States/Union territories which had not registered a single case under the PC&PNDT Act since 1994	14
Number of States/Union territories which had not secured as single conviction under the PC&PNDT Act since 1994	23
Top 10 States with cases of infanticide (As per NCRB's Crime	i) Uttar Pradesh, ii) Madhya Pradesh, iii) Tamil

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in India reports from 2001 to 2015)	Nadu, iv) Maharashtra, v) Chhattisgarh, vi) Karnataka, vii) Punjab, viii) Andhra Pradesh, ix) Haryana and x) Gujarat
Top 10 States with cases of foeticide (As per NCRB's Crime in India reports from 2001 to 2015)	i) Madhya Pradesh, ii) Rajasthan, iii) Punjab, iv) Maharashtra, v) Chhattisgarh, vi) Haryana, vii) Uttar Pradesh, viii) Delhi, ix) Karnataka and x) Gujarat
Top 10 states with skewed CSR as per 2011 census	i) Haryana, ii) Punjab, iii) Jammu & Kashmir, iv) NCT of Delhi, v) Chandigarh, vi) Rajasthan, vii) Gujarat, viii) Maharashtra, ix) Uttarakhand and x) Uttar Pradesh
Top 10 states with skewed SRB (Sample Registration System Statistical Report-2013)	Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Jharkhand

(Source- <http://www.stopfemaleinfanticide.org/files/TheStateofthePCPNDTAct2016.pdf>)

A Shimmering Hope

The Social Campaign of *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* was launched two years ago in Panipat, Haryana by Prime Minister Modi to address the issue of decline in Child Sex-ratio (CSR) in 100 gender critical districts. The objective of the scheme is to celebrate the Girl Child & Enable her Education. In order to achieve the goals, the emphasis has been laid on preventing gender biased sex selective elimination, to ensure survival and protection of the girl child, providing education to the girl child. The Scheme is implemented with the coordination and joint efforts of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Human Resource Development. At the district level, the District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners lead and coordinate actions of all the departments for the implementation of the scheme.^{xi}

According to the gender ratio data available with the Haryana state government, 12 districts have crossed the 900-mark.^{xii} Sex ratio at birth (SRB) in the State this past year touched the 900-mark for the first time in almost two decades. The SRB in December 2016 was 914. The State Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has claimed that the improvement was made possible due to effective implementation of the law against illegal sex determination and female foeticide.^{xiii} The State had initiated an aggressive drive against female foeticide by ensuring stern implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act. As a result, 391 first information reports were lodged in the State since May 2015 and more than 1,000 offenders have been arrested. However, the programme in Haryana now faces new challenges: the mushrooming of illegal ultrasound centres near Haryana in Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. During the 74 inter-State raids conducted by the Haryana government officials over the past year in this connection, 37 (the maximum) of these were in Uttar Pradesh alone.^{xiv}

The officials have reported that with increased enforcement in Haryana, touts were now taking pregnant women to ultrasound centres located outside the State, with UP turning out to be a haven. While touts in Haryana charged ₹35,000-₹30,000 for illegal sex-determination, the rates in Uttar Pradesh are as low as ₹10,000. In addition, sex-determination and female foeticide has also been thriving in Delhi, Punjab and Rajasthan.^{xv}

Mixed Result in other States

According to the information provided by the Government in the Parliament, the sex ratio at birth has dipped from 909 (2011-13) to 906 (2012-14) females per 1000 males. However, despite India's deteriorating sex-ratio, there has been improvement in some states. Along with Haryana, the state of Punjab which had displayed an alarming trend in the last few decades, have begun to show signs of improvement. In Punjab, the ratio improved from 867 to 870 and in Haryana

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it improved from 864 to 866. Both these states had a ratio below the national average of 906. Some other states where the ratio has improved are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.^{xvi}

The child sex ratio at birth in Gujarat has plunged to a five-year low of 907 girls per 1,000 boys in 2012-2014, according to the data released by Sample Registration System (SRS). This is a major drop of 4 points from 2011-2013 SRS data which recorded 911 girls per 1,000 boys in the state.^{xvii} In Jaisalmer, the number was 925; this has fallen drastically to 888 per 1,000 boys in November last year. The Rajasthan State government has taken this sharp fall very seriously and there are seven such districts which have seen drastic fall in sex ratio.^{xviii}

Comparison of Sex Ratio at Birth and Child Sex Ratio

State	SRB (2011-2013)	CSR of 0-6 years (2011)
Haryana	864	834
Punjab	867	846
Uttar Pradesh	878	902
Delhi	887	871
Rajasthan	893	888
Jammu and Kashmir	902	862
Maharashtra	902	894

(Source- <http://www.stopfemaleinfanticide.org/files/TheStateofthePCPNDTAct2016.pdf>)

The Way Forward

The PC & PNDT Act makes no distinction between punishment for sex selection leading to female foeticide and other offences under the Act or Rule such as non-maintenance of Form F, non-registration, non-maintenance of records etc but which do not necessarily lead to abortion of the identified foetus. Due to these factors, in September 2016, radiologists went on a severe strike to protest against the harassment they had to face. They had explained that the violation of the Act amounted to equal punishment for sex determination and clerical errors. They had recommended for separate provisions – to place record- keeping out of the ambit of criminal provisions, separate from actual sex selection under the Act.^{xix} However, it will be wrong to prosecute different offences under the same criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, the medical practitioners should not and cannot be allowed to violate the clauses in the Act. They have to strictly adhere to the norms as prescribed in the Act. Hence, they should be punished for violation of the Act, but it should be based on the gravity of the offence, where punishment for sex selection or determination should be severely dealt with.^{xx}

However, it is not difficult to understand the factors responsible for low number of cases that have been registered for violation of the Act. For the period 1994 – 2014 only 2,021 cases have been registered, which is merely 101 cases per year. For the same period, the number of cases that have been convicted is 206. These numbers are drastically low given the fact that there were 25.49 million girls missing due to sex selection during the period 1991 – 2011. Moreover, 14 States/UTs have not registered a single case so far, which implies that these regions are not prone to the disease of sex-ratio discrimination. However, this is not true. Therefore, the Central Government in cooperation with State governments should ensure that every district is provided with an effective enforcement team and infrastructure which will enable them to diligently perform their duties.

The number of Genetic Counselling Centre/Genetic Clinic/Genetic Laboratory etc that are registered across the country under the PC&PNDT Act is 50,743.^{xxi} Since, the idea of monitoring over 29 million pregnant women from their pregnancy to the delivery of the child is next to impossible and problematic; the option of regulating the 50,743 USG centres across India is more feasible. Therefore, the way forward for the PC & PNDT is in the hands of District Appropriate Authorities to carry out inspections and prosecute the touts and medical practitioners who are fearlessly

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flaunting the Act. This option is not only viable but essential to equalise the sex-ratio in India and hence, empowering the girls.

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Headlines

Headway on dual control, GST likely in July: FM Arun Jaitley

(Anchal Magazine, *The Indian Express*, January 17, 2017)

The Centre and the states managed to hammer out a broad consensus over the contentious issue of division of administrative control over tax assesseees at the ninth meeting of GST Council Monday though it will be at the cost of a three-month delay in the rollout of the proposed indirect tax regime. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said 90 per cent of tax assesseees below the annual turnover threshold of Rs 1.5 crore will be under the control of states and the remaining 10 per cent will be under the Centre's jurisdiction. For a turnover of Rs 1.5 crore and higher, there will be equal division of assesseees between the states and the Centre.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/headway-on-dual-control-gst-likely-in-july-arun-jaitley-4477739/>

Date Accessed: 17/01/2017

Economy

Budget 2017: Government planning national social security system for poor, unemployed

(Deepshikha Sikarwar, *The Economic Times*, January 17, 2017)

The government is considering an ambitious income transfer scheme that could form the basis of a national social security system though opinion is divided over whether it should be a universal basic income or more focused support limited to the most vulnerable. The idea is being discussed as a means of addressing poverty and if a decision is reached, it could be announced in the February 1 budget by FM Arun Jaitley.

Read More:

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56606863.cms?google_editors_picks=true&google_editors_picks=true&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Date Accessed: 17/01/2017

Modi Government Can't Get Away With Demonetisation by Claiming 'Good Intent'

(Sachin Rao, *The Wire*, January 15, 2017)

Through all that has been said about demonetisation over the past two months, the one near constant has been the acknowledgement of the 'good intent' of the exercise. This intent is supposed to include the elimination of black money, the curbing of counterfeiting, controlling terrorism and moving the nation to a cashless age. Such is the aura of intent that even the harshest critics of the government have to preface their criticism with a disclaimer acknowledging the laudable motivations of the exercise. This armour shields the prime minister and the government so that any scrutiny is limited only to how they approach their stated intent without ever questioning their character or the true nature of the intent.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/99905/demonetisation-modi-government-intent/>

Date Accessed: 17/01/2017

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

When it Comes to Uniform Civil Code, Fear and Reform are Contradictory

(Mohammad Azeemullah, *The Wire*, 9 January, 2017)

Muslims are as respectful of the country's laws as other Indian citizens. They have as many rights enshrined in the constitution as citizens of other faiths do. Anyone who violates the law is charged under the same Indian Penal Code (IPC). From laws pertaining to everything, from domestic violence, land disputes, rape and murder to forgery and dowry, Muslims, as Indian citizens, follow all the rules that come under the purview of the country's civil and criminal laws. As with other citizens, Muslims' regular affairs, such as day-to-day economic activities, dealing with banking systems and life insurance policies, to list just a few, are governed by the uniform laws of the country. Muslims do not feel uneasy in obeying these laws.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/98088/when-it-comes-to-uniform-civil-code-fear-and-reform-are-contradictory/>.

Date of Access: 13.01.2017

DEVELOPMENT

Despite government attempts, manual scavenging still a problem in UP

(Saurabh Sharma, *News Laundry*, 13 January, 2017)

"I have never liked picking up shit with my bare hands. Who in the world would? Society does not respect us. It is our fate. If I was born in an upper caste family I wouldn't be a manual scavenger. But you're born according to God's wish, not your own wish or liking," said Rajeshwari, 38, who collects human excreta from dry toilets for a living. She has been a manual scavenger ever since her marriage, as was her mother-in-law. She is one of the five women in Bharatpur village, in Uttar Pradesh's Shahajanpur district, who are yet to receive the relief package but are listed as rehabilitated nonetheless. The Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers Act (SRMS) was introduced in January, 2007 with the objective of rehabilitating manual scavengers and their dependents in alternative occupations. In 2013, a revised version of the SRMS was introduced. The revised version identified manual scavengers, and one from each family is provided a one-time cash assistance.

Read More: <https://www.newslaundry.com/2017/01/13/despite-government-attempts-manual-scavenging-still-a-problem-in-up>

Date of Access: 13.01.2017

SECURITY

BSF Jawan's Video Has a Simple Message: India Should be Ready to Pay for Security

(Manoj Joshi, *The Wire*, 10 January 2017)

The Border Security Force constable Tej Bahadur Yadav who uploaded a video complaint about the quality of food that the forces get on the India-Pakistan border is, by the standards of his force, a trouble maker. The BSF may not be misleading us when it says that he has been a difficult jawan all through his 20 years of service because his action in uploading a video is not in keeping with the rules and regulations of either the BSF or any other police force.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/98677/bsf-army-jawan/>

Date of Access: 13.01.2017

EDUCATION

Rural India Needs English Medium Schools

(*The Tribune*, January 17, 2017)

Discarding all the anti-English noise made by the RSS-affiliated Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, a group of educationists has recommended that at least one government-run English-medium school should be made available in each of the 6,612 blocks in the country. Their recommendations, formed after consultations with state governments, are in tune with the requirements of the changing times.

Governance & Development

Read more: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/listen-to-educationists/351247.html>

Date Accessed: 17.01.2017

HEALTH

No debate on healthcare in India

(Dipankar De Sarkar, *Livemint*, 12th January, 2017)

The Indian newspapers were full of reports of Obamacare—the US healthcare initiative of outgoing President Barack Obama—and will no doubt carry further reports when the new President does with it what he will do. Yet for the most part, there is only silence on healthcare in the world's largest democracy.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/Lk9Nkx8vZlIFVH0BytH5AL/No-debate-on-healthcare-in-India.html>

Date Accessed: 17.1.2017

ENVIRONMENT

Banning Jallikattu Will Decimate India's Indigenous Cattle Breeds

(Himakiran Anugula, *The Wire*, 10 January, 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. Suddenly a bull decides to run astray. With wild animals lurking, there is the danger of the herd breaking up into smaller groups. A young herder emerges and chases the bull. Bulls being males high on testosterone run quite fast and finally the herder catches up with it. He lunges forward and holds onto the hump of the bull. The hump is a unique feature of *Bos Indicus* cattle. He manages to hold onto the hump, slowing the bull down and finally stopping it. He leads it back to the herd and the group continues, while showering praises on the young herder for catching the bull.

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

Date of Access: 13.01.2017

Society

CASTEISM

“My Birth is my Fatal Accident”: Rohith Vemula’s Searing Letter is a Powerful Indictment of Social Prejudices

(The Wire Staff, *The Wire*, January 17, 2017)

One year ago, a young scholar at the University of Hyderabad committed suicide and triggered off a chain of events that still remain unresolved. Rohith Vemula, a Dalit student and a PhD candidate, had been suspended along with four others after a complaint by the local unit of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the BJP. Vemula’s fellowship of Rs 25,000 was suspended for raising “issues under the banner of the Ambedkar Students Association” (ASA). The ABVP’s complaints against the ASA was taken up by union minister Bandaru Dattatreya who forwarded them to the then HRD minister Smriti Irani who asked the university administration to look into them. Vemula found it difficult to manage his expenses and after the he and the four other students were removed from their hostel rooms, they set up a tent on the campus and began a relay hunger strike.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/100488/100488/>

Date Accessed: 17/01/2017

GENDER

Bengaluru molestation and beyond: Not just safety measures – we need a new way of looking at women

(Mrinal Pande, *Scroll*, 16th January, 2017)

Some years ago, while working on a book on the reproductive health of India’s rural women, I was taken aback by the extent to which our vernaculars lack clear terminology to describe or discuss feminine reproductive organs, female hygiene and reproductive rights. If at all, the only commonly understood terms for sex or female sexual organs were available in a gutter language one could not use in civil company without feeling deeply embarrassed and angry.

Read More: <https://scroll.in/article/826552/bengaluru-molestation-and-its-aftermath-not-just-safety-we-need-a-new-way-of-looking-at-women>

Date Accessed: 17.1.2017

Poor, Illiterate Women Will Be the Worst Casualty of Demonetisation

(Sakuntala Narasimhan, *Wire*, 16th January, 2017)

What a cruel joke on the illiterate, subsistence workers who cannot even add or multiply, and don’t understand about passwords, PINs, and the need for secrecy and vigilance. India has the world’s largest population of illiterate people. Among them, women are particularly vulnerable when socio-cultural factors put them at the mercy of the male members of their families, especially over money matters. How can we talk of e-payments without addressing the lacunae in literacy and awareness levels? Even literate citizens are not immune to banking frauds and accounts being hacked. We don’t have adequate laws to protect us from such technology-based malpractices.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/100112/demonetisation-gender-cashless-rural-women/>

Date Accessed: 17.1.2017

Society

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Adoption Panel Moots Tax Sops

(The Tribune, January 17, 2017)

Reeling under a severe shortage of children in its pool, the national body on adoption has recommended a two-year tax break as an incentive for parents adopting through it so that traffickers selling children can be put out of business. According to an estimate there are likely to be over 2 crore orphaned children in the country as on 2011. However, a mere 1,800 of them are available for adoption with Child Adoption Resource Authority (CARA).

Read more: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/adoption-panel-moots-tax-sops/351355.html>

Date Accessed: 17.01.2017

DEMOGRAPHY

Young India Getting on in Years

(The Tribune, January 17, 2017)

Young India will soon be ageing. By 2050, around 20 per cent of the population will be old. There were 100.3 million senior citizens (60 and above) in 2011 which is 8.6 per cent of the population. In 2050, there will be 324 million elderly. Today there are more elderly women than men — around 10 per cent of all women are over 60 years and 8.2 per cent of men are over 60. The main problem in India, however, is how to utilise the demographic dividend and give jobs to the youth who are joining the labour force at the rate of 1 million a month. It is very important that the youth are employed otherwise the old will be treated in a worse manner.

Read more: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/young-india-getting-on-in-years/351249.html>

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ELDERLY

PMO seeks assessment of policy for elderly by external agency

(Indian Express, 15th January, 2017)

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has asked the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to assess the implementation and outcome of the existing national policy for senior citizens by some external agency before giving its nod to the new proposed policy. It also sought a status update on implementation of the Maintenance of Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizen Act, 2007. The PMO has raised a few other queries regarding the draft policy on senior citizens which was sent to it for approval sometime back, a senior official in the Ministry said. The new draft policy will replace the existing National Policy on Older Persons (NOPO), 1999, once approved. "The Ministry should assess the implementation and impact/outcome of earlier policy for senior citizens preferably by some external agency.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/pmo-seeks-assessment-of-policy-for-elderly-by-external-agency-4475255/>

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India and World

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India, China and A Diplomatic Game of Chess

(Sunaina Kumar, *News Laundry*, 10 January, 2017)

For the Ministry of External Affairs, the month of December was exceptionally busy, and this when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was on an extended leave of absence. Three heads of state – the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon; the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Almazbek Atambaev; the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo – and the Chairperson of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Madam Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and the defence minister of Vietnam, Ngo Xuan Lich, visited India. It would be simple to slot these visits as courtesy calls after Narendra Modi's visit to these countries — in July 2015, Modi became the first Prime Minister to call on all five of the Central Asian states and in September 2016, he stopped at Vietnam ahead of the G20 summit. Modi met with the Indonesian President Widodo, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Myanmar in 2014 and invited him to India.

Read More: <https://www.newslaundry.com/2017/01/10/india-china-and-a-diplomatic-game-of-chess>

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Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

Socialism for Modern Times

(*The Telegraph*, January 17, 2017)

What is worth thinking about is progressivism as part of good living. Many rich countries have all kinds of schemes for the poor, unemployed, old, young and so on. But only some have used them to create a desirable life for the young and the old. Scandinavian countries are amongst them; Germany also probably qualifies. These are the countries whose people are happy where they are and do not want to leave. It is this secret of a good life that a government should try to crack. It will involve a fair dose of redistribution, for it is only the rich that have the surplus to finance a good life.

Read more: https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170117/jsp/opinion/story_130633.jsp#.WH2milN97IU

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