



Editorial

Challenges to Democracy and Peace in South Asia

Democracy is an age-old aspiration of humankind. The quest for democracy and peace continues even today and is a global phenomenon. It is a quest for a fair and just organization of human relations, a polity in which all individuals and groups can guide their own destinies. Yet defining and measuring this phenomenon remains highly contested and controversial.

Democracy and peace may be defined in many different ways. The South Asian context and experience, though, shows that democracy is a process for achieving the goals of peace and prosperity in the region.

This is because South Asia has been among the world's most conflict-prone regions in recent history, mainly as a legacy of the colonial past and a feudal mindset, and also as a result of the current "war on terror". Protracted ethno-political conflicts produce vicious cycles of civil war resulting in violence, death, displacement, and violation of human rights. Democracy and peace face quite a few challenges in the region.

The notion of democracy itself faces a foundational challenge in South Asia – to institute a democratic government that will not be undermined by authoritarian tendencies and forces. For several countries in the region have been enamoured of the claims of the army and non-democratic forms of government that they can provide effective leadership. Violence and conflict -- internal or external, civil or military, and declared or undeclared – valorizes the readiness to kill or be killed and the destruction of human life and its "accomplishments". It mocks compassion and conscience, belittles the refusal to erect artificial walls which divide people in the name of one identity or the other, and glorifies masculinity and destruction while devaluing sustenance of life.

The absence of sustainable peace is evident everywhere, with conflicts manifesting themselves in several forms – economic, social, communal, ethnic, class, caste and gender -- all of which are interconnected. This absence of peace and proliferation of conflict is in turn used as a pretext by governments to suspend democratic exercises and curtail human rights. Democracy and the democratic culture are at the lowest while militarism and militarization are at their heights. Global powers, under the imperialist leadership of the US, still keep chanting "war on terror" to implement their agenda of domination and denial.

(Continued on page 3)



Participants In
Regional Peace Conference
July, 2011



Participants In
'Women's participation in politics'
Lahore, March, 2011



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<p>Women Deprivation to Land in South Asia</p> <p>Women's Movement</p>	<p>2010 Flood & Its Impacts on women</p> <p>Women's Movement</p>	<p>Women: The Survivors of Civil War in Sri Lanka</p> <p>Women's Movement</p>
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Denial of basic human rights is a major concern. The present system exploits every crisis situation to take away people's democratic rights and assume draconian powers, crushing civil liberties, eroding human rights, branding all dissent as 'terrorism', curbing freedom of expression, and promoting xenophobia by urging the elimination of the "other". The most reproachable aspect of the war on terror is that even when the purported targets are "terrorists", the victims are often innocent civilians, and their suffering reinforces the cause of the terrorists. Further, this war has relied only on military actions, ruling out a political approach and solutions based on dialogue, reconciliation and peace, and hence has spectacularly failed to address the root causes of violence. All these tendencies entail gross denial of justice and growing violations of democracy, human rights and the right to self-determination. Violence, conflicts and war have thus reduced communities to live in terror, mutual suspicion and constant insecurity. The livelihood of millions of people has been severely affected. And they have caused unbelievable suffering particularly for women and children.

Holistic understanding

Democracy and peace are the two sides of a coin and are interlinked. A holistic meaning of democracy and peace has therefore to be discovered by rejecting the dominance of authoritarian regimes and by cultivating the culture of peace. Significant political, economic and social developments within the countries and outside affect democratic institutions and economic processes which then impinge on the freedom, basic rights and entitlements of the people. But meaningful democracy and peace are the pre-conditions for the fullness of dignified life. This is reflected in the fact that though the South Asian countries together account for 22.6 per cent of the global population they have only 2 per cent of the global income. Except for Maldives and Sri Lanka, South Asian countries fall between the ranks of 127 and 140 in the Human Development Index out of 177 countries of the world. In India, for example, despite a democratic constitution based on the "sovereignty of the people", large sections of the people do not enjoy full political freedom, and over 400 million people live below the (World Bank-defined) poverty level.

A major source of these deprivations is the inability of the people to participate in making decisions that directly affect them. If it is to function well, democracy requires such wider participation. However, democratic decision-making structures and processes are often far removed from the people. This leads to the detachment of policy-making from the concerns of the people and consequently to alienation; and it also results in a lack of accountability and transparency in governance which further alienates the people from the institutions of governance. Such governance often breeds corruption, promotes political patronage and low observance of the rule of law and leads to distortions in the delivery of public goods and services, especially in remote areas. All these problems often get compounded by the recurring political instability of ruling coalitions -- as the system of checks and balances in governance fail, the political class becomes unresponsive and unaccountable, and the bureaucracy acquires autonomy of its own and does not function as it should. In such circumstances, the state also becomes liable to be destabilized by "non-state actors".

Deficiencies in democracy and governance are thus the biggest problems in the region. There is therefore a strong need for functioning states. In the absence of this, governments, whether democratic or otherwise, will continue distributing benefits to sections close to power, cronies, and the creamy layers while people demand that governments function on the basis of fair and democratic values and improve their political and economic situations. The eventual evolution of South Asian countries would depend on the outcome of the struggle between these two forces.

Another challenge to democracy and peace is the growing inequality between the rich and the poor and between the urban and the rural populations. This inequality creates conditions that can lead to social

tensions, conflict and violence, undermining democracy and peace. So this problem needs to be addressed -- how to reduce this inequality for the even development of diverse people and regions. Fairness and justice should be the key concerns here. As mentioned earlier, India with its wide diversity still has so many people living in poverty even after 60 years of constitutional democracy while some sections have acquired enormous wealth or are flourishing, generally by appropriating public resources or aided by state policies in favour of them.

Democracy in South Asia also faces the challenge of its expansion and depth. This calls upon states to apply the basic principles of democracy to all regions, social groups and sectors. But representation of the poor, women, marginal castes and ethnic communities, protection of minorities, and bringing the government to the poor remain a problematic. Democracy also needs to be deepened and taken beyond institutional routines and the elites. It calls for democratizing public policy-making, fostering social democracy, and resisting anti-democratic tendencies and putsches. Finally, it calls for the celebration of diversity within the different societies of South Asia. In essence, the current political practice must give way to a new language and practice of democracy, drawing on deeper home-grown reflections on the current challenges and failures.

So, to sum up, an alternative approach to democratic reforms that will respond to the promise of democracy is the need of the hour in South Asia. There is a need to prioritize the accommodation of minority interests and aspirations, and re-invigorate politics through a radical re-working of political institutions and the state. In South Asia, the state now blatantly dominates the discourse on democracy and, despite the constitutional provisions, sets limits to freedom. Using "national security" as a handy ruse, the state places enormous restrictions on the "freedoms" of the people and most institutions of governance, including the judiciary, go along with this game. "Restricted freedoms", whether political, economic, social or cultural, are indeed a problem in South Asia. As discussed earlier, the region also faces numerous human rights and developmental challenges that threaten democracy and peace; long-standing repression and conflicts hamper the democratic process. Torture and illegal detention by security forces are widespread, eroding public trust in government authorities. Rampant corruption perpetuates inefficiency and often blocks the administration of justice, leading to further abuses against members of the most vulnerable communities, particularly women and minority religious and ethnic groups. We need to remember that peace without justice is not peace; the struggle for peace must therefore be linked to justice and democratization of society, which also means that we need to secularize society. And in order to defeat the divisive game the ruling classes play, there is a need to expand people-to-people contacts as a continuous process.

Going beyond, there is a need to reconstruct South Asia, based on close cooperation, by imaginative new ways. There is also a need for greater cultural understanding. Economic cooperation and cultural understanding are the key areas that countries in South Asia can work on to come together and create a new South Asia. The task before all actors is to create the space and pave the way for this.

SAAPE had earlier held a two-day conference as an effort to contribute towards addressing these key issues. Some of these issues and concerns are reflected in this bulletin.



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SAAPE News and Events

Workshop on "Setting Labour Agenda for South Asia"

30-31 March 2011 Kathmandu, Nepal

The Labour Rights Thematic Group of SAAPE, General Federation of Nepalese Trade unions (GEFONT) and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER) organized a two-day workshop on "Setting Labour Agenda for South Asia" in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 30 and 31 March, 2011. The workshop sought to identify labour issues and consolidate trade union movements in South Asia.

The workshop had about 36 participants, mainly from different trade unions and labor-supporting organizations from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The participants agreed to reactivate the South Asian Labour Forum (SALF) and this would be discussed at the country level and then at the South Asia Social Forum at Dhaka, Bangladesh (see box, "SALF - a Brief Background").

Mr. Ganga Lal Tuladhar, Minister and spokesperson of the Government of Nepal, inaugurated the workshop. Mr. Bishnu Rimal, Chairman of GEFONT and Member of the Constituent Assembly and Parliament, Nepal, presided over the inaugural session.

Call for unity

In his inaugural address, Mr. Tuladhar said that, in the 19th and 20th centuries, Europe was the centre of trade union movements, but in the 21st century South Asia had become the leader of trade union and democratic movements. "In Nepal, we are passing through a transition period. We are changing our movement to social and economic development." During the democratic movement in Nepal, many South Asian labour movements supported the Nepali people. He expressed thanks for that support. However, he noted that trade unions in South Asia were divided, and he urged them to be united.

SALF – a Brief Background

SALF evolved from the South Asian Consultation Conference on Labour Rights or the Kathmandu Consultation held in May 1996. It was formed as a step towards promoting regional solidarity in peace and labour rights. The second significant meeting of the trade unions of South Asia took place in Karachi, Pakistan, in September 2003 where it was resolved that labour in the region must work for regional peace, demilitarisation, denuclearisation and elimination of foreign military bases.

Recalling and reaffirming the statement of the Kathmandu Consultation and its resolution on South Asian Labour Rights Charter on Environmental Standards and Rights and on Human Rights, the meeting in Karachi adopted the Karachi Declaration. The two-day workshop in Kathmandu further sought to identify labour issues and consolidate the trade union movements in South Asia.

In Nepal, workers were facing many problems, including social security, minimum wages, job insecurity, and issues of migrant and women workers, and all these issues needed to be addressed. He praised GEFONT for playing a vital role in the labour movement in Nepal. The government had asked Mr. Bishnu Rimal to help in formulating a bill on social security.

Talking about the issue of visa on arrival for Afghan citizens, he said he would check it with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and hoped to solve this problem soon.

Addressing the inaugural session, Mr. Prem Sing Bohra, Vice-President of NTUC-I said that 23 per cent of Nepal's economy depended on remittances from abroad. However, because of lack of skills, Nepalese migrant workers were facing problems. There was also lack of awareness and information. Education was the key to development .

Mr. Karamat Ali, Executive Director, PILER, gave a presentation on labour's condition in South Asia. He said representatives of trade unions, NGOs and labour-supporting organisations from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India had met in Kathmandu in 1996 and formed SALF, which was a step towards promoting regional solidarity on labour rights and peace-building. He pointed out that a number of issues had been identified by labour and trade union leaders of South Asia. Among these was the issue of migrant workers within South Asia. "Today we have 10 times more migrant workers than in the 1990s," he noted.

Mr. Ali said South Asia was the only region where there was no trade cooperation. Open trade and free movement of people should be included in the labour movement's agenda. He deplored that neither people nor the governments in South Asia had raised their voice in support of the basic rights of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. "We did not show regional solidarity with the Tamil people." When we could express solidarity with Vietnam and other people of the world, why not

solidarity with the Tamils of Sri Lanka, he asked. "A labour movement has to be different and based on the principle of solidarity with the people," he said.

Mr. Ali underlined the need to devise a strategy to develop a common platform like SALF. In the SAARC process, he pointed out, many institutions had already been established -- the SAARC Development Fund, SAAFRC Food Bank, SAARC Social Charter and the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). There was a need for a legal framework like South Asian Labour Convention. No country in South Asia has implemented ILO Conventions, and therefore governments in the region should be held accountable for implementing all ILO Conventions and other UN Covenants.

Mr. Ali requested Mr. Tuladhar to address the issue of visa for Afghani people, as they were not given visa on arrival like other South Asian citizens but had to get visa from India. He said more than 60,000 Nepalis were working in Afghanistan and they didn't have access to the Counsellor. These problems should be solved as a priority.

In his presidential address, Mr. Bishnu Rimal said that South Asia was no doubt now the centre of labour movement but the movement had not received attention in European countries. Europeans were only interested in our products. "We are producing, they are consuming," he added. Within South Asia, though labour organisations had similar programmes and challenges, they were ideologically divided; some were apolitical and some too political, whereas some followed one party. There was a need to find solutions to the many problems labour faced through unity.

The widespread informalisation of jobs was creating job insecurity. Employers were outsourcing jobs through contractors. Lower wages and delayed payments were the other major problems. Employers were using hire-and-fire policies. Capital was influencing political

movements. Labour migration was the biggest issue in Nepal as well as in other South Asian countries. He said SALF aimed to address these issues. Its approach was to organise, educate and agitate. In Nepal, the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre had been established for a single union. After the 2006 uprising, Nepal was trying to introduce a new trade union movement in which every member was to pay a fee.

Non-implementation of social security was a big issue. He said recently we have made a deal with employers. Besides increasing workers' wages by Rs 1500, we have initiated drafting a social security bill that would cover 2 million workers in Nepal.

Separate sessions were held on various issues of labour in South Asia. Representatives from each country gave an overview of the labour movement and trade unions in their countries. There was a special session on Nepal in which Mr. Rimal shared his experience and knowledge of the contemporary labour agenda in Nepal.

Major decisions taken by the workshop included:

1. The next meeting of SALF members would be held on the occasion of South Asia Social Forum in Dhaka in November, and the following programmes would be completed before the meeting.
 - i. A meeting of MNC Unions' Coordination would be held in any country.
 - ii. Information sharing as promised by PILER would be completed in the form of a booklet.
2. A joint meeting of garment workers' unions in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan would

be held on the occasion of South Asia Social Forum. Focal persons/organisations in each country were identified:

- i. India: Mr. Gautam Modi
- ii. Pakistan: Mr. Khalid Mahmood
- iii. Nepal: Mr. Umesh Upadhyaya
- iv. Bangladesh: Ms. Shirin Akhter
- v. Sri Lanka: Mr. Arumugam Muthulingam

3. There was unanimity on:

- Harmonising minimum wages
- Coordination between unions of MNCs Women workers' problems could be taken up through the HomeNet alliance as a start-up.
- A document on social security has been prepared, though inputs from some countries are still to be included. The emphasis is on the UN Social and Economic Charter.
- Standardisation of labour laws, labour rights in Constitutions and ILO Core Labour Standards in each South Asian country. PILER has taken the responsibility to start a process for gathering information and publishing a booklet. Information on political space of workers and trade unions in South Asia would also be part of this.
- On the migration issue, we are committed to the UN Charter. We would press for automatic applicability of labour laws in the receiving country GEFONT will lead this process and guide others on issues of migrant workers.

At the end of the workshop, the following Declaration (Kathmandu Declaration) was unanimously passed and released.



Kathmandu Declaration

We the participants from South Asian countries - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - assembled in Kathmandu to share experiences and views on contemporary labour issues in the region and also to explore appropriate actions to reduce the sufferings of the working class.

We focused attention on the frequent violation of labour rights in South Asia despite recognition of their rights in national Constitutions and legislation. Freedom of association for the working class is still a big challenge because of the non-responsive character of the states and policy-makers.

The meeting agreed to revitalise the South Asian Labour Forum (SALF) and endorse the South Asian Labour Rights Charter and adopt the subsequent declarations passed in 2003 and 2008.

We also discussed the issues of insufficiency of minimum wages for workers for a decent living. The need to introduce and redesign social security systems in each of the South Asian countries has become more relevant in the context of the international economic crisis and international finance institutions-led globalisation. The workforce in South Asia is dependent on the informal sector of employment including agriculture, garments, textiles and domestic work and the overwhelming masses are in acute poverty. The contribution of a large number of women workers is still not recognised and they are deprived of equal opportunities at the workplace and in society. The meeting demanded that South Asian governments ensure gender

equality at the workplace as part of their economic and social policies.

There is a need to develop a common understanding for negotiations with multinational corporations in South Asia for similar working conditions, wages and benefits. Recognising the contribution of migrant workers in the economies of South Asian countries, the need has been re-emphasised for appropriate mechanisms to ensure the basic rights and protection of South Asian migrant workers within the region and beyond. The meeting emphasised the need for practical measures for greater solidarity within the labour movements of South Asia. The participants urged governments of South Asian countries to liberalise visa restrictions to facilitate people-to-people contact.

The participants expressed serious concern over growing militarisation and nuclearisation in South Asia and demanded that governments of South Asian countries enter into no-war pacts, reduce military expenditures and transfer these resources to the provision of social security to all workers.

Analysing the current situation, we have come to the conclusion that a new type of unified movement is necessary in order to create effective political space for the working class of South Asia. The trade union movement and labour-friendly, pro-people, and pro-worker organisations should join hands in order to create a new labour-friendly and better South Asia. For these objectives, we express our commitment to coordinate actions throughout South Asia by developing a sound coordination mechanism.

(Reported by Shujauddin Qureshi, PILER)



Advocacy and Lobbying with Political Parties in Pakistan for Women's Participation in Politics

29 March 2011 - Lahore, Pakistan

Women's political participation refers to their ability to participate equally with men in all aspects of public and political life. It is one of the major ways to ensure women's empowerment, to increase their decision-making power and ability to influence matters that affect their lives. Although, comprising over half of the population in South Asia, women have extremely low participation in decision-making, especially representation at different levels of the government. Meager representation is seen in almost all cabinet formations and women have rarely got the opportunities to hold key portfolios. This indicates that not only women are denied their rightful place in the democratic polity but that their voices also remain unheard and their special needs neglected. Gender-insensitive masculine political culture has made it difficult for women politicians to struggle, survive and continue their political careers.

Currently, women's participation in political parties is not proportional and low as compared to men's participation. Political parties' statutes and manifestos, modalities and timing of programs are not gender-sensitive. Grassroots women leaders have the caliber to come to the forefront in politics but they are not given the opportunity. An age-old patriarchal mindset has contributed to this. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a campaign and advocacy for equal participation of women in politics.

Towards this end, Women Workers Help Line (WWHL), in collaboration with SAAPE, organized a round table meeting in Carlton Tower Hotel, Lahore, on 29 March 2011 for advocacy and lobbying with political parties to enhance women participation in politics and also in their own parties' structures. Government officials from the gender department, members of the opposition, members of political parties including PMLN,

PMLQ, PPP, Labor Party Pakistan, Workers Party Pakistan, Awami Jamhuri Forum, Tehreek-e-Insaaf, civil society actors, media representatives, people from social movements such as the Labor Qoumi Movement, and community activists participated in the meeting. The program was meant to create awareness among political parties about the significance of women's equal participation in politics.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- To ensure women's effective participation in political structures including political parties, national and provincial assemblies, senate, political institutions, leadership and decision-making
- Women from the grassroots should be given chances to play effective roles in the protection of women's rights
- To make women-friendly and women-focused policies
- Initiate women-friendly programs, especially focusing on women's particular issues
- To enact women-friendly laws for the protection of women's rights
- To contribute to ensuring women's participation in the committees of political parties from the local to the central level
- Ensure a women-friendly environment, free of violence and discrimination.

Proceedings

Ms Azra Shad, Chairperson, WWHL, initiated the program by briefing the participants on the organization's struggles over the past six years for women's effective participation in politics. The

overall program was facilitated by Riffat Maqsood, General-Secretary, WWHL, and Farooq Tariq from the Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee.

They said that women's participation in politics was not increasing because of social and economic exploitation, the patriarchal mindset of male leaders, community women being not allowed to participate in politics, and a complex and corrupt system of nominating candidates for elections. Women's leaders from the grassroots must be given a chance to sit in national and provincial assemblies as the women now in assemblies do not represent the poor. Coming from the rich section of society, how can they understand the hurdles and barriers faced by women at the grassroots? It is the need of our time that women come in front and play effective roles in increasing their numbers not only in assemblies but also within their political parties. Women who are in the assemblies must see to it that 33 per cent of the seats in national and provincial assemblies are reserved for women. Women from the grassroots have great potential and capacity but because of lack of financial support they are unable to contest elections. So there is a need to make policies which ensure the representation of the poor in assemblies and organizational structures.

In KhayberPakhtoun Khawh (KPK), women are not allowed to go out to cast their votes as the area is under the control of religious fanatics. Peace in the area is disturbed and politicians and the government are unable to control the situation. Restrictions on the mobilization of women have adversely affected progress in the area. The government needs to specially focus on protecting women and enhancing their participation in politics. A woman-friendly environment needs to be created to protect the

basic rights of women and end discriminatory practices.

All participants took part in the open discussion that followed. At the end of the meeting the group resolved that the following actions be taken up.

- Review manifestos of political parties so as to get women-friendly policies included in these manifestos.
- Sensitization of members of political parties so that they respect women in their constituencies and give them their rightful place
- Organize training programs for political parties women which provides them to play their effective role for maintaining women friendly society
- Demand a legislative structure that ensures 33 per cent reservation for women in provincial and national assemblies
- Lobby with political parties to ensure at least 33 per cent women's representation in their own constituencies
- Media program to encourage women to play effective roles in assemblies and political constituencies
- Conduct lobbying and advocacy programs in close coordination with civil society organizations
- Making the political process easy for women and initiating programs to encourage community women to participate in politics
- Maintaining an environment which facilitates women from the grassroots to participate in politics
- Initializing programs to help women play effective roles in governance.



Regional conference on challenges and way forward for democracy and peace in South Asia

1-2 July 2011 -- Kathmandu Nepal

SAAPE organised a regional-level conference on Challenges and Way Forward for Democracy and Peace in South Asia in Kathmandu on 1 and 2 July, 2011. The main objective of the conference was to contribute towards strengthening democracy and sustainable peace in South Asia. The conference had the following specific objectives.

- Unravel the discourse on the deficiency of democracy and peace with dignity and justice which are dialectically linked and hence each sustains and impacts the other.
- Broaden the understanding of the various dimensions of conflicts and violence that humanity faces today.
- Build and strengthen a common civil society platform for democracy, peace and justice in the region to promote activities and actions of social movements, mobilise public opinion and rally support for the peace agenda through organised campaigns focusing on peoples' struggles for freedom and democracy.
- Strengthen civil society movement against the violation of fundamental human rights - specifically civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development.

The conference, in which political leaders, parliamentarians, academicians, policy-makers, human rights defenders, members of CSOs, and representatives from marginalised sections of the Nepalese society such as women, Dalits, indigenous groups, workers, unemployed youth and students participated, discussed the following issues.

Democracy and governance

- a) Redefining democracy, state, civil society and governance in South Asia: Prospects and challenges

- b) Grassroots democracy and food sovereignty/ food security

Conflict transformation and peace-building

- a) Role of civil society in promoting democracy, peace and justice
- b) 'War on terror' and impacts of militarisation on democracy and peace in South Asia
- c) Prospects for promoting a culture of justice and peace in South Asia

Human rights and gender justice for democracy and peace

- a) Emerging challenges to human rights and peace in South Asia
- b) Religion, gender and patriarchy: Obstacles to or opportunities for democracy and peace
- c) Gender dimensions of democratic governance and peace: Women's political participation

Mani Shankar Aiyar (Member of Rajya Sabha, and a member of the Indian Foreign Service) gave the keynote address. Guest speakers included C. P. Gajurel, Constituent Assembly member and Secretary of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist; Bam Dev Gautam, Vice-President of Communist Party of Nepal--United Marxist-Leninist; Chitrakha Yadav, Central Treasurer of Nepali Congress Party; Hridayesh Tripathi, Constituent Assembly member and Vice-President of Tarai Madheh Democratic Party, Nepal; Jitendra Dev, Secretary-General of Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum (Democratic), Nepal; Riyaz Khan Fatayana, Member of Parliament and Chairman of Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights, Pakistan; and Selva Thiruchandran, Sri Lanka.

The keynote address, guest-speeches and discussion sessions on the key issues produced some conclusions which are summarised below:

- Civil societies have to develop some kind of understanding with the marginalised people and have to make people aware of unethical and suppressive neo-liberal policies. Civil society activities are important for bringing out the voices of marginalised clusters and enable them to actively participate in state affairs.
- For a just society, there should be both ideals of economic democracy and social democracy combined to assure the participation of the peoples from the bottom. Initiatives for climate justice, fund-raising for natural resources mobilisation, multilateral transit, economic justice and building up joint food stocks are the focal points to be addressed as the common problems of the South Asia region along with movement against militarisation, fundamentalism and terrorism.
- There is increasing exploitation of women in the modern capitalist world. The economic aspects of violence against women continue

because of the lack of a proper accounting system of their labour in informal sector. Women's issues are not issues related to women alone but are the issues of whole humanity. Peace without justice is not possible. To attain peace in our society, gender rights and justice should be viewed through the same lens through which human rights and justice are viewed.

- The basic needs of the people -- education, clothing, shelter, etc. --- are to be addressed as their rights so as to institutionalise democracy from the grassroots level. For this, there is a need to nurture institutions at local levels and a need for a strong civil society.
- Failure to internalise popular support and people's aspirations may lead to autocracy which is personality-centred. To consolidate and deepen democracy, there is no alternative to building participatory and inclusive institutions and democratising them.



SAAPE Core Committee Meeting

3-4 July 2011 - Kathmandu, Nepal

The SAAPE Core Committee (CC) meeting (extended) was held in Kathmandu on 3 and 4 July 2011. Twenty-two SAAPE members (CC as well as general) and staff members participated.

The extended meeting decided to take part in the South Asia Social Forum (SASF) to be held in Bangladesh in November 2011. The meeting also discussed the organisation of People's SAARC and decided to take further action for the event. Further, it was decided to publish the *Poverty and Vulnerability Report* by 2012; a writers' workshop would be held before the report was published.

The meeting also drew up the agenda for SAAPE campaigns. The agenda included land and neo-liberalism, agrarian reforms including control/corporatisation of seeds and privatisation of land,

women in politics, and right to food and productive resources.

A new structure was proposed for SAAPE as follows:

CC structure:

- One representative and one alternative member from each country in the region
- Almost half of the CC members need to retire voluntarily every three years

Suggested structural reorganisation of SAAPE's thematic groups into campaign groups:

- Labour rights and food sovereignty, livelihood, employment and climate change to be one campaign group. ANPFA, in consultation with

PILER, will work as the moderator of this group.

- Peace, justice and demilitarisation, and democracy and just governance to function as another campaign group. IMADR and VAK will jointly moderate this group.

- Gender justice as a third group will also cut across the agendas of other groups. BNPS (Rokeya) will moderate this group.

The meeting concluded by stressing the importance and uniqueness of the SAAPE initiative in the region and decided to consolidate and strengthen SAAPE activities.



Conference on the Rights of Bhutanese Refugees

6 July 2011 -- Jhapa, Nepal

There are over 130,000 Bhutanese living outside the country for fear of political persecution. Of the 110,000 registered Bhutanese asylum-seekers in Nepal, not one has returned to Bhutan. International effort to relocate the refugees in a third country has not picked up momentum.

To analyze the contestations and identify the way forward for the effective and acceptable repatriation of Bhutanese refugees from Nepal, a conference on the rights of Bhutanese refugees was organized on 6 July 2011 in Jhapa district of Nepal. About 100 representatives of diverse stakeholders -- political parties of Nepal, Bhutanese political leaders (in exile), human rights and civil society organizations, and activists from refugees' rights movement -- participated in the conference.

Speakers at the conference included human rights activists, representatives of women refugees, journalists, activists and representatives from national and international organizations working on the issues of human rights, democracy, and refugee problems. The programme was organized by South Asian Association for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), Vikas Adhyayan Kendra (VAK, Mumbai) and the NGO Federation of Nepal. A detailed report follows.

Rights of Bhutanese Refugees: Contestations and Way Forward

The Bhutanese refugees issue in Nepal has been a major problem since 1990 as the Bhutan

government indiscriminately forced a section of its citizens to leave the country. Since then, both Bhutan and Nepal have gone through a number of political changes.

In Bhutan, the king, perhaps learning from the Nepalese events, announced a 'democratic polity'. A peculiar version of democracy and party politics was introduced with a royal decree. (At the same time, the country also carried out the exercise of measuring the 'national happiness index'.) This move, however disguised, underlined the fact that rights and broadly citizenship had been defined in Bhutan in ethnic terms. (The President of Sri Lanka will love this arrangement!) All national programmes and policies excluded from their ambit the large population of Nepalese-speaking people who are part of the country. The move brought destitution to hundreds of thousands of people who were forced to live in abysmal conditions in refugee camps in Nepal and India as displaced and stateless persons. The Government of Bhutan refuses to consider the plight of these people and hopes to consolidate and perpetuate its rule on ethnic basis. The insistence that all citizens follow one culture, including dress codes, is part of this project.

Issues and concerns

There are now no human rights organisations functioning in Bhutan. The judiciary is not free. The constitution does not provide for a human rights commission which should have been an

integral part of the democratisation process. Human rights groups functioning from outside the country are not allowed to set up office in the country. There are numerous instances of human rights violation. Political dissent is not tolerated. Many political dissenters are languishing in prison without a fair trial.

Of the 110,000 registered Bhutanese asylum-seekers in Nepal, not one has returned to Bhutan, and over 50 per cent have not shown interest in efforts being made by some governments and international organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to settle them in a third country. The Bhutanese government has been saying that there are over 80,000 people of Nepali origin in Bhutan who are considered non-Bhutanese. Observers opine that the regime is preparing the ground for a legal ethnic-cleansing of the remaining Lhotsampa (people of Nepali origin) population in Bhutan.

Conference participants' reflections

Dr. Bhampa Rai, a leader of the Bhutanese refugees, set the tone for the conference by presenting the issues the refugees faced. The Government of Bhutan was reluctant to recognise them as refugees who had been living in Nepal since 1990. Neither the Nepal government nor Nepal's political parties seemed to take the issue seriously; if they had, the problem could have been solved long ago. In this context, consider what would happen if India sent back the 30 million Nepalis living in that country as refugees. In Bhutan, there was no democracy, and the autocratic regime patronised all NGOs, including international NGOs. Third-country rehabilitation was a kind of subversion in that it diluted the issues. The role of the UNHCR was not clear either, as the organisation did not respect the refugees' rights to be sent back to Bhutan. The solution therefore lay in the political process. The UNHCR in Nepal must recognise this. The refugees had also been suffering psychological trauma. Regional organisations such as SAARC would not be relevant if they were not pro-people and

concerned about such issues. SAAPE should therefore take up political campaigns on refugees' rights in South Asia, and also internationalise the issue.

D.P. Kafle, human rights activist, said that the UNHCR had in the beginning recognised the identities of the refugees but later seemed to advocate third-country rehabilitation which was a violation of their human rights. He called for Nepal's political parties to help in resolving the problems. He suggested three solutions: (i) repatriation; (ii) reconciliation; and (iii) third-country rehabilitation. India's role was important. (The refugees were not allowed to go to India.)

Kishor Bhandari, a refugee representative, said that all attempts, including 15-16 roundtable meetings, for the repatriation of refugees had failed. Those who had been rehabilitated in a third country faced serious problems.

Yashoda Budhathoki, a woman representative from refugee camps, said that women faced greater discrimination and violence - rape, trafficking and other kinds of violence - in the camps. This ought to be taken into consideration. The refugees wanted to go back to Bhutan, their home country, and Nepal's CSOs, government and political parties should help them. However, most such organisations and institutions pushed for third-country rehabilitation.

Rajan Sunuwar, UNHCR representative, stated that he did not think that his organisation pressed for third-country rehabilitation. All three doors were open and which came first depended on the governments concerned, CSOs and political parties.

Gopal Gadtaula, a journalist, pointed out that third-country rehabilitation policies had led to the fragmentation of families, and they suffered trauma. Some members were in refugee camps in Nepal, some in Bhutan, and others in a third country.

Father Amal Raj from Caritas said that they had been involved in advocacy for ensuring the rights of the refugees. Common people in the camps wanted to go back to Bhutan, and therefore repatriation was important. Towards this end, there was a need to build up a joint campaign. More so because political parties had not been active in this issue for the past five years.

Bidhyapati Mishra, a refugee and a journalist, reflected on the recent visit of Bhutan's Prime Minister to Nepal. He had asked the Nepal government for evidence that the refugees were Bhutanese citizens, which was an insult to the refugees. There were reports that people in the camps felt insecure. Refugees avoided lodging complaints with the police if crimes were committed against them (so as not to spoil their records with the police). Corruption and bribery were the other big problems. Third-country rehabilitation also was a source of corruption. It was a complex process; many people did not understand it, and the poor among the refugees had no access to it. Only the elite tended to benefit.

Thinle Penjor, President of Duke National Congress - Democratic, stressed that the refugee issue was a political problem which needed a political solution. For this, it was necessary to put pressure on the Nepal government, and also hold national, regional and international campaigns. His organisation had conveyed its concern to the SAARC summit every year but bilateral issues did not find place on the SAARC agenda. Also, the Bhutanese regime needed to be democratised. Without this, even repatriation might not end the oppression of the refugees.

Chhabi Kharel, a refugee activist, said that, in Bhutan, a number of people who had been fighting for democracy had been jailed.

Devendra Dahal, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist-Leninist, argued that it was necessary to protest against the Bhutanese government's refusal to 'recognise' the refugees. The UNHCR had been pushing for third-country

rehabilitation. This had diverted the focus from the real issues; those who had been settled in a third country, including the US, should demand to be sent back to Bhutan. Political parties and campaigners in Bhutan, however, had not yet found common ground on the issue. His party expressed solidarity with the Bhutanese refugees, and also provided moral support to the democratic movement in Bhutan, though this issue had been sidelined in Bhutan after 'democracy' was proclaimed.

Sher B. Bhattarai, leader of Nepali Congress, said that it was the basic right of the refugees to be sent back to Bhutan, and the Nepali Congress had put forward this agenda to the Nepal government; the issue needed to be resolved immediately. Bhutanese refugees must be united in this struggle. Donors and UN agencies had divided them, presenting rosy pictures of third-country settlement and persuading them to opt for it. IOM particularly had acted as a business company to make profit out of such third-country rehabilitation.

Durga Chaulagain, United Communist Party of Nepal -- Maoist, said that all the issues being discussed were very relevant. Third-country rehabilitation was not a solution. The refugees were fighting the autocratic regime in Bhutan. But Nepal's national political parties did not seem to have reached a consensus on these issues. India had played a divisive role. If the Indian establishment didn't play a positive role, it would take several years more to resolve the issue. In the beginning, a number of actors were involved in supporting the cause of the refugees but later most of them lost interest. The Bhutanese refugees were now considered slaves in a third country and had no dignified life. The Bhutan government had sent a mission to identify the refugees, but the mission was reluctant to recognise all of them as Bhutanese. Political parties should therefore lead these issues, and organise such conferences.

Sharada Timsina, a representative from the Sanischare camp, said that about 40 per cent of the refugees had moved to third country. To be

thus exiled was to lose one's history. So his group had come up with the idea of a museum documenting the history, status, locations, etc. of the struggle. The museum might help the refugees, fragmented for various reasons, unite and develop a common understanding. Meanwhile, political parties must fight for democracy in Bhutan, and only then the Bhutanese refugees would have their rights to be repatriated.

T.R. Rai, secretary at the Khudnabari refugee camp, asserted that the Bhutanese refugees were fighting for democracy but were being branded as terrorists. However, Fundamental Rights must be defended. While the refugees followed *rastrabad* (nationalism), third-country rehabilitation was *awasarbad* (opportunism) and *punjibad* (capitalism). Meanwhile, the camp consolidation programme in Nepal put the refugees under pressure. For example, after staying in one place for 17 years, people in his camp were transferred to different places which broke relationships within the community. Some refugees had also 'disappeared' as they could not put up their cases for registration before the authorities.

T.R. Regmi, a representative from the Beldangi refugee camp, said that many refugees were yet to be registered and their cases verified. Though Nepali citizens had warmly accepted the refugees, the government had not been as active as it should be in solving the problem.

Laxmi Neupane, Chairperson of the Inter-Party Women Alliance, Jhapa, and sub-secretary of UCPN-Maoist, highlighted the problem of discrimination against women, which only a political movement could end. Women's issues in general were in fact strongly linked to the political movement for liberation. So also, the refugee question, being a class issue, could only be resolved through the political process. Narad Mani Adhikari, from the same camp, said that India, while claiming to be the largest democracy, behaved like an autocratic regime as far as the

refugee problem was concerned. Being a regional issue, it needed to be taken to SAARC.

Som Thapa, a human rights activist from INSEC, an NGO, said the issue of refugee rights should be dealt in the framework of equity and justice and international conventions. Human rights movements must be strengthened. Identity, respect and dignity were the important issues to be considered. In this context, Nepal's political parties had not played an effective role.

Ajit Muriken, immediate past director of VAK, which has been working on Just and Democratic Governance in South Asia, said that the organisation had been engaged since long in the campaign for the rights of the Bhutanese refugees. The Indian government had double standard in relation to this issue; it was interested in gaining access to Bhutan's natural resources. So support had to come from civil society, and pressure groups could create an impact. The question therefore was: how should civil society build an alliance?

Sushovan Dhar, of SAAPE, pointed out that civil society in India had made many efforts to raise the issue but the ruling class was not ready to listen. Because of its strategic interest in Bhutan, the Indian ruling class wanted to support the Bhutan king. Around 30,000 refugees were in different parts of India. But this third-country settlement was an instrument for dividing the refugees. Legal frameworks would not help the movement; these served the elites more than the deprived. UNHCR policies were not formed in Nepal, so pressure needed to be put on the UNHCR headquarters where policies were made. As an effort to influence donors' policies, a Bhutanese delegation had also gone to European Union parliament last year.

Sundara Babu, director of VAK, noted that one heard the same stories even after 10 years; people in the camps continued to be deprived of human rights. The issue needed to be taken to People's SAARC and SAARC by building up campaigns to

highlight the issues. Other refugees such as the Burmese and Tibetan also faced the same problems. He wanted to know how the refugees could move forward and how others could help them.

Suggestions

- Political parties and the Nepal government should put a clear agenda before the Bhutan regime. Even if India did not allow the refugees to transit through the country to Bhutan, they could fly if the governments of Nepal and Bhutan created a conducive environment.
- Political parties should go to Bhutan, and also form a political front. Call for integrated efforts from political parties.
- Indian CSOs need to be active in advocating refugee issues.
- Internationalize the issue.
- Refugees need to be properly listed.
- Reconcile conflicts among the refugees.
- The refugee issue should be raised in SAARC summits.
- Start an immediate dialogue between the government and stakeholders.



Press Release:

SAAPE condemns the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti

SAAPE is shocked by the killing of Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Minister for Religious Minorities, in Islamabad on the alleged charges of recommending improvements in the country's blasphemy law regime. We believe that in this modern era any differences and discontent can be settled by way of negotiation but not by arms and militarist might. The use of arms to appease the unrealistic and antihuman interests of someone on any account is barbaric. Therefore, SAAPE urges the government of Pakistan to immediately bring the culprit to justice and create an enabling environment where human rights,

Follow-up actions

- Organise a dialogue between different stakeholders.
- Initiate a discourse at the political level to create greater awareness of the issues and build a consensus on possible actions.
- Bring the refugees together for joint action as they seem to have different perspectives.
- Build up pressure for a SAARC refugees protocol - refugees issues have been the major problem in South Asia.
- Prepare a protocol document (refugees) to present to SAARC, and lobby with SAARC Secretary-General.
- Delegations to Home and Foreign Ministries of Nepal.
- Those whose refugee status has been verified (74% of them) need to be repatriated to Bhutan. SAAPE should take up strong advocacy of this.
- Develop links with CSOs in West Bengal to broaden the issues, and build relationship with West Bengal's political parties.

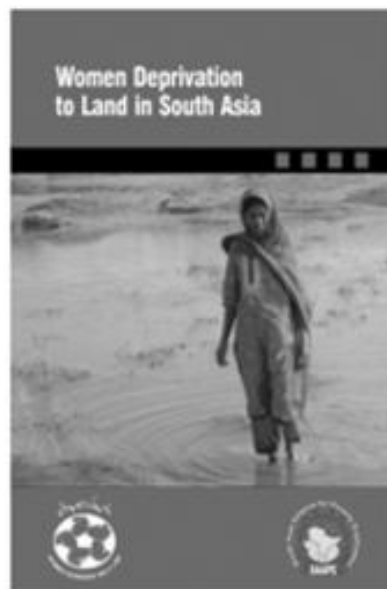
justice and peace can be realised. In particular, it urges the government to uphold the civil and political rights of the people, emphasising the right to life, freedom of speech and association. We hope the state and the people of Pakistan will play an instrumental role in protecting, promoting, respecting and fulfilling human rights. SAAPE also expresses its condolence to the family and relatives of the departed as well as to the people of Pakistan.

Long live South Asian peoples' solidarity.

(Sarba Khadka, Kathmandu, Nepal)

Women's Deprivation to Land in South Asia

In South Asia, even though governments have signed and ratified international agreements and passed laws granting equal property rights, property ownership is still exclusively in male control. Women's empowerment, equal rights to both men and women, equal share of property, etc., are some of the issues which we discuss everyday in life, newspapers and on television. But the reality is that these issues are still "unresolved". Not much has actually been done to create equality between them.



Realizing that women's deprivation to land was a barrier to their economic progress, SAAPE's Gender Thematic Group (GTG) drafted position papers relating to this issue in four South Asian countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka). The purpose was to get information on provisions available in law regarding the distribution of land among males and females in these countries. Based on these position papers, a consolidated comparative analysis was made and published as a booklet titled *Women Deprivation to Land in South Asia*.

The male still dominates society. Many obsolete traditions and taboos including *Watta Satta* (exchange marriages), marriage with the *Quran*, honor killing, forced marriage, etc. are used to deprive women of their property rights and to hamper their progress and sustainable economic uplift. Misuse of religion and its biased interpretation in relation to women also contribute to their dependency on males.

In South Asian countries, even when women do have a clear legal right to own and inherit property and land, they may be unaware of that right. Women may not know that legal means exist through which they can claim that right, and few women have access to legal advice. If they have access, they may lack money to actually obtain advice. In many instances, judges and magistrates lack the capacity and knowledge to interpret and implement national laws within the provisions of international human rights instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence that where women can own and inherit property, they are better placed to support themselves and their families.

Country positions

The study shows that a large section of women in Pakistan are landless and deprived of the right to own, control and inherit land and property. In the rural areas particularly, women are deprived of their inheritance; male relatives, in connivance with revenue officers, rob women of their lawful rights. This unequal opportunity to own land is a structural and systemic gender barrier that is both the cause and the effect of women's marginalization. Apart from the formal laws, there are combinations of factors such as discriminatory customary practices, social inhibitions and unequal power structures that impact women's right to inheritance. Many despicable practices remain unchallenged.

Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan) is no different when it comes to on-ground inheritance. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2008 showed that in Bangladesh 25 per cent of women who were eligible to inherit property gave it up. Based on its political history - Bangladesh has a complicated legal foundation - access to property for women is still a distant goal. Although equality is enshrined in the legal system, in 1996, only 3.5

per cent (0.62 million) of the 17.8 million agricultural holdings were female-owned. Women's ownership of homesteads were only slightly higher than their ownership of agricultural land and women were more likely to own the homestead if it was not attached to cultivable land. Most Bangladeshi women were employed in the informal sector. According to official estimates (2003), only 26 per cent of women in the age group 15-59 were employed in the formal sector, and only 10 per cent of employed women and 22 per cent of employed men, aged 20-55, received any cash wages. In addition, women who were employed year-round earned 60-65 per cent of what their male counterparts earned in the agricultural sector. Little over 4 per cent of all women and 13 per cent of employed women were casual workers. They were customarily involved in the post-harvest processing of crops, rearing of livestock and poultry, and home-gardening of fruits and vegetables. To the extent that they sell the products themselves, they do contribute to household savings, expenditure and investment, and there are some poor rural women who earn from lending their small savings to various productive rural enterprises.

In Nepal, women control only 4 per cent of the land-holdings and only 10.84 per cent (2001) of the households have land-holding in the name of women. Their main access to land is through their relationship with the husbands. Therefore, in essence, they are the secondary owners of the land owned legally by the husband. This type of access is vulnerable to breakdowns in relationships, divorce and to the changing priorities of male landowners. Data from the *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey* show that children of mothers who own land are significantly less likely to be severely underweight or stunted.

In contrast, Nepalese women have wide social diversity among them - based on caste, class and location, tradition and the like. The role of land in the livelihood security of these divergent women's groups is also different. In most cases, it is important that marginal women have access to or ownership of land (educated women might ask

for their rights if it is incorporated in the law and policies). Therefore, dalit and underprivileged *janajati* women, physically and mentally challenged women, women from minority groups and women engaged in work attracting social stigma need to emphasize land reform programs. How far these groups have access to land and how land ownership, if any, is helping them sustain their livelihood needs to be understood.

As in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, women's land rights in Sri Lanka are impacted by legal provisions and personal laws that govern different segments of the community. In addition to legal provisions, traditions and customs have a significant bearing on land ownership as well as access to and enjoyment of land among women. These legal provisions as well as customs and traditions can discriminate against women. According to *The World Factbook*, the majority of female landowners in Sri Lanka had received their property by inheritance. Ninety per cent of rural households in the North and the East are female-headed households. Discriminatory land laws have negatively impacted more than 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from all communities -- Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims -- as a result of the armed conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and government forces in the North-East of the country for the past two decades. Most recent surveys undertaken by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Colombo) show that over 75 per cent of IDPs wish to return home, subject to the principles of a voluntary, safe, secure and dignified return. A serious overhaul of the existing laws, particularly those relating to land rights, is necessary in order to assist voluntary repatriation.

Based on existing literature on women's property ownership and its impact on the lives of men and women, it is clear that property ownership among women in South Asia is a complex issue impacted by laws, customs, cultural practices and gendered perceptions of the roles of men and women in society. Women are discriminated against in property and land ownership, succession and enjoyment of property.

Women survivors of armed conflict in Sri Lanka

An analysis paper on the post-war situation in Sri Lanka, "Women- the Survivors of Civil War in Sri Lanka" was published during this reporting period by The Women Workers' Help Line (WWHL), the Gender RTFO of SAAPE, in coordination with The International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Sri Lanka (CTFO Gender and RTFO Peace, Justice and Demilitarisation) and the secretariat.



According to the report, women faced significant disadvantages during the course of the armed conflict. The unequal gender relations of the pre-conflict period were exacerbated by the armed conflict. Displacement, being refugees, trafficking in girls and other forms of involuntary migration were the problems women faced in the post-war situation.

In post-war situations, whether in groups or individually, formally or informally, women probably contribute more than government authorities or international aid agencies to reconciliation, revival of local economies and rebuilding social networks.

This overview report analyses the situation of women following the end of the armed conflict between the state and rebel groups in Sri Lanka. It explores the distinct ways in which women are affected by armed conflicts, and highlights the gender-specific disadvantages experienced by women left out of the conventional interpretations of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Many displaced women, refugee women and girls experienced violence by smugglers, traffickers, border guards, police and other law-enforcement officers and sometimes even by other refugees. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were used in armed conflicts to dehumanise women, as a form of torture to extract information and to control women and their communities. Whether asylum-seekers, refugees or internally displaced, for many women, the violence doesn't stop when the armed conflict ends.

(http://www.saaape.org/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=file&id=42:women-the-survivors-of-civil-war-in-sri-lanka&Itemid=88)



Meeting with European parliamentarians and EU Officials

13-16 June 2011 - Brussels

A team of two core-committee members of SAAPE, Rokeya Kabir (Bangladesh) and Farooq Tariq (Pakistan), visited the European Union (EU) headquarters in Brussels from 13 to 16 June 2011 to discuss issues of concern to SAAPE with EU officials and European parliamentarians. The visit and the meetings were jointly organised and facilitated by SAAPE and Eurostep, and hosted

by Richard Howitt, Member of European Parliament.

During discussions at various forums and meetings with parliamentarians, the SAAPE representatives argued that the current trend of focusing on energy and infrastructure in the EU's development cooperation policies in South Asia

was misguided and did nothing to address the social problems of the region. Similarly, the privatisation of the health and education sectors, advocated by many donors, served to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. The delegation also called for EU's support for democratic reforms in the region.

A public meeting, 'Promoting social and economic justice in South Asia: EU cooperation policy with the region', on 14 June was attended by 40 social and political activists. Ms Rokeya explained the overall condition of ordinary citizens in the South Asian region and presented some views on how

to counter the prevailing severe conditions. Mr Tariq focused on religious fundamentalism and its relation with poverty, the 'neo-liberal agenda' and the 'war on terror' and the terror it created in the lives of the people in the region.

In response to these observations, Mr. Jos Jonckers, head of European Commission's social sector programs in Asia and Central Asia (Europe Aid Office), said that the EU must promote human rights and democracy in development cooperation with partner countries, and "not compromise" on these basic principles and values.



Booklet: Post-Flood Situation in Pakistan

Heavy monsoon rains during June 2010 in Pakistan caused devastating floods which swept away homes and infrastructure, and destroyed crops and livestock. The flood killed thousands of people and made millions homeless. According to government data, the floods directly affected about 20 million people, mostly by destruction of property, infrastructure, cultivated land and livelihood.

SAAPE's Gender Thematic Group (GTG) felt the need to identify and highlight the impacts of the floods on women and the state of rehabilitation in the flood-affected areas. The study was published in the form of a booklet, *2010 Flood & its Impacts on Women*.

The study found that approximately 170,000 flood victims were still living in camps and spontaneous settlements across the provinces of Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and



Baloochistan. Most of these internally displaced people were in Sindh (128,000 people). The floods had caused, and might further cause, many problems -- starvation, epidemics, changes in the weather and political instability, and could also cause violence. The heavy rainfall put some 20 per cent of Pakistan's land area under water, an area larger than Italy.

Women were more affected than men, and they suffered more from the natural disasters. Women in rural areas of developing countries are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, and they also have the responsibility for securing water, food and energy for cooking and heating. Families returning home need food so they could start rebuilding their communities. Young children need proper nutrition so that the health effects of this tragedy do not last a lifetime.



REGIONAL NEWS AND ANALYSIS

Obama Declares Beginning of the End of Afghan War

Washington, 24 June 2011: President Barack Obama yesterday ordered all 33,000 US surge troops home

from Afghanistan by next summer and declared the beginning of the end of the war, vowing to turn to nation- building at home. In a watershed moment for American foreign policy, Obama also significantly curtailed US war aims, saying Washington would no longer try to build a "perfect" Afghanistan from a nation traumatized by decades of war.

"The tide of war is receding," Obama said in a 13-minute prime time speech addressed to an American public increasingly fatigued from costly foreign wars and weighed down with economic insecurity.

"Even as there will be dark days ahead in Afghanistan, the light of a secure peace can be seen in the distance. These long wars will come to a responsible end," Obama said.

The president argued US forces had made large strides towards the objectives of the troop surge strategy he ordered in December 2009 by reversing Taliban momentum, crushing Al-Qaeda and training new Afghan forces.

But he ultimately rejected appeals from the Pentagon for a slower drawdown to safeguard gains against the Taliban, and his decision will be seen as a political defeat for the US commander in Afghanistan General David Petraeus.

The president said he would, as promised, begin the US withdrawal this July and that 10,000 of the more than 30,000 troops he committed to the escalation of the conflict would be home this year. A further 23,000 surge troops will be withdrawn by next summer, and more yet-to-be announced drawdowns will continue, until Afghan forces assume security responsibility in 2014. "This is the beginning -- but not the end -- of our effort to wind down this war," Obama said.

However, despite Obama's stirring words, it is possible that the Taliban -- which dismissed the announced withdrawal as a "symbolic step" -- will be emboldened by signs of an accelerated US exit. More than 1,600 US soldiers have died in Afghanistan since the invasion after the September 11, 2001 attacks, including at least 187 this year alone.



The Endgame in Afghanistan

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Jinnah Institute (JI), Pakistan co-convened a project aimed at gathering and articulating informed Pakistani opinion on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Following are excerpts from their report.

Pakistan's objectives in Afghanistan: In terms of the end game, Pakistani policy elite see their state as having defined two overriding objectives: The "settlement" in Afghanistan should not lead to a negative spillover such that it contributes to further instability in Pakistan or causes resentment among Pakistani Pashtuns; and

the government in Kabul should not be antagonistic to Pakistan and should not allow its territory to be used against Pakistani state interests. Translated into actionable policy, these umbrella objectives lead Pakistan to pursue three outcomes:

A degree of stability in Afghanistan: Project participants felt that Pakistan's interests are best served by a relatively stable government in Kabul that is not hostile towards Pakistan. There was across the board realisation among the participants that persistent instability in Afghanistan will have numerous and predictable consequences for Pakistan that it is ill-prepared to tackle.

An inclusive government in Kabul: Pakistan prefers a negotiated configuration with adequate Pashtun representation that is recognised by all ethnic and political stakeholders in Afghanistan. Some of the opinion makers insisted that given the current situation, a sustainable arrangement would necessarily require the main Taliban factions - particularly Mullah Omar's "Quetta Shura" Taliban and the Haqqani network - to be part of the new political arrangement.

Limiting Indian presence to development activities: Pakistani foreign policy elite accept that India has a role to play in Afghanistan's economic progress and prosperity. However, many participants perceived the present Indian engagement to be going beyond strictly development. They wish to see greater transparency on Indian actions and objectives.

Views on US strategy in Afghanistan: Pakistani policy elite involved in the project perceived America's Afghanistan strategy to date to be inconsistent and counterproductive to Pakistan's interests. The most scathing criticism was targeted at the political component of the strategy, which is largely seen to be subservient to the military surge. Not many among the participants were optimistic about the prospects of the surge. While there was recognition that operations over the past year have degraded the Taliban's capacity, virtually no one was convinced that this would force the main Taliban factions to negotiate on America's terms.

Pakistani policy elite see the prospects for a successful end game in Afghanistan as bleak also

because of the belief that the US would want to retain some long-term security presence in Afghanistan, which will likely create unease among the Afghan Taliban and countries in the region, including Pakistan. In terms of Pakistan's role in the end game, project participants believed that the US would continue to push the Pakistan military to "do more" to stamp out militant sanctuaries while Washington tries to open up direct channels for talks with the Taliban --with an eye on reducing reliance on Pakistan's security establishment in the political reconciliation process.

Regardless, there was no support for a breakdown of the Pakistan-US relationship. Project participants, however, felt that greater clarity in US and Pakistani policies was crucial in order to avoid failure in Afghanistan, to convince the Taliban of the validity of a power-sharing agreement, and to urge regional actors (including Pakistan) to stop hedging and to play a more constructive role.

Reacting to the US: Project participants suggested that Pakistani policy faces a dilemma vis-a-vis the US. On the one hand, US military operations in Afghanistan are believed to be causing an internal backlash in terms of militancy and deepening the state-society rift within Pakistan; on the other hand, Pakistani policy elite appreciate that a premature US troop withdrawal would lead to added instability in Afghanistan.

Participants felt that from Islamabad's perspective, the longer US military operations continue without a clear path for political negotiations, the tougher it will become for Pakistan to manage its internal security balancing act. Islamabad therefore favours an immediate, yet patient effort at inclusive reconciliation.

Pakistani policy elite we spoke with tended to believe that a genuine intra-Afghan dialogue will inevitably allow a significant share of power to the Pashtuns and thus produce a dispensation in Kabul that is sensitive to Pakistani interests. Based

on their perceptions about the current realities on the ground in Afghanistan, those tied to this narrative see any attempts to alienate Pashtuns in general, and the Taliban in particular, as shortsighted.

Nonetheless, the Taliban's perceived utility for Pakistan does not translate into a desire for a return to Taliban rule in Afghanistan. A bid to regain lost glory by Mullah Omar's Taliban would end up creating conditions in Afghanistan which run counter to Pakistani objectives, most notably stability. The Pakistani state is no longer believed to be interested in a return to complete Taliban rule akin to the 1990s.

Other impediments to successful endgame negotiations: Project participants saw the following aspects as additional hurdles in ensuring successful negotiations and a durable settlement in Afghanistan.

Viability of a regional framework: A regional framework which seeks neutrality and non-interference from countries in the neighbourhood received in principle support during the discussions held under the project. However, Pakistani elite are unsure of how a regional agreement will be enforced. Some participants worried that just the entrenched expectation of interference by others will prompt countries not to honour the arrangement in the first place as each seeks 'first mover's advantage' in establishing its influence in Afghanistan.

Taliban's willingness to negotiate: Pakistani policy elite claim a lack of clarity about the Afghan Taliban's willingness to participate in a political reconciliation process, or even to communicate directly with the United States beyond a point. Notwithstanding, they feel that the longer meaningful talks are delayed, the more challenging it will become for the Pakistani security establishment to persuade the main Taliban factions to come to the negotiating table.

Political situation in Afghanistan: Afghan

President Hamid Karzai, while acknowledged as a legitimate leader, is also seen as having lost credibility among Afghan citizens. This is believed to be generating additional support for the insurgency and forcing Afghan groups opposed to his government to delay serious negotiations. A major challenge in this political environment lies in identifying representatives who could mediate and speak on behalf of different Afghan stakeholders.

Future of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): Pakistani policy elite remain wary of the future role of the ANSF. Participants perceived the bloated size of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to be unsustainable and a threat to Pakistan's interests. In terms of ANA's ethnic composition, the presence of non-Pashtun officers in key positions was highlighted to suggest that the make-up is more likely to fuel ethnic hostility than to maintain peace in Afghanistan.

The Post-Osama Bin Laden calculus: Because most of our conversations with Pakistani foreign policy elite predated the 2 May 2011 killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, the project team subsequently requested participants to reflect on the impact of this development on the Afghan calculus for Pakistan and the US.

Most respondents believed that bin Laden's death had no bearing on Pakistan's strategy in Afghanistan. As for the US, there was a sense that bin Laden's departure will make it easier to create a 'narrative of victory' against Al Qaida and perhaps, to negotiate directly with Afghan Taliban leaders. A greater emphasis may be laid on distinguishing Al Qaeda from the Taliban to facilitate the process further.

That said, the growing mutual distrust between Pakistan and the US, as exposed during the 2 May US unilateral raid that killed bin Laden, has raised doubts about the ability of the two countries to collaborate in attaining a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. The state of the bilateral

relationship, it was feared, may end up overshadowing the otherwise considerable overlap on the issue of reconciliation between the American and Pakistani positions. Some of the respondents disagreed with this view, arguing that

the Obama administration will continue reaching out to elicit Pakistan's support in nudging the main Afghan Taliban factions to the negotiating table.

Sherry Rehman and Moeed Yusuf,
Friday Times, 2-8 September 2011

(Excerpted from "Pakistan, the United States and the End Game in Afghanistan: Perceptions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy Elite")



South Asia the Least Integrated Region

Seeking to put on fast track the economic integration of the region, India has urged other South Asian countries to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to help boost trade and investments.

"A range of tariff and non-tariff barriers that have been erected in our region in the early years of our respective independence prevented businesses from developing value in the neighbourhood," India's Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said while speaking at the South Asia Forum, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

He said the South Asia region was geographically and culturally designed for the widest possible

cooperation but in reality it was the least integrated region in the world.

Referring to a World Bank report, Mr. Ahluwalia said intra-regional trade in South Asia was less than 2 per cent of GDP, as compared to over 20 per cent in East Asia.

"Cost of trading across borders in South Asia is one of the highest in the world," he added. All indices of intra-regional economic cooperation in South Asia were significantly lower than in other regions, leading to low trade and investment flows.

He also underlined the need for investing in capacity-building of the young people in the region through education so as to provide them with productive jobs.

The Hindu, 8 September 2011



COUNTRY WISE

India

Anna Upsurge and the Social Movements

Anna Hazare's second fast (August 2011) in Delhi, demanding the acceptance of his teams' draft for the Jana Lokpal Bill (bill to set up an Ombudsman-like mechanism against corruption) has raised many different debates about the nature of this upsurge and how the social action groups engaged in the process of struggle for human rights of different sections of society, should relate to such movements.

Just to recall, the first such fast for the Bill undertaken by Hazare was in April 2011. Around that time there was a competing movement by Baba Ramdev for getting back illegitimate money stashed abroad. While Hazare withstood the pressures of the state to resurface again, Baba Ramdev collapsed soon enough and tried to run away dressed in women's clothes. Hazare's, 'Team Anna' has diverse people, engaged with different social issues, including reforms in judiciary, bonded labour, communal amity, etc.

Many of them have been rubbing shoulders with grassroots level social activists working for social change. This time around other social activists of the repute of Medha Patkar have come forward more openly and joined hands with the Hazare upsurge. The movement has also elicited lot of sympathy from other activists seriously committed to the issues of human rights while others like Shabnam Hashmi, Mahesh Bhatt, Anand Teltumde and the noted writer Arundhati Roy have come out with heavy criticism of this movement. Aruna Roy's group has come out with an alternative draft for the Lokpal Bill. The dilemma for activists is: what do we do? Do we become part of the Anna upsurge and fight for getting his draft of Jan Lokpal Bill accepted or should we stand aloof from this movement. Surely the Anna movement has at one level caught the imagination of a large section of people.

The background

The Lokpal Bill idea was floated decades ago and many different parties have come to power during this time, but this Bill remained unattended to. Janata Party, VP Singh and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) all had put the proposal of a Lokpal Bill in the cold storage. Anna's fast has made it come to the fore.

The Anna movement in fact emerged suddenly and soon was converted into a spectacle by the mobilisation done by RSS-BJP-VHP combine. It was then hugely overblown by the media which pitched in to give it an exalted status. Live coverage and hype reserved for a cricket match, all was on display. Most TV anchors were screaming and exhorting the people to be part of the Anna upsurge. The RSS mechanism, both visible and invisible, came into action, and the candle-holding middle class, the 'shining India' class, was there in good strength. Bharat Mata was in the backdrop and the cry of Vande Matram was in the air. RSS functionaries and associated godmen were around to mix overt faith with a particular type of politics. This politics had earlier, by a different type of mobilisation, led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

This time around (August), when Anna went on fast again, this 'shining India' group was joined in by other sections in larger numbers. Many sections, who are part of this mobilisation, are hardly aware of what the real debate is about. Team Anna succeeded in projecting that they are against corruption and those who are not with them are supporting corruption. The real issue, that Anna wants only his draft to be made into a Bill within a stipulated time, went to the background in popular perception.

Some other points related to the issue are worth noting. One of these is: how come the issue has been raised both by Anna and Ramdev around the time when some corporate executives were arrested for corruption and there was a fear that big honchos may also have to be behind bars.

The Anna movement has two components. One is the core one, which has been called by political scientists as 'shining India' or 'the MBA-type generation'. This class is receiving good packages and is showing its concern about social issues mainly by opposing state affirmative action like the National Rural employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) or reservation for dalits. This is the class, large sections of which called for the need to attack Pakistan in the aftermath of the July 2011 Mumbai blasts. The second group, smaller and less assertive, around this core of middle class, is constituted by those deprived sections that are looking for a platform to express their anguish with rising prices and problems of daily life, which is worsening by the day.

Undermining parliamentary system?

While the 'Anna protest' is valid in pressurising the state-government to bring in a suitable law for Lokpal), one does not understand why the insistence by Anna that the Bill must be passed within the time stipulated by him, and that only his draft should be accepted. Anna's group is not the only civil society group engaged with this issue; there are other groups which have come out with probably better alternatives and have tried to overcome the authoritarian nature of the government's draft Bill and Team Anna's draft bill. For example, the draft prepared by the Aruna Roy group which has been quietly working on it. Why is there this attempt to bypass parliamentary norms, to rush through them? One knows that bills like the Right to Information (RTI) Bill, took years to become law. One knows that bills like those against communal violence and for Right to Food are in the pipeline, and taking a good gestation period. The haste can be understood only from the angle that this is an attempt to

undermine the parliamentary system of democracy.

No doubt, many sincere social activists feel that the present system has failed and needs to be replaced. Good enough. There are severe fallacies in the present system. Lots of lacunas, lots of inertia! So what is the solution? To change the government, as Anna is demanding-- *Lao ya jao* (bring my Lokpal Bill or quit)? Is this a political call to bring in the party whose affiliates are mobilising the middle and other classes and is distributing t-shirts and caps that proclaim "I am Anna Hazare", and whose volunteers have been going door to door to whip up support for Anna. The other interpretation is that the parliamentary system will give way to a revolution, a better system. Many sincere social activists believe this. This is a sign of frustration with the present state of things and also a lack of a deeper understanding of the logic of a 'democratic system in evolution'. Democratic systems can always give way to other systems, but surely those systems coming in their place can only be authoritarian.

Comparing this upsurge with that in many Muslim countries is misplaced again. In countries like Egypt and Tunisia, authoritarian regimes are being replaced towards democratic ones with all their teething troubles. As such every mass movement does not bring in democracy. We had seen that in Germany. Hitler also built up a mass movement, but his movement crushed democracy. Every mass movement is not for better values, The Ram janmabhoomi movement was one such, which created hate politics and paved the way for massive violence. One welcomes mass movements as far as they are inclusive and within the democratic norms for values of liberty, equality and fraternity. The one being orchestrated around Anna Hazare smacks of intolerance for others' views and lacks patience. It is necessary to nurture the norms of parliamentary democracy, which should be non-negotiable. The hidden/overt hand of divisive forces and the core composition of the 'shining India' class raises doubts about the democratic

credentials of this current upsurge.

Social movements and their campaigns must give direction to the democratic system, the government, the parliament. The space of democratic society is currently being usurped to do away with parliamentary democracy; it is a danger signal of sorts. At the core of this movement, what dominates is the superficial attitude to the widespread cancer of corruption.

Corruption is being seen in isolation. The point to remember is that corruption is a mere symptom of a disease, and not the disease by itself. The deeper disease, which is a system based on inequality, lack of transparency and lack of accountability, is the one which needs to be addressed by and by, that's where we need to focus our attention. Creating another unaccountable all-powerful institution may be something worse than the disease itself.

– Ram Puniyani



The Child Malnutrition Puzzle

One of the least talked about issues in the debate on India's demographic dividend is child malnutrition. India is home to about a third of the world's underweight and stunted children under the age of five. A child under 5 is almost twice as likely to be chronically underweight in India as in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sadly, the impressive economic growth of the past decade has made only a modest dent into the obstinately high incidence of severe underweight and stunting of children in the country.

Poverty is one obvious underlying cause. But it does not explain the wide difference in malnutrition between India and sub-Saharan Africa. UNICEF data show that about 47 per cent of Indian children under 5 are underweight; the corresponding figure for sub-Saharan Africa is 24 per cent.

The overall poverty rate is lower in India than in many sub-Saharan countries. Besides, the incidence of child malnutrition in India remains high even in non-poor families. According to data from the National Family Health Survey for 2005-06, a quarter of all children below the age of 3 in the wealthiest 20 per cent of families are stunted and 20 per cent chronically underweight.

Of course, children living in families with lower incomes and wealth are at a much higher risk of

being malnourished. But the incidence of severe underweight and stunting in non-poor families is not trivial.

What then explains this puzzle that India has much higher rates of underweight and stunting of children than countries with higher poverty and relatively stagnant economies? Is it per capita food availability? No, India has somewhat higher per capita food availability than countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Is it higher mortality among children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa? Yes, but only to some extent. Mortality among children under 5 is 140 per 1,000 in sub-Saharan Africa and 66 per 1,000 in India.

A back-of-the-envelope calculation would show that about a third of the gap in chronic underweight among children in India and sub-Saharan Africa is due to higher child mortality in the latter, which simply removes from the data a large number of undernourished children in sub-Saharan Africa.

What explains the remaining two-thirds of the gap? Are we Indians less caring about our children than people in sub-Saharan Africa? Is there something in our traditional social and cultural values and practices that hurt the health and welfare of our children? The answer, sadly, is yes.

In 1996, Vulimiri Ramalingaswami and Jon Rohde wrote a commentary for UNICEF investigating the various possible determinants of child malnourishment and concluded "the exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition in South Asia are rooted deep in the soil of inequality between men and women."

How? Here it is worth repeating how the three experts on child health and nutrition reached this conclusion. They studied weights of children at birth in India and sub-Saharan Africa. In India, a third of the children have low birth weight; in sub-Saharan Africa, only one sixth.

A child's birth weight is an indicator of the health and nourishment of the mother when she is pregnant as well as her overall health and nourishment as a child and while growing up. Most African women gain 10 kg of weight during pregnancy, but women in South Asia gain only half as much. They also found that while about 40 per cent women in sub-Saharan Africa suffered from iron deficiency, as many as 60 per cent women in South Asia and 83 per cent of pregnant women in India were anaemic.

Dr Ramalingaswami and his co-authors also found a major difference in the feeding practices of

children in the two regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of breast-fed children aged 6-9 months receiving complementary foods was almost two-thirds; in South Asia, it was less than one-third.

Indeed, the age-wise pattern of undernutrition studied in a World Bank report on South Asia published in 2006 shows that most of the growth retardation occurs early in life. The difference in length-for-age and weight-for-age between Indian and South African children begins to widen around the time the child is three to four months of age. The report finds that most of the retardation in growth in India occurs either during the pregnancy or during the first two years after birth.

Critics often argue that the economic reforms have failed to reach the poor and deprived sections of society. But malnutrition also prevails in families that are neither poor nor deprived. It is true that the implementation of government programmes such as the Integrated Child Development Service needs a lot to be desired, and such programmes are *not aimed at changing gender relations at home*.

Neeraj Kaushal,
The Economic Times, 29 April 2011



Missing Daughters Can Skew Growth

For some of us, this Sunday was special. It marked the 20th anniversary of an epochal Union budget that accelerated economic reforms in an unprecedented fashion, which eventually nudged the Indian economy into a new rarified club of trillion-dollar economies. While this indeed does give the country bragging rights, we should take a moment and think of a darker side to the country's persona, something that is unfortunately very rarely discussed: the heinous practice of sex selective abortion (SSA).

It may sound like a dampener to bring up this topic on such an occasion. But it is precisely why

it should be discussed. Sustainable economic growth is only possible through sustainable social change that empowers across class and gender. Alternatively, the growth will be skewed and non-inclusive -- something that will run aground sooner, if not later.

It is counter-intuitive. This phenomenon is happening despite impressive economic growth and a sharp spike in literacy levels; clearly the country's mindset is yet to change. If nothing, as fresh research undertaken by P.M. Kulkarni, one of the country's foremost demographers and a professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in

Delhi, using data from Census 2011, reveals that this trend is actually worsening, leave alone being arrested. Cheaper and portable technology has, if trends are right, shown that this is no longer an urban phenomenon or something practised by the well-off. It seems to be cutting across class and the urban-rural divide.

Nationally, the proportion of SSA to total female births works out to 3.6%. A disaggregate picture shows that this number masks more than it reveals. For states such as Haryana and Punjab, more than one in 10 females suffer the SSA fate; the proportion for Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra vary between 6.8% and 7.6%.

Barring Rajasthan, all the other states qualify to be classified as economically progressive, especially Gujarat-now considered the fastest growing region in the country. In the case of Haryana, it is ironical that it is rapidly emerging as the new centre for education after the generous handout of land by the state government to education entrepreneurs.

Further, literacy levels in the rural areas across these states have jumped dramatically in the last decade. From around below average to average levels, the literacy level, according to Census 2011, in rural areas of these states has improved to top the national average-in the case of Haryana and Punjab, the two with the most dubious record, the literacy levels are above 70% in the states. Obviously, neither literacy nor economic upliftment seems to resolve the problem; it has actually worsened it.

In Haryana's Jhajjar district-less than an hour's drive from Gurgaon, the new glitzy urban sprawl-reported a child sex ratio of 774 as against the average of 914 at the national level and 830 at the state level. A colleague, who had travelled to Jhajjar immediately after the census data was put out, wrote in a compelling piece that villagers were candidly admitting to the prevalence of the practice of SSA.

Santara Devi, chief of the village council of Dariyapur village in Jhajjar district, said, "Though

it is illegal, most people get ultrasound tests done to determine the sex of the baby, and if it is a girl, they go for abortion," before adding, "Nobody says it openly these days, unlike in earlier times."

Devi's last line is probably what gives us some hope. There is some fear and hence it is all happening below the radar. The existing law-Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act-was created 17 years ago. It is clearly not sufficient, though it was very necessary.

Obviously, something more has to be done to give that extra nudge. In this, politicians have to take the lead. They can respond either in terms of more policy (which will only increase the premium of illegal sex selection clinics and hence not advisable) or through sustained political activism at the grassroots through schools and demonstrative action.

Another hope may be in the growing literacy among women -not only does it carry the potential of changing the mindset of the entire household, it could lead to economic empowerment through the acquisition of a skill and consequently a job.

Census 2011 reveals that while 82.14 per cent of males are literate, literacy rate for females stand at 65.46 per cent. Though there is still a gap, it is at its lowest in the last four decades-clearly women are catching up on men in literacy levels. The gap was 16.68 percentage points in Census 2011, some 10 percentage points lower than the 26.62 percentage points in the 1981 census.

Therefore, looking back, the country can indeed feel proud at the economic transformation that has been managed so far. At the same time, the good feeling diminishes rapidly when you hold up the prevalence of the dubious practice of SSA. The big question that comes to mind is how would we look at this point of time a decade from now.

Anil Padmanabhan, *Mint*, 25 July 2011

NAC Demands Complete Abolition of Child Labour

The Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council (NAC), which seeks to provide policy and legislative inputs to the government, has recommended the abolition of child labour under the age of 14 and its regulation between the ages of 15 and 18.

"We are demanding a complete ban on child labour, whether hazardous or non-hazardous, under the age of 14, and we are also demanding that the age group between 15 and 18 years should be regulated at least in hazardous situations," NAC member Harsh Mander said.

With the Right to Education (RTE) law in place, the demand for complete abolition of child labour assumes greater importance, Mander said. The RTE Act, which was passed by Parliament in April last year, guarantees education for all children between the ages of six and 14.

"We are also demanding that parents should not be penalized in case a child is at work; instead, the employer should be penalized," Mander said.

The draft recommendations of the NAC working

group on the abolition of child labour will be put on the body's website for public comment, along with those of the working groups on the Rajiv Awas Yojana, schemes for minority development, social security for unorganized workers and the scheduled castes sub-plan.

At present, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, prohibits "employment of children in certain occupations and processes".

While the prohibited occupations include work related to the construction of railway stations, the port authority, slaughterhouses and cinder picking, those under the definition of prohibited processes include bidi-making, carpet-making and soap manufacturing.

NAC also discussed the modalities for the pre-legislative consultative process. The council aims to involve civil society in the formulation of important policies and laws. "We discussed the modalities today; there was nothing final," said Aruna Roy, a member of NAC.

Anuja , *Mint*, 24 October 2011



Oxfam Report Slams India's Hunger Management

The Indian Government's handling of hunger has been sharply criticised in a new report by British charity Oxfam.

India failed to make "even a tiny dent" in the number of hungry people between 1990 and 2005, despite doubling the size of its economy, the Oxford-based charity said in its "Growing A Better Future" report on global food prices.

In that period, the number of hungry people rose by a staggering 65 million, the report said. "You have roughly one in four of the world's hungry in India, and with all the growth that the country

has achieved it is clear that something is very wrong," said Ms Kirsty Hughes, head of public policy at Oxfam.

The charity contrasts the situation with that of Brazil, pointing the finger at government policy. "Ultimately, it comes down to Government failure in India and Government success in Brazil, where a purposeful political leadership was buttressed by a strong citizens' movement led by people living in poverty," the report notes.

The report points to Brazil's Zero Hunger campaign, launched in 2003 and strongly backed

by former President Mr Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and which included a range of projects from cash transfers to poor mothers to water tank construction and loans. The programme has received widespread praise, including from the Food and Agriculture Organisation. By contrast, India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the fertiliser subsidy programme have failed to make inroads, the report argues. "Sadly, India failed to prioritise hunger or develop a coherent strategy," writes author Mr Robert Bailey.

The report provides a bleak picture of the future for India and the rest of the world. The average cost of key crops will rise by 120-180 per cent by 2030 with climate change, ecological degradation, rising energy and biofuel demands, population growth and the increasing role of institutional investors in commodity markets

among the contributing factors. The biggest single contributor, according to the report, is climate change - accounting for around half the predicted rise.

The report is also critical of government action globally - arguing that the 2008 spike in food prices was badly handled by government policies including price and export controls or economy-wide subsidies - actions it argued only reduced incentives for food producers, or added to a nation's fiscal woes.

"We want this to be a positive campaign," says Hughes, "There is a lot of good work happening but the question is about how you disseminate that," she said.

Vidya Ram , *Business Line* , 8 July 2011



SCs/STs form Half of India's Poor: Survey

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) constitute half of the total "poor, deprived households", a pilot survey to identify the Below Poverty Line population has found.

The survey found that SCs/STs were a mere 25 per cent of the "non-poor households" who showed deprivation on some of the parameters - ranging from housing to illiteracy to homelessness and destitution. The findings reiterate the long-held hypothesis that dalits are the most-underprivileged sections of population and the easiest marker of poverty. The pilot survey is significant given that results have come from the representative sample of 166 villages across 22 states. It will form the basis for the full-fledged survey to be conducted soon to identify the poor.

Vivek Kumar, sociologist with Jawaharlal Nehru University, said the findings proved that caste and class identities in the country overlapped and the social identity of dalits led to cumulative

deprivation cutting across parameters for identification of poor. "Economic deprivation depends on social identity," he said, summing up the inferences from the pilot survey.

That 22 per cent of the population (SC/ST) forms half of the country's rural poor is in line with known facts about poverty statistics but it is startling that the theory continues to hold good. After the pilot survey, the anticipated household exercise to identify the poor - with methodology refined by Planning Commission member Mihir Shah for the Union rural development ministry - would show where the final figures stand for the country.

While dalits and tribals form the bulk of poor households, their share drops to 25 per cent among the non-poor households with deprivation, a fact which underlines the relationship between SC/STs and economic status. The communities are not just poor but also score high on kuchcha housing, illiteracy among

adults, homelessness, destitution, landlessness with agricultural wages as their main source of income.

The BPL survey is crucial because the identified families would form the target group of government's subsidy-based welfare schemes.

According to observers, the BPL survey is crucial to the fate of dalits because they form the bulk of beneficiaries of targeted welfare.

Subodh Ghildiyal,
The Times of India, 15 April 2011



Counter-insurgency and the Law

The depredations of Salwa Judum have attracted more tribal peasants into the ranks of the Maoist guerrilla army.

Will the security forces and the state-sponsored vigilante gangs engaged in counter-insurgency in the Maoist heartland ever desist from killing and maiming innocent people, raping women, looting or destroying people's property and burning their dwelling units? Will the unconstitutionally established, state-sponsored vigilante gangs ever be disbanded? The report of a 13-member fact-finding team of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee and other civil and democratic rights organisations on the atrocities perpetrated on unarmed adivasis by the Central Reserve Police Force and special police officers of the Salwa Judum in the Chintalnar area of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh between 11 and 16 March suggests heinousness of a kind reserved for those deemed to be supporters of the Maoists.

Media access to the affected villages of Tadmella, Timapuram and Morupalli has been denied, even as Chhattisgarh's home minister could brazenly say in the state assembly that it was the Maoists who had attacked the villagers and burnt their homes in order to divert the attention of the police who were on an "area domination exercise" at the time. The political representatives of the dominant classes surely ought to be concerned about the fact that such operations are counterproductive in terms of the very objectives of the counter-insurgency.

Way back in 1970, the then Calcutta Police Commissioner circulated excerpts from the book

Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam (1966) by Robert Thompson among the officers combating the Naxalite insurgency, then in its first phase. Thompson, a veteran of the Malayan civil service, had played a significant role in the defeat of the communist insurgency in that country. One does not know what impact these excerpts had on the practitioners of the art of counter-insurgency in West Bengal in the early 1970s, but going by their practice, they drew on Thompson's advice only very selectively. But coming to the context of Chhattisgarh today, surely Thompson has not been forgotten, though the strategic hamlets programme conceived there in 2005 has been completely botched.

More generally, Thompson had laid down "five basic principles" to be followed in the waging of an anti-guerrilla campaign. In the context of the Chintalnar atrocities, it might be worth dwelling on one of these principles, namely, the imperative that the security forces operate within the ambit of the law. By giving these forces and the *Salwa Judum* carte blanche to act in the brutal manner in which they did in Chintalnar, the powers that be have tacitly admitted that responsible government has broken down. Indeed in allowing murder and rape, the government of Chhattisgarh has lost whatever legitimacy it may have had.

Interestingly; Thompson says that there are three sorts of people who are attracted to a communist insurgency -- the "naturals", the "converted", and the "deceived". The "naturals", for Thompson, are those who see no decent prospects in the prevailing order, while the "deceived" are those

who are attracted by the ideology of the insurgents, by what the movement has on offer and by bonds of solidarity. But it is the "converted" that concerns him - those who join the movement because they are revolted by the gross violations of democratic rights and the other omissions and commissions of the government. It is the widespread violation of human rights by the state that is counterproductive for it alienates the people and goads them on to join the ranks of the guerrillas. Indeed, even those among the people who feign to be "neutral" actually hate the security force while only being apprehensive of the guerrillas.

In these columns, we have consistently backed the demands of civil liberties and democratic rights' organisations, who, whenever they investigate state violations of democratic rights, raise a set of demands in keeping with the Constitution. While we will continue to support such demands, over the years we find that the very office-holders of the Indian state seem to have no commitment to the rule of law or the Constitution. Hence, we thought that we would draw their attention to the very counter-productiveness of their acts in achieving the objectives they have set for their counter-

insurgency programme.

The "search-and-clear" and the "search-and-destroy" campaigns of the security forces and the state-sponsored vigilante gangs in the Maoist insurgent-controlled areas only "create", as Thompson would have said, "more communists than they kill". Indeed, Thompson goes on to say that the "search-and-destroy" missions "become in *effect* communist recruiting devices". In fact, the late Cherukuri Rajkumar (Azad), member of the Central Committee and Politburo of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) when he was allegedly killed by the police on 2 July last year in the forests in Adilabad of Andhra Pradesh, in one of his interviews (*Mainstream*, 30 January 2010) remarked: "Thanks to *Salwa Judum*, our guerrilla army has expanded rapidly".

Moreover, even though it refuses to admit that it is in a state of civil war, the Indian state should abide by the fourth Geneva Convention in not harming non-combatants/civilians. After all, is not the present Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram so fond of talking of the "rule of law"?

Economic & Political Weekly, 9 April 2011



Government Unveils Draft Land Acquisition Bill

New Delhi, 1 August 2011: The United Progressive Alliance government on 29 July unveiled its second draft Bill addressing the critical issues of land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement. The National Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2011 clearly defines "public purposes" for land acquisition while delineating rehabilitation and resettlement, compensation to land owners as well as livelihood losers in the process.

Commensurate with the recommendations of the National Advisory Council (NAC), Union Minister

Jairam Ramesh has proposed a single bill combining issues of land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement to avoid neglect of the latter. The new bill makes it mandatory that gram sabhas are consulted and the rehabilitation and resettlement (R &R) package is executed before the acquired land is transferred.

The draft legislation invites comments online from the general public. The Ministry has given the public time till 31 August to send their comments and introduce it in Parliament before the scheduled closure of the monsoon session on 8 September.

Key provisions

The government was spurred into redrafting the new Bill in the wake of the turmoil in Uttar Pradesh, where farmers opposed the acquisition of land by the State. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had directed Mr. Ramesh's predecessor Vilasrao Deshmukh to finalise the Bills and introduce them in the monsoon session of Parliament.

Under the proposed law, the R&R package would necessarily have to be executed for land acquisitions in excess of 100 acres by private companies. The law also prohibits private companies from purchasing any multi-cropped irrigated land for public purposes.

While the State government would not have any role in acquisition of land, it would come into the picture if the private companies petitioned for such an intervention. The government would do so only if the acquisition would benefit the general public.

To safeguard against indiscriminate acquisition, the Bill requires States to set up a committee under the Chief Secretary to approve that the acquisition is for "public purpose" and the social impact assessment for the land in question. If the acquired land was not put to use within five years of the acquisition, it would be returned to the original owner.

Greater role of Gram Panchayats

For the first time, the government has acknowledged the role of the gram sabha in the process of land acquisition, stressing that they would have to be "consulted". This has been done to comply with other laws, such as the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996; the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; and Land Transfer Regulations in Schedule V (Tribal) Areas. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj had opposed the earlier draft, stressing that the approval of the gram sabha was

necessary for land acquisition under PESA.

The draft Bill will enjoy primacy over 18 other laws pertaining to land acquisition. Its provision will be in addition to and not in derogation of the existing safeguards currently provided for in these laws.

Compensation and benefits

Both the land-owners and livelihood-losers will have to be paid compensation. In rural areas, the compensation will amount to six times the market value of the land while in urban areas it would be at least twice the market value. Apart from this, land-owners will be entitled to a subsistence allowance of Rs.3,000 per month for 12 years and Rs.2,000 as annuity for 20 years, with an appropriate index for inflation.

In the cases of land acquired for urbanisation, 20 per cent of the developed land would be reserved and offered to the land-owners in proportion to the acquired land. In addition, every affected family would be entitled to one job, else Rs.2 lakh. Those who lost their house in the land acquisition process would be provided a constructed house with, in rural areas, plinth area of 150 sq. m, and 50 sq. m in urban areas, as well as a one-time resettlement allowance of Rs.50,000. If the land acquired is for an irrigation project, one acre of land would be provided to each affected family in the command area.

Livelihood-losers would get a subsistence allowance of Rs.3,000 per month per family for 12 months and Rs.2,000 per month for 20 years as annuity, factoring in inflation. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes would get a special package wherein each family was entitled to one acre of land in every project. Those settled outside the district would be entitled to an additional 25 per cent of R&R benefits. The draft envisages that Scheduled Tribe (ST) families be paid one-third of the compensation amount at the very outset. They will also have preference in relocation and resettlement in an area in the same compact block

and free land for community and social gatherings.

If 100 or more ST families are displaced, a Tribal Displacement Plan would be put in place. It would include settling land rights and restoring titles on alienated land and development of alternative fuel, fodder and non-timber forest produce.

STs and Scheduled Castes (SCs) would also get, in the resettlement area, reservation and other benefits they were entitled to in the displaced area.

The resettlement area should provide at least 25 infrastructural amenities including schools and playgrounds, health centres, roads and electric connections, assured sources of safe drinking water for each family, panchayat houses, fair-price shops and seed-cum-fertiliser storage facilities, places of worship and burial and cremation grounds.

The government has also called for higher compensation for tribals displaced by forest land. Tribal affairs minister Kishore Chandra Deo, who took charge this month, wants a clear policy on higher compensation to people displaced because of the increasing number of private projects on forest land. Tribal groups have demanded a national policy on the rehabilitation of tribals displaced by large-scale mining across India. Over 1.64 lakh hectares of forest land has been lost due to mining affecting lakhs of tribals.

It is noteworthy that three districts in Jharkhand, Orissa and Chattisgarh account for 70 per cent of India's coal and 80 per cent of iron-ore reserves but are still amongst the poorest regions of the country.

OneWorld South Asia, 1 August 2011.
Source: *The Hindu* and *Hindustan Times*



PAKISTAN

Civil Society Organisations Express Concern over Anti-worker Policy and Actions

Karachi, 29 March 2011: The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) and the Pakistan Fisher folk Forum (PFF), two major civil society organisations, have expressed grave concern over the brutal use of force against peasants by the Punjab government.

The Punjab government used police force yesterday against peacefully protesting peasants in Khanewal and Okara districts which resulted in wounding more than 100 peasants including women and children and arrest of over 40 workers. Police used teargas and baton-charged thousands of peasants who were marching towards Lahore to present their demands to the government of Punjab.

PILER and PFF, in a statement released here on today, condemned the use of violence against the peasants and stressed that the incident exposed Punjab governments' claims of good governance and poor-friendly systems. "This brutal action has proved that the current government in Punjab is the most ruthless regime in the country."

The statement says that, on the one hand, the Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has been talking about peoples' revolution and on other hand his regime unleashed a reign of terror against poor workers. "If this is his revolution then people in Pakistan, particularly workers and peasants, will never accept it."

Civil Society organisations have said that it's not the Khanewal incident alone that has exposed the Punjab Government's anti-worker policies. The PML-N -led capitalist government in Punjab boasts of a history of anti-worker steps that include continued ban on labour inspections and inserting provisions in the recently approved provincial Industrial Relations Act that blatantly violate the rights of the workers.

PILER and PFF have further added that peasants from Khanewal and Okara under the aegis of the AMP are demanding ownership rights of the land which they been tilling for decades. About one million tenants work on farmland owned by the Punjab government in South Punjab. A large proportion of the government land cultivated by the poor peasants for decades in Okara and Khanewal districts is under the control of military and other agencies which have imposed unjust arrangements.

Mazareen (peasants) have primary right over the land as they have shed blood, sweat and tears to turn the barren pieces of land into cultivable, lush green farms.

The PILER and PFF statement says that an overwhelming majority of the rural population consists of landless people and it is time the government addresses their long-standing demands and allots land to them. The two civil society organisations have warned that by ignoring the genuine demands of the landless and the marginalised population, the government is not only fuelling discontent and unrest, it is also violating Article 38 of the constitution that binds the state to provide housing, employment, and social services to the people without any discrimination, and prohibits the monopoly of a few over the means of productive resources.

PILER/PFF



No Space for Pashtuns?

On 17 August 2011, Amjad Peshawari's body was found in a sack in Nazimabad. "He was a tailor's apprentice and had nothing to do with politics," his sister said. "They killed him because he was a Pashtun."

Amjad was among about 200 people killed in violence since the beginning of August, and among more than 1,400 people killed for political or ethnic reasons this year so far.

As ethnic tensions in Karachi increase, a large number of those killed, according to statistics, are Pashtuns. Dozens of shops and restaurants that belonged to Pashtuns were set on fire. A number Pashtuns are abandoning the city, leaving behind their property and businesses. The only problem is, there are no jobs back home.

Karachi hosts the largest urban Pashtun population that surpasses Peshawar, Quetta and

Kandahar. Migration of Pashtuns from the northwest to Karachi began during Ayub Khan's regime, when the economic boom and rapid industrialisation created new opportunities of employment, especially in the construction, textile and transport sectors. The hardworking Pashtuns were ready to take the low-wage jobs that the locals did not want. This was because of a lack of economic opportunities in their own province. The Pashtun contributed significantly to the economy of Karachi through labour, petty jobs and small trade. There were about 1.3 million Pashtuns in the city at the time of the 1998 census - 14 per cent of the city's entire population.

Immigrant Pashtun boys in Karachi

A large number of Pashtun migrants arrived from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal Areas in the 2000s, particularly because of the 2005 earthquake and counter-insurgency operations from 2007 to 2011. According to new estimates,

Pashtuns are now 22 per cent of Karachi's population. The changes in demography also change the political realities in the city. Karachi has a history of urban ethnic violence which has increased since 2007. Relations between Mohajirs (Urdu-speaking ethnic community) and Pashtuns have remained tense. Pashtuns mostly live in western and eastern parts of the city including Sohrab Goth, Mingopfir, SITE Town, Qasba Colony, Landhi Industrial Area, Korangi Industrial Area, Kemari, Baldia Town, Sultanabad and Pipri.

Experts believe that long-ignored mass migration and settlement patterns resulted in a serious societal breakdown, leading to even serious conflict. Dr Marvin Weinbaum, a researcher at the Middle East Institute, says the Pashtuns have often left the Tribal Areas to seek their fortune in Pakistan's economic hub, Karachi, and this migration has made the Mohajirs very uneasy. "Here we have two very different cultures coming into contact with one another and again fighting over scarce resources, fighting for turf," Weinbaum said in an interview with the Voice of America. "And a lot of it, then and now, continues to be in the category of simple criminality, which gets an ethnic patina on it. Of the victims of violence, around 75 per cent were Pashtuns who had nothing to do with armed gangs or ANP but were killed only for basis of ethnicity".

Arif Hasan, a prominent urban planner, believes that the failure of state institutions, bad governance and ethnicisation of politics are key factors that fuel ethnic violence and tensions in the city and strengthen ethnic political groups. "Because of the collapse of the state institutions, ethnic political groups are consulted for employment or admissions in educational institutions, and other administrative issues. As a result, these ethnic parties exploit ethnic communal support for political and personal interests," he said.

Pashtuns, despite being second largest ethnic community, are politically underrepresented and

have been kept backwards by Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)-led district and provincial governments, complains Shahi Syed, president of Awami National Party (ANP) in Sindh. The discrimination against Pashtuns in Karachi was exacerbated during Gen Pervez Musharaf's regime when he completely handed over Karachi and Hyderabad to the MQM, he alleged. "The fight in Karachi is not the fight of Pashtuns or ANP. It is a fight for control of Karachi by MQM that says Karachi and Hyderabad are theirs and no one else's," he claims. "According to the 1973 constitution, every Pakistani can live and do business in every city of the country. He accuses MQM of running a propaganda calling all Pashtuns Taliban. "They want this myth to be perpetuated to rid Karachi of Pashtuns."

Karachi's Pashtuns have traditionally aligned themselves with religious parties, but in the last few years the ethnic-based ANP has successfully projected itself as sole representative of the community. "Rejecting the ethno-lingual politics of the ANP, Pashtuns of Karachi had voted for religious parties in 2002 general elections and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) had four Pashtun members in Sindh Assembly and one in the National Assembly from Karachi," said Ishaq Khan, a Pashtun leader of Jammāt-e-Islami (JI), who heads the party in Karachi's Pashtun-dominated west district. He said the ANP won two seats from Karachi this time because of an arrangement with the Pakistan People Party, and because the JI boycotted the polls.

MQM outrightly rejects ANP's claims. It also insists it does not represent only Mohajirs. "Pashtuns don't have economic clashes with Mohajirs. It is a wrong perception," Gul Faraz Khattak, a Pashtun member of Rabita Committee of MQM, said in an interview. "Not all Pashtuns support the ANP. Some elements fuel ethnic violence in the city to protect their illicit businesses." Khattak said MQM was interested in talking to ANP if that could end ethnic violence, but the ANP leadership is not interested.

Abdul Waheed, an Asoka fellow and a social activist working in education sector in Katti Pahari, one of the areas worst hit by violence, said things were worsening. "Internal migration within the city has started because of ethnic violence and people are under pressure to sell property and move to the neighbourhoods where their ethnic community is in majority," he said.

"Hospitals, schools and roads are now segregated on ethnic grounds and people are reluctant to go

to the neighbourhoods where rival ethnic groups live," Waheed said. "People are just being picked off the streets and killed because of their ethnic background."

Zia Ur Rehman,
Friday Times, 2-8 September 2011



BANGLADESH

Poverty Rate Declines but More People in Abject Poverty

There has been a significant fall in poverty in Bangladesh according to media reports. The poverty rate declined to 31.5 per cent in 2010 from 40 per cent in 2005 because of consistent economic and remittance growth. This was shown in a report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2010.

However, the country did not perform well in redressing inequality during this period as wealth remained concentrated in the hands of a few people, the report said. Inequality (Gini) in per capita income stood at 0.458 in 2010 against 0.467 in 2005. The report was released at a workshop organised by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the World Bank.

Eminent economist Wahiduddin Mahmud chaired the workshop in the presence of Bangladesh Planning Minister A.K. Khandker. Bangladesh has reduced poverty levels and improved living standards significantly in recent years despite the global economic meltdown and natural calamities, the report said. The survey showed a marked improvement in nutrition levels across the country, primarily because of the more diversified food that people are now consuming. Other indicators of welfare related to human development, access to services, and coverage

of social welfare schemes also saw much progress over the years.

Addressing the function as chief guest, A.K. Khandker said the main objective of the present government was to alleviate poverty and establish equity. The poverty reduction rate will help achieve the other objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) by 2015. Highlighting the poverty in the country, Mahmud said the poverty rate was 50 per cent in 1990 and it came down to 45 per cent in 2000 and 40 per cent in 2005. The poverty rate has declined by eight per cent in past five years. He said the poverty rate had been decreasing gradually in the country keeping pace with the increasing growth of per head national income.

This encouraging report of decline in poverty has come against the backdrop of a grim situation. According to an earlier report, of the about country's 40 per cent people living below the poverty line, 20 per cent were in extreme poverty while 10 per cent were ultra-poor. Poverty was and still is a big problem.

According to an economic update prepared by the World Bank, around 24 lakh more people in Bangladesh were set to be plunged into poverty

in the current fiscal year due to the impact of global economic recession. It said that due to the global economic meltdown, deepening of poverty and fall in income might be more intense now than before.

Earlier, a UN report said hunger in South Asia had reached its highest level in 40 years because of food and fuel price rises and the global economic downturn. The report by UNICEF said that 100 million more people in the region are going hungry compared with two years ago. It named Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan as the worst affected areas. According to the World Bank, three-quarters of the population in South Asia - almost 1.2 billion people - live on less than \$2 (£1.2) a day. And more than 400m people in the region are now chronically hungry.

The global economic meltdown and climate change are affecting Bangladesh adversely. The effects of climate change and high levels of malnutrition are having a crippling affect on the estimated 61 million people living in poverty in Bangladesh. Three million children are acutely malnourished and 41 per cent of children under

five are underweight, it was stated in a recent press release by the United Nations' World Food Programme. The price hike of essentials during 2007-08 has pushed many people below the poverty line.

According to the World Bank, despite a fall in the overall number of the poor, the number of people in abject poverty has increased. At present 56 million people of the total population live below the poverty line. Of them the number of hardcore poor is 35 million against 32.5 million in 2000.

This is due to our failure in achieving the desired progress in the drive for poverty alleviation. With a view to rescuing the extreme poor from endless miseries, we need substantial employment generation and long-term plans for poverty alleviation. Concerted efforts should be made to this end and the government should take the lead in this regard. Poverty alleviation should be our topmost priority as it stands as a stumbling block on our way to progress and prosperity and worst still to our existence.

Bangladesh Today, 26 June 2011



NEPAL

Malnutrition Linked to Gender Discrimination

Khalanga Bazaar, 23 September 2011(IRIN): Gender discrimination lies behind much of the malnutrition found in under-five children in Nepal, say locals and experts.

In Khalanga Bazaar, the headquarters of Jumla District in Nepal's remote mid-west, there is evidence of seasonal plenty - apples and walnuts in abundance - yet last month a three-year-old child died of malnutrition in the neighbouring village of Urthu.

According to the preliminary Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) released in August, 29 per

cent of children under five are malnourished, and the problem is chronic in remote parts of the mid-western region. The most recent regional figures (in the NDHS 2006 report) show more than half of the children are chronically malnourished.

"Girls are neglected because they are thought not to need strength," Indra Raj Panta, programme officer for Decentralized Action for Children and Women in Jumla, told IRIN.

Women live hard lives from day one, born with no fanfare, contrasting starkly to the six-day celebration to mark the birth of a boy. Walking

along the road from one village to the next, women and girls bear the weight of baskets of apples, rocks or bags of rice, while men and boys tag alongside unburdened.

Despite the physical demands of a woman's daily life, boys and husbands eat first and are offered the most nutritious food, often leaving girls and women with leftovers.

Pregnant women still labour

The role of a woman as labourer does not ease while pregnant either: The same work is done, the same weight is borne. And the local belief that leafy, green vegetables are bad for babies, results in a seriously restricted diet contributing to the puzzling chronic malnutrition found in the remote Karnali Zone.

"Malnutrition in Nepal is an intergenerational cycle," said Sophiya Uprety, a nutritionist for the World Food Programme (WFP) in Kathmandu. She explained that supporting pregnant women with a nutritious and adequate diet, rest and care did more than improve a person's strength -- it bolstered society as well.

"Breaking this vicious cycle would later on not only translate into better physical abilities, but also mental and cognitive abilities," she said.

Research indicates that about half of stunting in children occurs before birth and up to two years old. Girls who are not fed well, turn into women who are more likely to give birth to low weight babies, and so the cycle perpetuates.

Tara devi Sejuwal, an auxiliary health worker in Urthu, confirmed the need to improve support for pregnant women in the community. "Not enough is being done for maternal health. Even mothers-in-law discourage check-ups (for their daughters-in-law) because it is not what they had when they were pregnant themselves," she said.

Early marriage, early childbirth and inadequate spacing of births are additional issues contributing

to the low health of people in her village where stunting and wasting is pervasive. Nearly a quarter of Nepalese women have their first child before they are 18 and more than half by the time they are 20, according to the 2006 NDHS report.

More than rice

The Karnali highway, built about three years ago, has meant improved access to food in the region, and crops are performing relatively well - there is a surplus of vegetables and potatoes - but Jumla is reporting a 12 per cent food shortage this year, according to the district agriculture office.

Jumla has been food secure for the past three months, but community officials are anticipating a food shortage in the coming six months due to heavy rains throughout the growing season, said Bed Prasad Chaulagain Dado, Jumla's chief district agricultural development officer.

Poor feeding habits are also a problem: They only want rice, rice and rice, Dado said. WFP has local partners on the ground spreading the word on how to eat the nutritious food available. Awareness on how to construct a healthy diet is improving, but the culture of gender discrimination is harder to shift, say aid workers.

The Nepal Red Cross, WFP and other NGOs are combating discrimination by mandating women's participation in committees, trying to create opportunities for economic independence, and by improving education. But these efforts require women to change their own situation, and exclude men from the process, said Hari Prasad Subedi, organisational development manager with the Nepal Red Cross.

"To make a change we must have male-based programmes, he said. There are women's empowerment programmes and the women learn, but then they can communicate it at home. Things need to change one household - one husband and wife at a time."



Plans to Continue Keep Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal ?

Bhadrapur, 6 July 2011: Bhutanese refugees and their human rights organisations have urged Nepal to remain alert towards a conspiracy being hatched to assimilate the Bhutanese refugees, languishing in refugee camps in Jhapa and Morang, inside Nepal.

Speakers at an interaction programme organized in Damak in Jhapa today on the "Future strategy and campaign for securing Bhutanese refugee rights" said that though the Bhutan government had proposed a dialogue, it has in fact indulged in protracting the problem.

Bhutanese refugees' leader Dr. Bhumpa Rai hinted at a conspiracy to assimilate Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Also speaking on the occasion were Chairperson of Bhutan's Duke National Congress, Binley Penzore, Bhutanese human rights activist D.P. Kafle and representatives of the three major political parties of Nepal.

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has set a goal to accomplish the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees by 2015.

www.titanherald.com/NEPAL/News/2001-07-06/32905/RSS%Feeds



SRI LANKA

Emergency Ends but Police State Continues

More than two years after the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan government has finally lifted the state of emergency imposed during the war. President Mahinda Rajapakse announced the move last Thursday in a bid to deflect mounting international pressure over his government's war crimes and abuses.

The decision was immediately hailed by the media and political establishment in Colombo as a step toward democracy. In reality, the change is purely cosmetic. Most of the police-state powers exercised under the country's long-standing state of emergency will continue under existing or amended legislation.

None of the thousands of Tamils currently detained under emergency powers and held arbitrarily without charge or trial as "LTTE suspects" will be released. The extensive high security zones proclaimed by the military will not be removed. And the LTTE will continue to be proscribed as a "terrorist organisation."

These anti-democratic measures will be enforced as newly proclaimed regulations under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which remains in place. The PTA gives sweeping powers to the security forces and police, including detention without trial for up to 18 months.

Attorney General Mohan Peiris told the *Daily Mirror*: "We will leave no room for de-proscription of the LTTE and the invalidation of the High Security Zones. Also, we need these new regulations to deal with surrendered LTTE members and detainees. There will not be any respite in this case, though the emergency lapses."

Peiris also explained that the government intended to pass an "Emergency Sequential Bill" to make unspecified emergency powers permanent. The new regulations and proposed law are yet to be made public, further underlining the anti-democratic character of this government.

Alternative ways

Amid rising class tensions in Sri Lanka, the government will certainly find an alternative way to impose bans on strikes and industrial action. Just weeks after breaking the 2002 ceasefire with the LTTE and plunging the island back into civil war in July 2006, President Rajapakse invoked his emergency powers to declare the Central Bank, fuel supplies, postal and telecommunication services, export industries and public transport as "essential services," effectively banning industrial actions.

The government mobilised the military on a number of occasions to break strikes, including in hospitals. Despite the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, Rajapakse imposed an essential services order in November 2009 to outlaw a limited work-to-rule campaign by workers in the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, Ceylon Electricity Board, the Water Board and the ports.

In the course of his speech to parliament last week, Rajapakse sought to justify the renewed war and his government's gross abuse of democratic rights. At one point, he cynically declared: "Although some sections of the media caused grave obstacles to the Humanitarian Operation (the war), up to this time we have not carried out any media censorship."

The government did not need to impose censorship as it terrorised the media through other methods. Following Rajapakse's installation as president in late 2005, hundreds of people-Tamils, politicians and government critics-were abducted and in many cases murdered by pro-government death squads operating in collusion with the military. Journalists and media workers were prime targets, forcing numbers to flee the country. No one has been detained, let alone charged and convicted, in any of these cases.

The lifting of the state of emergency will do nothing to prevent pro-government thugs from continuing such attacks. Throughout the course

of his rule, Rajapakse has demonstrated nothing but contempt for the legal system, the country's constitution and parliament. Having gained an overwhelming parliamentary majority at the last general election-largely as a result of the political bankruptcy of the opposition parties-Rajapakse changed the constitution to widen his powers, including to appear in parliament whenever he decides-as he did last week.

The state of emergency has been in place almost continuously since 1979 as the then United National Party government plunged the island towards a full-blown civil war, which then erupted following murderous anti-Tamil pogroms in 1983. The emergency was lifted after the ceasefire was signed in 2002, but was re-imposed after the still unexplained murder of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in August 2005. Rajapakse, who won the November 2005 election, maintained the state of emergency as he sabotaged peace talks and prepared for renewed war.

Rajapakse's "democratic" gesture of lifting the emergency last week was primarily aimed at defusing international criticism-particularly by the US, India and the European powers-of his government's human rights record. All these countries backed Rajapakse's war and turned a blind eye to the military's war crimes and abuses until the final months of the conflict. Concerned at the growing influence of China in Colombo, they have since exploited the issue to pressure Rajapakse to distance himself from Beijing.

The timing of the end of the emergency coincides with a key meeting of the UN Human Rights Council scheduled for 13 September in Geneva. Earlier this year, an Expert Panel appointed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon found "credible allegations" that the Sri Lankan government had committed a "wide range of serious violations" of international law, some of which "would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity."

The panel report estimated that tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were killed in the final months of the war alone. The relentless shelling of civilians in LTTE-held areas also involved the deliberate bombardment of hospitals and aid centres. After the LTTE's military collapse, the military herded some 280,000 Tamil civilians-men, women and children-into detention centres or "welfare villages" where they were effectively imprisoned without charge. Only after thousands of "LTTE suspects" were dragged off to unknown prisons did the army begin to "resettle" the detainees.

Rajapakse is desperate to avoid a discussion at the UN human rights body on the panel report, which the government has dismissed out of hand without providing any evidence to refute the allegations. The Sri Lankan government is taking steps to line up support to block any debate in the UN committee. *The Sunday Times* reported that the Sri Lankan ambassador to Geneva has been instructed to "get in touch with the Latin American group of countries." External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris went on a two-week tour to lobby leaders in Singapore, Jordan, South Korea and others in the Non-Aligned Movement.

The US and India have already issued statements welcoming Rajapakse's decision to lift the state of emergency. They have been joined in Colombo by the main opposition parties-the United National Party (UNP) and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-which supported Rajapakse's war, routinely voted for the monthly renewal of the state of emergency and only belatedly began to call for its withdrawal.

This chorus of support for Rajapakse's announcement simply underlines the cynical manner in which the issue is being exploited both internationally and in Sri Lanka for political purposes. The US and its allies will ignore the Sri Lankan government's anti-democratic methods as long as it aligns itself with Washington.

Far from being dismantled, the machinery of a police state built up over a quarter century of civil war is being maintained and will inevitably be turned on the working class as it comes forward to defend its basic rights and living standards

– Deepal Jayasekera , 1 September 2011



GENERAL NEWS AND ANALYSIS

The Global "Land Grab" and an Appeal from Africa

"I come to you first and foremost as a fellow human as I call you to join our effort to stop the plundering of Ethiopia and Africa by African dictators, their cronies and their foreign partners - some of whom are Indian - who are hungry for our resources but care little for our people.... Will you help work within India to bring greater transparency and compliance with whatever protective laws and safeguards are in place in India?"

That is an appeal from Obang Metho, director of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), who, in an "Open Letter to the People of India", asked them to take steps to stop the harmful land-grabbing by Indian companies in Ethiopia

The reason: the global 'farmland grab' in Ethiopia and the rest of Africa has become competitive, with companies from Asia, including India and China, joining it.

An extraordinary new process has been at work in the past few years: the aggressive entry of Indian corporations into the markets for agricultural land in Africa. At one level, this process is simply following the hoary old tradition in global capitalism of firms (often supported by the governments of the originating countries) entering new areas in search of access to natural resources on preferential terms.

Several centuries ago, the growth of plantation agriculture in large parts of the western hemisphere was essentially the product of such a process. This was further facilitated by cross-border movements of labour (in the extreme case of African labour through slavery, then through indentured labour contracts largely from South Asia, then through supposedly more "free"

movements driven by lack of adequate income opportunities in the home countries). Together these flows generated production and trade patterns that were critical in shaping the international division of labour by the mid-20th century.

In more recent cases, multinational agribusiness companies from Europe and the United States have been active for more than a decade now in acquiring prime agricultural land in developing countries to grow cash crops and biofuels that benefited from substantial subsidies provided by developed country governments. But recently, this global land rush has become even more competitive, with companies from developing Asia, and particularly China and India, joining the scramble to acquire land.

A new research study by Rick Rowden provides some startling insights into this process, particularly with respect to Indian companies and the explicit and implicit encouragement provided by the Government of India. Most of the Indian companies involved in such land purchase and lease arrangements have thus far been focused on Africa, but South America is also seen as a promising new destination. And integrated Indian oilseeds firms have already invested in South-East Asia, in operations ranging from plantation cultivation to the processing of edible oils for export.

Looking at the East African region alone, on the basis of data provided by governments in the region, Rowden finds that more than 80 Indian companies have already invested about \$2.4 billion in buying or leasing huge plantations in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and Mozambique. The land will be used

to grow food grains and other cash crops for the global market and in some cases specifically for the Indian market.

It is not just the allure for Indian foreign investors of much cheaper land and the promise of more abundant water sources in these locations that have driven these investments. It is interesting to note that many governments in the African region have actively courted Indian and other agricultural investors. They have typically offered incentives, ranging from the permission to lease massive tracts of arable land at very generous terms and providing access to water, to promising the firms that they will be allowed to export all output and have the ability to repatriate all profits.

The Indian government, for its part, has both facilitated and encouraged such investment, seeing it as a way out of land availability issues and increasing problems of water shortage facing Indian agriculture. In addition to leading trade missions and supporting various initiatives to facilitate Indian agricultural companies in their overseas investments in Africa and elsewhere, it has progressively liberalised the rules on outward foreign direct investment by Indian companies. The Exim Bank (Export-Import Bank) has provided lines of credit and soft loans not only to African governments but also to Indian companies engaged in such transactions.

Ironically, many of these Indian companies operating in Africa are engaging in activities that involve huge displacement of farmers and changing patterns of production and consumption that would either be difficult or impossible for them to do in India. They would either be illegal or get embroiled in very significant political controversies because of the negative impact on local people.

Take, for instance, one of the most high profile of recent deals, the acquisition of around 300,000 hectares of land on long lease in the Gambela region of Ethiopia by the Indian firm Karuturi

Global Ltd. The claim is that this was all surplus or unutilised land that will now be used for more efficient and productive cultivation. But this is fiercely contested by several local analysts, who point out that there is no such thing as "idle land" in Ethiopia, or indeed anywhere else in Africa.

It is well known that competition for grazing land and access to waterbodies are the two most important sources of conflict between different pastoral communities in Ethiopia, and in all such cases of land lease involving foreign enterprises, there have been complaints by locals of loss of access to grazing land and water. There have been many cases of loss of cultivated land as well as homestead land in the process, leading to simmering discontent that has not yet been able to find political voice.

Further, since the new cultivation practices will be highly mechanised, there will necessarily be quite substantial displacement of labour from the traditional smaller-sized farms that will have lost land. And cultivation of the traditional staple food crop teff has already been affected, leading to significant increases in its local prices. It forms part of the subsistence diet of most Ethiopians. Meanwhile, there are also growing environmental concerns about the pattern of cultivation that has been promoted through these new arrangements. The large-scale and heavily mechanised monocropping farms that are being created typically depend upon high levels of water usage and involve heavy doses of pesticides and herbicides that can pollute nearby groundwater, all of which can rapidly deplete soil quality.

What is even worse is that the contracts signed provide a high degree of protection to the companies with low responsibility for any adverse effects, and scant respect for the rights of those affected by the contracts. Rowden's study provides detailed analysis of several contracts, including that of Karuturi Global Ltd with the government of Ethiopia.

According to Karuturi's signed lease agreement

for the first 100,000 hectares, it has been given the land for 50 years at a total cost of only 100,000,000 birr (equivalent to \$59.28 a hectare) for full use of prime agricultural land, with a yearly rent of only \$1.18 a hectare. The five contracts analysed all mention that the companies have the right to build dams, water boreholes and irrigation systems as they see fit. But there is no mention of paying for this water, how much water would be used or over what period of time, how the usage would be monitored, or what the environmental impacts would be on surrounding areas regarding the water that would be diverted for use by the companies. With fixed-term leases, the implications for over-exploitation of this critical resource are obvious.

As a sign of how the Ethiopian government is seeking to make such investments attractive, the contracts all provide for "special investment privileges such as exemptions from taxation and import duties on capital goods and repatriation of capital and profits granted under the investment laws of Ethiopia". None of these five contracts for the Indian companies mentions labour laws or specifies any wages or working conditions for their local employees. There is no obligation to dedicate any portion of the produced crops to the domestic market for local consumption.

In all the contracts analysed, the Indian companies have the "right" to provide power, health clinics, schools, and so on, but these are not listed under "obligations" of the investors. Nor do the contracts specify for whom these services might be provided - the local population or for those of company workers. Since this is merely a non-enforceable right, the companies may choose not to act on it.

One of the most disturbing features of the contracts relates to displacement, the very aspect that is currently the cause of so many intense disputes in India. Rowden points out that "the contract for Karuturi suggests the Government of Ethiopia will evict any local people who are in the way of the commercial project, by force if necessary". Although this land has been or still is

home to thousands of Ethiopian citizens, Article 6.1 of the contract states: "The lessor (Government of Ethiopia) shall be obliged to deliver and hand over the vacant possession of leased land free of impediments." Arguably, local people who are unwilling to leave their land could be construed as "impediments", and the lessor is now contractually obligated to ensure they are not a problem for the company.

Article 6.6 seems to suggest the government will provide police or military action against any resistance: "The lessor [government] shall ensure during the period of lease, the lessee [Karuturi] shall enjoy peaceful and trouble free possession of the premises and it shall be provided adequate security, free of cost, for carrying out its entire activities in the said premises, against any riot, disturbance or any other turbulent time other than force majeure, as and when requested by the lessee."

All these features point to a frightening new tendency with respect to land acquisition by Indian companies. As democratic processes in India force both Indian corporations and the government to take into account the rights of local citizens, issues of compensation and rehabilitation of those displaced, environmental concerns, the conditions of workers, and other related aspects, there is an attempt to export the problem by encouraging these companies to undertake land grabs elsewhere in the developing world.

Surely all those who would fight such irresponsible and exploitative corporate behaviour in India must raise their voices against this tendency as well.

At the very least, we have to express solidarity with those like Obang Metho. This is important for Indian democracy, not only because of the broader humanist considerations outlined by Metho but also because without this solidarity, the struggle for greater economic justice *within India will also be undermined*.

Adapted from 'Landgrab' Overseas', Jayati Ghosh, *Frontline*, 23 September 2011



The Great Asian Arms Bazaar

According to data released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India is now the largest importer of arms, with China coming a poor second followed by South Korea, Pakistan and Greece.

In its *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2010*, SIPRI uses a five-year moving average to capture trends in arms transfers. Till last year, China topped the list with India coming a close second. Asia and Oceania tops the regional list and accounts for 43% of total imports of conventional weapons (excluding small arms) during the period from 2006 to 2010 followed by Europe (21%), west Asia (17%), the Americas (12%) and Africa (7%).

India received 9% of the weapons exported with the bulk of its munitions coming from Russia (82%) followed by the United Kingdom (6%) and Israel (3%). This is going to change with the United States and France jumping into the fray with major deals for ships, submarines, guns and aircraft in the pipeline.

According to SIPRI estimates, India's volume of imports in 2006-10 was 21% higher than during the period 2001-05. Aircraft accounted for 71% of deliveries. In 2010, the deliveries included 35 Su-30 MK1 and 10 MIG-29 SMT combat aircraft from Russia as well as a second Phalcon airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft from Israel. It is interesting to note that though China received 6% of the worldwide exports (mostly from Russia), it also contributed 3% to the world's exports with Pakistan being a major receiver. South Korea received 6% of transfers with 71% of its imports from the US. (Pakistan at 5% is at fourth place with 39% of imports received from the US and 38% from China.)

The top suppliers of weapon systems, as estimated in the SIPRI Fact Sheet, are the US, Russia, Germany, France and UK. The top five account for 75% of total transfers with the US (30%) and

Russia (23%) supplying bulk of the arms during the period 2006-10. There has been an increase of 24% in terms of volume of transfers from the period 2001-05. This clearly indicates that the worldwide recession has had little or no impact on the arms industry. SIPRI states that the US has decided to supply its allies with advanced weapon systems so that they can meet their own security needs more effectively and reduce dependency on US troops stationed overseas. There is however another consideration of keeping its military-industrial-complex in good health.

The Fact Sheet states: "Six of the 10 largest importers in 2006- 10 are from the Asia and Oceania Region: India (1st), China (2nd), South Korea (3rd), Pakistan (4th), Singapore (7th) and Australia (9th). Arms transfers to Pakistan increased by 128% between the periods 2001-05 and 2006-10. Aircraft accounted for 45% of imports. Deliveries to Pakistan in 2010 include 18 F-16 combat aircraft from the USA, 15 JF-17 combat aircraft from China and 3

Erieye AEW aircraft from Sweden. Pakistan also received large numbers of air to air missiles and guided bombs from China and US and anti-radar missiles from Brazil.

In recent years, the composition of the five largest recipients has remained relatively stable. In the period 2006-10, their share of volume of transfers dropped from 39% in 2001-05 to 30%.

The total volume of India's arms imports over the past five years is about \$40 billion. This figure is going to increase with each passing year as several big-ticket deals are in the process of being signed. There is the \$10 billion deal for 126 multirole combat aircraft, the \$7 billion deal for supply of C130 J and Globemaster-17 transport aircraft by the US, the ongoing Scorpene submarine deal with France valued at \$4 billion and several smaller deals for maritime aircraft, guns, radars, helicopters, missiles and tanks valued

cumulatively at several billion dollars.

Based on current allocations, over the next five years India is expected to spend \$75 billion on procurement of conventional weapon systems out of which \$60 billion worth of equipment will be imported (our estimates). This may be good news for the arms industry but there is a need to utilise the capacity of the 39 ordnance factories and nine public sector units which have been created at heavy public expense.

It is also a matter of grave concern that India continues to import state-of-the-art defence equipment whilst languishing in the human development index. There seems to be a direct

connection between the fact that India tops the list of arms importers and also tops in rates of *child-malnutrition*. Given the profligacy of the security establishment, it is highly unlikely that defence spending will be reduced to 1.76% of the GDP by 2014-15 as recommended by the Thirteenth Finance Commission. In the budget for 2011-12, the total defence outlay (inclusive of defence civil estimates) is Rs 2,02,571 crore which is 2.3% of the expanded GDP. With several heads of state visiting New Delhi primarily to push weapon sales, the only direction that figure will move is northwards.

Pavan Nair,
Economic and Political Weekly, 9 April 2011



Building Trust in Asia through Cooperative Retirement of Obsolete Missiles

Nuclear deterrence is growing roots in South Asia. India and Pakistan have both incorporated nuclear capabilities into their defence planning. Both are guided by a philosophy of minimum credible deterrence, although within this context modest growth is expected to achieve desired force postures. It is natural that asymmetries exist in the forces held by India and Pakistan. These will persist along with different perceptions of strategy and tactics. Despite these differences, we believe India and Pakistan have both reached a point where they should share perceptions about deterrence and nuclear stability in the region.

The time is right for India and Pakistan to expand shared understandings through cooperative exchanges of information about their respective deterrence postures. Such understanding could be critical in a crisis.

Both India and Pakistan have mutually resolved to enhance strategic stability in our region, as affirmed in the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February 1999. One

possibility for furthering this goal is to consider retiring their oldest, first-generation, nuclear-capable, short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), which are at the end of their natural lifespan. Pakistan's HATF 1 & 2 and India's Prithvi 1 & 2 have served their purpose and will be eventually retired unilaterally according to each nation's normal decommissioning process. We propose a plan of mutual transparency measures that would share information about the retirement of these missiles on a reciprocal, bilateral basis - without impinging on the continuing modernisation of both sides' strategic forces. The retirement of other nuclear-capable, obsolescent ballistic missiles can then follow in the same cooperative spirit.

We have participated in an in-depth study and also recently in a mock exercise to explore how information exchanges between our two countries could be conducted. We are confident that such an exchange could be achieved with minimal risk and costs yet would provide important reassurance about significant changes in deterrence postures.

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The Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan have recently reaffirmed their commitment to pursue confidence-building measures (CBM) in connection with their ongoing Composite Dialogue. A working group on peace and security matters is charged with exploring CBMs in the security area. One candidate CBM would be to conduct a Joint Transparency Exercise (JTE) to exchange information about retired missiles. With the voluntary retirement of these obsolete missiles already imminent, New Delhi and Islamabad could make a virtue of a necessity by adding reciprocal transparency to the retirement process. Our studies show such a joint CBM is ripe for consideration and could be conducted in the near term. A first step might be to declare these

nuclear-capable missiles to be non-nuclear delivery systems. Then, as these missiles are removed from the nuclear arsenal, our two countries can build trust and understanding as our respective experts expand cooperation in the draw-down of obsolete forces.

This is a small step. It has been endorsed by several prestigious expert groups. We have studied the practical details of how such ideas could be implemented. We concluded that such exchanges could be powerful tools in enhancing mutual confidence and signal maturity as responsible nuclear powers. The costs and risks for India and Pakistan are small, but the potential benefits are great. It is a step whose time has come.

Feroz Khan and Gurmeet Kanwal,
Friday Times, 2-8 September 2011

(The authors, both retired Brigadiers, are with the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, USA, and the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi, respectively. The Views are personal.)



Sisters in Struggle for Justice:

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

United Nations, 7 July 2011 (IPS): As UN Women, the new United Nations agency dedicated to enhancing gender equality, releases its first major report following the organisation's launch early this year, its most significant finding may be the shared challenges faced by women across the globe.

"Despite the fact that women's lives all over the world are very different in many ways, a lot of the challenges that women face in very different countries are actually quite similar," said the report's lead author, Laura Turquet, in an interview with IPS.

She noted similarities between Europe and South Africa, Rwanda and Nepal. "So it's not particularly

about level of income," she said, "it's actually about approaches that governments take to address these problems." And the report, *Progress of the World's Women*, highlights the importance of the justice system in conquering these challenges.

"We chose justice for the theme of our first report because, really, we think it's an issue that underpins all of the things that UN Women cares about," explained Turquet. "It really underpins gender equality."

"Where we see women better represented in political decision-making, we also see the policies that reflect women's lives," Turquet told IPS. She said that women's representation is still a major

challenge to achieving gender equality - both in developing and developed countries. "I think there's always going to be resistance where you're challenging entrenched power imbalances," she said. However, she noted one sphere in which some progress could easily be made: "It would be wonderful to have a woman Secretary-General of the UN," she conceded.

Turquet added that, while it is essential to have women in those positions, it is equally important that men in high-level posts are supportive of women's rights as well. "We need women role models and leaders, but I think we also need to make sure that we're holding our male leaders to account for gender equality and women's empowerment," she told IPS.

According to the report, laws and justice systems are what shape social attitudes. "We know that laws can change societies," said Michelle Bachelet, UN Women's executive director and the former president of Chile. But she noted that "laws are made by people, and they have to represent the evolution of situations."

That is why the report aims to highlight key actions that governments and civil society can take to legally and judicially enhance gender equality. It also demonstrates the possibilities for women to advance their own rights, noting, for example, the dramatic increase in sexual assault reporting when police forces are comprised of female officers.

"Women can play a critical role in driving the change we need to see," said Bachelet, and the report recommends putting women "on the front line of law enforcement." But while, according to Bachelet, "in too many countries the rule of law still rules women out," Turquet described the vast improvements around the world in terms of women's legal rights.

"Just a century ago, only two countries in the world allowed women to vote, and now that right is more or less universal," she said, noting the

number of constitutions that now guarantee gender equality (139) and the number of countries that have equal pay laws (117).

Despite this progress, however, "we are seeing these enormous implementation gaps between the laws that exist on paper and reality," Turquet said. Sometimes, monetary incentives can narrow these gaps. The report details women's inheritance rights in Nepal, which were legislated in the early 1990s but rarely observed until a tax exemption for land transfers was introduced, motivating men to share land with their female counterparts.

In most cases, however, simply accessing the justice system is the greatest challenge to implementing gender equality laws. First, there is the long and complicated justice chain that women must navigate before they can attain justice. In a sexual assault case, for example, the process spans from reporting the incident to interviewing the victim, to identifying, interviewing, and charging the suspect, to the eventual trial, and then the possible conviction. Even in Europe only a fraction of reported rape cases result in conviction, according to the report.

Access to services

The report highlights one South African solution to this process: the One-Stop Shop model, which brings services like health care, legal advice, the police, and forensic services together "under one roof", according to Turquet. "It cuts down on the number of steps that women have to take and helps to reduce the number of cases that drop out of the system," she explained, noting a conviction rate of 89 per cent -- up from the seven per cent national average - in some One-Stop Shop areas.

Another challenge is physically accessing courts for trial. The Mobile Court model, used primarily in the Democratic Republic of Congo, provides an effective solution. That country's sheer vastness, as well as its citizens' pervasive poverty, often prevents women from attaining justice, according to the report.

"This (Mobile Court) initiative, which is relatively small scale at the moment, has been incredibly successful at reaching women in remote rural areas. In countries with weak infrastructure, it's probably much cheaper to use mobile courts than it is to build expensive courtrooms, which, then, people won't be able to access," she said.

She described a recent case, involving the rape of 40 women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was tried in a mobile court. It was the first-ever crimes against humanity trial heard in a mobile court, and it successfully garnered a large number of high-level convictions.

However, according to Turquet, there is still a great need for investment in women's access to justice. She said that 2009 saw 4.2 billion dollars in bilateral donations allocated to justice work, but of that, only five per cent was spent

specifically targeting women and girls. "There needs to be greater investment in the kind of justice that women and girls need," she said.

For now, tackling these challenges will be the main objective for UN Women, which held its first annual Executive Board meeting last week in New York. "Legislating is only the first step," according to Bachelet. She wants to work together with governments towards better implementation and delivery of justice.

But the six-month-old agency must do so with the minimal funding it has received. Its budget this year is 300 million dollars - of which 120 million dollars has not been earmarked for specific purposes. At its commencement, then, "the key for UN Women will be to work with all our partners to drive forward those goals," said Turquet.

Portia Crowe



Minority Women Fight Back Against Mistreatment

United Nations, 6 July 2011 (IPS): Women in minority and indigenous communities are especially vulnerable to wide-ranging forms of violence, abuse and discrimination, according to a new report released by Minority Rights Group International (MRG), a human rights group that works on behalf of minorities and indigenous peoples.

With limited access to political mechanisms of justice and protection, they are disproportionately the targets of attacks and discrimination, during times of conflict or peace, the report said.

Dalits in India, Muslims in Britain, Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, Batwas in Uganda, Aborigines in Australia - these are just a few of the communities spanning the globe who are sometimes welcomed, but more often not, by the dominant national cultures.

The disproportionate levels of abuse and discrimination that these women face - including rape, other forms of sexual violence, and trafficking, from government forces, paramilitaries, or members of their own communities - can be attributed to the fact that their identity exists at the intersection of two rather marginalised groups, women and minorities, making them easy targets.

In spite of the compound disadvantage, these women are standing up for themselves and challenging the status quo, even as government policies fail to provide the rights and protections they deserve, or, in some cases, attempt to write discrimination into their very laws.

All the Batwa women in Uganda interviewed by MRG said that they had experienced some form of violence, whether ongoing or in the past year.

Dalit women in India experience horrific discrimination as part of the "untouchables" within

the traditional caste system. Even though "untouchability" is illegal according to India's constitution, in practice, it is alive and pervasive in many forms.

In Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, ethnic Uzbek girls and women were subject to widespread rape and sexual violence. Yet in women's crisis centres sympathetic to them, they could not receive residential support due to "hostility among ethnic Kyrgyz clients", the report said.

Speaking up

In countries where discrimination towards minorities is the norm, women from these groups have a particularly difficult time ensuring that they are protected, in law and in reality, from attacks and that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity, especially where socio-economic and geographic factors entrench discriminatory practices further.

Because minority and indigenous women often hail from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and remote areas, they have less access to education, employment, or justice. Without these opportunities, their channels through which to fight violence and discrimination are extremely limited, and opportunities to ameliorate the situation are scarce.

Nevertheless, "many are actively fighting for their rights as women, for the rights of their communities and for their rights as minority or indigenous women," the report stated, even at the risk of violent reprisals from majority communities or their own.

Dalit women "have come out very powerfully to fight for their rights and for justice," said Manjula Pradeep, executive director of Navsarjan, a grassroots Dalit human rights organisation.. "They are the ones that are really fighting for the rights," even if they receive little support from families and community members, she said.

For instance, over the nearly two decades that Pradeep has worked with Navsarjan, she has witnessed a shift in reportage of cases of abuse.

When she first began, few cases of violence against Dalit women were reported to police. Now, she says, women are coming out and speaking about sexual abuse by landlords and employers.

The double standard applied to Dalit women exemplifies the horrors they face. "At one level you don't allow a Dalit woman to fetch water from a public well, but on the other side you rape the woman," Pradeep said. "At one level you see her as a defiled person, somebody who is very impure, but you rape the same woman."

Developed countries have poor records too

"Politicians in the developed world sometimes speak as if the violation of women's rights was simply a problem in the developing world," says Mark Lattimer, executive director of MRG, "but the evidence shows that this is simply not the case."

In Australia, for instance, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women determined that indigenous women "have fewer opportunities, are less likely to participate in public life, and have more restricted access to justice, and to quality education, health care and legal aid services."

In Britain, Muslim women endure verbal and physical assault, and different countries in Europe have sought to ban the hijab or fine those wearing it.

Nor is discrimination limited to the practices of daily life - it reaches the higher echelons of society as well. Lattimer noted that "in almost every developed democracy, minority women are grossly underrepresented in politics, in the judiciary, in corporate boardrooms and in other positions of power and influence."

What we need to do is listen to women who speak out and risk their lives to protect their rights, he concluded, "and take seriously their own recommendations for how their rights should be protected."

— Elizabeth Whitman



Don't Mock People's Concerns – the Year of Protests

The widening disconnect between the State and its people is triggering violence around the world

The year 2011 might be written about as the year of protests. The reasons for these protests have varied considerably from country to country and even from one area to another. Analysts have spent hours trying to determine whether the root causes of this widespread dissatisfaction were economic, political and social or a mix of all three. Harvard historian Niall Ferguson dismissed all the protests as being nothing more than a "global temper tantrum" but such a facile stance does nothing more than mock the real concerns of people.

Predictably, the 'camp of experts' is divided into socialists of various shades and liberals of different hues. Therefore, analyses have primarily been attuned to what is perceived to be the ideological and dogmatic goals of a particular school of thought. There might be a number of factors that underlie many of these protests around the world, but perhaps one underlying issue that seems to be shared by people is a disenchantment - indeed, even a distrust - of the State and its accompanying apparatus.

Over the past 150 years, the nation-state has gradually become the de facto and dominant form of political organisation and representation. The accompanying decrease of physical colonisation has also meant that for the most part many sovereign countries have not interfered in the internal processes of another state with some exceptions.

Some argue that the subservience born out of colonial subjugation is still a feature of the political landscape of many countries and is further entrenched by capitalistic economic policies. Even if this is true, ultimately it is the State that functions as the enforcer and sustainer of such economic models. Even the bogeymen that have usually been fed to people to explain

away some of the problems they face are themselves becoming hackneyed, unacceptable excuses. Communism was the bete noire for many years and of late it has been replaced by a fear of 'Islamisation'. However, it is important to note that Anders Behring Breivik (in Norway) mounted an attack against his own State, specifically the Labour Party, albeit in the name of Islamophobia but didn't choose to target Muslims or Islamic institutions directly.

Since the beginning of this year, there have been sporadic protests around the world. Could it be more than a coincidence that it was the death of one man that sparked protests in Tunisia and in Tottenham? Unfortunately, in England the beginnings of any real movement was completely subsumed by the viciousness of the mob. Since January, many Arabs have been on the streets demanding more rights and even Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, relatively wealthy countries, suddenly declared a number of measures to counteract any possible popular movement.

While the world has been fixated on the London riots, similar clashes have taken place in Santiago in Chile where students have taken to the streets in order to demand a better, more efficient and more just education system. The protesters in Chile are now also demanding a rehaul of mining, agricultural and environmental policies. Nearly a quarter of a million people have protested against the rising cost of living in Israel. In Malaysia, the government is justifying stricter anti-protest measures by citing the London riots and again this illustrates the suspicion with which some governments view their own citizens, thereby increasing the gap between themselves and the population.

In India too, where national politics often drowns out local movements, one group has occupied prime-time news and has entered round two of its protests. Although Anna Hazare's method of fasting as social activism and indeed his demands

might not resonate or even be acceptable to many people, it is now increasingly hard to deny that there is a substantial and increasing disillusionment with the government and with governance.

A few weeks ago, I was travelling in the interior of Uttar Pradesh, when I stopped at a roadside tea stall. After chatting with a group of youth as well as the more elderly villagers, it transpired that on many issues the two generations had different views. However, when I asked them about what they thought was the biggest impediment in their everyday lives, the young men swore and said "sarkar" (government). At this point, one of the quieter and older people repeated this, spat on the floor with great show and said, "They are the real problem."

Of course, it is easy to overstate the amount of discontent that exists, especially vis-à-vis the

State, and it is equally simple to draw parallels and links between protests all over the world but the fact is that the State and its apparatus are increasingly being seen, not as institutions that will protect and enhance peoples lives, but as bodies with interests that are inimical to those of ordinary people. Although the violence and looting accompanying the riots in England as well as in other countries must be condemned, it is striking that unfortunately these protests are only ever truly recognised when people challenge one of the State's most coveted monopolies: violence. The widening disconnect between citizens and the State is an issue that cannot be ignored by focusing on those elements that, by their actions, seek to undermine the real and legitimate concerns of an increasing number of people.

Ali Khan Mahmudabad,
Tehelka, 27 August 2011



ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

DEMOCRACY

Suu Kyi Holds First Talks with New Myanmar Govt

Yangon, 26 July 2011: Democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi held her first talks with a minister in Myanmar's new government yesterday, raising hopes for an ongoing dialogue between the two sides. Suu Kyi, who was released from house arrest after the controversial November 2010 elections, spent more than an hour with labour minister Aung Kyi.

"We can say this is the first step towards many things to be worked on in the future," the minister told journalists outside the state guesthouse in Yangon where the pair met, adding that they had agreed to meet again.

"The meeting included matters of law and order and also the easing of tensions for the benefit of the people," he said, without giving concrete details of their discussion. Suu Kyi herself added little, saying she was "expecting results that can benefit the country".

The meeting came shortly after she tested the limits of her freedom with her first visit outside Yangon since her release, refraining from overt political activities that might have antagonised the government.

The regime had earlier told her party to stay out of politics, warning that "chaos and riots" could ensue if she went ahead with a planned political tour.

The 66-year-old democracy champion was freed shortly after elections that were won overwhelmingly by the military's political proxies, amid claims of cheating and the exclusion of Suu Kyi from the process.

She has since frequently urged dialogue with the government, but the authorities' decision to hold talks met with a mixed reaction from observers, with some seeing it as aimed at gaining concessions from the international community.

Aung Kyi was in charge of relations between the military junta and Suu Kyi under Myanmar's previous regime, but this was the first meeting between them since the new government was formed.

Plans for the meeting emerged three days ago, the day when the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged Myanmar's rulers to have "meaningful and inclusive dialogue" with the opposition. A US official travelling with Clinton on her Asian tour also said the Myanmar government's bid for the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014 would be in doubt unless it reformed its ways.

The timing of the meeting was significant, said political analyst Pavin Chachavalpongpun of Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

AFP



Aung Suu Kyi and the Struggle for Rights and Dignity

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 and had she been awarded it repeatedly all the years since, these would not have sufficiently acknowledged her contribution to the fight for human dignity.

"It is not the strength but the duration of great sentiments that makes great men", Friedrich Nietzsche had said. Nietzsche's quote always reminds me of Aung San Suu Kyi and Nelson Mandela for their persistent uncompromising struggle for rights and human dignity. In case of Daw Suu, as she is respectfully addressed, because of her frailty in comparison to the monstrous strength of the brutal Burmese ruling junta, it touches the heart even more. She has steadfastly struggled for the Burmese people's rights since 1988 and spent 15 years in jail, survived murderous attacks, been held incommunicado, been put under tremendous emotional stress, seen friends and supporters suffer immensely at the hands of an unforgiving junta and yet persists and this is what makes her a truly great person, a beacon and symbol for all struggling people.

Daw Suu, still facing restrictions, secretly recorded lectures on 'Liberty' and 'Dissent' for Reith Lectures series, which were recently podcast on BBC Radio and through them I want to present Daw Suu and her thoughts hoping that these will guide all those who struggle against tyranny.

She, as a 13-year-old, had read the book *Seven Years Solitary* by the Hungarian Edith Hajós Bone, a resilient person, who "was able to keep her mind sharp and her spirit unbroken through the years when her only human contact was with men whose everyday preoccupation was to try to break her". She says it influenced her immensely and helped her survive tribulations. She says "in the business of dissent" the primary task is to remain "unbroken" and to persevere; this defeats the tyrants' goals. She mentions how her supporter U Win Tin who authored *Is This a Human Hell?* after

20 years in jail was sustained through the ordeal by Ernest Henley's poem 'Invictus' of "struggle and suffering, the bloody unbowed head, and even death, all for the sake of freedom"; incidentally, *Invictus* had inspired her father too.

Three qualities

Quoting Max Weber, she says, "Three qualities of decisive importance for politicians as passion, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of proportion" are required. Passionate dedication to a cause "has to be at the core of each and every person who makes the decision, declared or undeclared, to live in a world apart from the rest of their fellow citizens; a precarious world with its own unwritten rules and regulations. The world of dissidence."

Praising the young who have chosen the difficult path of dissidence, she says, "Their weapons are their faith; their armour is their passion - our passion. What is this passion? What is the cause to which we are so passionately dedicated as to forego the comforts of a conventional existence? Going back to Vaclav Havel's definition of the basic job of dissidents, we are dedicated to the defence of the right of individuals to free and truthful life. In other words, our passion is liberty." And adds, "It is not a decision made lightly - we do not enjoy suffering; we are not masochists. It is because of the high value we put on the object of our passion that we are able, sometimes in spite of ourselves, to choose suffering." She admits that "our most passionate dissidents are not overly concerned with academic theories of freedom" but have their own simple reasons of commitment to rights of people.

On May 30, 2003, her motorcade was attacked in Dabayin by hooligans of the junta and though her driver managed to take her to safety, 70 of her supporters were beaten to death and she was again put under house arrest; she tells how Anna Akhmatova's words, "No, this is not me. This is somebody else that suffers. I could never face that and all that happened," sustained her.

She says that "whenever I was asked at the end of each stretch of house arrest how it felt to be free, I would answer that I felt no different because my mind had always been free" but adds that "there is certainly a danger that the acceptance of spiritual freedom as a satisfactory substitute for all other freedoms could lead to passivity and resignation. But an inner sense of freedom can reinforce a practical drive for the more fundamental freedoms in the form of human rights and rule of law." She remains aware of the pitfalls that dot the paths of struggle.

She emphasises that, "A basic human right, which I value highly, is freedom from fear. Since the very beginning of the democracy movement in Burma, we have had to contend with the debilitating sense of fear that permeates our whole society." She adds, "Fear is the first adversary we have to get past when we set out to battle for freedom, and often it is the one that remains until the very end. But freedom from fear does not have to be complete. It only has to be sufficient to enable us to carry on; and to carry on in spite of fear requires tremendous courage." She asks not for super human beings but ordinary human beings.

Sue Lawley, the moderator, during the question session said, "But you are pushing hard at the moment - you have given these lectures to the BBC, you addressed the US Congress, intending to tour Burma. The generals have been patient so far. How much do you fear that their patience may run out?" She replied, "I am not sure that patience is a word that you should apply to them. After all, we have been patient for 23 years. And when you say that they are patient, what do you mean? After all, it is my right as a citizen to travel around this country if I wish to and it is my right as a citizen of this country to say whatever I believe to those who ask me what I think." This reminded me of Safar Khan Zarakzai (who fought for Baloch rights) who when surrounded by the Pakistan Army and asked to surrender, had replied, "You are the aggressors and do not have the right to ask me to surrender because this is my land" and died fighting on August 9, 1976.

– Mir Mohammad Ali Talpur,
Bangladesh Today, 26 July 2011

(The writer has an association with the Baloch rights movement going back to the early 1970s.)



LABOUR

Making Markets Work for Jobs and Not the Other Way Around

The next few months will be crucial for avoiding a dramatic downturn in employment and a further significant aggravation of social unrest. The world economy, which had started to recover from the global crisis, has entered a new phase of economic weakening. Economic growth in major advanced economies has come to a halt and some countries have re-entered recession, notably in Europe. Growth has also slowed down in large emerging and developing countries.

Based on past experience, it will take around six months for the ongoing economic weakening to impact labour markets. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the global crisis, it was possible to

delay or attenuate job losses to a certain extent, but this time the slowdown may have a much quicker and stronger impact on employment. After the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, many viable enterprises expected a temporary slowdown in activity and so were inclined to retain workers. Now, three years into the crisis, the business environment has become more uncertain and the economic outlook continues to deteriorate. Job retention may therefore be less widespread.

The latest indicators suggest that the employment slowdown has already started to materialize. This is the case in nearly two-thirds of advanced

economies and half of the emerging and developing economies for which recent data are available. Meanwhile, young people continue to enter the labour market. As a result, approximately 80 million net new jobs will be needed over the next two years to restore pre-crisis employment rates; 27 million in advanced economies and the remainder in emerging and developing countries. However, in light of the recent economic slowdown, the world economy is likely to create only about half of those much-needed jobs. And it is estimated that employment in advanced economies will not return to its pre-crisis levels until 2016, i.e. one year later than projected in the World of Work Report 2010.

Exacerbating inequalities and social discontent

As the recovery derails, social discontent is now becoming more widespread, according to a study carried out for the purposes of this Report. In 40 per cent of the 119 countries for which estimates could be performed, the risk of social unrest has increased significantly since 2010. Similarly, 58 per cent of countries show an increase in the percentage of people who report a worsening of standards of living. And confidence in the ability of national governments to address the situation has weakened in half the countries.

The Report shows that the trends in social discontent are associated with both the employment developments and perceptions that the burden of the crisis is shared unevenly. Social discontent has increased in advanced economies, Middle-East and North Africa and, albeit to a much lesser extent, Asia. By contrast, it may have stabilized in Sub-Saharan Africa, and it has receded in Latin America

Delaying economic recovery

The worsening employment and social outlook, in turn, is affecting economic growth. In advanced economies, household consumption - a key engine of growth - is subdued as workers become more pessimistic about their employment and

wage prospects. Indicators for the United States and several European countries suggest that workers expect stagnating or even falling wages. The uncertain demand outlook, combined with continued weaknesses in the financial system of advanced economies, is depressing investment in all countries, including in emerging and developing economies which rely primarily on exports for growth and job creation. In short, there is a vicious cycle of a weaker economy affecting jobs and society, in turn depressing real investment and consumption, thus the economy and so on.

Making markets work for jobs

Recent trends reflect the fact that not enough attention has been paid to jobs as a key driver of recovery. Countries have increasingly focused on appeasing financial markets. In particular, in advanced economies, the debate has often centred on fiscal austerity and how to help banks -without necessarily reforming the bank practices that led to the crisis, or providing a vision for how the real economy will recover. In some cases, this has been accompanied by measures that have been perceived as a threat to social protection and workers' rights. This will not boost growth and jobs.

Meanwhile, regulation of the financial system - the epicentre of the global crisis- remains inadequate. In advanced economies, the financial sector does not perform its normal intermediary role of providing credit to the real economy. And emerging economies have been affected by the massive inflows of volatile capital.

In practice, this means that employment is regarded as second order vis-à-vis financial goals. Strikingly, while most countries now have fiscal consolidation plans, only one major advanced economy - the United States - has announced a national jobs plan. Elsewhere, employment policy is often examined with a fiscal lens

It is urgent to shift gears. The window of opportunity for leveraging job creation and

income generation is closing, as labour market exclusion is beginning to take hold and social discontent grows.

Effects of Wage Moderation Policies

It is time to reconsider "wage moderation" policies. Over the past two decades, the majority of countries have witnessed a decline in the share of income accruing to labour - meaning that real incomes of wage earners and self-employed workers have, on average, grown less than would have been justified by productivity gains. Nor has wage moderation translated into higher real investment: between 2000 and 2009 more than 83 per cent of countries experienced an increase in the share of profits in GDP, but those profits were used increasingly to pay dividends rather than invest. And there is no clear evidence that wage moderation has boosted employment.

In fact, wage moderation has contributed to exacerbating global imbalances which, along with financial system inefficiencies, have led to the crisis and its perpetuation. In advanced economies, stagnant wages created fertile ground for debt-led spending growth - which is clearly unsustainable. In some emerging and developing economies, wage moderation was an integral part of growth strategies based on exports to advanced economies - and this strategy too is unsustainable.

By ensuring a closer connection between wages and productivity, the global shortfall in demand would be addressed. In addition, such a balanced approach would ease the pressures on budget-constrained governments to stimulate the economy. In many countries, profitability levels are such that allowing wages to grow in line with productivity would also support investment.

Obviously, the proposed policy would need to be adapted to country circumstances and can only be achieved through social dialogue, well-designed minimum wage instruments and collective bargaining, and renewed efforts to promote core labour standards. With this in mind,

surplus economies like China, Germany, Japan and the Russian Federation have a strong competitive position, and therefore more space for such a policy than other countries. More balanced income developments in surplus countries would be in the interest of those countries while also supporting recovery in deficit countries, particularly those in the Euro-area which cannot rely on currency devaluation in order to recover lost competitiveness.

Supporting real investment notably through financial reform

There will be no job recovery until credit to viable small firms is restored. In the EU, the net percentage of banks reporting a tightening of lending standards has remained positive throughout 2011, and when firms in the EU were asked about the most pressing problem they faced between September 2010 and February 2011, one-fifth of small firms reported lack of adequate access to finance. Targeted support could take the form credit guarantees, the deployment of mediators to review credit requests denied to small firms and providing liquidity directly to banks to finance operations of small enterprises. Such schemes already exist in countries like Brazil and Germany.

In developing countries, there is significant scope for increasing investment in rural and agricultural areas. This requires targeted public investment, but also curbing financial speculation on food commodities in order to reduce the volatility of food prices. Food prices were twice as volatile during the period 2006-2010 than during the preceding five years. As a result, any increase in agricultural income is perceived by producers - especially small ones - as temporary. Producers thus lack the stable horizon needed to invest the agricultural-income gains, perpetuating food shortages and wasting decent work opportunities.

Maintaining and strengthening pro-employment programmes

No country can develop with ever-rising public debts and deficits. However, efforts to reduce

public debt and deficits have disproportionately and counter-productively focused on labour market and social programmes. Indeed, cuts in these areas need to be carefully assessed in terms of both direct and indirect effects. For instance, cutting income support programmes may in the short-run lead to cost savings, but this can also lead to poverty and lower consumption with long-lasting effects on growth potential and individual well-being.

A pro-employment approach that centres on cost-effective measures will be instrumental in avoiding a further deterioration in employment. Carefully designed pro-employment programmes support demand while promoting a faster return to pre-crisis labour market conditions. Early support in crisis times pays off through reduced risk of labour market exclusion, as well as productivity gains. The positive employment effects due to more vibrant labour market matching compensates for any negative effects resulting from private sector crowding out. Increasing active labour market spending by only half a per cent of GDP would increase employment by between 0.2 per cent and 1.2 per cent in the medium-term, depending on the country. Though these estimates provide broad orders of magnitude only, they underline that, if well-designed, spending on pro-employment programmes is consistent with fiscal objectives in the medium term.

Moreover, pro-employment programmes are not expensive to the public purse. If need be, new resources can be found to support much-needed spending. In this regard, the Report notes that there is scope for broadening tax bases, notably on property and certain financial transactions. Such measures would enhance economic

efficiency and help share the burden of adjustment more equitably, thereby also contributing to appease social tensions. The heterogeneous nature of the recovery makes it necessary, however, to apply the approach in the light of country-specific circumstances.

Putting jobs back on top of the global agenda

The responsibility for making markets work for jobs rests primarily with national governments. They have at their disposal a rich panoply of measures inspired by the ILO Global Jobs Pact - ranging from job-friendly social protection programmes, to well-designed minimum wages and employment regulations and productive social dialogue- which can be quickly mobilized in combination with job-friendly macroeconomic and financial settings. It is especially important to move quickly on this front in the Euro-area, where the signs of economic weakening are strongest.

There is also a critical role for international policy coordination. This task has become more difficult given the different cyclical positions of countries. However, the Report's findings suggest that a job recession in one region will, sooner or later, affect economic and social prospects in the other regions. Conversely, the inter-connectedness of economies means that, if countries act in a coordinated way, any favourable effects on employment will be amplified. In this regard, the G20 has a special leadership role to play in keeping employment, along with fiscal and financial issues, high on the global policy agenda. Here too, time is of the essence.

– *International Labour Organisation*



Decline in Share of Wages in GDP must be Reversed

What is the root cause of the explosion of consumer debt in the developed countries that led to the financial crisis? Why did China choose an export-led growth strategy? What is the real reason for lopsided international trade where some countries run up huge surpluses while others notch up massive deficits? The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has one answer to all these questions: The lack of domestic demand.

It is because real wages have stagnated in the US that it tried to compensate by lowering interest rates so that the masses relied on borrowing for consumption. Increasing the prices of homes, which were used as collateral for borrowing, was one way to do it. Higher borrowing became a substitute for higher incomes.

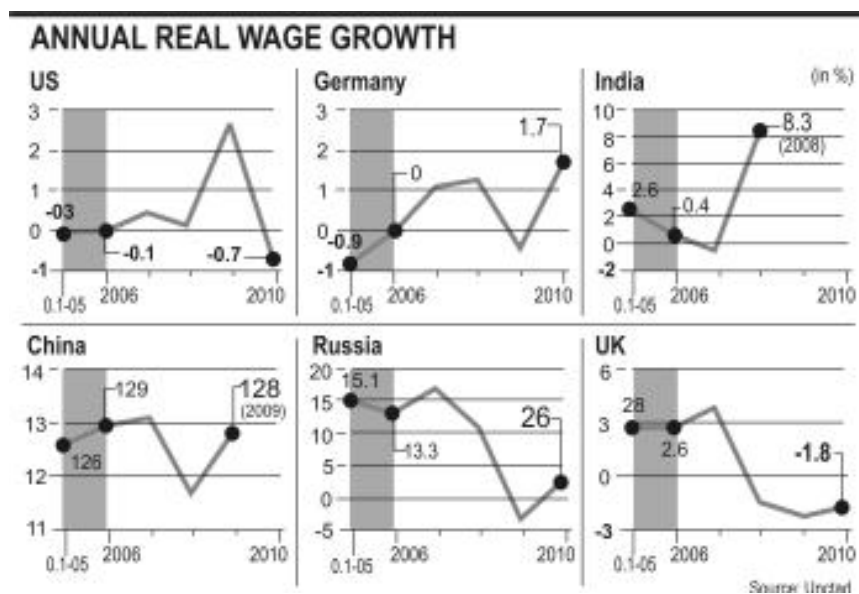
Ahmed Raza Khan/Mint

China, on the other hand, has very low levels of household consumption—a mere 33 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010. Growth, accordingly, comes from investments and exports. This leads to large surpluses which have to be matched by equally large deficits in other countries, particularly the US.

This is the thesis propounded by UNCTAD's latest Trade and Development Report, released a couple of days ago.

It says that wage growth is the main driver of domestic demand in all countries, but wages have been depressed in the developed nations for a very long time. The report states clearly that "the main global risk is that wages and mass incomes may not increase sufficiently to feed a sustainable and globally balanced process of growth based on domestic demand". It says that wages as a share of national income in the developed economies has been steadily going down. This matches with what economists have been pointing out for a long time. For instance, in a recent report, Gerard Minack, Morgan Stanley's global market strategist, says that the wage share of GDP in the US is at a 50-year low. The share of profits, on the other hand, is at multi-decade highs.

The UNCTAD report gives a table on real wage growth in selected countries since 2001. I've taken the data for real GDP growth from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) database and compared it with the numbers for real wage growth. The results are interesting.



For the US, growth in real GDP during 2001-05 averaged 2.4 per cent, but growth in real wages, according to UNCTAD, was -0.3 per cent annually. Real wages lagged real GDP growth in 2006 and 2007, but did better during the recession in 2008 and 2009. A similar pattern was seen in Japan as well. For China, real wage growth has been higher than GDP growth over most of the period. Between 2001 and 2005, average growth of GDP was 9.8 per cent but UNCTAD's figures put real wage growth at 12.6 per cent annually. Real wage growth

outstripped real GDP growth in China in 2006, 2008 and 2009. More recently, there have been many news stories about how workers in China have been able to get large raises.

The story for India, however, is very different. According to the UNCTAD figures, growth of real wages in India between 2001 and 2005 was a mere 2.6 per cent annually. If we take the IMF database numbers, the average real GDP growth in India during the period was much higher, at 6.5 per cent. Real wages grew at abysmal rates of 0.4 per cent in 2006 and -0.6 per cent in 2007, far lower than the GDP growth rates during this boom period. It was only in 2008 that real wage rates went up by 8.3 per cent, much higher than the GDP growth rate, which suffered on account of the financial crisis. If UNCTAD's numbers are right, then large sections of the population haven't really benefited from the high growth rates of the last decade, although anecdotal evidence suggests that demand for skilled labour is high. The lower share of wages could also account for the declining share of private consumption in India's GDP.

This is not the first time that economists have drawn attention to labour's steadily falling share of national income in the developed nations. But

the problem now is that, as a result of the financial crisis, these economies are very fragile. Levels of consumer debt are high, which means consumers are reluctant to take on more debt, even at low rates of interest. UNCTAD says the insistence on cutting public spending in the developed economies will keep unemployment high, which in turn will depress wages and keep private sector consumption low, depressing growth. Moreover, UNCTAD also warns that while the recovery has been led by higher wages in the developing countries, that might change as the slowdown in the West could lead to lower growth in emerging markets as well.

UNCTAD points out that when wages grow less than productivity, it implies that domestic demand is lower than potential supply. The gap can be filled in two ways—by exports, or by stimulating demand by credit easing. Both these strategies have been tried and proved to be unsustainable. At best, they lead to bubbles, while at worst they could degenerate into trade and currency wars. Policy-makers, unfortunately, seem to be paying little heed to UNCTAD's advice.

— Manas Chakravarty,
Mint, 8 September 2011



Little Cheer on the Job Front

July 8, 2011: The National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO) report (66th round) for 2010 shows a dip in the percentage of jobless persons across different indicators compared with 2004-05, the year of the previous survey. The overall unemployment rate dipped from 8.2 per cent to 6.6 per cent over this period, when measured in terms of current daily status (CDS), the most acceptable measure of employment.

Nevertheless, the unemployment rates and the much slower decline in the unemployment rate among women over this period is a cause for concern. The numbers show that the proportion of female labour in the total population has gone down from 215 per 1,000 in 2004-05 to 179 per 1,000 in 2009-10.

Data quality

Some of the inconsistencies in the employment and labour participation data have once again put a question mark over the quality of data. For instance, the Labour Force Participation rate, which is a ratio of labour force to population, showed a decline to 39.2 per cent in 2009-10 from 42 per cent on 2004-05. This is inconceivable at a time when the real GDP was growing at a healthy rate of 8.6 per cent per annum and the unemployment rate was declining.

Some experts believe that the NSSO's 'Question and Answer' format could be the likely cause of the gaps. In fact, Pronab Sen, former chief statistician, who is now Principal Advisor in the

Planning Commission, stated that the design of the survey was faulty. "For any survey-based data collection, follow-up questions and corrections are mandatory to be able to capture data accurately," he explained.

Mr Rajiv Kumar, secretary-general of FICCI, supported Sen's view. He said the fall in labour force participation is "obscure" given the stage the economy is at right now. "With rising wages and growing economy, the data is obviously inconsistent", he added. The problem seems to have got compounded by the fact that most of the investigators hired by the NSSO are on contract and hence they have low accountability.

Incidentally, the year 2009-10, the year of the survey, was an abnormal one with the global financial and economic slump, and employment in the urban areas of the country taking a big hit. Also, inadequate monsoons had caused a drought in many parts of the country, leading to low employment in rural areas also. The National Statistical Commission has already asked the NSSO to conduct a fresh round of survey this year.

Dismal picture

Leaving aside the question of possible inaccuracies and evident inconsistencies, the broader picture relating to the employment scene in the country continues to remain dismal.

The survey figures show that an overwhelming 51 per cent of Indian workers were self-employed with the ratio as high as 54.2 per cent in rural areas and a little lower, 41.1 per cent, in urban areas.

It is a well-known fact that the majority of the so-called "self-employed" are in that category not by choice but for want of any job opportunities. In fact, the chunk of the poor in the country, belong to this category, engaging themselves in some petty part-time occupations because industry and services have not been able to absorb about them.

According to the survey, among those employed, the share of casual workers was as high as 33.5 per cent -- 38.6 per cent in rural areas and 17.3 per cent in urban areas. The overall share of wage/salaried employment was just 15.6 per cent -- 41.4 per cent in urban areas and 7.3 per cent in rural areas.

The survey also found that female employees, both in rural and urban areas, received less remuneration than their male counterparts for doing similar jobs.

Agri push needed

Over the decades, the share of agriculture in GDP has come down drastically and stood at only 14.6 per cent in 2009-10. Even now some 50 per cent of the total workforce in the country is engaged in this sector and it supports 60 per cent of the population. In fact, there is large-scale disguised unemployment in agriculture for want of alternative job opportunities.

Not surprisingly, the per worker value addition as well as the incomes are the lowest in agriculture in our country; the per worker value addition in the sector is estimated at around Rs 20,900 per annum. Incidentally, the excessive labour force engaged in the sector is one of the main reasons for the declining productivity being seen in agriculture and the prevalence of large-scale poverty.

For the overwhelming majority of workers in other sectors also, the working conditions and incomes are not much better as there has been a large-scale casualisation of labour force in the country because of rigid labour laws. About 92 per cent of India's workforce is in the unorganised sector.

According to a recently released survey of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, only 15.7 per cent of the Indian workforce is eligible for paid leave while just 16.3 per cent enjoy some kind of social security.

The country has been paying a heavy price for the prolonged neglect of agriculture, particularly in the post-reform period. Only a bold push for agriculture and a new deal for manufacturing, including the micro, small and medium enterprises, aimed at creating more job opportunities could change the situation for the better.

—S.D.Naik, 8 July 2011 *Businessline*



Child Labourers' Plight: Underpaid and Overworked

8 May 2011: For most people in cities, Labour Day (or May Day) was just another public holiday that nobody thought too much about. On a day marked to give voice to the rights of the Indian work force, perhaps one ought to consider those who have been forced to join their ranks too soon - child labourers.

According to government estimates, an astounding 42.02 per cent of the Indian workforce is children between the ages of 5 and 14. This is in direct contravention of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. Further, this figure does not include those who fall outside the purview of the Act - children between 15 and 18 years. In spite of child labour being banned in hazardous industries, 17 million children are engaged in child labour, according to official sources. Unofficially, the numbers are much higher.

So why does India continue to register some of the highest numbers of child labourers in the world?

About 77 per cent of Indians live on less than Rs.20 a day; lives of utter destitution such that families are forced to send their children to work. Underpaid, overworked, starving, and with little or no access to healthcare, sending a child to work is not a choice for any family. *It is a basic step for survival.*

When his father died in a mine accident, 14-year-old Sambhu from the coal-rich Giridih district of Jharkhand had to provide for his mother and three younger siblings. The only job available was illegal mining. Sambhu would descend into a wet, dark pit and mine coal. Every day he risked breaking his neck while descending into the 10-foot pit, of being buried alive, or being hauled into prison for illegally mining coal. The price of survival for Sambhu was Rs.20 a day.

About 93 per cent of India's workforce is unorganised, a situation expected to worsen. CRY's (Child Rights and You, an NGO) work in over 5,000 villages has proven that children from families who have access to a livelihood - whether through self-sustainable means or through accessible employment - are less likely to be ensnared in child labour. It has also proven that communities that are aware of their rights and entitlements are less likely to accept exploitation.

Take Sambhu's village, for example. Through the initiatives of CRY's on-ground partner, community workers mobilised children and women into self-help groups and collectives. Together, they went door-to-door, convincing people to stand up for their entitlements, and organise demonstrations in front of government officials to demand just wages.

The local children's group has appointed its own 'ministers' in order to understand and imbibe the values of public governance. Teenage girls have formed groups to keep an eye on cases of child marriage, and women's groups have taken on the battle against alcoholism among the men. The villagers are developing safer livelihood options that keep people away from the open coal pits. Children are now in school and not in labour.

But micro-successes like these will not impact India's staggering poverty statistics unless backed by a holistic policy. Despite impressive GDP growth in recent years, the benefits are limited to a small section of the population. Those left out are socially discriminated, educationally deprived, and economically destitute.

The implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has been uneven. There have also been delays in payments in recent months, causing hardship to NREGS workers. The programme promises childcare facilities at sites where more than five

children under the age of six are present. However, there are very few such on-site childcare facilities. The limit of 100 days of work per household leaves workers unemployed for two-thirds of the year and restricts employment for other eligible family members, who may consequently be forced to find work elsewhere. It leaves children vulnerable to exploitative industries, which end up being the only employment options available.

However, these initiatives are in the right direction. Anecdotal evidence from Rajasthan suggests that NREGS has led to a 20 per cent reduction in the incidence of migration amongst

children, and a corresponding increase in school enrolment and retention by 25 per cent.

India needs more such programmes. The NREGS should be expanded to all rural areas and also to urban areas. Another requirement is a social security bill that could provide social security for the vast unorganised sector. The benefits of such inclusive policies would span generations. This is something we have seen happening in village after village: when the rights of the parents are guaranteed, the rights and dignity of the child are taken care of.

– Puja Marwaha, *DNA*, 3 May 2011



Inhumane Approach to Labour Problems

In a stirring speech in September, President Obama promised Americans he will help them get back to work. The government will give more support for the unemployed and teachers; it will rebuild decayed infrastructure; it will give tax cuts to employees and employers alike; it will tax the super-rich. I wanted to believe his every word. But could he pull the magic rabbit out of the hat? For his first three years in office, Mr. Obama neglected the problems of U.S. workers because he was badly advised.

His economic team was led by people, notably Timothy Geithner and Lawrence Summers, focused on banking; these advisers believed that restoring the fortunes of Wall Street was the key to creating jobs - eventually. Recently Mr. Obama has brought in people more expert on labour issues, but they have to deal with deep-rooted rot in the jobs world.

Too many, too few

Most of the President's listeners are only too aware that too many people are chasing too few jobs, especially good jobs. The recession hasn't caused this. For over a generation, financial prosperity in Europe as in the U.S. has not depended on a

robust labour force at home; the work that corporations need can be done cheaper and often better elsewhere.

Again, the digital revolution is finally realising an old nightmare - that machines can reduce the need for human labour; by 2006 this "replacement effect" stood at 7 per cent annually in the service sector. And the viability of lifetime service to a corporation is a thing of the past. The result of these changes is that western workers have known insecurity and the spectre of uselessness for a long time.

Mr. Obama didn't address these structural problems in his speech. How could he? These are the hard facts of modern capitalism, and the President's enemies have long accused him of being a closet socialist. Mr. Obama has always rightly described himself as a centrist. For this reason he faces the same dilemma as David Cameron in centrist mode: both are trying to trim government while stimulating the economy. The \$447 billion Obama promises to spend sounds like a lot, but there's much less actual cash being put immediately on the table; tax cuts are meant to do the heavy-lifting in job creation.

Such "cost-effective" measures don't do much to deal with the sheer scale of labour problems. Investing in construction projects achieves a big bang for the buck. But in both Britain and the U.S., unemployment among unskilled young people hovers at about 22 per cent; it requires a great deal of money and remedial expertise to make them competitive in the job market. The number of people suffering from involuntary under-employment now stands at about 14 per cent in both countries, workers whose wealth dramatically declines when they work less. They need income support, but this too requires lots of government cash.

Calculating unemployment

America calculates unemployment in a peculiar way. Its official statistics do not include under-employment, nor are people without work for more than six months counted. These are instead classed as "discouraged workers"; non-government economists estimate their number at three to five million, and they are indeed discouraged, suffering from family crises, alcoholism and depression the longer they are unemployed.

The U.S. remedy for their plight is similar to the idea behind Britain's "big society": leave it to churches, voluntary associations and "the community" to sort out the personal and family consequences of long-term unemployment. In practice, that means individuals are thrown back on themselves, since one real effect of the recession has been to beggar many of these civil-society institutions.

Europe's northern rim

The "special relationship" has a perverse twist in the realm of labour; our two societies harbour large numbers of insecure employees whose ills have been addressed timidly by centrist governments.

There are real solutions, however, to the travails of work; they are found along Europe's northern

rim - in Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands. These more balanced economies have avoided Anglo-American, finance-driven capitalism; their governments have protected established companies, especially small companies, providing capital for growth when banks won't lend it. Norway and Sweden have made concerted efforts to include young people in starter jobs; their youth unemployment stands at about eight per cent. The Germans put big resources into youth training schemes; the Dutch effectively supplement the wages of part-time employees. Factories in Europe's northern rim have long explored how to deal humanely with automation. Why don't we learn from them?

The Anglo-American elite deploys a "big beast" defence against acting like northern Europeans: in Norway there is no City of London, no Apple. Which produces a paradox: our big beasts think small about work and its discontents. Perhaps it's true that the U.S. economy is so global and so complex that little can be done to remedy its ills at home. But Britain is about the same size as Germany and its cultural DNA is northern European.

Much as I admire Mr. Obama, I couldn't help thinking after his speech that time has run out for him. He thinks his reforms will have a real effect during the 14 months before the election. But if the past is any guide, it takes about three years for government-stimulus measures to bite in the U.S. economy; if Mr. Obama's proposals for public works and tax were enacted tomorrow, their modest effects would be felt during the time of President Perry. In Britain, the decay of public institutions caused by today's big society will be Prime Minister Miliband's problem. To short-circuit that cursed inheritance, in Britain we need to start thinking big and acting decisively about work, like our near northern neighbours.- © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

Richard Sennett
(Source: *The Hindu*, 12 September 2011)



CLIMATE CHANGE

Worst-ever Carbon Emissions Leave Climate on the Brink

Economic recession has failed to curb rising emissions, undermining hope of keeping global warming to safe levels.

Greenhouse gas emissions increased by a record amount in 2010 to the highest carbon output in history, putting hopes of holding global warming to safe levels all but out of reach, according to unpublished estimates from the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The shock rise means the goal of preventing a temperature rise of more than 2 degrees Celsius which scientists say is the threshold for potentially "dangerous climate change" - is likely to be just "a nice Utopia", according to Fatih Birol, chief economist of the IEA. It also shows the most serious global recession for 80 years has had only a minimal effect on emissions, contrary to some predictions.

Last year, a record 30.6 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon dioxide poured into the atmosphere, mainly from burning fossil fuel - a rise of 1.6Gt on 2009, according to estimates from the IEA regarded as the gold standard for emissions data.

"I am very worried. This is the worst news on emissions," Birol told the *Guardian*. "It is becoming extremely challenging to remain below 2 degrees. The prospect is getting bleaker. That is what the numbers say."

Professor Lord Stern of the London School of Economics, the author of the influential Stern Report into the economics of climate change in 2006, warned that if the pattern continued, the results would be dire. "These figures indicate that [emissions] are now close to being back on a 'business as usual' path. According to the IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's) projections, such a path would mean around a 50 per cent chance of a rise in global average

temperature of more than 4 degrees C by 2100," he said.

"Such warming would disrupt the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people across the planet, leading to widespread mass migration and conflict. That is a risk any sane person would seek to drastically reduce

Birol said disaster could yet be averted, if governments heed the warning. "If we have bold, decisive and urgent action, very soon, we still have a chance of succeeding," he said.

The IEA has calculated that if 'the world is to escape the most damaging effects of global warming, annual energy-related emissions should be no more than 32Gt by 2020. If this year's emissions rise by as much as they did in 2010, that limit will be exceeded nine years ahead of schedule, making it all but impossible to hold warming to a manageable degree.

Emissions from energy fell slightly between 2008 and 2009, from 29.3Gt to 29Gt, due to the financial crisis. A small rise was predicted for 2010 as economies recovered, but the scale of the increase has shocked the IEA. "I was expecting a rebound, but not such a strong one," said Birol, who is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost experts on emissions.

Most of the rise - about three-quarters - has come from developing countries, as rapidly emerging economies have weathered the financial crisis and the recession that has gripped most of the developed world.

But he added that, while the emissions data was bad enough news, there were other factors that made it even less likely that the world would meet its greenhouse gas targets.

- About 80 per cent of the power stations likely to be in use in 2020 are either already built or under construction, the IEA found. Most of these are fossil fuel power stations unlikely to be taken out of service early, so they will continue to pour out carbon - possibly into the mid-century. The emissions from these stations amount to about 11.2Gt, out of a total of 13.7Gt from the electricity sector. These "locked-in" emissions mean savings must be found elsewhere.

"It means the room for manoeuvre is shrinking," warned Birol.

- Another factor that suggests emissions will continue their climb is the crisis in the nuclear power industry. Following the tsunami damage at Fukushima, Japan and Germany have called a halt to their reactor programmes, and other countries are reconsidering nuclear power.

"People may not like nuclear, but it is one of the major technologies for generating electricity without carbon dioxide," said Birol. The gap left by scaling back the world's nuclear ambitions is unlikely to be filled entirely by renewable energy, meaning an increased reliance on fossil fuels.

- Added to that, the United Nations-led negotiations on a new global treaty on climate change have stalled. "The significance of climate change in international policy debates is much less pronounced than it was a few years ago," said Birol.

Forthcoming research led by Sir David will show the West has only managed to reduce emissions by relying on imports from countries such as China.

Fiona Harvey,
Guardian, UK, 29 May 2011



Youth and Children Seek Justice and a Safe Future

Asia-Pacific Youth Forum Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development

The Asia-Pacific Youth Forum on Climate Actions and Mountain Issues was held from 8 to 12 August in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Forum was part of a series of youth activities designed to help build the next generation of leadership in sustainable mountain development and climate change adaptation in regional member-countries of The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

The event, held in the context of the UNFCCC COP 17 meeting on climate change in Durban in December 2011 and the Rio+20 meeting in 2012, was intended to help youth develop and project its voice in environmental awareness-raising and decision-making. Attended by over 40 young people from ICIMOD's eight regional member-countries and the wider Asia-Pacific region, it focused on formulating policy recommendations

and developing individual commitments and sustainability plans.

Following the deliberations, the Forum adopted a Declaration on climate change and sustainable development -- The Asia-Pacific Youth Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development.

The Declaration

The future belongs to us and we, the youth from 15 countries of the Asia-Pacific region, are aware of the urgency and threats posed by different environmental problems including climate change. We believe that the current global economic models are affecting the overall environment and natural resources; as a result, the global ecological footprint has exceeded by 30 per cent, contributed by and seen largely in

high carbon emissions, climate change and global warming. We realise that the institutional frameworks and mechanisms prepared at the Rio meeting, most importantly Agenda 21, and the UNFCCC, have failed to meet the high expectations generated, mainly due to weak political commitment, weak institutional mechanisms, less efficient governance, and lack of human and financial capital. We strongly advocate justice, equity (intergenerational and north-south equity) and global sustainability. We are here to claim our safe future and we demand the following from global leaders and global citizens.

1. Be aware of the impact of climate change and vulnerability of the poor people in the Asia-Pacific region ranging from the top of the world to low-land coastal areas. We are facing the increasing frequency and severity of disasters, the melting of glaciers and glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF), declining water resources, loss of forest coverage and biodiversity, declining agricultural productivity and increasing food insecurity, health impacts, sea level rise and coastal flooding, environmental refugees and overall socio economic problems.
2. Act urgently and immediately to mitigate climate change by reducing GHG emissions at source, the global temperature rise should be limited to 1.5 degree C from the pre-industrial level and the carbon dioxide concentration should return to 350 parts per million (PPM).
3. Immediate commitment to the mitigation of emission of Black Carbon and develop strategies to minimise the Atmospheric Brown Cloud (Trans-boundary Air Pollution) within the region.
4. Strong commitment from the relatively higher GHG-emitting nations within the region (like India and China) and globally to revise their development paths and make the transition to a low-carbon development path. We also urge our respective governments to plan and follow the low carbon development path.
5. Provide adequate and long-term financial support as a grant to the poor, most vulnerable and marginalised communities for climate change adaptation (NAPA implementation) and mitigation at the national and local levels. Any funds related to climate change should be channeled via a globally agreed framework within the UN process. We are strongly against any financial assistance as a loan (climate loan) and the finance should be free of climate corruption and should follow the principles of good governance i.e. authority, responsibility, accountability and transparency.
6. Respect our right to move towards a prosperous future and support the low carbon development path through the development and transfer of clean technologies, research, conservation, promotion and sharing of traditional indigenous knowledge, beliefs and values.
7. Increase significantly investment in promoting green technologies and economic sectors like alternative energy resources, waste management, clean-energy transport systems, development of green parks, organic agriculture, urban farming and recreational sites in urban areas.
8. Develop flexible, transparent and accountable mechanisms and a common strategy and platform at the regional level with a multi-stakeholder approach which should address all dimensions of sustainable development, i.e., social, environmental and economic.
9. [Agree to develop standards for all environmental goods and services and set up certification mechanisms when they go the market].
10. Agree to establish simple but efficient environmental governance from the central to the local level in all member countries and in the development arena to ensure that environmental issues are better coordinated and more reflective and responsive to public interest. Agree to facilitate the establishment

of local, decentralised economies where ownership of natural resources and business profits are equitably shared amongst local stakeholders.

11. Develop compensatory mechanisms for resource-sharing between upstream and downstream resource managers/beneficiaries and as well as people living in the rural areas for their contribution in environmental conservation and have benefit-sharing mechanisms in place.
12. Promote research, scientific study and information-sharing within the region and

globally to understand the problem more clearly and develop sustainable solutions.

13. Enhance the capacity and ensure the role of youth in contributing to sustainable development by including them in the decision-making process locally, nationally and globally.
14. Finally, we urge people around the globe, especially youth, to develop environmental voluntarism within themselves, adopt a sustainable lifestyle, and hold their governments accountable to safeguarding the future.



Children's Movement for Climate Justice

Children have the absolute right to live in a decent environment with all that implies - attending school, enjoying good health, living and growing in safety, protection against any form of disasters, assured food security, protection from all forms of abuse, etc. Child rights as it is guaranteed in the United Nation's Convention can only be achieved when the larger society addresses the issue of climate crisis and ensures justice around the equitable use of natural resources and protection of environment. When protected water, pure air to breathe and food security are at stake how can the basic rights be assured?

Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies (RCPDS), a child-focused development NGO in Tamilnadu, jointly with its international partner organisation, Kindernoethilfe, which is committed to protection of child rights, initiated a small working committee to deal with child safety, food security and sovereignty, disaster preparedness, good governance, climate change mitigation and lobbying and advocacy. From this, a small working group gradually emerged as an active movement on the ground to address the issue of climate justice as part of a child-focused

community development process and child rights approach.

The Children's Movement for Climate Justice (CMCJ) started in 2008 with over 300 children from Palar Panchayat (Children's Parliament). It is an institutional base/framework for adolescent children to express, learn, practise, scale. up through peer pressure and experiment with various social and rights-based issues aimed at good governance. CMCJ basically aims to create more equitable and just use of natural resources which have an impact on Universal Child Rights for children and create a demand-driven process of climate justice that need to be rendered by all stakeholders concerned. Since the movement has emerged from Palar Panchayat, which is a democratic good-governance platform for children, it has reiterated the need for social, political, economic and legal systems to enable the realisation of children's rights at all levels.

CMCJ, within its overall goal, endorses that the revival of traditional knowledge in agriculture and environmental protection as the key to food sovereignty and security of the marginalised. A

participatory study of the vulnerability and experience of children, members of CMCJ, living in a semi-arid millet zone, showed the need for children to get exposed to traditional agricultural practices as part of their lifestyles and livelihoods. As members of the movement, the children commit themselves to reducing risk and vulnerability by learning about the low-carbon path to food production. In this context, Manvasanai (Smell of the Soil), a children-led ecological learning project, offers an opportunity for open hands-on experience of eco-friendly farming for anyone who shares this commitment.

In this experiment, children learn various basic concepts of eco-friendly agriculture such as soil and water conservation, moisture retention, recharging of ground water through effective water-harvesting measures, use of herbal plants, reviving traditional minor millets and their role in family nutrition support systems. The project ultimately aims at giving hands-on experience to children not only in aspects of food security but also in food sovereignty. This learning centre is

visited by many schools around as well from other parts of the country.

There is a great urgency, beyond the craze for economic growth, urbanization, and science and technology, for our generation to get exposure and better understanding of where we get our food from and how we preserve the food production systems and rights of the poorest.. This learning venture reinforces the belief that to undermine sovereignty- based food security is to dig one's own grave. So members of CMCJ further commit themselves to educate and empower their families and communities to adapt traditional- knowledge-based science and advancements to ensure food security and to mitigate climate change.

CMCJ would like to expand the movement so that two-thirds of the children in Tamilnadu join hands to make an impact on issues of environmental protection and food security through Palar Panchayat institutions.

– John Devarajan,
Source: *Eco-ethic*



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