



SOUTH ASIAN NETWORK FOR SOCIAL & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Turning Point, August 2010 Issue, Vol. VI, No.2

Foreword

SANSAD wishes all its readers a very happy and prosperous march towards realizing goals of equitable and just society. We strongly believe, it's hard for one person to make changes or even just keep things going, but in partnership anything is possible! We are looking forward to cope with challenging times ahead in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development of people in the face of constraints imposed through financial crisis and climate change events in solidarity with other like minded people and organisations.

I would like to extend very warm greetings to our readers to the August 2010 edition of the SANSAD Newsletter. We have carefully chosen to avoid or at least limit political inferences, if any and all political views that appear in this publication are solely the opinion of the author and the author only. It is the intention of the author that issues highlighted in this and subsequent newsletters will spur the reader to greater action and become part of the global community for change. Please feel free to share this Newsletter with your friends.

We greatly welcome your comments.



News from South Asian Region

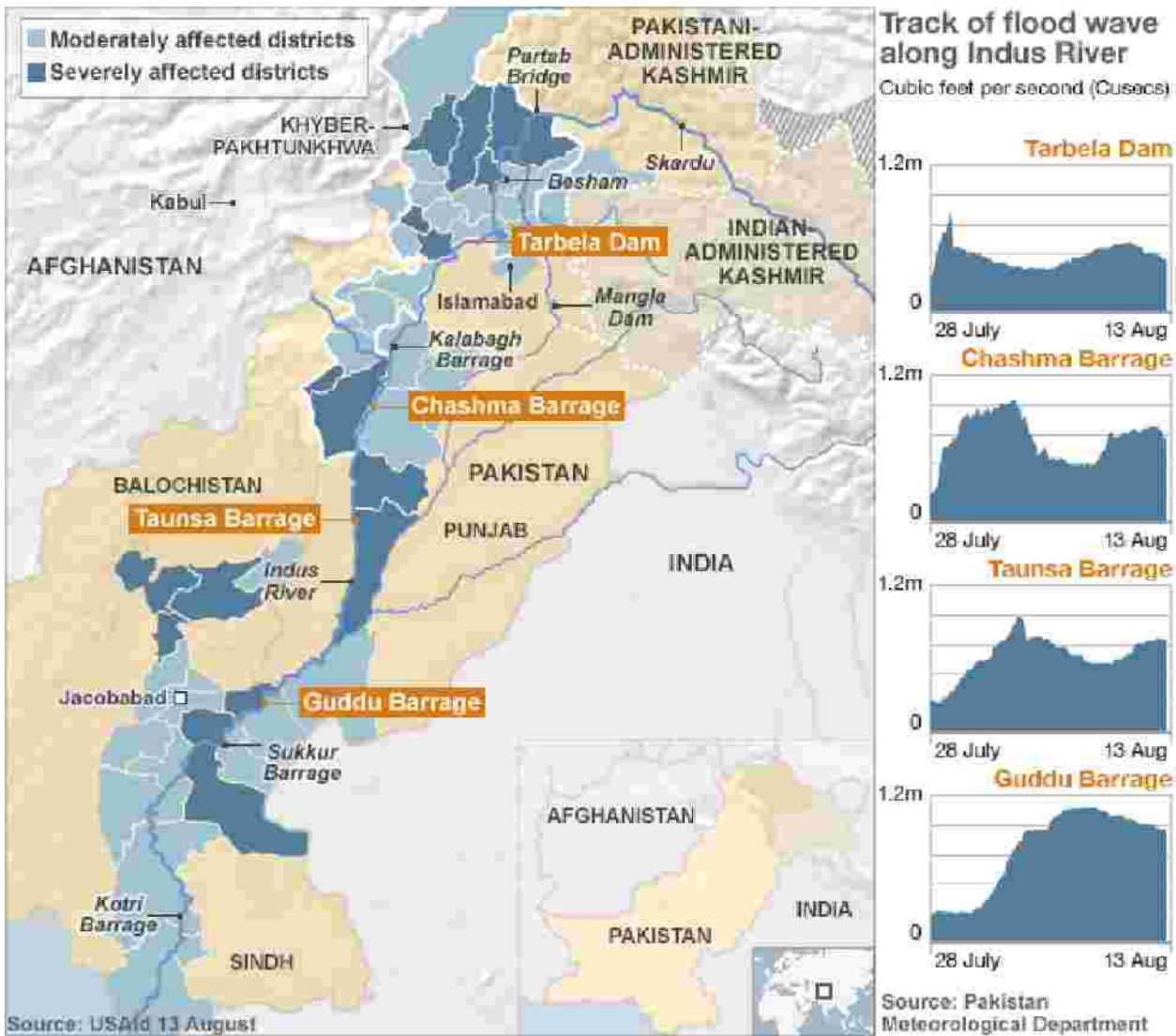
Floods in Pakistan

Pakistan has experienced its worst ever flooding in its history with an estimated 20 million people affected in Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh provinces. There have been many deaths and people reported missing along with many homeless and displaced. There is the danger of water-borne diseases and widespread damage to crops and the country's infrastructure. The floods moved south with all the inevitable destruction that came with them. Repairing roads, dams and power infrastructure will need large amounts of funds from the government. Pakistan's High Commissioner to Britain has said it could take up to five years and \$15bn for the country to recover.

The disaster is being used by various political groups (Islamic militant groups, the US and the government) to gain political credibility. Concerns have been made that the military would be overstretched with disaster relief and maintaining security. However, Pakistan's army spokesman Maj Gen Athar Abbas has assured that troops could cope with both relief work and security..

It has been suggested that the government has been slow to respond and that aid commitments from abroad have been slow and ungenerous. As of writing, only five countries have committed more than \$5m in new funding. Funds for the 2005 Pakistan earthquake attracted far more funding. Presumably this is a result of the changed global economic conditions but also there are worries that aid may be corrupted to the Taliban and not get through to the flood victims. Interestingly India has sent no aid and has no plans to do so. (STOP PRESS: India has decided to send \$5 million but Pakistan is deciding whether to accept it!)

Along with the Pakistan flood disaster there have been floods and mudslides in China and a heat-wave in Russia with serious forest fires. Taking all this, with the assertion by the the UN's World Meteorological Organization that this is the warmest year recorded, it is natural to wonder if these disasters are linked to climate change. It is possibly spurious to ascribe individual events to climate change, but there is certainly an unusual weather pattern this year. The jet stream, a band of high speed winds, is blowing faster than normal over Pakistan, causing a stronger monsoon effect. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, vice-president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said the weather patterns were consistent with changes in the climate caused by man.



Sources:

[Pakistan floods 'hit 14m people'](#)

[Floods, fires, landslides called evidence of warming](#)

[Desperation as Pakistan flood misery grows](#)

[Pakistan flood toll rises but international aid fails to flow](#)

[Supercharged jet stream contributing to floods](#)

[Pakistan floods cause 'huge losses' to crops](#)

[Pak yet to decide on India's flood aid offer](#)

[Up to 3.5m Pakistan children at risk of flood diseases](#)

[World Bank to lend \\$900m to Pakistan for flood recovery](#)

[Pakistan aid 'will not fall to extremists'](#)

Food Rotting in India

Food wastage in India is frowned upon and the country has a need for every grain of food it can get hold of. Food prices are inflating and food is scarce. So it is a bit of a shock to hear about the large amounts of grain going to waste because of poor storage facilities and poor management. Some estimates put the wastage as high as 20 to 30 per cent of food grain. The government is hammering out the details of the Food Security Act and how it will work but food wastage on this scale make a mockery of these efforts.

Allegations are rife of corruption, using storage facilities for parking vehicles or storing liquor while grain was left to rot in the rain. Food Corporation of India (FCI) employees are being disciplined and the Supreme Court has demanded a response from the government. The FCI is having to take a lot of the anger for this situation. The Supreme Court has stated that not a grain should be wasted and calls have been made to distribute the grain free.

But this is not a new problem. Every year there is a huge wastage and the figures from 2002 to 2004 were worse than today. Given the large increase in the amount of grain being handled it has been argued that the figures are not as bad as they could have been. Is this a problem of today or a problem that has been going on for many years that has not been addressed properly? Is this really a deep systemic problem that needs some prolonged government direction and intervention to solve?

A positive note is a four-member delegation, led by Minister of State for Agriculture K.V. Thomas, has been invited to China to study foodgrain storage. The emphasis would be on the use of modern technology to control the environmental conditions for storage. Thomas highlighted the need for increased and better storage facilities, especially needed to implement the Food Security Act effectively.

Sources:

[Vehicles parked in shed while crops rot in rain](#)

[Booze in FCI godown, wheat can rot](#)

[Food grains allowed to rot as part of racket](#)

[It's much more than rotting grain](#)

[Rotting food: Three FCI officials suspended](#)

[India to learn about foodgrain storage from China](#)

[Rotting food, careless FCI and furious minister](#)

Why let foodgrain rot? The Times of India, Friday August 13th 2010

Killed by the Food Bill, The Times of India, Friday August 13th 2010

India's National Food Security Act Taking Shape

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had said in his last year's Budget speech in July that the Centre would soon introduce a Bill to enact a Food Security law. He had said a draft bill would be put up in public domain for comments.

The National Food Security Act is beginning to take shape. After being promised over a year ago it is now likely to be tabled in Parliament by the Monsoon session. There has been considerable wrangling and compromise over the details. The government is still to define how the Below Poverty line (BPL) is to be set with discussions over whether it be set just by economic criteria or include social categories as well. Other details being argued over are the amount of the grain allowance and the costs of the scheme. Shortages of available grain have focussed the politicians' minds on what can actually be achieved.

The bill is expected to deliver 25kg of food grain to the poor per family per month at the subsidised price of 3 ` per kg. Poor is defined as Below Poverty Line or BPL, a government set index. It is unclear what the definition of a family is.

It is expected that the bill will be a big vote winner for the government and particularly the bill's champion Sonia Gandhi.

Sources:

[Food bill: Pawar, Sonia to lock horns?](#)

[UPA gets food security bill off the block](#)

[Food Security Act should cover entire population](#)

[Govt committed to bring National Food Security Act: Patil](#)

[Sonia's NAC clears pruned Food Security Act](#)

[Make Food Security Act effective](#)

[Sonia's NAC clears pruned Food Security Act](#)

[Dialogue on the National Food Security Act April 19, 2010 Constitution Club, New Delhi](#)

[Food security act: Government yet to determine poverty line criteria](#)

[Food Security Bill: Cause of elation of grief?](#)

[NGOs protest proposed National Food Security Act](#)

[Food Security Act or Food Entitlement Act?](#)

[The Big Food Security Debate: Universal v. Targeted](#)

Jammu Kashmir troubles

The troubles in Jammu Kashmir have been going for twenty years now but they have flared up to a new level of intensity in the last three months. In that time security forces have fired on protesters killing over 50 people. Locals involved in the protests call it an uprising against India.

The trigger for this increase may have been the killing of a seventeen year old youth, Tufail Mattoo, allegedly by the security forces. Since that time many people have been killed when attending protests.

The Prime Minister, Dr Singh, has urged a return to peace but with little effect; four people being killed just days later.

Sources:

[The angry housewives setting Kashmir ablaze](#)

[Jammu And Kashmir: Mapping Street Violence - South Asia Intelligence Review](#)

[Tufail Mattoo killing case 'Govt playing hoax with Kashmiris'](#)

[Tufail Mattoo killing case CJM asks cops to begin investigation](#)

[Prime Minister's peace balm for Kashmir's angry youth](#)

[How I became a stone thrower for a day](#)

[The Other Half: Mothers and sons](#)

[Allow classes to resume: PM urges Kashmir youth](#)

[After lull, Kashmir boils again, 4 killed](#)

Mining in Orissa

The Environment and Forests Ministry put a halt to the clearance for the Orissa Mining Corporation to mine Niyamgiri hills for the Vedanta aluminium refinery in Lanjigarh. Additionally the plant is threatened with shutdown for infringing the Environment Protection Act. Mining has a troubled history in Orissa with corporate rivalries and influential tribal votes.

Source:

"Govt denies green signal to Vedanta Mining Plan", The Times of India, August 25th 2010

"Is Orissa tribal vote a factor in heat on Vedanta?", The Times of India, August 25th 2010

SANSAD Events

October 25th-29th, 2010 - National Consultation on Aid Effectiveness - Delhi

Date to be finalised.