

The Weekly

## OBSERVER

## Stock Markets at 20,000; India still hungry

India is now a country where its stock market has crossed 20,000 points, inflation is under control, where we are on the road to achieving economic stability...but another part of this reality is that one in every two children under three years of age goes hungry.

Intermittent media coverage of a village showing poverty, hunger, and malnourished children may appear in the newspaper one day and the next morning we may see a politician posing with the masses, leaving readers wondering whether this is genuine concern or another PR skill.

No apt solution has been devised to eradicate these problems. Though out of few plans being adopted to find a solution, 'anganwadi' was one. The main aim was to provide children with at least one square meal a day. But along with this effort, another thing that cannot be escaped unseen is the fact that there is no assurance that after this one healthy meal, they would get another meal for the day or not. In a country like India, it is possible for those children to still sleep on an empty stomach after that one meal of the day.

Many villages are emerging with the trend of self-help groups to empower women. But again there happens to be no fruitful consequence of saving this money. Many men take the money their wives bring home, get drunk and make life more miserable for their families.

Children work in factories round the clock to contribute to the meagre family income. So what is the solution? It is really easy to say that the population will soon be under control. But it is equally difficult to convince the people for the same, since children are the biggest asset to them. They prefer to produce more children rather

than die of hunger.

And why not? They are entitled to live in dignity.

No matter how high the sensex goes, it seems that misery and hardship in rural India prevails.

The United Nations' Food & Agriculture Organization in 2006 explained that its State of Food Insecurity in the World report confirmed yet again that we have the largest number of undernourished people in the world. The 2004 edition of the report has shown that India had added more people to the 'newly hungry' in the planet than the rest of the world together. Statistics from poorer nations weren't as bad. Between the years 1995-97 and 2000-02, hunger grew in India at a time when it fell in Ethiopia.

So looking at these ground realities and not just celebrating our success stories in the international arena, it's time to acknowledge and begin addressing them.

Think of how many times we visit McDonald's, Pizza Hut, and Café Coffee Day. But it is really thought provoking if we put ourselves in the shoes of those people who spend equal number of days finding food in the scraps we throw in the bin.

Therefore, it is still a long way to go. Three square meals for all is still a dream for many Indians who work hard to fill our stomachs. So the fact that should not be forgotten is that even farmers and their families are human beings, they too feel hungry and even they deserve their basic needs to be fulfilled.

Instead of spending all the energy and attention on other issues of the world, our real heroes (farmers) too deserve attention and the chance to good health. Our mandarins should expend their energies on a better farm produce.

### Letters to the Editor

Dear Students,

Articles are on interesting topics. What they lack, in my opinion, is sufficient depth. I guess it is difficult for you to find sufficient time to carry out more investigation. But you are bringing out topics that our dailies fail to write.

Make sure that your articles are balanced and objective. Keep your personal opinion/prejudices in check unless it is an opinion column. However, do not be shy to bring out the truth if verifiable or factual.

Best,

Abraham George (Dean, IJNM)

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## Shunning Chromosome X

ANUYA ULPE

Indians are heading towards polyandry says the United Nations. We have known that forever but have had only a marginal increase in numbers of women. From 927 females for 1000 males (1991 census), we are now at 933 (2001) while the world was at 986 females against 1000 males in 2000.

Due to prenatal gender determination done illegally, we are killing the girl child before she sees the light of day. Amniocentesis and ultrasound are two such methods. Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act in 1994 is supposed to have made sex determination and abortion illegal

but hardly any cases are reported, let alone booked.

In addition to this, people have a nonchalant attitude and therefore nothing stops them from snuffing out a life that was conceived without planning.

The prejudice we hold against baby girls will never change as long as we have easy access to adoption centers. Not wanting to take the responsibility of raising her, she is put her up for adoption. How is that any different from killing her? She is being abandoned anyway.

Also, there is widespread and deep-rooted gender discrimination, from which more evils arise. An unborn girl can garner so much

resentment. This, even before she reaches the stage of "eve-teasing" and sexual assault.

The irony is that in some years there won't be any 'good' girls for our soul breadwinners to marry. There won't be enough sundar, susheel and ghareloo (beautiful, gentle and homely) girls for the boys to hitch. The poorer men won't have much of a choice and crimes against women will only get more horrendous and frequent.

Prohibit sex selection and spread awareness about the girl child. These measures will go in vain if we do not change the way the girl child is perceived - a tiny, innocent being that grows up only to be labelled a liability for life.

### Make way for the new gas!

SHILPA KRISHNAN

In a startling twist to the Indo-US nuclear deal, cabinet minister Laloo Prasad Yadav provided a solution to the current imbroglio. He proposed an idea that no true Indian would refuse. Gobar gas. Laloo Prasad Yadav has made a generous offer and agreed to donate the dung of his 5-lakh buffaloes for the manufacture of the said gas. Top energy experts have studied this plan and decided that it is foolproof. Not only does it produce more energy than would be produced by the nuclear deal, it also provides direct employment to 5 lakh families of Bihar and indirect employment to many others.

Rabri Devi, Mr. Yadav's wife, has drafted the plan. Her children Jalebi, Rosgulla, Gulabjamun, Kajubarfi and Besan laddoo have agreed to volunteer in the execution of the plan. While Jalebi is in charge of making a

huge stable in the outskirts of Patna to accommodate the buffaloes, Rosgulla will be taking care of their grazing schedule. Gulabjamun, Kajubarfi and Besan laddoo are in charge of maintaining the stable and ensuring proper hygiene. Mr. Yadav, meanwhile has graciously agreed to take care of the fodder scam.

In addition to the gobar gas idea, Ms. Mayawati has propounded a new idea. She says that there is a lot of energy that can be drawn from human flatulence. In a meeting of the Fart association of India, Ms. Mayawati addressed the issue and said that there is great potential for energy production from human farts. Animal farts too can be used. However, a separate plant will have to be set up for that.

This plan too has been studied by the energy commission and is said to be feasible. It has been

proposed that fart collection machines will be set up at all street corners. All the public has to do is go to the machine, place their posterior in the place meant for it and produce as explosive farts as possible. Ms. Mayawati has personally assured to contribute 12 farts a day. She says that all her party officials will be doing the same. The fart machines connected to the main plant. A tube will connect the machine to the plant and the gas will pass through these tubes.

Studies are being made to extract energy from burps and hiccups as well. At the rate it is progressing, India might soon be claim be a self-reliant energy-producing nation. Considering that it has a population of over one billion, very soon, we might be able to export energy drawn from flatulence as well. So lets begin this noble venture with a prayer to the Gods of fart.

### Forcibly orphaned, almost smuggled

AYESHA ALEEM

This October, 17 members of the French charity organisation Zoe's Ark were charged with child abduction by the Chad government. They were accused of smuggling children from the country, citing that they were orphans of the Darfur conflict. According to the UN, virtually all of the children had been living with family members in villages.

The aid group was working in the Abéché region of Chad—the base of operations for dozens of aid groups—to raise awareness of the crisis in Darfur and provide aid for children affected by it.

When a reader comes across a story such as this, they're divided between supporting the Chad government that claims the foreign aid group is interfering in matters that they don't need to, and those who are disillusioned with the corrupt system existent in a country that prevents them from providing the most vulnerable victims of turmoil with fast relief.

In a war-ravaged country, children are one of the first to suffer. Adults always have more options available to them for survival. Children, who are dependent on others for even their basic requirements often find

themselves helpless in the face of adversity.

According to a survey by Berlin-based organization Transparency International in 2006, Chad ranks 156 among 163 countries, making it one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Therefore, processing of documentation that will allow the children to be legally taken out of the country and placed in healthier environment would take time and there is always the possibility that it may never become a reality. Meanwhile, it is the children who bear the consequences of an unjust system that denies them essentials like nutritious food, clean water and hygienic sanitation facilities.

On the other hand, several cases have been reported in the past of perpetrators smuggling children into foreign countries, stating reasons of rehabilitation and adoption. The children find themselves trapped in vile circumstances of debilitating exploitation such as trafficking, physical and sexual abuse.

The aid organization had claimed that the children were sick, hungry and abandoned, and had raised money from European families to rescue the children and place them temporarily in French homes. But checkups showed the children to be

in good condition and well-fed in the context of Chad.

The scandal has caused outrage and was condemned across Africa, raking up bitter precedents when slave traders, missionaries and colonial officials blithely separated African families with little regard for their wishes.

The majority of the children came from Chadian villages along the border with Sudan, but aid officials were not able to say if the children were Chadians or Sudanese.

The long and porous border, and the violence in neighbouring Darfur, has pushed Sudanese and Chadian residents into each other's territory. This makes tracing the children's families difficult. Some of the children old enough to talk (most of them were under the age of 10) were interviewed. But little information regarding where they came from could be gathered from them.

At present, the children are at an Abéché orphanage, where they are being attended to by health and social workers, according to a spokesperson for a United Nations refugee agency.

Those formally charged, including airline employees, now face a minimum sentence of 20 years with hard labour.