

NEWS WRAP

AGD

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development, reportedly stresses the need to fight climate change by way of promoting sterilization programs on India's poor. The theory is that reducing population numbers would cut greenhouse gases. Millions of foreign aid are spent on forcible sterilization of Indian women and men. Many have died from botched operations and bleeding. Women selected for sterilization have suffered miscarriages and lost their babies. The poor are being sterilized to curb India's growing population of 1.2 billion people. In the poor states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the poor and little educated men and women in rural areas are rounded up and sterilized without having a chance to object. Some of the poor are told that they are going to health camps for operations that will improve their general well being, and discover the truth after the knife is applied. Victims are left in pain, with little or no after care. There are numerous reports from across India of deaths, and of pregnant women suffering miscarriages after being selected for sterilization, without being warned that they would lose their unborn babies. In temporarily requisitioned school buildings, as many as 53 operations are carried out in two hours by surgeons, assisted by unqualified staff, with no access to running water or equipment to clean the operating equipment. Sterilization operations are conducted even by torch light.

People have been threatened with losing their ration cards if they do not undergo operations, or bribed Rs 600 and a sari. Some state run lotteries offer winning of cars and fridges, to people who agree to be sterilized. Sterilization remains the most common method of family planning in the government's Reproductive and Child Health Program Phase. Nearly half a million sterilizations are carried out every year in India. The quality of services is affected as much of the work is crammed into the final part of the financial year. Officials and doctors are paid a bonus for every operation.

SLOW GROWTH AND INDIA'S POOR

India's economy is expanding at an annual rate of 5.3%, compared to 9.2% of the previous year, partly because of political paralysis. US growth has fallen to 1.9% from 2%, fuelling concerns over weak global growth. India's manufacturing sector shrank 0.3% from a year earlier. The rupee has depreciated by about 25% against the dollar, over the past ten months, hitting an all time low of Rs 56.5 against the dollar. The fall in industrial production output and of exports, caused by declining domestic and overseas consumption has left millions of Indians unemployed. The current slowdown in growth is spreading poverty faster in India, than the prosperity that trickled down, during the economy's boom years. The threshold between survival and absolute poverty remains thin, 42% of children under five are officially underweight, in spite of India's economy doubling between 1990 and 2005. The showdown in India's economy is damaging the government's efforts to improve healthcare, education and food security, for those at below the poverty live. In the absence of national health system, the

loss of a job implies the loss of already tenuous access to healthcare. India's fiscal deficit is 5.8%, and trade deficit is 9.9%, of gross domestic product. Rising energy prices is accelerating inflation.

SMUGGLING IN VIETNAM

The Vietnamese city of Mong Cai, is separated from China's Guangxi province, by the narrow Ka Long river. Trade between the two 'communist' neighbours is \$36 billion annually, and Mong Cai is one of the busiest transit points for the extensive trade. Unofficial and illegal trade in Mong Cai accounts for nearly 98% of all cross border traffic. China has strengthened security at its main ports in recent years. Smugglers are now moving contraband through the permeable Vietnamese port of Haiphong, and then on the Mong Cai, 230 km to the north. About 1500 vehicles traffic goods everyday, through the busiest unofficial crossings in Mong Cai, each paying border officials \$10 to \$20, as right of passage bribes. Annually Vietnam exports about \$11 billion to China, of mostly raw materials and imports about \$25 billion of finished goods from China. At the numerous illegal crossing points on the Ka Long river, dozens of barges are loaded with contraband, every few minutes. Illegal goods from around the world, feed China's rising demand for everything from women, to banned electronic waste products, to tiger organs for use in traditional medicine. □□□