

LETTERS

UPA AND POOR

In the Union Budget 2007-08 the finance minister has stated that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is being expanded from 200 districts to 330 districts, but the budget allocation has been increased only from Rs 11300 crore to Rs 12000 cr. It is common sense that budget should increase in proportion to the increase in the number of districts. If this is not done then, resources will have to be spread too thinly and a very important new poverty alleviation scheme will simply breakdown.

Also, the minister has announced a significant expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) without any proportional increase in resources.

A comprehensive social security legislation for unorganised sector workers has been pending for a long time and is due to be introduced very soon. However the budget '07-'08 makes provision for Rs 1000 crores to *aam aadmi bima yojana*.

Recent press reports have pointed out that some centrally sponsored schemes for bonded labourers, leprosy patients and other highly vulnerable groups have been discontinued. Last but not the least there should be a special central initiative and matching allocation for speeding up badly neglected land reforms.

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RULING ON BOSNIA

In March, the International Court of Justice, which the US has refused to join, ruled against a Bosnian lawsuit claiming that Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia was guilty of genocide during the Bosnian war. The Court did find that genocide took place against Bosnia, however, something that the French public opinion, let alone that in pro-Serbia Russia or Greece, has up to now refused to recognize.

But the Court found for genocide in only one instance, the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of 8,000 Muslim boys and men. The rest of the 200,000 killed and the many more "ethnically cleansed," they concluded were not genocide. Moreover, since there was supposedly no direct proof that the Milosevic regime had actually ordered Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic to carry out the Srebrenica massacre, the Serbian state was therefore "not guilty" of genocide. The Court acknowledged with unintended irony that Milosevic had not done "enough" to prevent the genocide at Srebrenica.

Up to now, Serbia has been under serious consideration for European Union membership. In fact, this genocidal state is at the same rung on the ladder to membership as democratic predominantly Muslim Turkey. This has been the case despite Serbia's proven sheltering of war criminals. For example, a Serbian court revealed late last year that Mladic, under indictment by the international Hague Tribunal, had lived for three years in Belgrade under military protection.

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