



Business Acutities

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TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

DHAKA, Aug 31 (IPS) - After the recent student uprising in Bangladesh, and despite increased policing on the streets and amendments to the traffic laws, there has been criticism that things have not changed significantly enough to make the country's roads safer.



Ilias Kanchan, an actor and road safety activist, tells IPS that while the government was quick to observe 'Traffic Week' at the start of August, during which time the police had been actively inspecting vehicles and private cars for violations, it was not sufficient.

"The move was an eye wash. We notice the same public buses on the streets again driving without valid

road permits and driving licenses. Although the traffic police are checking and fining violators everyday, the scale of violations have not declined, which shows ignorance of the vehicle owners," Kanchan, who himself narrowly escaped injury in a road accident in 1989, tells IPS.

Kanchan has been advocating for safer roads under the Nirapad Sarak Chai (We Demand Safe Roads) campaign for the last 25 years, ever since his wife was killed in a tragic road accident.

About 3,000 to 5,000 student protesters took to the streets at the end of July and in early August, demanding safer roads and calling for order to be brought to the chaotic,



age-old public transportation system—one that is mostly dominated by private transport owners and workers.

The protests, the first of its kind by students in the history of this country, began after a bus crashed into students on the afternoon of Jul. 29, killing two and injuring many others. It sparked off violent protests across the capital Dhaka, a city of over 18 million people.



Shaken by the nationwide, fast-spreading student road blockade movement, the government bowed to the ultimatum of demonstrators, agreeing to meet their demands in phases.

Quick changes to the laws

The government promised safer roads and a clampdown against illegal bus drivers. And the country's relevant traffic departments are already implementing some of the demands, which include:

- The vigorous checking of vehicles for roadworthiness;
- Increasing the number of police check posts;
- Strictly fining offenders;
- Punishing drivers and owners for driving unroadworthy vehicles on the roads.
- The government also amended the country's traffic laws..

In early August, cabinet approved the Road Transport Act 2018, which changed the maximum sentence for death in a road accident to five years without bail, from a previous maximum of three years with bail. Fines ranging from USD 50 to USD 200 for speeding and other traffic offences were also imposed. The act will soon be passed into law by parliament.

UNICEF
United Nations
International Children's
Emergency Fund

A Journey From a Nepali Village to the Upper Ranks of UNICEF



BRIGHTON, UK, Aug 28 (IPS) - Sir Arthur Richard Jolly, an eminent development economist, is Honorary Professor and former Director of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK.

Kul Gautam's memoir is everything which one hopes for from a good biography. There are difficulties all along the way, obstacles and challenges overcome and a vision pursued with

extraordinary persistence in spite of everything.

There are successes and triumphs, many of real significance. And there are lessons to be learned, albeit presented with self-deprecating gentleness and modesty.

Kul Gautam's story has all of this and much more, set in a journey from a poor village in one of the world's poorest countries to operating at the highest level, negotiating with government leaders at World Summits of the United Nations.

Collaborating with Kul in my role as Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, from 1982-1995, was not only rewarding professionally, it cemented a friendship that has endured to the present.



Kul's early life and teenage years are eye-opening for those of us born in middle-class comfort in the richer parts of the world. Kul had to break free from the constraints of his Nepali village in order to train as a priest – which itself involved travelling miles away to India, the first five days on foot.



There, seemingly established in Sanskrit and religious studies, his intellectual potential for more serious education was spotted and he left for secondary school back in Nepal. With good fortune, the teachers at his progressive public school helped him build an impressive

academic record and he was offered a full scholarship at Dartmouth College in the United States.

SMALL BUSINESS

How Accurate Information About the Weather is Yielding Resilience for Zambia's Smallholders

PEMBA, Zambia, Aug 30 (IPS) - Just having better information about when and for how long it will rain is proving the difference between success and failure among smallholder farmers in southern Zambia. Empowered with timely information about the weather ahead of the 2017/18 farming season, 56-year-old Fainess Muzyamba of Pemba district, ending up ditching her traditional maize crop for sweet potatoes.



In Zambia, 73 percent of farmers or 1.5 million of the country's 28 million people are smallholders, cultivating less than two hectares of land. Erratic rainfall is an additional burden to challenges such as fragile soils and poor access to agricultural inputs, markets and improved agricultural practices.

She told IPS:

"It is for this reason that we think the Rural Resilience Initiative we are implementing with partners needs to be scaled up to empower smallholders to create resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts by discouraging mono-cropping of maize and promoting diversification."



In partnership with Meteorological Department of Zambia, WFP "has installed two Automatic Weather stations to improve upstream and downstream dissemination and utilisation of agro-met information," Allan Mulando of WFP Zambia told IPS. "WFP has also installed 20 manual rain gauges manned by trained local farmers and used by the community to make timely decisions on planting."



Farmers take and then share readings from the gauges with the meteorological office, field project and government extension officers, and fellow farmers for planning purposes.

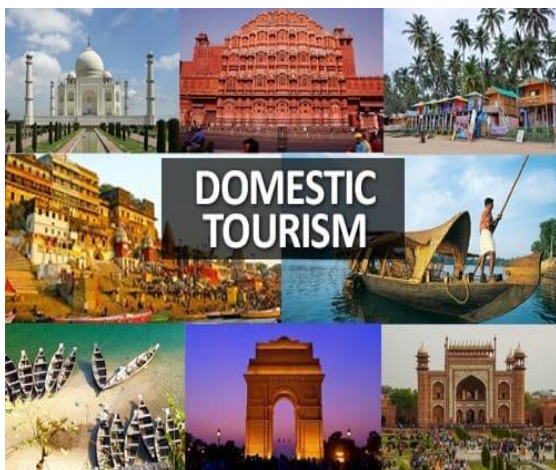
In their farmers' clubs, lead and follower farmers gather to discuss parameters such as the right soil

moisture content for planting. By comparing their own locally-obtained information and the broad-based national and regional weather forecast, they are able to make projections of what to expect, thereby helping them to plan what and when to plant.

A success in a season of disaster

When she compares the average yields of other farmers in the area, Muzyamba believes her story is a remarkable turnaround in a season that has largely been a disaster for the majority of smallholders due to poor rainfall.

DOMESTIC TOURISM



Ahead of August 15: Advance

bookings by tourists rise by 50 percent

Ahead of August 15, advance bookings to popular tourist destinations have seen an increase of 50 per cent, according to data. Bookings have been made at least a month in advance.



Travel websites claimed that although August 15 is a mid-week holiday, the bookings have seen an increase. Balu Ramachandran, Head – Air & Distribution, Cleartrip, said: “Given that Independence Day is on a Wednesday this year, we saw that number of bookings has increased, both for the weekend prior to and after August 15. The number of air bookings, at least 15 days in advance,

has increased by 49 per cent for the travel days close to August 15.”

Domestic destinations that have seen an increase in bookings are Kochi, Kolkata, Goa, Shirdi, Visakhapatnam, Patna and Munnar. Bangkok, Colombo, Singapore, Chicago, and Krabi are the leading international ones.



Travel websites like Expedia and Avis, claimed that while usual bookings for extended weekends would start two weeks prior to the dates, tourists started booking hotels at least a month in advance this time. There has been a 30 per cent increase in queries related to bookings as well.

“Midweek holidays do not bother the new-era travelers anymore as they are ready to take the

opportunity of the extra two days,” said Kapil Goswamy, chairman and managing director, BigBreaks.com. He said travelers, of both the young and older generations, are utilising the mid-week break for exploring longer holiday options.”There has been a behavioral change, as the new trends indicate that people are no longer afraid of planning ahead, applying for leave and using the opportunity by embarking upon a journey from Friday evening to Wednesday,” he added.

Websites like Avis are offering one-way rentals (to Mumbai and Pune) that helps people save 60 per cent of the cost. Airlines like Jet Airways had offered discounts of up to 30 per cent on economy and premiere fares.

“Monsoon has hit the country right on time and the weather is cooler. Places like Munnar, Kumarakom, Alleppey, Panchgani, Lonavala and Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra, Coorg and Agumbe in Karnataka and Kodaikanal in Tamil

Nadu are trending. For international travelers, Sri Lanka, Phuket and Bangkok in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Maldives, Dubai, Paris and Venice in Italy, Prague (Czech Republic), Vienna in Austria, and Budapest (Hungary) have become hot spots,” said Goswamy.

IMF

India's Strong Economy Continues to Lead Global Growth



August 8, 2018

India’s economy is picking up and growth prospects look bright—partly thanks to the implementation of recent policies, such as the nationwide goods and services tax. As one of the world’s fastest-growing

economies—accounting for about 15 percent of global growth—India’s economy has helped to lift millions out of poverty.



IMF Country Focus interviewed Ranil Salgado, the head of the IMF team for India, to discuss a few of these key recommendations, as well as the report’s overall findings.

Looking at this year’s economic assessment, you’ve likened the Indian economy to an elephant starting to run. Can you explain what you mean?

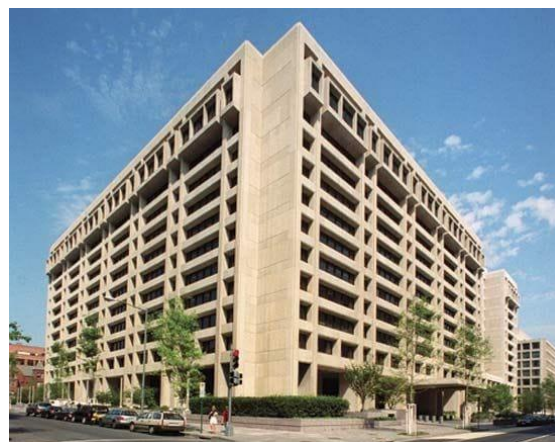
India’s economy is gaining momentum, thanks to the implementation of several recent noteworthy policies—such as the

enactment of the long-awaited goods and services tax, and the country opening up more to foreign investors. Therefore, we expect economic growth to pick up to about 7.3 percent for fiscal year 2018/19—meaning the year that runs from April of 2018 through March 2019—from 6.7 percent in the year prior. Meanwhile, inflation has edged higher, in part due to a reduction of economic slack.

To sustain and build on these policies and to harness the demographic dividend associated with a growing working-age population (which constitutes about two-thirds of the total population), India needs to reinvigorate reform efforts to keep the growth and jobs engine running. This is critical in a country where per capita income is about \$2,000 U.S. dollars, still well below that of other large emerging economies.

The recent cash shortages after the currency demonetization, as well as transitional costs from the introduction of the goods and

services tax weighed heavily on economic performance. Now that a



recovery is underway, how will the goods and services tax help the Indian economy?

The goods and services tax created a unified national market for the first time by lowering internal barriers to trade—effectively establishing a free trade agreement for a market of over 1.3 billion people. The tax is also expected to increase the amount of economic activity taking place in the formal sector of the economy—leading to better quality and more reliable jobs.