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Congress' draft anti-rape law proposes chemical castration

As outrage against the death of the Delhi gang-rape victim, Congress has decided to propose a tougher law to check crimes against women which could include a provision like chemical castration of perpetrators of rape in rare cases. The final draft of the Congress' bill, which is to be submitted to the Justice JS Verma-led Committee set up by the Centre in the wake of the horrific incident on December 16, has not, however, been readied yet, the sources said.

Some of the provisions of this tougher law include imprisonment up to 30 years for rape convicts and setting up of fast track-courts to decide the cases within three months and were discussed in the presence of party chief Sonia Gandhi on December 23 when she had held a meeting with a group of people protesting against the gang-rape incident.

Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council, which has framed and helped frame many landmark legislations like RTI, is likely to be involved in the whole exercise.

Sources said the Women and Child Development Ministry, headed by Krishna Tirath, held a marathon meeting with stakeholders on this issue on Friday during which several suggestions have been made.

The ministry will prepare a summary of the suggestions received and will submit it to the Justice Verma-headed three-member committee set up to review existing laws make recommendations changes in them to effectively check crimes against women.

"There is no government draft till now. The summary that we submit to the JS Verma Committee will be the first written document on which the new law will be based," sources said.

In the meeting with the protestors at her 10 Janpath residence, Gandhi had favoured fast track courts for trying rape cases with a 90-day cap while Renuka Chowdhary had made a strong pitch for chemical castration to rape accused saying such a punishment is already in practice in various countries and that it had a deterrent effect, sources said.

There is also a suggestion to re-define the juvenile and lower their age.

One of the accused in the ghastly rape case, who inflicted maximum brutality on the victim, is a juvenile and aged a few months less than 18 years.

A view has been expressed by a section that only those aged below 15 years should be described as juvenile.

The proposal of the Women and Child Ministry will undergo legal scrutiny and an ordinance is likely to be brought after the proposal is vetted by the Home Ministry and the Law Ministry.

Since the next session of Parliament is more than two months away, the government is contemplating bringing the ordinance, an issue discussed in the last two Core Group meetings of Congress on December 24 and December 29, the sources said.

Khaps oppose death penalty for rapists
Opposing the demand for death penalty for rapists, Khaps in Haryana . They said no law should be introduced in a hurry which can be misused. Speaking at a village here, Khap leader Sube Singh said that the authorities should not be carried away by emotions in the wake of the public protests over the gangrape issue and demand for death penalty for rapists.

Massive quakes may hit the Himalayas: scientists

In what can have huge implications for countries like India, scientists have warned of massive earthquakes of the magnitude 8 to 8.5 in the Himalayas, especially in areas with their surface yet to be broken by a temblor.

A research team led by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) here has discovered that powerful earthquakes in the range of 8 to 8.5 magnitudes on the Richter scale have left clear ground scars in the central Himalayas.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

NDC approves 12th Five Year Plan

Country's apex policy making body NDC has approved the strategy to achieve average growth rate of 8 pc during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17), generate 50 million new jobs and increase investments in infrastructure sector. "I am very happy that NDC (National Development Council) has approved the 12th Five Year Plan. We have marginally reduced the average annual growth rate to 8 per cent (from 8.2 per cent). "We expect with the growth rate of 5.8 per cent this fiscal and little over 7 per cent next fiscal, and with extra effort in the remaining three more years we can reach 8 per cent," Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said in New Delhi on Thursday. The voluminous document, containing detailed policy strategy for the 12th Plan, was approved at the full meeting of the NDC chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The document has pegged the aggregate Plan resources at Rs 37.16 lakh crore during the five year period starting 2012-13. Singh assured all Chief Ministers that Centre has taken note of the points raised by them, including those in the written speeches. "All these points will be carefully considered by the Planning Commission," he said, adding, the Plan is not a rigid blue print.

"It is a broad 'directional' and 'aspirational' document, which must allow for modification on the basis of experience... We must now devote all our energies to implementing the Plan," the Prime Minister said. Moving away from previous practice of presenting single growth projection, the Planning Commission has come out with three different economic scenarios for 12th Five-Year Plan. As per the "aspirational" scenario one -- of strong inclusive growth -- India's economic growth will be average 8 percent in the five years. The document also cautions that in scenario of policy logjam, the GDP growth could slow down to 5-5.5 percent. The document proposes to bring down poverty by 10 percentage points by the end of the 12th Plan and generate five crore new jobs in non-farm sector. As regard the infrastructure sector, it says that efforts should be made to increase investment in this sector to 9 percent of the GDP by the end of the Plan period. The other targets include increasing green cover by one million hectare every year and adding 30,000 MW of renewable energy generation capacity in the Plan period. It also seeks to reduce emission intensity of the GDP in line with the target of 20-25 reduction by 2020 over 2005 levels.

Although the document envisages 6.7 percent growth rate in the current fiscal, it has been projected at 5.7-5.9 percent in 2012-13 by the Finance Ministry. The strategy for the full Plan would aim at raising agriculture output to 4 percent and manufacturing sector growth to 10 percent. It also wants all the states to set higher targets of growth than what was achieved in the 11th Five Year Plan.

Indian bourses perform better than global peers in tough year

Amid turbulent times for the stock markets across the world, the equity turnover fell on Indian bourses as well in 2012, but the fall was meagre at 1.57 per cent when compared to the global average. Globally, the equity turnover fell sharply by 14.7 per cent, while the fall was nearly 8 per cent for the bourses in Asia Pacific region as well. On the other hand, the collective equity trade volume of two Indian bourses, NSE and BSE, fell by 1.57 per cent to 161.74 crore during January-November period of 2012, as per data from the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE).

The total number of equity trades on the exchanges across the world was 907 crore for the same period. Indian markets are expected to further improve their tally in 2013, as a new bourse MCX-SX is expected to begin operations as a full-fledged stock exchange.

The Asia pacific region registered a decline of nearly 8 per cent to 533.4 crore trades in January-November period of 2012. The global data for December is still awaited as one last trading session would take place tomorrow. Experts said economic uncertainty across the globe, political deadlock in Europe, fiscal cliff debate in the US, policy logjam in India and lack of trading opportunities were main reasons for fall in equity trading in India and rest of the world. Individually, National Stock Exchange (NSE) recorded 129 crore equity trades, showing a marginal improvement of one per cent compared to 2011, and grabbing the mantle as the top bourse among

Two policy statements, common messages

The mid-year economic analysis of the economy and the Reserve Bank of India's mid-quarter monetary policy review — were unveiled in quick succession two weeks ago. The mid-year analysis or review laid before Parliament on December 17 is a scorecard on the economy submitted by the finance ministry. It is largely the work of the new Chief Economic Advisor, Raghuram Rajan.

As a policy statement, it is a sequel to the Economic Survey that is presented to Parliament days before the Union Budget and, hence, should command the same degree of importance. However, just as the Union Budget eclipses, as it were, the Economic Survey, the recent mid-term review has not merited the attention it deserves, upstaged as it seems to have been by the RBI's policy statement of the next day (December 18).

That is unfortunate because both the reports, inevitably, cover common ground. Macro-economic issues such as those relating to inflation, fiscal and current account deficits and expectations of gross domestic product (GDP) growth form the subject matter of both the reports. Corroborating the views of one with those of the other gives the analyst a complete picture of the economy. Especially in a situation where the Finance Minister and the RBI are reportedly having significant differences over matters such as the direction of monetary policy: should RBI yield to the government's subtle and not so subtle pressures and start cutting interest rates?

To its credit the mid-year review has effectively broken the mould of exaggerated economic growth forecasts that have been a characteristic feature of most official pronouncements so far. Introducing a touch of realism in the economic discourse was long overdue. In estimating GDP growth for the current year (2012-13) at between 5.7 per cent and 5.9 per cent, it acknowledges the slowdown in uncertain terms. The budget had projected a growth rate of 7.6 per cent. So the latest projection is a good 2 percentage points lower. To be fair, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram has recently talked of a lower growth rate but officially the government had not revised its forecast even in the face of mounting evidence of a slowdown.

All others, including the RBI, had brought it down. The RBI's current forecast is of a 5.8 per cent growth down from its earlier 6.5 per cent. Even the revised estimate of growth of between 5.7 per cent and 5.9 per cent is based on certain assumptions. During the first-half of this year (April-September), economic growth was of the order of 5.4 per cent. That means the economy has to grow by at least 6 per cent during the next six months. Whether that is going to be possible or not depends upon a variety of circumstances, which both the government and the RBI have spelt out in detail. Of special relevance to the monetary policy are the twin deficits — the fiscal deficit and the current account deficit — and inflation. Both the reports agree on the main points relating to inflation.

WPI-based inflation

There was some good news at last — the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation slowed to a 10 month low of 7.24 per cent in November from 7.45 per cent in the previous month. Very significantly, core inflation, a measure that excludes food and fuel inflation, touched a 32 month low of 4.5 per cent in November. This measure, closely watched by the RBI, is, however, known to be volatile. Food inflation was, however, sharply up in November.

On balance, both the government and the RBI reports expect inflation to moderate further in the last quarter of fiscal 2013 (January-March 2013). Based on this, the RBI has hinted at an easing of monetary stance from the beginning of next year. The levels of fiscal deficit have remained contentious. In the mid-year review, the government has stuck to the target of 5.3 per cent of the GDP, while admitting that it will be tough to be a tough call. There has been a slippage in corporate tax, excise and customs duty and service tax. The realisations from both the disinvestment and the 2G spectrum auctions are likely to fall below expectations. While the RBI has not gone into the details, it has always advocated greater alacrity on fiscal consolidation as an essential prelude to easing of interest rates. Both the reports cite the importance of global economy on decision making in India. Adverse economic conditions in the developed world have led to a fall in India's exports. Consequently, the trade deficit and with it the current account deficit has widened. It is going to be a challenge to keep the CAD within acceptable limits.

In nutshell, both the reports are mildly optimistic of an economic revival from the beginning of calendar year 2013. Quite refreshingly, the government and the RBI seem to agree on the building blocks necessary for such a revival.



Year End Review

of Power Ministry & New and Renewable Energy

The Indian power sector is one of the most diversified in the world. India is the fifth largest producer of electricity in the world and according to the Planning Commission, while the State Governments account for 51.5% of the total generation capacity, the central sector and the private sector account for 33.1% and 15.4% of the generation capacity respectively. Sources for power generation range from commercial sources like coal, lignite, natural gas, oil, hydro and nuclear power to other viable non-conventional sources like wind, solar and agriculture and domestic waste. The capacity addition achieved in the 11th plan has already surpassed the achievement of the earlier plans. A capacity of 54,964 MW has been added which has a significant contribution from the private sector and the government is making serious efforts to achieve a much higher capacity addition of about 88,000 MW in 12th plan. The contribution of private sector in capacity addition has increased from 10% in the 10th plan to approx 42% in the 11th plan and during 12th plan; it is expected to be more than 50%. A capacity addition target of 17956 MW has been fixed for 2012-13. The demand for electricity in the country has been growing at a rapid rate and is expected to grow further in the years to come. In order to meet the increasing requirement of electricity, massive addition to the installed generating capacity in the country is required. It is proposed to add total of 17426 ckm transmission lines in central, state and private sector during the year 2012-13. As against the first quarter target of 4551ckm transmission lines, 3267 ckm transmission lines have been added. A generation target of 930 BU was fixed for the year 2012-13. Performance in the first quarter has exceeded the target. As against the target of 222.500 BU for the first quarter, 231 BU of electricity has been generated. For capacity building, the government has initiated various measures to encourage participation of private sector in the power sector.

To ensure that the benefits of the increased availability of power reaches the poorest of the poor living in the rural areas, the Government has implemented the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana with vigour and determination to electrify over one lakh un-electrified villages and to provide free electricity connection to 2.34 crore rural BPL households. Since inception of RGGVY, electrification work in 1,04,496 un-electrified villages have been completed and electricity connections have been released to 1.94 crore BPL households till the end of the 11th plan i.e 31st march 2012. Bharat Nirman targets for electrification of villages and provision of electricity connections to BPL households have been met. It is targeted to complete electrification works in 6,000 un-electrified villages and provide electricity connection to 36.80 lakh BPL households under RGGVY during 2012-13. During 2012-13, electrification work in 818 unelectrified villages have been completed and electricity connections to 4.31 lakh BPL households have been provided as on 30.06.2012.

Smart planning with smart innovations will now be the fundamental objective of India. With the support of Government, the adoption of technology in the power sector has revolutionized India's Grid and enhanced dynamic solutions that cater to India's power problems.

Wind power has played a crucial role in meeting this rapidly growing demand. Since 2003, the wind sector has delivered an impressive compound annual growth rate of 29%. Last year, India was ranked in the top three countries in the world for new installed wind capacity.

Annual National Energy Conservation Day was celebrated on 14th December, 2012 where President handed over the prizes to several industrial units and other establishments. The total annual energy savings worth Rs. 2,886 Crores was achieved by all participating units of National Energy Conservation Award Scheme- 2012. The President also presented the prizes to 13 winners of the National Level Painting Competition under the National Campaign on Energy Conservation undertaken by the Ministry of Power and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). Nearly 31 lakh children participated in the competition.

Restructured Accelerated Power Development and Reform Program (R-APDRP):

The actual focus of the R-APDRP program is on demonstration of performance in terms of reduction in Aggregate technical & commercial losses. Projects under this scheme are to be taken up in two parts:

Part A: This includes projects for establishment of baseline data and IT applications for energy accounting /auditing & IT based consumer service centers. Part A (IT enabled system) projects worth 5196.50 crores for 1402 towns : 63 Part –A (SCADA) projects worth Rs.14443.48 crore;

Part B: This consists of regular distribution strengthening projects. 1086 Part B projects worth 24776.17 crores have been sanctioned till 32st march 2012 under the programme.

For the year 2012-13, it is targeted to sanction Rs.1080 crore and disburse Rs.2997 crore as loan under R-APDRP. So far, disbursement during the current year 2012-13 has been Rs.289.63 crore.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal Ministry of the Government of India for all matters relating to new and renewable energy. The broad aim of the Ministry is to develop and deploy new and renewable energy for supplementing the energy requirements of the country. The role of new and renewable energy has been assuming increasing significance in recent times with the growing concern for the country's energy security. Energy self-sufficiency was identified as the major driver for new and renewable energy in the country in the wake of the two oil shocks of the 1970s. The sudden increase in the price of oil, uncertainties associated with its supply and the adverse impact on the balance of payments position led to think for alternate energy.

Renewable energy resources and significant opportunities for energy efficiency exist over wide geographical areas of the country, in contrast to other energy sources, which are concentrated in a limited number of countries. Rapid deployment of renewable energy and energy efficiency, and technological diversification of energy sources, would result in significant energy security and economic benefits.

To develop new and renewable energy technologies, processes, materials, components, sub-systems, products & services at par with international specifications, standards and performance parameters in order to make the country a net foreign exchange earner in the sector and deploy such indigenously developed and/or manufactured products and services in furtherance of the national goal of energy security.

A total power generation capacity of around 26,267 MW from renewable has been setup in the country as on 31.10.2012. A target of adding about 30,000 MW from various renewable energy sources has been fixed for the 12th Plan period.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy implemented a Scheme on Special Area Demonstration Projects to demonstrate various Renewable Energy (RE) Systems includes solar lights at places of National and International importance including religious and historical heritage sites in the country. So far 29 religious and historical heritage sites have been covered under this programme in 12 States.

Domestic production of solar PV modules based on crystalline silicon technology during the year 2011 was around 300 MWp. Further, a total capacity of 268 MWp of Grid- connected Solar PV power plants have been set up under JNNSM so far (as on 31.10.2012), of which plants with 120 MWp aggregate capacity are using domestically produced module, which corresponds to about 40% of the domestic production. Off-grid solar PV systems with aggregate capacity of 31 MWp have also been deployed under JNNSM so far (as on 31.10.2012), of which 99% are using domestically produced modules. As per monthly generation report compiled by Central Electricity Authority, 83.483 MU of grid solar power was produced during August, 2012 and 539.205 MU during the period April, 2012 to August, 2012.

The ministry is undertaking numerous awareness programmes such as exhibitions, training workshops etc. are being conducted. Several R&D efforts have also been initiated for new technologies and improvement in efficiency.

Andhra Pradesh kicks off special ministry for promotion of Telugu

The fourth World Telugu Conference (WTC) began in this temple town Thursday with Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy announcing that a separate ministry would be created for the promotion and development of Telugu language in the state.

Addressing the conference, which was inaugurated by president Pranab Mukherjee, the chief minister promised that Telugu would be made the language of administration and education. He said steps would also be taken to make Telugu as the medium of instruction up to 10th standard. He said three academies for promotion of Telugu music, art and literature would be revived.

Speaking in Telugu, Governor ESL Narasimhan described it as a sweet language and said it has a bright future. The president felicitated eminent Telugu personalities from various walks of life, including actor Akkineni Nageswara Rao and former hockey player Mukesh Kumar.

The conference, being held in Andhra Pradesh after a gap of 37 years, got off to a glittering start at the sprawling campus of the Veterinary University. Over 5,000 delegates from India and abroad are attending the three-day meet, which will discuss various issues for preserving the finesse of the Telugu language for posterity. Various sessions will deliberate on culture, dance, song, food and other aspects. There will also be sessions on films, plays and poetry besides cultural programmes. Seventeen feature films depicting the greatness of Telugu would be screened at select theatres in the town.

Before the inauguration of WTC, the chief minister unveiled the statue of Telugu Talli (mother Telugu). A massive procession with 1,500 artists was taken out to highlight the rich cultural heritage of Telugu. Hundreds of students also participated in the procession. About 8,000 policemen have been deployed as part of the massive security arrangements for the conference.

The first WTC was held in Hyderabad in 1975. The second was held in Malaysia in 1981 and the third in Mauritius in 1990.

Shinzo Abe is new Japan PM

In Japan, Mr Shinzo Abe has been voted in as the Prime Minister by Japan's MPs, after his party's crushing poll victory earlier this month. Mr Abe's Liberal Democratic party (LDP) and its coalition partner have a two-thirds majority in the lower house. The governing Democratic Party (DPJ) suffered major losses in the poll, with leader Yoshihiko Noda stepping down. Mr Abe, who was the Prime Minister in 2006-07, has pledged to take a tough line in a territorial row with China.

China has urged the new government to take practical steps to deal with the dispute over islands in the East China Sea. Mr Abe, 58, has also called for Japan's pacifist constitution to be revised and patriotic sentiment nurtured.

Earlier, the Japanese Cabinet resigned, allowing for a parliamentary vote to install Mr Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister.

UBS to pay US\$1.5b in rate-rigging scandal

Swiss bank UBS agreed Wednesday to pay \$1.5 billion in fines for trying to manipulate a key interest rate that affects borrowers around the world. The settlement with U.S., British and Swiss regulators caps a tough year for the company and the reputation of the global banking industry. The fine on UBS, which will also see two former traders charged with conspiracy, is triple the amount that British bank Barclays PLC agreed to pay in June to settle similar charges.

And it comes a week after HSBC agreed to pay nearly \$2 billion to settle allegations of laundering money for Mexican drug cartels and countries under U.S. embargoes, such as Iran.

UBS, Switzerland's largest bank, said some of its employees tried to rig the LIBOR rate - short for London Interbank Offered Rate - in several currencies. The rate is set daily using information that banks provide and is used to price trillions of dollars in contracts around the world, including mortgages and credit cards.

Some UBS traders voluntarily submitted - or pressured others to submit - inaccurate data to gain some financial advantage.

The bank's Japan unit, where much of the manipulation took place, entered a plea to one count of wire fraud in an agreement with the U.S. Justice Department.

The Justice Department said two former UBS senior traders, Tom Alexander William Hayes, 33, of Britain, and Roger Darin, 41, of Switzerland, will be charged with conspiracy, while Hayes also will be charged with wire fraud in New York federal court. Justice Department officials said they believed the two men were in Britain and Switzerland, and would be seeking their extradition.

UBS will pay \$1.2 billion of its fine to the Justice Department and U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission. The CFTC will get \$700 million, the largest fine it ever ordered. The remaining \$300 million will go to regulators in Britain and Switzerland.

As a result of the fines, litigation, unwinding of real estate investments, restructuring and other costs, UBS said it expects to lose between 2 billion and 2.5 billion Swiss francs (\$2.2 billion to \$2.7 billion) in the fourth quarter. Nevertheless, the Zurich-based bank maintained that it "remains one of the best capitalized banks in the world." UBS shares closed down 0.3 percent at 15.20 francs on the Zurich exchange.

The **LIBOR scandal** is likely to make headlines again in coming months. Other big global banks are also being investigated for rigging the same market and are expected to be fined.

UBS said some of its personnel had "engaged in efforts to manipulate submissions for certain benchmark rates to benefit trading positions" and that some employees had "colluded with employees at other banks and cash brokers to influence certain benchmark rates to benefit their trading positions." Britain's financial regulator called the misconduct by UBS "extensive and broad," with the rate-fixing carried out from UBS offices in London and Zurich.

Different desks were responsible for different rate submissions. At least 2,000 requests for inappropriate submissions were documented. An unquantifiable number of oral requests were also made, the U.K.'s Financial Services Authority said. "Manipulation was also discussed in internal open chat forums and group emails, and was widely known," the FSA said. "At least 45 individuals including traders, managers and senior managers were involved in, or aware of, the practice of attempting to influence submissions."

Joe Rundle, head of trading at London-based ETX Capital, said the case exposes "just how brazen and arrogant" the UBS traders were while collaborating with "corrupt external brokers."

Sergio Ermotti, who was appointed CEO of UBS in November 2011 in the wake of a major trading scandal, said the misconduct does not reflect the bank's values or standards.

In an interview with Swiss TV, Ermotti said the bank fired 36 employees involved in the scandal over the past 18 months and learned some clear lessons from it - mainly that "we had to strengthen our controls." "We are on our way to finding solutions to some of the problems," he told the German-speaking public broadcaster SRF. "We have to recognize our failures and learn from them, but also look ahead." With more than 2.2 trillion Swiss francs (\$2.4 trillion) in invested assets, UBS is one of the world's largest managers of private wealth assets. At last count, the bank had 63,745 employees in 57 countries and said it aims for a headcount of 54,000 in 2015.

Along with Credit Suisse, the second-largest Swiss bank, UBS is on the list of the 29 "globally systemically important banks" that the Bank for International Settlements - the central bank for central banks - considers too big to fail. It's not the first time that UBS has fallen afoul of regulators. In 2009, U.S. authorities fined UBS \$780 million for helping U.S. citizens avoid paying taxes.

The U.S. government has since been pushing Switzerland to loosen its rules on banking secrecy. The country has been trying to shed its image as a tax haven, signing deals with the U.S., Germany and Britain to provide greater assistance to foreign tax authorities seeking information on their citizens' accounts.

Ermotti has called Switzerland's tax disputes with the U.S. and some European nations "an economic war" putting thousands of jobs at risk.

In September 2011, UBS revealed that unauthorized trades in London by a 32-year-old employee, Kweku Adoboli, had cost it more than \$2 billion, the biggest ever fraud at a bank in Britain.

Britain's financial regulator fined UBS, saying its internal controls were inadequate to prevent Adoboli, a relatively inexperienced trader, from making vast and risky bets. Adoboli has been sentenced to seven years in prison.

Park Geun-hye wins South Korea's presidential election

Park Geun-hye spent part of her childhood in South Korea's presidential palace, raised by an auto-

HIGGS BOSON

discovery biggest scientific breakthrough of 2012

The capture of the most wanted sub-atomic particle in physics - Higgs boson - has topped the chart of the year's ten biggest scientific breakthroughs. Scientists had been chasing the Higgs boson, nicknamed the 'God particle' for more than four decades. In July the team from the European nuclear research facility at CERN in Geneva announced the detection of a particle that fitted the description of the elusive Higgs. The boson is believed to give matter mass via an associated 'Higgs field' that permeates space. Without the property of mass, the universe we live in could not exist.

Scientists used the world's biggest atom smashing machine, the Large Hadron Collider on the Swiss-French border, to track down the missing particle.

Finding the Higgs topped the list of most important discoveries of 2012 released by Science, a prestigious scientific journal, the 'Daily Mail' reported.

"Mass must somehow emerge from interactions of the otherwise mass-less particles themselves. That's where the Higgs comes in," Science news journalist Adrian Cho, who wrote about the discovery in the journal's latest issue, said.

Nine other pioneering achievements from 2012 which made it to the list included sequencing of the DNA blueprint of the Denisovans, an extinct species of human that lived alongside Neanderthals and the ancestors of people living today. Japanese researchers showing that embryonic stem cells from mice could be coaxed into becoming viable egg cells was hailed as another breakthrough.

Curiosity rover's Landing System was also an achievement for the scientific world as mission engineers at the American space agency NASA safely and precisely placed the Curiosity rover on the surface of Mars. In another advance, researchers used an X-ray laser, which shines a billion times brighter than traditional synchrotron sources, to determine the structure of an enzyme required by the parasite that causes African sleeping sickness.

In 2012, scientists using a tool known as TALENs, which stands for 'transcription activator-like effector nucleases', altered or inactivated specific genes in animals such as zebra fish and toads, and cells from patients with disease.

A team from Netherlands gave solid evidence of the existence of Majorana fermions, particles that act as their own antimatter and annihilate themselves.

A decade-long study reported this year revealed that the human genetic code is more functional than researchers had believed while another team showed that paralysed human patients could move a mechanical arm with their minds and perform complex movements in three dimensions. Researchers working on the Daya Bay Reactor Neutrino Experiment in China found the last part of the jigsaw describing how particles known as neutrinos morph from one strain or 'flavour' to another travelling at near-light speed.

cratic father who seized power in a military coup 51 years ago. She returns now as the democratically elected president of a nation concerned about its slowing economy and mounting social problems. With her narrow victory in Wednesday's election, Park, 60, becomes an unlikely leader: She's the first female president in a nation dominated by men, and she's a conservative selected by voters to address their largely left-leaning wishes, including greater engagement with North Korea and a major expansion of government welfare spending.

She was also elected because she convinced South Korean voters that she could heal some of the scars of her father's 18-year rule - a period of hypercharged economic growth, but also one in which dissenters were tortured, jailed and sometimes killed.

Govt hikes Wheat MSP by Rs 65 a quintal

The government on Wednesday announced Rs 65 per quintal hike in the support price of wheat to Rs 1,350 per quintal and allowed additional exports of 2.5 million tonnes of wheat from its godowns to clear surplus stock and ease storage crunch. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved these two decisions in its meeting held in New Delhi.

The minimum support price of wheat has been increased by Rs 65 per quintal to Rs 1,350 per quintal, Finance Minister P Chidambaram told reporters after the meeting.

The CCEA had not fixed the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat while approving the MSPs of other rabi crops for 2012-13 crop year (July-June) in its meeting held in November. It had asked the CACP, government body that suggests farm pricing policy, to relook into the issue following differences between the Agriculture and Finance ministries. In its proposal, the Agriculture Ministry had suggested an increase of Rs 100 per quintal in wheat MSP.

The increase in wheat MSP would entice farmers to cover more area under crop. Till last week, farmers have sown wheat in 25.3 million hectare, marginally lower than 25.7 million hectare in the same period last year.

The CCEA also approved a proposal of the Food Ministry to allow export of an additional 2.5 million tonnes of wheat from the FCI godowns.

In June, the government had allowed export of 2 million tonnes of wheat from FCI godowns to clear surplus stocks. The entire quantity has been contracted for shipment and 1 million tonnes of it has already been exported.

This takes the total approval for wheat exports to 4.5 million tonnes.

Cabinet gives nod to new science policy

India is set to unveil its new science policy next week which lays greater thrust on innovation, establishing research institutes and participation in mega science projects with an aim to positioning itself among the top five scientific powers in the world by 2020. The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, on Wednesday approved the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy-2013. It will be released by the Prime Minister on January three at the inauguration session of the centenary edition of the Indian Science Congress in Kolkata.

"The proposed STI policy seeks to focus on both STI for people and people for STI," officials said. The document is a revision of the 2003 policy which sought to bring science and technology together and emphasised on the need for higher investment into Research and Development (R&D) to address national problems.

"The (STI) policy also seeks to trigger an ecosystem for innovative abilities to flourish by leveraging partnerships among diverse stakeholders and by encouraging and facilitating enterprises to invest in innovations," the officials said.

The policy also aims at positioning India among the top five global scientific powers by 2020. The officials said the aim of the policy is to accelerate the pace of discovery, diffusion and delivery of science-led solutions for serving the aspirational goals of India for faster, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The key features of the STI Policy, 2013 include making careers in science, research and innovation attractive and establishing world-class infrastructure for R&D for gaining global leadership in some select frontier areas of science.

The policy also includes linking contributions of science, research and innovation system with the inclusive economic growth agenda and combining priorities of excellence and relevance. It stresses on creating an environment for enhanced private sector participation in R&D, enabling conversion of R&D outputs into societal and commercial applications by replicating successful models as well as establishing of new public-private partnership structures.

The officials said the policy would strengthen the R&D base of the country through proper funding, development and utilisation of technologies, building entrepreneurship, mounting mission mode initiatives and rejuvenating research in universities.

Narendra Modi sworn in as Gujarat CM for fourth term

In Gujarat, Narendra Modi was today sworn-in as the Chief Minister for the fourth consecutive term. Governor Dr. Kamla Beniwal administered the oath of office and secrecy to him at Sardar Patel Stadium at Ahmedabad. Seven cabinet Ministers and nine Ministers of State also took oath in today's ceremony. Cabinet Ministers, who took oath along with Chief Minister Narendra Modi include Anandiben Patel, Saurabh Patel, Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, Ramanlal Vora, Nitin Patel, Babu Bokhriya and Ganpat Vasava. Minister of State who took oath in today's ceremony are Vasuben Trivedi, Pradipsinh Jadeja, Parbat Patel, Nanu Vanani, Rajanikant Patel, Liladhar Waghela, Govind Patel, Jayanti Kavadiya and Parsottam Solanki.

The top BJP leaders, including L K Advani, Nitin Gadkari, Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj, Rajnath Singh and Venkaiah Naidu were present for the swearing-in ceremony. Chief Ministers of other BJP-ruled states and some non-BJP ruled states were also present. Jayalalithaa was among the non-BJP Chief

Ministers who attended the ceremony.

Largest Kuchipudi dance performance in H'bad enters Guinness book

In Hyderabad, a performance by 5,974 Kuchipudi dancers has found its way into the Guinness Book of World Records for being the largest Kuchipudi dance. The artists of different ages performed to different songs at a time to set the record as part of the 3rd International Kuchipudi Dance Convention in Hyderabad last night. The event was organised by Silicon Andhra, a cultural organisation run by US-based Telugus, at the GMC Balayogi stadium. A representative of the Guinness Book, who observed the event said it was the largest Kuchipudi dance. Union Minister D Purandeswari, who was present on the occasion, appreciated the efforts of the organisers and the dancers.

Shreyasi, Sushma win Gold in National Shooting Championship

Shreyasi Singh and Sushma Singh have won gold medals in the 56th National Shooting Championship being played in New Delhi. Shreyasi of Bihar shot 88 in women's double trap for the coveted medal. Sushma from Uttarakhand won the gold medal in sports pistol event after she shot 580 + 200.

In Men's section, Sushil Ghaley clinched the yellow metal in rifle prone. Rakesh Manpat of Karnataka took the silver while the bronze went to Navy's Sanjeev Rajput.

In women's double trap, there was a tie for the second position between Seema Tomar and Varsha Tomar of Army after both scored 83. But Seema prevailed over her rival in the tie shoot.

In women's sports pistol event, Rahi Sarnobat of Maharashtra bagged the silver. The bronze went to Annuraj Singh.

In women's air rifle event, Apurvi Chandel of Rajasthan won the gold medal. Pooja Ghatkar of Maharashtra clinched the silver. The bronze went to Pournima Chinmoy of Madhya Pradesh.

In the air rifle junior women's event, Nikita Salunke of Maharashtra won the gold. She was followed by Chandel of Rajasthan for the Silver, while the bronze went to Mampi Das of West Bengal.

In the double trap men's event, two rounds were completed yesterday and Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore of Army was leading with 96. He was followed by Mohd Asab of UP 95 shots.

India, Russia seal new defence deals worth USD 4 bn; inks 10 pacts

India has inked deals worth around Rs 22,000 crore with Russia to procure 42 new Su-30 MKI combat aircraft and 71 Mi-17V5 medium-lift helicopters. "Russia is a key partner in our efforts to modernise our armed forces and enhance our defence preparedness. A number of joint design, development and production projects are underway in high technology areas. We expressed satisfaction that these projects are progressing well," the Prime Minister said.

The contracts for acquiring these weapon systems were signed during the 13th India-Russia Annual Summit after talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi.

At the Summit meeting on Monday, a joint venture agreement was also inked between Elcom Systems Private Ltd. and DAO "Vertoleti Rassi" (JSC "Helicopters Russia"), which aims to set up a modern industrial facility for manufacturing Russian Mi and Kamov choppers in India. These multi-role frontline aircraft could also be equipped with Indo-Russian joint venture BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles.

Addressing media after signing of agreements, the Prime Minister said that the development of Indo-Russia nuclear energy programme has been a key pillar of strategic partnership between the two countries.

"The development of our nuclear energy programme has been a key pillar of our strategic partnership," the Prime Minister said while noting that construction of Unit 1 of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project was now complete, and power generation will commence shortly.

Egyptian voters approve new constitution drafted by Islamists

Egyptian voters have overwhelmingly approved a new Constitution drafted by President Mohamed Mursi and his Islamist allies, triggering fresh protests from the mostly secular opposition which claims the charter ignores the rights of minorities. Announcing the final results of the referendum on the new Constitution live on Tuesday night, the High Judicial Elections Commission said nearly two-thirds of voters have supported the proposed charter.

Sixty-three per cent of voters cast "Yes" ballots in two stages, giving Islamists their third straight victory at the polls since Hosni Mubarak was toppled in a 2011 revolution.

Samir Abul Maati, head of the commission, said that out of 51,919,067 eligible voters, 17,058,317 cast their ballots, equalling a turnout of 32.9 per cent.

A total of 10,693,911 voted in favour of the Constitution, while 661,101 or 36.2 per cent said "no." Invalid ballots totalled 303,395, a newspaper reported.

The draft Constitution was put to a referendum over two stages, with 10 governorates voting on 15th December and the remaining 17 voting a week later.

The Commission said it has thoroughly reviewed all the complaints it received on violations, adding the referendum was held under full judicial supervision at all polling stations since the electoral system prohibits non-judicial officials from overseeing the process, the paper said.

Soon after the results were declared, protests broke out in several parts of the Egyptian capital, with protesters halting traffic and setting tires ablaze.

Major General Hassan el-Bardesy, head of the Cairo Traffic Department, said that protesters numbered around 150 and that arrangements for alternative routes were made.

Prime Minister Hisham Qandil later congratulated the Egyptian people on the new Constitution, saying that the people are the winners and there are no losers.

Indian I-League football Club Mohun Bagan banned for Two Years

Iconic football club Mohun Bagan was on Saturday handed a two-year ban from the I-League by the All India Football Federation for abandoning the violence-marred derby match against East Bengal on December 9. The decision was taken by the I-League Core Committee, which also declared all of club's matches in the "I-League Competition 2012-2013 cancelled and considered null and void."

I-League football club Mohun Bagan on 29 December 2012 slapped with a two-year suspension by the All India Football Federation (AIFF) for abandoning their violence-marred I-League match against East Bengal on 9 December 2012. As per the AIFF's Statement Mohun Bagan had breached Regulation 22, the 123-year-old club, had been withdrawn from the current I-League season, with all its past and future matches in the 2012/13 null and void. In effect, this season will have 13 teams now. The I-League Core Committee of All India Football Federation (AIFF) received the detailed Report dated 26th December 2012 of the Justice A K Ganguly relating to I-League Match No. 68 between Kingfisher East Bengal (KEB) and McDowell Mohun Bagan (MMB) played at Yuba Bharati Stadium, Salt Lake City Kolkata on 9 December 2012.

Justice Ganguly in his report has concluded that the decision of MMB for not playing the match after the interval cannot be supported on the grounds of Force Majeure and accordingly MMB has breached Regulation 22 of the I-League Regulation 2012-2013.

The I-League core committee is going to meet on 9 January 2013 to decide if the quantum of punishment on Mohun Bagan is enough or if additional fine and suspension were needed.

About Mohun Bagan Football Club

- Founded in 1889, Mohun Bagan is the oldest football club in India.
- It is the first Indian club to win the IFA Shield final, in 1911, beating East Yorkshire Regiment.
- It have won the erstwhile National Football League thrice — in 1997-98, 1999-2000, 2001-02 — and their best performance in the re-christened I-League has been a runner-up finish in 2008-09.

Bihar became the Fastest Growing Indian State between 2006 and 2010

As per the data released by the Planning Commission of India, Bihar became the fastest growing state in India at 10.9 per cent between 2006 and 2010 while Gujarat's growth rate declined to 9.3 per cent and it lagged behind Bihar and other four states- Orissa, Maharashtra, Haryana, Chhattisgarh in terms of growth rate. Bihar was the slowest growing state during 2001-05 period with GDP figure of 2.9 percent whereas Gujarat was the fastest growing state between 2001 and 2005 with figure of 11 percent.

Chhattisgarh grew from 7.7 per cent in 2001-05 to 10 per cent growth between 2006 and 2010 while Haryana grew from 8.4 per cent to 9.7 per cent, Maharashtra from 8.2 per cent to 9.6 per cent and Orissa from 7.8 per cent to 9.4 per cent between 2006 and 2010.

The period between 2004-05 and 2011-12 registered an average increase of 300 per cent in consumption in rural areas, minimizing the gap between rural and urban area thus highlighting the inclusive growth.

Courts must ensure speedy trial in rape cases: SC

Rape trials must end within two months as stipulated under law, the Supreme Court has said directing trial courts to "strictly adhere" to existing norms while asking them to rule out the possibility of "manoeuvring" through undue long adjournments. A bench of justices Swatanter Kumar and Fakkir Mohammed Ibrahim Kalifulla gave their judgement on December 6, 10 days before the Delhi gangrape which triggered nation-wide outrage with strong demands for fast-tracking of rape cases. The apex court's verdict came while dismissing the appeal of a man convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for the offences of murder and robbery.

The convict, Akil, along with two others in October 1998 while robbing a woman of her cash and jewellery at gunpoint inside her home at Maujpur here had shot her friend when he had objected to the accused's attempt to molest her.

"We issue directions in light of the provisions contained in section 231 (evidence for prosecution) read along with section 309 (power to postpone or adjourn proceedings) of CrPC for the trial court to strictly adhere to the procedure prescribed therein in order to ensure speedy trial of cases. "And also rule out the possibility of any manoeuvring taking place by granting undue long adjournments for mere asking," the bench said in its 37-page judgement.

Section 309 of the CrPC provides that in every inquiry or trial the proceedings should be held as expeditiously as possible and once the examination of witnesses begins the same shall be continued on a day-to-day basis till all the witnesses are examined.

The apex court also noted that in cases that come under section 376 (rape) and related offences under sections 376 A to D of the IPC, the CrPC stipulates that "the inquiry or trial shall, as far as possible, be completed within a period of two months from the date of commencement of the examination of witnesses."

The apex court made the observations in the case after it found that the trial court had granted a two-month-long adjournment in the case after which one of the witnesses had turned hostile during his cross-examination.

The bench cautioned the trial court against granting long adjournments. "We wish to issue a note of caution to the trial court dealing with sessions case to ensure that there are well settled procedures laid down under the CrPC as regards the manner in which the trial should be conducted in sessions cases in order to ensure dispensation of justice without providing any scope for unscrupulous elements to meddle with the course of justice to achieve some unlawful advantage," it said.

The apex court referred to one of its earlier decisions when it had asked all the high courts "to remind all the trial judges of the need to comply with section 309 of the Code in letter and spirit. In fact, the high courts were directed to take note of the conduct of any particular trial judge who violates the above legislative mandate and to adopt such administrative action against the delinquent judicial officer as per the law."

The court went on to add that it was "unfortunate" that despite specific directions by it, "such recalcitrant approach was being made by the trial court unmindful of the adverse serious consequences affecting the society at large flowing therefrom." "Therefore, even while disposing of this appeal by confirming the conviction and sentence imposed on appellant by trial judge and confirmed by the impugned judgement of September 2005 of the high court, we direct the registry to forward a copy of this decision to all the high courts. "...to specifically follow the instructions issued by this court, to ensure that such directions are scrupulously followed by the trial courts without providing scope for any deviation in following the procedure prescribed in the matter of a trial of sessions cases as well as other cases as provided under Section 309 of CrPC," the court said.

The apex court also referred to a 1987 circular of the Delhi High Court which said that whenever more than three months have elapsed between the date of arrest and close of trial, an explanation on the cause of delay shall be forthcoming in the judgement.

Novak Djokovic won World Tennis Championships in Abu Dhabi

Novak Djokovic on 29 December 2012 won World Tennis Championship final against Spanish tennis player Nicolas Almagro.

Novak Djokovic beat Nicolas Almagro to clinch the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition tournament held in Dubai. Novak Djokovic, the world number one from Serbia beat Nicolas Almagro the Spaniard by 6-7 (4-7) 6-3 6-4 to get his season off to the perfect start.

Also, Spain's David Ferrer defeated Janko Tipsarevic of Serbia 7-6 (7-4) 6-2 to take third place in Abu Dhabi.

All the four players are going to compete in the Australian Open which is meant to be started in Melbourne on 14 January 2013 with Serbia's Djokovic the defending champion.

Novak Djokovic beat world number five Ferrer in straight sets to book his place in the final, while Almagro, a late replacement for the injured Rafael Nadal, fought back from a set down to beat Janko Tipsarevic.

Australian Cricketer Michael Hussey Announced Retirement from Test Cricket

Australian veteran Michael Hussey on 29 December 2012 announced that he would retire from Test cricket after playing the final match of the series against Sri Lanka at Sydney starting on 3 January 2012. Sydney Test match is going to be the 79th and final Test in 37-year-old Hussey's career having made his debut at 30.

However Hussey will continue playing the ODI tri-series involving Australia, West Indies and Sri Lanka which will be his last international assignment.

Michael Hussey, the senior left-hand batsman who is Known as Mr Cricket for his consistency, had a successful year 2012 with four centuries and has been in great scoring form this summer season against South Africa and Sri Lanka.

A Brief insight into Hussey's Career

- Hussey made his Test debut at the age of 30 in the Gabba cricket ground of Brisbane on 3 November 2005, as a replacement for fellow Western Australian batsman Justin Langer in the Australia vs. West Indies series.
- Hussey has till now played 78 Tests scoring 6183 runs including 19 centuries and 29 half centuries at an impressive average of 51.52.
- Hussey who is also the Australia's 393rd Test Captain had a fantastic ODI record having scored 5442 runs in 185 ODIs with three hundreds and 39 half-centuries at an average of 48.15.
- He was a member of the victorious 2007 ICC World Cup squad. He also played 38 T20 Internationals.
- He had played in the Indian Premier League (IPL) for the Chennai Super Kings, although he opted out of the 2009 season. He was retained by Chennai Super Kings in the 2011–2012 season of Indian Premier League for 425000 dollars.

4th World Telgu Conference Inaugurated by President Pranab Mukherjee in Tirupati

President Pranab Mukherjee on 27 December 2012 declared open the 4th World Telugu Conference in the presence of thousands of Telugu-speaking people from across the world in the temple town of Tirupati of Andhra Pradesh. Marking the occasion President released Teluguvani Charitra, a coffee table book brought out by EMESCO and another on gold coins of Srivari Hundi on Tirumala, while Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan released Teluguvani, another book. The event was also marked with the felicitation of 14 eminent Telugus.

People were asked to pass on the rich Telugu culture, heritage and tradition to the next generation with a resolve to preserve and promote the honey-laced aura of the language. The inaugural also saw the laying of a foundation stone for an international convention centre.

The deliberations of the three-day conference should come out with recommendations on preserving and promoting the language.

The purpose behind the conference is to give a new dimension and vision for the upkeep of Telugu, tracing its history and while naming prominent persons and their contributions and various literary movements.

President Mukherjee also praised Telugu and recalled its antiquity dating to 1,500 and 1,000 years BC and the contribution of poets - from Nannayya to Viswanatha and its golden age during the 11th and 17th centuries.

The President earlier honoured 14 distinguished Telugu personalities from all over the world and laid the foundation-stone for construction of an international convention centre at Tirupati.

Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy announced that a separate ministry would be created in the Secretariat for protection and promotion of Telugu, and with this telgu is going to be introduced as a medium of instruction in primary education up to Class X. Also the Sangitha, Nataka, Lalitha, Sahitya and Rangasthala akademis would be revived.

World Telugu Conference is held for promotion of Telugu language. Literary exemplary personalities attend and share their views on spreading and preserving the rich language.

First World Telgu Conference was held in Hyderabad in year 1975. It was the then Minister of Education, Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao instrumental in starting it. Eminent singer M. S. Ramaroo made his debut at the conference. It was also attended by Sarkarambadi Sundarachari, who penned the anthem Maa Telugu Thaliki, and the actor-singer Tanguturi Suryakumari.

Oriya Novelist and Academician Pratibha Ray selected for 2011 Jnanpith Award

Renowned Oriya novelist, Pratibha Ray on 27 December 2012 selected for the prestigious Jnanpith award for the year 2011 for her contribution to the field of Indian literature. Pratibha Ray is the first Oriya woman and fourth Oriya writer to get the coveted award. Earlier Gopinath Mohanty (1973), Sachidananda Routray (1986) and Sitakant Mohapatra (1993) were conferred the honour.

The award carries a cash prize of 7 lakh rupees, a citation and a bronze statuette of Godess Saraswati.

- Pratibha Ray was born in Alabol, a village in Jagatsingpur district of Odisha.
- Ray's literary journey started at nine, she received recognition as a writer with her first novel Barsa Basanta Baishakha in 1974 followed by Aranya, 1977, Nishidha Prithivi, 1978, Parichya, 1979, Aparichita, 1979 (a film was made and won Best Film-Story award from the state government), Punyatoya, 1979, Meghamedura, 1980, Ashabari, 1980, Ayamarambha, 1981, Nilatrishna, 1981, Samudrara Swara, 1982.
- Ray's Shilapadma in 1983 won her the Orissa Sahitya Academy Award, 1985, while Yajnaseeni (1984) got her the Moorti Devi Award in 1991 and Sarala Award in 1990.
- Ray has 20 novels, 24 short stories, 10 travelogues, two poetry collections and a number of essays to her credit.
- Ray's writings have been translated into English, other foreign languages as also a number of other Indian languages.
- Other renowned works of the eminent writer include Yjnaseeni (1985), which won Jnanpith Trust's Moorti Devi Award in 1991, Mahamoh (1997), Shilapadma (1983), Uttarmarg (1988), Magnamari (2003), among others.

She described Odisha's first Jnanpith awardee (1973) Gopinath Mohanty as her role model and favourite among Oriya novelists.

Pratibha Ray is one of the most widely read Oriya novelists and short story writers. Her novels and stories are deeply and persuasively grounded in the great tradition of story-telling.

Astronomers Claimed Rare Supercomet Would Outshine Moon in 2013

Astronomers claimed that a rare supercomet called C/2012 S1 (ISON) was moving towards the Sun from outer solar system. This supercomet would outshine Moon in November 2013. C/2012 S1 (ISON) was first noticed in September 2012.

The comet would be closest to the Sun in November 2013. The comet would be as good as Hale-Bopp, a comet which appeared in 1997. Hale-Bopp is the most widely noticed comet of 20th cen-

tury. It is also the brightest comet observed in various decades. ISON on the other hand would be making its first voyage in the solar system. Astronomers believe that this comet might also contain certain volatile gases which are not found in other comets. Astronomers also hope that this would help them get a peep into the materials of the outer solar system.

Additionally, the year would also witness celestial fireworks having various flavours because of the gas cloud which has three times the mass of Earth, heading in the direction of calm supermassive black hole which sits in the heart of our galaxy. This collision would not be visible with naked eyes. However, the X-ray telescopes will be able to catch the radiations from shock wave which would be created as the cloud hits into aura of hot gases which surround the hole.

Because this black hole called Sagittarius A is just 25000 light years far from Earth, therefore the crash would offer a unique view of various materials getting into the black hole. This might also provide a hint about what had happened 300 years back when this black hole was brighter than present.

Spaceplane Successfully Completed Flight Test; Moved a Step Closer to Space Tourism

The spaceplane constructed by Richard Branson's spaceflight company called Virgin Galactic successfully completed the important flight test which would be able to carry the people to space.

SpaceShipTwo, the spaceplane was piloted to soft runway touchdown after high-altitude release from WhiteKnightTwo mothership, which eventually enabled it to score successful test drop. It additionally also checked off various milestones at Mojave Air and Space Port in California.

George Whitesides, CEO and president of Virgin Galactic declared that the test flight made them closer to first powered flight.

The spaceplane called SpaceShipTwo is the hybrid motor-powered plane which is designed for carrying six passengers as well as two pilots. The spaceplane would carry these passengers to edge of the space without completing the full orbit of Earth. The price of spaceplane per seat is 200000 dollar. Commercial operations would be carried out in America at New Mexico's Spaceport.

Central African Republic rebels advance on Bangui

Rebels in the Central African Republic have made fresh gains and are now in control of a key central city, officials say. Forces from the Seleka rebel alliance have entered the town of Sibut after the army withdrew on Friday evening. Meanwhile government officials have confirmed that their forces' attempt to retake Bambari on Friday had been beaten back. Rebel forces are now within 150km (95 miles) of the capital, Bangui.



President Francois Bozize has appealed to France, the United States and neighbouring countries for help to combat Seleka - an alliance of three separate groups who want the terms of an earlier peace deal to be honoured.

France and the US have refused, though more French troops arrived in Bangui from a base in Gabon, tasked with protecting French nationals and interests. More than 1,000 French nationals live in CAR, mainly working for mining companies.

Officials from a regional grouping, Eccas (the Economic Community of Central African States), said on Friday that more troops from the Central African Multinational Force (Fomac) would be sent to CAR. But no firm timetable for that deployment has yet be given, nor has a date been set for talks between the government and the rebels.

Speaking after Friday's meeting in Libreville, the Foreign Minister of Gabon, Emmanuel Isoze Ngondet said: ""We are thinking of a way to deploy this mission as quickly as possible".

More than 500 soldiers from Fomac are already in CAR. Troops from Chad had been stationed at Sibut but withdrew along with the government forces.

Rapid gains by the Seleka rebels have raised fears that CAR's capital Bangui could fall within days. Seleka accuses Mr Bozize of failing to honour a 2007 peace deal under which fighters who laid down their arms were meant to be paid.

The rebels have pledged to depose Mr Bozize unless he negotiates with them.

They began their campaign a month ago and have taken several towns and the diamond centre of Bria in their push towards the capital.

In Bangui, residents report sharp rises in staple foods as the rebels draw closer.

The price of the food staple, cassava, has risen by more than a quarter in recent days.

Britain's New Year Honours List

Bradley Wiggins and Dave Brailsford have been awarded knighthoods in the New Years Honours List, published today, while Sarah Storey becomes a Dame, the female equivalent of a knight. The trio are among five people connected with London 2012 to be so honoured, the others being sailor Ben Ainslie and David Tanner, performance director of British Rowing. The fact that five such honours have been awarded this year - a quota system usually means that just one person from the world of sport is made a knight or a dame - reflects not only the impact on the national consciousness this year of Great Britain's success at London 2012, but also the fact that awards at this level aren't made to reflect a solitary performance, but rather reflect years of dedication.



Wiggins' time trial victory in London, which came ten days after he became the first British rider to win the Tour de France, is the fourth Olympic gold medal of his career, the first coming in Athens eight years ago.

In a decade as performance director at British Cycling, Brailsford has overseen Team GB's dominance on the track at the last two Olympics, as well as being the architect of Team Sky's success.

Storey, who won four gold medals in London, now has 11 career Paralympic golds, the first five in the swimming pool and dating back to Barcelona in 1992. Being named as a Dame ushers in what was already set to be a momentous year for her and husband Barney - the couple are expecting a baby.

Victoria Pendleton, winner of the keirin in London and already an MBE, is awarded a CBE, while British Cycling's golden couple, Jason Kenny and Laura Trott, who won two gold medals apiece in London this summer and subsequently revealed they were dating, are both made OBEs.

Kenny, who was part of the gold medal winning team sprint trio along with Sir Chris Hoy and Philip

Hindes, and who also won the individual sprint, was already an MBE, awarded, like Pendleton's, after the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

MBEs go to Paralympic champions Mark Colbourne and Neil Fachie, tandem pilot Craig MacLean and Olympic gold medal winners Hindes, Stephen Burke, Peter Kennaugh, Dani King and Joanna Rowsell.

Other cycling gold medal winners this summer such as Geraint Thomas and Ed Clancy, who rode in the team pursuit with Kennaugh and Burke, had already been awarded MBEs after winning their first gold medals four years ago.

Speaking of his knighthood, Brailsford told the Team Sky website: "On the one hand you feel proud and honoured but on the other it feels quite humbling. I think more than anything else it's recognition for everything that has happened in cycling, not just for this year, but over a period of time and the development of the sport. I'm the lucky one that gets recognised.

"I'm just an orchestra conductor and I am only ever going to be as good as the people playing the instruments by making sure they are all coordinated. I am very reliant on being able to recruit and develop the best people in given areas and I think I have been very lucky in having some absolutely brilliant people who have worked with me. "But more than anything it's bike riders that win races and gold medals and I have been incredibly lucky to have such a talented bunch of riders come through the system in the last few years and I think they are the ones that deserve the credit.

"After a year like this my ambitions are sky high and I'm still very hungry. I get up in the morning and think about how we can better and I've got a group of people around me who think all the time about continuous improvement. That is quite contagious and once that ball starts rolling it's very difficult to stop it."

Wiggins, who said earlier this year that he would be reluctant to accept a knighthood but would do so because his grandmother told him that his late grandfather would have wanted him to do so, added: "It's an incredible honour and an incredible thing to have.

"[Sir] is not something I would like to use in daily life because it would still sit uneasy with me. The only thing I have insisted on is that my wife and children call me Sir at home but other than that everyone is free to call me Bradley!

"The goal this year was to win the Tour de France and the Olympic Games and we did that. I think it's everything else that has happened since then, which have not been the biggest achievements but the most rewarding - things like Sports Personality and the Knighthood - because those things are out of your hands. So to be awarded those is humbling."

Storey, whose 11 Paralympic gold medals puts her level with Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson as Great Britain's most successful female Paralympian - although the swimmer turned cyclist has 22 medals in total against the former wheelchair athlete's 16 - said: "Wow, I am speechless but incredibly honoured and extremely proud to be able to accept this.

"I never expected any additional awards after my sporting success, I love competing for my country and that is a huge honour in itself.

"Now to be a Dame is beyond anything I could have ever imagined and I cannot thank my family, friends, coaches and support staff over all the years enough for their devotion in helping me to follow the path of becoming the best athlete I can possibly be."

British Cycling president Brian Cookson commented: "This is a fitting end to a phenomenal year for us. Dave, Bradley and Sarah's outstanding achievements this year have made us all proud to be British and have shone a spotlight on our sport, inspiring hundreds of thousands of people to take up cycling.

"Cycling is the sport that has redefined our national sporting identity this year and it is fantastic to see this recognised in the New Year Honours list. On behalf of all their colleagues and fellow members of British Cycling, I warmly congratulate all three on achieving this highest of all national honours."

Putin signs Dima Yakovlev Bill

President Putin has signed into law the Dima Yakovlev Bill banning US citizens from adopting Russian-born children, the Kremlin announced Friday. The bill is named for a two-year-old Russian boy who suffocated to death in 2008 when his US adoptive father left him shut in a sweltering car. The President's signature means that the law comes into effect January the 1st 2013, which may annul the dozens of adoptions by prospective US parents that are already being processed. The bill is being widely seen inside and outside Russia as retaliation for the so-called Magnitsky Act introduced in the US, targeting Russian officials the US believe may be implicated in the death of lawyer Sergey Magnitsky.



Also Friday, it was reported that a Moscow court has acquitted the deputy chief of the capital's Butyrka prison, Dmitry Kratov, the only person charged in Magnitsky's 2009 death. Kratov was accused of negligence leading to the Capital Hermitage attorney's death while in the intensive care unit of Moscow's Matrosskaya Tishina prison.

Lawyers representing the victim's relatives are seeking further inquiry into the case. The court decided that the investigation had failed to prove the relationship between the defendant's actions and the death of the lawyer. But Magnitsky's family said they would appeal against the sentence. Earlier, VoR spoke with political commentator Dmitry Babich about the implications of the Dima Yakovlev Bill.

President Aquino signs RH bill into law

President Benigno Aquino III signed into law Republic Act No. 10354 or the "Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012" Friday last week, December 21, according to a copy obtained by Rappler. It was signed without fanfare, confirmed House Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II on Friday, December 28.

On Saturday, December 29, Malacañang issued a statement saying:

"The passage into law of the Responsible Parenthood Act closes a highly divisive chapter of our history—a chapter borne of the convictions of those who argued for, or against this Act, whether in the legislative branch or in civil society. At the same time, it opens the possibility of cooperation and reconciliation among different sectors in society: engagement and dialogue characterized not by animosity, but by our collective desire to better the welfare of the Filipino people. This is the mark of a true democracy: one in which debate that spans all levels of society is spurred by deeply-held beliefs and values, enriching and elevating public discourse, as we all work together to find ways to improve the lives of our fellow citizens."

Landmark legislation

The RH law provides universal access to reproductive health care services and information, which do not prevent the implantation of a fertilized ovum as determined by the Food and Drug Administration. It prioritizes poorer households as identified by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction.

In contrast to the intensity of debates that surrounded the divisive measure, Aquino signed the law without much fanfare. He chose to do away with formal ceremonies usually held when a landmark bill is signed.

The law, which provides access to contraceptives as a family planning method, was met with strong opposition from the Catholic Church. In the weeks leading to the RH law's passage, bishops were among those who watched legislative proceedings from the House gallery.

The RH law was signed on the same day as RA 10353 or the Anti-Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance Act of 2012. Albay Rep Edcel Lagman is the principal author of both measures.

Lagman earlier said the enactment of the RH bill into a law will be the greatest gift of the govern-

ment to Filipinos this Christmas season.

"The enactment this Yuletide season of the RH bill, which will save countless lives of women and children and assure their better future, is truly symbolic because millennia ago Jesus Christ was born in a manger to save the world," Lagman said.

The House and the Senate approved the measure on 3rd and final reading on December 17 and ratified its final version on December 19 - the last day of session for 2012 - after Aquino gave the RH bill a final push by certifying it as urgent.

Japanese 115-Year-Old Becomes Oldest Man in History

Jiroemon Kimura, a 115-year-old Japanese man born when Queen Victoria still reigned over the British Empire, became the oldest man in recorded history today, Guinness World Records said. Kimura, of Kyotango, western Japan, was born April 19, 1897, in the 30th year of the Meiji era, according to London-based Guinness. That makes him 115 years and 253 days as of today, breaking the longevity record for men held by Christian Mortensen of California, who died in 1998 at the age of 115 years and 252 days. The oldest woman in recorded history, Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, died in 1997 at the age of 122. "He has an amazingly strong will to live," Kimura's nephew Tamotsu Miyake, 80, said in an interview. "He is strongly confident that he lives right and well."

Kimura is among 22 Japanese people on a list of the world's 64 oldest people compiled by the Los Angeles-based Gerontology Research Group, highlighting the challenges facing Japan as its population ages. A combination of the world's highest life expectancy, the world's second-largest public debt and a below-replacement birthrate is straining the nation's pension system, prompting the government to curb payouts, raise contributions and delay the age of eligibility. Japan's average life expectancy at birth is 83 years, a figure projected to exceed 90 for women by 2050. The number of Japanese centenarians rose 7.6 percent from a year earlier to 51,376 as of September, and there are 40 centenarians per 100,000 people in the country, which has the world's highest proportion of elderly, according to Japan's health ministry.

Oldest Living Person

Kimura became the world's oldest currently living person on Dec. 17, when 115-year-old Dina Manfredini of Iowa died, according to Guinness and the Gerontology Research Group. Manfredini was born 15 days before Kimura. Kimura was in a hospital this morning, Yasuhiro Kawato, head of the section for elderly welfare at Kyotango's city hall, said by phone. "His condition has improved, and we're not worried, but the doctors said it would be best if he stayed in the hospital into the new year," Kawato said.

The world's second-oldest living person, Japanese woman Koto Okubo, turned 115 on Dec. 24.

Kimura is only the third man in history to reach 115 years of age, Guinness said in a statement today. He's one of just four male supercentenarians, or people aged 110 or more, currently known to be alive, the organization said.

'Exceptional Person'

"To be able to present Mr. Kimura his second Guinness World Records title is truly an honor," Guinness Editor-in-Chief Craig Glenday said in the statement. "Kimura-san is an exceptional person."

Kimura lives with his grandson's widow, Eiko Kimura, in a two-story wooden house he built in the 1960s. Eiko wakes him up every day at 7:30 a.m. and takes him by wheelchair to a dining room for breakfast consisting of porridge and miso soup with potatoes and vegetables. He has never suffered from serious diseases, can communicate and spends most of his time in bed, Eiko said.

"Grandpa is positive and optimistic," she said. "He becomes cheerful when he has guests. He's well with a good appetite. Even when he falls ill, I can tell he'll recover."

Sino-Japanese War

Kimura, the third of six children, was born as Kinjiro Miyake in Kamiukawa, a fishing and farming village sandwiched between the mountains and the Sea of Japan. His parents, Morizo and Fusa Miyake, were farmers who grew rice and vegetables.

Only two years earlier, Japan's success in the First Sino-Japanese War had established the nation as the dominant power in East Asia. Less than a year after Kimura was born, the sinking of the U.S. battleship Maine in Havana Harbor would trigger the Spanish-American War.

According to Kimura's nephew Tamotsu, the 115-year-old's birthday is actually March 19. Records say he was born April 19 because an official misprinted the month when records from merging towns were consolidated in 1955, the nephew said.

After finishing school at the age of 14 as the second-best student in his class, Kimura worked at local post offices for 45 years until his retirement in 1962 at the age of 65. He also worked at a government communication unit in Korea in the 1920s, when the peninsula was under Japanese rule, and returned to marry his neighbor Yae Kimura.

Disciplined, Serious

As his wife's family didn't have a male heir, he changed his name to Jiroemon Kimura, making him the ninth person in the family to bear the name. Since retiring, he has enjoyed reading newspapers and watching sumo wrestling on television. He sometimes helped his son farm until he was about 90 years old, Eiko Kimura said.

Kimura was a disciplined, serious man when he was younger, Miyake said. Even when he drank with his brothers, he would sit straight and keep quiet, Miyake said.

His wife, Yae, died 34 years ago at the age of 74. Four of Kimura's five siblings lived to be more than 90 years old, and his youngest brother, Tetsuo, died at 100, Miyake said. Kimura's living descendants include five children, 14 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren and 13 great-great-grandchildren.

The U.S. has an estimated 80,000 centenarians, or about 25 per 100,000 people, according to researchers at the Okinawa Centenarian Study.

The mayor of Kyotango, a fishing center facing the Sea of Japan that's known for snow crabs and oysters, congratulated Kimura on the town's Facebook page. "Mr. Kimura, you are respected and adored as an example by our citizens aiming to make Kyotango a center of longevity and health," wrote Mayor Yasushi Nakayama.

Benazir Bhutto son Bilawal gives Pakistan political vow

The son of Pakistan's murdered ex-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has promised to fight militancy to maintain democracy, in his first major political speech. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari told party supporters marking five years since his mother's death that she "sacrificed her life to uphold democracy". Ms Bhutto died in a gun and bomb attack during her 2007 election campaign. Her son, whose father is President Asif Ali Zardari, has so far kept a low profile as party chairman.

In remarks carried by Pakistan state television, Mr Bhutto Zardari told a crowd of tens of thousands of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) supporters near his family's shrine in Sindh province that the people were "the source of power".



"The beacon of democracy continues to shine," he said, pledging that his party would fight militancy and extremism to create a peaceful, democratic Pakistan. The 24-year-old Oxford graduate has been PPP chairman since his mother's assassination, blamed on Taliban militants.

He cannot contest an election until his 25th birthday, which falls next September, some months after a parliamentary vote is due. It was the first time that Pakistanis had heard Mr Bhutto Zardari speak live on radio and TV and he drew heavily on his family's dynastic role at the heart of the country's politics.

"Bhutto is an emotion, a love," he was quoted as saying, adding that however many Bhuttos were killed, even more would emerge.

Over the next few months, Mr Bhutto Zardari is expected to play a bigger role in party politics, the BBC's Shahzeb Jillani reports from the event in the city of Larkana. But our correspondent says it will be a while before he emerges from the shadow of President Zardari, who will remain the de

YEAR END REVIEW 2012

January

January 23 – Iran–European Union relations: The European Union adopts an embargo against Iran in protest of that nation's continued effort to enrich uranium.

February

February 1 – At least 79 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured after a football match in Port Said, Egypt.

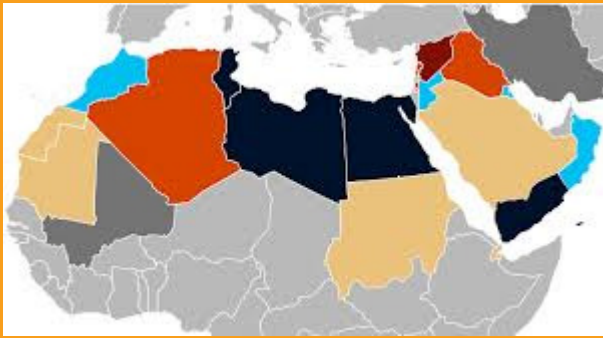
February 6 – The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II marks the 60th anniversary of her accession to the thrones of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the 60th anniversary of her becoming Head of the Commonwealth.

February 15 – A fire at a prison in Comayagua, Honduras kills 360.

February 19 – Iran suspends oil exports to Britain and France following sanctions put in place by the European Union and the United States in January.

February 21 – Greek government debt crisis: Eurozone finance ministers reach an agreement on a second, €130-billion Greek bailout.

February 27 – Arab Spring: As a result of ongoing protests, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh is succeeded by Vice President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi.



March

March 4 – A series of explosions are reported at a munitions dump in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, with at least 250 people dead.

March 13 – After 244 years since its first publication, the Encyclopædia Britannica discontinues its print edition.

March 22 – The President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, is ousted in a coup d'état after mutinous soldiers attack government offices.

April

April 6 – The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad unilaterally declares the independence of Azawad from Mali.

April 12 – Mutinous soldiers in Guinea-Bissau stage a coup d'état and take control of the capital city, Bissau. They arrest interim President Raimundo Pereira and leading presidential candidate Carlos Gomes Júnior in the midst of a presidential election campaign.

April 13 – Kwangmyongsong-3, a North Korean Earth observation satellite, explodes shortly after launch. The United States and other countries had called the impending launch a violation of United Nations Security Council demands. The launch was planned to mark the centenary of the birth of Kim Il-sung, the founder of the republic.

April 26 – Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is found guilty on 11 counts of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Sierra Leone Civil War.

May

May 2 – A pastel version of The Scream, by Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, sells for US\$120 million in a New York City auction, setting a new world record for an auctioned work of art.

May 12 – August 12 – The 2012 World Expo takes place in Yeosu, South Korea.

May 22 – Tokyo Skytree, the tallest self-supporting tower in the world at 634 metres high, is opened to public.

June

June 5–6 – The century's second and last solar transit of Venus occurs. The next pair are predicted to occur in 2117 and 2125.

June 24 - Shenzhou 9, a Chinese spacecraft carrying three Chinese astronauts, including the first-ever female one, docked manually with an orbiting module Tiangong 1, first time as the country, making them as the third country, after the United States and Russia, to successfully perform the mission.

Lonesome George, the last known individual of the Pinta Island Tortoise subspecies, dies at a Galapagos National Park, thus making the subspecies extinct.

July

July 4 – CERN announces the discovery of a new particle with properties consistent with the Higgs boson after experiments at the Large Hadron Collider.

July 27 – August 12 – The 2012 Summer Olympics are held in London, England, United Kingdom.

July 30–31 – In the worst power outage in world history, the 2012 India blackouts leave 620 million people without power.

August

August 6 – Curiosity, the Mars Science Laboratory mission's rover, successfully lands on Mars.

August 31 - Researchers successfully perform the first implantation of an early prototype bionic eye with 24 electrodes.

Armenia severs diplomatic relations with Hungary, following the extradition to Azerbaijan and subsequent pardoning of Ramil Safarov, who was convicted of killing an Armenian soldier in Hungary in 2004. The move is also met with fierce criticism from other countries.

September

September 7 – Canada officially cuts diplomatic ties with Iran by closing its embassy in Tehran and ordered the expulsion of Iranian diplomats from Ottawa, over support for Syria, nuclear plans and human rights abuses.

September 11 – Garment factory fires in the Pakistani cities of Karachi and Lahore kill 315 and seriously injure more than 250.

September 11 – 27 – A series of terrorist attacks are directed against United States diplomatic missions worldwide, as well as diplomatic missions of Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In the US, opinions are divided over whether the attacks are a reaction to a Youtube trailer for the film Innocence of Muslims. In Libya, among the dead is US ambassador J. Christopher Stevens.



October

October 14 – Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner becomes the first person to break the sound barrier without any machine assistance during a record space dive out of the Red Bull Stratos helium-filled balloon from 24 miles (39 kilometers) over Roswell, New Mexico in the United States.

October 24 – 30 – Hurricane Sandy kills at least 209 people in the Caribbean, Bahamas, United States and Canada. Considerable storm surge damage causes major disruption to the eastern seaboard of the United States.

November

November 14 – 21 – Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense against the Palestinian-governed Gaza Strip, killing Hamas military chief Ahmed Jabari. In the following week 140 Palestinians and five Israelis are killed in an ensuing cycle of violence. A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is announced by Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after the week-long escalation in hostilities in Southern Israel and the Gaza Strip.

November 25 – December 2 – Typhoon Bopha, known as "Pablo" in the Philippines, kills at least 1020 with around 844 people still missing. The typhoon caused considerable damage in the island of Mindanao.

November 29 – The UN General Assembly approves a motion granting Palestine non-member observer state status.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN EGYPT

C.S. Rajput

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi on 25 December 2012 signed into law a new Islamist-drafted constitution which will help end political disorder and allow him to focus on fixing the weak economy.

Mohamed Morsi signed a declaration enforcing the charter late after the official announcement of the result of a referendum approving the basic law, Egypt's first constitution since Hosni Mubarak's overthrow.

The passing of the constitution meant Egypt could now move to a new stage that should bring security and stability for the people.

The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt is the fundamental law of Egypt. It was signed into law by President Mohamed Morsi on 26 December 2012, after it was approved by the Constituent Assembly on 30 November 2012 and passed in a referendum held 15–22 December 2012 with 64% support, but with only 33% electorate participation. It replaced the 2011 Provisional Constitution of Egypt, adopted in 2011 following the Egyptian revolution.

The constitution and the manner in which it was adopted have been one focus of the 2012 Egyptian protests. Zaghouel el-Balshi, the general secretary of the commission overseeing the planned constitutional referendum, resigned in the wake of the protests.

The Constituent Assembly was originally elected by Parliament in March 2012, before being dissolved by a court in April after it was deemed unconstitutional. A second Assembly was elected by Parliament during the summer. The Assembly produced a 234 article draft constitution, and approved each article individually during a 19 hour meeting starting on 29 November.

The constitution ends Egypt's all-powerful presidency, institutes a stronger parliament, and contains provisions against torture or detention without trial. But it would also give Egypt's generals much of the power and privilege they had during the Hosni Mubarak era. Human Rights Watch noted that it provides for basic protections against arbitrary detention and torture and for some economic rights but fails to end military trials of civilians or to protect freedom of expression and religion. The organization also stated that the Chapter II draft, entitled Rights and Freedoms, provides for strong protection against arbitrary detention in article 35 and torture and inhumane treatment in article 36, and for freedom of movement in article 42, privacy of communication in article 38, freedom of assembly in article 50, and of association in article 51, but defers to objections from the country's military leadership and has removed the clear prohibition of trials of civilians before military courts.

Article 2, defining the relationship between Islam and Egyptian law, remains essentially unchanged from Egypt's old constitution. The new charter says that the legal code stems from "the principles of Islamic law", wording that is broad enough to allow for individual rights and freedoms. But in an attempted compromise between the ultraconservatives and their liberal opponents, the proposed constitution added a new article defining those principles in accordance with established schools of Sunni Muslim thought.

Article 50 preserves the right to assembly but requires "notification" of such gatherings. The constitution calls for freedom from discrimination, but does not specify whether women or religious minorities are protected. A provision on women's equality was left out to avoid a dispute after ultraconservatives insisted that women's equality should be qualified by compliance with religious laws. One article that passed pertains to arbitrary arrest and detention rights. The article says that no person may be "arrested, searched, incarcerated, deprived of freedom in any way and/or confined" unless it is ordered by a "competent judge". Another article stipulates that anyone jailed must be told why in writing within 12 hours, and the case must go to investigators within 24 hours. Detainees cannot be interrogated without their attorney or one appointed to them being present, the article also states. Phone conversations, electronic correspondence and other communication cannot be listened to without a warrant.

The new constitution limits the President to two four-year terms, marking a clear shift away from the era of Mubarak, who ruled for 30 years. But other checks on presidential power remain ill-defined. The defense minister would be chosen from the military's officers. Insulating the armed forces from parliamentary oversight, a special council that includes military officers would oversee military affairs and the defense budget. Mr. Ali of the International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance noted that another article in the document calls for the election of local councils in each province but keeps all the power in the hands of federally appointed governors. And even though Egypt's pervasive public corruption was a major complaint by those who forced Hosni Mubarak from power, the as-

sembly declined to borrow any international models to promote transparency, Ali said. "There won't be a huge improvement in the way government works and the way services are delivered, and that is a setback for democracy."

Protection of rights

Article 81 states that no law may limit the essence of the rights and freedoms set out in the constitution but goes on to say that, "These rights and freedoms shall be exercised insofar as they do not contradict the principles set out in the Chapter on State and Society in this constitution." The provisions in that chapter include article 10, which states that, "The state and society shall commit to preserving the true nature of the Egyptian family," and article 11, which states that, "The state shall protect ethics and morals and public order."

Freedom of expression

Article 45 protects freedom of expression without stating what legitimate limitations are permissible and how to balance this right against article 31, which states that, "The individual person may not be insulted," and article 44 prohibiting "the insulting of prophets."

Freedom of religion

Believers in any of the three Abrahamic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism — are guaranteed the freedom of worship, but only those three. More specifically Article 43 on freedom of religion grants the right to practice religion and to establish places of worship to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, but excludes followers of other religions, including Egyptian Bahais, as well as irreligious individuals. Article 45 guarantees freedom of expression and Article 44 forbids insulting any prophets, but the draft constitution offers no guidance about how to balance its broad protections of freedom of expression against other provisions protecting people or religions from insults.

Military trials of civilians

According to the draft the military would retain the ability to try civilians in military courts if they are accused of damaging the armed forces. Article 198 provides that, "Civilians may not be tried before the military justice system except for crimes that harm the armed forces, and this shall be defined by law." This leaves intact the military's discretion to try civilians under the Code of Military Justice.

Freedom from discrimination and women rights

The constitution calls for freedom from discrimination by declaring, under article 30, "Citizens are equal before the law and are equal in general rights and duties without discrimination between them based on gender, origin, language, religion, belief, opinion, social status or disability." It also explicitly states in article 68 that "The State is committed to taking all measures to establish equality between women and men in political, cultural, economic and social life and all other fields without prejudice to the provisions of Islamic Sharia." Under the same article it also secures particular care for mothers by ensuring that "the State provides mother and child services for free and guarantees for women health, social, and economic care, inheritance right and adjustment between her family duties and work in society."

Status of international obligations

Article 145 states that the president shall sign treaties and that they must be ratified by the upper and lower houses of parliament, and goes on to say that, "No international treaty that contradicts the provisions of this constitution shall be signed." Human Rights Watch had urged members of the Assembly to include a provision directly incorporating human rights as defined by international treaties ratified by Egypt into Egyptian law to strengthen the basis for amending many domestic laws that restrict rights.

Egyptian constitution 'approved' in referendum

Egyptians appear to have approved a controversial new constitution in a referendum, unofficial and preliminary results indicate. Results reported by state media suggest that some 63% of voters backed the charter over two rounds of polling. Critics say the document, which has triggered mass protests, betrays the revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak.

President Mohammed Morsi's mainly Islamist supporters say it will secure democracy and encourage stability. Official results are not expected until Monday, after appeals are heard. If the constitution passes, parliamentary elections must take place within three months.

Turnout was estimated at 30%. The opposition said voting in both rounds had been marred by abuses. Violations in the second round on Saturday included polling stations opening late and Islamists seeking to influence voters, the opposition said.

The second round was held in the 17 provinces that did not vote in the first round on 15 December. Some 25 million people were eligible to vote in the second round, about 51 million across the two rounds.

The Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movement, which supports Mr Morsi and the new constitu-

tion, said early on Sunday that, with most second round votes counted, more than 70% were in favour.

The opposition National Salvation Front also said the "Yes" vote appeared to have won, though spokesman Khaled Daoud said the Front felt "empowered".

In the first round, on 15 December, turnout was reported to be just above 30% with unofficial counts suggesting some 56% of those who cast ballots voted in favour of the draft.

Opponents have said the draft constitution fails to protect the freedoms and human rights that they sought in the uprising that ended Mr Mubarak's rule last year.

They accuse the president of pushing through a text that favours Islamists and does not sufficiently protect the rights of women or Christians, who make up about 10% of the population.

After an outcry, the president revoked much of the 22 November decree, but he refused to back down on the draft constitution.

The text was rushed through by a constituent assembly dominated by Islamists and boycotted by liberal and left-wing members, and facing a threat of dissolution by the country's top court. Egypt has seen large demonstrations by both sides, which have occasionally turned violent, ever since.

Constitution at a glance

- Sharia remains the main source of legislation
- Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's leading authority, to be consulted on "matters related to Sharia"
- Christianity and Judaism to be the main source of legislation for Christians and Jews
- Religious freedom to be limited to Muslims, Christians and Jews
- Limits president to two four-year terms of office

Egypt court suspends constitutional assembly

A court in Egypt has suspended the 100-member assembly appointed last month to draft the country's new constitution. Several lawsuits had demanded Cairo's Administrative Court block the decision to form the panel as it did not reflect the diversity of Egyptian society.

Egyptians have voted in a referendum on their country's draft constitution.

The poll took place amid a political crisis triggered by President Mohammed Morsi's decree giving him extensive new powers. Following widespread protests and strikes by parts of the judiciary, Mr Morsi rescinded most of his decree on 10 December. However, he refused to postpone the referendum, despite opposition demands.

Why is the draft constitution controversial?

The process of drafting a new constitution to replace the one suspended after Hosni Mubarak was overthrown began in March 2012. But it was slowed by a court ruling in April dissolving the first constituent assembly, amid accusations that it was dominated by Islamists.

In June, political parties agreed on the make-up of a new panel, which included a range of politicians, members of the armed forces, police, judiciary and trade unions, as well as Muslim and Christian leaders.

However, liberals, secularists and Coptic Christians continued to complain about the distribution of seats. Most of their representatives on the assembly boycotted its sessions leaving the majority Islamists with a relatively free hand, and 43 separate legal challenges to its constitutional legitimacy were filed.

Mr Morsi's decree of 22 November gave the 100-member panel until January to complete the draft constitution. But after the Supreme Constitutional Court said it would soon rule on the lawsuits, supporters of the president on the assembly decided to pass a rushed draft.

A large number of members boycotted the vote or had earlier resigned in protest over what they said was the failure of Islamists to compromise on key issues, including the place of religion in affairs of state.

Human Rights Watch says the draft provides for basic protections against arbitrary detention and torture, but fails to end military trials of civilians or to protect freedom of expression and religion.

What happens next?

Results from the referendum vote are expected to confirm the approval of the draft constitution. President Morsi will then call new elections for parliament's lower house within two months, in which Islamist candidates are expected to do well.

Analysts say the Islamists are likely to insist that laws are brought into line with Sharia, or Islamic law, especially in relation to morality, culture, and personal freedoms. There is also concern that new-found freedoms of the private press could be curbed.

Until the lower house is elected, parliament's upper chamber, the Shura Council, will assume tem-



porary legislative powers. The Council is expected to vote on a law to restrict the right to demonstrate, which will come ahead of widely anticipated large-scale economic reforms.

The opposition has said it will reject the result of the referendum and has demanded an investigation into reports of voting violations, which - coupled with a low turnout - they say has compromised the integrity of the referendum.

How did the crisis start?

The crisis began when the president issued the constitutional declaration on 22 November which stated that his decisions were "final and unchallengeable by any individual or body until a new constitution has been ratified and a new parliament has been elected".

The declaration also said the constituent assembly could not be dissolved by the judiciary, preempting any ruling by the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) on its legitimacy. Liberals, Christians and secularists said it was dominated by Islamists.

The president portrayed his decree as an attempt to protect the transition to a constitutional democracy, but following days of protests he agreed to limit its scope to "sovereign matters". However, Mr Morsi insisted on keeping his right to protect the constituent assembly.

Despite that, members of the assembly began a marathon overnight session of voting on a rushed draft of the draft constitution on 29 November after the SCC announced that it would rule on whether the panel should be dissolved.

The panel approved the draft - despite a boycott by secular and liberal parties and the Coptic Church - and sent it to Mr Morsi, who called a referendum.

What do the opposition want?

The decree and the referendum have brought together Egypt's fractious and divided opposition factions, who are now united in their resistance to what they see as a power grab by the president and his allies.

On 24 November, a number of political parties and leading figures formed a coalition, the National Salvation Front (NSF), to force the president to rescind his decree and form a more representative constituent assembly.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the former UN diplomat who is co-ordinator of the NSF, said the draft constitution belonged in the "garbage bin of history". He compared the document to those passed in rigged votes under Egypt's former authoritarian rulers.

Mr ElBaradei later said President Morsi's refusal to postpone the referendum until there was consensus on the draft charter had "closed the door to any dialogue".

The Coptic Christian Church, whose members make up about 10% of Egypt's population, said the constitution represents only the Islamists who drafted it.

What does the president say?

Mr Morsi portrayed his decree as an attempt to protect Egypt's transition to a democracy more than 20 months after Hosni Mubarak's overthrow, and stressed that his new powers would last only until the new constitution was approved and fresh parliamentary elections were held.

He also dismissed the criticism of the constituent assembly and draft constitution, saying that Egyptians were "going to get out of this short bottleneck hugging each other".

A day after the violence on 5 December, Mr Morsi used a televised address to blame a "fifth column", saying remnants of the Mubarak regime had been "hiring thugs and giving out firearms".

What is the position of the military?

The military is the most powerful government entity in Egypt and was the power behind all previous presidents. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf) ruled the country after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, but it was pushed aside in August by President Morsi.

The generals stayed out of the limelight at the beginning of this crisis, but on 8 December they urged the government and opposition to resolve their disputes via dialogue, warning that they would not allow the country to be dragged into a "dark tunnel".

EDITORIAL

DEVELOP INDIA

English Weekly Newspaper
Year 4, Vol. 1, Issue 229, 23-30 December, 2012

CHINA HAS OFFICIALLY OPENED THE WORLD'S LONGEST HIGH-SPEED RAIL ROUTE

China has officially opened the world's longest high-speed rail route, linking the capital Beijing with the southern commercial hub of Guangzhou. The first bullet train left Beijing on Wednesday morning. Trains will initially travel at 300km/h (187mph), more than halving travel time. A Chinese official has described the route - parts of which were already in operation - as "one of the most technically advanced in the world". The 2,298km route will have 35 stops. They include such major cities as Wuhan and Changsha. The previously 22-hour journey will now take less than 10 hours.



The decision was taken to start the passenger rail service on 26 December to commemorate the birth of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong, state media said.

China is currently expanding its high-speed rail network across the vast country. But the ambitious project has not been free from controversy. Forty people died last summer in a crash on a rapid train line in eastern Zhejiang province and the entire high-speed scheme has been dogged with reports of corruption.



High-speed rail is a type of passenger rail transport that operates significantly faster than traditional rail traffic. As of 2012 the maximum commercial speed was about 300 km/h (185 mph) for the majority of installed systems (China, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, UK), 310 km/h (195 mph) in Spain and 320 km/h (200 mph) in France. The Shanghai Maglev Train reaches 431 km/h (268 mph).

High-speed trains travel at their maximum speed on specific tracks, almost all using conventional tracks, generally using standard gauge (except in countries like Russia, Finland and Mongolia, which continue to use Russian gauge), whilst avoiding at-grade crossings and minimizing curvature of the right-of-way.

The world speed record for conventional high-speed rail is held by the V150, a specially configured and heavily-modified version of Alstom's TGV which clocked 574.8 km/h (357.2 mph) on a test run. The world speed record for Maglev is held by the Japanese experimental MLX01: 581 km/h (361 mph).

While high-speed rail is usually designed for passenger travel, some high-speed systems also offer freight service. For instance, the French mail service La Poste owns a few special TGV trains for carrying postal freight.

The world's longest line opened in China on 26 December 2012. It runs 2,298 kilometers (1,428 miles) from the capital Beijing in the north to Guangzhou in the South.

Records in trial runs

Year	Country	Train	Speed km/h mph	Comments
1963	Japan	Shinkansen	256 159	First country to develop HSR technology
2003	Japan	MLX01	581 361	Current world record holder for any train
2007	France	V150	574.8 357	Current world record holder on conventional rails. Heavily modified trainset. Track electric power increased for the test.

Maximum speed in service

The Shanghai Maglev Train reaches 431 km/h (268 mph) during its daily service on its 30 km (19 mi) dedicated line, holding the speed record for commercial train service. From mid 2011, the fastest operating conventional trains are the French TGV POS and German ICE 3 with a commercial maximum speed of 320 km/h (199 mph) on the French LGV Est.

The highest commercial operating speed record was held from August 2008 to July 2011 by China Railway High-speed trains, reaching 350 km/h (217 mph) on some lines (Beijing–Tianjin Intercity Railway, Wuhan–Guangzhou High-Speed Railway). The highest scheduled average speed between two scheduled stops was the China Railway High-speed service on Wuhan–Guangzhou High-Speed Railway, from 26 December 2009, until 29 January 2010. Non-stop trains on this line covered the 922 km (573 mi) journey in 2 hours, 57 minutes, at an average speed of 312.5 km/h (194.2 mph) from Wuhan to Guangzhou North.

Due to high costs and safety concerns the top speeds in China were reduced to 300 km/h (186 mph) on 1 July 2011.

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facto PPP head and its chief strategist in its bid to return to power next year. Stressing his family's political legacy, Mr Bhutto Zardari said the party's focus was and would remain on "food, clothes and homes". Although the PPP government faced considerable challenges from terrorism and a global recession, Pakistan's economy was standing on its own two feet, he said. President Zardari, who also addressed the crowd, promised that next year's vote would be free and fair and would not be postponed. Security was tight as activists carrying portraits of Ms Bhutto and her father, former Prime Minister and President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, arrived at the shrine. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in 1979, during the military rule of Gen Zia ul-Haq. Oxford graduate Bilawal Bhutto Zadari has so far kept a low profile because of his inexperience. The governing PPP is keen to use the rally as a show of strength to demonstrate that despite widespread criticism over its performance during the past five years, it still enjoys popular support, our correspondent says. Mr Bhutto Zardari's father has been at the forefront of the party until now but faces dwindling support over corruption allegations. Those fed up with President Zardari's politics are looking to his son to help revive the party's mass appeal, our correspondent says. The Bhutto dynasty has been a major political force since Pakistan gained independence in 1947. Ms Bhutto, whose father founded the PPP, was prime minister from 1988 to 1990 and from 1993 to 1996. On both occasions she was dismissed from office for alleged corruption. No-one has been charged with her assassination. A UN inquiry in 2010 found that her murder could have been prevented and that the subsequent investigation was bungled.

High-speed rail in India

India has one of the largest rail networks in the world but does not have any high-speed rail lines capable of supporting speeds of 200 km/h (124 mph) or more. High-speed corridors have been proposed but not implemented. Currently, the fastest train in India is the Bhopal Shatabdi, which has a top speed of 150 km/h (93 mph). For the first time in the history of Indian Railways, point-to-point non-stop Durgam Cheruvu Express trains started in 2009. Indian Railways aims to raise the speed of passenger trains to 160–180 km/h on dedicated conventional tracks. The railway minister said in 2012 that a combination of prudent investment decisions in the areas of track and bridges, signalling, doubling and train-sets is proposed to be adopted to enable train running at speed of 160 kmph and above. The proposal would significantly reduce travel time for passenger trains by 20-25%. Such infrastructure would also enable Railways to run Shatabdi trains on long distance trunk routes and between metros, he said in his speech.

Approach to high-speed

Indian Railways' approach to high-speed is incremental improvement on existing conventional lines for up to 160 km/h, with a forward vision of speed above 200 km/h on new tracks with state-of-the-art technology, such as Shinkansen/TGV/etc. While they do not define high-speed, Indian Railways' approach matches the high-speed definitions of the Trans-European high-speed rail network, for upgraded lines and new lines built for high-speed.

Dedicate tracks to passenger trains

Dedicate tracks on existing trunk lines to passenger trains, by building separate corridors for freight trains, and build separate tracks for busy suburban traffic in Mumbai and other cities where traffic is equally busy. Without slower freight and suburban traffic, fast-express trains can run at the speed limit of rolling stock, the track or railroad switch, whichever is lowest among those that apply.

Dedicated Freight Corridors

Upgrade tracks for 250–300 km/h

Upgrade the dedicated passenger tracks with heavier rails, and build the tracks to a close tolerance geometry fit for 250–300 km/h. High-speed tracks to be maintained and inspected using automation to ensure required track geometry. Perform more frequent inspection to ensure high confidence of safety at high-speed.

Design, manufacture and deploy railroad switches, with thick web construction and movable crossings that permit 50 km/h to alleviate this bottleneck to speed.

Upgrade locomotives and coaches

Improve coaches, which can support 160 km/h, with stainless steel bodies and crash-worthy designs, incorporating passenger and crew protection, and fire-retardant materials. Equip coaches with electro-pneumatic brake systems to enhance safe operations at 160–180 km/h. Develop locomotives with output of 9000 to 12000 hp for hauling of 24-26 coach long passenger trains to 160–200 km/h.

Indian railways has asked IIT Kharagpur to conduct research to obtain the technological knowhow to increase the maximum attainable speed to 200 km/h. The project, which will be conducted in the Railway Research Centre of IIT Kharagpur, has four main goals; improving speed, improving carrying capacity (heavy haul), use of advanced material, advanced signalling and maintenance for better safety. The research is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

[edit]Proposal to introduce 250-350 km/h trains

History

The Indian Ministry of Railways' white-paper *Vision 2020* submitted to Indian Parliament on December 18, 2009 envisages the implementation of regional high-speed rail projects to provide services at 250–350 km/h, and planning for corridors connecting commercial, tourist and pilgrimage hubs. Six corridors have already been identified for technical studies on setting up of high-speed rail corridors: Delhi-Chandigarh-Amritsar, Pune-Mumbai-Ahmedabad, Hyderabad-Dornakal-Vijayawada-Chennai, Howrah-Haldia, Chennai-Bangalore-Coimbatore-Trivandrum, Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna. These high-speed rail corridors will be built as elevated corridors in keeping with the pattern of habitation and the constraint of land.

Not everyone in India is equally keen on introducing high-speed rail with some leaders expressing apprehension that regional bias might creep in the absence of a comprehensive national policy vis-a-vis high speed railways.

Indian Railway plans to set up a corporation called National High Speed Rail Corp (NHSR) that will exclusively deal with the proposed ambitious high speed rail corridor projects. It will handle tendering, pre-feasibility studies, awarding contracts and execution of the projects. The corporation will comprise of four members, all of whom will be railway officials. All high-speed rail lines will be implemented through PPP mode on a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis. In a feasibility study published in 1987, RDSO and JICA estimated the construction cost to be Rs 49 million per km, for a line dedicated to 250–300 km/h trains. In 2010, that 1987-estimated cost, inflated at 10% a year, would be Rs 439 million per km (US\$ 9.5 million/km). RITES is currently performing a feasibility study. It is being estimated that dedicated high speed corridor will cost about 100 crore per km.

According to news media, the costs for constructing such rail lines in India are estimated to be Rs 700-1000 million per km (US\$ 15-22 million/km). Therefore the Mumbai-Ahmedabad route of 500 km, will cost Rs 370 billion (US\$ 8.04 billion) to build and to make a profit, passengers will have to be charged Rs 5 per km (US\$ 0.11/km). Delhi to Amritsar one-way, a distance of 450 km, will cost about Rs 2000 (US\$ 43.48). At US\$ 15-22 million per km, cost estimates are in line with US\$ 18 million per km of the recently completed Wu-Guang HSR line in China.

Potential High Speed Rail lines

In India, trains in the future with speed of 250–350 km/h, are envisaged to run on elevated corridors, to prevent trespassing by animals and people. This is an excellent way to isolate high-speed train tracks. The TGV tracks are completely fenced in and has no road crossing them at the same level. Wu-Guang's 2-tracks line is laid, 468 km on bridges, 177 km in tunnels, and 323 km on embankments. The 336 km THSR tracks are 91% on bridges, flyover, or tunnels.

The current conventional lines between Amritsar-New Delhi, and Ahmedabad-Mumbai runs through suburban and rural areas, which are flat, therefore have no tunnel. Ahmedabad-Mumbai line runs near the coast therefore have more bridges, and parts of it are in backwaters or forest. The 1987 RDSO/JICA feasibility study found the Mumbai-Ahmedabad line as most promising. Maharashtra state government has proposed a link between Mumbai and Nagpur which will be good for development of the state railway. This project's cost is estimated 60,000 crore. The government also wants a corridor which will connect to Navi Mumbai International Airport.

As of July 2010, there are currently 49 train services on the 968 km Wuhan-Guangzhou HSR line in China, with fares from US\$ 70-115 (Rs 3220-5290), or US\$ 0.07-0.12 per km (Rs 3.33-5.46/km). Amritsar-New Delhi line has 22 daily services, with fares range from Rs 552-1434 (US\$ 12-31). Ahmedabad-Mumbai has 32 daily services with fares from Rs 514-1475 (US\$ 11-32). On the 2 Indian lines travelling cost Rs 1.14-3.19 per km (US\$ 0.025-0.069/km).

A separate entity, High Speed Rail Authority of India (HSRA), will be set up to operationalise bullet

trains in the country as part of 12th Five Year Plan (2012–17).

To put the construction in perspective, in the period 2005-09 Indian Railways took on construction of 42 completely new conventional lines, a total of 4060 km at a cost of Rs 167 billion (US\$ 3.63 billion), or Rs 41 million per km (US\$ 0.89 million/km).[2] A public-private-partnership mode of investment and execution is envisaged for such expensive 250–350 km/h high-speed rail project.

[edit]Feasibility studies

The consultants for pre-feasibility study for four corridors are:

Systra, Italferr and RITES Limited for Pune – Mumbai – Ahmedabad,

British firm Mott MacDonald for Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna

INECO, PROINTEC, Ayesa for Howrah-Haldia

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Oriental Consultancy along with Parsons Brinckerhoff India for Hyderabad-Dornakal-Vijaywada-Chennai

The state governments are ready to meet 50% cost of the consultancy. While Japan has shown interest in India's high speed train, it is funding 80% of the cost of construction of the 1,499 km-long Western Dedicated Freight Corridor.

On 21 March 2011, the British firm Mott MacDonald was asked to conduct a pre-feasibility study on the 993 km long Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna route. It cost the Railways 8.8 crore for the report.

The Indian Railways gave the go ahead for conducting a feasibility study on the Chennai-Bangalore-Coimbatore-Kochi route. There was a plan to either include Mysore in the main route or to create a branch line to that city. With the Railways' move, the Karnataka State government decided not to commission a separate feasibility study on implementing a high-speed train between Bangalore and Mysore. The pre-feasibility study will be tabled in Parliament and the final feasibility study will begin in April 2012.

During the 2012 Rail Budget speech, Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi announced that pre-feasibility studies on the Ahmedabad-Mumbai-Pune, Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna, Howrah-Haldia, Hyderabad-Dornakal-Vijaywada-Chennai and the Chennai-Bangalore-Coimbatore-Kochi high-speed corridors have already been completed and study on Delhi-Jaipur-Ajmer-Jodhpur route will be taken up in 2012-13.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is better known by its Hausa name Boko Haram is a jihadist militant organisation based in the northeast of Nigeria. It is an Islamist movement which strongly opposes man-made laws and modern science. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2001, the organisation seeks to establish sharia law in the country. The group is also known for attacking Christians and bombing churches.

The movement is divided into three factions. In 2011, Boko Haram was responsible for at least 450 killings in Nigeria. It was also reported that they had been responsible for over 620 deaths over the first 6 months of 2012. Since its founding in 2001, the jihadists have been responsible for between 3,000 to 10,000 deaths.

The group became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in July 2009, which left over 1000 people dead. They do not have a clear structure or evident chain of command. Moreover, it is still a matter of debate whether Boko Haram has links to terror outfits outside Nigeria and its fighters have frequently clashed with Nigeria's central government. A US commander stated that Boko Haram is likely linked to AQIM (al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb), although professor Paul Lubeck points out that no evidence is presented for any claims of material international support.

Boko Haram was founded as an indigenous Salafist group, turning itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009. It proposes that interaction with the Western World is forbidden, and also supports opposition to the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria. The group publicly extols its ideology despite the fact that its founder and former leader Muhammad Yusuf was himself a highly educated man who lived a lavish life and drove a Mercedes-Benz.

The members of the group do not interact with the local Muslim population and have carried out assassinations in the past of any one who criticises it, including Muslim clerics.

In a 2009 BBC interview, Muhammad Yusuf, then leader of the group, stated his belief that the concept of a spherical Earth is contrary to Islamic teaching and should be rejected, along with Darwinian evolution and the concept of rain originating from water evaporated by the sun. Before his death, Yusuf reiterated the group's objective of changing the current education system and rejecting democracy. Nigerian academic Hussain Zakaria told BBC News that the controversial cleric had a graduate education, spoke proficient English, lived a lavish lifestyle and drove a Mercedes-Benz.

In the wake of the 2009 crackdown on its members and its subsequent reemergence, the growing frequency and geographical range of attacks attributed to Boko Haram have led some[who?] political and religious leaders in the north to the conclusion that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well.

The group conducted its operations

The group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence. That changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that the government reportedly repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organisation, including that of a military officer.

When the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces which led to the deaths of an estimated 700 people. During the fighting with the security forces Boko Haram "fighters reportedly "used fuel-laden motorcycles" and "bows with poison arrows" to attack a police station. The group's founder and then leader Mohammed Yusuf was also killed during this time while still in police custody. After Yusuf's killing, a new leader emerged whose identity was not known at the time.

After the killing of M. Yusuf, the group carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2010. It resulted in the killing of four people. Since then, the violence has only escalated in terms of both frequency and intensity.

In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, appeared in a video posted on YouTube. According to Reuters, Shekau took control of the group after Yusuf's death in 2009. Authorities had previously believed that Shekau died during the violence in 2009. By early 2012, the group was responsible for over 900 deaths.

History of riot in Nigeria

Before colonisation and subsequent annexation into the British Empire, the Bornu Empire ruled the territory where Boko Haram is currently active. It was a sovereign sultanate run according to the principles of the Constitution of Medina, with a majority Kanuri Muslim population. The Bornu Sultanate emerged after the overthrow of the Kanem-Bornu Empire ruled by the Saifawa dynasty for over 2000 years. The Bornu Sultanate of the Kanuri is distinct from the Sokoto Caliphate of the *Hausa/Fulani* established in 1802 by the military conquest of Usman dan Fodio. Both the Bornu Sultanate and Sokoto Caliphate came under control of the British in 1903. However, due to activities of early Christian missionaries who used Western education as a tool for evangelism, it is viewed with suspicion by the local population. Increased dissatisfaction gave rise to many fundamentalists among the Kanuri and other peoples of northeast Nigeria.

One of the most famous such fundamentalists was Mohammed Marwa, also known as Maitatsine, who was at the height of his notoriety during the 1970s and 1980s. He was sent into exile by the Nigerian authorities, he refused to believe Mohammed was the Prophet and instigated riots in the country which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Some analysts view Boko Haram as an extension of the Maitatsine riots.

Year-End-Review of the Ministry of Civil Aviation for the Year 2012

Civil Aviation has been identified as one of the most important growth engines essential for the economic growth of the country. Besides providing air transport for passengers and goods, it facilitates growth of trade and commerce, domestic and foreign investments, transfer of technology, creation of infrastructure, domestic and international tourism and generation of employment etc. Air transport in India has witnessed enormous growth in the recent past. During the last 10 years, compounded annual growth rate of passenger traffic has been approximately 15%. A key trend in the business model of the Indian Carriers in the domestic operations is that the domestic traffic is rapidly shifting to Low Cost Carriers (LCC). From a level of about 1% in 2003-2004, the market share of LCC including the LCC arm of full service carriers is today exceeding 70% of the total domestic traffic.

India is likely to be the fastest growing aviation market in the world in the next 20 years. Estimates suggest that the domestic air traffic will touch 160–180 million passengers per annum in the next 10 years and the international traffic will exceed 80 million passengers per annum from the current level of 60 million domestic and 40 million international passengers respectively. According to International Air Transport Association's Airline Industry Forecast 2012-2016, India's domestic air travel market would be among the top five globally, experiencing the second highest growth rate.

Keeping this in mind, a number of steps have been taken by the Government to accelerate the pace of growth of airline industry in the country. These have been summarized as follows:

1. EXPANSION AND UPGRADEATION OF AIRPORTS:

At present 5 major airports are being operationalized under PPP mode at New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Cochin. The new Terminal Building is under construction at Mumbai airport with Phase I of it for international operations likely to be ready by August, 2013, while Phase II for domestic operations will be ready by August, 2014. The existing Greenfield airport at Bangalore is undergoing Phase-II expansion to meet the growing capacity demand. Airports Authority of India has undertaken expansion and upgradation of airports at Kolkata and Chennai. The Government of India has also approved 15 more airports under the Greenfield Airports Policy being developed, majority under PPP mode.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) is upgrading and modernizing airport infrastructure at Chennai, Kolkata and select non-metro airports in the country. During the year 2012, airport infrastructure has been developed and upgraded as below:

- New integrated terminals equipped with modern state-of-the-art facilities commissioned at Indore, Lucknow and Raipur airports.

- Development of new Civil Enclaves completed at Bhatinda and Jaisalmer airports.

- New Domestic terminals completed / expanded at Rajahmundry, Pudducherry and Gondia airports.

- Development of Jalgaon airport completed and commissioned for ATR-72 type of aircraft operations.

- Airside apron capacity increased at Chennai, Kolkata, Jammu, Surat and Tirupathi airports.

- Integrated Cargo Terminal completed at Chennai at a cost of Rs. 144.93 crores. Total enhanced handling capacity is 11 lacs MT/year.

- New terminals at Bhubaneswar and Ranchi airports are completed and shall be operationalized shortly after pre-commissioning trials of various services.

- Expansion and upgradation of airports at Chennai and Kolkata is completed at a cost of Rs. 2015 crores and Rs.2325 crores respectively. Trial operations have been successfully conducted through new terminal and are expected to be commissioned in January – February, 2013.

- Work has commenced for development of new Civil Enclave at Chandigarh Airport (Mohali side).

- Solar Photo-voltaic power plants have been commissioned at Corporate Headquarters at Safdarjung Airports, Jaisalmer, Guwahati and Raipur airports as initiative under Sustainable Development.

Declaration of Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Varanasi and Lucknow airports as International airports: So far there were 17 international airports. Five new airports at Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Varanasi and Lucknow have been added to the list this year. Earlier these airports were custom airports where all facilities as per extended norms of an international airport in terms of customs, immigration, health, animal & plant quarantine etc. were available on temporary basis. After these airports were declared as international airports, these facilities will be available on permanent basis which would open the door to have more international flights to different destinations.

2. TURN AROUND / FINANCIAL RESTRUCTURING PLANS OF AIR INDIA:

The plan includes infusion of equity to the extent of approximately Rs. 30,000 crores over a period of next 10 years, issue of Government guaranteed Non-Convertible Debentures amounting to Rs.7,400 crore, induction of 27 B-787 (Dreamliner) upto March, 2016 and various other measures. However, the infusion of equity is not unconditional and shall be on the basis of achievement of milestones which have been fixed for Air India at different stages in terms of Passenger Load Factor (PLF), On-Time Performance (OTP), fleet utilisation, market-share etc.

Improvement in Performance of Air India

- There has been reduction in net losses of Air India by about Rs. 650 crores in the first 6 months of financial year 2012-13.

- PLF of Air India had reached 78.6% in November 2012 as against the TAP benchmark of 69.5%.

- Integration process of Indian Airlines and Air India as per the recommendations of Justice Dharmadhikari Committee Report is almost completed.

- Computerization of Flight and Cabin Crew Management System (Auto Roster) is in progress. It will be operational for pilots by January, 2013 and for cabin crew by February-March 2013. The new system is an algorithm that will automate the task of Flight Duty Assignments based on user defined rules, policies, parameters and constraints. Auto-Roster aims to equalize the flying hours (for past period or the roster period), sector flown (number of times and last date flown), day & night flights (diurnal distribution), flight operations type (domestic, regional, international), crew pairing rotation, number of landings and other user-defined parameters.

- Three B-787 Dreamliner aircrafts have been received and five more will be received during the current financial year.

- Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) for Pilots and Cabin Crew has been implemented.

- Hiving off of MRO and Ground Handling Businesses of Air India into separate subsidiaries is in progress after approval given by the Government. Air India Engineering Services subsidiary will take care of maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO); while Air India Transport Services Services will take care of ground handling services, which includes jobs like ticket check-in into wholly owned subsidiaries of the airline.

- Up-to-date payment of salaries to staff till the month of November, 2012 has been made.

- No more free excess baggage is being allowed in Air India to anybody now.

3. FDI BY FOREIGN AIRLINES IN INDIAN CIVIL AVIATION:

The Government has allowed 49% FDI by the foreign airlines in the domestic carriers. It is expected that this step would bring in much needed equity infusion in the domestic carriers. The FDI will be subject to certain safeguards including Government approval route and compliance with all applicable rules and regulations of SEBI. It will require clearance from Home Ministry and FIPB.

4. ALLOCATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC RIGHTS

The Government has adopted a pragmatic policy to allocate traffic rights to private Indian carriers on various international routes. In November, 2012, the traffic rights to Indian carriers were allocated much in advance upto Winter-2013 season so as to remove uncertainties about traffic rights and give them enough time for making their preparations. The total bilateral traffic rights allocated to Indian carriers including Air India upto Summer-2012 were 1074 services per week, have now increased to the level of 1695 services per week in the next Winter-2013 schedule, which is an enhancement of more than 60%. Besides this, a number of new international routes have been opened for Indian carriers to fly in the next 3 seasons as follows:

- Air India: Delhi-Rome-Madrid/ Barcelona; Delhi-Moscow; Delhi-Sydney/ Melbourne; Mumbai-Nairobi, Mumbai-Al Najaf (Iraq)

- Jet Airways: Mumbai-Jakarta; Delhi-Barcelona; Mumbai-Zurich; Delhi-Tashkent; Mumbai-Ho Chi Minh City

- Spicejet: Lucknow- Al Najaf (Iraq); Varanasi- Al Najaf (Iraq); Delhi-Macau; Delhi-Ho Chi Minh City

5. INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF AIR NAVIGATION SYSTEMS

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has taken a number of initiatives to upgrade Airport and Airspace infrastructure to cater to the continued growth in air traffic with enhanced safety and efficiency. AAI as Air Navigation Service Provider, responsible for provision of Air Navigation Services in the delegated airspace, has embarked upon ANS infrastructure upgradation strategy with the objective of ensuring safety, efficiency, cost-effectiveness of aircraft operations with environmental benefits on a long-term and sustainable basis. The comprehensive strategy has been to transition from voice to data-link, transition from ground based navigation to satellite based navigation, augmentation of Radar surveillance, implementation of ATM Automation and enhancement in ATM procedures.

Navigation: AAI has installed 66 Instrument landing systems and 93 VOR/DME which provide navigational guidance to aircraft. In addition, Satellite Based Navigation System (SBAS) called GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) system is being jointly developed and implemented by Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). The GAGAN is designed to provide the improved accuracy, availability, and integrity necessary to enable users to rely on GPS for all phases of flight, from en route through approach for all qualified airports within the GAGAN service volume. GAGAN will also provide increased positional accuracy of aircraft thereby permitting enhanced safety and operational efficiency. The system will be commissioned by June 2013. India is the fourth country in the world, after USA, JAPAN and Europe to take up the challenge of establishing the regional SBAS Navigation System which will redefine the navigation over Indian airspace and other states falling in the footprint of GAGAN.

Enhanced Air and Ground Surveillance: In addition to the existing Radars at 13 sites, 9 more Secondary Surveillance Radars have been commissioned to ensure that aircraft are seen on the Radar display by the controllers throughout their flight from departure to destination. This ensures safety, provision of reduced distance between aircraft allowing the controller to accommodate more flights in a given airspace/airport. 8 more Radars are also under implementation to ensure total seamless radar coverage in the country. 14 ADS-B (Automatic Dependent Surveillance –Broadcast) systems which support Radar-like services have also been installed at 14 airports to provide back-up cover to Radars. ADS-B will also provide direct routing to aircraft in medium-density airports (where Radar is not installed), thereby accommodating more number of arrivals/departures from those airports.

ATM Automation: Advanced ATM Automation Systems have been implemented at 38 airports in addition to Metro airports, providing the controllers with advanced Safety nets, tools and safety features for enhancing safety and efficiency.

Integration of Radar Data into Automation system: Radar data from Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Porbander and Udaipur Radars have been integrated in to the Automation system at Ahmedabad.

Enhancement in ATM procedures: Performance Based Navigation procedures exploiting avionics & ground infrastructure and providing optimized and accurate flight paths for departures and arrivals have been implemented at all major airports. The initiative has enhanced Safety and efficiency of aircraft operations.

In addition to the above initiatives that have enhanced safety, efficiency and capacity of airspace and airports, AAI is implementing Air Traffic Flow Management which will ensure that air traffic demand and capacity is balanced and delay to aircraft in the air and ground is eliminated. Due to above efforts for safety, the International Jane's ATC Award 2102 was conferred on AAI at Amsterdam for achieving best operational efficiency among many major ANSPs in the world is a testimony to AAI's ANS achievements in the Region.

6. SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURE FOR SANCTION OF BUILDINGS AROUND AIRPORTS

Government has decided to do away with the system of taking NOC from AAI every time and has now prescribed the height at different distances from the airports upto which the local municipal authority will be empowered to sanction the map as per their bye-laws. In this regard, Airports Authority of India (AAI) would prepare colour coded zoning maps in a grid format for each airport. For buildings whose height exceeds the height indicated in the zoning map, the designated officer/ office of AAI would assess the obstructions to be caused by the proposed building. If the design and orientation of the proposed building can suitably be amended to meet the regulations, NOC may be given, otherwise not.

7. DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

In the year 2012, scheduled domestic airlines operated more than 11,500 departures per week connecting 77 airports. A new daily flight has been introduced from 26th December, 2012 on the route Delhi-Varanasi-Agra-Khajuraho to link these cities of historical importance on air map.

8. HELICOPTER CONNECTIVITY TO VRINDAVAN

Vrindavan was connected with Delhi by Helicopter service from 28th November, 2012. The service is being operated by Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd. Pawan.

9. AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BUREAU

Government has set up an Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau to efficiently investigate the accidents and to recommend effective corrective measures.

10. PERMISSION TO IMPORT ATF

The Government has allowed import of ATF by Indian carriers, which will bring much required competition among the oil marketing companies apart from huge cost saving to the India carriers.

11. OTHER PRIORITY ISSUES BEFORE THE MINISTRY

Development of Low Cost Airports: In an endeavour to provide air connectivity to different parts of India, development of low cost airports is the most important component. Instructions have been issued to AAI to identify the most suitable low cost model for development of smaller airports and to develop airports in the smaller cities based on this model.

Connectivity to Smaller and Remote Parts of India: The top most priority is to provide air connectivity to remote and interior areas of the country, North Eastern Region, Tier-II & Tier-III cities of India and other smaller cities of the country. Connectivity which is proposed to be provided would be customer oriented in terms of affordability and cost of travel. The Ministry has engaged internationally renowned firm "Deloitte" as a Consultant to identify the factors that are inhibiting the growth of domestic connectivity and what needs to be done in this regard. The outcome of the study will form the basis of the implementation of various measures for providing better domestic connectivity. This would also include enhancement of present operations of helicopters and construction of heliports to improve the connectivity to smaller places including the places of religious and tourist importance.

Enhancement of Helicopter connectivity: The Government is also working to develop Heliports in different parts of the country to make Helicopter operations to inaccessible areas for the purpose of air connectivity, religious, other tourism and for medical purposes. Pawan Hans with a mix fleet of about 50 Helicopters has a cliental from diversified sectors. It is successfully operating Helicopter services to several pilgrim centres including Mata Vaishno Devi, Kedarnathji, Amarnathji, Vrindavan and Badrinathji. It is also operating services in Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep and plans to shortly start services in Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. Pawan Hans is now planning to venture into fixed wing aircraft and seaplane operations. It has also recently conducted a detailed study in Uttar Pradesh to connect Buddhist Circuit in association with UP Tourism by Helicopter and has plans to extend Helicopter services on these destinations in near future.

Creation of Civil Aviation Authority: To manage the phenomenal growth of air traffic with safety, an effective, autonomous and professional regulatory body is required and a Bill in this regard will soon be brought before the Parliament.

Creation of Civil Aviation Security Force: To strengthen the Civil Aviation Security in the country, Ministry of Civil Aviation engaged a team of experts from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to carry out a detailed study of the existing security system at the airports and suggest measures to improve the same. The ICAO study report, which has been accepted by the Government, has suggested establishing a dedicated Aviation Security Force (ASF) under the command and control of the Ministry of Civil Aviation which is supposed to be completely integrated with the aviation industry, in line with the practices across the world. To pursue the matter further, a sub-group was constituted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to examine the recommendations of ICAO study report on creation of a dedicated specialized ASF. This sub-group has also recommended constitution of a dedicated, specialized ASF under the command and control of Ministry of Civil Aviation. Further, necessary action has been initiated to approach Cabinet Committee on Security for seeking its approval.

ATF Related Issues: ATF constitutes approximately 40% to 50% of operating expenses of Indian Airlines. Efforts are on to rationalise the price of ATF by getting it declared as a notified product under PNGRB Act to bring it under the ambit of PNGR Board. The major contributor to the high prices of ATF is the VAT levied by various State Governments ranging from 4% to 30%. Efforts are also on to persuade the State Governments to reduce the VAT on ATF so as to bring down the prices of ATF and discussions with a number of States have already taken place in this regard. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also proposed to include ATF in the list of declared goods.

Achievements and Initiatives of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment for the Year 2012

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is entrusted with the empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society. The target groups of the Ministry are: (i) scheduled Castes, (ii) Other Backward Classes, (iii) Senior Citizens and (iv) Victims of Substance Abuse.

Enhancement in Plan Outlay of the Ministry

There was an unprecedented increase of 136.60% in the plan outlay of the Ministry from Rs.2500 crore in 2009-10 to Rs 5915 crore in 2012-13 which includes the Budget Estimate of Department of Disability of Affairs. The plan Outlay allocated to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for 12th Five Year Plan has been enhanced to Rs 32684 crore from Rs 13043 crore in the 11th Five Year Plan.

Scheduled Castes Development

Revisions in the Scheme of Post Matric Scholarship to the Scheduled Castes Students

As on date, twenty three States/UTs have confirmed the implementation of the revised scheme, which was revised by the Government with effect from 1st July, 2010, with the following modifica-

tions:-

- (i) Revision of income ceiling (of parents/guardians from all sources) from existing Rs. 1.00 lakh p.a. to Rs. 2.00 lakh p.a.;
- (ii) Regrouping of courses; and
- (iii) Revision of maintenance and other allowances.

Introduction of a New Scheme "Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students"

In pursuance to the announcement made by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech for 2011-12 to introduce a scholarship scheme for needy students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes studying in classes IX and X, the Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students has been introduced with effect from 01.07.2012. The objective of the scheme is to support parents of SC children for education of their wards studying in classes IX and X so that the incidence of drop-out, especially in the transition from the elementary to the secondary stage is minimized. For being eligible under this Scheme, the student should belong to Scheduled Caste and her/ his Parent/Guardian's income should not exceed Rs. 2 lakh per annum.

The Scheme has been communicated to all the State Governments/UTs vide Ministry's letter dated 15.06.2012 with the request to give wide publicity to the provisions of the new Pre-Matric Scheme and take suitable steps to implement the Scheme with effect from 01.07.2012.

Central Sector Scholarship Scheme of Top Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students: Inclusion of New Institutions and enhancement in the parental annual income ceiling

Under the Scheme, SC students who secure the admission in the notified institutions are provided full financial support to meet the requirements of Tuition fees, living expenses, books and computer. Maximum number of slots for new scholarship each year is 1250. Scholarships are granted for Engineering, Medicine, Law, Management and other specialized courses. Notified Institutions include Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), National Institute of Technology (NITs), Commercial Pilot training Institutions and reputed medical/law and other institutions of excellence.

During the year 2011-12, 24 new institutions, which include 10 NITs, 3 IIMs, 2 Schools of Planning & Architecture, 5 National Law universities, and 4 other premier Institutions, under various Central Ministries were added under the Scheme. With this addition, total number of notified institutions under the scheme has increased from 181 to 205. A decision was taken in March 2012 to enhance the ceiling on the students' annual family income for eligibility for this scheme from Rs.2 lakh to Rs.4.5 lakh for the academic year, 2012-13.

Elimination of Manual Scavenging

New law for prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their rehabilitation

In pursuance of the National Advisory Council's resolution of 23.10.10 and its recommendations dated 25.5.2011, regarding eradication of manual scavenging, the Cabinet, in its meeting held on 23.8.2012, approved the introduction of a new Bill, namely, "The Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Bill, 2012", in Parliament. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha, which has been referred by the House to the Standing Committee of the Parliament.

Brief on Survey of Manual Scavengers and their Dependents

In pursuance to the Registrar General of India's House listing and Housing Census 2011, which, inter alia, reported the existence of 26.06 lakh insanitary latrines (12.76 lakh in rural and 13.30 lakh in urban areas), the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, with the Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as its co-Chairman. The Committee in its report dated 19.6.2012, recommended that since a survey of the manual scavengers in the rural areas of the country is already being undertaken as a part of the Socio-Economic Castes Census (SECC), the survey of manual scavengers may be undertaken in the statutory towns only. The scope of the survey would be limited to the 3546 statutory cities/towns (out of a total of 4041) where the Census 2011 has pointed out the existence of insanitary latrines. The Committee also recommended that before conducting the full survey in all the statutory towns, a pilot survey may be undertaken in selected areas.

Accordingly, in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee, the Ministry has taken action for conducting a pilot survey in one district each of five States/UT viz., Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, NCT of Delhi and West Bengal. An orientation meeting was organized on 16.10.2012, at New Delhi with the Pr. Secretaries/Secretaries of the concerned States and the District Collectors of the concerned districts to make them aware about the process of the pilot survey and to sensitize them about the importance of doing it in a time bound manner. Thus the process of pilot survey has started on 16.10.2012.

The D/o SJ&E also organized a meeting on 18.10.2012 to discuss the modalities for development of an application software and database for the survey, with the Director General NIC, representative of Bharat Electronics Ltd. and Ministries of Rural Development and Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, as they have the requisite experience regarding the application software and the databases being used in the Socio-Economic Caste Census. The DG NIC has been requested to, inter alia, have the necessary software developed for the survey, besides providing other related support. The matter is under progress.

Revision of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995 (PoA Rules) have been revised. The most significant component of these revisions related to enhancing the minimum scale of relief for victims of atrocity. The existing rates (between Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 2,50,000/-) of relief to the victims of atrocity, their family members and dependents have been increased by 150% to between Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 5,00,000/-. These have also been circulated to the states/UTs, with a request to implement the same.

Enhancing the Authorized equity share of the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFCDC)

The authorized share capital of NSKFCDC has been enhanced from Rs.300.00 crore to Rs. 600.00 crore by the Government in January, 2012. These would enable the Corporation to cover additional number of SafaiKaramcharis under its Schemes for enabling them to undertake income generating activities etc.

Backward Classes Development

During the calendar year, 2012, 8.98 lakh post-matric and 14.62 lakh pre-matric students belonging to OBCs have been given scholarships under Post matric and Pre-matric Scholarship Schemes of the Ministry respectively.

Around 1.4 lakh persons belonging to OBCs were given concessional loans under various schemes of the National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFCDC) during the period from 1st January, 2012 to 30th November, 2012, as per the details given below:

Marketing support was provided to Artisans belonging to OBC Categories by the Ministry by organizing various exhibitions and fairs for their products:

- Shilpotsav-2012 Exhibition at World Trade Centre Expo Centre, Mumbai from 18th-22nd January, 2012 wherein 13 artisans from 03 States participated with handicraft items.
- Surajkund Craft Mela at Faridabad, Haryana from 1st -15th February, 2012 wherein beneficiaries, artisans/handicraft persons participated to display their products and handicrafts.
- Shilpotsav at Kolkata from 18th-27th February, 2012.
- Shilpotsav-2012 on behalf of the Ministry of SJ&E at DilliHaat, opposite INA market, New Delhi from 1-11th November, 2012.
- IITF-2012 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi from 14-27th November, 2012.

National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC)

In pursuance to the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) 1999, the National Council for Older Persons (NCOP) was last reconstituted on 1.8.2005 for a tenure of five years. With a view to have a more definite structure, the Council was reconstituted and renamed as National Council for Senior Citizens (NCSrC) vide a Resolution dated 17.02.2012 to this effect which was published in the Gazette of India on 22.02.2012.

International Day for Older Persons (IDOP) celebrated on 1.10.2012

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment observed the International Day of Older Persons on 1st October 2012 on the Theme "Security for Senior Citizens". The Ministry in collaboration with HelpAge India, organized an Inter-generational Walkathon at the India Gate Lawns, Rajpath, New Delhi on the morning of 1st October, 2012. A function was organized at the Vigyan Bhavan wherein Vayoshresha the Sammans were conferred on eminent Senior Citizens and Institutions in recognition for their contribution towards the cause of the elderly. The Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Sushil Kumar Shinde, was the Chief Guest at the function. The Ministry also sponsored HelpAge India in organizing an Inter generational Walkathon in 9 State Capitals, namely, Chandigarh, Shimla, Jaipur, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Bhopal, Chennai, Mumbai and Ahmedabad and one important city Kochi on 1st October 2012. The Ministry also sponsored the Walkathon and Awareness Rally on the theme "Safety and Security of Senior Citizens" organized in Dehradun.

National Conference on Ageing held on 6th and 7th November, 2012

The first ever National Conference on Ageing was held in New Delhi on 6th and 7th November,

2012 with an objective to (a) sensitize all stakeholders on ageing issues, and (b) review the various interventions of Central Government, State Governments/ UT Administrations, NGOs and the Civil Society. The focus of the Conference was on best practices and to prepare a Plan of Action for more effective implementation of various programmes for the welfare of senior citizens.

Representatives from the concerned Central Government Ministries/ Departments; concerned departments of all State Governments and Union Territories, Human Rights Commissions, Planning Boards International Organizations like WHO, UNFPA, FAO, ILO, World Bank, ISSO, NGOs, reputed Academic Institutions, Senior Citizens Associations, Experts and Activists working in the field of senior citizens, etc. participated in the Conference.

Drug Abuse Prevention

Awareness Generation Programme about the ill-effects of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse The Ministry, in collaboration with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) started an awareness generation programme in 3000 villages of 10 Districts in the State of Punjab and 750 villages of 7 Districts in the State of Manipur. NYKS through its network of volunteers at the village level created awareness about the ill-effects of alcoholism and substances (drug) abuse among the rural masses, identified the addicts and organized de-addiction camps for these addicts.

The Ministry has also, in collaboration with the National Bal Bhavan, New Delhi, an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, carried out an awareness generation about the ill effects of drug abuse among the children in the age group of 12 to 16 years in the country through a series of activities like poster making, creative writing, lectures, rallies, nukkad natak, etc. at local, zonal and national level.

Advanced Pilot Survey on the extent, pattern and trends of drug abuse in the State of Maharashtra, Manipur and Punjab

On the request of the Ministry, a Pilot Survey on the extent, pattern and trends of drug abuse has been carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in March-April 2010 in the cities of Amritsar, Imphal and Mumbai using the method of network sampling. The survey was conducted with the help of NGOs identified by the Ministry. The main objective of the pilot survey was to test the efficacy of the sampling design and survey instrument to be adopted for a national survey.

As the draft report of the pilot survey did not give a realistic picture of the prevalence of drug abuse, it was decided that on the basis of experience gained during the first pilot survey, an advanced pilot survey for 3 States viz. Punjab, Maharashtra and Manipur be conducted in which the left out groups like street children, homeless and educational institutions should form part of the sample to be surveyed. Accordingly, NSSO has been requested to carry out the survey.

Celebration of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26th June, 2012

The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was observed on 26th June, 2012. The main function for observance of this day was presided over by the Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment. Shri Shri Ajay Maken, Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports, attended the function as the Chief Guest. Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment along with other officials and dignitaries also attended the function.

On this Occasion, the message of the UN Secretary General was read by the Representative UNODC, Regional Office South Asia, Ms Cristina Albertin. An Audio Visual Presentation by the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) on awareness generation Project going on in the States of Punjab and Manipur was made. An audio visual presentation was also made by the National Bal Bhawan on the awareness generation programme undertaken by them. A cultural programme was presented by the artistes of the North Zone Culture Centre Chandigarh and the North East Zone Culture Centre Dimapur. Prizes were distributed to the children of the National Bal Bhawan who were winners of the competitions organized as a part of the awareness generation.

Department of Disability Affairs

Creation of a new Department of Disability Affairs

A new Department of Disability Affairs has been set up vide Cabinet Secretariat's notification dated 12.05.2012. The Department has been allocated twenty five (25) subjects. Creation of a new Department would ensure greater focus on policy matters to effectively address disability issues. Having a separate budget would help in strengthening existing schemes, formulation of new schemes as also promotion of technological innovation in the sector. It would further boost greater coordination among stakeholders, organizations, state governments and related central ministries.

New Draft Legislation on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PwD Act) has been in force for over 15 years. In view of the need to review it and harmonize its provision with United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Ministry constituted an experts committee, which submitted its report to the Ministry on 30.06.2011. The draft bill was uploaded on the Ministry's website for comments. The Ministry also initiated consultations with 17 Central Ministries and Departments on provisions of the draft Bill concerning them. Based on the inputs received, a draft Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2012 has been prepared and circulated in September, 2012 to all State Governments/Union Territories for their comments. The Bill will be introduced in the Parliament, after due consultations with the State Governments and other Stakeholders.

Ministry of Women and Child Development YEAR END REVIEW 2012

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, came into existence as a separate Ministry with effect from 30 January, 2006. It is the nodal Ministry for all matters relating to women and children. The prime functions of the Ministry include promoting the survival, protection, development and participation of women and children in a holistic manner. The following have been the significant achievements of the Ministry in 2011-2012.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

The health and security of the country's children is integral to any vision for its progress and development. One of the issues marring the vision for the country's children is the evil of child sexual abuse, and a special law - the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 - was passed by Parliament in May, 2012 to address this issue. The Act received the President's assent on 19th June 2012 and was notified in the Gazette of India for public information on 20th June, 2012. The Act came into force on 14th of November, 2012, along with the rules framed under the Act. The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years. It provides precise definitions for different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. The Act provides for stringent punishment graded as per the gravity of the offence, with a maximum term of rigorous imprisonment for life for certain offences, and fine.

In keeping with the best international child protection standards, the Act provides for mandatory reporting of sexual offences. It also prescribes punishment for a person if he provides false information with the intention to defame any person, including a child. Most importantly, the Act provides for child-friendly procedures for reporting of offences, recording of evidence, investigation and trial.

Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government. The rules framed under the Act provide for qualifications and experience of interpreters, translators, special educators, and experts; arrangements for care and protection and emergency medical treatment of the child; compensation payable to a child who has been the victim of a sexual offence; and the manner of periodic monitoring of the provisions of the Act by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights.

The rules rely on the structures established under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000, such as Child Welfare Committees and District Child Protection Units, to make arrangements for the care and protection of the child and to ensure that the child is not re-victimised in the course of investigation and trial. They also provide that where a child is taken to a medical facility for emergency medical care, no magisterial requisition or other documentation may be demanded by such facility prior to rendering medical care. The rules also lay down criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court, which includes the gravity of the offence; loss of educational opportunity or employment as a result of the offence; and disability, disease or pregnancy suffered as a consequence of the offence. The compensation may be awarded at the interim stage as well as upon completion of trial.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

The ICDS Scheme has been under implementation since 1975. The challenges arising out of the present status of child health and nutrition has necessitated introduction of new interventions:

- During the year more than 97 projects and 14486 AWCs made operational.
- Proposal for Strengthening & Restructuring ICDS Scheme approved by the CCEA on 24.9.2012 and Administrative approval issued on 22.10.2012. The roll out is in process in the 200 identified

high burden districts.

- The IDA-assisted 'ICDS Systems strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project' (ISSNIP) approved by the CCEA on 4 th October 2012 for a total outlay of Rs. 2893 crore (with IDA share of Rs. 2023 crore equivalent to US\$ 450 million) for a seven year period starting from the effectiveness of the project with an estimated cost of about Rs. 681.71 crore for phase 1 (3 years) and Rs. 2211.23 crore for phase 2 (4 years). The agreement with the World Bank was signed on 5.11.2012 and the project effectiveness has been notified on 26.11.2012 by the Department of External Affairs.
- A framework for multi-sectoral programme to address maternal and child malnutrition in selected 200 high burdened districts prepared. A follow up meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary, PMO and it was decided to re-visit the concept in view of limited resources and thereafter process EFC and approvals.
- A nation-wide Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign against malnutrition was launched by the Hon'ble President of India at Vigyan Bhawan on 19th November 2012.
- Finalisation of Draft ECCE Policy, Framework and field testing - National Consultation to finalise the Policy held on 29th October, 2012. Finalisation and approval of competent authority for draft ECCE policy is under process. For pilot testing process of National ECE Curriculum, Orientation workshop held for the States participating in the pilot test on 30-31 August 2012, state-specific (contextual) curriculum developed, training of functionaries is being conducted to develop their skills for transacting the curriculum of AWCs. Pilot testing of curriculum to commence from December, 2012.
- Roll out of revised MIS – For roll-out of revised MIS in States/UTs, 22 States/UTs has been provided with state-specific print-ready formats of revised AWC Registers in local languages for printing of AWC Registers and Report formats. Three states viz. Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have completed the printing. Eleven states have initiated printing process and are at various stages of completion.
- IVRS based monitoring of AWC key indicators – For piloting of IVRS based monitoring of AWCs in select projects in 21 states, as part of National Resource Platform (NRP), information from AWCs started and States are pursued to get higher saturation of data from AWCs in the system.
- Web-based on-line monitoring of AWCs- For pilot testing of web-based on-line monitoring in select projects in 12 states, coding for AWCs being assigned. Data Entry software developed for input of AW-MPR, AW-ASR, CDPO-MPR & CDPO-ASR. Initially, pilot started with one project in Delhi.
- APIP of 16 States deliberated and action initiated.
- A total of 59 Projects and 3143 AWCs and 2552 AoDs sanctioned.

Achievements under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)

The Integrated Child Protection Scheme is being implemented since 2009-10. All States have signed the MoU to implement the Scheme, except Jammu & Kashmir, and have commenced implementation. Considerable progress has been made in setting up of statutory structures, such as JJBs and CWCs, and existing institutional services and open shelters are being reviewed and upgraded for enhancement in quality of services. Dedicated Service Delivery Structure (SCPS, DCPUs and SARAs) have been set up by all major States and in most staff has already been appointed and trained. Locations covered by Childline services as well as number of registered adoption agencies have more than doubled after commencement of the implementation of ICPS. Already about 63,545 children are availing services under the Scheme.

As on date expenditure under the Scheme has been Rs. 163.51 crores.

The component wise status for which financial support is provided under ICPS is as follows:

2. Dedicated Service Delivery Structures

ICPS provides for setting up of a dedicated service delivery structure, with a cadre of personnel exclusively working on planning, implementation and monitoring of the Scheme, so that maximum benefits can accrue to the children. These include:

- 2.1 State Child Protection Society (SCPS): So far all States & UTs except Goa and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have set up SCPSs.
- 2.2 State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA): So far 24 States have set up SARAs in their State/UT.
- 2.3 District Child Protection Units: 568 DCPUs have been set up so far.

3. Statutory Support Services

ICPS provides grants to the State Governments/UT Administrations for setting up and maintenance of statutory bodies under the JJ Act. These include:

- 3.1 Child Welfare Committees (CWCs): Prior to implementation of ICPS 240 CWCs were functioning in the country. ICPS has given a fillip to this component and number of CWCs has gradually increased to 607.
- 3.2 Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs): Prior to implementation of ICPS 211 JJBs were functioning in the country which has gradually increased to 609 after introduction of ICPS.
- 3.3 Training of CWC and JJB members: A special thrust has been given to the training of CWC and JJB members through NIPCCD and State governments. In the current year so far, around 688 CWC members and 264 JJB members have been trained.

4.Care, Support and Rehabilitation Services

ICPS provides grants for setting up and running either by themselves or through voluntary sector, various types of rehabilitation services for children in difficult circumstances. These include:

- 4.1 Open Shelters in Urban and Semi Urban Areas: So far 157 open shelters have been provided financial assistance under ICPS. Prior to implementation of ICPS, 90 Street Children projects (now open shelters) were supported by the Ministry.
- 4.2 Institutional Services: 1037 homes till date have been supported under the Scheme. Prior to implementation of ICPS, 1268 Homes of various types were supported by the Ministry. The number of Homes supported has reduced as many Homes were found underutilised and rationalisation exercise has been undertaken.
- 4.3 Family Based Non-Institutional Care: Whereas institutional care would continue to be one of the major means for rehabilitation of children with no - or minimal - family support, ICPS seeks to promote family based care for all children through various interventions. These include:
 - i) Adoption: 222 SAAs have been provided support under ICPS. Prior to implementation of ICPS, 71 Shishu Grehs (now SAAs) were supported by the Ministry.
 - ii) Sponsorship & Foster Care Fund: The sponsorship programme was piloted in Odisha and Gujarat and the number of children covered were 17 and 279 respectively. However, from 2012-13 it has been decided to provide Sponsorship fund to all the States through District Child Protection Units. Similarly, the Foster Care programme was being piloted in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Jharkhand. However, the guidelines for Foster Care have not been finalised as the reports from these States are not encouraging.
- 4.4 Emergency Outreach Services through Childline: This service has been expanded to 264 cities/ districts of the country from 83 cities before implementation of ICPS.

5. Other initiatives:

- a) TrackChild: To enable monitoring of the progress of children availing services under ICPS on a realtime basis as well as facilitate matching of 'missing' and 'found' children, a software namely TrackChild, has been developed through NIC and its implementation has begun in fourteen pilot States after training of all stakeholders in these States including JJ/ICPS personnel as well as police officers. For this project, nodal officers have been appointed under the department implementing ICPS in 18 States and by the Police in all States.
- To fast track the implementation of this software, the Ministry in association with MHA and NIC organised an All India Conference on 30th October, 2012 in which senior police officers (responsible for tracing missing persons) and senior officers from the departments of women and child of the State Governments were present.
- b) Registration of Homes: In view of the recent spate of reports of abuse of children within institutions, considerable emphasis is being placed on registration of all Child Care Institutions under the JJ Act and formation of Inspection Committees, Management Committees and Children's Committees. Many States have confirmed that the process of identification and registration is well underway.
- c) Guidelines have been framed, piloted and finalised for Sponsorship and After Care components of the Scheme.
- d) Keeping in view various incidents of irregular transfer of children from one State to another and their misuse and abuse thereafter, Standard Operation Procedures for transfer of children under the JJ Act, from one location and another have been developed and circulated to all State Governments for implementation.
- e) Need assessment: The process of identifying the problems being faced by their children, and mapping the more susceptible areas, has been begun in most States. The States are also being urged, through regular interactions, to assess the needs of children through district-wise studies and draw up their implementation plans accordingly.
- f) Facilitating implementation by States/UTs: ICPS is a complex and multi-layered scheme and, therefore, the functionaries of both, the State/UT Governments, as well as the voluntary sector, require continuous hand-holding to understand various facets of the Scheme and implement them. The

Ministry has attempted to facilitate implementation of the Scheme through regular interactions with them.

- An inter-ministerial Project Approval Board has been set up under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, to review the implementation so far, appraise the financial proposals of the States/UTs and guide the States/ UTs for improving the services and 57 PAB meetings have been held so far.
- A separate web page has been created for ICPS containing details of the Scheme, relevant legislations and other important documents, minutes of PAB meetings, sanction letters, list of facilities supported under ICPS etc.
- To facilitate cross learning and document best practices, five regional consultations have been scheduled this year of which two have already been held.
- Tools for facilitating the work of functionaries, such as templates for preparation of District Child Protection Plans, online facility for submission of financial proposals and monitoring data have also been developed.

Achievements of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all-round development of women

It has the mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments. The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries.

In light with its mandate, the Mission has been named Mission Poorna Shakti, implying a vision for holistic empowerment of women. Progress of the NMEW till December, 2012 is as follows:

- Constitution of National Mission Authority (NMA) headed by the Prime Minister of India, in September, 2010, is at the apex of the NMEW
- National Resource Centre for Women (NRCW) functional with 31 gender experts
- 24 States have notified State Mission Authority (SMA)
- State Resource Centres for Women (SRCW) set up in 14 States
- Constitution of Inter Ministerial Co-ordination Committee (IMCC) to review and identify inter ministerial issues related to women requiring convergence on a continuous basis
- Constitution of Central Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister, Women and Child Development to monitor and assess the Mission's progress and to ensure that objectives of the Mission are met
- Pilot Convergence models in Dist. Pali, Rajasthan since Sep 17,2011 showing impressive results
- 2 Smaller scale Pilot convergence models launched in Dist. Kamrup, Assam
- Six Regional Conferences held with all the States & UTs governments during the months of February-April 2012
- Action Plan being prepared for 2013-2014
- PSK in Dist Jaintia hills, Meghalaya: Recruitment in process
- 11 thematic Pilots in collaboration with Partner Ministries, State Govts, CSOs launched on 18th Aug, 2012 which are showing progress
- Gender Convergence Officer (GCO) appointed by 8 Partner Ministries
- Charter of Collaboration signed and thematic convergence projects announced with eight partner organizations on 14th November, 2012 during the Opening Ceremony of Vatsalya Mela, 2012 with UNDP (India), UN Women, South Asia Regional Office, UNESCO, (India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka), CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd., Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, IIT Delhi, FICCI – FLO & Women Power Connect.
- Consultation on Valuation of Women's Unpaid Work organized in November, 2012 with eminent economists, gender experts and representatives from 14 partner Ministries.
- A Series of three consultations held on "Designing a Social Inclusion Plan for Socially Marginalized and Excluded Population"
- NMEW participation in Vatsalya Mela, 2012 and grand success of unique model of community participation named Nari ki Choupal
- Literacy Mission Preraks, Anganwadi, ASHA, Poorna Shakti Kendra village co-ordinators and other grass root level workers to be termed as Ahimsa Messengers to work towards prevention of violence against women
- Successful completion of Orientation programme for Nodal Officers of SRCW in December, 2012
- A Stakeholder Dialogue held in collaboration with UN Women and Planning Commission on "No Policy is Gender Neutral" and Launch of 8 Policy Briefs in December, 2012.

Collaborating with 5 Partner Ministries:

Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)

- Research Study of MGNREGA to identify low work participation of women
- Visit to Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) districts of Kerala & Andhra Pradesh to study best practices for convergence

Ministry of Labour & Employment (MOLE)

- Two joint studies on " Skill development programmes for women with different Ministries & their impact on women's employment and identifying gaps"
- Identifying constraints and barriers in women availing and accessing vocational training institutes under DGE&T along with identification of new trades"

Ministry of Law & Justice (MoLJ)

- Action Research proposal on Access to Justice by Women in 7 districts in 5 North Eastern States to which either Schedule 6 Applies/ excluded under Article 371 A of the constitution

Ministry of Human Resources Development (MoHRD)

- Utilize the "Mahila Samakya" platform for building capacities of women
- Recommendations of study on "An assessment of convergence of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with selected Central and State Schemes" in Mewat district of Haryana shared with MHRD and Govt. of Haryana
- In-house Communication Needs Assessment Study of Saakshar Bharat, a centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to find out the gaps in the current communication strategy being used by the MHRD for the Saakshar Bharat programme and to suggest a more efficient and effective communication strategy for the same, so that more women at the grassroots enrol for the programme and are benefitted.

Ministry of Panchyati Raj (MOPR)

- Pilots to address Declining Child Sex Ratio in 12 gender critical districts. Recruitment process of Gender Convergence Officers for implementation of these projects is currently going on.

Action Research Studies:

- Completion of a study to develop a 'Communication Charter' based on Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Study with Breakthrough in order to chalk out a cohesive communication strategy to address the problem of female foeticide or 'Sex Selective Elimination' (SSE).
- Study on Access and Utilization of Government Schemes in Pali, Rajasthan
- Study with Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative (LC) on monitoring and evaluation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Best Practices Manual to be launched in December
- Review of concurrent evaluation reports on Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) to strengthen the program
- Study on 'Accessibility and utilization of basic services rendered to women of SC/ST community to meet their Rights and Entitlements. (Avinashlingam University, Coimbatore)
- Gender Atlas of India: A Geo-spatial Perspective (by Delhi University)
- Women and Multiple Vulnerabilities in an area of unrest: Key issues and challenges of Tribal women in Dumka and Jamtara of Jharkhand" (by PRIA)
- In-house assessment of Labour Laws and impact on female workforce participation
- Critical gender concerns of MGNREGA- Review of Research Studies

Activities in the Pipe Line

1. Scaling up the Poorna Shakti Kendra (PSK) model in 20 districts across the country and roll out 50 thematic pilots across the country. The thematic models will cover a range of issues concerning women, however major focus will be on addressing the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR). Districts showing declining CSR as per census 2011 will be targeted for focussed interventions.
2. A mass movement to address Violence Against Women called "Ahimsa Messenger", using the platform of convergence projects, both the PSK models and thematic pilots will be initiated. The mass movement in coordination with multiple stakeholders will involve men, women and young persons at the grassroots levels to undertake the mission of spreading the message about domestic violence, dowry, female foeticide, child marriage, trafficking of women and girls for commercial sexual and other forms of exploitation.
3. Raise important issues concerning women in the State Mission Authority (SMA), under the Chief Ministers of respective States to bring about Policy and Programmatic changes as shown by the States of Goa and West Bengal.
4. Strengthen and build capacities of the State Resource Centres for Women (SRCW) to develop

detailed Action Plan for the activities in the State.

5. Implement initiatives for training PSK coordinators on Legal Rights of Women in 150 Gram Panchayats of Dist Pali, Rajasthan.

Achievements under the IGMSY and SABLA schemes:

Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)

- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) a Conditional Cash Transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme introduced in the year 2010-11.
- The Scheme envisages providing cash directly to P&L women during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling specific conditions. The scheme addresses short term income support objectives with long term objective of behaviour and attitudinal change and also attempts to partly compensate for wage loss to Pregnant & lactating women both prior to and after delivery of the child.
- The beneficiaries are paid Rs. 4000/ in three instalments between the second trimester of pregnancy till the child attains the age of 6 months on fulfilling specific conditions related to maternal and child health (All Government/PSUs (Central & State) employees are excluded from the scheme as they are entitled for paid maternity leave).
- Anganwadi worker (AWW) and Anganwadi helper (AWH) receives an incentive of Rs.200/- and Rs. 100/- respectively per P & L woman after all the due cash transfers to the beneficiary are complete.
- In 2012-13, as per information furnished by States/UTs, progressive achievement up to 30.09.2012 is 2.6 lakh.

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – Sabla

- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls – Sabla was introduced on a pilot basis in 2010 and is operational in 205 selected districts across the country. Sabla aims at all-round development of adolescent girls of 11-18 years with a focus on all out-of-school adolescent girls. The scheme has two major components Nutrition and Non Nutrition Component.
- Nutrition of 600 calories and 18-20 grams of protein per beneficiary per day for 300 days in a year is given to 11-14 years out of school girls and to all girls of 14 -18 years (out of school and in school girls).
- In the Non Nutrition Component, out of school adolescent girls of 11-18 years are being provided IFA supplementation, health check-up & referral services, nutrition & health education, ARSH counselling/guidance on family welfare, life skill education, guidance on accessing public services and vocational training (only 16-18 year old adolescent girls).
- Against the budgetary outlay of Rs 517 crore for 2012-13, total releases made to the States/UTs is Rs. 265 crore .
- Against the target of one crore beneficiaries for nutrition component under Sabla in 2012-13, as per information furnished by States/UTs, progressive achievement up to 30.09.2012 is 83.14 lakh.

The other achievements and initiatives taken by the M/O WCD are as follows:

1. Constitution of the High Level Committee to study the Status of Women

The Government constituted a High Level Committee on Status of Women in February 2012 to undertake a comprehensive study to understand the current status of women and evolve appropriate policy interventions based on a contemporary assessment of women's needs. The Committee is mandated to give its recommendations in two year's time.

2. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2012

The constitutional guarantee of gender equality includes protection from sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity. To provide a safe and secure environment to women at the workplace, a Bill was piloted by this Ministry for protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on 3rd September, 2012. The Bill is now expected to be taken up for consideration and passing in the Rajya Sabha in the Budget Session, 2013.

The Bill once enacted, would improve women's participation in the workforce resulting in their empowerment and inclusive growth.

3. Amendments in the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (IRWA), 1986

This Ministry has proposed amendments in the IRWA, 1986 to cover newer forms of communication such as internet and satellite based communication, multi-media messaging, cable television etc and to make the Act more effective by enhancing the quantum of punishment for violating provisions of the Act. The Bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha in the Winter Session of the Parliament.

4. Measures taken to address problems of declining child sex ratio

The Ministry celebrated the National Girl Child Day on 24.1.2012, during which inter alia a Panel discussion on reasons for and measures to be taken for arresting the declining child sex ratio, measured as the number of girl children in the age group of 0 to 6 years as compared to boys, was held. The Ministry set up a Sectoral Innovation Council in 2012 to suggest measures to improve CSR, which has since given its report.

Recently the Ministry has also set up an Inter-Ministerial Working Group to draw up a National Plan of Action for improving CSR in a time bound manner, which had its first meeting on 26.12.2012.

5. Core Group on Child Marriage

A Core Group on Child Marriage was set up by this Ministry in February 2012 under whose oversight, a National Consultation on Child Marriage was held in May 2012. The Core Group has,in December 2012,come out with a draft National Strategy to address the problem of Child Marriage.

6. Initiatives on Prevention of Trafficking and Related matters

The Central Advisory Committee on Trafficking held a meeting in May 2012.

A number of meetings of the Project Sanctioning Committee to clear the pendency of project proposals under Ujjwala Scheme were held, including through video conferencing.

The Ministry proactively filed an application, [in Criminal Appeal Case No 135/2010]- Budhadev Karmaskar case] for modification of Supreme Court panel term of reference that sought to make conditions "conductive" for sex workers who continue voluntarily in the profession, and got a clarification from the Apex Court that the Supreme court is not in favour of legalising prostitution.

The Ministry set up an Inter-ministerial Group to suggest amendments in Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956. The IMG has submitted its report on 7 December 2012.

7. Gender Responsive Parliament

In September 2012, for the first time, this Ministry has suggested a definition of Gender Sensitive Parliament as input of India for further consideration and debate by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Deathbed theory dreamt by an Indian maths genius is finally proved correct - almost 100 years after he died

Theory came to Srinivasa Ramanujan in a dream on his deathbed in 1920 - but has never been proved & Discovery could now be used to explain the behaviour of parts of a black hole

Researchers have finally solved the cryptic deathbed puzzle renowned Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan claimed came to him in dreams. While on his death-bed in 1920, Ramanujan wrote a letter to his mentor, English mathematician G. H. Hardy, outlining several new mathematical functions never before heard of, along with a hunch about how they worked. Decades years later, researchers say they've proved he was right - and that the formula could explain the behaviour of black holes. 'We've solved the problems from his last mysterious letters,' Emory University mathematician Ken Ono said.

'For people who work in this area of math, the problem has been open for 90 years,' Ramanujan, a self-taught mathematician born in a rural village in South India, spent so much time thinking about math that he flunked out of college in India twice, Ono said.

Ramanujan's letter described several new functions that behaved differently from known theta functions, or modular forms, and yet closely mimicked them. Functions are equations that can be drawn as graphs on an axis, like a sine wave, and produce an output when computed for any chosen input or value.

Ramanujan conjectured that his mock modular forms corresponded to the ordinary modular forms earlier identified by Carl Jacobi, and that both would wind up with similar outputs for roots of 1.

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