

No Share for Labour in the Emerging Sharing Economy



(Source - <https://www.nextbigwhat.com/can-now-book-uber-ola-cabs-yatra-com-297/>)

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Lead Essay

No Share for Labour in the Emerging Sharing Economy

The recent strike by drivers of cab-based aggregator companies Uber and Ola have exposed the complexities of accounting for labour welfare in a sharing economy. Also known as the peer-to-peer economy, the primary objective of this business model is to utilise technology for connecting the service provider with the user through a platform controlled by the aggregator. In this three party arrangement of the cab-based aggregator company (Uber/Ola), the rider and the service provider (driver) the welfare concerns of the latter remain last in the order of priority.

The structure of the cab-based aggregator companies is designed to attract drivers given the flexibility of work schedule, promise of incentives and the ease of seeking employment through these platforms. However, these positives do not last long. As these companies gain market control long work hours, diminishing incentives and a complete lack of recognition of labour rights characterise this economy. This became true for Uber and Ola drivers in India as well sometime in early 2017.

	Ola	Uber
Year of inception	Dec 2010	Mar 2009; launched in India in Aug 2013
Funds raised	\$1.2 billion	\$12.5 billion; committed \$1 billion in India in July 2015

Source: <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/okLbTyf5OtqKnO1roYBAeP/Uber-vs-Ola-the-battle-for-dominance-in-Indias-cab-market.html>, as on 08.07.2016

Regulatory concerns regarding cab aggregator companies

The cab aggregator companies like Uber and Ola do not clearly fall within the definition of traditional taxi-operating companies. Moreover, Uber has carefully ensured that it is not included within this definition. In order to avert liability for actions of Uber drivers they are referred to as ‘driver-partners’ to emphasize that they are not employees of the company but entrepreneurs or self-employed contractors or just ‘workers who choose to provide car rides using the Uber platform.’ (Krueger 2015) Despite the fact that Uber can arbitrarily increase or decrease the compensation it offers, penalise its driver-partners by removing them from the platform and even decide which route should be taken during a ride – Uber resists being called an employer. (Harris 2015)

World over governments and policymakers are grappling to devise a regulatory framework to address issues such as public safety, tax evasions, insurance coverage, unfair commercial practices, exploitative labour policy with regard to cab-based aggregator companies like Uber. Their inability to find a crystal clear solution for this has led many countries to either suspend or completely ban Uber services. Queensland in Australia; Florida, Texas, Nevada, parts of Alaska in United States; and Vancouver in Canada have completely banned Uber while its operations in other countries are also not entirely uncontroversial owing to strong opposition from taxi unions and lack of abiding by other licensing regulations.¹

¹ See <http://www.idrivewithuber.com/where-and-why-is-rideshare-banned/> Accessed on 28.2.2017

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Uber's Legal Problems Worldwide



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/Uber's_legal_issues_2015-02-06.jpg Accessed on 28.2.2017

Focus of attention shifts from cab drivers to consumers

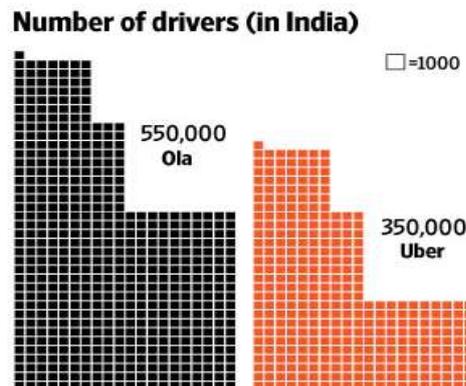
In India, the main controversy until now with regard to Uber and Ola has been in relation to incidents of sexual harassment and rape committed/allegedly committed by the drivers. Thus, public safety has remained at the forefront of regulatory debate concerning these cab-based aggregator companies. Only recently did the lack of regulation to address the welfare of labour in these companies were highlighted. In the months prior to the 13 day long strike led by Sarvodaya Drivers' Association of Delhi (SDAD) there was reduction in incentives offered to the drivers for completing a certain number of rides, discontinuation of waiting time fee, reduction in fares to as low as Rs 6/km which is less than an autorickshaw (Rs 8/km) and stopping of providing even smart phones and money for mobile data - essential for the drivers to log in to access the cab-based aggregators platforms - by Ola. (Goswami 2017)

The main demands made by SDAD during the strike were (Hafeez 2017):

- Increase in ride rates from the current Rs 6/km to anything between Rs 10/km to Rs 23/km
- Impose a five-year cap on new cabs signing up
- Pay drivers a “wait fee” of Rs 3/minute while they wait for a ride to flash on their devices
- Roll back recently introduced 25% commission inclusive of 5% service tax to the government

From projecting itself as a lucrative job alternative Uber and Ola have completely shifted their focus away its ‘driver-partners’ to profiteering and consumer satisfaction. At what cost these two are achieved is not the concern of these cab-based aggregator companies. With drivers succumbing to health ailments like severe neck pain, backaches owing to long hours of driving, they are the ones who have been sacrificed so that this sharing economy can flourish. As correctly pointed out at least for these drivers sharing economy is a misnomer since they get no ‘share’ of the benefits; a much apposite term for them would be ‘share the scraps economy.’ (Mathew 2017)

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Source: <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/okLbTyf5OtqKnO1roYBAeP/Uber-vs-Ola-the-battle-for-dominance-in-Indias-cab-market.html>, as on 08.07.2016

India lacks vision to address labour concerns in the new sharing economy

Uber operates in 81 countries and India is the fifth most active country using its services.² Is India as active in realising and assessing the impact Uber is having on its labour market? While the present government has taken initiative to address some regulatory concerns relating to cab-based aggregator companies, it is unfortunate that none of them focus on welfare of the workers (drivers) in this sharing economy.

Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways favours welfare of cab-based aggregators over drivers

The Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MoRTH) proposed a 'Taxi Policy Guideline to Promote Urban Mobility' in December 2016 where it recognised - the need to bring aggregators under a uniform, fair and transparent regulatory framework. (MoRTH December 2016) A fair objective, but to what end? MoRTH has completely refrained from adopting welfare of workers while formulating this policy. It states that 'irrational conditions' should not be prescribed for aggregators to make their operations 'economically unviable.' One may wonder if the drivers' demand of a higher per km fare and continuation of previous monetary incentives will be considered economically unviable as per this policy.

This policy further exemplifies its bias towards cab-based aggregators by viewing them as an essential limb of public transport system where 'riders have option of better pricing' and technology to book rides without a hassle. Repeating the argument made by Uber CEO Travis Kalanick, the policy fails to understand that cabs cannot replace public transport which at a point in time can cater to more people than a cab, include modes other than road transport thereby avoiding traffic congestion and most importantly are under the State's control.

By adopting goals of shared transportation assets and limit private car ownership to alleviate the acute congestion and pollution in cities as its goals, this government is offsetting the plight of the drivers involved. MoRTH has completely ignored its responsibility to protect the drivers from arbitrary management of these cab-based aggregator companies.

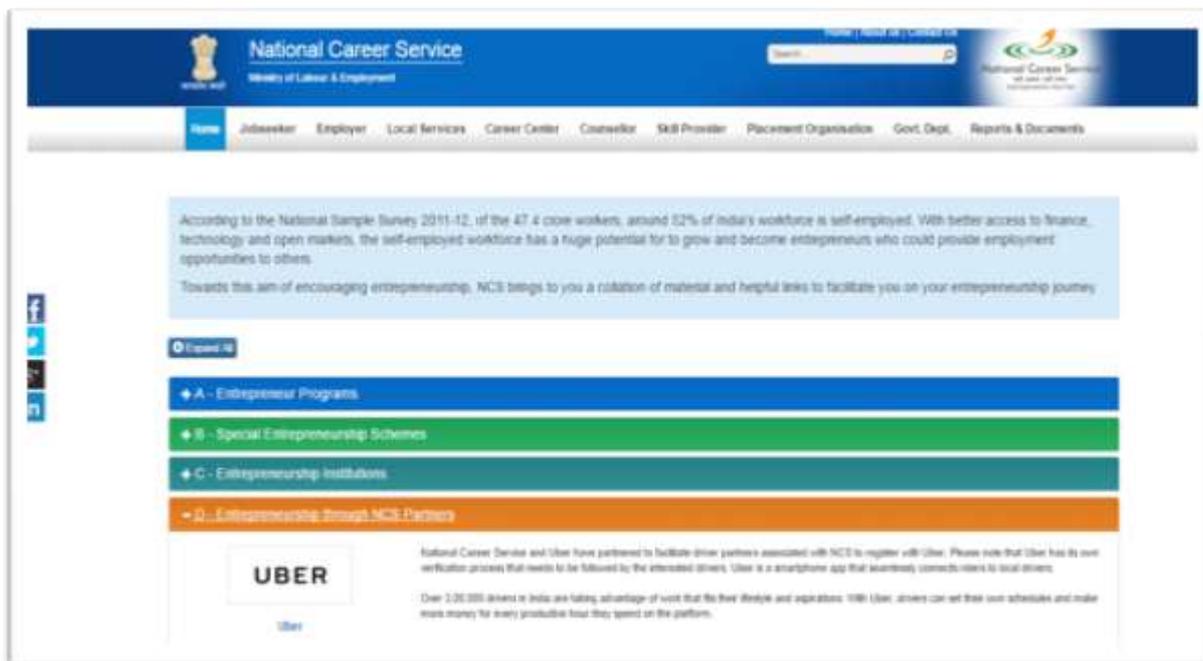
Ministry of Labour and Employment considers working with Uber as job creation

It appears that the government has not taken into cognisance experience of regulatory hurdles for labour welfare from other nations where Uber operates. Through its 'Start Your Business' page on the National Career Services Portal the Ministry of Labour and Employment 'facilitates' registration of driver-partners with Uber. Further, it projects working

² See <http://uberestimator.com/cities> Accessed on 28.2.2017

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with Uber as a sustainable job opportunity as it encourages individuals to take advantage of work that fits their lifestyle and aspirations like the rest of the 3, 00, 000 drivers in India.



Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in/pages/syob.aspx>, accessed on 27.02.2016

It is unnerving to realise that the Ministry that must protect the welfare of labour is encouraging employment with Uber, a company that does not prioritize labour welfare at all. Cab-based aggregator companies that lure unemployed individuals with attractive incentives and flexible work schedules to finally convert into a consumer-driven business are now backed by what seems to be an apathetic government. That Ministry of Labour and Employment trusts Uber to create job opportunities through entrepreneurship unconcerned with the fact that its operations are being resisted and opposed by taxi driver unions in other countries is saddening.

Way Forward – What Should the Government do?

It is true that under the current legislative framework the government cannot hold cab-based aggregator companies liable for not addressing the concerns of their drivers. At the same time the government cannot be oblivious to the glaring policy gap the sharing economy proposes. The debate regarding whether Uber drivers are employees or independent contractors is pertinent and is still rife in the world. While employees can demand benefits from their employer independent contractors/entrepreneurs cannot. The present government needs to realise the injustice being meted out to the Uber and Ola drivers on the pretext of this legal nomenclature.

Uber has declared that it will not engage with drivers' associations to resolve the strike in Delhi, rather it has begun negotiating with drivers individually. (Agarwal 2017) Clearly, unionisation of drivers is being discouraged thereby affecting their bargaining power in demanding relief as well. It becomes very urgent that the government sets up a Parliamentary Committee to deliberate under what category the Uber and Ola drivers fall - are they employees or independent contractors? Or could they be understood as consumers of Uber/Ola's technology under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and approach consumer forums for relief? Only after determination of what kind of workers they are can the Parliament legislate for their welfare and protection. The recent Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2016 requires State governments to award licences to aggregators on the basis of guidelines issued by the Central

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Government. This initiative to begin regulation will only be a fig leaf if the Central Government does not take a pro-worker stand and include their concerns while formulating these guidelines.

On his visit to Indian in December last year for the 'Start Up India, Stand Up India' event, Travis Kalanick, Uber CEO, stated that Uber provides efficiency and positive outcomes for the riders using this app and said he would protect Uber from the 'protectionist attitudes' in India. (Standard 2016) Only recently a widely circulated video revealed Travis Kalanick in conversation with an Uber driver complaining about Uber's history of lowering earnings for drivers, to which Kalanick's advice is that drivers should "take responsibility" for their own problems. (Issac 2017) This government must not choose to support a capitalistic business model practising exploitative labour policies as it takes advantage of the burgeoning job crisis in India. The blind support extended to Uber and its CEO and the kind of labour market – which lacks rights for the workers - they stand for cannot be this government's plan of action to address the problem of unemployment.

A start for identification of the real concerns has been made in Delhi where the Congress has suggested that Ola-Uber drivers should form a co-operative society and should be given financial aid and a separate mobile phone App to do their business and become independent. (Congress Supports Ola-Uber Drivers' Union 2017) This could be one approach to solve the issue. The need of the hour is extensive deliberation regarding the policy challenges the sharing economy is posing for labour welfare.

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Headlines

From JNU to Ramjas, Where Has the Spirit of Studentship Disappeared?

(Avijit Pathak, *The Wire*, March 04, 2017)

When political sensibility degenerates into political indoctrination, studentship receives a severe blow. Growth stops, the mind becomes closed, rigid, deterministic and, hence, violent. From JNU to Ramjas College – we find ourselves amidst a culture that reveals the assertion of brute power, the mob mentality and the volcano of inflated emotions centred on the practice of ‘nationalism’. With reaction and counter-reaction, physical power and intellectual arrogance, ‘moral puritanism’ of the radical Left and ‘reactionary conservatism’ of the Hindu Right, we allow ourselves to be trapped into a vicious circle that transforms our colleges and universities into war zones.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/113948/jnu-ramjas-college-spirit-studentship-disappeared/>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Economy

Services sector growth rebounds after three months of contraction

(*Business Line*, March 03, 2017)

Services sector rebounded in February — for the first time since October — as businesses recovered from the demonetisation-led disruptions seen in the previous three months. The Nikkei India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which tracks services sector firms on a monthly basis, stood at 50.3 in February, up from 48.7 registered in January. After slipping to a near three-year low last November, signalling the first monthly drop in output since June 2015, the headline index edged above the 50.0 mark, that separates expansion from contraction. "The upturn in services activity follows news from the sister PMI survey showing factory production growing for the second straight month in February," Pollyanna De Lima, economist at IHS Markit, and also the author of the report, said. However, outlook for the year-ahead remained subdued.

Read More: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/services-sector-growth-rebounds-after-3-months-of-contraction/article9568987.ece>

Date Accessed: 3.3.2017

Post-demonetisation GDP growth 'too good to be true', says SBI study

(*G. Naga Sridhar*, *Business Line*, March 02, 2017)

Are the third quarter estimates for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate pegged at 7 per cent too good to be true in the wake of an adverse impact of demonetisation? This is the sense given by an internal study by the State Bank of India research team in an analysis of the GDP estimates released by the Central Statistics Office on Tuesday. According to the advanced estimates of CSO, the GDP growth was 7 per cent in the third quarter of the current fiscal, during which demonetisation had taken place. For FY17, GDP growth has been pegged at 7.1 per cent. There is more than what the numbers speak on the surface impact of demonetisation, if one goes by the expenditure side of demonetisation. "Interestingly, the impact of valuables on the total estimates from the expenditure side tell the story of demonetisation," says the research study by the State Bank of India on the GDP estimates on impact of demonetisation.

Read More: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/postdemonetisation-gdp-growth-too-good-to-be-true-says-sbi-study/article9567888.ece>

Date Accessed: 3.3.2017

CSO's GDP growth estimate has weak links

(*Radhika Merwin*, *Business Line*, March 1, 2017)

The GDP growth estimate of 7.1 per cent for 2016-17 put out by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), barely changing from the earlier estimate (first advance estimate), has again flummoxed economists. If the latest growth numbers are indeed credible, then the cash crunch after demonetisation has had no impact on economic growth. But, aside from several weak links in the CSO's estimate, the important point to note is that the current estimates mostly take into account data from the organised sector. Incorporating data from the informal sector, where the real impact of demonetisation was felt, will take a couple of months. This could lead to subsequent revisions in the GDP growth number, which can be significant. The CSO only recently revised growth numbers for 2015-16 substantially. So we might have to wait for a year to assess the real impact of demonetisation.

Read More: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/csos-gdp-growth-estimate-has-weak-links/article9565912.ece>

Date Accessed: 3.3.2017

With depressed prices, mining is biggest laggard

(*Twesh Mishra*, *Business Line*, March 1, 2017)

The domestic mining sector turned spoilsport for the country's growth numbers. The sector churned a gross value addition (GVA) of just 1.3 per cent in the GDP for FY17 till December 2016, according to CSO data. Comparably, it grew 12.3 per cent in the corresponding period of FY16. The Central Statistical Organisation categorises coal, crude oil and natural gas production under the mining and quarrying sector. It estimates a 2 per cent GVA growth in coal production till December in FY17. Comparably, coal production GVA grew 4.5 per cent in the same period last fiscal.

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Read More: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/with-depressed-prices-mining-is-biggest-laggard/article9565915.ece>

Date Accessed: 03/03/2017

No time for complacency

(N.K. Singh, *The Hindu*, March 06, 2017)

The Indian economy continues to outperform the prognosis of its critics. This is clearly true of the GDP growth estimates in the third quarter; quite at variance with what the critics of the demonetisation exercise had assumed. No doubt there could be correction in the fourth quarter, primarily to factor the impact of the informal sector. It has never been easy to capture real time data on economic activity in the informal sector.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/no-time-for-complacency/article17413032.ece>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

The political economy of India's bad bank

(Rohan Chinchwadkar, *Live Mint*, March 06, 2017)

The idea of setting up a centralized public asset management company (PAMC) or “bad bank” to solve the problem of stressed loans is gathering steam. The Economic Survey 2016-17 proposed the setting up of a public sector asset rehabilitation agency (PARA), which is essentially a centralized bad bank. In a recent speech, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) deputy governor Viral Acharya said there is a “sense of urgency” to decisively resolve Indian banks’ stressed assets.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/gOZjapklzFj5dsFTIKKmWP/The-political-economy-of-Indias-bad-bank.html>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

How Do We Resolve the Confusing Puzzles Surrounding the Latest GDP Data?

(*The Wire*, March 02, 2017)

New Delhi: A set of much-awaited economic growth data, the first official estimates to be released after the Modi government’s demonetisation move, has raised more questions than answers.

There are a number of puzzles – some of which are solved more easily than others. The big one of course is, as per advanced estimates released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) yesterday, that India’s economy grew at a very healthy 7% during the third quarter of FY’17 – the quarter in which 86% of India’s currency was invalidated (October – December 2016).

Read More: <https://thewire.in/113413/puzzles-surrounding-latest-economic-growth-data/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

Looking for Hidden Black Money? London Might be the Place to Start

(Kannan Srinivasan, *The Wire*, March 04, 2017)

Narendra Modi had campaigned on a promise that he would bring black money home from abroad and give each poor Indian Rs 15 lakhs. Taking the World Bank’s rosy projection of how Indian poverty has declined under liberalisation, that would mean giving Rs 417 trillion to 278 million people. That was an absurd promise. Since the Prime Minister is an intelligent man, he must have had known that and perhaps had no intention of keeping it. Instead his Government has chosen to inflict untold misery on the poor by withdrawing from circulation the denominations in which they hold most of their wealth.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/110293/looking-hidden-black-money-london-might-place-start/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

Economy

Good and Services Tax Set to Launch in July

(Rajesh Kumar Singh, *The Wire*, March 05, 2017)

New Delhi: India moved a step closer on Saturday towards launching a new national sales tax from July after a panel of federal and state finance officials finalised two key bills to be put before parliament.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has missed several launch dates. On Saturday, finance minister Arun Jaitley said the measure is on track for a roll-out from July 1 with the bills set to be discussed in parliament after it reconvenes next week.

To meet the deadline, parliament must pass the bills, which spell out the operational details of the new tax, before its current session concludes in mid-April.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/114124/gst-tax-india/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

Farmer's Notebook: Tackling Drought With a Portable Solar Water Pump

(M.J. Prabhu, *The Wire*, March 02, 2017)

Accessing water on time and its availability is one of the greatest challenges in Indian agriculture. Digging farm ponds is one way of ensuring water availability for crops, while many farmers across the country also follow the drip irrigation technique. But for those who don't have a drip and are in areas where water availability is a serious issue, there is a need for a simple solution.

P. David Raja Beula, the assistant director of Horticulture Kadayam in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, seems to have an answer for this. Beula is currently employed in the government horticulture department, but he has always had a penchant for developing simple farm machineries that can be operated using solar power.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/112408/farmers-notebook-portable-solar-water-pump-tackle-drought/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

Governance & Development

HEALTH

India Improves on Health Indicators, but Reality Is Still Bleak

(Sameeksha Khare, *The Quint*, March 3, 2017)

Sex ratio at birth (number of girls per 1,000 boys), only slightly increased from 914 to 919 nationally in a decade. But the difference between overall sex ratio and that at birth in the last 5 years is glaring in most major states.

Obesity, among both men and women, has seen an increase of 9.3% and 8.1%, respectively.

Read More: <https://www.thequint.com/health/2017/03/03/nfhs-survey-shows-obesity-infant-mortality-rate-sex-ratio-changes>

Date Accessed: 4.03.2017

TRANSPORT

Why the Problems of Uber, Ola Drivers Are Far From Over

(Anurag Mazumdar, *The Wire*, March 5, 2017)

While online taxi companies may simply be reproducing old exploitative structures, the question that seems to have been forgotten is: What kind of public and private transportation system does India want?

Read More: <https://thewire.in/113979/ola-uber-driver-problem-far/>

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

ENVIRONMENT

Bengaluru May Go Thirsty as Massive Drought Looms Over Karnataka

(*The Quint*, February 22, 2017)

Thirsty fields and depleting groundwater have become common phenomena across the Cauvery basin, which includes Mysuru, Mandya, Hassan and Chamarajanagar districts in southern Karnataka. According to an official at the Revenue Department (Disaster Management), the relief work undertaken in drought-hit areas has been inadequate.

Read More: <https://www.thequint.com/india/2017/02/21/bengaluru-drought-siddaramaiah-karnataka-mekedatu-dam-cauvery>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Why We May Need to Refreeze the Arctic – And Why India Should Care

(Shalini Iyengar, *The Quint*, February 24, 2017)

Distance notwithstanding, the Arctic Ocean impacts Indian weather systems in several ways. Monsoons, for instance, are impacted by polar ice fluctuations – a fact which is especially worrisome for India since 70% of our agriculture is still rain-fed. Research on these impacts is ongoing and India maintains a permanent research station and an underwater observatory in the Arctic.

Read More: <https://www.thequint.com/environment/2017/02/24/why-me-have-to-refreeze-arctic-region-because-of-glaciers-sea-ice-cap-melt-climate-change-global-warming>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Governance & Development

AGRICULTURE

Maharashtra govt to focus on smart agriculture, food processing

(Shubhangi Kapre, *The Indian Express*, March 1, 2017)

Climate resilient agricultural practices coupled with greater thrust on promoting investments in food processing sector to improve lives of farmers is likely to get greater impetus in the forthcoming state budget. Highly placed sources in the government revealed to *The Indian Express*, "Agriculture sector will remain the highest concern of the state budget this year too." However, unlike last year when the prime concern related to relief for the drought hit, the focus in 2017-18 would be on sustainable agriculture.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/maharashtra-govt-to-focus-on-smart-agriculture-food-processing-4550410/>

Date Accessed: 4.03.2017

Food on its own terms

(Pulapre Balakrishnan, *The Hindu*, March 02, 2017)

Kerala is rare among the world's economies, barring Zimbabwe, where agricultural production actually declined after land reforms. Land reforms in China after Mao led to a surge in food production, which in turn led to its rise to global prominence. In theory, one form of reorganisation possible even at this stage in Kerala is for those in ownership of land but not wishing to cultivate to lease it out. But leasing was made unlawful by the land reform Act.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/food-on-its-own-terms/article17388839.ece>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

LAW AND JUSTICE

Many meanings of corruption

(Upendra Baxi, *The Indian Express*, March 06, 2017)

The constitutional courts in India remain confronted by a democratic dilemma; they have tried to walk a fine balance but the belief in contempt power is so strong that media stories are routinely killed in the apprehension of protracted judicial proceedings. The Supreme Court of India breathes a fresh air when it virtually quashes the contempt action against Transparency International and the Centre of Media Studies.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/judiciary-corruption-law-of-contempt-4556016/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

Society

GENDER

President Pranab Mukherjee calls for reservation for women in Parliament

(*Hindustan Times*, March 4, 2017)

Mukherjee said without appropriate reservations, representation of women will be difficult to achieve on basis of voluntary actions by political parties and institutions, as reservations provide Constitutional guarantees and earmarking of constituencies to be represented by women.

Read More: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/president-pranab-mukherjee-calls-for-reservation-for-women-in-parliament/story-5nGOQEQqRLiKsyEGLbhi4L.html>

Date Accessed: 4.03.2017

Seven Things You Should Know About the Widening Global Gender Wage Gap

(IPS News Desk, *The Wire*, March 4, 2017)

It is estimated that it will take 170 years to close the global gender wage gap – 52 years longer than it would have done just a year ago. Women across the globe are facing new threats, which risk dismantling decades of hard-won rights and derailing the effort to end extreme poverty, an international confederation of civil society organisations has revealed ahead of International Women’s Day on March 8. The renewal of the global gag rule restricting US funding for family planning services is the latest of a number of new threats that will have a huge effect on the world’s poorest women, OXFAM international on March 2 warned in its new report ‘An economy that works for women’.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/113714/seven-things-you-should-know-widening-global-gender-wage-gap/>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Equality and Tradition Clash As Naga Women Fight for Representation

(Lianboi Vaiphei, *The Wire*, February 5, 2017)

Around the world, tradition often opposes equality. But when it comes to the question of gender equality, such situations can become volatile. That’s what happened in India’s Nagaland this February, when protests relating to women’s political participation killed two people. The conflict has also led the government of this eastern federal state to play a game of political musical chairs.

Read more: <https://thewire.in/114151/naga-women-representation/>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Dalit Women in Corporate India are Being Left Behind

(Christina Thomas Dhanaraj, *The Wire*, March 2, 2017)

While companies are increasingly aware of the need for a ‘feminist’ narrative within the organisation, the corporate sector as a whole ignores the reality of caste and the effect this has on the workplace. Generally speaking, there is an extremely minimal presence of Dalit women in corporate spaces, which by itself is a huge challenge. Unlike the public sector, no affirmative action policies in India mandate the recruitment of Dalits or Dalit women in the private sector. A study conducted in 2010 by the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion in New Delhi found that while economic reforms (that started in 1991) did result in increased employment for educated Dalit women in private companies, it did not necessarily ensure higher wages, security of employment, or better welfare.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/113166/dalit-wome-corporate-india/>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

Right to Safe Abortion Care

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, March 4, 2017)

The recent spate of cases being heard at the Supreme Court seeking permission to conduct abortion in pregnancies that have passed

Society

20 weeks, is indicative of the urgent need to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971. These cases land up at the doors of the judiciary because of the clause in the act that permits abortions after 20 weeks only if the life of the pregnant woman is in danger. The act does not consider foetal abnormalities or danger to the physical and mental health of pregnant women, or the fact that it has been possible for some time now to detect foetal abnormalities beyond 20 weeks. In such situations, the judiciary is approached, and has to adjudicate on a case-by-case basis with the recommendation of a panel of doctors.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/9/editorials/right-safe-abortion-care.html#sthash.AaV2hCo5.dpuf>.

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

ELDERLY

Less than 1% elderly have health insurance

(Rachel Chitral, *Times of India*, March 1, 2017)

Industry estimates are that health insurance coverage in India is poor and the lack of coverage is more pronounced among the elderly population. This is largely due to lack of awareness rather than exclusion from insurers. Health insurance penetration on average is below 3.9% in India, including developed states like TN.

Read More: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/less-than-1-elderly-have-health-insurance/articleshow/57402699.cms>

Date Accessed: 4.03.2017

Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

No firsts among equals

(Jyotsna Yagnik, *The Indian Express*, March 06, 2017)

Students across our diverse fields need to be enlightened on the commands of the Constitution that cover secularism, liberty, freedom and equality; these should be so deeply imbibed by all that every person understands the role of each functionary connected with the law and the administration of justice. But unfortunately, that does not happen.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/indian-constitution-equality-democracy-human-rights-4556024/>

Date Accessed: 6.3.2017

The Zero Case: Deadly Implications of the Birla–Sahara Judgment

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, March 4, 2017)

The manner of dismissal of the interim appeals filed by Common Cause in the Birla–Sahara Papers case triggers a host of questions, legal and political. The presiding of a particular judge is also problematic as it appears to conflict with the code of conduct for judges, more so with the allegations against the chief justice of India and another sitting judge of the Supreme Court made by Kalikho Pul, former Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, in his so-called suicide note.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/9/web-exclusives/zero-case-deadly-implications-birla%E2%80%93sahara-judgment.html#sthash.Y5bBndvL.dpuf>

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

The Mirage of a Caste-less Society in India

(*Economic and Political Weekly*, March 4, 2017)

A new social category of people that appears to be free from the bonds of caste has indeed emerged in the country. However, it is quite small, compared to the size of the country. It claims to be liberal, cosmopolitan and global. But, it is necessary to assess its capacity to influence the rest of this vast society. It does not appear to be even loosely organised, compared with the tight organisation of castes. Often the claim to being caste-less is skin deep, and caste surfaces all of a sudden in mysterious ways.

Read more at: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/9/perspectives/mirage-caste-less-society-india.html#sthash.3IQwpH3Y.dpuf>

Date of Access: 6.3.2017

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