

## Implementation Failures: 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Scheme



(Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/government/top-schemes-launched-by-modi-government>)

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## Lead Essay

### Implementation Failures: 'Beti Bacho Beti Padhao' Scheme

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (BBBPS) (Save daughters, educate daughters) is a flagship scheme of the current government to ensure survival, protection and education of the girl child. While the idea is a noble one, according to Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) state reports, the scheme has not been able to achieve its objectives.

The lack of implementation of policies, diversion of funds and failure of monitoring mechanisms are some of the reasons for this failure. To achieve the objectives of the scheme, the government must ensure stricter enforcement of the policy guidelines and improve the monitoring mechanisms being employed.

There have been reports of orders by State Governments to validate data collected by district officials by independent agencies. In various districts during an audit, it was found that the birth of all girls had been registered while those of some baby boys had been concealed to present improved figures of the gender ratio.<sup>i</sup>

When poor implementation of policies is combined with manipulation of data by government officials under pressure to show growth, the true state of affairs cannot be gauged. The ideal picture presented can make policy makers complacent. It can lead to poor policy planning and the objectives of the scheme will not be achieved. There will be no progress and the focus of policy makers will no longer be on the scheme.

Multiple measures have been taken to improve the gender ratio by successive governments yet, across India the practice of female infanticide and foeticide is still rampant. Every policy contributes in improving the ratio but, when policies are not implemented and numbers are manipulated, it sets back the efforts by many years. The long-term effects of a skewed gender ratio range from lack of employment opportunities for women, health concerns to its impact on the overall development of the country. Drop in the number of women may lead to decline in population, increase in crimes against women and increase in instances of human trafficking.<sup>ii</sup>

Social welfare schemes are aimed at improving the human development indicators of a country. But, they can only be improved when policies are implemented and data collected is accurate. Without fulfilling these conditions the state of affairs cannot be changed and successive policy efforts will keep failing.

#### **The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (BBBPS)**

The scheme was launched in 2015, in response to the falling Child Sex Ratio (CSR) between 0-6 years as per the Census (2011) data. The issue of decline in the CSR is a major indicator of women disempowerment. CSR reflects both, pre-birth discrimination manifested through gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls for education.

The difference in mortality rates of girls and boys indicates the difference in access to various health care and nutrition services as well as the preferential care and treatment given to boys. Further, access to entitlements such as education, protection and participation are essential to the overall development of the girl child. Denial of these services and

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entitlements is a violation of children's rights and can have long lasting negative impacts such as exclusion, low-self-esteem, lack of employment opportunities, health concerns etc. also impacts the overall development of the country.

The scheme aims to fight against the strong socio- cultural and religious biases, preference for sons & discrimination towards daughters, which contribute to the decline in CSR. It criticizes the common belief that girls are "someone else's property" and it is the boys who look after the parents. The core principles of the scheme are respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of girls and women, including the ending of gender based violence. The main objectives of the scheme are i) to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination ii) to ensure the survival and protection of the girl child and iii) to ensure education and participation of the girl child.

The overall goal of the scheme is improvement of CSR in 161 Gender Critical Districts. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development (WCD), Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development (HRD).

A budgetary allocation of Rs. 100 Cr. has been made under the budget announcement for Beti Bachao, Beti Padoos campaign. Additional resources can be mobilized through Corporate Social Responsibility at National & State levels. The estimated cost of the Scheme is Rs. 200 cr. Out of 200 cr. Rs. 115 cr. is proposed to be released during the current year i.e. 2014-15 (for six month) Rs. 45 Cr. and 40 cr. will be released during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively.

The scheme is to be evaluated at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan based on mapping of Ultra-sonography machines, baseline survey of concurrent assessment of percentage of births of male & female child and reporting of complaints under Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act). The audits are to be conducted by the Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG).<sup>iii</sup>

### Critique

The PM India website on BBBPS lists many success stories and multiple examples to establish that the scheme has received great responses from across India, specifically mentioning achievements in Punjab and Haryana.<sup>iv</sup> These success stories are at odds with the findings of CAG reports on Social, General and Economic Sectors (Non-Public Sector Undertakings), 2017 on BBBPS in Haryana and Punjab.<sup>v</sup>

The guidelines provided for improving the sex ratio at birth (SRB) in gender critical districts by 10 points in a year. As per the CAG reports, in various districts of Haryana and Punjab, the sex ratio has decreased. For example, in Panipat (Haryana) the ratio was 892 against the target of 902 but, it further dropped to 881. It is worth mentioning that this is despite the fact that the sex ratio has been increasing steadily for the last four years for the State as a whole from 833 in 2011 to 876 in 2015 due to impact of several other schemes. In Punjab, during 2015, in six districts there was a decrease in SRB in comparison to the baseline values of 2014. In four of these districts, SRB was not only declining but, less than the overall SRB of Punjab.

Targets of increasing girl's enrollment in secondary education and hundred percent re-enrolment of drop-out girls could also not be fully achieved. Further, implementation of PCPNDT Act also needed strengthening. The report further lists the reasons for failure of implementation of the scheme.

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### 1. Budgetary Issues

#### Diversion of Funds

BBBPS is a centrally sponsored scheme with 100 per cent financial assistance to the State Governments. Haryana has 20 districts which are in the gender critical district list. As per the scheme guidelines, five lakh rupees were to be provided to each district for implementing the scheme.

Diversion of funds has been noted in various districts of Haryana. For example, in Panipat out of the five lakhs receive by the district, three lakhs were spent on preparation of a “Theme Gate” for the entrance at Panipat on the launching of the scheme. The expenditure has been categorized as irregular and is tantamount to diversion of funds. Similarly, expenditure of 21.24 lakh was incurred in 2015 by the WCD Department from funds of the scheme for the purchase of 1,800 laptop bags and 2,900 mugs. There was no provision in the scheme for purchase of these items.

In Punjab, the district programme officers deposited one lakh (1,000 for each girl child) in the bank accounts of 100 girls covered under the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY). This was irregular as the financial benefit of other schemes was not to be met out of the funds of the BBBP scheme. Thus, it was declared as a diversion of funds.

#### Underutilization of Funds

Overall, out of a total amount of Rs 43 crore that was set aside for BBBP in the fiscal year 2016-2017, only Rs 5 crore has been utilized, according to the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development. The amount of money spent on this scheme in the current fiscal year is also less than one-tenth of Rs 59.37 crore spent on BBBP in the previous fiscal year.<sup>vi</sup>

Against the budget provision of 14.28 crore, 8.08 crore were released by the Government and expenditure of only 5.31 crore was incurred from January 2015 to March 2016 in Haryana. Similarly, out of 6.36 crore released by the Central Government to the State Government during 2014-16, only 0.91 crore was utilized up to March 2016 in Punjab.

### 2. Implementation of the Scheme

#### Enforcement of PC PNDT Act

Under the scheme, district authorities are required to effectively monitor and ensure that the use of sex-determination tools by families and doctors lead to stringent action by law. The guidelines of the scheme emphasize on the enforcement of the PCPNDT Act at National/State/ Districts levels. But, there were various gaps in implementation observed which directly dilute the monitoring capacity.

- None of the gender critical districts in Haryana have an anonymous online complaint portal. The anonymous portal was to be made functional by September 2014. Only seven complaints regarding unregistered doctors operating ultrasound machines and illegal activities under PCPNDT Act were received during 2014-16.
- As per scheme guidelines, District PCPNDT Cells were to be strengthened with technical manpower and equipment. No action had been initiated to strengthen the PCPNDT cells.

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- No specific targets have been mentioned in the guidelines in respect of conducting inspections/checking of diagnostic centres. But, the CAG report highlights the need for fixed targets of inspections for proper monitoring.
- The Department did not monitor the scheme adequately according to the CAG report. The guidelines state that field inspections and monitoring is to be carried out every three months in all districts by the State Inspection and Monitoring Committee. It was noted that against the requirement of five meetings only one meeting was held in 2015-2016.

### Education of Girl Child

“Right to Education Act, 2010 entitles every child the right to free education till the completion of elementary education in a neighborhood school. Unfortunately, the Act does not see its proper implementation in letter and spirit. If the girls are educated properly, they will grow up to be self-empowered individuals, better equipped to take their socio-economic decisions in their own and society’s best interests. Under the BBBP scheme, district-level education officials have to ensure that the benefit of free elementary education reaches all the girls in their areas.”<sup>vii</sup> Various measures were to be taken as per the guidelines to improve the enrollment and re-enrollment of girl children in secondary education. Various implementation gaps were found in the CAG reports.

- Awards were to be given to five schools every year in each gender critical district at the rate of one lakh per school through the Education Department of respective district for strengthening and promoting girl’s education. In Haryana, in three districts against the award of fifteen lakhs only one lakh was distributed in 2015-2016. The report found that the reason for non-distribution of funds was that they had been utilized by the State Government for funding other elements of the scheme.
- The guidelines provide that girl’s enrolment in secondary education (9th to 12th class) should be increased from 76 per cent in 2013-14 to 79 per cent by 2017. The report found that the percentage of girl’s enrolment in secondary education in the selected districts decreased in 2015-16 as compared to 2014-15.
- The Director and Special Secretary, Secondary Education directed (July 2015) all the district officers in Haryana to ensure zero drop-out and 100 per cent retention of girls up to secondary education. The CAG report found that based on figures from 2014-15 and 2015-16, this target was not achieved.

### Multi-sectoral implementation of scheme

The State Government of Haryana was in charge of creating a State Task Force (STF) and District Task Force (DTF) with a view to co-ordinate the implementation of various state level schemes under the BBBPS. But, against the requirement of five meetings only one meeting of STF and three DTF were conducted in 2015-2016. In Punjab, no quarterly meetings of STF were conducted for convergence and coordination between concerned departments as required under the guidelines. It was also noticed that against the required 44/308 quarterly meetings of District Task Force (DTF)/Block Task Force (BTF), only 22/10 meetings were held respectively during 2015-16.

### 3. Lack of Documentation

The guidelines provide that to ensure accountability and for service improvement, it was important to document all activities conducted at the District, Block and Gram Panchayat. Upon closer inspection, the CAG report found that there were no records of implementation of various activities for IEC and child development during 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

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In Punjab, it was found that meetings could not be held due to non-receipt of monthly progress reports (MPRs), UCs and Statement of Expenditure (SOE) from the districts.

#### 4. Problems faced by NGOs

The NGO workers in 161 districts under the scheme have stated on multiple occasions that they are not getting adequate support from the local government bodies in Haryana. A major challenge that they face, is that by the time they build a rapport with local officers, they get transferred and they have to start all over again.<sup>viii</sup>

#### The Way Ahead

Issues such as delayed release of funds, short utilization of funds, non-compliance of guidelines, lack of documentation, not conducting required Task Force meetings has led to the lack of monitoring of the scheme which has further adversely affect the overall implementation of the scheme. To achieve the target of empowerment of women in India and ensuring the education, protection and survival of the girl child, these issues must be resolved. The factors responsible for these failures must be identified and remedial action must be taken.

#### **Prepared By:**

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viii Maninder Dabas, 6 August, 2015, Available at: <http://www.dnaindia.com/locality/gurgaon/'beti-bachao-beti-padhao-campaign-will-not-be-successful-haryana-unless-civic-bodies-extend-support'-66405>.

## Headlines

### **Is India ready for the Real Estate Act?**

(Bidya Sapam & Madhurima Nandy, *Live Mint*, May 01, 2017)

Many states are far from ready with the infrastructure and resources to implement it while most builders and real estate agents said they are still struggling to understand the regulations and are in early stages of preparing themselves to comply with the new Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA) 2016.

So far, only 13 states and Union territories have notified the new rules, of which only three states—Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—have appointed a housing regulator. Besides, none of the states apart from Maharashtra has set up a website where developers and brokers can register or apply for new projects under the new Act.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/KdQ5ALMHkvjLbXK38D6oqI/Is-India-ready-for-the-Real-Estate-Act.html>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

## Economy

### Reining in the sharks

(Satvik Varma, *The Hindu*, May 01, 2017)

The much awaited Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act is now in effect. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation recently notified 69 out of the 92 sections in total, which set the ball rolling for States to formulate, within six months, rules and regulations as statutorily mandated. Since land is a State subject under the Constitution, even after the Centre enacts the legislation, State governments will have to ratify them. States will have to set up the Real Estate Regulatory Authority's (RERA) and the Real Estate Appellate Tribunals and have only a maximum of a year from the coming into effect of the Act to do so.

While consumer interests have been protected, developers find provisions of the Act to be exceptionally burdensome on a sector already ailing from a paucity of funds and multiple regulatory challenges. The builder lobby has been demanding "industry" status for the real estate sector as it would help in the availability of bank loans. Real estate companies say that most delays are because of the failure of authorities to grant approvals/sanctions on time.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/reining-in-the-sharks/article18345016.ece>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### South Asia's missing intra-regional trade

(Srinath Raghavan, *Live Mint*, May 01, 2017)

South Asia has for some years been the fastest growing region in the world. At an impressive 6.7% year-on-year growth in GDP (gross domestic product) in 2016, it outstripped East Asia, which notched up 6.3%. Notwithstanding subregional variation, most countries have registered growth, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India being the fastest growing economies. There has been a sharp reduction in inflation. The regional consumer price index has come down from 5% in June 2016 to just over 3% recently—but again, there is variation within the region.

Despite real exchange rate appreciation, current accounts are mostly balanced. Remittance flows have rebounded from the lows touched in the previous years, though in absolute terms they remain well below the levels prior to the oil price slump. FDI (foreign direct investment) and portfolio inflows have remained stable and international reserves have grown.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/sHn3ofeFbHUhrT9psMn1LM/South-Asias-missing-intraregional-trade.html>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### India's economy is not growing fast enough

(Parthasarty Raghavan, *Business Line*, April 30, 2017)

It is now an axiom that economic growth significantly reduces poverty. A concomitant benefit is its positive impact on standard of living. Not surprisingly, developing nations strive to achieve robust growth rapidly and in a sustained manner. Economic growth is measured using Gross Domestic Product. GDP is the market value of all goods and services produced by a country in a year. Rate of growth is computed by examining year-over-year change in GDP. What is significant, though, is not growth in GDP *per se* but growth in per capita GDP — the economic value created per person. It is per capita GDP that is the true measure of prosperity and standard of living. Hence, developing nations pay more attention to per capita GDP growth, which occurs when GDP rises faster than population.

Read More: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/indias-economy-is-not-growing-fast-enough/article9674753.ece>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

## Economy

### **High growth, fiscal gains can improve India's debt to GDP: Report**

(*Financial Express*, April 30, 2017)

India is likely to witness sustained improvement in debt to GDP ratio over the medium term, driven by high economic growth rate and modest fiscal consolidation, says a Deutsche Bank report. The report titled Analysing India's Debt Sustainability noted that the nominal GDP growth will surprise on the upside and in turn will help the country bring down the debt level.

"Our analysis reveals that high economic growth rate and modest fiscal consolidation could lead to sustained improvement in India's debt-GDP ratio over the medium term," Deutsche Bank Chief Economist Kaushik Das said in a note.

India has seen its public debt-GDP ratio decline significantly in recent decades — to about 70 per cent in 2016-17, from 84 per cent in 2005-06.

Read More: <http://www.financialexpress.com/economy/high-growth-fiscal-gains-can-improve-indias-debt-to-gdp-report/647919/>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### **Why Are Cesses Meant For Workers' Social Security Being Abolished?**

(*Dogra Bharat, The Wire*, May 01, 2017)

Assaults on the hard-earned rights of several categories of workers have been on the rise in recent times, evidenced by the cancellation of cesses meant to be utilised for workers' social security. If left unchecked, such changes can lead to much bigger losses for workers at large and undo any positive changes we have seen in their working and living conditions. Some MPs have tried to raise the issue. Sharad Yadav, a senior political leader and member of the Rajya Sabha, wrote a letter on March 17 to finance minister Arun Jaitley. "I write this to express my great concern about salt, mica, coal, dolomite, cine, iron ore, manganese and chrome ore workers as welfare cesses being collected for their social security have been cancelled without consulting the trade unions," he said.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/130708/cesses-workers-social-security/>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### **Modi Government's Tech Fetish is Diluting MGNREGA's Accountability**

(*Dutta Siraj, The Wire*, May 01, 2017)

In his 2017-18 Budget speech, finance minister Arun Jaitley asserted with great conviction that the ruling dispensation's "initiative to geo-tag all MGNREGA assets" to put them "in public domain has established greater transparency". In 2016-17, the rural development ministry started an initiative called 'GeoMGNREGA', under which it was proposed that all assets created under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) were to be tagged with their respective geospatial locations. To a technologically-savvy individual the online Management Information System (MIS) of MGNREGA, GeoMGNREGA – as envisaged by the rural development ministry – will allow access to photographs and geospatial locations for lakhs of MGNREGA assets constructed across the country. But is this idea – which sounds quite impressive – actually helping in making the programme more transparent for those who it affects the most – the workers employed under this scheme?

Read More: <https://thewire.in/128900/technology-fetish-diluting-mgnrega-accountability-transparency/>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

## Governance & Development

### HEALTH

#### **Sanitation Failures Kill, Stunt Children Most in UP, Four Other States**

*(India Spend, April 26, 2017)*

Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Assam and Chhattisgarh had India's highest under-five mortality, higher stunting (low height-for-age) rates and higher prevalence of diarrhoea due to lack of "improved sanitation"—usually a house with its own latrine connected to a sewer or septic tank—according to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS-4). Unsafe water, poor hygiene practices and inadequate sanitation are not only the causes of the continued high incidence of diarrhoeal diseases but a significant contributing factor in under-five mortality caused by pneumonia, neonatal disorders and under nutrition, according to this 2016 report by the United Nations Children's Fund

Read more: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/sanitation-failures-kill-stunt-children-most-in-up-4-other-states-77385>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### URBAN

#### **Why Urban Waste Continues to Follow the Path of Least Resistance**

*(The Economic and Political Weekly, April 29, 2017)*

A lack of imagination and linear municipal solid waste management practices have resulted in promoting incineration, which is fraught with adverse environmental and health consequences, as a solution to getting rid of our urban garbage. This paper points out that while enhancing the abilities of cities to work towards zero waste ought to be the goal, local populations now bear the unhealthy effects of unsound waste management processes, and local governments bear their operational and financial burden, all to no good effect.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/17/special-articles/why-urban-waste-continues-follow-path-least-resistance.html>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### TRANSPORT

#### **Flip flop model: Udan could have India flying in circles**

*(Times of India Editorials, 29 April 2017)*

This Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a new regional air connectivity scheme which aims to put smaller cities on the aviation map. Enhanced connectivity results in economic benefits and should be welcomed. But in India, passengers flying popular routes have already partially subsidised others for over two decades. Now the new regional connectivity scheme, or Udan, adds another layer of cross-subsidies to connect small towns. This overly complicated maze doesn't necessarily make Udan commercially sustainable, nor does it yield very many other benefits.

Read More: <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-editorials/flip-flop-model-udan-could-have-india-flying-in-circles/>.

Date of Access: 1.5.2017

## Governance & Development

### TECHNOLOGY

#### **How Artificial Wombs will Change our Idea of Gender, Family and Equality**

*(The Guardian, May 1, 2017)*

This type of technology offers the most plausible chance yet for the possibility that an artificial womb may yet become a reality – a device in which an embryo might be brought to full term. Over the years scientists wary of the ethical tangles involved have become silent (or been silenced) on its creation. The researchers behind the Biobag have been similarly clear that their goal is not to use it to push back the current limits of when a foetus can survive outside the human womb. But the idea of babies carried to term “outside of woman” is no dystopian vision, and neither is it fanciful in motivation or practicality. A fully functional artificial womb will undoubtedly present entirely new ethical dilemmas, including some we may not yet be ready to negotiate. But it could offer, at least, solutions to inequalities that we find intractable today.

Read more: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/01/artificial-womb-gender-family-equality-lamb>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

### AGRICULTURE

#### **Are Farmers Collateral Damage of Economic Growth?**

*(Village Square, April 12, 2017)*

People living in villages, who are migrating in large numbers to urban spaces in search of livelihoods, could be victims of our economic development or perhaps the dismal income growth of farm households is semi-deliberate to keep labor costs low.

Read more: <http://www.villagesquare.in/2017/04/12/farmers-collateral-damage-modern-economic-growth/>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

## Society

### GENDER

#### **Govt under fire for fudging gender ratio figures**

(Sushil Manav, *The Tribune*, 27 April 2017)

Amid reports of a considerable improvement in the gender ratio in the state, known for people's penchant for boy child, the alleged manipulation of figures by some districts has come as a dampener for the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign. However, it has been learnt that the state government has taken a serious view of the alleged fudging of gender ratio figures between January and March by some districts and ordered validation of the figures by an independent agency. Sources said names of Palwal and Narnaul districts had surfaced in this regard. Interestingly, both Palwal and Narnaul have suddenly jumped to the first and third positions in the state with the gender ratio of 1,042 and 968 girls, respectively, against 1,000 baby boys born between January 1 and March 31, 2017.

Read More: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/govt-under-fire-for-fudging-gender-ratio-figures/398674.html>.

Date of Access: 1.5.2017

## Opinions/ Books

### **Sukma massacre: What went wrong and what should be done**

(Shantanu Mukharji, *DailyO*, 29 April, 2017)

What is needed perhaps is a professional introspection into the incident and putting in place a fail-proof anti-Naxalite plan to prevent recurrence of similar kind. One should move forward with a positive frame of mind with constructive thoughts, instead of hitting out at the force. What comes to mind as an immediate redressal is perhaps to tone up intelligence to deal with the menace. We are not sure if intelligence within the CRPF is at all playing any role, though the top brass often talks about this subject. It's hard to imagine a humongous force like the CRPF, with a strength of nearly 3 lakh and principally engaged in fighting Naxals in a particular region, is without any formidable intelligence set up which is Maoist-centric.

Read More: <http://www.dailyo.in/politics/sukma-attack-maoists-crpf/story/1/16929.html>.

Date of Access: 1.5.2017

### **How to Milk a Cow in India: Reclaiming Gau-Seva from Gau-Rakshaks**

(Radhika Govindrajan, *The Wire*, 1 May 2017)

In 2011, I had a conversation with Raju Arya, which got me thinking about what it means to love a cow – or any livestock animal – and how that bond is formed. Raju da was a Dalit man who lived in a village not far from Nainital, which I was visiting for my fieldwork on people's relationships with animals in Uttarakhand's mountain villages. As we poured over the day's newspaper in his courtyard, I spotted a report about the police intercepting three gau-taskars (cow smugglers) with the aid of a few young men who had tipped them off, and prevented a riot. Uttarakhand was an early adopter of legal cow-protection, having passed a law in 2007 that forbade the slaughter of cattle, the consumption or possession of beef, and the transportation of cattle across state lines. Long before contemporary cow-protection came to occupy the national imagination, the news in Uttarakhand was rife with reports that Hindu youth were committing themselves to the task of protecting the gau-mata at any cost.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/130617/cow-beef-gau-rakshak/>.

Date of Access: 1.5.2017

### **The Centre Has Abdicated Its Responsibility to Farmers Through Its Pricing Policies**

(Kavitha Kuruganti, *The Wire*, 30 April 2017)

Farmer suicides and agrarian distress have likely never been among the national public debates as they are right now. A group of Tamil Nadu farmers, whose protests in New Delhi were dubbed 'bizarre' but who were actually desperate for debate and action, managed to get find mention in the media as well as in the Parliament. In Odisha, a state Assembly house panel is visiting villages to inquire into farmer suicide cases. The Madras high court didn't hesitate to direct the Tamil Nadu government to waive off cooperatives' loans of all farmers in the state; agriculture insurance companies have received notices from a few high courts on the lack of payments to farmers even for seasons when huge losses were incurred.

Read More: <https://thewire.in/130603/tamil-nadu-farmers-suicides-drought-pmfby/>.

Date of Access: 1.5.2017

## Opinions/ Books

### Price caps are a bad idea

(Prashanth Perumal, *The Hindu*, May 01, 2017)

Cardiac stents, the medical devices used to prevent fatal heart attacks by allowing the easier flow of blood, are a lifesaver for millions of patients in India. It was no wonder that when the government decided in February this year to cap the price of stents to improve affordability, it brought a huge sigh of relief.

The NPPA has justified the price cap saying that these companies can earn profits even at the lower prices mandated by it. This misses the point that investors judge the attractiveness of an investment based on its expected return compared to other investments. Thus, as long as price caps affect relative returns, it would affect the amount and urgency of investments into making stents.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/price-caps-are-a-bad-idea/article18345030.ece>

Date Accessed: 01.05.2017

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